



FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Contents

Chairperson's View

AONB Manager's View

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Habitat and visitor opportunities improved at Landskill Farm

The RSPB on United Utilities Bowland estate

Nursing Langden Head back to health

RSPB Bowland Wader Project

Woodland scheme rakes root

AONB / RSPB Outreach Education Project

Farm management for breeding wading birds

Moorland restoration on Whitray Fell

United Utilities Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP)

Volunteering in the Forest of Bowland

Traditional boundaries

03 Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

04 Bowland business' make their mark in Europe 17

Lancashire Green Tourism Project 18

05 Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board's Country Escapes Marketing Campaign 20

06 Community Futures in the Forest of Bowland AONB 21

07 Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Development Fund 22

10 Enjoyment

Improving access along the Scorton Millennium Way 25

Active Wyre 26

Bowland Festival & Festival Bowland 27

Provision and services for visitors 28

13 New Bridleway links in North Bowland 28

14 Garstang Walking Festival 29

16 Co-ordination & Management

Reviewing the Management Plan 30

Review of Governance 32

Website Developments 33

Financial Summary 34

Membership 35

Contacts 36

Cover Image - Fair Oak Fell and Totridge taken above Whitewell Hamlet
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Chairperson's View



'Changes and Challenges' former County Councillor Jean Yates, Chair of the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee during 2008/09

My first experience of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty was when I joined the Executive Board of Arnsdale & Silverdale over 20 years ago when a great deal of the emphasis was on improving the environment by co-ordinating volunteers and working with local government planners. As chair of the Forest of Bowland, I was able to work across an area that covered Lancashire and Yorkshire - in my opinion the most unique and diverse part of the United Kingdom.

Volunteers still play a great role in our work in the AONBs but who could have foreseen the changes that working with a range of other partners has brought. Economic development & eco-systems, art and agriculture, trampers and multi user trails, climate change & cultural activities - all these and many more are now within the scope of our everyday workload.

New premises and computer use with touch down points for staff make us more efficient and mobile. Changes and challenges have always been with us and I believe that we have successfully responded. The proof? It's to be found in this annual report, the new revised Management Plan and the progress already reported on our website. We are excited to be starting to deliver the new Management Plan programme over the next five years and you will be able to keep an eye on our progress on the website www.forestofbowland.com But better still, come and visit the fantastic Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and see for yourselves.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jean Yates".

Editor's note: Following changes resulting from the recent County Council elections Jean Yates is no longer a County Councillor so the piece above has been adapted from a foreword Jean prepared for the new Management Plan.

Jean made an outstanding contribution to Bowland over many years, recently as Chair and in former years too when the partnership was in its infancy and I am sure she takes with her our warmest wishes for the future.

AONB Manager's View



2008/09 has been a year of firsts for the AONB Partnership - all of them good I'm pleased to say. Spring saw us welcome English Heritage to become more actively involved in the regular work of the Bowland partnership. Having given valuable advice over the years EH is now a regular member of our Sustainable Development Fund Panel and contributor to various partnership meetings. At our first 2008 Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) meeting the Partnership also made the decision to relocate our existing offices, currently split between Preston and Clitheroe, into a single office in renovated and converted estate workshops near Dunsop Bridge. This implemented a long standing proposal from an earlier review of governance and management.

Summer saw the bold decision by partners to roll out the hitherto week or so Bowland Festival to a rolling season by season calendar of events branded as 'Festival Bowland'. This tackles the problem that people could not get on the events of their choice as they were too quickly booked up, accommodation especially for larger groups was a problem and a short fortnight festival did nothing for tourism businesses in the shoulder months. 2009 will give us valuable feedback from visitors and businesses alike on how it has worked out and how we need to develop our ideas for the future. Our priority is always to guide and assist the kind of tourism in Bowland that can combine public enjoyment with appreciation of our landscapes, wildlife and heritage, yet bring economic benefits and exemplify good environmental practice thereby conserving our sustainable tourism credentials as a European Charter Award winner *.

Autumn saw us reap the rewards of much effort by AONB staff to secure a Heritage Lottery Fund award of almost £50,000 to work with community groups on four different heritage projects; as well as over £150,000 of external funding won to roll out a 3 year sustainable tourism scheme beyond the boundaries of the AONB. This will promote Lancashire as a green tourism county as well as help clusters of businesses working for mutual benefit in and around Bowland. Not the first time Bowland has been a seed bed area for transplanting successful schemes - e.g. the Bowland Initiative, Parish Lengthsman or the Bowland Sustainable Tourism Business network and European Charter businesses.

Underpinning all our work we successfully completed the review of our AONB Management Plan by December which was then approved by the two county and six district councils and by Natural England. The New Year saw us reviewing governance and management of the AONB to respond to the needs of delivering the new Management plan - changes in staffing and responsibilities later approved by the JAC in April.

In 2008/09 the AONB partnership, helped by funding from Ribble Valley Council, continued to work closely with the RSPB in a scheme we believe will have inspired many pupils from 8 different schools across the AONB learning about Bowland's special wildlife. With the help of £5,000 from Natural Economy Northwest we were able to make improvements to our website, introducing a special Birding in Bowland section including audio of the various bird calls to recognise when out and about.

Our international profile also benefited in 2008/09 as the Europarc Federation, that represents protected landscapes across Europe, continued to feature the achievements of our own sustainable tourism business network and our European Charter Business awards scheme.

