Forest of Bowland National Landscape

State of the National Landscape 2024/25

Credit – Graham Cooper

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Forest of Bowland National Landscape celebrated its 60th anniversary as a protected landscape during 2024, and the start of the next statutory National Landscape Management Plan, the following report will help to provide a snapshot of the National Landscape allow reflection of the wide variety of work that goes on within its boundaries.

The indicators within the report have been chosen to reflect the wide range of work that takes place within the National Landscape in support of delivering the Management Plan. It is hoped that these indicators can be used to provide a baseline measure for future years and help inform future work to enhance and conserve the National Landscape. All indicators have been measured using the most recent data releases.

2. An Outstanding Landscape

2.1 Landscape Quality/Landscape Character Areas

A – Moorland Plateaux

B – Unenclosed Moorland Hills

C – Enclosed Moorland Hills

D – Moorland Fringe

E – Undulating Lowland Farmland

F – ULF with Wooded Brooks

G – ULF with Parkland

H – ULF with Settlement & industry

I – Wooded Rural Valleys

J – Valley Floodplain

K – Drumlin Field

L – Rolling Upland Farmland

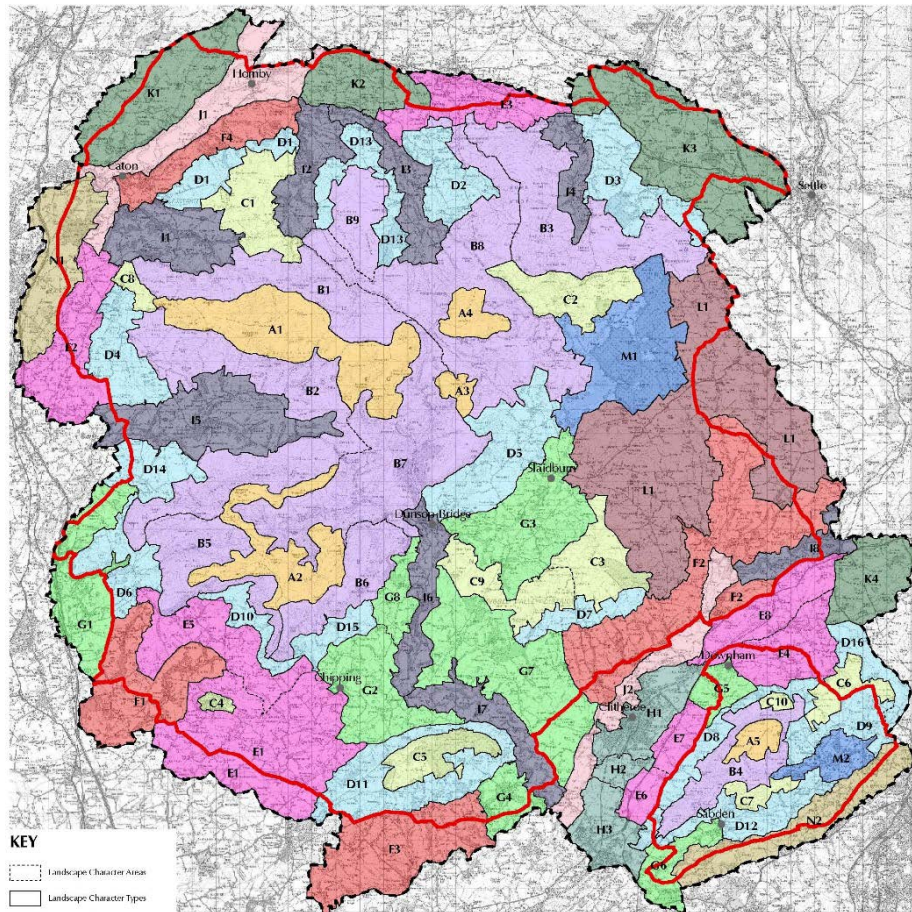M – Forestry & Reservoir

N – Farmed Ridges

Figure 1: Forest of Bowland AONB Landscape Character Assessment 2009 (Chris Blandford Associates)

The current Forest of Bowland landscape character assessment was carried out in. An updated version of the character assessment is being created and will be published in March 2025.

