



FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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Woodland near Dolphinholme
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Cover Image - Great Stone, Bentham
© Jon Brook

View from the Chair



View from the Chair: County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Chairman of the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee

For the AONB Partnership, the last year could perhaps be characterised as a 'big' year; one of big landscape-scale projects and big debates on the future of land management and environmental regulation as the UK prepares to leave the European Union.

Clearly, a major focus of the AONB Partnership's work over recent years has been the development of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This exciting scheme is looking to re-connect people with their landscape and their past, to safeguard the area's wildlife and heritage and to improve people's access to this popular countryside area. Activity will include providing opportunities for training and volunteering; supporting research and devising digital interpretation to inspire a new generation about our heritage; restoring important landscape features, and working with communities to re-tell the stories of radical Pendle people. The scheme aims to increase pride in this special place and raise aspirations amongst communities, and bring in new investment to support the environment and the economy. In December 2017, the AONB Unit received the happy news that the Stage 2 bid for almost £1.9million of Heritage Lottery funding had been successful. Since then work has continued apace to get the new team in place to start work on scheme delivery from April 2018.

Another area of big project work has been in restoring peatland habitat in the AONB. The Pennine Peat LIFE project (delivered in partnership with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, no less!) has now commenced the development of restoration plans for priority blanket bog habitat on the Bleasdale Fells and Langden Head on United Utilities Estate. In addition, the AONB Unit has helped to secure additional funds from DEFRA to support further restoration works on Abbeystead Estate, as part of a wider 'North of England Peat Project'.

Between these two programmes over the coming years, Bowland will benefit from almost £2million of investment in habitat restoration; helping improve biodiversity and water quality, locking up carbon and potentially reducing flood risk for communities downstream.

And then of course we come to Brexit...

The one thing we can be sure of is that change is on the way as a result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union. The last year has seen a keen focus on what domestic agricultural and environmental policies will look like after Brexit.

Amongst all these debates, the Government launched its '25 Year Environment Plan' in January 2018. This included the announcement that a Review of Designated Landscapes (both AONBs and National Parks) will take place in the lead up to the 70th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 2019.

We hope to welcome the recently established Review panel to Bowland in the coming year to, not only learn about all the magnificent work done by AONB partners, but also about how we can renew the mission started back in the 1940s with the work of John Dower and Sir Arthur Hobhouse in the designation of these outstanding landscapes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Atkinson', with a small flourish at the end.

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

Just before Christmas 2017 the AONB was delighted to hear that the Heritage Lottery had decided to support our stage 2 application for funds for the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership. This four year £2.5million programme is set to transform the landscape and reveal the heritage of this iconic hill that forms the eastern gateway to the AONB.

Since April 2016 the Landscape Partnership (LP) development officer, Cathy Hopley, and a graduate assistant, Jayne Ashe, had been commissioning research and developing project plans to make up this ambitious and exciting scheme. The Pendle Hill landscape partnership is planning to uncover the area's lesser known heritage and to share it with a wide range of visitors and locals. Plans include improving access to the hill, celebrating the area's social history, improving wildlife sites, and offering opportunity to volunteers and trainees.

Pendle's history is summed up in its name: 'Pen' is Celtic for hill, whilst 'Dhull' is the Saxon word for hill – so the place is really called 'hill hill hill'. This shows us just how important the landmark has been throughout the history of the area. It provided safe haven for prehistoric travellers and settlers and there is evidence in the burial cairns, enclosure patterns and trackways still remaining today. The landscape partnership includes a number of archaeological explorations, plus training for budding archaeologists, and heritage open days for everyone to learn more. Similarly there will be opportunity for people to learn more about the area's radical past and the impact of groups such as the Chartists, non-conformists, suffragettes and socialists.

The natural heritage of the hill will also be improved by the scheme. Old walls and hedgerows will be restored to bring back the patchwork pattern to the landscape and to revive an interest in these traditional rural crafts. Important grasslands and woodlands will be restored and managed and there will be plenty of opportunity for farmers to get involved through a new farmers group being set up by the AONB. Volunteers too can get involved and there will also be special day visits and activities planned for people who do not normally get the chance to benefit from the landscape. There will be new apprenticeships offered to young people interested in a career outdoors; and learning opportunities for visiting schools and other groups will also be on offer.

There are plans to improve and waymark walking routes and to open these up for people of all abilities. Information hubs at Barley, Downham, Spring Wood and the Nick of Pendle will be improved and local tourism and food providers will be encouraged and supported to promote the area more. The project will generate more creative activity and digital interpretation such as an 'heritage app', village treasure trails and download walking guides.

A number of artists in residence will be involved in the projects helping to interpret the stories of the hill, its nature and its past. There will be opportunity for people to get involved with the artists' work and they will also help to run annual Gatherings to celebrate and guide the scheme throughout its four year life.

The scheme started in April 2018 and is now up and running, with a small team of six staff and based in Clitheroe.



Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership board members
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

New Habitat for Sabden's Fish!