My reflections on last year would not be complete without recognising the support of our many partners and friends and this year perhaps I can be excused for picking out for special recognition the staff in the AONB Unit, as well as the Countryside Officers, Rangers and the Parish Lengthsman who all work so enthusiastically and painstakingly to deliver quality services for Bowland. On a sadder note we lost some major contributors to Bowland in former years from our former Chairman in the 1990s and beginning of the millennium, George Slynn who sadly died last year after many years of battling illness. George was a colourful and at times wonderfully enigmatic character who at what has come to be called the 'Accrington Conference' in 1999 called on all AONBs to form their own national association to speak to government on their behalf. He gave his full support to setting up such an association and served on the original shadow committee and later on the NAAONB executive. We also mourned the sudden and tragic deaths of Gordon Adamson who tirelessly managed the complications of finances for the AONB and the many threads of funding of the Bowland Initiative working quietly in the background giving wise advice when needed over many decades and Margaret Barton who also died suddenly and unexpectedly and who for years provided meticulous secretarial support to the JAC. Their contributions will be remembered by many.

On a happier note our warm congratulations go to Lucy Barron who 'graduated', from the Bowland AONB Unit to take the role as lead officer managing the Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB Unit. We look forward to continuing our close working with A&S and all our Northern AONBs where we can share experience and maximise our resources for best effect in service to conserving and enhancing our outstanding landscapes for the present and hopefully for many generations to come.

*European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Landscapes.

Don McKay AONB Officer
© Susan MacDonald, Forest of Bowland AONB

Don McKay
AONB Manager
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage



Habitat and visitor opportunities improved at Landskill Farm

Over the winter of 2008/9 local volunteers from the community and Wyre and Lancashire Countryside Services have spent several wet, miserable and some dry sunny days learning the art of hedge laying with expert guidance from Geoff Whitely. Their efforts have made a significant contribution to the restoration of wet grassland habitat for wading birds in this area of the Forest of Bowland. Gapping up and laying of relict hedgerows and the removal of beech trees, not only restores the historic boundary network but opens up the landscape and removes taller trees and remnant hedgerow shrubs that wading birds tend to avoid. The work has already made a big difference with lapwings nesting more widely across these fields closer to the field boundaries with redshank and snipe using the felled tree stumps as song posts!

The farmer at Landskill Farm is planning to carry out ditch edge re-profiling and scrape creation in the autumn of 2009 to provide boggy feeding areas for wading birds and their chicks. He's also planning rush management to open up rank areas of pasture to provide further habitat. The fields at Landskill adjoin land at Cobble Hey and Broadgate Farms where similar habitat work has already been undertaken to great effect. Two local RSPB volunteers have been surveying the fields at

Landskill and have recorded good numbers of lapwings with chicks, as well as redshank, snipe, curlews and oystercatchers behaving as if they have young.

Visitors can now overlook these fields from two newly installed bird-hides at Landskill and Cobble Hey farms, or venture a little further on foot or by Trampler (all terrain wheelchair) to continue to Broadgate Farm where there is another bird hide overlooking fields used by waders, where you can also enjoy the outstanding views of the Bleasdale fells and beyond to Pendle Hill.

Support for this work includes a grant from the Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and in-kind support from farmers, Lancashire Countryside Service, Wyre Countryside Service, Forest of Bowland AONB and the RSPB's Bowland Wader Project.

Further information on opportunities to enjoy the area including bird watching, walking, horse riding and cycling and for information about where to stay or how to book a trampler can be found at www.forestofbowland.com

Volunteers & staff hedge laying
© Tarja Wilson, LCC Countryside Service

For further information please contact:

Tarja Wilson
Lancashire County Council Countryside Service
01200 448000
tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

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The RSPB on United Utilities Bowland estate

The hen harrier, symbol of the Forest of Bowland AONB, remains one of the key conservation concerns for RSPB. As ever, in 2008, the main breeding site for hen harriers in England was the Forest of Bowland, and in particular the United Utilities Bowland estate. The RSPB team monitored a total of ten nesting attempts on the estate, of which seven were successful, resulting in 22 fledged young.

These nesting attempts represent just over 50% of all the nesting attempts in England, and a shocking 70% of successful nests. It is probably true to say that without the efforts of United Utilities and its tenants, the hen harrier would be in an extremely precarious position as a breeding species in England.

Encouragingly, ring ouzels, a relative of the blackbird, and found in important numbers on the UU estate, actually increased in numbers after many years of continual decline. The total number of pairs was 11, an increase in two pairs over the 2007 figures, but still less than a third of the total present in the early 90s. Let's hope that this marks a turn around in the fortunes of this once relatively common species.

The annual programme of events, centred on guided walks, continues to attract good numbers of people who want to see and learn about the uplands and the special species, such as hen harriers, that can be found there. In excess of 250 people went on the guided walks, in all weather conditions!

The hen harrier nest camera was run for a second year, as part of a partnership with UU, Natural England and Lancashire County Council Countryside Service. A few initial teething troubles with the equipment were eventually overcome, and visitors to the Bowland Visitor Centre at Beacon Fell were treated to the sight of four chicks hatching and fledging over a five to six week period.

On-going work, primarily on the Sustainable Catchment Project (SCaMP), took up much of the autumn and winter months, the only time of the year when work on the fells can go ahead. Numerous projects were assisted, including the restoration of Langden Head (reported on elsewhere) as well as grip (moorland drains) blocking work and the final agri-environment application for land bordering Pendle Hill.



Female hen harrier
© Andy Hey, rspb-images.com

Hen harrier chick and eggs
© Peter Wilson, RSPB

For further information please contact:

Pete Wilson
RSPB
07968 129570
pete.wilson@rspb.org.uk

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Nursing Langden Head Back to Health

A huge project to stabilise and re-vegetate areas of bare and eroding peat at Langden Head in Bowland has seen more than 40 hectares being fenced off from livestock of which around nine hectares is bare peat. Geotextile matting has been pegged out on the steeper areas and heather brash applied to flatter ground. The areas are then spread with lime, fertiliser and grass seed to cover the area in a lush growth of vegetation. This first crop of grass will act as a nurse crop, stabilizing the ground while providing the essential micro climate for the heather and other moorland plants to establish.

