



**Forest of
Bowland
National
Landscape**

JAC Team Report October 2023 to April 2024

An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage

Nature Recovery Plan

The National Landscape team has been working with landowners, farmers and conservation groups to design a roadmap to restore these landscapes, improve habitats for wildlife and harness the area's valuable natural assets to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

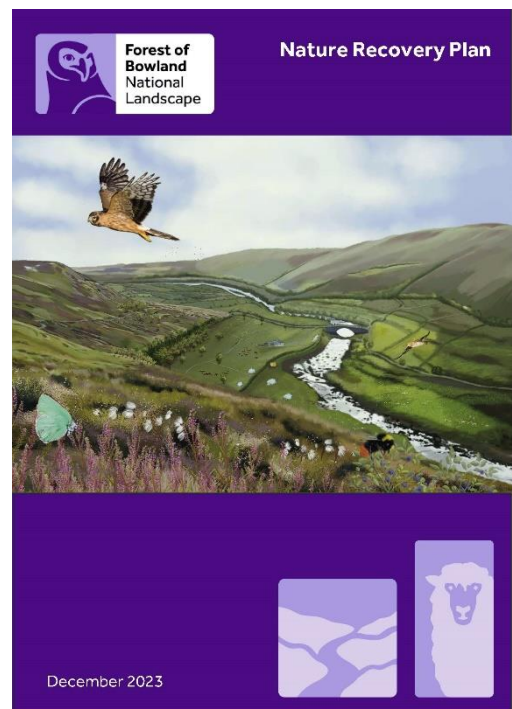
The plan will inform county-wide strategies currently being developed by Lancashire County Council and North Yorkshire Council – ensuring it contributes to a bigger, better and a more joined up Nature Recovery Network across the north of England.

It's also part of a nationwide Nature Recovery Network that creates a proactive framework for delivery by the National Landscape Partnerships, landowners, farmers, land managers, businesses and communities.

By improving the quality of the habitats and the connections between them, the plan outlines how Bowland's diverse landscapes can support thriving populations of 14 'champion' species including the hen harrier, black grouse, brown long-eared bat and brown trout.

The conservation priorities between now and 2040 are to make Bowland's precious habitats bigger, better and more joined up.

To download a copy of the plan visit: www.forestofbowland.com/nature-recovery



Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme

The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL), originally a 3-year programme, is now entering its fourth and final year with 1.5 million to allocate to projects this financial year in the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The team have already allocated over half of this budget with plenty more applications to process and are hoping to be fully allocated by the end of the summer.

Laura Simpson is a new full-time member to the team who joined in November, filling Emily's previous role of Programme Assistant. The whole team are now



responding to the massive response they have received from farmers and land managers across the National Landscape to help facilitate projects which deliver for climate, nature, people, and place.

As of the 25th March 2024, the programme has received 280 expressions of interest, 131 applications submitted and 116 agreements are either live or have been completed. A list of successful projects can be found on our webpage:

www.forestofbowland.com/farming-protected-landscapes

Some examples include:

NATURE:

- Hay Meadow Restoration through support of YDMT Hay time Project Officer.
- 9,819 metres of hedgerow restoration and 17,289 metres of newly planted hedgerows completed or committed throughout the programme.
- Monitoring of wading birds through a project facilitated by the RSPB.



CLIMATE:

- Funding for *Pasture For Life* to deliver a groundbreaking farmer to farmer mentoring project to enable more farmers within the Forest of Bowland to reduce their inputs of fertiliser and fuel by moving to more regenerative farming.
- Partnership project with Ribble Rivers Trust to reduce local flood risk through the installation of large leaky dams to improve natural flood management.



PEOPLE:

- 458 educational access visits completed or committed throughout the programme.
- Installation of a more accessible classroom and bathroom facilities and purchase of all-terrain wheelchairs for farms offering group visits.



PLACE:

- Restoring an old stone barn back to its former glory to be used as an agricultural farm building.
- 2,846 metres of stone-faced bank and stone wall restoration completed or committed through the programme.



Forest of Bowland Farmer Group

The Forest of Bowland farmer group has been granted another year's worth of funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, and so will continue to run until March 2025.

Since it began in March 2023, the group co-ordinator Nichola has delivered four 'on farm' meetings, all of which have been well attended with a variety of members at each one. The four topics were 'Regenerative Agriculture', 'Nature-Friendly Farming in Bowland', 'Water, Woodlands and Natural Flood Management' and 'Farming and working with Waders'.



