

AONB Team Report to JAC

April 2020 – October 2020

An outstanding landscape of natural and cultural heritage

Peatland Restoration

The areas of the Bowland fells where our peat restoration work is taking place is also home to a range of breeding bird species, including sky lark, meadow pipits, curlew, snipe, lesser black backed gulls, merlin, peregrines and hen harriers. In order to prevent disturbance to these and any other nesting birds, peat restoration work only happens outside of the breeding season, and so during the summer months, no work happens on the ground.

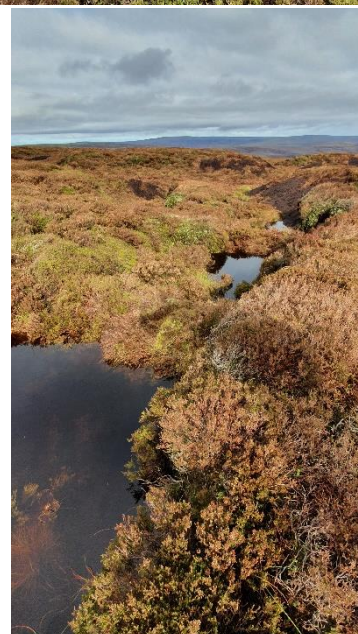
However, we have been busy getting ready for this coming restoration season, letting the contracts for the final year of works to be completed as part of the Defra funded Northern England Peat Project. These are now ready to go, with local contractors Hanafin's and Terra Firma set up to start the work later in 2020. This is the final year of the project, which by the time this final year of work is completed, will have invested nearly £560,000 into peat restoration in the AONB, helping to restore nearly 200 hectares of moorland and preventing further carbon losses from the peat of around 400 tonnes of CO₂ per year (in the UK each person is responsible for around 10 tonnes CO₂/year) as well as enabling the blanket bog vegetation to start to store carbon as peat at a rate of around 3.5 tonnes/ha/year. So our 200 ha will start to lock up 700 tonnes of CO₂/year in the future, once the restoration work is completed.

We are also hopeful that in addition to this project, we will be able to work on two other areas within the Bowland Fells with funding coming from Defra via the EA, helping to support restoration begun in previous years. Peat restoration is an iterative process, and this funding will be vital in enabling the condition of degraded areas to continue to improve.

The Covid-19 restrictions over the summer meant that many of our Festival Bowland events moved onto Zoom, and the peat restoration story was no exception, with a really interesting and well attended session in July.

Finally, members of the team have also been assisting Yorkshire Peat Partnership with the delivery of the Pennine Peat LIFE project restoration works on Hareden Fell and Langden Head, part of United Utilities estate. The project is funded by EU LIFE+ programme, United Utilities and the Environment Agency.

For several weeks from late July, helicopters were flying materials from close to the Langden intake up onto the fellside. In September, work commenced on site,



installing stone, timber and peat dams to slow the flow and restore the moorland hydrology and habitat. More recently work has also begun on re-profiling gullies and peat hag edges to stop erosion of the peat soils. The work is anticipated to be complete before Christmas.

For further information email sarah.robinson@lancashire.gov.uk

Bowland Hay Time

After a delayed start to the season we have managed to build on our previous years' work to extend the areas of traditional hay meadows within the AONB.

This summer we have carried out just over 13 hectares of green hay restoration work on three sites. One site is part of our "Late Green Hay" trials in partnership with Plantlife. The hay crop is taken late August or early September to enable transferring some of the later flowering species that often get missed in a July cut, as they are still in flower at that time. Many of the hay meadow flowers don't set seed until August or September. The site was chosen for its close location to our donor Coronation meadow at Bell Sykes Farm in Slaidburn, and also for having a reliable management plan for cutting at a later date in the future.



We have also distributed 10.5kg of brush harvested seed to a further 7 sites to enhance approximately 18 acres, together with ground preparation and management advice. These are sites where they are either too far from our donor meadows, or are only looking to enhance patches within a meadow due to financial or access restrictions. These patches will then spread gradually throughout the meadow, with more seed added in each year as well to help it on the way.

Two community pollinator patches have been created with our help and advice "virtually", and on 10th October we delivered a "Create a Pollinator Patch" online event, which was fully booked.

Seed of 10 wildflower species has been collected to be grown for next years' plug plants, with this years' plugs ready to plant out in October.

