



**Forest of
Bowland**
National
Landscape



Annual Report

2024 – 2025



Green hairstreak butterfly

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Cover Image
Keasden Head Farm overlooking Keasden to the Yorkshire Dales

This has been a very special year for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape - celebrating sixty years since designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. And whilst the area may have had a slight name change since 1964, this latest annual report shows that the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of this very special place continues apace.



**Wyre District Councillor
Councillor John Ibison**

*Vice-Chair of the Forest of
Bowland National Landscape Joint
Advisory Committee*

The highly successful Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been extended for a further year, which is fantastic news. I know the programme team, alongside the Local Assessment Panel, will continue to work hard with landowners and land managers to bring about projects delivering positive outcomes for nature, climate, people and place. The traditional barn feature on page 7 is a great example of how funding is helping to support farming businesses, whilst enhancing a very visible element of Bowland's cultural and landscape heritage.

The local farming community is also being offered practical support through the Forest of Bowland Farmer Group in the form of training, networking and information sharing. All extremely relevant in this time of agricultural transition, and evident from the growing number of members.

Initiatives like the ambitious Brock and Calder Landscape Recovery Project, crucial peat restoration and a continued focus on Bowland's valuable hay meadows are delivering improvements to biodiversity, habitats, water quality

and flood resilience across the National Landscape and, importantly, engaging local communities and visitors at the same time.

The sustained recovery of hen harriers in recent years in Bowland is encouraging, and continued partnership working will be key to supporting the revival of this threatened species.

The wellbeing benefits of connecting with nature are well known, so I was particularly pleased to note the success of last summer's Access for All event at Gisburn Forest Hub. The two days were inspiring, thought provoking and immensely enjoyable by all accounts. Do take a look at the article on page 11 to find out all about it.

It's events like this, alongside improved infrastructure, all-terrain wheelchair hubs, tourism businesses accessibility guides and outreach projects like Connecting People & Nature and Days to Remember, which will help to put Bowland on the map as a welcoming place for everyone.

This aspiration underpins the national Nature Calling arts programme. As one

of six "hubs", the Forest of Bowland is working with writers, artists and local communities to encourage new audiences to connect with National Landscapes and foster a real sense of belonging. Exciting work has been happening this year, and the season of creativity and fun planned for summer 2025 is definitely one for the diary!

I've highlighted partnership working above but it absolutely bears mentioning again. None of the work described in this latest Annual Report would be possible without the commitment and co-operation of agencies, organisations, businesses, land managers and volunteers working together. Too numerous to mention individually, you'll get a good idea of the range of partners involved as you read on. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them all.

So, as we look back at our Diamond Anniversary year and begin work on reviewing the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Management Plan, it's good to know that, through vision and collaboration, we'll have many more reasons to celebrate going forward.

An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage

Highlights for 2024 – 25



View into the Hodder Valley from Waddington Fell

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme has now completed its fourth year. Defra has recently confirmed extension of the programme to end of March 2026. Over the 2024/25 financial year the FiPL team awarded just over £1.5 million to projects. Through the programme, farmers and land managers were supported to carry out projects encouraging nature recovery, mitigating the impacts of climate change, providing opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and supporting nature-friendly sustainable farm businesses. Successful projects so far can be viewed at: www.forestofbowland.com/farming-protected-landscapes



Contact: bowlandfipl@lancashire.gov.uk



Work with Access the Dales has continued, with all-terrain wheelchair hubs at Cobble Hey and Keasden Head due to open in the spring and summer. The National Landscape team carried out site assessments and risk assessments to help the FiPL team and farms to plan for their new arrivals. Gisburn Forest continues to be a busy site for a range of visitors and work has been carried out with Forestry England to provide accessible picnic benches along the popular Birch Hills Trail.

Contact: sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk



Access for All work has continued at both Brock Bottoms and Beacon Fell Country Park. Wyre Rivers Trust have stabilised the river bank at Brock Bottoms which, along with regrading and surfacing of the footpath, allows visitors with access needs to get closer to the river. Lancashire County Council Rights of Way team have also extended access further along the Brock Valley. At Beacon Fell, Lancashire Countryside Service have improved access to some of the more challenging areas on the long-established Fellside Trail.