In May this year, a fish pass was installed on the large weir adjacent to Victoria Mill in Sabden. The weir was constructed in the late 18th century to provide a supply of water to the mill but, now redundant, it continued to restrict the natural migration of fish species such as salmon and trout, impeding their population growth. Sabden weir was selected as one of 14 priority targets by the Ribble Rivers Trust and their partners who are delivering a 3-year project entitled 'Ribble Life Together', a £3.2 million project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Environment Agency and others.

The Trust prefers to remove a weir in its entirety as the most effective way of enabling fish to migrate, but this was not possible in Sabden. Instead, boulders were set into the existing flat face of the weir to funnel the flow of water into a zig-zag channel, creating a greater depth of water for fish to swim up. The works have given Sabden Brook's fish access to a further 7km of habitat, up on to the shoulder of Pendle Hill!

According to the Environment Agency, only 21% of the Ribble Catchment's rivers currently achieve a good ecological standard. As well as constructing 14 fish passes, Ribble Life Together will also deliver 30 new riparian woodlands and 15 new wetlands around the Ribble Catchment to help reduce the amount of pollution entering rivers, increase biodiversity, provide natural flood risk management and reduce climate change impacts. Scientific monitoring will determine how much the rivers improve as a result of these interventions.

At the heart of the project is a determination to establish a better relationship between communities and their rivers by developing people's understanding and appreciation of river environments, with the hope of creating a lasting legacy for the catchment and its communities. People are invited to get involved in the project in a variety of ways, from attending volunteer events and conservation training workshops, to geocaching competitions, guided river walks, augmented reality videos and oral history. A new website has been set up for the project – www.ribbonlifetogether.org – which will act as a hub of information for people wanting to know more about the project and their local rivers in general.



Sabden weir before and after
© Ribble Rivers Trust

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Wyre Coast and Countryside Service

Access for All and Promoted Route Management

Rangers and volunteers help to provide access for all by looking after popular picnic areas, such as Brock Picnic Area, and gateway access points to the Forest of Bowland at Garstang and Scorton. Two volunteer teams carry out a programme of surveys, maintenance and improvement on paths, routes and trails promoted by Wyre Council, the AONB and Visit Garstang Centre. Work has included installation of new small footbridges, surfaced paths and kissing gates, waymarking and vegetation management. The volunteer teams also did quite a bit of clearance works on paths after the floods.

Biodiversity - Invasives Non Native Species

Staff and volunteers undertook vegetation management of two invasive non-native species in the river catchment: Himalayan Balsam management with volunteers and public in the Brock valley at various sites and along the River Wyre, and Japanese Knotweed injection on the banks of the Wyre with trained staff from Wyre Council and staff and volunteers from River Wyre Catchment Partnership.

Traditional Boundaries

Wyre Countryside Volunteers help to care for local boundaries adjacent to busy public footpaths and access points. Wyre volunteers took part in hedge-laying training with the Lancashire and Westmorland Hedge Laying Association, which increased their skills and interest in hedgerow management.



Newly laid hedge
© Forest of Bowland AONB

Volunteers repair flood damage along the Wyre Way
© J Robinson

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Natural & Cultural Heritage



Abbeystead Estate

The Abbeystead Estate takes great pride in its long term management of both the built and natural environment and its relationship with the communities who live and work here. Over recent years the Estate has worked with a number of organisations to survey, understand and try and improve the features on the Estate. These features include:

- Deep peat habitat which sustains a designated range of plant and animal species as well as sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. The Estate has identified that on two areas of the peatland habitat hosting large numbers of breeding Lesser Black Backed Gulls, the vegetation has been damaged and peat erosion is taking place. Both Sarah Robinson and Elliott Lorimer working for the AONB Unit have been instrumental in starting the process of restoring the habitat with a successful bid to the DEFRA Peatland Fund and we are working closely with Natural England to address the underlying issue of gull numbers on both sites.
- Flood alleviation works – water running off the bare peat is finding its way into gullies, channels and streams before entering the River Wyre. Again, the AONB Unit have facilitated work with the Environment Agency and we hope following some extensive catchment survey work that we can continue to address these matters.
- The AONB through championing the area have assisted in the replacement of various County Council road signs with traditional cast iron finger posts, which we believe are more in-keeping with the landscape character and also what visitors would like to see in Bowland.

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Traditional Boundaries

Hedges are a key part of the Forest of Bowland landscape. They provide shelter for livestock along with valuable food and habitat for wildlife. A good hedge can last for many years but will need managing in order to stay healthy.

Once again we must thank our trusty – and hardy! – volunteers for their time and effort in helping to keep Bowland's hedges looking trim during the latest season. 38 people, both regular volunteers and newcomers, joined us under the watchful eyes of trainers Geoff Whitley, Joe Craig, Andrew Kirkwood and Dave Padley.

The sessions were a great opportunity to learn new skills, practice old ones and enjoy some fantastic locations.