By working with local contacts including the Rural Task Force, RSPB and Rivers Trusts, Nichola has been able to keep the group informed of any relevant farming news, including local rural crime notifications, grants and funding opportunities, and any local training or events etc, by sending out emails as and when necessary. The quarterly e-newsletters (five sent to date) have also pulled together farming information both locally and nationally.

The group has now gained 104 'farmer' members and 15 'other' members who have a connection to farming within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, and Nichola will soon be distributing some new flyers to the local auctions/farm suppliers to encourage further sign-ups over the next year.

There are now six further meetings in the pipeline, again with varying topics including 'Woodlands, Wood Pasture and Orchard creation', 'Dry stone walling gapping up training sessions', 'Farm resilience through diversification', and 'Raising awareness of mental health in agriculture'.

For further information email nichola.gill@lancashire.gov.uk

Quernmore and Conder Valley – Landscape Enhancement Initiative

Winter and early spring have seen National Grid LEI-funded projects in the Crook o' Lune, Quernmore and Ellel areas continue.

Year 3 of the programme has seen 600m of hedge planting/gapping, over 800m of hedge laying and 100m of dry stone wall refurbishment completed.

Work will continue during 2024-2025, with a focus on identifying small woodland planting sites and locations for tree cages.

For further information email sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk



Traditional Boundaries

A long-standing programme in Bowland, our Traditional Boundaries work continued during winter 2023 and spring this year.

Hedge laying training took place in Downham, Ribble Valley, on the 11th and 12th November and 10th March, with two days of tuition at the popular Crook o' Lune, Lancaster, on the 16th and 17th November. In all, there were 30 attendances over these three events.

The Lancashire & Westmorland Hedge Laying Association recently took the decision to reduce the number of competitions in their "Grand Prix" series to just two, and Bowland – along with the event held in Westmorland – was chosen as one of the locations.



The Bowland Celebration of Hedges took place on Saturday 16th March, kindly hosted, once again, by the Downham Estate. 25 participants took part in four classes on the day, with styles ranging from our local Lancashire & Westmorland, to demonstrations of both the Cheshire and Welsh styles. Thanks go to the LWHA for organising and overseeing the day.

For further information contact sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

Regenerative Agriculture and Net Zero: North Yorkshire research

Working with 4 other protected landscapes in North Yorkshire we have embarked on a major piece of research funded by the new combined mayoral authority, and Lancashire County Council, to establish a baseline of carbon emissions from agriculture and to assess the impact that a transition to regenerative practices may have on the region's goal of Net Zero.



Regenerative farming is a developing scene, aiming to regenerate the soil by adopting practices to increase fertility, improve structure and reduce erosion and compaction. It has also been touted as a way to decarbonise the food system and to provide resilience to climate shocks. Here in Bowland we have supported a number of farms to develop regenerative practice, with support and mentoring supplied via the FiPL programme.

There is, however, little data available on its long-term impact on carbon in hill farming scenarios; plus conflicting evidence on its potential impact, or scale of impact, on reducing emissions. Our research intends to establish a baseline of emissions and to draw together existing studies into the impact of regenerative practice as an authoritative study.

The research will also include the economic impacts of transitioning to this new practice and explore how it can work in harmony with nature recovery.

A steering group comprising representatives from the protected landscapes have appointed consultants' consortium, Cumulus Fera to undertake the work. Initially they will use nationally available data sets to estimate the total carbon (and equivalent) emissions from agricultural activity

– largely hill farming but also some arable production in the Howardian Hills and North York Moors. This will be backed up with information from farm scale carbon audits. Over the next 6-9 months the study will look at how changes in farming practice could support the drive to net zero and draw up a report and action plan. The work will be supported by an expert advisory panel and a number of consultations with farmers and other stakeholders.

Our overall aim is to produce a compelling argument for a transition to regenerative agriculture in the protected landscapes. This will include a strong call for support for the continuation and development of financial support to farmers, plus a well-funded farm advisory service hosted by the protected landscapes. The report will feed into our next Management Plan and future funding applications.

For more information, please contact cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk or sarah.robinson@lancashire.gov.uk

Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Eco Escapes

Following the development work during 2023 to produce 12 Eco Escapes itineraries, we've now produced a high-quality leaflet to showcase the 12 bespoke itineraries to help visitors make the most of their time in Bowland's outstanding natural landscape. Each itinerary focuses on a different area or aspect of the Eco Escapes offer, from walking and cycling adventures to railway walks and foodie tours. Eco Escapes are about slowing down, taking time and tuning into the slower rhythms of nature. They are about relaxing, resetting and reconnecting with the natural world more sustainably.

