



Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 20th April, 2023 at 2.00 pm in Bleasdale Parish Hall, off Bleasdale Lane, Preston PR3 1UZ

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Shaun Turner, Lancashire County Council

Committee Members

County Councillor Matthew Maxwell-Scott, Lancashire County Council

Councillor Joyce Pritchard, Lancaster City Council

Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Council

Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Helen Dix, Environment Agency

Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum

Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland

David Kelly, Ramblers Association

Barrie Tyrer, Friends of Bowland

Sonja Ludwig, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

James Cooper, Natural England

Neil Kilgour, Moorland Association

Peter Wilson, United Utilities

Officers

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council

Alex Shutt, Ribble Valley Borough Council

Liz Small, North Yorkshire Council

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Team, Lancashire County Council

Sam Gorton, Legal and Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council

Sarah Robinson, Forest of Bowland AONB Team, Lancashire County Council

Emily Brazington, Forest of Bowland AONB Team, Lancashire County Council

Graham Nuttall, Wyre Borough Council

Apologies

County Councillor Ged Mirfin, Lancashire County Council

County Councillor Simon Myers, North Yorkshire Council
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Elms, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Cllr Anna Hindle, Preston City Council
David Hewitt, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Lucy Henwood, Preston City Council
Andrew Laycock, North Yorkshire Council
Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB Team, Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

All were welcomed to the meeting, introductions made, and apologies presented on behalf of the Committee members and officers as detailed:

The following new members were welcomed:

- James Cooper, Natural England

Alternatives for the meeting were:

Peter Wilson for Matthew Upton, United Utilities
Barrie Tyrer for Marilyn Pilkington, Friends of Bowland

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosures of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record following the amendment at Item 2 – Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair, which should be:

"In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair took the meeting".

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB, Lancashire County Council provided an update on the Haweswater Aqueduct Resilience Programme (HARP) and the progress that has been made by the Planning Authorities, Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council. The Newton application was considered by Ribble Valley Borough Council's Planning Committee on 16 March 2023 to consider the application proposing works for and use of replacement section of aqueduct, including earthworks and ancillary infrastructure including: New valve house buildings within fenced compounds with permanent vehicular access provision. With the installation of tunnel shafts, open cut connection areas at either end of the replacement section within temporary construction compounds, to include side accesses, storage areas, plant and machinery, and drainage infrastructure. In addition, a temporary haul route with bridge over the River Ribble (as one of two options for vehicular access to the temporary construction compound); a series of local highway works together with a temporary satellite park and ride facility and a vehicle marshalling area. The approval is subject to the planning conditions detailed in the [minutes](#) and the Board noted that the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Team

will be consulted over the conditions surrounding the ecology and landscaping elements of the proposal. The Board were informed that the MP for Ribble Valley, Nigel Evans and Newton Parish Council have requested that the decision be "called-in" by the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling-Up Housing and Communities due to concerns that some of the assessments carried out by Ribble Valley Borough Council had not addressed issues around the major development in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Further details were awaited with regards to the request for 'call-in'.

The Waddington Fell Quarry application for the variation of condition 2 of planning permission 03/06/0095, to allow mineral working to continue until 31 December 2023, and final restoration to be completed by 31 December 2024 was considered by Lancashire County Council's Development Control Committee on 1 March 2023 and the Board noted that permission had been granted. Further details of the conditions granted can be found in the [minutes](#).

With regards to the removal of trees and hedgerows relating to the HARP proposals, the Committee were informed that a meeting had taken place between Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB, Lancashire County Council, United Utilities Planning Team, the Ecological Advisor and the Landscape Advisor, Lancashire County Council to look at where the trees and hedgerows had been identified for removal. United Utilities had identified the trees on a worst-case scenario basis and that they anticipated that fewer trees and hedgerows would need to be removed once more detailed plans at the 'design and build' stage.

Resolved: That the Committee noted the updated provided.

4. Partner Updates

Wyre Borough Council

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council shared an update with the Board which would be circulated following the meeting. The report included:

- The Councils planning and public realm and community teams embarked upon a combined Sports Pitch Strategy and Public Open Space Audit and the development of Green Infrastructure Audit and Strategy working with contractor KPMG and leading to consultation with sports clubs and parish councils. Further work is planned for 2023/24 with key stakeholders.
- The Wyre Coast and Countryside team continue to patrol and care for popular picnic areas, concessionary paths, public rights of ways and access areas removing litter, fly-tipping and updating site information and habitat management.
- Tree planting with the Wyre Rivers Trust team on the Calder catchment.
- Leaky dams in the upper Wyre catchment.
- Helping the Garstang Millennium Greet Trust to improve and manage a gateway site to Bowland.
- Working with Nether Wyresdale Parish Council on Scorton Millennium Way.
- Concessionary access improvement at Holme Wood and improvements to gates on Public Rights of Way (ProW) around Grizedale Valley.

- Brock Path repair and invasive management.
- Farming In Protected Landscapes (FiPL)
- Coast and Countryside team and volunteers and staff have worked in partnership with the Forest of Bowland Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) team and local farmers to develop 2 projects – one in Bleasdale (near completion) and one at Cobble Hey (in development). Both projects include improving access to nature amongst other objectives.
- Traditional boundaries at Cobble Hey.
- Wyre Great Outdoors in Festival Bowland - In spring 2022 after a winter of more COVID restrictions people were able to take part in activities in an unrestricted way. The first Garstang Well-being Walks were launched in May in partnership with the Ramblers Association as a weekly walk, suitable for all in the Wyre Great Outdoors. A big commitment to deliver weekly walks. Activity attendance records in 2022/23 show the scheme has enabled 329 attendances on guided walks and conservation days and a further 303 attendances on the Garstang Walking Festival programme – total for 2022/23 being 632.
- The Friends of Garstang Walking Festival Garstang Walking Festival which went to back to its full 9-day programme in Spring. Which was well attended with the Claughton Estate walk proving to be very popular along with upland fell walks. A new walk for the programme was a wildlife walk looking at the wildlife of the River Brock with the Wyre Rangers and Wyre Rivers Trust here in Bleasdale where participants had great views of Brown Hares and Lapwing as well as seeing freshwater invertebrates from the river and ponds on the farm.

Resolved: Sam Gorton, Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council would circulate the report from Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council to the Committee.

Ramblers Association

David Kelly, Ramblers Association reported an issue at the Cairn section to the North East of Fair Snape Fell, Grid Ref SD59714731 where there is deep mud near the kissing gate. Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland, AONB Team, commented that there is potential to build access improvements into future funding bids for peatland restoration.

Resolved: That David Kelly, Ramblers Association had already sent details of the issue to Sarah Dornan, Forest of Bowland, AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council and that Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland, AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council would discuss this further with Sarah.

Environment Agency (EA)

Helen Dix, Environment Agency (EA) reported that they were working with United Utilities and Ribble Rivers Trust on the wastewater site which is requiring improvements at Chipping Wastewater Treatment Works specifically looking at catchment solutions and how to reduce phosphate inputs from other sources. Ribble Rivers Trust have now started to talk to farmers to look at opportunities such as buffer strips that could be funded by United Utilities and the Environment Agency. They are rolling out an improvement

programme as part of a regulatory requirement to ensure that utility companies are delivering on reducing phosphate across the catchment.

Natural England

James Cooper, Natural England informed the Committee that there was a Species Recovery Capital Grant Scheme is currently open for applications and is for individual organisations, businesses and partnerships to apply to Natural England for funding of between £50,000 and £500,000 for projects to develop, enhance and conserve assets for the benefit of a particular species. The closing date for applications is mid-May 2023. Further information will be shared with the Committee following the meeting.

Resolved: That James Cooper, Natural England forward information to Sam Gorton, Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council to share with the Committee on the Species Recovery Capital Grant Scheme.

Champion Bowland

Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland reminded the Committee that as the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership had come to an end, that some remaining monies from various donations received will now be transferred to Champion Bowland who will maintain a 'Legacy Fund' for the Pendle Hill area, and this will become effective in May 2023.

Friends of Bowland

Barrie Tyrer, Friends of Bowland updated the Committee explain how the Friends arrange one task and one walking activity per month, with some months having more activities. They also carry out conservation work for clients and it is anticipated that further work will be requested by United Utilities and the Woodland Trust on sites within the AONB. They also requested to be kept informed of any new conservation sites and any potential clients Committee members may be aware of.

United Utilities

Peter Wilson, United Utilities reported that United Utilities had been working with the AONB Team on peatland restoration and that approximately 40-50 hectares had been restored on farms at Lamb Hill. A further project delivered in the AONB had commenced six months previously in conjunction with Wyre Rivers Trust, from the Water Industry's Green Recovery funding, which is a challenge to industry to bring forward plans for 'green' project delivery originally planned for the next AMP period. Funding for the next two years will enable work with farms in the Wyre catchment area to deliver projects that will benefit the water environment, in particular water quality and biodiversity.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Sonja Ludwig, RSPB provided the following update:

Support for breeding farmland waders

During the winter we have worked with the River Ribble and Wyre Trusts to ensure selection of suitable tree planting areas to avoid negative impacts on breeding waders.

The results of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) -funded project on testing a 'gull-proof' sheep feeder have now been written up, showing that the use of these feeders significantly reduced gull numbers in the trial fields. The final report will be distributed shortly.

We undertook a successful bid to the Bowland AONB for another Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funded project aimed at monitoring and improving wader productivity. The additional equipment (25 electric fence kits, 30 nest cameras, and four thermal imagers) will be used to protect breeding waders from predation and to monitor wader productivity and causes of nesting failure.

During the upcoming breeding season, we are planning to conduct breeding wader surveys on 67 farms across Bowland. This will also be the third year of curlew productivity surveys.

Bird of prey monitoring

During the winter months 2022-23, we monitored several hen harrier winter roosts across Bowland, some on private estates with kind permission of the estate. On three dates in October, December and February, we participated in the coordinated roost watches organised by the Northern England Raptor Forum across the English Uplands. The data from our satellite-tagged hen harriers suggest that the birds overwintering in Bowland are not necessarily the same birds that breed here, as most of our tagged birds overwintered elsewhere.

During the upcoming breeding season, we will monitor upland breeding raptors on the United Utilities estate in partnership with United Utilities and their shooting and farming tenants.

North Yorkshire Council

Liz Small, North Yorkshire Council provided an update on the recent Local Government Re-organisation where eight Councils including North Yorkshire County Council and Craven District became part of the new North Yorkshire Council unitary authority on 1 April 2023. Contacts and the budget for the Forest of Bowland AONB currently remain the same whilst the Council is undergoing restructuring. North Yorkshire Council is the provisional responsible Authority for the local nature recovery staff until work commences on the restructure. A meeting with Defra is scheduled for 9 May 2023 to discuss funding. £22 million is also being made available from the Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund and applications are also being received for Net Zero funding.

Moorland Association

Neil Kilgour, Moorland Association updated on joint work with the AONB team on Abbeystead estate on the peatland restoration and hay meadow restoration work, which is starting to gain traction.

Work supported with private finance with the Wyre Rivers Trust is also underway, and as well as work on several estate farms with the AONB on Farming in Protected Landscapes. There is also an interest in waders and there was a recent visit from the Curlew Recovery Project. Neil explained that for the last five years, on the Estate there were 22 curlew breeding pairs per km², however, fledgling success has reduced by approximately 50% over the last four years, which could be linked to a growing gull population.

Last year saw around 1800 children visit the Estate on school visits as part of the 'Learn Moor' initiative. This was a record number for the Estate and had been facilitated by a number of organisations, however the Country Trust and the Countryside Learning had been particularly outstanding in their efforts.

Discussions and work have also been taking place with the Rivers Trust on soil and how it interacts with water quality and water moving through the landscape, as well as leaky dams and looking at when the water hits the ground before it gets into a water course and how that is managed.

Neil also noted that wildfires continue to be a big concern for the Estate due to a build-up of mature moorland vegetation as a fuel, and it is felt that it is only a matter of time before a disaster occurs and the peatland restoration could be damaged. Therefore, work continues on educating the public and the Committee discussed how it could support this concern. It was noted that during COVID the AONB had carried out a lot of work around disseminating information around the Countryside Code as well as a local version which included, "No Fires and No BBQs", however there are no resources to police this and people can ignore these signs. The Committee felt that the best plan is to continue to educate and encourage visitors to the areas, advising not to have fires/BBQs and to revisit the work that was done in COVID on the Countryside Code and circulate the information again.

Resolved: That the AONB Unit will contact landowners, Parish Councils, farmers, to ask if they want more copies of the Countryside Code and to display in the right places. Also, to offer the information to the Sustainable Tourism businesses.

Following all the updates from Partners, it was:

Resolved: That the Committee noted the updates.

5. Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

Sarah Robinson, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council provided an update on the programme which has been running

from July 2021 and will end in March 2025 and forms part of the Defra post-Brexit Agricultural Transition Plan. The Committee received a detailed presentation which was circulated after the meeting and contained further information on the following:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
- Who can apply?
- Climate outcomes
- Climate examples
- Nature outcomes
- Nature examples
- People outcomes
- People examples
- Place outcomes
- Place examples
- How applications are assessed
- Local Assessment panel
- Funding allocation
- Enquiries, applications and agreements
- FiPL Programme Team

The Committee noted that funding allocation for 2023-24 is £720,766 and a further £500,000 has also been requested as 97% of the original amount is already allocated and Defra has asked if further funding could be used. Funding allocation for 2024-25 is awaited.

In terms of enquiring, applications and agreements the Committee were informed that there had been:

221 enquiries
181 farms contacted
100 applications received
95 agreements in place
20 projects completed
75 project still live

There is currently a waiting list of 40 farms that still need contacting with only £20,000 remaining for this current year as well as the pending decision from Defra re further funding.

The Committee noted that there was a webpage for Farming in Protected Landscapes and further information can be found here: [Farming in Protected Landscapes in the Forest of Bowland | Forest of Bowland AONB](#).

A huge thanks was noted to the Team for their work on Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme and this was echoed other Committee members around the table.

Resolved: i) That the Committee noted the update.

- ii) That a list of successful projects be circulated to the Committee following the meeting by Sam Gorton, Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council.

6. AONB Partnership Budget 2023/2024

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council, presented the report as set out in the agenda papers.

The report outlined the AONB Partnership Budget (Appendix A, column 3) for 2023-24 which takes account of Defra's AONB grant funding settlement, confirmation of which was received in March 2023.

The Defra AONB funding settlement for 2023-24 is £259,075, which represents a 'flat cash' rollover settlement of that received for 2023-24.

The Committee were asked to note a minor adjustment to 'Salaries, NI and Superannuation' following consultation with Lancashire County Council's Finance team on staff cost forecasts. It should also be noted that local government pay awards for 2023-24 have yet to be agreed and this is likely to further increase these costs. This will be reported at the Committee meeting in October 2023.

The Committee also noted that when the AONB Unit staffing, out-based premises and partnership costs are taken into account, the remaining funds allow for an annual 'Projects' programme to the value of £72,610 to assist in delivery of the AONB Management Plan. Wherever possible, the AONB Unit will seek to use this 'Projects' programme allocation to lever in additional external funding (e.g. National Lottery Heritage Fund, Peatland Restoration Grant Scheme, private sector and landowner contributions) to deliver more. Additional funding secured will be reported at the Committee meeting in October 2023.

Resolved: That the Committee noted the 2023-24 revised estimates and offered comments.

7. AONB Unit Activity Report (Oct 2022 - April 2023)

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the AONB Team Report that had been tabled at the meeting which also included the Forest of Bowland's AONB Sustainable Tourism Symposium report. Both reports would be circulated to Committee members following the meeting.

It was noted that the National Association had been funded by Defra to develop a branding strategy to help co-ordinate branding, logos and communications for the National Association and AONB network under the new designation title, National Landscapes.

The Committee were requested to contact officers as detailed in the report, if they had any questions/comments, requests for more information outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

- i) That the report be noted.
- ii) That a report on the branding strategy from the National Association be brought to the next Joint Advisory Committee in October 2023.

8. Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council referred to the report circulated with the agenda pack which was the scheme evaluation summary.

Any queries or further information required, please contact the Forest of Bowland, AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. Three Counties: Lune Valley

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland, AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the report which was circulated with the agenda on the proposed landscape heritage programme, titled "Three Counties: Lune Valley", focussed on the middle and lower reaches of the Lune catchment.

The Committee noted the implications for the AONB Partnership and noted that it is anticipated that such a commitment could be accommodated within the annual AONB 'Projects' programme available to the AONB Partnership.

It was requested that the Greta and Wenning boundaries also be considered.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- i) Noted the report and offered comments.
- ii) Offered approval (if acceptable) for the AONB Manager to work with project partners to jointly submit a Stage 1 bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund by early August 2023.
- iii) Further updates will be brought to subsequent meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee.

10. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

11. Date of Next Meeting

19 October 2023 in Pendle district, venue to be confirmed.

18 April 2024 in Preston district, venue to be confirmed.

Samantha Gorton
Democratic Services

Lancashire County Council
County Hall

Preston