Natural England is funding the majority of the project which has also benefited from a £33,000 grant from Lancashire County Council's "Our Moors, Our Planet Fund" which will be used to re-profile some of the large gully drip edges on the site.



Geotextile being applied to steeper peat areas
© Nigel Pilling, United Utilities

Partners on site at Langden Head
© Nigel Pilling, United Utilities

For further information please contact:

Nigel Pilling
United Utilities
01200 454408
nigel.pilling@uuplc.co.uk

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RSPB Bowland Wader Project

Doesn't Bowland look and sound fantastic! Tumbling lapwings in their spring display flights and bubbling calls of curlews over the pastures, meadows and moors make this a truly special place. The fortunes of the area's nationally important populations of these wading birds continue to be a core part of RSPB work in northern England as the Bowland Wader Project enters its eighth year.

For those of you who'd thought the Wader Project had disappeared it's simply a case of northward migration. In October 2008 the Project moved to the new RSPB office on the White Cross Estate in Lancaster. Our key partners at the AONB, Lancashire Countryside Service, Wyre and Ribble Valley Borough Councils, United Utilities and Natural England are all still working with us very closely and, together, we're continuing to achieve great things for Bowland's breeding waders.

Of course it is the numerous local farmers and landowners that are key to helping us conserve these declining birds. A significant proportion of the AONB is now being managed under agri-environment schemes that provide financial incentives for pasture and meadow management that is sympathetic to these ground nesting birds. Every year the project gains more and more contacts that can result in anything from a farmer learning how to locate and avoid a lapwing nest in his field to turning most of the farm over to wildlife conservation!

On one particular farm in Roeburndale, the farmer's tremendous enthusiasm and passion for wildlife is clear; as with help and guidance from the Wader Project, he has greatly increased populations of nesting lapwings and snipe. He has also purchased a small herd of Belted Galloway cattle to better graze the rougher fell edge fields for waders. In addition to the measures to help breeding waders he has also sown specially tailored game cover crops that provide insect and seed food for declining farmland birds such as linnets and reed buntings, as well as peasants, opened up clearings in his oak woodland to encourage butterflies, erected nest boxes to provide additional nest sites for species such as pied flycatchers and redstarts and is suggesting to his farming neighbours that they should be doing likewise! With this in mind the farmer hosted a demonstration event for the Wader Project in September. 35 farmers and advisers attended and were inspired and enthused in the ways of wading bird conservation. The event led directly to several new contacts being made who are also now undertaking measures on their farms to help Bowland's wading birds and other wildlife.

After what has seemed like two years of near perpetual rainfall, many of the best sites for breeding waders in Bowland were in danger of being taken over by aggressive rush growth. At Chipping Moss, and almost everywhere else for that matter, the ground was simply too



Snipe chick
© Gavin Thomas

Natural & Cultural Heritage

waterlogged to take heavy tractors and rush cutting machinery. So we decided that if the machines couldn't manage it we would! Teaming up with Martin Charlesworth from the AONB, we donned scythes, rakes and brush cutters and spent two days cutting areas of rushes on Chipping Moss. Blessed with fine sunny weather on the first session, the frequent blizzard conditions of the second in early February failed to deter an admirably dedicated team of staff and volunteers. This valiant effort by all, doubtless buoyed by Martin's excellent home made soup, resulted in several open areas of pasture suitable for nesting lapwings come spring. Sure enough, everyone involved will be satisfied to know that most of the site's lapwings, snipe and redshanks chose to nest in exactly the areas where we had cut the rush!

The Lapwing Recovery Project, a trial management project that is part of Natural England and RSPB's Action for Birds in England (AfBiE) programme, saw 62 Bowland farms surveyed in the spring. The project is looking to see how well agri-environment scheme management works for breeding lapwings. The survey data showed us that Bowland's breeding lapwings again had varied success across the AONB but as a whole it was suspected that heavy rain when chicks were hatching-out resulted in a poor season overall. Let's hope next year's spring weather is more kind.

To show our appreciation of the invaluable help from partner organisations staff and volunteers, the project organised a small thank you event and those brave enough to endure a freezing December day were rewarded with excellent views of a stunning male hen harrier; a short eared owl and tens of thousands of starlings heading to roost at Stocks Reservoir. The quality pie and vegetable lunch from the Dog and Partridge Inn at Tosside also went down very well!

People engagement and Project publicity in the past year has included participation in Festival Bowland with several guided walks led, a stand at the Hodder Valley Show in September; talks given to local groups and organisations including Clitheroe Ramblers and local Young Farmers Clubs, supporting ADAS events to publicise the agri-environment schemes to local farmers and helping with Bleasdale's Breathing Places and World Environment Day event. There are now three bird hides on Bowland farms that allow people to see breeding waders up close and learn more about Wader Project work from the interpretation material placed within them. The hides are also helping boost on-farm business. Our work with Schools has been resurrected and an education project is now underway to enthuse local primary school children about Bowland's special people, places and wildlife. Hopefully you will all be hearing more about this exciting new project in the near future!



Young Farmers
© Gavin Thomas

For further information please contact:

Gavin Thomas
RSPB

07814 462429

gavin.thomas@rspb.org.uk

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Woodland Scheme Takes Root

United Utilities have joined forces with the Forestry Commission to create 350 hectares of broadleaved woodland in the Dunsop Valley. The massive project is being carried out in the Forest of Bowland under the auspices of SCaMP and the Forestry Commission's own conifer to native woodland programme.