Two days during November saw the perimeter of the picnic site at Lancaster's Crook O'Lune given a face lift and the path made passable when 90 meters of hedge were laid. Over towards Scorton, over 130 meters were laid around the boundaries of Fell View Caravan Park in the shadow of Harrisend Fell.

Despite the weather being against us at times in January and February, 115m of track-side hedge were laid at Higher Gills Farm above Rimington – against the grand backdrop of Pendle Hill, plus a further 82m at Lane Side Farm in West Bradford – the venue for a number of past Bowland Hedge Laying Competitions.

Unfortunately, the weather got the better of the 2018 competition, which had to be cancelled. A real shame for all the organisers and competitors but hopefully all will be back on track for next year!

Thanks go too to the landowners and farmers who welcomed us onto their land and helped with providing stakes and clearing brash.

We hope to see some old friends, and new faces, in the coming season.



Hedge laying volunteers and trainers above Rimington.
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Natural & Cultural Heritage

Undergrounding for Visual Amenity

As part of the 'Undergrounding for Visual Amenity' (UVA) programme, Electricity North West Ltd. (ENWL) continues to work with the Forest of Bowland AONB Unit to underground visually intrusive sections of overhead lines. Forest of Bowland AONB was allocated c. £1.8m for the current price review period (RIO-ED1) to 2023.

Work in 2017/18 focused on completion of two undergrounding schemes identified within Ribble Valley:

Wolfen Hall to Fell Foot (near Chipping)

This scheme involved undergrounding 852m of high voltage line. This work has improved the local landscape and views from Fell Foot towards Wolf Fell and Saddle Fell.

Crimpton to Ing Barn (between Cow Ark and Newton)

This scheme involved undergrounding 2480m of high voltage line and 207m of low voltage line. This work has helped to remove overhead lines from the local landscape of Marl Hill Moor and Birkett Fell, as well as improving wider views towards Totridge, Burn Fell and the Yorkshire Dales' Three Peaks.



Before and after undergrounding along the Crimpton scheme above Newton
© Graham Cooper

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Natural & Cultural Heritage



Natural Flood Management in Roeburndale

In August 1967 a flash flood caused great destruction in the Roeburndale valley and to the village of Wray, including the loss of houses, livestock, bridges and vehicles.

As part of a series of events marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Wray flood, a natural flood management workshop was held on 19th October 2017 and attended by 12 farmers and landowners.

Natural flood management (NFM), sometimes known as "Slow the Flow", looks at ways of working with natural processes to store water in the landscape in order to try and slow its movement downstream. Techniques range from peatland restoration and woodland planting to swales and leaky dams.

Instigated by local farmer, Dr Rod Everett, the half day workshop at Hornby Institute involved a series of short presentations from organisations including the Lune Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and Abbeystead Estate. Members of the group then travelled the short distance to Backsbottom Farm where a series of NFM demonstration examples have been developed.

Thanks go to Rod Everett, Sarah James from the Lune Rivers Trust and all the speakers for a very interesting session which engendered much discussion.

Swales with tree planting at Backsbottom Farm, Roeburndale
© Lune Rivers Trust

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Bowland Experience

During 2017 Champion Bowland changed its governance arrangements and reconstituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This also had implications for Bowland Experience Ltd which was closed as a company at the end of 2017. Now, the set-up still remains, but more informally, as an active sustainable tourism business to business network supported by the AONB.

New membership & networking

During the year we welcomed 15 new members to the network from a variety of new and established businesses; from camping and glamping sites and luxury self-catering providers to cafes, tearooms and a cycling activity provider. We also organised two breakfast club meetings, established to bring existing and new members together to share ideas and good practice. Eight to 10 businesses attended each, at Dale House Camping Barn and Bentham Golf Club.

Workshops & training

We organised a 'Star Tips for Profit' workshop on 26th September run by astronomer Robert Ince and attended by seven members. This enabled businesses to become 'Dark Sky Friendly' linked to the AONB's Dark Sky Discovery Site project. Before being given access to the AONB's Dark Sky Friendly logo, businesses carry out a lighting audit of their business and implement changes to make themselves more dark sky friendly. They can then proudly display the logo to attract new customers.

Two social media workshops were run by Salar Media, at the Shireburn Arms in October and Wyreside Lakes Fishery in January, and attended by 12 businesses.

A successful Sense of Place workshop was held at Holmes Mill in January and tailored for the managers of James' Places businesses - 12 staff in total attended. The workshop enabled staff to gain an understanding of what is special about Bowland and to learn more about the opportunities in the area. They then put this new knowledge into practice by highlighting to customers the local distinctiveness around each of their businesses and promoting the messages of the AONB.

Celebrations & awards

Support for businesses undertaking a commitment to greening their business is still a priority of the network, and their efforts continue to be rewarded through the internationally accredited scheme run by Green Business UK. Ribble Valley Holiday Homes and Wigglesworth House both achieved a gold Green Tourism award in December. Achieving a gold award is no mean feat as it is given to those who integrate innovative green practices into the core of their business. Also, long standing members, Browsholme Hall, (who have been recipients of the sustainable tourism award for the county for a number of years) received the silver Sustainable Tourism award in the 2018 Visit England Awards for Excellence, a fantastic achievement!