We've also spent some time updating the database and content on the website and have developed an interactive [active travel map](#) for visitors to easily plan their next Eco Escape, linked to the business offer:

www.discoverbowland.uk/activities/ecoescapes/map/

For further information please contact hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

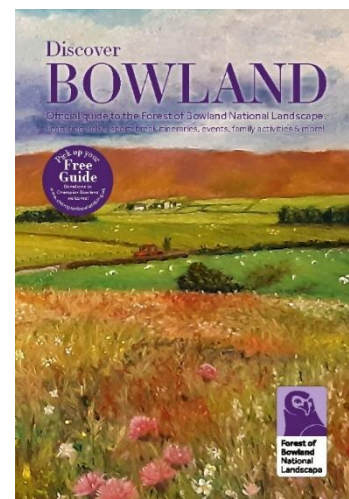


A Diamond Year to Discover Bowland

2024 marks 60 years since the designation of the Forest of Bowland as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and coincides with celebrating our new name as a National Landscape, making this a fantastic year to explore and enjoy this beautiful area.

As the Forest of Bowland launches its 2024 'Discover Bowland Guide', rural businesses in the area's Sustainable Tourism Network are emphasising the year-round appeal of this beautiful area and a warm welcome for everyone.

As well as offering practical advice and information on making the most of holidays and short breaks in the area, the Discover Bowland Guide also highlights the increasingly diverse tourism options in the amazing landscapes of the Forest of Bowland.



From year-round favourites like walking and cycling, to exploring the night skies, food tourism and the therapeutic benefits of being in nature, the new Guide is packed with useful tips and practical information.

The 116-page Discover guide also includes features about the fantastic work of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Team. Find out about new peatland restoration practices, volunteer bumble bee helpers, nature recovery plans and new developments to break down barriers to accessing the countryside.



This year's guide was launched at Wild Fox Distillery, Inglewhite on 8th February and was attended by members of the Bowland Sustainable Tourism Business network, who enjoyed a morning of networking and finding out about more inclusive and accessible tourism.

Printed in a durable perfect-bound pocket-friendly format, the guide is widely available at tourist information centres, hospitality and accommodation providers and other outlets across the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The guide is also available to download online at

www.forestofbowland.com/discover-bowland-guide-0

For further information please contact hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

A Strong Connection Between People & the Landscape

Days to Remember

Days to Remember is the umbrella name for a series of AONB projects which aim to support and encourage older people, including those living with dementia, to keep connected to nature.

Following a successful visit earlier in the autumn, Northwood Farm in Higham hosted a further visit on 24th November; this time with a group of residents and staff from Park Grove, a residential care home in Burscough.

13th December saw Jennifer Reid, performer of 19th century Lancashire dialect and Victorian broadside ballads, visit Age UK Lancashire's cognitive stimulation therapy group in Burnley. During the session, Jenn sang her traditional songs, whilst sharing a hand loom weaving activity with participants.

The opportunities for keeping connected to nature were highlighted in a talk given to Lancashire County Council's Fylde and Wyre Activities Forum held in Lytham on 24th January.



For more information email sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

Festival Bowland

The annual Bowland Dark Skies Festival took place once again during February half-term, with stargazing talks, photography tips, family crafts – even a dark-skies inspired food tour – all on the menu this year. The spring period is always a busy time in the programme, and this year is no exception. Earthworms - fascinating, yet under-appreciated annelids! – feature in April, along with river dipping, bird watching, easy access walks and forest bathing.



International Dawn Chorus Day is being celebrated at two locations - Garstang and Gisburn Forest - over the weekend of the 4th and 5th May; or why not brush up on your bumblebee ID skills (or pottery skills!) instead?

Garstang Walking Festival is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, which makes 2024 a great time to explore this lovely part of Bowland.

Event details can be found at: www.forestofbowland.com/festival-bowland

For further information email sandra.silk@lancashire.gov.uk

Diamonds in the Landscape

Originally designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1964, the Forest of Bowland celebrates 60 years this year, with a brand new name – Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

To mark this special anniversary, we have curated a photography exhibition entitled, *Diamonds in the Landscape*, which was launched at Clitheroe Castle Museum on 9th February.

Entries for the exhibition have been chosen from images submitted to the National Landscape Partnership's Diamonds in the Landscape Competition, which took place during autumn last year.