Two of the largest plantings are at Whitendale Farm and Brennand Farm. Together they will see the creation of 160 hectares of new native broadleaved woodland on land previously grazed by sheep. The woodland schemes have been designed and planted to replicate upland oak woodlands, a habitat type recognised nationally and internationally as being of high biodiversity importance. The combined Brennand, Whitendale and Dunsop Valley woodland system, which lies right at the 'Centre of Great Britain', has the potential to become an extremely important area in terms of landscape character and wildlife and woodland habitat.

AONB / RSPB Outreach Education Project

The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an exceptional place for birds and wildlife. The AONB / RSPB Outreach Education Project is an exciting project designed to inspire primary school children about the AONB and help them to celebrate and conserve its special wildlife.

The project has been working with eight schools across the Forest of Bowland AONB. Pupils from Brabins Endowed, Chipping, Dolphinholme, Tatham Fells, Calder Vale St Johns, Brennands Endowed, Slaidburn, Waddington & West Bradford, Quernmore and Pendle Primary Schools learnt all about the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and why this area is such a special place for people, birds and other wildlife. As well as taking part in the Big Schools Birdwatch, the project will culminate in a visit to farms in the area where farming practices are helping the Forest of Bowland's wading birds. The project is proving to be a huge success and plans are already in place to continue with it in a further eight schools across the Forest of Bowland AONB in the next school year.

The project is being run by the Forest of Bowland AONB and the RSPB and is part funded by Ribbles Valley Borough Council.



For further information on the woodland scheme please contact:

Steven Highley
United Utilities
01200 454408
steven.highley@uuplc.co.uk

AONB / RSPB Outreach Education Project
© Brabin's Endowed School

For further information on the outreach project please contact:

Susan MacDonald
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Farm management for breeding wading birds

£500 from the Green Partnership Awards was gratefully received in August 2007 to support a farm based demonstration day to educate farmers, landowners and advisers on habitat management for Bowland's nationally important but declining populations of wading birds. The foot and mouth outbreak in 2007 meant the day had to be postponed with a view to rescheduling it for autumn 2008. The event was finally held on 18 September 2008 at Barkin Gate Farm in Roeburndale and hosted by Malcolm and Janet Woodhouse the farm owners. Around 35 people attended, a very good turn out considering the break in the weather finally offered local farmers a short window to gather cut hay and silage!

Barkin Gate Farm in Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship scheme and receives annual payments to manage areas for the important wildlife it supports. Several of the grazing pastures and meadows are being managed for curlew, snipe, redshank and lapwing. The population of lapwing alone has already doubled on the farm due to management of rushes and creation of small shallow pools or wader scrapes that provide boggy areas for the birds and their chicks to feed in during the breeding season.

A farm walk to look at the intricacies of this management stimulated some good discussion on a range of related topics including livestock, rush management, pasture management machinery and predator control. Staff from Natural England provided valuable input on the stewardship schemes, Taylors ATV from Green Smithy, Bentham were on hand to demonstrate pasture management machinery, Lancashire County Council Countryside Service outlined predator control methods and the host farmers also demonstrated how to create wader scrapes as well as ensuring everyone was very well fed at the all important lunchtime!

The day was a great success. The Green Partnership Award funding helped cover costs of providing lunch on the day and hire of pasture management and scrape creation machinery. All attendees went away with a wealth of RSPB advisory material on managing habitats and species and the event also generated a lot of interest in stewardship. Several new contacts were made and a number of visits to local farms have already been undertaken by the RSPB Bowland Wader Project to assess stewardship potential and offer on-site management advice. Several of these have led to Higher Level Stewardship applications or amendments to existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes. These will greatly improve the management of Bowland's pastures for wading birds and other wildlife and provide valuable sources of income for the area's farming community



Demonstration Day, Barkin Gate Farm
© RSPB

For further information please contact:

Gavin Thomas
RSPB

07814 462429

gavin.thomas@rspb.org.uk

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Moorland restoration on Whitray Fell

During the past couple of years United Utilities have been carrying out 'grip blocking' and other moorland restoration work on their Bowland Estate.

Between the 1950s and the 1980s extensive areas of moorland across the Pennines including the Bowland Fells were drained to improve their agricultural viability, however the creation of these drainage grips has caused, and continues to cause, significant damage to the moorland peat habitat by destroying its hydrological balance.

Moorland and lowland peat store large amounts of carbon and 'active' peat bogs have the potential to sequester a significant amount of carbon from the atmosphere, meaning that the Bowland Fells could play a significant role in helping to control the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.

During the Autumn of 2008 the owner and farmer on Whitray Fell blocked more than 1.5km of drainage grips using a local contractor with extensive expertise in the work. The work was funded through his Environmental Stewardship agreement and supported by Lancashire County Council Countryside Service. The work was carried out by skilled machine operators on a seven tonne tracked hymac without the

need to use any imported materials. In fact the contractor took the opportunity to train a couple of his employees in the techniques whilst on site.

The operator re-profiles the grip edges and uses vegetation/peat on site to block the grips at regular intervals. The result is that water is held on the fell within the grips and it also spreads out into surrounding peat, slowly seeping down the fell. This has the benefit of improving the moorland habitat and increasing carbon storage capacity. In addition it also reduces flash run off of water after heavy rainfall, which in turn reduces flooding problems lower downstream whilst also reducing erosion of the soils off the fells and resulting silting up further down stream.

The Bowland Fells are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Part of this designation is due to the fact that these upland fells support the largest expanse of blanket bog and heather moorland in Lancashire and provide suitable habitat for a diverse upland breeding bird community including the hen harrier, merlin and peregrine. Blocking up drainage grips also helps to restore blanket peat bog habitat and thus helps to manage the SSSI positively.

