



Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 22nd April, 2021 at 2.00 pm in Zoom Virtual Meeting

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Lancashire County Council

Committee Members

County Councillor Susie Charles, Lancashire County Council
Councillor Joyce Pritchard, Lancaster City Council
Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Council
Matthew Upton, United Utilities
Helen Dix, Environment Agency
Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum
Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland
David Kelly, Ramblers Association
Chris Kynch, Lancashire Association of Local Councils (Parish Councils)
Ginny Hinton, Natural England

Officers

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council
Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Cathy Hopley, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Hugh Clear Hill, North Yorkshire County Council
Sam Gorton, Legal and Democratic Services, LCC
Sarah Robinson, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Robin Gray, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Sarah Dornan, Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, LCC

Apologies

Councillor John Browne, Preston City Council
Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association

David Hewitt, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Colin Hirst, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Richard Camp, Lancaster City Council
Neil Kilgour, Grosvenor Estate
Andrew Laycock, Craven District Council
Christina Marginson, Preston City 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 previously.

The following observers of the meeting were also in attendance:

- Dominic Hartley, Graduate Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, Lancashire County Council
- Katie Atkinson, Yorkshire CPRE

The Committee noted that this was the last meeting of the Chair and Deputy Chair, County Councillors Atkinson and Charles as they were both stepping down from Council business. Elliott Lorimer, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Manager, Lancashire County Council thanked them both on behalf of the Committee and for their contributions over the years.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

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

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 October 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Matt Upton, United Utilities provided an update on the Haweswater Aqueduct Replacement Programme. The project will construct a series of aqueduct pipelines, including two sections (Bowland and Marl Hill) affecting the AONB. Details of the scheme have been presented to the Committee in previous meetings in 2019. There is still a huge amount of work to do in terms of stakeholder engagement and working with landowners along the pipeline route. Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council informed members that three planning applications are expected to be submitted to the relevant local planning authorities soon and that there was also a planning application submitted to Lancashire County Council for a revision of the Waddington Fell Quarry restoration scheme to accommodate the arisings from the tunnelling work.

In terms of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) membership review, Elliott Lorimer was still pursuing this and would inform the Board of the outcomes at the next meeting in October 2021.

4. Partner Updates

Environment Agency

Helen Dix, Environment Agency informed the Board that technical staff had been involved in reviewing the early plans for the Haweswater Aqueduct Resilience Programme and particular interest for the Agency was around where the pipe would cross the rivers and mitigating for any flood risk for environmental impact to do with those river crossings.

It was also noted that there was a review of drought plans, including those from United Utilities and the Water Resources staff, and will be reviewing the water bank at Stocks Reservoir, that is released at a constant rate throughout. However, it is understood that there is a review as to whether there is a better way to discharge that water according to conditions.

Primrose Lodge is a project that the Ribble Rivers Trust has been leading on and the Environment Agency have been involved also and contributed funding towards the project, particularly towards a fish pass which has been constructed there, which will enable fish to pass beyond Primrose Lodge.

North Yorkshire Council

Hugh Clear Hill, North Yorkshire Council updated the Committee that County Councillor Richard Welch, had died earlier in the year sadly, and that a by-election was due to take place on 7 May 2021 and following that, a representative will be appointed to the Forest of Bowland Joint Advisory Committee (JAC).

Also, discussions on the Local Government Reorganisation were still ongoing. The formal consultation ended on 19 April 2021, with two basic proposals, North Yorkshire as a Unitary and the City of York and the other model proposed by six Districts was an East/West split. The current timeframe from the Government is that an announcement will be made in July 2021 with potentially the new Unitary structures to be in place April 2023.

Natural England

Ginny Hinton, Natural England informed the members, that it was also feeding into the Haweswater Aqueduct Resilience Programme as a regulator around conservation and protected sites.