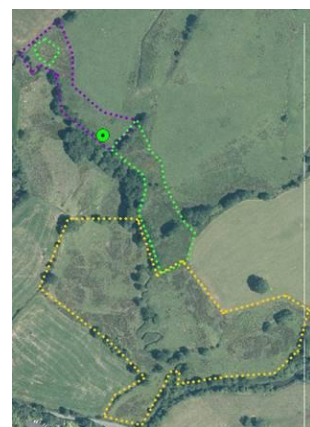
For further information email carol.edmondson@lancashire.gov.uk

Farming and Wildlife Advice

Making decisions about the most environmentally friendly way to manage land takes time and discussion and needs to take lots of factors into account. We are very happy to be working with local farmers, landowners and tenants as well as our partner organisations such as Natural England and the Wyre and Ribble Rivers Trusts to help to shape those decisions. This summer we have been involved in eight separate cases, where we have been surveying grasslands in order to add information about their value to wildlife, which can then be used in the management planning process.

The good news is we have found some really fabulous sites which don't seem to have been known about in the past! This includes a site for Bird's Eye primrose, one of the species the Hay Time Rescue project has been concentrating on.

For further information email sarah.robinson@lancashire.gov.uk



Green Recovery Challenge Fund

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a short-term competitive fund to kick-start environmental renewal whilst creating and retaining a range of jobs. It is open to environmental charities and their partners to deliver projects in England. The aim of the fund is to support projects that are ready to deliver and focus on nature restoration, nature-based solutions and connecting people with nature, delivering against the goals of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP), whilst helping to sustain and build capacity in the sector. The £40million fund has been developed by DEFRA and its Arm's-Length Bodies, including Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and others. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is distributing and monitoring this government money. The Forest of Bowland AONB has contributed to several bids:

- The AONB team contributed to a National Association of AONB bid for nature recovery that would have led to officers appointed in host AONBs. Although unsuccessful it has helped scope a potential wider bid in the future
- A bid championed by Plantlife (the national charity) would lead to support for Bowland Haytime and secure the existing officer post. The bid was successful at Expression of Interest stage and will now work up details for the next stage by 23rd October. The project would secure £ 77,000 towards hay meadow restoration through our partner Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
- The AONB working with Yorkshire Peat Project submitted a bid for the restoration of the 127 hectare Holme House Fell above Bleasdale.

For further information email robin.gray@lancashire.gov.uk

'High Nature Value Farming in the Northern Upland AONBs' – A Defra Environmental Land Management Test

This Environmental Land Management test involves working collaboratively with farmers and land managers in the co-design of simple 'land management plans', with information and data gathered being fed back to Defra to guide its development of the proposed Environmental Land Management system.

Work on this test (part of the National Association for AONBs, Farming for the Nation) has continued over the last six months, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Good progress has been made on developing the land management plans, with Margaret Dickinson, our ELM Test Advisor, having visited all six participating farms in June/July 2020 to carry out an initial 'natural capital' audit of each farm; together with work to gather relevant datasets to help inform the development of land management plans.

In addition, farm business information has been gathered and collated from each farm by Askham Bryan Rural Business Research Unit to be analysed by Nethergill Associates. In September 2020, Chris Clark from Nethergill Associates and Margaret have been meeting with each farmer or farming family to discuss the results of the analysis, in particular the impact on the business of the planned removal of basic payment scheme and transition to the ELM system.

Over the coming months, Margaret will be continuing to work closely with the farmer (and in liaison with Chris Clark) in an iterative process to develop and refine a land management plan, which (we hope!) will help the farm move forward taking a 'high nature value' approach, supported by the new ELM system. It is also hoped that the participating farmers will be able to meet together to discuss their experiences of the test work.

For further information contact elliott.lorimer@lancashire.gov.uk

Undergrounding for Visual Amenity Programme (RIIO-EDI)

The Undergrounding for Visual Amenity Programme delivered jointly by the AONB Unit and Electricity Northwest Limited has continued with planning and delivery work for the removal of overhead lines.

Since April 2020, the underground line from Holden to Wycongill has been laid, but the (now redundant) overhead line has yet to be removed. Works were also due to commence with a scheme at Bleasdale estate during September 2020.