Reprofiling on Whitray Fell
© RSPB

For further information please contact:

Tarja Wilson
Lancashire County Council Countryside Service
01200 448000
tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

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United Utilities Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP)

United Utilities Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP) covers United Utilities Bowland Estate and Southern Estate area (Goyt, Longdendale and Peak District). Now four years into the five-year programme, which looks to improve landscape and habitat value and to help stabilise or reverse the deterioration in raw water quality. The programme objectives are:

To develop an integrated approach to catchment management incorporating sustainable upland farming which delivers:

- Government targets for SSSIs
- Biodiversity plans for priority habitats and species
- Improved raw water quality

The £10m programme is improving the condition of the land, the wildlife habitats on it and the quality of the raw water that runs off it into our reservoirs. The SCaMP farm plans that layout all of the work required to ensure that we move to a farming system that is both environmentally and economically sustainable, are moving towards completion. The programme looks to get multiple benefits from investing in activities such as planting new streamside woodland which provides valuable new habitat for wildlife whilst at the same time providing a barrier to grazing farm animals contaminating reservoir feeder streams. By providing new farm buildings grazing pressure can be reduced on fragile habitats at appropriate times of year along with relocating activities that present an elevated risk to raw water quality such as lambing and calving. The programme is in its fourth year with substantial work being completed which has led to over 96% of specially designated land in these areas being classified as being in favourable or recovering condition. Across the SCaMP areas we have planted over 340 hectares of woodland, blocked over 100 km of moorland drains, re-vegetated 445 ha of bare or degraded peat and built or improved 10 buildings. The programme in Bowland is now virtually complete and is showing some very encouraging early results in terms of habitats and water quality.

Grip blocking at Whitendale
© United Utilities

For further information please contact:

Martin McGrath
United Utilities
01925 463096

martin.mcgrath@uuplc.co.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage



Volunteering in the Forest of Bowland

There's a whole range of reasons why people volunteer in the environmental sector. Some people wish to gain experience, improve their CV and then get a paid job. Volunteering can be a means to this end. Some older people, who have retired perhaps, wish to remain active, meet others and stay in touch with the countryside. Other people are committed environmentalists and want to do their bit towards helping conserve and enhance their local environment. They may have a special interest in birds or plants for example, or they may be happy to undertake any task within reason. In addition, there are people who undertake conservation work in exchange for a holiday – 'conservation holidays'. Lastly, there are a growing number of employers who allow their staff to take a day a year; sometimes 2, to undertake an environmental task, 'Employee Volunteers'. There are opportunities for all these types of volunteer in the Forest of Bowland and we see this as a valuable exercise in education, training and conservation for local people and visitors alike; all part of our mission to explain, enthuse and involve people in our landscape.

In May 2008 we hosted 40 Employee Volunteers, from the Environment Agency building bat boxes and undertaking woodland management at Waddow Hall. So, they had a good time and learned about building bat boxes and about which trees to keep and which to remove and the bats around the Ribble got lots of new homes.

Also in May, Landskill farm, Calder Vale was the setting for a BTCV conservation working holiday rebuilding a curving dry stone wall on a well used public footpath. People came from all over the UK and stayed and ate locally. The same site was used for hedge laying training in November – a number of local people came to this, some with an interest and previous experience in hedge laying and some others thinking of tackling a hedge of their own or becoming a hedge layer. The trainer in each case was a local expert who could impart real local knowledge to the trainees.

Trail builders

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Natural & Cultural Heritage

In June 2008 a regular volunteer task featured for the first time as an Employee Volunteering task for local Clitheroe firm 3Ms Healthcare. Two groups of staff from the 3Ms site came out to saw, dig and shovel their way through Gisburn Forest and create new bike trails. They worked very hard and were in at the beginning of nearly 2km of track that has been built entirely by volunteers working mainly on Sundays. Volunteers have come from as far away as Manchester, Cheshire and the Fylde. Cycle enthusiasts have heard about the task from our website and from internet blogs and word of mouth.

In late summer, volunteers were trained in plant identification and then picked wildflower seeds from a Biological Heritage Site for later growing on and planting back into the countryside. We would like to see the dwindling reserves of native wildflowers preserved and local volunteers will hopefully have a role to play in the future monitoring and management of verges.

In November, our RSPB colleagues asked for help cutting rush on Chipping Moss, a prime site for lapwings, which had become somewhat overgrown with rush. Several volunteers came out on two separate days to cut rush with sickles and brushcutters. On the second day, it snowed heavily but the sun came out intermittently. Lapwings have bred there in ever increasing numbers this year although we hope that most rush can be cut with tractor and cutter bar in future!

November through to February is the season for hedge laying and the annual Bowland leg of the Hedge Laying Grand Prix competition was held just outside Chatburn. A large turnout of competitors, professional, amateur, novice and junior, was boosted by students from Burnley College and by volunteers from BTCV on the last day of a working holiday there. The hedge was transformed over the course of the day with professionals taking a 10 yard 'stint' round a tight bend. Many people came to watch this old skill and were surprised to hear that there were more hedges being planted now than at any time in living memory. Two further days of hedge laying training were delivered at the Crook of Lune where a new hedge was laid.

Completion of every volunteer task has helped conserve and enhance our important landscape and every volunteer has gained from having taken part; mentally, physically and last but not least socially. Thank you!



