

## **Bolton Council – Action in West Pennine Moors 2012/13**

Following continued and on-going reduction in resources, progress of management of sites, habitats and community engagement has reduced from what has been delivered in previous years. Despite this, some positive action has been achieved.

In November 2012, Brownstones Quarry on the edge of Smithills Moor was formally designated a Local Nature Reserve under powers granted by the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The site is a small disused stone quarry with local site designation Grade B Site of Biological Importance, supporting a varied range of wildlife in its Heathland, acid grassland and ponds.

This builds upon the designation of Upper Bradshaw Valley as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in June 2011. This includes the area south of the Jumbles Reservoir, south to Bradshaw Brow, a total of 34.19ha. Only a small part of this site is within the West Pennine Moors management area but the site provides a green valley gateway to the moors. It is also proposed that Ousel Nest Quarry off Chapletown Road, Bromley Cross is also designated an LNR in the near future.

An area of Smithills Estate within Bolton Council ownership has been consulted on with various organisations and the tenant farmers, with regard to its future management. Consultations are still on-going, with The Woodland Trust emerging as a potential buyer. It is too early to be able to predict any outcome of this process.

Wilderswood Plantation is a mixed conifer/broadleaf woodland within the West Pennine Moors area which Bolton Council manages under a tree planting licence. Over the last 12 months safety felling has been undertaken to clear windblown trees with re-stocking of new tree whips in these areas. Large scale felling was undertaken two years ago when disease in the Corsican Pine accelerated the need to fell some areas. These areas were re-stocked with mainly native broadleaf trees in line with the England Forestry Strategy. Replacement of failed whips within the re-planted areas has also been undertaken with a further 660 broadleaf trees planted this year. Re-grading of 230m of main track has also been completed to improve access for walkers.

Mowing of the fields north of Smithills Hall drive has been re-introduced in partnership with a local farmer. The aim is to improve the meadow habitat and herb species diversity through annual mowing and removal of hay.

Treatment of the pernicious weed Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) has been on-going with emphasis being on Local Nature Reserve sites. Sites treated last year (2012) will again be surveyed and targeted this year (2013), at:-

Brownstones Quarry LNR

Upper Bradshaw Valley LNR

Ousel Nest Quarry proposed LNR

Bridge Street, Horwich LNR