Contact: sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk

The Wyre Rivers Trust have undertaken comprehensive monitoring of both fish populations and macroinvertebrates within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The primary objective of the WRT fisheries and macroinvertebrate monitoring programme is to monitor the health of the River Wyre catchment, by assessing population status and species distribution alongside ecological and habitat data. The data collected and biological indices produced will allow WRT to further understand pressures in the catchment, investigate the effectiveness of habitat improvement works and identify potential areas in need of improvement.



Contact: matt.carroll@wyreverstrust.org

An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage



Hen harriers are one of the most iconic but also most threatened bird species nesting in our upland moorland habitats, and the Bowland Fells have been their most important stronghold in England for many years. In 2024, the Bowland Fells held 36% of all successful nesting attempts in England, with 22 chicks fledged from 9 nests monitored by the RSPB on the United Utilities Estate. The sustained recovery of hen harriers in Bowland is a tribute to successful partnership working.

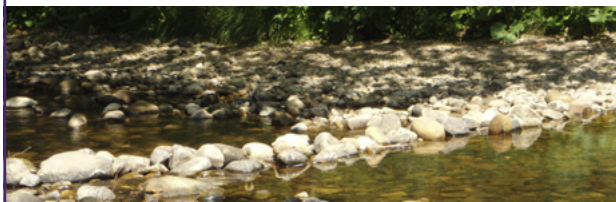
Contact: sonja.ludwig@rspb.org.uk

The Bowland Hay Time project works with farmers and landowners to increase the diversity of plants and wildlife in meadows, collecting seed from local donor sites, drying and re-distributing across restoration sites, with follow up plug planting. In 2024-2025 we worked with 13 landowners & managers to start another 20ha on their journey, funded through Farming in Protected Landscapes. Over 200 people learned about meadows through our events, including National Meadows Day. Botany training for meadow monitoring volunteers engaged a further 22 volunteers.



Contact: carol.edmondson@lancashire.gov.uk

Environment Agency are supporting Wyre Rivers Trust with the ambitious Brock & Calder Landscape Recovery Project. The Project will create, restore and manage a mosaic of wildlife-rich habitats across 4,081ha, improving the condition of protected sites, supporting biodiversity and helping to deliver net zero, whilst maintaining food production. The result will be a sustainable, resilient, complex and diverse ecosystem, supporting an enhanced variety of flora, fauna and fungi, delivering a wide range of ecosystem services underpinned by ambitious natural flood management, innovative regenerative farming and social impact programmes.



Contact: helen.dix@environment-agency.gov.uk



With the support of the Bleasdale Estate and a kind donation of flag stones from Lancashire County Council's Rights of Way team, a short section of flagged path was laid along the busy route between Feindsdale Head and Fairsnape Fell. Promoted route volunteers continue to monitor our routes throughout the year and are looking to assist planning with the promotion of a new package of meadow routes to complement the National Landscape team's work on Bowland's Champion Species.

Contact: sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk

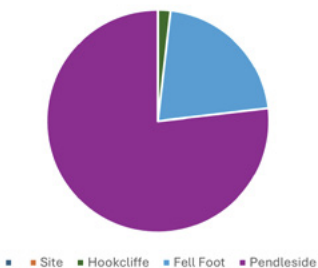


An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage



Thanks to a previous Lottery funded project, two people counters were sited in Bowland; one at Pendle Hill and one at Fell Foot, Parlick. The counters are now out of service, but the data proved useful to identify visitor patterns and numbers, with Pendle Hill being accessed over 300,000 times between July 2019 and March 2025. This not only shows the volume of visitors but also highlights the need for safe access to the countryside.

'16 July 2019 00:00 → 9 March 2025 23:00'



Contact: sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk



Environment Agency has been working with Ribble Rivers Trust for the past five years to plant woodlands which will benefit water. Ribble Rivers Trust have used Environment Agency funding, aimed at improving the health of our water bodies, to work with landowners and land managers, secure additional funding (e.g. Grow Back Greener) and sensitively plant riparian woodlands across the Ribble Catchment, including within the Forest of Bowland. The project will provide benefits for water quality, habitat and climate resilience.