Volunteers collecting wildflowers seeds

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

Rush cutting

© Martin Charlesworth, Forest of Bowland AONB

For further information please contact:

Martin Charlesworth

Forest of Bowland AONB

01200 448000

martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Natural & Cultural Heritage

Traditional Boundaries

Wyre Countryside Service continues to contribute towards the Traditional Boundaries project within western Bowland. Wyre Countryside Volunteers planted 100m of hedgerow at Landskill Farm, Barnacre, as a follow up to a hedge laying course organised by Forest of Bowland AONB in conjunction with BTCV. Wyre Countryside Volunteers and Lancashire Countryside Volunteers came together on a week long dry stone walling training course. The course was funded by Forest of Bowland AONB, Natural England, the Green Partnership Award and Tamarack Outdoor. Six volunteers took part in the course at Grizedale Bridge, Nether Wyresdale, creating a new seating structure at this picturesque location. Master Craftsman Mick Rushden from Tamarack Outdoor ran the weeks training. The week proved very popular with over subscription and a further course will hopefully be run later in the year.



Dry stone wall

© Graham Cooper - www.forestofbowlandimages.com

For further information please contact:

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast & Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity



Bowland businesses make their mark in Europe

The success of the Sustainable Tourism Business Network was highlighted at the annual Europarc Charter meeting. This was a cross border conference in the Italian Alps in June 2008 hosted jointly by the Italian Alpi Marittime National in Park in Italy and France's Mercantour National Park.

The Forest of Bowland was the first Europarc to award Charter Partner status to some of its leading businesses. These are tourism operators who demonstrate high quality service and have shown their commitment to sustainability principles by achieving a Green Tourism Award. Jon Beavan, of Dalesbridge, a hostel, campsite and B&B complex on the northern edge of the AONB, was invited to go to the meeting in Italy to talk about the work done by the AONB. He particularly explained how the Network had helped to bring the area's tourism businesses together as a team and provided all kinds of advice and support.



Sharing expertise, Europarc Charter Meeting
© Jon Beavan

For further information please contact:

Mike Pugh
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
mike.pugh@lancashire.gov.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity



Lancashire Green Tourism Project

The Lancashire Green Tourism Project began in October 2008 and is being delivered by the Forest of Bowland AONB team, in partnership with Lancashire County Developments Ltd and the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board, with support from the NWDA.

Fifteen businesses received Green Tourism Business Awards after meeting a rigorous set of criteria, covering a range of areas, like energy and water efficiency, waste management and biodiversity. The awards will be presented by David Jackson from the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and Katie Read from Natural Economy Northwest at a ceremony to be held at Hornby Village Institute in April 2009.

The Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) is a national sustainable tourism certification scheme. It is the largest and most established scheme of its type in the UK. The businesses have all been supported by the Lancashire Green Tourism Project. The three year project is designed to help tourism businesses and organisations that wish to operate in a more environmentally friendly manner to achieve GTBS certification and work together to develop sustainable tourism activities and to promote Lancashire as a sustainable tourism destination.

The businesses that have been successful in getting the GTBS accreditation include bed and breakfast provider Cobden Farm in the Sabden Valley near Clitheroe. The farm's owners have taken a number of environmental measures including recycling as much waste as possible, using eco products for cleaning and washing clothes and using low energy light bulbs, recycled paper and bin bags.

Maggie Wright from Cobden Farm says: "We're delighted to have won a Green Tourism Award. The Green Tourism scheme has really helped us to focus on environmental issues. We have also been given a lot of support and some really good ideas both by the Green Tourism officers and the team at the Forest of Bowland AONB. We hope that our award will broaden our appeal as a business and attract new customers."

Another Green Tourism success story is Grisedale Farm B&B at Leighton near Carnforth. Their environmental measures include setting up their own recycling system for all glass, plastic bottles, tin cans and newspapers. They shop locally to reduce their carbon footprint and support local retailers.

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

The owners rescued 18 battery hens, giving them an improved life, and providing fresh eggs for the B&B. In addition, they are helping with the restoration of the reed beds at Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve to improve the habitat of the Bittern, one of Britain's rarest birds.

Alison Robinson from Grisedale Farm says: "I think there are great benefits in green tourism both for businesses and the environment. Just last night we had an enquiry from somebody who wanted to stay with us because we were a green tourism business. I think it's fantastic that people are interested in green tourism and in what we are doing here. It's something we passionately believe in."


David Jackson, Visitor Information and Quality Manager from the Northwest Regional Development Agency, says: "It's great to see so many tourism businesses in Lancashire embracing the green agenda and realising the significant benefits that operating in a more sustainable way can bring. Consumers are becoming far more demanding and are increasingly looking for a more authentic experience. By investing in quality and adopting these green practices, businesses can gain a real competitive advantage in the marketplace."

There are now a total of 33 businesses in Lancashire in the GTBS and the Lancashire Green Tourism Project aims to help at least 35 more businesses achieve the accreditation by 2011.

In addition, the Project plans to create 6 new tourism business clusters in the Forest of Bowland AONB, further developing sustainable tourism in the area and complementing the area's high quality environment and protected area status. Business clusters will include guided walks, Trumper vehicles for people with limited mobility and the 'Bowland Experience'.

Business who recently received awards:


Bowland Visitor Centre, Beacon Fell –  GOLD

Broadgate Farm B&B, Bleasdale –  SILVER


Cobden Farm B&B, Sabden –  SILVER

Forrest Hills, Lancaster –  GOLD

Foxhill Barn B&B, Gisburn –  GOLD

The Garden Cottage, Inglewhite –  SILVER

Grisedale Farm B&B, Leighton –  SILVER


Height Top Farm, Higham –  SILVER

Lower Gill Holiday Cottages, Tosside –  GOLD

The Old Post House Hotel, Clitheroe –  BRONZE

Pickle Cottage, Garstang –  SILVER

Pinfold Farm, Ribchester –  SILVER

Riverbank Tearooms, Slaidburn –  BRONZE

Samlesbury Hall, Samlesbury –  SILVER

Slaidburn Village Hall, Slaidburn –  SILVER



Riverbank Tearooms, Slaidburn

Slaidburn Village Hall
© John Darch

Bowland Visitor Centre

Broadgate Farm

For further information please contact:

Hetty Byrne
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk
www.lancashiregreentourism.com

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board Country Escapes Marketing Campaign

Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board (LBTB) was responsible for delivering the Country Escapes short break campaign, which includes the Forest of Bowland AONB and Pendle Hill as theme champions.