At the Annual Sustainable Tourism Forum on 21st November, held at the Tithe Barn Browsholme Hall, there was a celebration of the achievements of both Bowland Experience and Champion Bowland over the last decade, as well as individual businesses - <http://forestofbowland.com/Sustainable-Tourism>. There was also group discussion looking ahead to future projects and activity. Louise Kite, project officer for the LEADER Rural Development Fund, gave an update and the Bowland Clothing Company brought along a stand to showcase their AONB range. The forum was attended by 20 tourism businesses within the network.



Browsholme Hall's Visit England Silver Sustainable Tourism Award 2018

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CHAMPION BOWLAND

Champion Bowland

This has been an important year for Champion Bowland. Thanks to persistence and hard work on the part of Lorraine Ritche-Stones and the Directors of Champion Bowland, the organisation was granted charitable status in February 2018. The new organisation is actually a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation' and its main purposes are:

1. To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
2. To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

In reality the organisation will carry on much as before, raising funds from visitor donations and charitable activity; and awarding these funds as small grants (up to £750) to local projects which benefit the environment, local communities and visitors.

In 2017/18, largely due to the re-organisation of the governance of Champion Bowland, no grants were offered. However, fundraising continued via collection boxes, donations for the AONB Discovery Guide, calendar sales and the postcard prize draw. In total just over £500 was raised.

Champion Bowland also administers the AONB's Farm Visit Transport Fund which grants bursaries towards travel costs for groups making educational farm visits in the AONB. In 2017/18 bursaries were offered to 10 groups taking a total of 16 trips involving 466 people and £1,282.50 was granted.

The trustees are keen to recruit new members to the Board to assist with the development and running of the charity, so if you are interested, please contact the chair, and see the website for further information about the role and activities of the charity:

www.championbowland.org.uk

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (LMCRP)

During 2015 the LMCRP began working with the Forest of Bowland to establish four gateway stations to the AONB along the Forest's northern boundary at Giggleswick, Clapham, Bentham and Wennington. Walking and cycling routes were developed from all four stations into the area and large information panels provided at the stations, with the support of Northern Rail.

The partners have continued working together since on ways of building closer links between the organisations and on improving the tourism offer into the heart of, and through, Bowland.

The partners met with the Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company, operators of Dales Bus, in late 2016, to look at ways of linking rail travel onward journeys to the heart of Bowland. As a result, the Bowland Explorer mini-coach service was established to run on summer Sundays and Bank Holidays in 2017.

The mini-coach starts from Lancaster station and travels to Bentham station to connect with the rail service from Leeds, before heading off through Bowland, via Slaidburn, to Clitheroe, to link with rail services to and from Greater Manchester and Lancashire. It then returns northwards via Gisburn Forest and Stocks Reservoir to the dales villages of Clapham and Ingleton. The mini-coach makes a loop of Bowland before its last journey to Clitheroe and the final leg back to Lancaster via Bentham. Following on from the positive interest in the service in 2017, we are very pleased that funding has been secured to run the service again during 2018.

Over the past two years, the Forest of Bowland has also played a positive role in the Partnership's pioneering Dementia and Community Rail project on the Bentham Line. Members of the Bowland team have been involved in dementia awareness sessions and have enlisted the help of the Forestry Commission and United Utilities in creating one of the project's four dementia-friendly walks along the Birch Hills Trail in Gisburn Forest, adjacent to Stocks Reservoir.

In July 2017 the Forest of Bowland became a member of the LMCRP and is a regular supporter of the Partnership's management committee.

The Partnership would especially like to thank Sandra Silk of Bowland for her continued support, work and advice, in helping to develop these initiatives.



The Bowland Explorer on its journey south
© Mark Sutcliffe

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

New publications

50 local businesses, event organisers and community members gathered to celebrate the release of Discover Bowland 2018 at Gisburn Forest Hub cafe in early February – and got the chance to try out Champion Bowland's four-wheel drive, electric Trampler vehicle at the same time.

With everything from walking routes and wildlife features to traditional countryside skills, archaeology and local food, the 2018 guide is packed with information about the AONB.

New for this year are two Discover Bowland itineraries - the first in a series of five planned over the next 18 months. The itineraries provide inspiration for short breaks in the area, highlighting suggestions on what to do and where to eat and stay. And thanks to local businesses – all part of Bowland's Sustainable Tourism Network – there are offers and discounts a-plenty.