2.2 Condition of registered geological sites

Within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape there are 30 Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS) which are notified and monitored by Geo Lancashire. All LGS in Lancashire meet the more stringent requirement of regional importance and are classed as Geological Heritage Sites which have the same level of protection under planning policies as Biological Heritage Sites.

There are also 7 Geological SSSI's features within the National Landscape, which are designated and monitored by Natural England all of which are in a Favourable condition.

Source: Geo Lancahsire, Defra analysis: Number of geological and geomorphological SSSI unit features and % in favourable or recovering condition 2024.

2.3 Condition of heritage assets

Within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, English heritage state that there are 819 listed buildings.

- 13 Grade 1
- 37 Grade II*
- 769 Grade II

There are also 20 scheduled Monuments, and 2 Registers Parks and Gardens (Stonyhurst College is Grade II* and Gisburn Park is Grade II)

- 7.7% of Grade 1 listed buildings are at risk (Church of St Margaret, Main Street, Hornby)
- 5% of Scheduled Monuments are at risk (Bleasdale Circle enclosed Bronze age urnfield)

Source: Historic England 2024

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

Within the 2014 State of the AONB report, there was one heritage site that was considered to be 'At Risk' this was Ashnott lead mines near Newton in the Hodder Valley which is now longer considered at risk.

2.4 Condition of SSSIs

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are England's best wildlife sites, they support key habitats and species which may find it difficult to survive in the wider countryside. Most SSSIs are in private ownership and their management is a shared responsibility with Natural England which is the body responsible for designating SSSIs and for monitoring their condition using the following classifications.
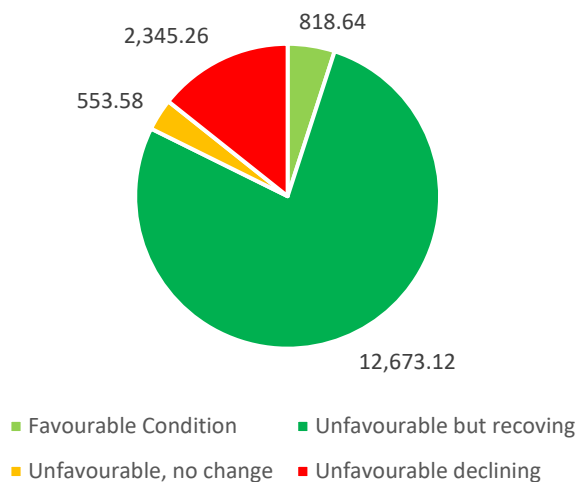
- Favourable
- Unfavourable but recovering
- Unfavourable, no change
- Unfavourable, declining.

The condition assessments carried out by Natural England on each of SSSI's, are only carried out periodically with some sites last assessed in 2009 and while other have been assessed as recently as 2024.

There are 22 SSSI's within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, covering an area of over 16,387ha. Of these:

- 5% are in a favourable condition.
- 77.3% are in an unfavourable but recovering condition.
- 82.3% are in a favourable or recovering condition.
- 3.4% are in an unfavourable, no change condition.
- 14.3% are in an unfavourable, declining condition.

Figure 2 - Condition of SSSI's within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape by area (Ha)