A report was also presented on the Farm and Conservation Agri-Environment agreements in Bowland from last year. As a summary, work was carried out with landowners on three higher tier agreements covering 263 hectares of uplands, five hectares of grassland and 25 hectares of breeding wader habitat, as well as 5000 metres of boundary work which has a landscape impact and educational access. There was also an extension of 14 higher level stewardship agreements, which covers 2677 hectares and detailed condition assessments have been carried out in eight SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) meadow units and rapid assessments on a further 18 units, mainly in the uplands/fells area. There are also 24 higher tier applications for this year across Chester and Lancashire which will include locations in the Bowland area which will be progressed.

Wyre Borough Council

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council outlined that following some of the lockdown restrictions being eased, some face to face activities had taken place, mainly in the urban and coastal areas with health walks and rides with around 4-6 customers attending however, as the lockdown restrictions returned in the winter, again they ceased to operate. Again they recommenced in April with face to face activities with the rule of six set out by the Government and from April, the following will take place:

- Whimbrel watch
- Lapwing and hares walk
- Scorton health walk

Ways of working will be shared with the Festival Bowland Team on health and safety at the events that have taken place during Covid and it is hoped that as lockdown restrictions are eased, the number of activities can also be increased as well as attendance.

Due to the huge impact of a difficult winter due to the pandemic, a meeting took place with organisers of the Garstang Walking Festival and it was agreed that it should be moved from May to August bank holiday weekend. There will be some trial runs of Friends of Garstang Walking Festival taking place prior to the bank holiday.

The Committee were informed that no literature on the Wyre Great Outdoors has been produced this year, again due to the pandemic, however there is a monthly poster produced which will be shared with the Festival Bowland Team to be included in the Visit Bowland information.

Volunteers have been doing activities with the Ranger Team throughout the pandemic and these were very minimal and in-line with Government guidelines and mainly in a lone way. More volunteers are now doing activities in the rule of six (which includes staff) and experiences from this will be shared with the Forest of Bowland Team. As a result, recommencement of work has started on upgrading and repairing the Scorton Millennium Way, which is a permissive route on flood embankments that enable people to walk in from Garstang to Scorton.

Work on the Abbeystead Estate has continued and the way marking of the Wyre Way on how improvements can be made with the help of surveying from volunteers. An asset check is also be carried out on the Wyre Way which links people on recreational routes into the Forest of Bowland from the estuary and the coast.

Rural farmers, residents and businesses have been struggling with regards to the impact of Covid as well as staycation behaviour and unfortunately in public places there has been lots of litter found and damage done particularly fires either caused accidentally or deliberately. Work is ongoing with partners in Lancashire to get the right messages out to help encourage the correct behaviours of people visiting the countryside sites as well as the coastal areas.

United Utilities

Matt Upton, United Utilities updated the Committee on the Water Industry National Environment Programme which the team are heavily involved with currently in Bowland. Support is continuing with an ongoing University research project at York University to continue to look at restoration of blanket bog for bio-diversity reasons as well as carbon and raw water regulations. Alongside that, there is also an extensive programme of moorland restoration works on the United Utilities estates in Bowland. Survey work has commenced across the tenanted farms and will hopefully be completed in the next three months, where data will then be analysed as to where funding should be directed to address areas such as peat degradation, vegetation management improvement and generally improving the moorland around Bowland.

In addition, across all estates, and particularly the Bowland estate, there are tree planting opportunities to meet United Utilities commitments and carbon off-setting targets with a lot more investment in terms of planting and to meet wider initiatives and targets, reaching out to partners to help to deliver that.

Recreation has also proved to be a huge challenge in terms of anti-social behaviour which has put a lot of pressure on United Utilities around managing land holdings on the Estate, especially footpaths, fly-tipping, littering, moorland fires and it was of concern that this would only increase as further lockdown restrictions are lifted. An exercise on managing wildfires has recently been carried out at Longridge Fell with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service in dealing with moorland fires and links continue to be strengthened with the Service and partners to ensure preparedness in case of an incident.

The Board were informed that the RSPB reported that it appeared to be a further good season for hen harriers on the Bowland Estate and that several breeding pairs that had been seen in the area already.