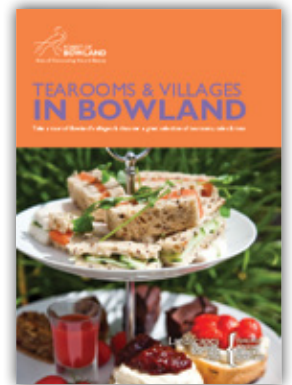
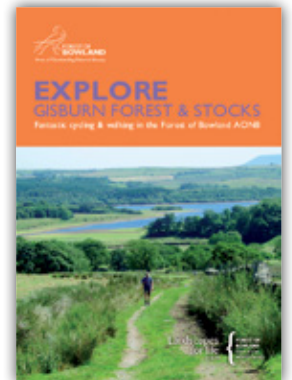
The guide also includes this year's Festival Bowland programme, which lists a host of events between February and October. The publication is available from local Tourist Information Centres and a range of local businesses, or view it online here:

https://issuu.com/forestofbowland/docs/fob_discoguide1217lores

Business advertising from BEx members generated over £4,000 to support the production of the guide. And although the guide is free, often visitors comment on the quality of the publication and are happy to donate to Champion Bowland; the businesses collect these donations to pass onto the charity.

The Gisburn Forest Bike Trails leaflet has also been re-produced to incorporate more information about the whole destination of Gisburn Forest and Stocks and includes information about walking, cycling and other opportunities, along with business listings. The businesses have made a contribution to Champion Bowland to be listed in the leaflet.

Similarly, the existing Teashops leaflet has been re-produced to include more information about the villages of Bowland - the history and walking opportunities - to encourage visitors to stay and explore. For inclusion in the teashops leaflet, businesses have agreed to host collection boxes to raise valuable funds for Champion Bowland.



Discover Bowland 2018 guide launch at Gisburn Forest Hub
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities

Marketing Lancashire

Over the last year Marketing Lancashire has developed a new VisitLancashire.com website (launched in April 2018) with the quality of the visitor journey and experience paramount. The new site builds on the existing destination pages dedicated to Forest of Bowland AONB which were enhanced extensively in 2015/16 but continue to grow in popularity. From April 2017 – March 2018 the Forest of Bowland destination pages received page views of 45,250 a 6% per cent increase compared with 16/17.

The Forest of Bowland featured in the 2017 Lancashire Visitor Magazine, the essential traveller's guide for short breaks and day visits to the county, which was also available as an online magazine. The Forest of Bowland AONB had a strong presence in the magazine appearing in features such as 24 hours in the Ribble Valley, Lancashire from above and in a number of food and drink articles. The print run of the magazine was 50,000 whilst the online version of the guide had a further 14,608 reads and 68,578 impressions.

The Forest of Bowland also appeared in the digital Visit Lancashire Summer campaign and the Autumn/Winter Short Breaks Campaign.



Cycling in the Forest of Bowland
© Marketing Lancashire

Marketing Lancashire

Summer campaign 2017

- 96 page digital short breaks guide – 35,557 impressions
- Dedicated campaign page views on visitlancashire.com – 45,995 page views
- Summer partner pages on visitlancashire.com – 218,553 page views
- Themed newsletters to over 70,000+ contacts
- Social Media /hash tag reach of 6,236,935 potential reach

Autumn/Winter -Short breaks campaign 2017/18

- 64 page digital short breaks guide – 18,620 impressions
- Dedicated campaign page views on visitlancashire.com – 41,120 page views
- Campaign partner pages on visitlancashire.com – 103,540 page views
- Themed newsletters to over 70,000+ contacts
- Social Media /hash tag reach of 6,191,490 potential reach

Countryfile Live

Marketing Lancashire was the only destination management organisation to take a stand at the first ever Countryfile Live, from 3- 6 August 2017 at Blenheim Palace, which promoted the Visit Lancashire tourism brand and visitor economy partners.

- Partners represented included: Forest of Bowland AONB, Holmes Mill, Merlin, Northcote, Samlesbury Hall and St Annes Beach Huts.
- Over 120,000 people attended the event
- Over 3,500 Visit Lancashire Magazines were handed out
- Over 3,000 visitors entered the Visit Lancashire prize draw

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Resilient & Sustainable Communities



Shortlisted for Prestigious Award

At the beginning of the year the Forest of Bowland was shortlisted as the 2018 Best Holiday Destination in the BBC Countryfile Magazine Awards. Now in their seventh year, the awards are a celebration of the British countryside and its people, from mighty landmarks and outstanding national parks to the best nature reserves and finest rural pubs.

This year, readers were invited to send in their suggestions for the greatest sites in the countryside. A panel of expert judges scrutinised all the suggestions and deliberated for hours to select five outstanding contenders in each category.

One of the panel experts and Countryfile presenter, John Craven, speaking about the Forest of Bowland said: *"At the very centre of mainland Britain, this is one of the most unspoiled of all holiday destinations in the UK. Although I'm a little worried that by nominating it, it might become too popular!"*

After a public vote the award went to Pembrokeshire Coast – a worthy recipient – but it was still an honour to be featured in the shortlist and to be acknowledge nationally by the Countryfile Magazine readership.

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Festival Bowland

Bowland is full of people ready to share their love of this beautiful area, its landscape, wildlife and heritage. It's these people who make Festival Bowland possible, delivering between them over 60 events during 2017/18.

Keen walkers had a whole host of options open to them: from regular Legstretchers to upland adventures and from pub rambles to meadow walks. Bowland of course is a treat for bird watchers and, once again, the programme had a series of guided moorland walks where participants kept a keen eye out for upland species.

More flying creatures – bats this time – were the focus of early summer and autumn evening explorations where experts were on hand to show visitors what to look for – and where. We hadn't had one for a while, but the 2017 programme also included a summer-time fungal foray and the chance to find out what was growing in Gisburn Forest.

Families were invited to come along and enjoy two storytelling sessions, discovering wonderful tales in a woodland setting, whilst music lovers experienced the debut performance of a specially commissioned choral work, Songs of Bowland, written by William, 16th Lord of Bowland, and set to music by Lakeland composer; Christopher Gibbs. (See the separate article in this report for full details.)

Once again we celebrated Outstanding Week in September when the AONB Family encourages visitors and residents to explore the UK's wonderful and varied Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



"Bats about Bowland" event
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Songs of Bowland

June 15th, 2017 saw the world premiere of a brand new choral work, *Music of the Forest*.

Written by William, 16th Lord of Bowland, and set to music by Lakeland composer, Christopher Gibbs, the four part song cycle evokes the landscape and history of this beautiful area. Performed by the Renaissance Singers of Blackburn Cathedral under the baton of Samuel Hudson, and featuring acclaimed musician, John Kenny, playing the carnyx, this was an evening not to be missed.

Chris had previously been inspired to write his Forest of Bowland suite whilst walking on Pendle Hill and, at William Bowland's request, he took inspiration from the landscape once again to produce this new piece. Whilst Chris' music reflects Bowland's atmosphere and sense of place, William's words explore the area's identity, from Celtic mythology to the late medieval monarchs who were known as Lords of Bowland.

During the performance, accomplished trombonist, John Kenny, played the carnyx. An ancient Celtic war horn, the carnyx would have been played before going into battle and its distinctive sound certainly made an impact at Slaidburn village hall during the evening!

A recording of *Music of the Forest*, made during the performance, can be found on the Forest of Bowland website at <https://forestofbowland.com/Bowland-Song-Cycle>. An interview with William Bowland and Chris Gibbs, written by Mark Sutcliffe, can be found on the website at <https://www.forestofbowland.com/Lordship-Bowland>



The arms of William, Lord of Bowland
© William Bowland

Composer, Christopher Gibbs, in Bowland
© Mark Sutcliffe

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A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Wyre Coast and Countryside Service

Festival Bowland - Wyre Walks and Activities and Garstang Walking Festival

The council coordinated a programme of activities with the aim of connecting people to the natural environment through healthy outdoor exercise. These included: Walking Wyre - Health Walks - one hour free walks which help people to get fit and stay fit and also graduate from one hour walks to two hour, slightly harder terrain walks. The venues included Garstang and Scorton and, for the longer Legstretchers, Bilsborrow, Clayands, Garstang and Scorton, with some summer evening walks in the programme; TrumperTreks, which provide customers with disabilities the use of four-wheel drive electric buggies, giving them the chance to explore the area with the support of additional Trampers and guides for the day; Wyre Walks - a borough-wide programme of activities which help to promote the Forest of Bowland in tandem with the Festival Bowland programme and themed guided walks, which highlight the wildlife and cultural heritage of the Forest of Bowland through walks focusing on, for example, lapwings, brown hares and whimbrels in springtime and Bleasdale WWI heritage and Quaker heritage during the national Heritage Open Days.

Garstang Walking Festival – Foreshore to Fells

In 2017 the Friends of Garstang Walking Festival coordinated the festival, supported by Wyre Council, with the aim of linking Morecambe Bay to the Forest of Bowland through a wide variety of walks. Taking place in the second week in May, the nine day festival celebrated springtime in Garstang, rural Wyre and the Forest of Bowland and encouraged new visitors, as well as local residents and more experienced walkers, to explore the area on foot. Walks taking people to places not normally open to the public were particularly popular. Walks included "Castles to Fallen Airmen", Dawn Chorus, Dog Friendly Ramble and the Knot-to-Tot 3 day challenge. The Introduction to Map and Compass and the Bluebell Teas walks were in much demand. The festival was well attended and customers particularly enjoyed the local knowledge provided and expertise and enthusiasm of the walk leaders.

Visit Garstang

The Visitor Centre at Garstang provides an easy access location for visitors to find out about Wyre and the Forest of Bowland and helps to promote local visitor attractions, accommodation and places to enjoy through walking and cycling.