Contact: helen.dix@environment-agency.gov.uk

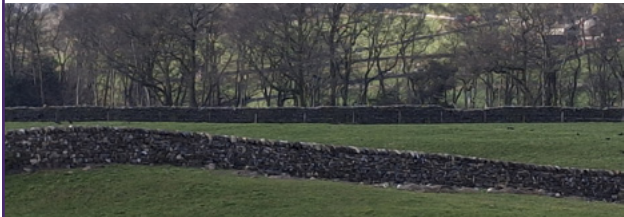


Peatland restoration work has continued throughout 2024-25, taking the total hectareage undertaken via the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (between December 2022 and April 2025) to 412ha. Working with landowners and project partners in Bowland and beyond, an extension to the grant scheme has been awarded to us for 2025-26, which will see a further 408ha undergo restoration work. The wider Lancashire Peat Partnership now has four full-time employees and one part-time position, working on delivery of peatland projects in Bowland and across the county.

Contact: dominic.hartley@lancashire.gov.uk

Grant applicants around Quernmore and the Conder Valley in Lancaster have been continuing to deliver work through National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative funding. This year, 670m of hedge creation and management took place, along with 198m of dry stone wall refurbishment.

The programme has also funded the construction and planting of ten tree cages, featuring fruit and nut varieties, at a site off Langthwaite road. Thanks are due to the Woodland Trust and Lancashire County Council's Treescapes team for partnership working.



Contact: sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage

New lease of life for farming and landscape assets

Traditional barns are significant heritage features within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has recognised the importance of investment to ensure their longevity.

The FiPL programme supported the structural restoration of five barns during financial year 2024-2025, to ensure their continued use as an important part of farm infrastructure. As well as traditional barn structural restorations, the FiPL programme supported projects to restore and replace doors and windows on nine traditional barns. This involved the replacement of 20 windows and nine small doors, alongside the restoration or replacement of six large barn doors. Works helped secure these traditional barns as key landscape features and has enabled them to continue to be used as part of the farm business for years to come.

One redundant, unusable in-field barn with a damaged roof was supported through FiPL. The farm began replacing the slate roof themselves, and FiPL then funded one barn door and two small doors to establish a weatherproof building, which could then become a functional space for the farm to utilise for storage and animal housing during the winter months. This has restored new life into a previously unused barn and will help to ensure that the structure does not deteriorate further beyond the point of revival.

All the restoration works used traditional techniques and existing fixtures and fittings where possible, which were replaced on a like-for-like basis to ensure any traditional features were retained or replicated. In addition to using sustainably sourced timber, the projects used local joiners to complete the work, supporting the local economy in the process.



Refurbished barn doors on a farm in Wyre

“ There are numerous benefits to restoring the traditional barns that sit within our landscape, but most of all it’s great to know that farmers can continue to make good agricultural use of them ”

Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Highlights for 2024 – 25



In summer 2024, we celebrated Bowland's new status as a National Landscape with a special photography competition during our 60th anniversary. "Life through a Lens" allowed photographers to capture the area's essence across three categories: people, nature, and place. Local businesses, part of the Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism Network, generously donated nine prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners. The public also voted for their favourite photos in the People's Choice category. Visit www.forestofbowland.com/bowland-life-through-lens-pr for details on the winners.



Contact: hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk



The Forest of Bowland Farmer Group now has more than 140 members and delivers information and training on relevant farming topics, which help farmers adjust during the ongoing agricultural transition. Over the past year the group has organised eight events, including training, workshops and farm walks and talks, which have been well attended throughout. Alongside these events, members have received quarterly newsletters and interim emails, with important events, news and reminders.

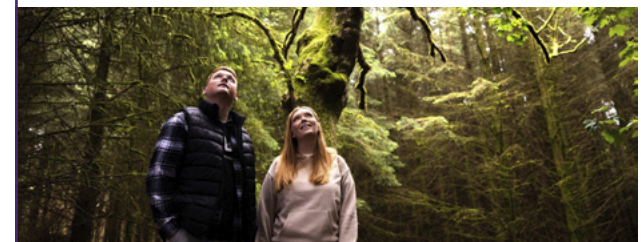
Contact: laura.simpson2@lancashire.gov.uk