2,345.26

818.64

553.58

12,673.12

- Favourable Condition
- Unfavourable but recoving
- Unfavourable, no change
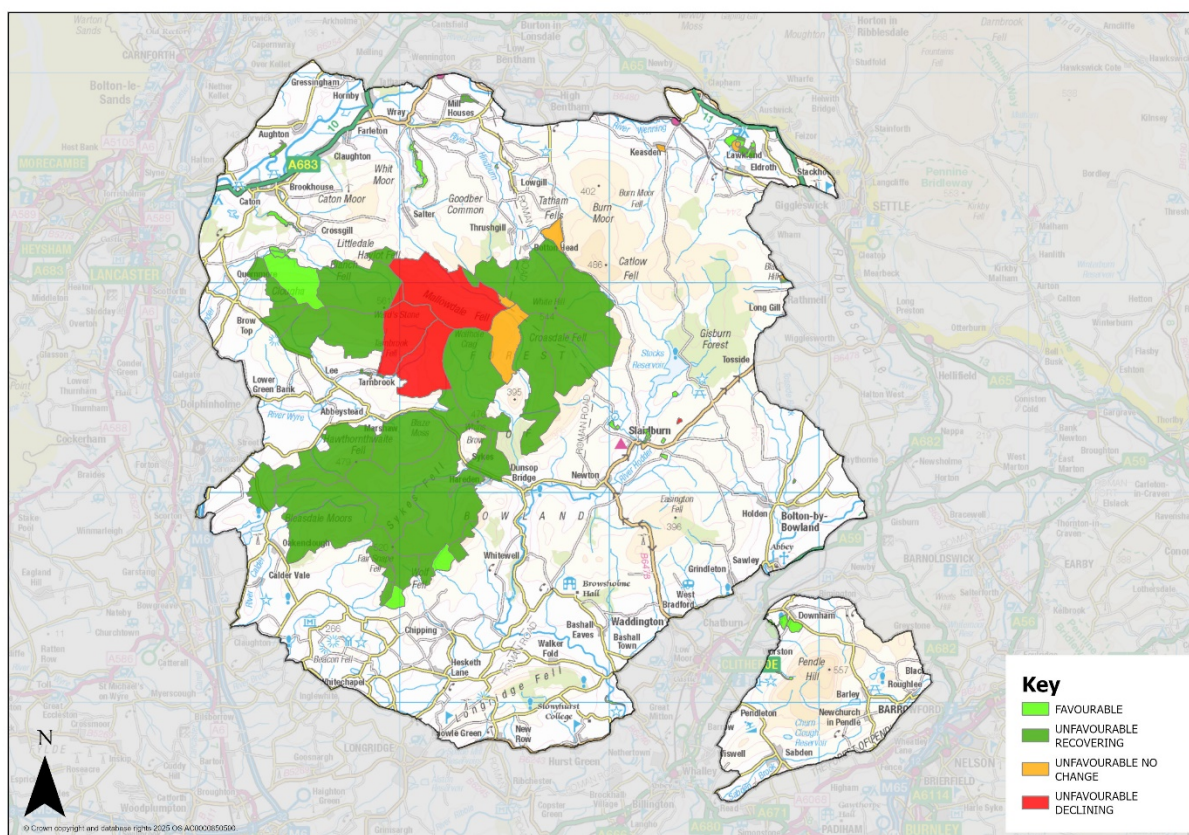- Unfavourable declining

Source: Natural England

Figure 3: Condition of SSSI units within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

Within the 2014 report:

- 6.7% of the SSSI sites were in a favourable condition

- 78.8% were in an unfavourable but recovering condition.

2.5 Land in environmental management

The Department for the Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) Agri-environment schemes provide funding to farmers and other land managers to deliver effective environmental management.

In a predominantly agricultural landscape like the Forest of Bowland, Countryside Stewardship, and its predecessor Environmental Stewardship have been the main tool for delivery of positive land management for wildlife. Over the last twenty years the schemes have been responsible for funding farmers and landowners to:

• restore and create many kilometres of hedgerow and dry-stone wall

• restore blanket bog

• reduce stocking levels

• restore and manage traditional hay meadows

• manage grassland for breeding wading birds

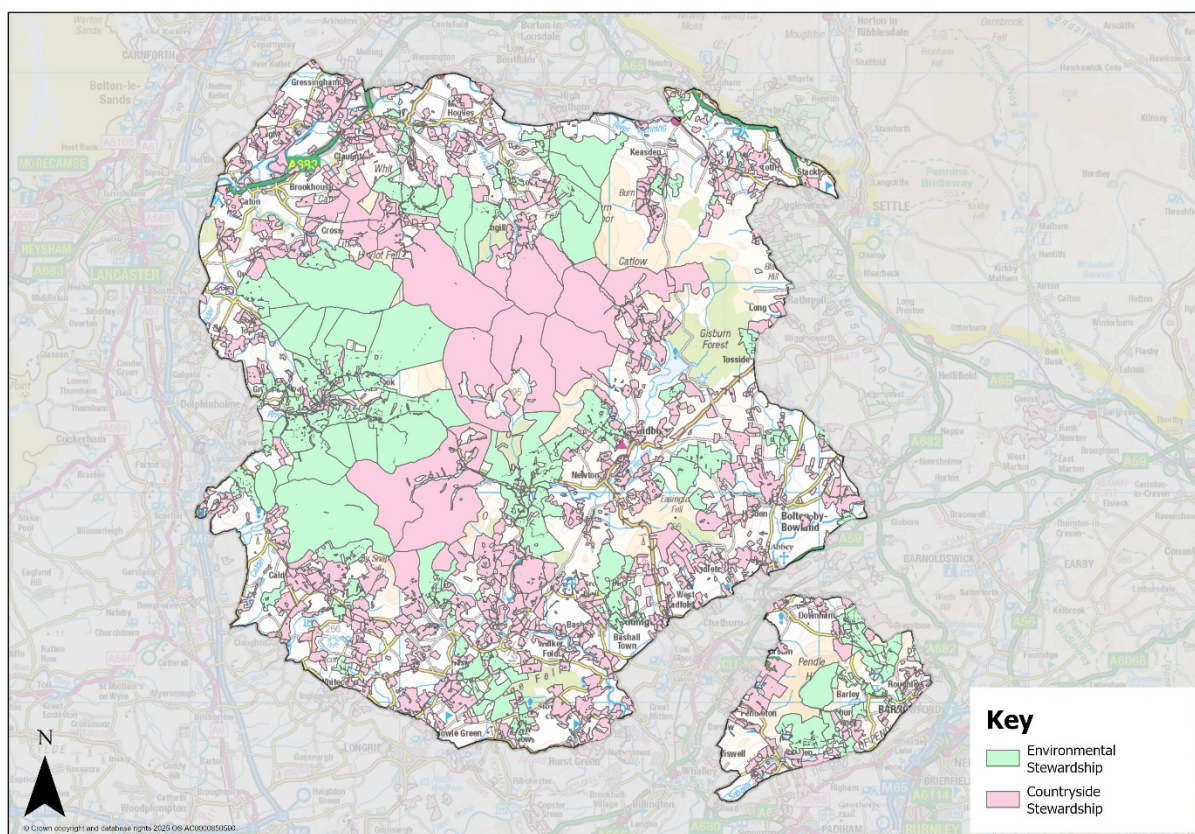
Figure 4: Land in Agri-environment schemes within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2024

The are currently 569 live agreements under the Countryside and Environmental Stewardship schemes across the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, these agreements cover a total of 38,000ha which equates to 47.1% of the National Landscape.

As part of the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) 151 projects have been support within Forest of Bowland National Landscape up to the end of March 2024. These projects have included wetland feasibility studies, boundary restoration, farm diversification, traditional building works, educational access improvements and regenerative agriculture infrastructure and equipment and cover a total area of 890.98ha

The National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative in the Forest of Bowland aims to ameliorate the visual impact of the electricity pylons which skirt the Quernmore and Conder Valley area of the National Landscape, through hedge creation and management, dry stone wall restoration and small-scale tree planting.

- 1385m hedge creation
- 3582m hedge management
- 204m dry stone wall restoration

Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2025

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

The 2014 report states that:

- There were 529 live stewardship agreements.

2.6 Peatland Restoration

Peatland or blanket bog is of international importance for its biodiversity and carbon storage. A number of Peatland restoration projects are taking place across the National Landscape, these include Great North Bog, Lancashire Peat Partnership, North of England Peat Project and Pennine Peat LIFE.

By the end of March 2025, 1403ha of peatland restoration will have been supported within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

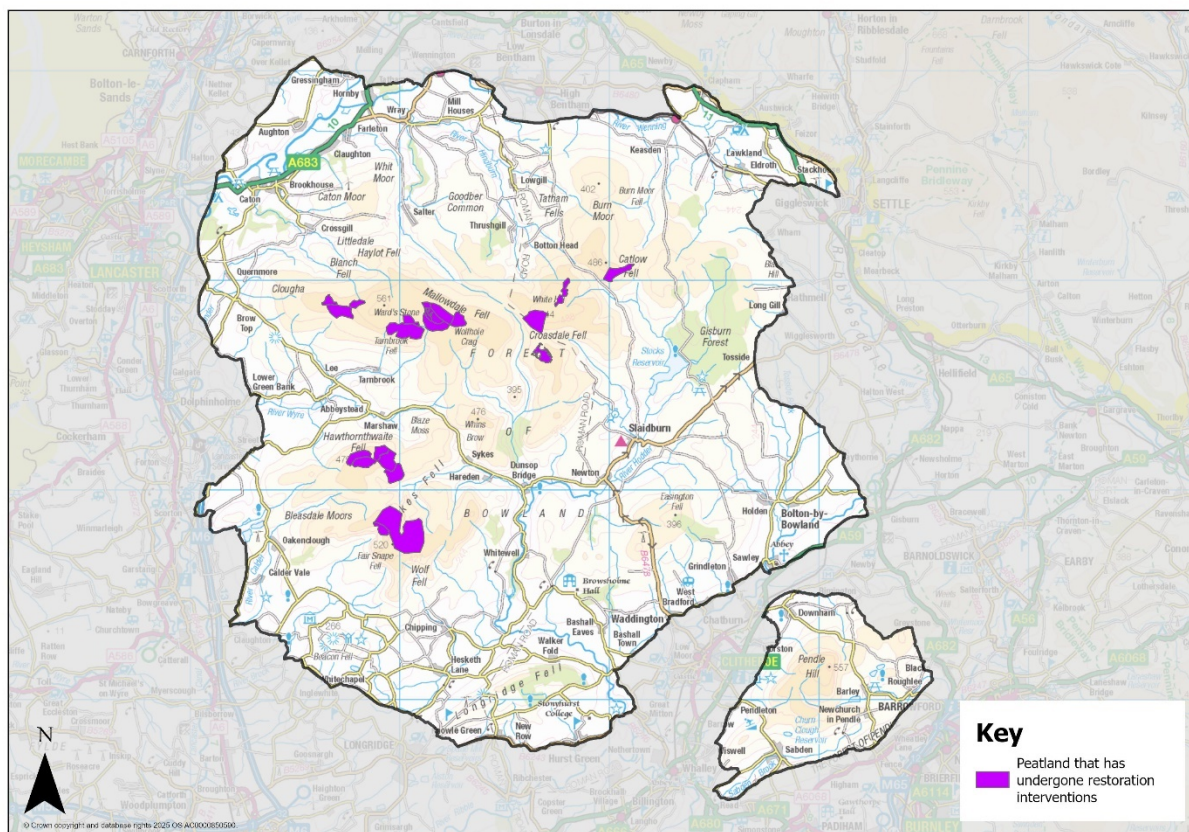**Source:** Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2025

Figure 5: Locations of Peatland Restoration work within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape by March 2025

2.7 Woodland creation and management

Based on the National Forest Inventory, using the 'assumed woodland' category. Which is the new planting data for the relevant year. Which is validated by Forest Research using a manual verification which takes out small areas, strip planting or low density planting unlikely to become woodland. Not all schemes share spatial data and so the assumed woodland layer is likely to be an underestimate. Shows that during 2023/24 within the Forest of Bowland:

- 164 new 'assumed woodlands' have been created
- These cover an area of 546.9ha

Source: Forestry Commission 2025

2.8 Woodlands in positive management

It is estimated that 7224ha of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is covered by woodland, this equates to 9% of the total area of the National Landscape. Broadleaf and coniferous woodlands account for 64% of the coverage.

- 61.8% of Woodland with the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is in a managed condition.

Source: Defra analysis: Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, Area of woodland in Protected Landscapes under sustainable management & Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes. 2024

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

The 2014 reported stated that:

- An estimated 6637ha of Woodland cover within the Forest of Bowland
- That equates to 8.2% of the total area
- 60% of woodland was in a managed condition

2.9 Water quality in rivers

Under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the ecological status of rivers and canals is classified to be either:

- High
- Good
- Moderate
- Poor
- Bad

The WFD aim is for all water bodies to be at good status.

- 46.2% WFD River WB's (river, canals, and surface water transfers) within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape have a 'high' or 'good' status.
- 26.4% WFD River WB'S (river, canals, and surface water transfers) within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape have a 'moderate' status.
- 22.6% WFD River WB'S (river, canals, and surface water transfers) within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape are not assessed.

