



Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 19th October, 2023 at 2.00 pm in
Roughlee Village Centre, Roughlee, Nelson, BB9 6NR**

Present:

Chair

County Councillor Shaun Turner, Lancashire County Council

Committee Members

County Councillor Simon Myers, North Yorkshire Council
Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Borough Council
Helen Dix, Environment Agency
Andrew Taylor, Bowland Land Managers Forum
Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland
David Kelly, Ramblers Association
Sonja Ludwig, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
James Cooper, Natural England

Officers

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Lucy Henwood, Preston City Council
Timothy Johns, North Yorkshire Council
Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Sandra Silk, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit
Sam Gorton, Legal and Democratic Services, LCC
Sarah Robinson, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit

Apologies

County Councillor Matthew Maxwell-Scott, Lancashire County Council
County Councillor Ged Mirfin, Lancashire County Council
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Elms, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Cllr Anna Hindle, Preston City Council
Councillor Ruth Colbridge, Lancaster City Council
Colin Price, Yorkshire Local Councils Association
Marilyn Pilkington, Friends of Bowland

Neil Kilgour, Moorland Association
Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council
David Hewitt, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Richard Camp, Lancaster City Council
Andrew Laycock, North Yorkshire Council
Alex Shutt, Ribble Valley Borough 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 as noted.

The Committee noted that Michael Leah had replaced Liz Small, North Yorkshire Council.

Alternates for this meeting were:

Timothy Johns for Michael Leah, North Yorkshire Council
Sonja Ludwig for Robin Horner, RSPB

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Resolved: County Councillor Shaun Turner and County Councillor Matthew Maxwell-Scott were appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests

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

4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the constitution, membership and terms of reference.

It was suggested that the Ribble Rivers Trust be approached to join the Committee and Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council approach the Trust with regards to appointing a representative as well as to invite them to present at a future meeting the work they are currently involved with and future projects in Lancashire.

Resolved: (i) That the Committee approved the constitution, membership and terms of reference for 2023/24.
(ii) That Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council approach the Ribble Rivers Trust to discuss representation on the Committee and also invite them to provide an update on the work they are currently undertaking and have planned for the future.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 April 2023

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council provided a brief update on the Haweswater Aqueduct Resilience Programme's (HARP) current position. A request had been made by MP Nigel Evans to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to call-in the two decisions made by Ribble Valley Borough Council in July 2023; however, it was not called-in, and the position is currently that the local authorities are progressing with drawing up a Section 106 agreement.

Elliott Lorimer has been in discussion with United Utilities with regards to timescales and now that works have been consented, United Utilities agreed to consider a Planning Performance Agreement in order that the AONB can manage the burden and that will be progressed by Elliott Lorimer with the Local Planning Authorities.

United Utilities are in the process of procuring the design and build contractor for the project and is expected to conclude late 2024 and then following, the discharge in conditions will commence. It is envisaged that commencement of works will be towards the end of 2025.

Resolved: (i) That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record.
(ii) That the update on the Haweswater Aqueduct Resilience Programme be noted.

6. Brief Partner Updates

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Sonja Ludwig, RSPB provided the following update:

Support for breeding farmland waders

- Annual report for breeding waders being written up, will be shared with partners before Christmas.
- 2023 Breeding season Results
 - 69 farms monitored, with 6% increase in survey area from 2022.
 - Estimated numbers (to be finalised) are:
Curlew 322 pairs, Lapwing 216 pairs, Oystercatcher 135 pairs, Redshank 28 pair, Snipe 56 pairs.
 - Better breeding season generally in 2023, after low point in 2022. Likely down to more favourable weather, possibly survey effort, and possible benefits of positive habitat management.
 - Nest monitoring and protection: 28 nests monitored (18 Curlew, four Oystercatcher, one Redshank, one Snipe). 19 hatched successfully. Causes of nest failure include predation by fox, carrion crow, rat, stoat and trampling by livestock. Nine nests fenced with electrified predator exclusion fencing, six of these hatched, two predated by carrion crow, one abandoned before fencing.
 - Other work includes funding applications through Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) and Natural England (NE) for habitat improvement work and further monitoring of nests and curlew chicks. Also,

ongoing advice for farmers on Countryside Stewardship (CS), Capital Grant, Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) applications. Ongoing advice with partners on suitability of woodland creation.

Bird of prey monitoring

Upland breeding raptors had been monitored on the United Utilities estate in partnership with United Utilities and their tenants. Hen harriers had another successful breeding season; breeding numbers were lower compared to the record-breaking season in 2022 but chick survival was higher. Nine nesting attempts had been recorded by eight females, of which seven were successful and fledged a total of 32 young. For the fourth year in a row, hen harriers also nested successfully on private estates (two nesting attempts, one of which fledged two chicks). However, both nests were located outside the Bowland Fells SPA, which has dropped again below the number of breeding pairs that it was designated for (12 pairs).

2023 was also a good year for merlin (seven pairs, four successful fledging 11 young) and short-eared owls (six pairs). However, none of the three territorial peregrine pairs was successful, which is only the second time in over 30 years that no peregrine chicks fledged from the United Utilities estate.

In addition, RSPB staff and volunteers helped to collate records for the breeding bird atlas of the Lancashire and District Bird Watching Society in Tetrads on the United Utilities Estate. This survey will continue in 2024.

Environment Agency (EA)

Helen Dix, Environment Agency (EA) reported that there is currently a fund of £25 million that has been announced by DEFRA and managed through the EA for natural flood risk management and is inviting bids. There are no specific thresholds however, they are expecting single site projects in the order of around £250,000 with a catchment approach of up to £2.5 million. It is foreseen that all three Rivers Trusts will be submitting bids and if they are successful will be within the AONB. Deadline for expressions of interest is 10 November 2023 and then projects that pass that phase will be invited to the next stage.

Wyre Borough Council

Councillor John Ibison, Wyre Borough Council informed the Committee that he had attended a recent meeting of the Brock and Calder Farm Cluster. Dr Heather Stott, River Wyre Trust is co-ordinating an application to the Natural Flood Risk Management fund which will cover approximately 50 hectares of which there are over 22 farms/land managers involved. Work will involve natural flood management and will improve environmental and farming practices.

It was also noted that Councillor John Ibison had been involved with a group at Calder Vale who had recently received funding from Electricity North West and are looking at alternative carbon friendly methods of electricity of which they are progressing and are looking at having a small community heat group that will be heated by borehole and heat pumps, which will be a first in the country.

Councillor John Ibison also attended a lecture held by the Friends of Bowland and reported that it was an enjoyable and interesting talk and sent his compliments to the Friends of Bowland.

Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council had shared an update in her absence and following the meeting, would be circulated to the Committee. The report included:

- The Councils planning, public realm and community teams are finalising the combined Green Infrastructure Audit and Strategy with the Sports Pitch Strategy and Public Open Space Audit and are pulling together the consultation feedback received this summer.
- Wyre's team have supported the Wyre Rivers Trust Catchment partnership and landowners in their work to develop landscape scale partnerships.
- The Wyre Coast and Countryside team continue to patrol and care for popular picnic areas, concessionary paths, and public rights of ways and access areas removing litter, fly-tipping and updating site information and habitat management. Leading and checking out guided walk routes.
- Volunteers have undertaken leaky dam works with the Wyre Rivers Trust team on the Wyre catchment and footpath repairs in Grizedale, Brock and Grizedale Valleys.
- Volunteering for April – October in Forest of Bowland AONB, 850 Volunteer Days = 3879 Volunteer Hours.
- Wyre Great Outdoors in Festival Bowland - It has been a busy year with good attendances for April – October in the AONB with 564 taking part in short walks and conservation activities in the Wyre Great Outdoors and 547 taking part in the Bowland locations of the Garstang Walking Festival, both part of the Festival Bowland Programme and promoted on the Festival Bowland website.
- Garstang Walking Festival, 5-14 May 2023 - The festival was a great success and is supported by Wyre and coordinated and led by the Friends of Garstang Walking Festival whose commitment to developing a quality experience and showcasing the landscape and habitats of Wyre is exceptional. Customers included visitors from overseas as well as the UK (through connections with family and friends) who planned their visits to Wyre to coincide with the festival. Many of the walks were fully booked. Walks took place in many locations throughout Wyre and locations in Bowland included Garstang, Bleasdale, Calder Vale, Scorton, Dunsop Bridge and Langden Intake. Customers were able to book for the first time via Ticket Tailor, an on-line booking system, supported by the great outdoors booking team based in Poulton and Garstang. In-person support was given by the Friends of the Garstang Walking Festival who were on hand at Garstang Library to provide help to customers not used to booking on-line.
- The trained walk leaders were mainly Wyre walk volunteers and Festival Friends with staff support from Wyre Coast and Countryside team, Wyre Rivers Trust, and Garstang Library. The Festival this year also incorporated the Wyre Coronation Walk where an additional 400 people took part in a mass participation walk (led by a band of musicians) as a part of the coronation weekend, the walk and performance events took place in Cherestanc Square, on the Riverside Picnic Area and Garstang Millennium Green coordinated by the council's events team and it helped to celebrate and promote the value of volunteering in the community. Popular walks in the festival included "To Grizedale and back" and "Geology of Bowland" and the "Wyre Way" long distance walk finishing at Abbeystead. For the first time a festival celebration meal was held on the last day at Bleasdale Parish Hall with food supplied by local caterers which was well supported by walk leaders and customers. Feedback from customers was

overwhelmingly positive with participants really enjoying the enthusiasm, kindness, and knowledge of the leaders.

Resolved: Sam Gorton, Democratic Services, Lancashire County Council would circulate the report from Alison Boden, Wyre Borough Council to the Committee.

North Yorkshire Council

Timothy Johns, North Yorkshire Council spoke about the local nature recovery strategy, which is a huge project and recapped that North Yorkshire Council is now one authority, where seven districts have merged with the County Council to form the Unitary and local government review continues within. North Yorkshire Council was appointed in June 2023 to carry out the local nature recovery strategy and funding was confirmed shortly afterwards. The governance structures are being set up with North Yorkshire Council as the responsible authority with four supporting authorities – the two National Parks, City of York and Natural England. There is also an Advisory (Steering) Group of which Forest of Bowland Joint Advisory Committee have a seat. An away day was held in September 2023 for the Advisory Group, and it will meet monthly throughout the process as well as several Task and Finish Groups (Species and Habitats, Data and Mapping, Public Consultation and Land Management). Elliott Lorimer, National Landscape, Lancashire County Council informed the Board that a parallel process was also ongoing in Lancashire and involved Lancashire County, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Councils and are working to the same timescales and are working cross boundaries also.

Bowland Land Managers Forum

Andrew Taylor, reported on the Forest of Bowland Farmer Group and how successful it had been to date, with a further report in the AONB Activity Report at Item 11 and that those involved were happy with the group and what they were getting from that involvement.

Champion Bowland

Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland updated the Board on the promotional activities that were currently taking place and reminded members what Champion Bowland came about through the Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism initiative which commenced in 2006 and developed gradually through that network and is now a chartered incorporated organisation and regulated by the Charity Commission and managed by seven volunteer trust organisations, four of whom are local tourism operators. They are an independent charity, and the main purpose is to offer grants up to £750 to promote, for the benefit of the public, the conservation, heritage, and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and advance the education of the public in these areas. Further information can be found on the website <https://www.championbowland.org.uk/>. Champion Bowland also owns and operate the Discover Bowland Website <https://www.discoverbowland.uk/>. Donations are welcomed and monies have also been received as part of the Pendle Hill Legacy Fund which again are used for projects in the AONB. Fundraising also takes place and the Chair agreed to speak with Mike Pugh outside of the meeting regards to funding that may be available from the Legends Car Rally.

Resolved: That the Chair speak with Mike Pugh, Champion Bowland regarding possible funding streams available.

Following all the updates from Partners, it was:

Resolved: That the Committee noted the updates.

7. AONB Management Plan Review

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the AONB Management Plan Review report as the 2019-2024 plan is now due for review. The report provided the context for the Review and an outlined methodology and timetable for consideration by the Committee. It is intended that the final draft plan will be completed by the end of March 2025. Further details on the following can be found in the report, which was attached to the agenda:

- Introduction
- National Guidance on AONB Management Plan Reviews
- The Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan
- Outline Methodology Timetable

James Cooper, Natural England commented that draft Management Plan review guidance had been issued approximately six weeks ago and was launched at the National AONB's conference at the beginning of September 2023. Since then, there has been further discussions made and the guidance is being reviewed based on the positive feedback that has been received. There are also national targets that the Secretary of State is poised to sign off on and are to be incorporated into the Management Plan as well as a reform to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Resolved: That the Committee reviewed the report, offered comments and approved the initial methodology and timetable outlined.

8. Written Ministerial Statement, Defra Secretary of State, 13 September 2023

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council alluded to the Ministerial Statement that had been tabled on 13 September 2023 by the Defra Secretary of State which set out a package of measures to support nature recovery on Protected Landscapes. The plans were also announced in the Lords by Lord Benyon. The Committee received a report which was attached to the agenda and provided a briefing on the Statement and further information on:

- Background
- Roundtable
- Third Reading of Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill – where the government's amendment to the Bill was to enhance AONB and National Park Management Plans was passed.

Resolved: That the Committee received the briefing and offered comments, particularly considering the potential implications for partner local authorities represented on the Joint Advisory Committee.

9. National Landscape Rebrand

Elliott Lorimer and Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council provided a report which set out the final stages of a national initiative to rebrand AONBs as National Landscapes, including the anticipated outcomes from the rebrand and the implementation of the new name and visual identity. Further information in the report that was attached to the agenda can be found on:

- Background
- Anticipated Outcomes from Rebranding
- Implementing the Rebrand

A decision has been taken by Defra and the National Association for AONBs to launch the rebrand nationally and locally on 22 November 2023. All AONB Partnerships will also be involved in this launch at their local level, with the national launch coordinated by the National Association for AONBs (which will be renamed the National Landscapes Association at the same time).

The Forest of Bowland AONB team will be working with local partner organisations in advance of the November launch to make them aware of the change. There will be local media news releases about “Forest of Bowland National Landscape” for the launch day and there will also be a change to online presence (website, social media, etc.) to reflect the new visual identity. The launch will be used to set out very positive messages about the Forest of Bowland’s landscape, wildlife, heritage and people.

Resolved: That the Committee received and offered comments and advice on the best way to share the new name with both local people and visitors; on how to make the most of these opportunities; and on any risks and how best to manage them.

10. Revised Estimates 2023/24 and Revenue Budget 2024/25

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the report as set out in the agenda papers.

The report outlines the core budget provision for the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee which is funded by seven constituent local authority partners and grant income from Defra, which is also enhanced by additional contribution from United Utilities.

The Committee were informed that a core team is established from this budget provision to assist in the delivery of the statutory AONB Management Plan on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee and the local authorities.

In terms of the Revenue Budget for 2024/25, it was proposed that there be a modest increase (equivalent to approximately 5%) in contributions from funding authorities and in

addition the estimates also include a similar increase in the contribution from United Utilities, matching the level requested of district/borough councils. The increase is proposed to partially address the inflationary pressures the AONB Partnership has been experiencing over recent years.

Resolved: That the Committee:

- (i) Noted the 2023/24 Revised Estimates.
- (ii) Approved the proposed 2024/25 Revenue Budget as set out in the report, noting the proposed request for a modest increase in local authority and other partner contributions.
- (iii) Subject to approval of (ii) above, the AONB Manager requests the funding authorities make appropriate provision in their revenue budgets for financial year ending 2024/25.

11. AONB Unit Activity Report (April-October 2023)

Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council presented the AONB Team Report that had been tabled and would be circulated to members after the meeting.

The Committee were requested to contact officers as detailed in the report, if they had any questions/comments, requests for more information, outside of the meeting.

Resolved: That the report noted.

12. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme

Sarah Robinson, Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), Forest of Bowland AONB Unit, Lancashire County Council provided an update on the programme which has been running from July 2021 and will end in March 2025 and forms part of the Defra post-Brexit Agricultural Transition Plan. The Committee received a detailed presentation which would be circulated following the meeting and contained further information on the following:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
- Funding allocation
- Enquiries, applications, and agreements
- Projects underway
 - Bracken management at Croasdale
 - Access for All
 - Lawkland Hall Farm reed bed
 - Pasture for Life
 - The Country Trust
 - Wader monitoring equipment
- FiPL Programme Team

The Committee noted the increase in the project delivery budget for 2024/25 to £1,557,240. In 2023/24 it was £1,050,235 of which 97% was allocated for the current year.

In terms of enquiring, applications, and agreements the Committee were informed that there had been:

- 251 enquiries
- 228 farms contacted
- 115 applications received
- 106 agreements in place
- 25 projects completed

The Committee was asked to appoint the FiPL Local Assessment Panel members for 2023/24.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Committee noted the update.
 - (ii) That the Committee appointed the current members of the FiPL Local Assessment Panel to continue as members for 2023/24 and the Chair and Deputy Chair will be appointed at the next Panel Meeting.

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business received.

14. Date of Next Meeting

18 April 2024, Preston district, venue to be confirmed.

10 October 2024, North Yorkshire, venue to be confirmed.

Samantha Gorton
Democratic Services

Lancashire County Council
County Hall
Preston