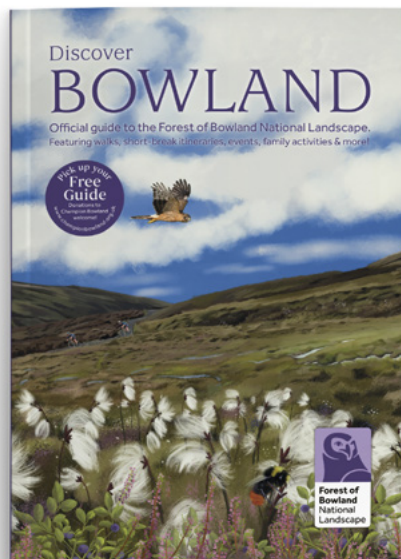
The Friends of Bowland have been planting trees (The Conservation Volunteers I Dig Trees scheme), pruning orchard trees, pulling balsam, sawing wood, gardening for various organisations and individual folk. We've welcomed new members and walked the byways of Bowland and a bit beyond in wind and rain and sometimes sunshine. We'll be doing the same this coming year - if you're interested then get in touch.

Contact: friendsofbowland@gmail.com

The National Landscape's 60th anniversary was promoted through Visit Lancashire's channels, featuring in the main digital Lancashire Summer Guide. VisitLancashire.com received over 920K page views (June – September), with annual page views for Forest of Bowland pages reaching 330K. Articles appeared in BBC Sky at Night magazine (51K readership) and in local media (potential reach of 2 million). A feature was also secured in Cycling Weekly (1.7million monthly readers). Marketing Lancashire supported the Access for All event, resulting in an article in the i-Paper with a potential reach of over 6 million readers.



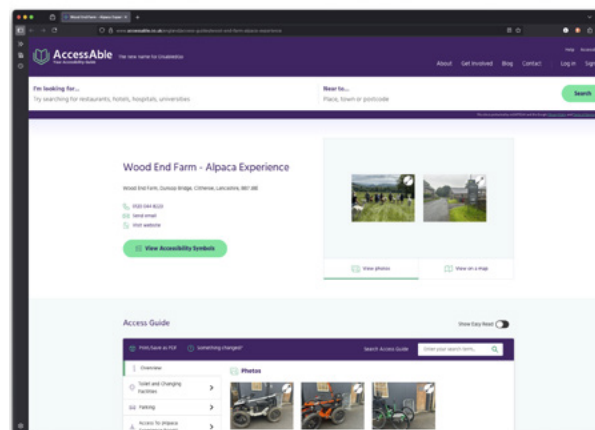
Contact: anna@marketinglancashire.com



The Discover Bowland 2025 guide was launched on February 26th at Eight at Gazegill, attended by over fifty members of the Bowland Sustainable Tourism Business network and partner organisations, many of whom support the guide's production through paid advertisements. Featuring Eco Escapes itineraries and Festival Bowland events, the guide also highlights the team's efforts and numerous initiatives, including nature recovery plans, curlew awards and accessibility improvements. Available at local tourist information centres and online at: www.forestofbowland.com/discover-bowland-guide



Contact: hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk



The "Accessible Guides" project has collaborated with the Sustainable Tourism Network to create detailed access guides and films. Produced by leading industry consultants – AccessAble – these resources provide comprehensive information to help visitors decide if a place meets individual accessibility needs, recognising that everyone's requirements are unique.

Accompanying the guides, we have been able to fund walk-through films to enhance the visitor experience and to provide welcoming spaces for all. To view the audits and films visit: www.forestofbowland.com/accessible-business-guides

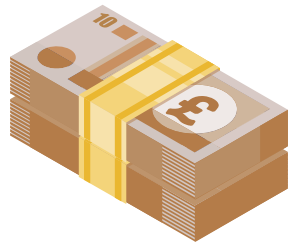


Contact: hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk



Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Since 2009 Champion Bowland Has Provided



£29,160
benefiting & supporting:

5 parish councils



17 school projects



4 churches



15 community organisations



5 community events from theatre to a photographic exhibition.



An archaeological dig for Roman remains



42 groups



making **81** farm visits involving **2,500** people



2 grants to the RSPB to support education.

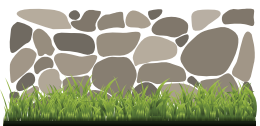


a heritage trail, a shelter and a bird hide.

6 projects



creating hay meadows.



stone walling training



a bee keeping group



the Bowland Scrapbook



The Wyre Coast & Countryside team patrolled and cared for popular sites and rights of way, removing litter, updating site information, carrying out habitat management and leading guided walks, with volunteers giving 6359 hours to support this important work.

