



FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

An outstanding landscape of natural and cultural heritage

Hedgelaying in Bowland

Over six days in November and January along the Lune Millennium Park near Crook O'Lune, Lancaster, twenty one members of the local community including volunteers, contractors and farmers gathered to learn and develop the traditional skill of hedgelaying. They were taught the Lancashire & Westmorland Style with expert guidance provided by Joe Craig and Geoff Whitley.

The hedgelaying was organised by Lancashire County Council and The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The AONB runs a Traditional Boundaries programme that includes grant aid towards positive management of hedgerows and drystone walls. Also as part of this programme, training courses and support towards competitions in the skills of drystone walling and hedgelaying are run.

Last winter, in total across Bowland, 1750m of hedges have been laid at Quernmore, Aughton, Goosnargh, Ribchester, Marles Wood, Bashall Eaves and Sawley. In addition to this 500m of hedgerows have been replanted in Goosnargh, Aughton and in the Ribble Valley. To find out more about hedgerows and the different styles of management go the National Hedgelaying Society website www.hedgelaying.org.uk/styles.htm

More recently, on 2nd March an hedge laying competition was held on a stretch of hedgerow next to the Three Fishes Inn at Mitton. And with categories from beginners through to professionals, the day offered a fantastic opportunity to see the range of techniques and tools involved in this traditional countryside practice.

Moorland Restoration

Since securing over £100,000 from the Environment Agency, the AONB partnership has been busy putting the money to good use restoring upland peat on three of the Bleasdale Fells, Fairsnape, Holme House and Fiendsdale Head.

These fells form part of the Bowland Fells SSSI, internationally important for their peatland habitats, providing habitats for many scarce upland species such as ring ouzel, golden plover, short-eared owls and the locally rare cloudberry. Wind, rain, sheep, trampling and wildfires have combined to erode the peat down to its base in places.

Peat stores vast amounts of carbon, which is released and adds to green house gas emissions when the peat erodes. Peat restoration can also help to reduce the risk of flooding downstream and improves water quality.

The diggers currently working on the fell tops are re-profiling the eroding edges of the peat to make them more gently sloping, and dams are being added to slow down the speed of the water currently washing the peat downstream. At the moment we are also waiting for a break in the weather so that heather brash can be flown up to the tops, to be spread out, drop its seed and help to re-establish a healthy cover of vegetation.

Later in the spring this will be supplemented by heather and grass seed, bog mosses and thousands of plug plants which will be planted by volunteers.

The peatlands of the Bleasdale Fells provide a wide range of benefits for people and for wildlife. They provide habitats for wildlife, store carbon in peat, and help prevent flash flooding after heavy rainfall. They are amazing wild spaces enjoyed by walkers, fell runners, hang gliders and paragliders, commanding impressive views out towards the Isle of Man. The Bleasdale Fells are also home to hundreds of red grouse and provide grazing for the flocks of upland sheep from the farms surrounding them.

As well as improvements in landscape quality, natural beauty and biodiversity such restoration projects can result in

- potential reductions in downstream flood risk and siltation
- reduction in wildfire risk on moorlands
- improvements in water quality
- reducing carbon loss and promoting sequestration of atmospheric carbon

So, if you would like to be part of this important restoration project, why don't you come and volunteer to plant some of those 2100 plug plants on one of the dates we are organising in late April/early May – for more information contact Tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk or sarah.robinson@lancashire.gov.uk or phone 01204 443300

Bowland Hay Time Project

The Hay Time project in Bowland has been concentrating time on planning for 2013. A long list of potential restoration and enhancement sites has been completed, so far with almost sixty hectares of meadows identified as potentials for the coming summer. More are being added every week, as work with the local Natural England advisers continues. Interestingly there are also a significant number of sites which, in the main due to their small size, are not covered by HLS agreements, and so will need to be covered by project funding if they are to be restored.

Work on the downloadable self-guided walks has continued, with visits to the sites involved with the local Access Officer in order to set out exactly what improved furniture is required to make the chosen meadows accessible to as many people as possible. We are delighted that one of the farmers involved in the project as a donor of organic hay has agreed to work with us to develop a Trumper route passing through three of his meadows. We hope this will be ready to open in June 2013.

In addition to the Haytime events being run through Festival Bowland, we organised a winter scythe maintenance workshop at Bentham Mart on the 6th February, during the fat lamb sale, when scything expert Tom Brandon demonstrated scythe maintenance, peening and sharpening, and members of the team were available to talk with interested farmers, copy hay time photographs and collect hay time stories. We are hopeful that this will encourage more farmers to get involved with the project.

As well as the many Hay Time events organised as part of the project within the Bowland Festival this year, we are also organising a Meadow Restoration Workshop on 26th June with Flora Locale, a national environmental training organisation, for anyone wanting to learn more about the techniques we use. More details will be available on the website soon and are also at www.floralocale.org.uk

Would you like to learn to scythe? We are organising a weekend training course at Keasden Head, please get in touch if you would like more information. The two day course will cost £75 per head and will be run by top scythe instructor Steve Tomlin from Cumbria.

Visits to the Slaidburn Archive are continuing, where we have access to an amazing set of farm diaries kept by one family from 1943 onwards. Following on from the war years and the advent of bag fertilisers in the 1950's, the diaries from the 1960's describe the family buying their first baler, Land Rover, and their participation in War Ag. schemes to drain and apply lime and slag to the meadows.

The wild flower plug plant nursery is now all planted, thanks to Holly, our biology undergraduate student placement, we await spring shoots!

The results of our grassland survey work on Biological Heritage Sites in Bowland showed that many sites have fewer species present than 15 years ago when they were last surveyed. However, and much more encouragingly, the surveys found 5 previously unknown wild flower meadows on three farms which are have now been added to the register. We look forward to working more closely with them this summer!

Haytime Appeal

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust have launched an appeal for £150,000 to enable them to continue this important hay meadow restoration project both in the Yorkshire Dales and in the Forest of Bowland AONB. The launch was held at the Devonshire Arms on the Bolton Abbey Estate on Wednesday 17th April, and was hosted by TV presenter Chris Myers who is from Craven. There was also a video message of support from HRH Prince of Wales who is Patron of the Trust and an active conservationist of his own meadows on the Highgrove estate in Gloucestershire. Indeed the Prince is also supporting a fact finding mission to the AONB and Yorkshire Dales by members of the Pogony-havas Association from Transylvania, who work with farmers to conserve the special hay meadows in their region, and who organised the Hay Meadow Festival Sarah attended last August, the farmer who hosted that Festival will also be in the visiting party if anyone is able to help us host and feed the volunteers whilst they are here, please get in touch!

Here in the Forest of Bowland, our Hay Time project is about to enter its second season with Fiona Corby due to return and carry out further wildflower surveys in June, and Sarah is already planning restoration projects and a wide variety of walks, talks and seminars, including a two day scythe training course in August. [See our events programme for details of events taking place in Bowland.](#)

Undergrounding for Visual Amenity programme – Roeburndale

As part of the £5.4M OFGEM Undergrounding for Visual Amenity (UVA) programme running from 2010 -2015, Electricity North West has been working with the Forest of Bowland AONB to identify visually intrusive sections of overhead lines for undergrounding. Three schemes identified in Littleddale and Roeburndale are now progressing towards completion later in 2013, totalling 5250m of 11kV overhead lines being undergrounded.

The three sections are as follows:

1. Harterbeck to Stauvin – completed
2. Thornbush to Backsbottom Farm – nearing completion
3. Harterbeck to Higher Salter – to complete in September 2013

A further three schemes are in development for completion by the end of the programme in 2015.

Resilient and sustainable rural communities

Champion Bowland

The Trustees of Bowland Tourism Environment Fund have thought long and hard and have now changed BTEF to a catchier name - 'Champion Bowland'. They also hope this gives a wider expression of how the charity is developing its activities.

Recent projects supported by the grant scheme include an "eco-congregation" wildlife event at Knowle Green and spending the last of the £8,500 Trampler Trail fund (raised by the Three Fishes at Great Mitton) with a new trail at Gazegill Organic Farm, Rimington.

Champion Bowland is also administering the Farm Visit grant scheme on behalf of the AONB to encourage and enable school parties to take advantage of the education visit programme offered by the 8 farms in the programme.

A new identity, logo and website are under development.

Electric Bicycle Network

"Over the hills and far away! Bowland's hills provide some of the best bike-riding in the country – but demand top equipment and fitness to climb them. An Electric Bicycle is the answer. These have a motor to supplement your own energy to help you reach the peaks, leaving you to pedal within your own ability and enjoy the fresh air. The battery will get you to one of our re-charge points to top up for the ride home. The members of the Bowland Experience Electric Bicycle Network will do everything they can to make sure your Electric Bicycle experience is a success and that you have lots of fun."

This is how the latest Bowland Experience venture starts rolling this month! There are 3 Hire Stations and 11 Charge Points in the Network to encourage visitors (and local residents) to take to the hills with electric power assistance and visit a variety of tea shops, pubs and restaurants where they and their bikes can be re-charged for the ride back.

Our Network has joined the national group and all the members are featured on their website – visit www.electricbicyclenetwork.com and click on Forest of Bowland for more information. A map and leaflet will be available soon from www.forestofbowland.com

Bowland Experience Ltd now has 100 member organisations.

Sustainable Development Fund

In 2012/13 the AONB supported a number of exciting new projects through the Sustainable Development Fund, including village hall energy saving projects at Melling, Tosside and Dunsop Bridge. We also supported the purchase of a 'power barrow' for the trail building volunteers at Gisburn Forest to assist them in creating and maintaining the network of mountain bike trails; and we part funded the development of a new piece of public art for the Way of the Roses at Bentham. For more details of this and other projects including the Bowland Electric Bike Network and a new composter at Old Holly Farm please see our website.

We will launch the 2013 SDF scheme in May and details of the new criteria and application forms will be made available on our website. For further information contact cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Wild about Bowland

The Bowland wildlife business blogging website has been in existence for several years now with consistently high visitor numbers. Working with Barrie Tyrer web consultancy we've now re-vamped the website to more effectively promote the accommodation offer linked to wildlife experiences, via the individual business blog postings. All businesses involved

in this cluster project have worked to certain criteria and have provided information about the wildlife habitats and opportunities around their business. We hope that the new website will attract more staying visitors to Bowland and enable them to take time to experience the wonderful wildlife watching opportunities of the AONB. Visit www.bowlandwildlife.org.uk
For further information contact hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Training for Tourism Businesses

In partnership with Bowland Experience the AONB secured RDPE funding through Myerscough College to subsidise several training courses for local tourism businesses. This included an inspiring social media workshop which was run by Zoe Dawes aka the Quirky Traveller www.thequirkytraveller.com and a fantastic green marketing workshop held in February by Dr Xavier Font, a marketing specialist from the International Centre for Responsible Tourism, feedback from the 25 businesses who attended was excellent, many went away inspired and ready to put into action their new knowledge.

Bowland Land Managers Forum

The Forum was established during 2012 to help re-establish strong links between the AONB Partnership and the land management sector in the Forest of Bowland. The Forum comprises farmers, landowners and agents from across the AONB and met on three occasions during 2012. Members of the Forum also met with Defra and Natural England directors on their visit to the AONB during September 2012.

With the assistance of funding from Natural England, members of the forum have been working with the assistance of the AONB Unit and rural development and planning consultancies, Rural Futures (North West) Ltd. and Rural Solutions on a range of tasks:

1. Development of a shared set of principles for land management in the AONB, helping to better inform the review of the AONB Management Plan during 2013/14.
2. Development of a statement on the economic contribution of the AONB landscape to inform the development of future rural development funding programmes in Lancashire and North Yorkshire.
3. Update best practice guidance for farmers on suppression and eradication of ticks and louping ill virus within livestock to be promoted to land managers via new 'Bowland Land Managers Forum' webpage on www.forestofbowland.com.

A strong connection between people and the landscape

A Leap in the Park

This new Heritage Lottery Funded project has now started up, and will run for the whole of 2013. The project seeks to increase understanding and participation in a small research project, led by volunteers, which looks into the history and impact of two medieval Deer Parks near Chipping and Whitewell.

This project has been busy over the winter months. Working closely with the volunteers and members of Chipping History Group, Cathy Hopley has been co-ordinating research and also writing a blog to record activity www.leapinthepark.blogspot.co.uk/.

Our first piece of work has been to commission an archaeological illustrator, Jennie Anderson, to produce a number of reconstruction drawings to illustrate what a medieval deer park would have looked like and how it was managed. This has been fascinating, and we are all very excited by the beautiful illustrations Jennie is creating – these will be used on the website, in the planned education pack and mobile app, and also on interpretation boards around Leagram and Radholme deer parks.

We have also been deciding on the route of four self guided walks around and between the two parks, and identifying features and places of interest which can be researched and interpreted for walkers using a mobile app or a podcast.

In addition research into the history of the parks, and fieldwork to identify and survey the pale boundary has also been proceeding, with a field survey run by English Heritage planned for Sunday 28th April.

Over the year we will be holding workshops and field visits, as well as creating a number of resources including a schools pack; new walking routes; and an app and podcast describing the historic environment. For more information contact cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk.

Lancashire Witches Walk

Over the winter months work on this project has focused on access improvements and associated waymarking of this new 51-mile long distance walking route, the Lancashire Witches Walk, which runs from Barrowford (Pendle) through Ribble Valley and finishing in Lancaster. The walk takes in the stunning scenery of the Bowland fells but also commemorates the final journey of the so-called 'witches' from Pendle to their trials in Lancaster in 1612.

Due to be launched in May 2013 with the poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy present.

Along the route to be shortly installed will be 10 milestone tercets each inscribed by sculptor, Stephen Raw, with one stanza of Carol Ann Duffy's poem, 'Lancashire Witches'.

Running from April to July 2013 are a series of 7 guided walks along the route, now open for bookings. Historian Dr Robert Poole will be joining artistic director of Green Close, Sue Flowers to lead the first, second and final stages of this series of community walks.

Bowland Rambler Bus Service

On Sunday May 5th the new Rambler Bus will come into service. This Summer Sunday and Bank Holiday bus runs from Clitheroe to Settle via Newton and Slaidburn, with good connections from Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn and even Manchester. From Settle you can also connect with services into the Dales and from Leeds and Skipton: making Bowland potentially accessible to millions of Sunday walkers, and without creating any traffic chaos!

The bus is being run by Dales and Bowland community interest company, with financial support from the AONB, Lancashire County Council, Ribble Valley and Hyndburn borough councils and the Forestry Commission. This is a two year pilot service so we are keen to ensure it is well used so that the service can generate enough revenue to run in future years.

The AONB Unit have been supporting the production of promotion and press coverage for the bus, and a suite of self guided walks are now on offer from the bus route, including: a section of the new Lancashire Witches Walk from Waddington to Slaidburn, routes in and around Gisburn Forest, several Hodder Valley rambles between Slaidburn and Dunsop Bridge, and a part of the Ribble Way between Rathmell and Settle. These will be produced on a new page of the AONB website and will also be made available on the bus and at businesses along the route. In addition three Sunday walks will be led by experienced guides over the course of the summer.

Big thanks to Parkers Arms at Newton for providing free afternoon teas to the press launch held on Thursday 25th April, and to Veolia Transdev for running the service: please use it!

Success of Tramping across Bowland continues to grow

Since Lancashire County Council started using *Trampers* (electric all-terrain wheelchairs) at Beacon Fell Country Park, interest in how they can contribute to the visitor experience has grown significantly across Bowland and Lancashire.

Lancashire County Council now has 8 all-terrain wheelchairs (*Trampers* plus a *TGA Breeze 4*) based at Beacon Fell Country Park and Wycolter Country park, plus they are available for use elsewhere within Lancashire. In addition to this Blackburn-w-Darwen have 5 *Trampers* and Wyre Borough Council 3 *Trampers*. To date more than 400 users have undergone the induction training and registered as a user with Lancashire County Council.

Since 2006 Lancashire County Council in conjunction with the Forest of Bowland AONB has been working with rural tourism businesses and the voluntary sector plus other partners to expand their use beyond the publicly managed recreation sites. There are now an additional 10 *Trampers*/TGA Breezes based in the private and voluntary sector in Bowland. Over the winter of 2012-2013 new *Tramper* trails have been developed at Caton Moor (Lancaster), Wyreside Fisheries (Nr Garstang, Wyre), Dunsop Bridge (Ribble Valley) and Aitken Wood (Barley, Pendle). Work continues during spring 2013 on developing further trails so watch this space.

To date more than 30 miles of *Tramper* usable trails have been developed, which are promoted as downloadable web routes on www.forestofbowland.com/tramper-trails. The businesses themselves also market the availability of the *Tramper* and the network of routes that link them. These routes take them over farmland, through woodland and include access to several bird-hides. For the 5th consecutive year Lancashire will again host a visit from the national user group the 'Disabled Ramblers' in June 2013 with rambles based from Barley, Pendle and Towneley Park, Burnley. These guided rambles will also be offered to local users using *Trampers* on loan. For further information contact tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

A *Tramper* Familiarisation event is being held at Stephen Park, Gisburn Forest on Monday 29 April, 9.30 to 12.00. The event is aimed at Tourist Information Staff and tourism businesses but everyone is welcome. Please contact hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk to book a place or for further information [follow this link](#).

50th Anniversary

As you may already know, 2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the designation of the AONB. We are planning some special events and projects for the year, including opportunities for communities, businesses and artists to help us to celebrate. Unfortunately a bid for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been unsuccessful so we are currently looking at how we can realise our ambitions with a reduced budget – please get in touch if you have any ideas or would like to be involved, or come along to a meeting at the AONB offices on Thursday 9th May at 2pm.

Gisburn Forest Hub

The brand new Gisburn Forest Hub is now open following a fantastic launch event on 14th April, including a new car park, cafe, viewpoint and trails.

At Gisburn Forest Hub explore the all ability trail that leads to a panoramic view of Stocks Reservoir and the Forest of Bowland AONB. The forest is criss-crossed with lots of footpaths and there is a reservoir walk that starts from School Lane car park. Gisburn Forest has two fantastic mountain bike trails, the moderate graded Bottoms Beck for younger or novice riders and the red graded 18km "The 8" for those with a higher level of experience and skill. At Gisburn Forest hub you'll find a new Skills Loop to practice riding mountain bike trail features. For further information visit www.forestry.gov.uk/gisburn or www.facebook.com/GisburnForest

Festival Bowland 2013

Despite the wintry weather, Festival Bowland workshops covering photography, navigation and children's mask making all attracted encouraging numbers of people during February and March. The programme is now approaching its busiest months with a whole range of events to choose from, so make sure you don't miss out.

Why not join one of the Whimbrel Roost Watch walks near Barnacre or go In Search of Sky Dancers in the Trough of Bowland to try and catch a glimpse of our fascinating bird life? Garstang Walking 10th Anniversary Festival is coming up in the middle of May offering 10 days of guided walks – including the 41 mile Wyre Way Challenge! There are also plenty of chances to combine a walk with a visit to one of Bowland's wonderful cafes or pubs – a winning combination.

As the summer approaches, look out for events with an artistic flavour over in Barrowford and a flowery theme around Slaidburn, or come and join us for our first ever Hay Time Family Day at Gazegill Farm in June!

For details of all the events within the Festival Bowland programme take a look at the calendar or download a booklet at www.forestofbowland.com

St. James' Church Archaeology Project

Although our digging on the site of the original St. James' Church near Stocks Reservoir came to an end last year, work to make the site more accessible to visitors continued over the winter months and has now been completed. To celebrate the end of the project we are planning an open afternoon on Sunday 16th June when the Reverend George Darby will deliver a short blessing on site. This will be followed, at Tosside Community Centre, by a final presentation by Oxford Archaeology North (OAN), bringing the project up to date. OAN will also launch a new booklet, currently in design, which will help to tell the story of St. James' Church to a wider audience. For more details contact Sandra Silk on 01200 448000 or email sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

Communications

Web Friendly Leaflets

We have produced a number of popular leaflets in a web-friendly format for visitors to easily view on screen, and to enable them to easily print specific pages. Have a look at www.forestofbowland.com/publ_leaflets and get some inspiration of places to visit in Bowland!

Bowland by Bike

Look out for the popular Bowland by Bike leaflet which has recently been re-printed and is now available to order from Take one Media.

New News

Have a look at the new business e-bulletin, sent monthly to businesses in the Bowland Experience Network. The new bulletin highlights events and opportunities taking place in tourism businesses and communities across Bowland. The AONB updates also provide inspiration and ideas to help businesses best promote themselves as being part of the Forest of Bowland AONB. Have a look at last [month's issue](#) and if you'd like to be added to the mailing list please contact hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

A dynamic and effective AONB partnership

The National Association for AONBs – Future Landscape Collaboration Project

The NAAONB was successful in securing funding from Defra to support the 'Future Landscapes' Collaboration Project which aims to help AONBs to collaborate more effectively, work together and address some of the key challenges AONBs currently face, such as funding pressures, maintaining profile within government, local government and communicating the importance and relevance of AONBs and Protected Landscapes to society.

The Principal AONB Officer has been participating in this project during early 2013 and will be seeking to involve the wider AONB Unit in future collaborative activity stemming from the NAAONB 'Future Landscapes' Project.