Participants on a Wyre Walk event
© Wyre Council

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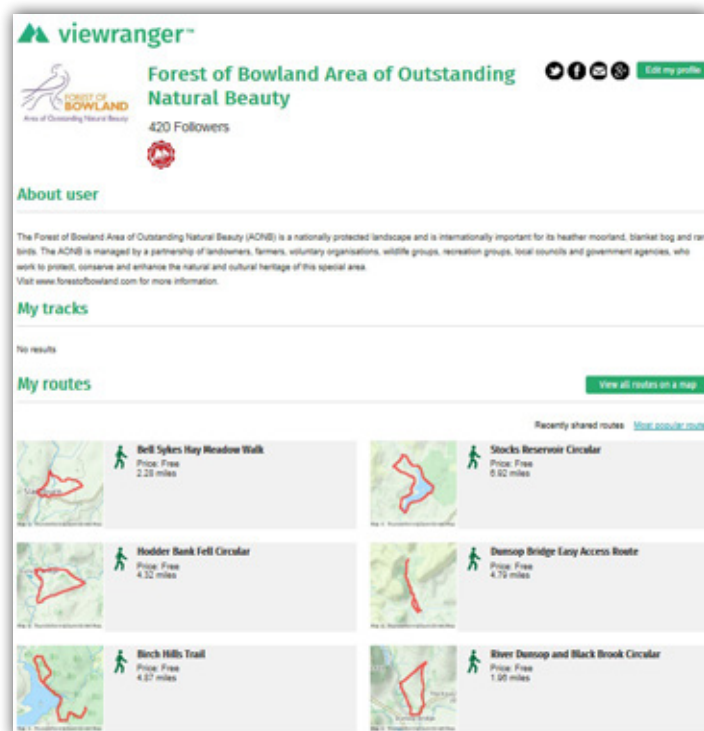
A Strong Connection Between People & The Landscape

Promoted Routes

Exploring Bowland on foot is a great way to experience the area and we want to be as aware as we can of any maintenance issues along our promoted routes so that we can try and get them fixed.

We're very grateful to the volunteers who give up their time to walk one or more chosen routes each year and report back to us on any work which might need carrying out. Our monitors are also very handy with hammer and screws if any way marker disks need replacing and can point out helpful improvements to the wording of route descriptions.

To help make us more efficient at updating route descriptions – or the routes themselves if needed – we began the process of migrating our promoted routes to the nationally recognised ViewRanger App and web-based walking resource. This free platform allows us to update information or alter walking routes more quickly if needed – in the event of footpath diversions for example. Access to the routes via



business websites is also much more succinct, and it means that any new updates will be reflected directly to business websites. Routes can be downloaded to mobile devices before visiting the AONB and a printed version is also available for people who prefer to follow routes on paper. It will take us a little while to move all our routes over but we hope to have this completed during 2018.

The Champion Bowland electric Tramper buggy is now located at Gisburn Forest Hub and is available to hire from the café. There is a five mile easy access route linking the Hub and the Birch Hills Trail at Stocks Reservoir Car Park on School Lane. The Tramper can be booked in advance by contacting the Hub café on 01200 446387 or by emailing gisburncafe@outlook.com. The staff at the café will be able to carry out an induction for those new to the Tramper.

Working with Lancashire County Council Public Rights of Way team and a firm of contractors, improvements were carried out to the Hodder Bank Fell Circular, River Dunsop & Black Brook Circular and Dunsop Easy Access routes – all of which feature in our new "Journey to the Centre of the Kingdom" itinerary.

Michelle and Angela, Gisburn Forest Hub Café managers
© Mark Sutcliffe

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Working in Partnership

Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership

The Forest of Bowland AONB Unit has continued its close working with partners across the Northern Upland Chain LNP area. The work of the LNP during 2017/18 focused on a number of key issues for the Pennines:

High Nature Value Farming

The LNP's pilot 'Payment by Results' agri-environment scheme started in 2016 (led by the Yorkshire Dale National Park in Wensleydale) is now nearing completion. The scheme supports around 20 farmers (not in existing stewardship schemes) to conserve species rich grassland and wader-friendly habitats, offering increased payments based on observed and assessed habitat improvements. The AONB Unit has worked with farmers from Bowland to remain involved in the pilot's development and to receive updates (via the Northern Hill Farmers Panel) on the delivery of the scheme, helping to inform potential future scheme roll-out to other areas of the LNP.

Curlew Species Recovery Action Plan

The LNP has been working with partner organisations to develop an LNP-wide action plan to address the alarming decline in curlew populations within England and the UK. This emblematic bird of the uplands has now been placed on the UK 'Red List' as being of highest conservation concern. A series of actions involving AONBs, National Parks, RSPB and wider LNP partners is now primed for delivery during 2018/19 and beyond.

Upland Hay Meadows Best Practice

The LNP commissioned the development of online resources for the LNP website (www.nuclnp.org.uk) on managing and conserving upland hay meadows. This drew on best practice information and guidance developed by projects and activities delivered by LNP partners going back to 2006. This work is nearing completion and will be presented at the LNP Annual Forum in September 2018



Curlew near High Bentham
© Alan Owens

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Working in Partnership

AONB Networks

National Association for AONBs

Members of the AONB Unit attended the NAAONB 'Landscapes for Life' Annual Conference held at the University of Winchester, Hampshire in July 2018.

The conference was themed on how to 'Do Different' and included local field trips, briefings and a key note speech from Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defra; as well as speakers from Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council, TYF and the Central Association for Agricultural Valuers.