The rangers and volunteers renovated a bird hide at Cobble Hey Farm as part of a Farming in Protected Landscapes project, in preparation for the hide to be used in connection with an access for all scheme, allowing all-terrain wheelchairs to go in and out.

Contact: countrysideservice@wyre.gov.uk

Champion Bowland, an independent charity managed by six voluntary trustees, assists community groups with projects to celebrate Bowland's conservation and heritage. Last year, grants included awards to Ribbles Valley Archaeology looking for Roman remains and to Sabden Parish Council with a new visitor information board.

It also runs the Discover Bowland website promoting a network of sustainable tourism providers to encourage people to help Keep Bowland Beautiful. In 2024, Discover Bowland launched a quarterly online newsletter to supporters across the UK. The Love Bowland Newsletter - www.discoverbowland.uk/love-bowland-newsletter



Contact: chair@championbowland.org.uk

Removing barriers: a celebration of what's possible

A free accessibility event held in Gisburn Forest in June proved to be a resounding success, with every spot on the two-day symposium quickly reserved.

Hosted by The Forest of Bowland National Landscape team and Access the Dales, the event was described as an 'exciting celebration of what's possible', and was designed to help organisations, businesses and individuals learn more about accessibility, share examples of best practice and engage in inclusive activities in a beautiful outdoor setting.

Activities included bushcraft skills, foraging, forest bathing, charcoal sketching and more, with workshop discussions focused on autism, dementia, mental health, inclusivity in the outdoors and tourism.

A variety of all-terrain wheelchairs were also available for the duration of the event for delegates to try out for themselves.

Organisers were delighted to welcome staff from Paralympics GB who were filming for their Everybody Moves programme during the event.

Sustainable Tourism Officer for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, Hetty Byrne, explained, 'We were joined not only by visitors from the local area, but also

from Kent, the Wye Valley, the Lake District, Northumberland, and even Fife and London.

'We were thrilled that the event was so well received and opened up some really important conversations around accessibility and inclusivity. We had a lot of interest, and we probably could have filled the places twice over – which shows the strong demand there is for inclusive activities and opportunities to learn more.'

'Delegates were keen to take part in a host of outdoor workshops while sharing ideas with each other and learning from our session leaders.'

'We know we've only scratched the surface of what's possible, and we hope that attendees will take lots of ideas away and be inspired to create their own events or implement what they've learned on a day-to-day basis.'

Sarah Dornan, Countryside Access Officer for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape said: 'Events like this provide a wonderful opportunity to come together and share experiences and best practice.'

The conference was free to attend, thanks to Defra's Removing barriers: Access for All funding and support from Lancashire County Council.

Information from the event, including a short film, is available at this link: www.forestofbowland.com/access-all-conference



Participants at the Access for All 2024 conference

“It was refreshing to be around like-minded individuals with a shared mission ... making the outdoors accessible for all”

Sarah Dornan/Hetty Byrne
Forest of Bowland National Landscape
sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk
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A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

Highlights for 2024 – 25



Enjoying Socks Reservoir picnic area



The Connecting People and Nature project, a partnership between the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and The Ernest Cook Trust, had a busy second year of delivery, focusing on school and community work in Blackburn and Preston. The project aims to support people to build a positive relationship with nature and to address the increasing numbers of people struggling with mental health and social isolation. Within the project, we work with schools, young people, families and adults from underserved/high need communities.

Contact: abbie.hampshire@lancashire.gov.uk

Festival Bowland celebrates the nature, landscape, culture and heritage of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. During the 2024 calendar year, 120 events received over 1300 attendances, with Wyre Coast & Countryside Service's short walks programme attracting encouraging numbers of participants. Bleasdale open gardens, the annual Bowland Lecture, Clarion House Whit walk and a guided walk around Claughton Estate all proved popular, as did summer and autumn dark skies events. The programme is possible thanks to the hard work of the event organisers, volunteers and landowners involved.