Activity for 2008/09 included the production of a new magazine style publication called 'Lancashire Country Escapes' of which 50,000 copies were printed. The Forest of Bowland AONB featured predominantly in the majority of articles with specific walks, cycle routes and accommodation providers being mentioned. Endangered species such as the hen harrier and the international important heather moorland and blanket bog were also highlighted within the editorial. A brochure request panel was included giving reader the opportunity to request a copy of 'Bowland by Bike' amongst other Lancashire walking and cycling guides.

The magazine was initially sent out to 15,000 consumers from the LBTB database and made available to all North West and Yorkshire Tourist information centres. A digital version is available to read on-line.

A fold out direct mail leaflet was produced and sent out in January 2009 to 15,000 cold contacts within the target market demographic and two hour drive time. The direct mail gave recipients the opportunity to enter a prize draw to win a short break at the Gibbon Bridge, Forest of Bowland AONB, and to request a copy of the magazine. A response of 14% was achieved via this direct mail and a further 1300 magazines sent out.

Full page advertisements were taken in the March 09 issues of Yorkshire Life, Cheshire Life, Shropshire Life and Staffordshire Life which promoted a competition to win a short break at The Red Pump Inn situated within the Forest of Bowland AONB and the opportunity to request a copy of the new magazine. 435 responses were received.

Visitlancashire.com was re-launched at the beginning of 2009 and which included a specific destination page for the Forest of Bowland AONB. This page included attractions and things to do as well as a link to the Forest of Bowland website. A number of Forest of Bowland leaflets were also made available to download from visitlancashire.com and Festival Bowland was promoted on a dedicated walking/countryside festivals page. On average visitlancashire.com receives 50,000 unique visits per month with the Forest of Bowland pages receiving between 500-1300 unique visits per month.

LBTB took a stand at the Ordnance Survey Outdoor Show in March 2009 at the NEC. Over 10,000 pieces of Lancashire literature, including Lancashire Country Escapes magazine were given out over three days and 1500+ people entered a prize draw, with 800+ signing up to receive more information on the Lancashire Countryside. 400 Festival Bowland leaflets were distributed on behalf of the Forest of Bowland AONB.



LBTB Country Escapes Marketing Campaign
© LBTB

For further information please contact:

Sally Jastrzebski-Lloyd
Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board
01257 226616
Sj-lloyd@lbtbltd.com
www.visitlancashire.com

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Community Futures in the Forest of Bowland AONB

Community Futures has continued to support community development projects in the Forest of Bowland AONB. The Community Resource Centres (CRC) in the AONB continue to thrive and are appreciated by all users, both local and visitors. The CRCs at Slaidburn, Barley and Abbeystead can demonstrate their renewable energy technology systems. Others such as Arkholme, Hornby, Chatburn, Gisburn and Chipping continue to grow and benefit the local economy through promoting local food when providing catering facilities.

Community Futures has continued working with Parish Councils in the Forest of Bowland AONB resulting in three new Parish Plans being produced this year. These are useful documents which provide a 'Vision' for the future, inform local leaders of community needs and provide reliable evidence to support funding applications, such as improving village hall facilities.

Community Futures has supported 12 village halls in and around the Forest of Bowland AONB, providing funding and energy efficiency advice, business/project planning and governance. Two large scale village hall projects just getting underway are Halton and Galgate who have secured large grants to carry out their plans.



Kirkland Village Hall
Chatburn Village Hall
Gisburn Village Hall
Forton Village Hall
© Community Futures

For further information please contact:

Finlay Hodge
Community Futures
01772 900250
www.communityfutures.org.uk

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Development Fund

In 2008/09 the Forest of Bowland AONB allocated a total of nearly £69,000 of Sustainable Development Funds to 18 projects across the area. Projects varied from nature conservation schemes, through arts projects, sustainable tourism work and a number of feasibility and evaluation studies.

BI study

This was a survey of passengers using the Bowland Transit bus service, and particularly the BI shuttle between Settle and Slaidburn, carried out by the University of Central Lancashire. It aimed to look at passenger's travelling habits as well as the spending power (economic impact) they have within the AONB and the market towns. We were keen to support this study with a small grant of £2400 as the BI bus service was under threat of closure at the time and any evidence we could supply to help secure its future was valuable.

Bashall Brook habitat improvement

An application from Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust last year resulted in us funding a small scale habitat and landscape survey to determine the impact of riverside fencing in the Bashall Brook area. As the study suggested impact would be low, this year we supported the Trust's application for £10,000 towards a project fencing off and improving several stretches of the brook. The scheme will enable bank side vegetation to regenerate and for trees to be planted. This will also improve the fish population and the wildlife habitat of the brook itself.

Bowland Festival Arts

Following on from organising a number of events in conjunction with the Bowland Festival in 2007, Bowland Festival Arts, co-ordinated by Green Close Studios, were awarded a grant of £10,000 to contribute to costs for their work in 2008/09. This work included a number of workshops with schools culminating in a 'Village Art Show'; networking and support for artists to develop an open studio trail for 2009; training for artists in the Bowland area; and preparation for events and exhibitions as part of Bowland Festival Arts in the summer of 2009. For more information see www.bowlandarts.co.uk

Growing with Grace eco toilet block

Growing with Grace is an organic market garden just outside Clapham, on the north eastern edge of the AONB. They are keen to develop their site for educational visits from schools interested in healthy eating, and are putting together a plan to develop classrooms and employ an education officer. The first step in this process was to provide toilet and hand washing facilities for visitors, and they came to us for a grant of £3930 to build a compost toilet - now available for use!