5. Visitor Management During COVID19

Sarah Dornan, Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, Lancashire County Council gave a presentation which outlined some of the issues that had been experienced during the pandemic which included inconsiderate parking, particularly in the Pendle Hill area which has seen a huge increase in visitors. Visitor data captured for Pendle Hill, revealed that in March 2020 there was a sudden peak in visitors, and when the lockdown was announced, there was then a huge decline in visitors, and again when restrictions were lifted, approximately 400 visitors a day were recorded. The current average is between 200-300 per day and visitor numbers have remained high throughout the pandemic which has caused significant pressures.

Other issues noted were in relation to public rights of way, and information has been shared with residents and landowners to allow people access to the countryside and alleviate pressures for the landowners and farmers. Also, some of the infrastructure on the public rights of way has started to deteriorate and some replacement work has been carried out. Another aspect of increased visitor numbers was erosion on rights of way across the Forest of Bowland and again, work has been undertaken in getting communications out to the public to consider alternative routes and new areas to visit.

The Committee noted information that had been shared on the number Public Rights of Way complaints that had been received by Pendle Borough Council, particularly around road blockages at the start of the pandemic.

The response from the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Team was to get the message out as much as possible as local villages were suffering from pressures of increased visitor numbers visiting small rural areas. This has been done by producing a series of AONB branded posters outlining the Countryside Code and promoting via social media, informing the public of what was open/closed and encouraging people to go where there is space and if somewhere was full, to have a plan B or plan C to fall back on when visiting the countryside.

Social media messaging throughout has been in line with Government guidelines and encouraging people to either stay at home, at which point online webinars and talks on the landscape, wildlife and heritage of the AONB were offered as an alternative to visiting.

It was also noted, that due to the bad weather, work had to be carried out on easy access trails in Dunsop Bridge as well as other access issues and this was on top of the increased pressures the pandemic had brought.

Conversations have taken place with the RSPB and United Utilities around the Dunsop Valley and installed way markers and posts to help keep visitors on the footpath, particularly in the area known for nesting hen harriers.

The Lancashire Rural Task Force was set up at the start of 2021, which is a new branch of Lancashire Police who are working in rural areas and have been informed on various rural policing matters in the Forest of Bowland. This will be a really strong partnership for the future and working closely together in addressing rural crime and policing matters.

Discussions have been ongoing with the Abbeystead Estate, to provide training to the estate staff on visitor management, particularly since Lancashire Countryside Service stopped offering ranger patrols within the AONB.

There will be some more Countryside Code material that will be produced, particularly with more local information and looking to rebrand the litterbags and having Countryside Code messages printed on them, so people can help clear up.

For more information please contact Sarah Dornan, email sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk.

Following the presentation, a query was raised in terms of disposable BBQs as to what approaches were being taken due to the issues they were causing. Sarah Dornan confirmed that no approaches had been made, however this was something that could be considered and raised with the Lancashire Fire Operation Group for further discussion. Members also suggested that further education in using and disposing of BBQs or designated BBQ areas with water to dilute them may be beneficial alongside locally tailoring the messages through the Countryside Code in consultation with landowners and their concerns locally. Again, Sarah Dornan confirmed that there is a designated BBQ area on Beacon Fell, however the issue was policing it and people ignoring the signs that were on the Fell.

- Resolved:**
- i) That the presentation be noted.
 - ii) That further discussion on the use of disposable BBQs be had with the Lancashire Fire Operation Group.

6. AONB Partnership Budget

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council, presented the report as set out in the agenda papers, on the revised estimates 2021/2022. It was noted that in Appendix 'A', the sub-total of core costs should be £341,512 not £343,512 as detailed.

The report outlined the updated AONB Partnership budget for 2021/2022, which took account of the AONB grant funding settlement communicated by Defra in early April 2021.

The Defra AONB funding settlement for 2021/22 is £225,997, which represented a 'flat cash rollover' of the budget settlement for 2020/21. It was noted that this does not include an inflationary increase that had been the case over the previous three-year settlement.

The Committee were also informed that this updated budget would allow for an annual 'Projects' programme to the value of £54,784 to help deliver the AONB Management Plan. Wherever possible, the AONB Unit would seek to apply this 'Projects' funding as 'match' to attract and secure additional external funding (e.g. National Lottery Heritage Fund or Lancashire Environmental Fund).

Resolved: That the Committee noted the 2021/22 revised estimates.

7. AONB Unit Activity Report (Oct 2020 - April 2021)

AONB Unit Activity Report (October 2020 - April 2021)

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council updated the Committee on the Teams activities from the last six months. Further information on the activities, can be found in the report that had been circulated prior to the meeting on:

An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage

- Peatland Restoration
 - Celebrating 10 years of partnership work which has resulted in peat restoration equivalent to the size of 1000 football pitches
 - Moorland restoration continues with funding from the Environment Agency and Defra
- Bowland Hay Time
- Farming and Wildlife Advice
 - Pendle Hill Farmer Network completes third year of work - online
- Green Recovery Challenge Fund
- 'High Nature Value Farming in the Northern Upland AONBs' – Defra Environmental Land Management Test

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

- Discover Bowland Guide
- Sustainable Tourism Network

A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

- Champion Bowland
- Festival Bowland
- Social Prescribing
- Promoted Route Volunteers
- New Countryside Code
- Promoted Route and Countryside Access
- Parish Lengthsman
- Pendle Hill Partnership Scheme
- National Association for AONBs
- COVID-19

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership

Cathy Hopley, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Quarterly Progress Report for October – December 2020, Year 3 Quarter 3 and for January – March 2021, Year 3, Quarter 4, which was shared with the Committee prior to the meeting. The Committee noted that this programme was for four years and the first two years had been successful up to the start of the pandemic and a mid-term review had been conducted which stated that the Partnership were one of the most innovative, integrated and well-managed schemes that the Heritage Lottery Fund had worked with.

When the pandemic hit, the programme was hit badly as a lot of the work was engaging with communities, which has been curtailed in the last 14 months. It is also beginning to affect a lot of the contracting work in terms of supplies and is having an ongoing impact on the scheme. As a result of this, discussions are taking place with the National Lottery Heritage Fund in terms of extending the programme to include an extra summer and instead of finishing in March 2022, the scheme would finish in October 2022.

Nevertheless, work has continued with new ways of delivery, and this has been outlined in the Quarterly Progress Reports, Year 3, Quarters 3 and 4.

Cathy Hopley presented the JAC with some of the key successes from over the last three years of the scheme, which have included:

- Access work – repairing footpaths
- Trails – a new bridleway, Corona Highway which links Chatburn and Downham
- Lots of creative work – Mid Pennine Arts and Insitu Arts working with volunteers and artists trying to find new ways of working

- Mental Health Work, PEN Project – People Enjoying Nature, which is partnership work with the NHS and the Council
- Work has been carried out with 26 schools
- The Outdoor Learning Officer has run over 150 sessions and worked with over 5000 people in outdoor settings
- 13 young people have been placed into trainee placements and apprenticeships
- Created 15 hectares of woodland and manage five
- A huge piece of work creating peatland restoration
- The scheme has secured 91% of the target funding in raising £700,000 towards the scheme in match funding
- The target for volunteer hours is close to target and the gift in kind target has been exceeded
- Output recording is currently under way and figures will be available soon

Face to face volunteering is due to commence again on Sunday, 25 April 2021 and dry stone walling courses are recommencing again in June, July and August 2021 alongside two contracts to build walls around Pendle Hill. Plans are also ready on the new Trumper Trail from Sabden and Churn Clough that will be starting in the summer. There is also a major building project at Spring Wood with the County Council which will involve completely rebuilding the Visitor Centre. There are two new artist residencies online in the summer and the Food Foray will take place in September 2021 as well as a new Get into Walking Festival and there is an archaeology project restarting in April and May 2021.

Resolved: That the reports be noted.

9. Farming in Protected Landscapes

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council outlined a forthcoming programme for the AONB Partnership and the AONB Team, namely a 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' Programme. This was briefly referenced in the Government's agricultural transition plan.

The plan entitled 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024' outlines the eventual removal of Basic Payment Scheme and reform of Agri-Environment Schemes; to be replaced by an all-encompassing 'Environmental Land Management' system. This will seek to reward farmers and land managers for the provision of public goods (e.g. biodiversity, carbon, clean water, flood risk management).

The new policies and support payments are likely to be a significant departure from those of the EU's CAP, to which most farmers are accustomed. It is anticipated that farmers and land managers will need additional advice, support and guidance to assist them in this transition. In recognition of this, the Government outlined a programme entitled 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' offering additional support for farmers and land managers in AONBs and National Parks.

Since late December 2020, a small group of senior officers from several AONBs and National Parks has been working with Defra, the Rural Payments Agency and Natural England to development and agree the detail of this programme.

Defra plan to share full details of the programme imminently, and Elliott Lorimer updated the Committee, with what was known currently about the proposals, which were detailed further in the report circulated to members with the agenda.

Members were asked to note the implications for the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership and Elliott Lorimer detailed some of the key implications for the AONB Partnership and Unit of the proposed 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' Programme which were:

- Oversight and scrutiny role for the Joint Advisory Committee on programme management
- Recruitment of staff team to manage and administer the programme and support applicants in project development
- Liaison with Lancashire County Council as host authority and accountable body for the AONB Partnership
- Appointment of grant panel (or panels) to make decisions on applications and grant awards
- Promote the programme to all farmers and land managers within the AONB

The Committee were informed that to facilitate the timely rollout of this programme, the AONB Manager is required to begin working up a local delivery plan and commence recruitment of staff and grant panel members before the next Committee meeting in October 2021. There were delays due to the pandemic and the confirmation of funding is still awaited. Scoping work was also being undertaken with the Farmer Network at Myerscough College and that further information on this would be brought to a future meeting.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- i) Noted the report.
- ii) Offered approval for the AONB Manager to commence preparation and planning for the delivery of the programme when full details were forthcoming from Defra.
- iii) Requested a further report on the scoping work with the Farmer Network be brought to a future meeting of the JAC.

10. NAAONB Art in the Landscape Strategy

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council reported on a piece of work that has been carried out by the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) to galvanise action that enables people to experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.

A request was made to the Forest of Bowland AONB to endorse and approve the strategy which was summarised in the report provided to members prior to the meeting and can also be found in full [on the NAAONB website](#).

This aims and objectives of this national strategy are reflected in the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan as follows:

Objective 2.4 Community Engagement and Volunteering

Support local communities and businesses to become more involved in activities and projects to conserve, enhance and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the AONB:

- ✓ Action 2.4D - Deliver and support community engagement through the arts and other creative industries, particularly via Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, which includes The Gatherings, Pendle Radicals and PendleFolk.

Objective 3.3 Discovering and Learning

Provide opportunities to discover and learn about the special qualities of the AONB by connecting people with nature, culture and landscape:

- ✓ Action 3.3A - Organise, support and promote an annual Festival Bowland programme of AONB and partner-led events for both visitors and local communities.
- ✓ Action 3.3F - Deliver 'outreach' activities to encourage a more diverse range of people to learn about, engage with and visit the AONB, particularly through Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership projects and activity.

Objective 3.4 Health and Wellbeing

Provide opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing by connecting with nature, culture and landscape:

- ✓ Action 3.4B – Deliver projects and activities in the AONB that deliver health and wellbeing outcomes.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- i) Noted the report.
- ii) Approved the formal adoption of this national strategy and the participation in national activities and project development by the AONB unit

11. Urgent Business

The Chair thanked everybody for their support over the years, particularly County Councillor Susie Charles and officers in the Forest of Bowland AONB Unit and wished everybody well with future meetings of the Forest of Bowland AONB JAC.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on:

21 October 2021 in Craven, venue tbc

21 April 2022 in Ribble Valley, venue tbc

Samantha Gorton
Democratic Services

Lancashire County Council
County Hall
Preston