Other NAAONB meetings and events attended during the year included:

- Communication Officers meeting in Birmingham, December 2017
- Lead Officers meeting in Birmingham, February 2018

Northern AONB Group

The AONB Unit attended Northern AONB Group meetings in the North Pennines in May 2017 and the Lincolnshire Wolds in October 2018. These meetings are a mixture of sharing best practice case studies of projects and activity from across the Northern AONBs plus local field visits.



Landscapes
for life
.org.uk

{ FOREST OF
BOWLAND
One of the
AONB Family

High Force, Forest-in-Teesdale
© Forest of Bowland AONB

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Financial Summary

	Actual 2017/2018 (Out-turn prices) £'s
EXPENDITURE	
Core Costs	
Salary, N.I. and Superannuation	167,586.65
Out-based premises	26,863.94
Travel and subsistence	4,870.81
Central, Departmental & Tech. Support (LCC)	41,448.74
Partnership costs	20,408.61
SUB TOTAL OF CORE COSTS	261,178.75
Non Core Costs	
Projects	108,260.16
SUB TOTAL OF NON CORE COSTS	108,260.16
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	369,438.91
INCOME	
Government Grants	
Defra Grant	215,364.00
Contributions	
United Utilities	6,800.00
Other project contributions	20,000.00
County Councils	
Lancashire	40,800.00
North Yorkshire	5,430.00
District Councils	
Craven	6,800.00
Lancaster	6,800.00
Pendle	6,800.00
Preston	6,800.00
Ribble Valley	6,800.00
Wyre	6,800.00
TOTAL INCOME RECEIVED	329,194.00
CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT COSTS (IN KIND)	
Lancashire County Council	40,244.91
	369,438.91

Membership



Membership and Terms of Reference of the Joint Advisory Committee 2017/18

Lancashire County Council

County Councillor A Atkinson
County Councillor S Charles
County Councillor S Turner

North Yorkshire County Council

County Councillor R Welch

Craven District Council

Councillor I Thompson

Lancaster City Council

Councillor J Parkinson

Wyre Borough Council

Councillor V Wilson

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Councillor Mrs R Elms

Preston City Council

Councillor J Browne

Pendle Borough Council

Councillor J Starkie

Lancashire Association of Local Councils

Mr M Helm

Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Mr C Price

United Utilities

Mr M Upton

Environment Agency

Ms H Dix

Natural England

Mr M Burke

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Mr G Jones

Bowland Land Managers' Forum

Mr A Taylor

Ramblers Association

Mr D Kelly

Champion Bowland

Mr P Reynolds

Friends of Bowland

Ms J Baddeley

Moorland Association

Vacant

Membership

The Committee and its constituent bodies are responsible for the implementation of the AONB Management Plan. The role of the Committee and its Terms of Reference, is as follows:-

The Joint Advisory Committee supports and encourages an active partnership between all of the agencies involved and co-ordinates management over the whole of the AONB. The aim is to:

- promote the AONB at national, regional and local level,
- ensure that the landscape of the AONB is conserved and enhanced appropriately through the implementation of the AONB Management Plan,
- work to assist the social and economic well-being of the AONB commensurate with the conservation of its special qualities,
- provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas,
- consider any issues likely to affect the area adversely and agree appropriate action
- make recommendations for new initiatives

A range of organisations with interests in the AONB is eligible for membership. Members include local authorities and the key organisations and interests, including representatives of local people, whose involvement will assist in implementing the Management Plan. Membership is kept under review and is at the discretion of the local authorities. Ideally there should be between 10 and 20 members and, where it is not practicable to include all of the represented interests, regular consultation mechanisms should be established.

Brief for the Joint Advisory Committee:

- co-ordinate the preparation and implementation of strategic plans for the AONB, including the preparation of the statutory Management Plan
- advise local authorities preparing structure plans, local plans or other plans covering all or part of the AONB, to ensure that policies and practices (including those for development control) are co-ordinated and consistent with the statement of commitment and AONB Management Plan
- advise local authorities and other agencies on the level of resources required for effective AONB management
- lobby to influence organisations that are not members of the JAC in the delivery of their services and programmes in order to benefit Bowland communities, businesses and the environment
- advise on, and co-ordinate the actions of the constituent organisations to achieve the objectives of the AONB and, in particular, ensure that the statement of commitment and Management Plan are implemented and reviewed. This includes:
 - receiving monitoring reports from the partners on progress and achievements in implementing the Management Plan, reviewing the Management Plan every five years and producing an annual report,
 - agreeing an annual work programme for the AONB to be delivered by the partners and the AONB Staff Unit,
 - carrying out special studies of key issues, as they arise, for example by setting up working parties or conducting research
 - advising the appropriate local planning authority about any developments within or adjacent to the AONB that are likely to affect significantly the landscape character of the area,
 - acting as forum for the discussion of major issues affecting the character of the AONB
 - promoting other action that is necessary to further the objectives of the AONB designation



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Night sky above Gisburn Forest

© Matthew Savage

Forest of Bowland AONB

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