For further information contact elliott.lorimer@lancashire.gov.uk

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

Discover Bowland website

Champion Bowland and the Forest of Bowland unit have supported the development of a new visitor destination website for businesses who are members of the Sustainable Tourism Business Network. During the summer months we put together the website which includes accommodation, outdoor activities, courses and experiences, and the food and drink offer, alongside business listings. We were able to launch 'Discover Bowland' at the end of September, visit: www.discoverbowland.uk

Businesses have been added to the website for free for this year, to support them as they adapt to COVID and also as they look to attracting visitors during 2021. From next summer businesses will be asked for an annual contribution for the ongoing maintenance of the website, and any profits will be donated to Champion Bowland.

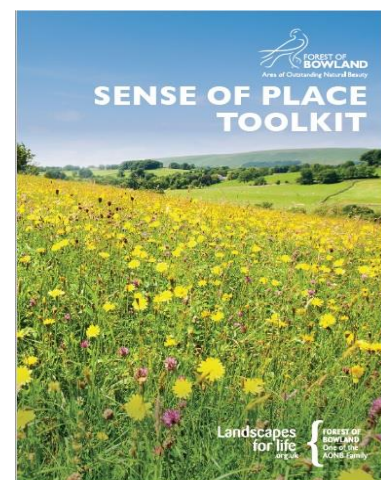
For further information email hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk



Sense of Place Toolkit

It is 15 years since the original Sense of Place toolkit was produced for businesses. Over the years the Toolkit and training has provided businesses with useful resources and information to help them promote the special qualities of Bowland. During the summer months we have re-visited the original research and content and updated it with fresh information and images to support new and existing businesses within the network. This will be supplemented by a series of online resources, including an image library that businesses can make use of for their marketing. A couple of online workshops are planned for November to launch the Toolkit and resources for businesses.

For further information email hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk



Dark Sky Friendly Business Workshop

During May when many businesses were closed, we offered an online workshop for those wanting to gain the Dark Sky Friendly Business accreditation. We ran the workshop with local astronomer Robert Ince, and provided

businesses with similar content and resources to what we would normally deliver in a face to face workshop. 8 participants joined the online session and went on to achieve the informal accreditation.

For further information email hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk



Planning and Development

The AONB Unit has continued to provide landscape planning advice and guidance for local authorities, planning consultants/applicants relating to planning applications, planning policy documents, woodland management plans and felling licence applications.

During the first six months of 2020/21, the AONB Unit has appraised over 60 planning applications and development proposals – these can vary from a brief desk-based appraisals to site visits (involving applicants, developers and local planning authorities) and detailed consultation responses.

A Strong Connection between People & the Landscape

Champion Bowland

The independent charity Champion Bowland CIO has undertaken a strategic review facilitated by an independent consultant, funded by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Amongst the recommendations are to:

- Support more projects
- Give more and bigger grants
- Connect and collaborate with more organisations
- Develop and strengthen the relationship with the AONB
 - A Memorandum of Understanding should be drafted and signed between CB and FBAONB Unit.
 - An annual joint action plan should be developed to complement the MoU.
- Involve more people and raise their awareness
- Develop communications
- Increase and diversify funding
 - Focus on a small number of fundraising priority areas
 - Develop visitor giving scheme with the AONB Unit and Sustainable Tourism Business Network
 - Develop more projects with the AONB Unit and secure external funding for their delivery
- Strengthen and improve organisational capacity
- Build trustee capacity
- Develop a strategy

The strategic plan will be developed by trustees for approval at its October meeting.

For further information email robin.gray@lancashire.gov.uk

Festival Bowland Goes Virtual

Given the restrictions around Covid-19 most of the Festival Bowland face to face events scheduled from March onwards were sadly cancelled, or have been postponed.

However, in order that we could continue to engage with people during this difficult period, the Pendle Hill LP and AONB teams have worked together to organise a series of online, "virtual" events.

Delivered via Zoom, the events have ranged from archaeology, bats and black grouse to rewilding, Roman roads and peat restoration. We even managed to move our National Meadows Day and Foodie Foray events online.

Between June and the end of September we jointly ran 17 sessions which attracted almost 600 attendances.

Alongside our online programme we are also building a library of resources, including links to further information and films, for anyone not able to join us on the day <https://www.forestofbowland.com/online-event-links>

These virtual sessions have proved popular and have reached new audiences for us - from across the country. They also make it possible for us to connect with people who wouldn't normally be able to join us face to face; whether that be for health, transport or other reasons. We certainly hope to include online events alongside our more traditional format in future Festival programmes.

For further information email sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

Days to Remember

Following on from our Memory Box collaboration with LCC's Heritage Learning Team late last year, we have now developed a new, online resource.

The Days to Remember project aims to encourage older people and those living with dementia, alongside family members and carers, to enjoy a "virtual" exploration of Bowland.

The web page has everything from tips and resources for making your own Great Outdoors memory box, to puzzles, quizzes and colouring sheets.

Activities include Bowland wildflower "playing cards" which can be downloaded and printed; a series of images from around the AONB, which can be used to make up a photograph album; recordings of the calls of Bowland birds, including the iconic curlew and lapwing, plus ideas for other resources to spark happy memories.

The web page also includes a guided meditation written and narrated by sustainable tourism network member, Helen Leece, of the Gathering Fields Retreat near Abbeystead. Based on the sights and sounds of a Bowland meadow in summer, the twenty minute audio, which includes natural sounds and simple music, is designed to offer gentle relaxation.

Ultimately, we would like to help people experience Bowland in a variety of ways, whether that be through improving signposting and access, so that people have the confidence to explore for themselves, or through offering guided sessions and activities. In the meantime, we hope our online suggestions will help people stay connected to nature.

The Days to Remember web page can be found at <https://www.forestofbowland.com/days-remember>

For further information email sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk



Promoted Route Volunteers

Promoted Route Volunteers have been limited in reporting issues on promoted routes due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation, we await approval from the Head of Service for Volunteering to resume. Some route description amendments have been reported by visitors and have been amended but no significant reports of issues have come in.

For further information email sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk

Promoted Route & Countryside Access

Pre-Covid19 only limited reports of issues on promoted routes had been reported, small jobs have been undertaken including way marking, clearance of fallen branches and cutting back of vegetation as well as larger jobs such as replacing the hanging post of part of the east access trail at Dunsop Bridge and replacing some fencing damaged during a storm.



For further information email sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk

Parish Lengthsman

The Coronavirus situation highlights some issues requiring attention because of increased visitor numbers at the end of lockdown such as gates that are not self-closing, these are currently being addressed by the Parish Lengthsman scheme. (Image from Clerkhill)

For further information email sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk



Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Scheme

To keep up to date with the project work of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership you can read their summer quarterly e-bulletin and sign-up to their distribution list here: <https://pendlehillproject.com/e-bulletin>



For further information email cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

National Association for AONBs

The National Association for AONBs has continued to work closely with Defra, Natural England and others on how Government plans to respond to the Landscapes Review report. Recent discussions have focused on the structure and function of a National Landscape Service.



A formal response from Government to the Landscapes Review report is still awaited.

In addition, the NAAONB has continued to help co-ordinate the following collaborative projects and initiatives:

- ['Farming for the Nation'](#) – 14 Environmental Land Management tests across 12 AONBs
- [Colchester Declaration Steering Group](#) – co-ordinating funding bids to Green Recovery Challenge Fund and to Natural England to create a new position within the NAAONB to assist AONBs deliver their commitments on nature recovery set out in the declaration, in particular the creation of AONB Nature Recovery Plans
- ['Art in the Landscape'](#) – a project to develop the capacity across all AONBs to embed the arts within their work
- [Laurel Prize](#) & [Ginkgo Prize](#) – a partnership with poet laureate, Simon Armitage
- Developing the AONB network and its collaborative working (building on 'Taking the Lead')

The annual 'Landscapes for Life' Conference due to be held in Devon was (unsurprisingly) cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information email elliott.lorimer@lancashire.gov.uk

COVID-19

In keeping with the latest Government guidance, the Forest of Bowland AONB team continue to work from home. We have postponed or cancelled volunteering activities and nature and wellbeing group activities and where possible have delivered events online. Face to face activities are under regular review and we have parameters in place to deliver these again, once it is safe to do so. We will be following the latest advice on the situation from [Public Health England](#).

This means we won't be reachable on our main office phone number – however, we are carrying on with business as usual as far as possible and we are all still working remotely. If you have a query, please email or ring individual mobile numbers, and they'll reply or give you a call as soon as they are able. Or use the general Bowland email bowland@lancashire.gov.uk and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.