Contact: sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

As part of the national arts programme, Nature Calling, the National Landscape team presented new work by Manchester-based, OneDa, whose music blends hip-hop, drum and bass, afro-trap and afrobeats. OneDa conducted two creative writing workshops with members of the Pendle YES Hub and her "Connections" rap brings to life her visits to the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. Nature Calling is funded by the Arts Council and Defra and the Forest of Bowland team have worked with Lancaster Arts and Blaze Arts. OneDa: CONNECTIONS www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxe10MzSyPs



Contact: cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk



A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape



Feast Bowland week returned from September 21st to 27th, celebrating the Forest of Bowland's rich culinary heritage and local produce. The week featured guided walks, foraging, picnics, dark sky explorations and food tours, offering a unique chance for visitors to engage with Bowland's food culture. Sustainable tourism providers also hosted food tours, supper clubs and jam-making experiences. Over one hundred people attended and enjoyed the events. For more details, visit: www.forestofbowland.com/feast-bowland-2024

Contact: hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Days to Remember is a partnership project helping older people, including those living with dementia and those caring for them, to keep connected to nature. Thanks to additional Defra funding, between September and March, seven groups, involving over 80 participants, took part in activities which included a bird watching afternoon at Wyre Estuary Country Park; visits to Northwood and Wood End Farms; a sound bath in the yurt at Gisburn Forest and a nature session at Beacon Fell Country Park. Groups also enjoyed nature-inspired watercolour painting, ceramic pottery and printmaking workshops.



Contact: sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk



Walkers at the River Hodder at Whitewell

A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape



“I am making so many valuable connections within the community and seeing so much growth from the participants who engage in different nature connection activities.”

CPAN Community Engagement Officer, Abbie

Connecting people and nature

In August 2024, the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Unit welcomed its newest member of the team, Abbie Hampshire. Abbie came on board as a Community Engagement Officer with the Connecting People and Nature (CPAN) programme; a three-year project in partnership with The Ernest Cook Trust and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Abbie took an interesting path to join the National Landscape team. After working seven years in the leisure industry, Abbie was ready to step into a new role where she could learn and develop new skills and utilise her passion for both people and nature.

Initially, Abbie secured herself a job as an Outdoor Learning Trainee with The Ernest Cook Trust on the CPAN project, where she worked alongside the Outdoor Learning Officer and Community Engagement Officer for 12 months. During this time, she learnt many valuable skills and participated in training courses that increased her knowledge of, and experience in, the outdoors. Reflecting on these experiences, Abbie said, “The traineeship opened doors for me that I would have struggled to get into otherwise without having a high-level qualification like a degree. The training and experience I got to build during my traineeship was invaluable, and I am really grateful for the opportunities that have got me here today.”

Since her appointment as Community Engagement Officer, Abbie has been actively working with communities in Preston for year two of project delivery. Her role entails making connections with underserved communities and creating tailored sessions that will encourage others to foster a deeper connection to nature and experience the benefits which connecting with nature can have on our wellbeing. Opportunities which Abbie has enabled include tree and plant identification sessions, nature arts and crafts workshops, guided walks in the Forest of Bowland, foray walks, tree planting and learning about medicinal plants.

Abbie Hampshire
Community Engagement Officer
Forest of Bowland National Landscape
abbie.hampshire@lancashire.gov.uk

Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee & Financial Summary 2024-2025

Lancashire County Council
County Councillor M Maxwell-Scott
County Councillor G Mirfin
County Councillor S Turner

North Yorkshire County Council
County Councillor S Myers

Lancaster City Council
Councillor R Colbridge

Pendle Borough Council
Councillor B Newman

Preston City Council
Councillor J Iqbal

Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor Mrs R Elms

Wyre Borough Council
Councillor J Ibison

Lancashire Association of Local Councils
Cllr K Martin
(replaced by Cllr S Houghton)

Yorkshire Local Councils Association
Mr C Price

The Terms of Reference of the Joint Advisory Committee are available at www.forestofbowland.com/Joint-Advisory-Committee

Papers from meetings of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee can be [viewed here](#).

United Utilities
Mr P Wilson

Environment Agency
Ms H Dix

Natural England
Ms G Hinton

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Mr R Horner

Bowland Land Managers' Forum
Mr A Taylor

Ramblers Association
Mr D Kelly

Champion Bowland
Mr M Pugh

Friends of Bowland
Ms M Pilkington

Moorland Association
Mr N Kilgour

Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Mr T Burditt

Actual 2024/2025
(Out-turn prices) £'s

EXPENDITURE

Core Costs

Salaries, including travel and training	238,226.00
Out-based premises	26,000.00
Partnership costs	30,564.00
Central, Departmental & Tech. Support (LCC)	84,656.00
SUB TOTAL OF CORE COSTS	379,446.00

Non Core Costs

Projects	326,136.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	705,582.00

INCOME

Government Grants

Defra Grant (including uplifts)	518,051.38
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Contributions

United Utilities	7,140.00
Other project contributions	

County Councils

Lancashire	48,365.45
North Yorkshire	14,280.00

District Councils

Lancaster	7,140.00
Pendle	7,140.00
Preston	7,140.00
Ribble Valley	7,140.00
Wyre	7,140.00

TOTAL INCOME RECEIVED	623,536.83
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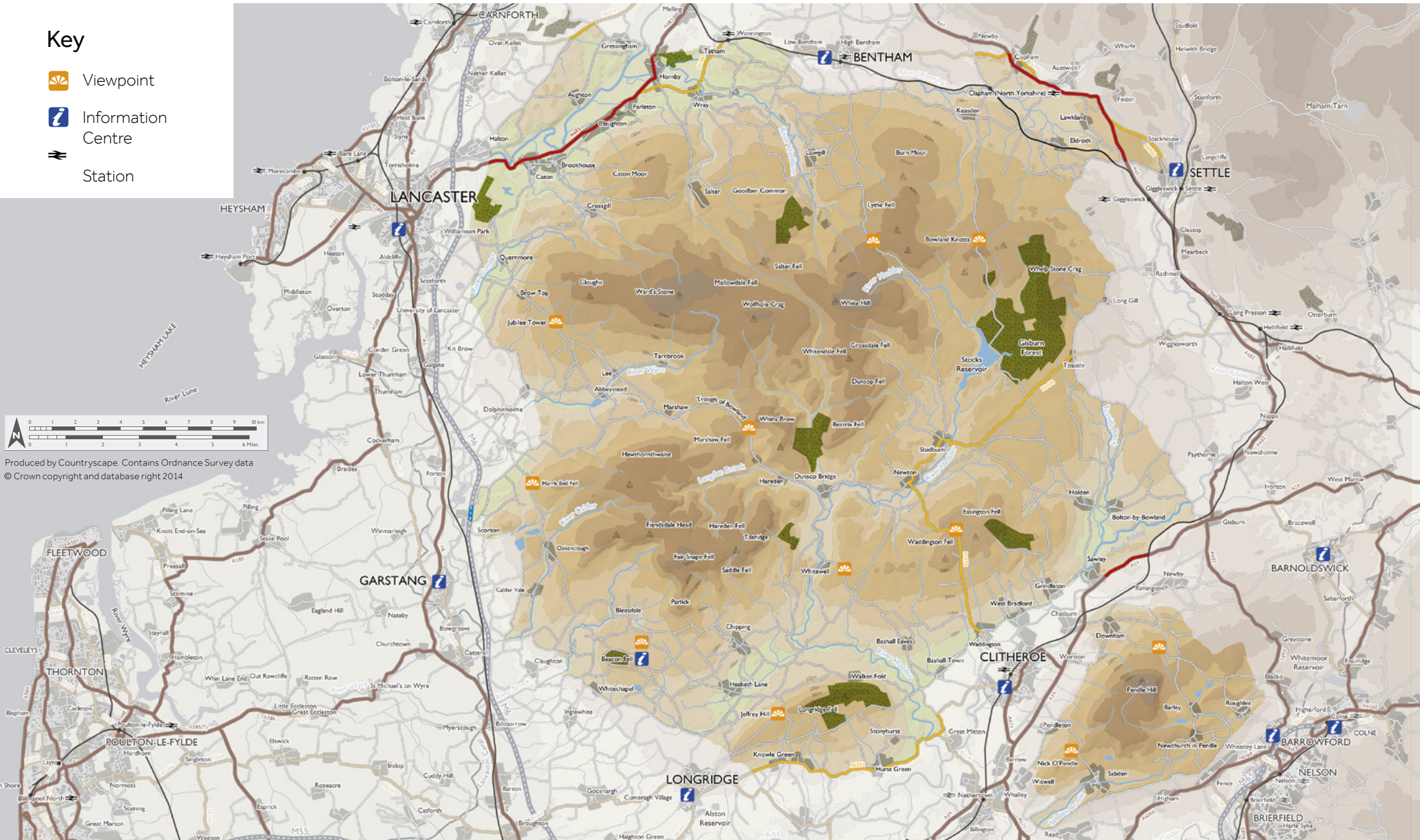
CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT COSTS (IN KIND)

Lancashire County Council	82,045.17
	705,582.00

Map of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape

Key

-  Viewpoint
-  Information Centre
-  Station





Forest of Bowland National Landscape

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Carol Edmondson

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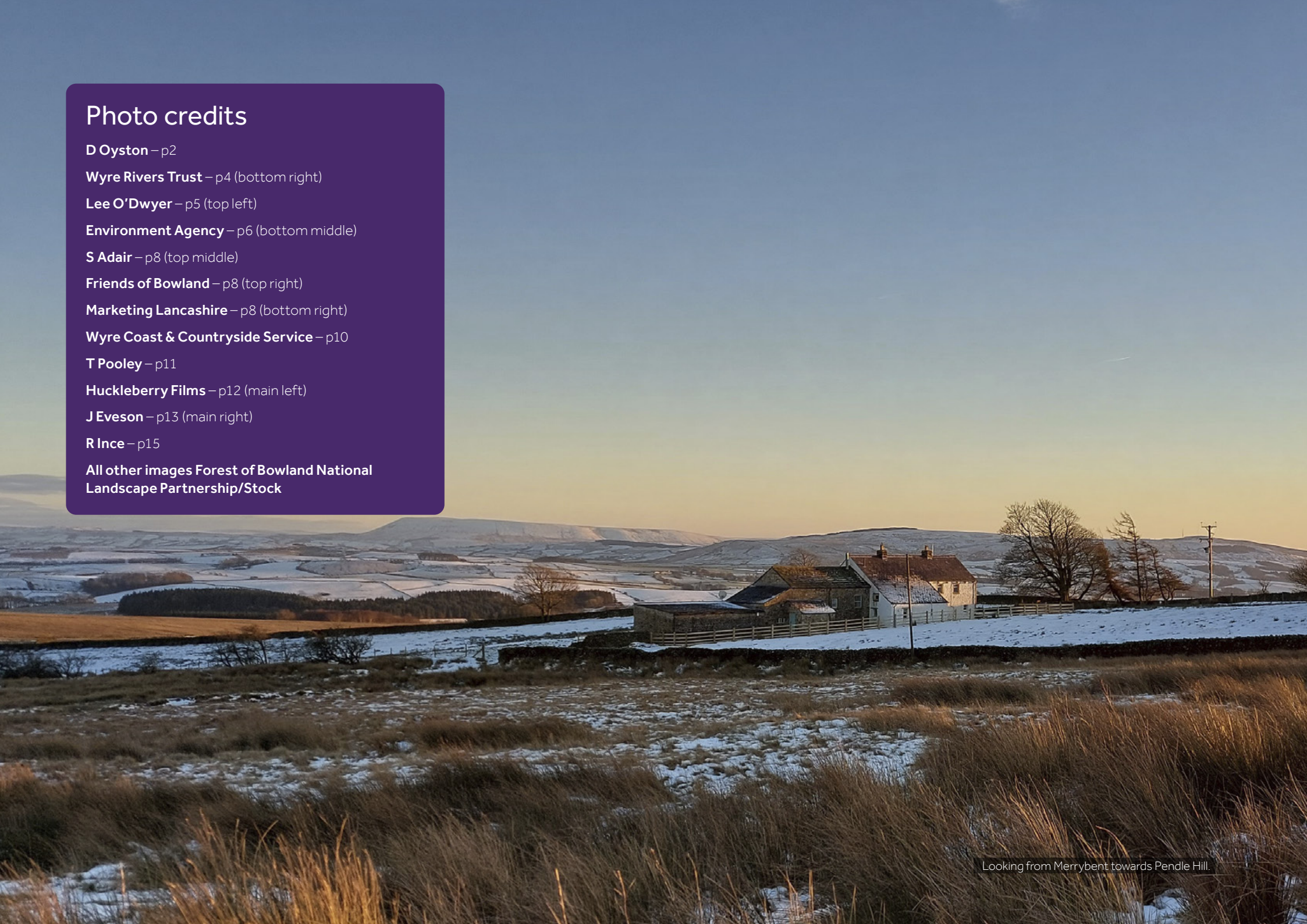
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Looking from Merrybent towards Pendle Hill.