Within the Forest of Bowland there are three Rivers Trusts working alongside the Environment Agency to improve water quality. These partnerships are all working to develop catchment-based management plans with stakeholders ranging from farmers and landowners to conservation and fishing groups.

Source: Defra analysis: Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes 2024

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

The 2014 report stated that in March 2014:

- 48.8% of river length had a 'good' Status
- 45.9% of river length had a 'moderate' status

2.10 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The table below shows the greenhouse gas emissions data for the Forest of Bowland for 2022 by sector both in KtCO2e and as a percentage of the total emissions, this is also shown as a comparison with the DESNZ national figures.

	Forest of Bowland		DESNZ National
	KtCO2e	%	%
Industry	16.7	5.3	16
Commercial	3.8	1.2	9
Public Sector	1.9	0.6	

Domestic	28.3	9.0	22
Transport	54.6	17.4	31
Land Use & Forestry	-22.2	-7.1	
Agriculture	224.3	71.5	13
Waste	6.3	2.0	
Total	313.7	100	

The percentage of greenhouse gas emissions for the Forest of Bowland for 2022 by sector as a percentage of the total emissions, are shown in the graph below. The largest sector was agriculture with over 71% of emissions for the National Landscape coming for this sector. This is followed by transport 17.4% and domestic at 9%.

Figure 3 - Percentage of Greenhouse Gas Emissions by sector 2022
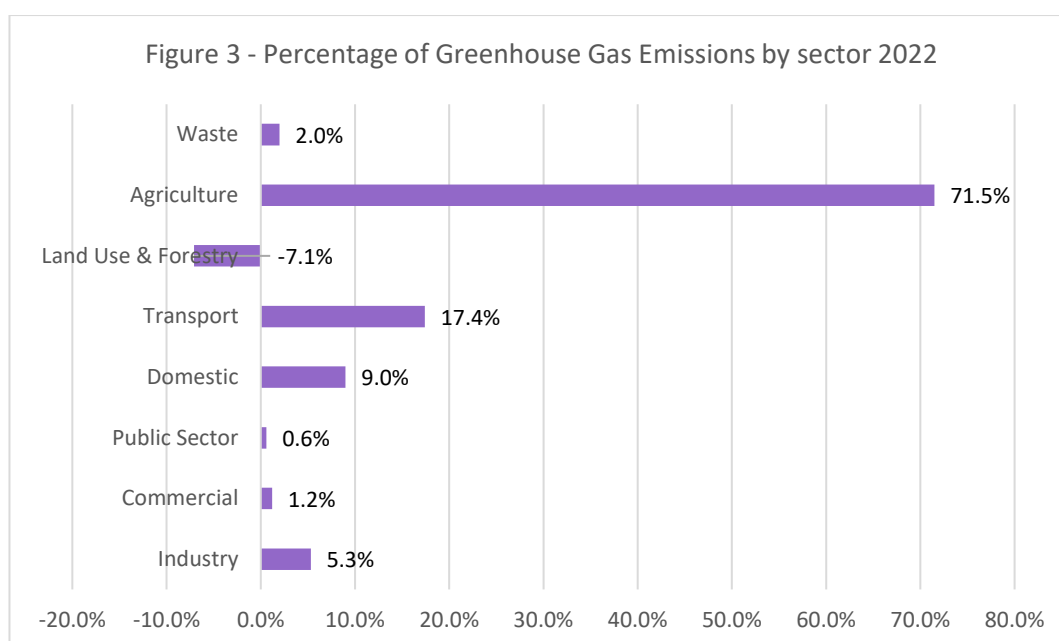
3. Resilient/Sustainable/Vibrant Rural Communities

3.1 Population
Based on data provided within the PLTOF data release, using information from the 2021 Census the population of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is 17,500

Source: Defra analysis; Census 2021 population estimates by sex

3.2 Average age
The average age for people living within the Forest of Bowland is 46, The national average for the National Parks is 48 and for the National Landscapes the average age is 47. The average age for England is 41.

Source: Defra analysis; Census 2021 population by single year of age

3.3 Ethnicity
A breakdown of the ethnicities for population living within the Forest of Bowland compared with other National Landscapes and England can be found in the table below.

	Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, or African	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	White	Other ethnic groups
Forest of Bowland	1%	0%	1%	98%	0%
National Landscapes	1%	0%	2%	96%	0%
England	10%	4%	3%	81%	2%

All values are rounded to the closest 1% so figures may not add up to 100%.

Source: Defra analysis; Census 2021 population by ethnic group

3.4 Deprivation
A breakdown of the proportion of the population living within each of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) deciles can be found in the table below.

Decile	Decile Description	Proportion of the population living within the decile
1	10% most deprived	0%
2	10% - 20%	0%
3	20% - 30%	0%
4	30% - 40%	0%
5	40% - 50%	8%
6	50% - 60%	19%
7	60% - 70%	29%
8	70% - 80%	19%
9	80% - 90%	24%
10	10% least deprived	1%

The average deprivation decile for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape in 7. There are a number of IMD lower super output areas within a 2km radius of the National Landscape boundary that are with the top 10% and top 20% most deprived nationally.

Source: Defra analysis; index of Multiple Deprivation, DLUHC 2024

3.5 Average earnings
The average earnings per calendar month (PCM) of the population living within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is £2,150, this is below the national landscape (£2,300), Protected Landscapes (£2,300) and England (£2,350) averages.

Source: Defra analysis; Earnings from PAYE RTI, ONS

3.6 Housing affordability
The house purchase affordability ratio for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is given as 9 (mean house price is 9x mean income) this is lower than the national average for Protected Landscapes ratio of 11 but higher than the England ratio of 8.

This data is provided as an affordability ration; the figures represent the mean house purchase price to the mean household gross annual income, as an example a £200,000 house and a £25,000 annual income would give an affordability ratio of 8. The lower the ration the more affordable.

Source: Defra analysis; House price statistics for small areas – ONS; Income estimates for small areas – ONS 2024

3.7 Farm size and type
With the majority of the land area of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape being used for agriculture, the way in which it is farmed is as important to its appearance and health.

The annual census of farming, carried out each June by Defra, provides useful data, which although outside of the National Landscape control, does help identify issues and trends which may be addressed by partners in the future. The latest data provided for the National Landscape area is from 2021. In 2021 there were 711 holdings located within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

Farm Size

In 2021 in the National Landscape

- 33.5% of Farms were under 20ha in size.
- 27.4% were over 100ha in size.

Farm Type

In 2021 in the National Landscape

- 11.8% of farm holdings were dairy farms.
- 62.4% were grazing livestock (LFA) holdings.

Source: DEFRA June Survey 2021

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

The 2014 report used figures from the 2010 DEFRA June survey:

- 678 farm holdings
- 27% of farms were under 20ha in size

- 27% were over 100ha
- 14.6% of farms were dairy farms

3.8 Business Activity

There are currently 114 members of the Sustainable Tourism Network, and a range of engagement activity took place during 2024:

- 34 businesses are linked to the Eco Escapes project and are paying members of Discover Bowland website.
- 38 business attended the launch of the 2024 Discover Bowland guide
- 19 businesses supported the 2024 Discover Bowland guide through paid advertisements
- 12 business have participated in Access Audits at their premises completed by Accessible
- 10 businesses supported the Forest of Bowland National Landscape annual photo competition through the donation of prizes.

Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2024/25

Credit – Graham Cooper

4. A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

4.1 Effective communication
Website visits

The Forest Bowland National Landscape website (Forest of Bowland National Landscape) has on average over 8,500 visit per month. The most frequented content during the last 12 months was:

- Walking (3,000 views per month)
- Towns & Villages (870 views per month)
- Map (808 views pre month)
- Visit landing page (614 per month)
- Family Fun (404 per month)

There have also been 4,343 Outdoor Active route downloads in the last 12 months via the website and 1,491 downloads directly from the Outdoor Active website and app.
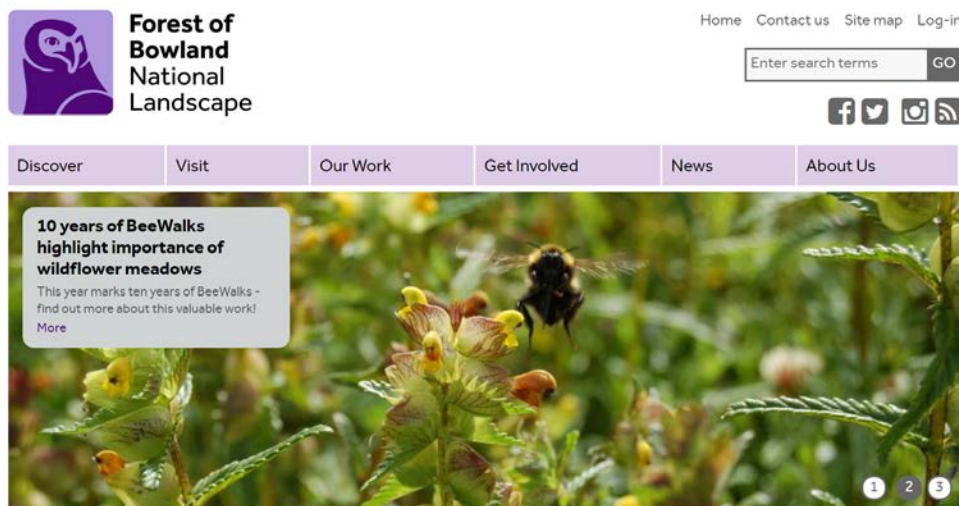
Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape November 2024

Social Media

Using social media, the Forest of Bowland has:

- 4977 followers on X (formerly Twitter)
- 7,700 followers on Facebook
- 1,895 Instagram followers

Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape November 2024

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

The 2014 report states that:

- There was on average 7000 visits to the Forest of Bowland website during 2013
- In May 2014 there was 1195 followers on Twitter and 201 followers on Facebook.
- 50-100 downloads of walks per month.

4.2 Audience development

A wide range of events are held across the National Landscape each year. Festival Bowland is a year-round calendar of events celebrating the nature, landscape, culture and heritage of the Landscape. Connecting People and Nature is a three-year collaboration between The Ernest Cook Trust, Lancashire South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust and the Forest of Bowland National Landscape funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

- 120 Festival Bowland events held in 2024 with 1,340 attendees.
- 132 Connecting People and Nature events held across 2023/24 with 1,455 attendees.
- An Eco Escapes Symposium on 21st – 22nd March 2023 had 85 delegates attend.
- An Access for All Celebration event on 25th – 26th June 2024 had 91 delegates attend on Day 1 108 delegates attend on Day 2.

Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2024/25

4.3 Access to the countryside

Providing good quality physical access to the countryside and promoting the infrastructure, is vital in connecting all people with the countryside so that they can explore, learn, and enjoy the National Landscape.

There are 84 promoted routes on the Forest of Bowland website.

- 63 Walking Routes (3 are Access for All routes)
- 8 Road Cycling
- 13 Mountain Biking

The Forest of Bowland National Landscape team commission two people counters one at Pendle Hill and one at Parlick Fell, during 2024 these counters recorded 91,213 people accessing these sites.

Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2024/25

Comparison with 2014 State of ANOB report

In 2014 there were:

- 65 promoted routes with the Forest of Bowland.

4.4 Volunteering and skills development

Providing opportunities for volunteering enables the National Landscape partnership to deliver more activity on the ground, whilst also providing positive personal experiences, and sometimes career development for individuals.

Much of the volunteering activity delivered in the National Landscape is through partner organisations such as Friends of Bowland, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the Rivers Trusts, RSPB, and Wyre Coast & Countryside Service.

- 561 volunteer days as part of the Farming in Protected Landscapes across 2023/24.
- 26 people trained as part of the Traditional Boundaries programme during 2023/24.
- 7 people trained as part of the Connecting People and Nature Community Leaders course in 2023/24.
- 10 people trained in Dry Stone Walling as part of the Forest of Bowland Farmer Group during 2023/24.

- 8 people trained in earthworm sampling techniques as part of the Bowland Hay Time project in 2023/24.

Source: Forest of Bowland National Landscape 2024/25

For more information, please contact the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Team:

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