From far-reaching moorland vistas and stunning wildlife shots, to majestic woodlands and atmospheric pastoral scenes, the talented photographers have perfectly captured the variety and beauty of the Bowland landscape.

The exhibition will be available in the Stewards Gallery at Clitheroe Castle until 28th April, before moving to The Folly, in Settle, on May 4th.



Nature Calling

The Forest of Bowland has been included as one of just 6 national landscapes in a major new £2million national arts programme: Nature Calling. This is funded by the Arts Council and Defra and led by the National Landscapes Association with support from Activate Arts and the Poetry School.

This ambitious programme was inspired by the creative work that many protected areas have been involved in recently, including ourselves with our 50th Anniversary works and the creative strand included in the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership. In response, the National Landscapes Association drew up an Arts Strategy, and a Memorandum of Understanding with Arts Council England was signed in 2021, followed by our successful bid for Nature Calling in 2023.



The aim of Nature Calling is to listen to our communities and ensure our landscapes are a place for everyone. It will engage new audiences across England and inspire the whole National Landscapes family, whilst bringing the special qualities of our National Landscapes to the fore.

The Forest of Bowland is represented on the national steering group and will act as a 'hub location' hosting two artists of national importance: one this summer and another next year. The first commission is based around words, and here in Bowland we will focus our engagement on young people. The second artist or company will be inspired by the initial work to develop a follow on creative work which will form part of a national season in 2025.

We will also work with 6 'spoke protected landscapes' comprising northern national landscapes and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. We aim to support their staff developing creative activity and to offer training and support in engaging under-served communities.

We are tasked locally with raising £20,000 over the life of the programme to match the nationally raised funds. £5000 has already been secured from the Pendle Hill legacy fund and although we have underwritten the balance from project funds we will also look at local fundraising opportunities to fill the gap.

The call for artists is now open and details can be seen at <https://www.forestofbowland.com/nature-calling>

For more information, please contact cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Access for All

Over the last 6 months we have partnered with [Access the Dales](#) to explore making the inaccessible accessible and to break down the barriers that prevent people living with disabilities enjoying the great outdoors, either independently or with their friends and family.

The Forest of Bowland now has a number of hub locations across the National Landscape where all-terrain wheelchairs are available to hire and can be used along designated trails. New sites include Wood End Farm, New Laund Farm, Sabden and the existing Tramper which is available to hire from Gisburn Forest cafe. This has provided an important link between the Removing Barriers funding and Farming in Protected Landscapes as it enables us to advise and support FiPL



applicants in improving access to their farms either by provision of All Terrain Wheelchairs or improving the infrastructure so that visitors are able to have a more obstruction free visit to the Forest of Bowland.

For further information visit: www.forestofbowland.com/access-all

We're excited to be continuing this work with Access the Dales and we are planning to host a 2-day event - **25 to 26 June at Gisburn Forest, 'Access for All - A Celebration of What is Possible'**. For further information visit: www.forestofbowland.com/access-all-event

For further information email hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk or sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk

Removing Barriers: Access for All Funding

The three-year funding stream Removing Barriers Access for All was designed to be a planning year during year two which is drawing to a close, but due to a change there has been some additional funds offered to us in year two. This has allowed the purchase of two Paratrekers, a robust non powered wheelchair ideal for use with schools who wish to involve disabled children in their school trip and activities. These are being hosted at Woodend Farm as part of their accessible offer to visitors but are available for other potential sites who wish to try them before ordering their own.



Other projects included in this year's funding include additional works to the Sabden Trampler trail and bridleway which provides a bigger accessible loop and in addition some more work at Nicky nook where the steps towards Grizedale will be removed and made into an easier experience for visitors. Finally, a short section of concessionary bridleway at hermitage Field near to Crook of Lune, Caton has had some repairs and made the route once again suitable for Trampers.

Access Land

Work continues to provide advice and support to landowners and managers relating to Open Access and visitor pressure. This season it has included on advice relating to closures of access points and the impending fire risk season. There is also on-going work with the Lancashire Rural Task Force to provide signage relating to ground nesting birds and livestock worrying including lambing signs as well as consulting with Natural England over times of high fire risk and restrictions of access points.

Promoted Routes

The network continues to develop with two new volunteers recruited to monitor the current walks, several of these require some basic maintenance which has been carried out with the volunteers and one route will need contractor input planned for spring/summer 2024.

For further information email sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk