

Three Counties: Lune Valley



Introduction

For several years, Sustrans has been exploring the provision of new traffic-free, multi-user paths to significantly extend a well-used, off-road section of the National Cycle Network from Lancaster along much of the Lune Valley.

In 2019, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) began to explore the idea of a landscape-scale, heritage-based programme for the Lune Valley area around the western boundary of the National Park.

In 2021, the Forest of Bowland AONB (FoBAONB) independently began to explore a similar proposal for the lower reaches of the Lune that lie within and along the AONB's northern boundary. The AONB approached Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) to see whether it would be interested in becoming involved.

Prior to that contact, YDMT had been aware of YDNPA's and Sustrans' proposals, and the three strands are being brought together with the aim to develop an area-based, rural scheme focussed on part of the River Lune catchment within Cumbria, Lancashire and North Yorkshire, that helps to improve the area for people, heritage and nature.

Discussions between the four organisations and potential partners has led to the formation of a steering group to develop the proposal.

In April 2022 we launched an online survey and held three community drop-in events to provide genuine opportunities for residents and visitors to share their thoughts and suggestions on the proposed scheme at an early stage in its development. There were over 240 detailed submissions and overwhelming support. This input will also help to inform the scheme boundary.

A NLHF expression of interest was submitted in early July 2022 and we have been invited to submit a 1st Stage application by August 2023.

It is clear that there is a strong desire and willingness to work in partnership to achieve shared and complementary objectives, and strong public support and interest.

For further information please contact Don Gamble (Programmes Manager, YDMT) on don.gamble@ydmtd.org

The River Lune

Its name possibly derives from the Celtic word *lano* meaning "full" or from an alternative word meaning "good" or "health giving".

At a length of over 105km, it is one of the longest rivers in the north west of England and is a key element of the variety of landscapes it runs through – fells, moors, crags, valleys, pastures, floodplains and estuary. The river and its tributaries drain an area of 1223 sq kms.

The Lune rises on Ravenstonedale Common on the northern slopes of the Howgills in Cumbria, and then flows west to Tebay. Here it turns southwards along the western slopes of the Howgills before the valley opens out as it flows towards the historic market town of Kirkby Lonsdale. From there it continues south west through the lowland countryside of North Lancashire towards its confluence with the Irish Sea west of Lancaster.

The valley of the Lune has three parts. The northern part between its source and Tebay is called Lunesdale. Below this is the spectacular Lune Gorge through which both the M6 motorway and the West Coast Main Railway Line run. Below the gorge, the valley broadens out into Lonsdale.

Nearly three quarters of the length of the river is within designated landscapes (two National Parks and two AONBs).

Compared to many rivers in the region, the Lune is relatively undeveloped and this enables it to support a wide range of wildlife. There are many designations for specific species and habitats, making it of regional, national and international importance.

For centuries, it has provided inspiration for artists and writers. When the art critic and philanthropist John Ruskin first saw the Lune Valley, he declared, "I do not know in all my country, still less France or Italy, a place more naturally divine or a more priceless possession of the true Holy Land..." The artist J M W Turner celebrated the Crook o' Lune, a renowned beauty spot, and the site impressed poet Thomas Gray so much that he described it as having "every feature which constitutes a perfect landscape."

The opportunities and benefits of the area's natural, built and cultural heritage, and the threats to that heritage, undoubtedly provide a strong basis for an area-based scheme.



National Lottery funding

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) provides funding for projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional and local heritage of the UK. It has three grant programmes for heritage with varying levels of funding; the programme that provides grants of £250,000 to £5million includes support for area-based schemes. This essentially replaces the Landscape Partnership funding programme (YDNPA, FoB AONB and YDMT are key partners in current and past schemes). Below are the key points about NLHF's outcomes that schemes need to achieve, what area-based schemes are, the application process, etc (sources: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/area-based-schemes-guidance>; <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes>; <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grants-heritage-250k-5m>)

NLHF outcomes

Heritage projects, including area-based schemes, must help NLHF to achieve its nine outcomes:

- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage (a mandatory outcome)
- The funded organisation will be more resilient
- People will have greater wellbeing
- People will have developed skills
- The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit
- The local economy will be boosted
- Heritage will be in better condition
- Heritage will be identified and better explained
- People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

It is also expected that projects build long-term environmental sustainability and inclusion into their plans.

The number of outcomes achieved will depend on what we want to deliver and should be proportionate to the size of grant requested or the specific focus of our project. Area-based schemes will need to achieve several outcomes, but we need to be realistic and focus on the key needs of the area and outline these under the outcomes that best capture this.

Area-based schemes

An area-based scheme needs to show how it will take a holistic and balanced approach to support the environmental, social and economic enhancement of a defined area of historic or landscape value by conserving, repairing and enhancing its distinct character for the benefit of local residents, workers and visitors.

NLHF define an area of historic or landscape value as a geography with a clear boundary that has built and/or natural features and a distinct character that is recognised either formally or informally. This includes an area of landscape with natural, archaeology, built and cultural heritage features that give it a unique character and sense of place.

A scheme should be in line with wider strategies for regeneration or biodiversity improvement, and it should stimulate further activity and have a lasting legacy.

Schemes should be led by partnerships of local, regional and national interests.

Partnership funding must cover at least 5% of the project costs for grants up to £1million and at least 10% for grants of £1million or more. Partnership funding can be made up of cash, non-cash contributions and volunteer time. For projects that involve capital work, the value of increased future costs of management and maintenance for up to five years after practical completion can also be included.

The benefits of taking an area-based approach

- It can be an effective way of using heritage to help transform a local area socially and economically for the benefit of people and communities.
- It can help halt and reverse the decline of historic landscapes by creating attractive, vibrant and interesting places where people will want to live, work, visit and invest.
- It can help halt and reverse the decline of natural and biodiversity heritage on a landscape scale in a way that could align with the European Landscape Convention.
- It is an opportunity to look beyond individual projects to take an integrated, holistic and strategic approach to improving all aspects of an area of historic and/or landscape value. The overall benefits should be more than the combined benefits of the individual projects within the scheme.
- Area-based schemes must demonstrate clear and robust links to wider strategies, for example, regeneration, biodiversity, and skills, so that improvements achieved are more likely to be embedded in the local area and sustained into the future.
- The diversity of heritage in a local area and the need to deliver a range of benefits to a variety of stakeholders requires and reinforces the need for effective partnership working.
- It encourages a broader understanding of the dynamic relationship between natural heritage, the built environment, people and communities, local institutions and local businesses, leading to a deeper understanding of the issues affecting a place and how these can be overcome.
- By achieving consensus among different owners of heritage, that heritage can help unlock the social and economic potential of an area; it is an opportunity to draw in investment from a wide range of sources including private individuals and commercial organisations.
- Schemes can seek to achieve social and economic transformation of the local area through improvement in the wellbeing of local people, and an increase in jobs, business activity, tourism and the visitor offer.

What an area-based scheme should include

An area-based scheme is made up of a balanced portfolio of integrated projects, including:

Physical works to repair and enhance the historic area, such as:

- carrying out structural and external repairs and reinstating elements of architectural detail to historic buildings
- conserving other historical structures and removing inappropriate structures, for example within a landscape
- work to bring vacant buildings back into use or encouraging the re-use of vacant space above shops
- works to enable “meanwhile” or “pop-up uses” of currently unused spaces
- restoring or enhancing habitats found in the area

- improvements to the public realm by conserving, restoring or reinstating heritage features
- re-introducing traditional land management techniques
- conserving and interpreting archaeology and geology
- protecting and enhancing water supplies and drainage
- felling trees, clearing shrub and restoring priority habitats
- re-routing or re-locating statutory services that are detrimental to the landscape (where this is a small part of the scheme)
- improving access for all, including people with disabilities
- improving public facilities such as toilets, seating or picnic areas
- improving the long-term management of the landscape and its future sustainability

Activities to help people engage with the heritage, such as:

- providing training in traditional nature or building conservation skills for contractors and trainees
- bringing the community together to explore their heritage through, for example, open days, exhibitions and tours
- demonstrations of good maintenance techniques for property owners
- recording, assessing and investigating what makes the area's character unique
- activities and interpretation to increase the range of audiences
- creating new formal and informal learning opportunities
- providing people with skills and training that contribute to the area's conservation and long-term management

Work to help develop and run a project, such as:

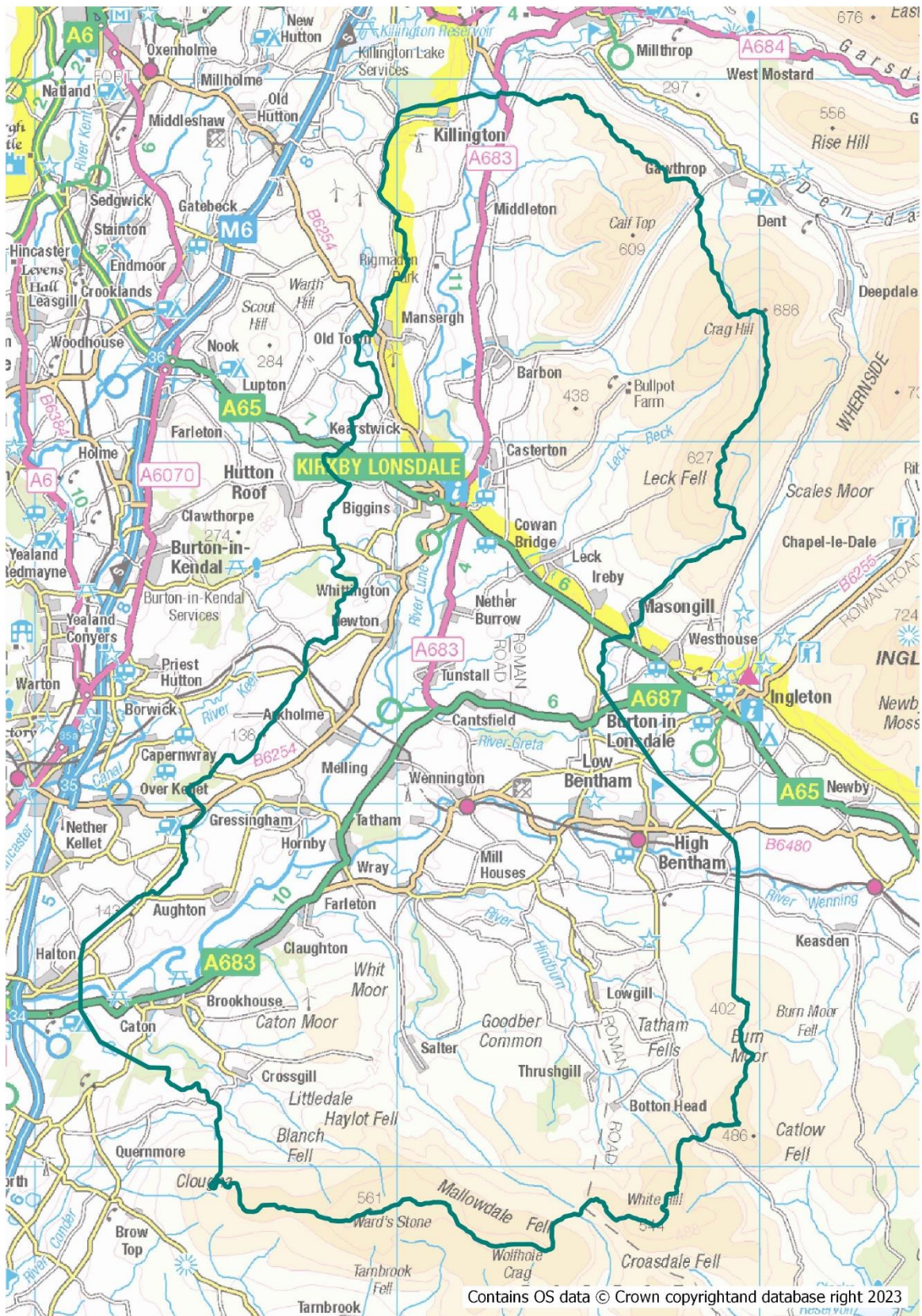
- valuations, professional fees or the costs associated with getting statutory permissions
- research and strategic planning work to safeguard the long-term approach to conservation
- preparing an Area Appraisal and an Area Management Plan
- employing project staff

Identifying the scheme boundary

The boundary should reflect the distinctive character of the area, the physical features on the ground, together with the views and values of local people. It should not be defined by administrative boundaries. While Landscape Partnerships had to focus on geographic areas of between 20 and 200 square kilometres, there are no similar parameters for area-based schemes in the published guidance.

However, guidance does state that schemes that are geographically concentrated to maximise impact (where the scheme boundary is tightly drawn and focused on one or more clusters of heritage in close proximity) have a greater chance of success. We will need to justify the rationale for our chosen boundary, and if it covers a large area this should include how we will ensure the benefits of NLHF funding are not too thinly spread.

Discussions about a possible scheme boundary are on-going but an indicative boundary, largely based on the Lune catchment, is shown overleaf.



Application process

We submitted an Expression of Interest in July 2022 and in early August NLHF invited us to develop a 1st Stage (Development Phase) application, which needs to be submitted within 12 months. An invitation to apply does not guarantee a grant but does indicate that NLHF sees potential in our initial proposals. We have enlisted Carrock Landscapes Ltd to help us prepare the application.

The aim of the Development Phase is to gain a better understanding of the costs, resources, timeline and the needs of our audiences. If the Development Phase application is approved, we have up to two years to develop the 2nd Stage (Delivery Phase) application (which includes producing an Area Action Plan, a document that pulls all of the different aspects of the scheme into a coherent and integrated whole). A Development Phase award does not guarantee that we will receive a Delivery Phase award.

There are quarterly deadlines for Development and Delivery Phase applications, and both stages are competitive.

Given NLHF's application process, partners' experience of developing and successfully running similar schemes, and our desire to develop a strong programme that's been well thought out, that has public support, and which makes best use of public and private funding, our current timetable is:

- Preparation of 1st Stage (Development Phase) application: December 2022 to August 2023 (for a December decision)
- Preparation of 2nd Stage (Delivery Phase) application: Early 2024 to February 2025 (for a June decision)
- Delivery: summer 2025 to summer 2029

Possible projects for a Three Counties: Lune Valley scheme

Projects that have been proposed to date include:

Opportunities for people

- Outreach work with under-represented/disadvantaged communities
- Schools
- Apprenticeships
- Training courses
- Public events
- Community grants

Opportunities for landscape enhancement and nature conservation

- Reuniting the river with its floodplain
- Pearl Mussel conservation
- Hay meadow restoration
- Removing obstructions (weirs)
- Peatland restoration
- Pollinator corridors
- New woodlands and hedges
- Recording cave fauna, especially bats
- Ancient semi-natural woodland managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust (Aughton Wood)
- Burton and Lawsons Woods

- Swift conservation
- Natural Flood Management
- Undergrounding electricity cables (Casterton to Bull Pot)
- Veteran trees record and succession planting

Opportunities for access and recreation

- Traffic-free route between Bull Beck (near Caton) and Kirkby Lonsdale, and from there to Sedbergh and Ingleton
- Charging points for electric bikes
- Missing links in Rights of Way network and bridge crossings over the River Lune
- Caving (Three Counties Cave System)
- Repair and enhancement of Rights of Way eg erosion on deep peat around Bull Pot
- Increasing riverside access (with agreement of farmers and landowners)
- Hermitage Field (Lancaster City Council)
- Arts and culture
- Crook o' Lune (LCC)
- Enhancement of the River Lune, Ruskin's View, St Mary's Church and Devil's Bridge

Opportunities for heritage and culture

- The Three Men of Gragareth (research, archaeology, conservation)
- Celebration of caving and the Three Counties Cave System
- The story of the area's geomorphology and geology (eg Dent Fault)
- Traditional barns – surveying and restoration
- Routeways through the Ages: from the Romans to the railways
- Landscape archaeology
- Medieval Castles – interpretative project
- Claughton brickworks and aerial ropeway
- Charcoal hearths in woodland
- Wray Castle
- Aughton Pudding Festival, at which the 'world's largest pudding' is prepared
- The Caton Oak
- Wray floods of 1967
- Wray Scarecrow Festival
- The story of the 'cheese wedge' and county stone
- Extractive industries – community archaeology project
- Oral History around farming community

Public consultation will take place up until the submission of the Delivery Phase application in February 2025 to identify the sites, locations, features and activities that residents and visitors value, and to support the co-creation of the scheme.