Green Tourism Business Scheme

As part of the AONB's ongoing work on sustainable tourism the team are currently working with Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board and LCDL to manage the Green Tourism Business Scheme for the whole of Lancashire. The scheme provides advice and accreditation to businesses who are improving the environmental performance of their business. A contribution of £6000 from SDF enabled the project to operate in the Yorkshire part of the AONB in 2008/09 and to contribute to the overall costs of the project which is funded by LBTB, LCDL and Lancashire County Council.

Way of the Roses Cycle Route development

The Way of the Roses Cycle Route is a new coast to coast route being developed by Sustrans to link Morecambe with Hull and Bridlington, due to open in 2010. The route cuts through the northern fringes of the AONB, and then continues through the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale AONB – connecting these protected landscapes to each other and to the coast. It is hoped that tourism businesses and communities will get involved and benefit from the new, largely on-road route. Our contribution of £2000 in 2008/09 helped with planning and feasibility work and was matched by contributions from Yorkshire Dales National Park and the various local authorities along the route.



SDF funded projects locations map
© LCC

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Pendleside Broadband

This was an innovative project to upgrade wireless broadband to the outlying communities in the Barley area of Pendle. Run by a not for profit business this scheme has enabled the doubling of capacity to this necessary rural network, and will encourage more people to work from home and use their cars less. Grant awarded £2900.

Corio Raptor Care Hospital

This charity based in Bentham take in sick, injured and abandoned birds of prey and prepares them for release whenever possible. Our grant of £3000 enabled them to build and equip a hospital area which will increase their capacity to take in chicks and sick birds.

Dalesbridge House energy efficiency project

We gave a small grant of £2425 to Dalesbridge House, a tourism accommodation business on the edge of Bowland near Austwick. In a bid to improve their energy efficiency the business has installed a highly efficient oil condenser boiler; plus insulation, in their Bed & Breakfast building. This will help substantially reduce their heating costs and their carbon footprint.

Higher Landskill Farm Habitat Scheme

This was a small habitat conservation project, supporting a farmer to work with Lancashire County Council's Countryside Service and RSPB to improve fields and hedgerows for nesting wading birds. We also supported the installation of a bird hide to enable visitors to view the wildlife on the farm. The total grant was £2603.

Cobble Hey Bird Watching

Close to Higher Landskill Farm and on adjoining fields lies Cobble Hey Farm and Gardens. Already an established tourism attraction the farmers here were also keen to develop bird watching on the farm, and installed a new hide with a grant of £2946, equipped with binoculars and interpretation for visitors and schoolchildren.

Evaluation of Renewables in Bowland

Over the last 4 years the SDF scheme has supported many renewable energy projects within the AONB. This £5000 grant has enabled us to commission an expert consultant to look at the effectiveness and impact of these projects and will draw out learning points and good practice for the future.



Way of the Roses Cycle route

© Rupert Douglas

Bird watching at Cobble Hey bird hide

© Cathy Hopley, Forest of Bowland AONB

Social Equity & Economic Opportunity

Slaidburn YHA feasibility study

The Youth Hostel Association (YHA) were exploring options for a new heating system at their hostel in Slaidburn. They were keen to include renewables in this study, so they commissioned a detailed scoping and costing study for the building. We supported this with a £1000 grant, and hope to be able to support the installation of a wood chip boiler next year.

Bowland LCA consultants

As part of the Forest of Bowland AONB's new management plan a revised Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the area was commissioned. In order to complete this study some extra research into historical landscapes and vernacular building styles was required, as well as stakeholder consultation and the provision of quality field sketches. A small grant of £2650 supplemented the larger study, which will be available in Summer 2009.

Hornby Village Institute

Hornby Village Institute was refurbished and re-opened a few years ago, but the Trust which manages the building is constantly reviewing improvements and energy saving that can be made. This year our small grant of £3032 has enabled the ballroom windows to be double glazed in a sympathetic manner; and this cuts down on noise too!

Gisburn Forest Tramper

The new cycle trails being developed in Gisburn Forest will also enable Tramper users to explore the area. Hyndburn & Ribble Valley CVS have therefore been awarded a grant of £2000 towards the costs of buying and providing a Tramper in the area, which will be available to all their service users, and to members of the public.

Maximising HLS Potential

This pilot project is being run by the AONB. A small 100% grant of £4650 has enabled 4 people to be trained by Natural England in carrying out Farm Environment Plans, an essential requirement of higher level stewardship (HLS) applications. Once trained, these independent consultants will be able to support landowners looking to apply for or renew their stewardship schemes on the most important and protected areas of the AONB landscape.

RSPB Schools Outreach Project

This project was commissioned by the Forest of Bowland AONB and delivered by RSPB during the 2008/09 school year. RSPB staff from Leighton Moss and the AONB team approached 8 schools within the AONB with a 4 day programme of activity. This included 3 visits to school by RSPB staff, working on topics such as wildlife, birds and farming. A final visit is planned for the summer term to take pupils out to the farms nearby to see for themselves the wealth of wildlife and breeding wader birds in the area. A grant of £4000 was awarded to this project.

Full reports on all of these projects can be found at www.forestofbowland.com



Bashall Brook
© Ribble Catchment Conservation Trust
Cobble Hey Bird Hide

For further information please contact:

Cathy Hopley
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Enjoyment

Improving access along the Scorton Millennium Way

It's hard to believe it's already 10 years since this route was first created, and now the occupier has signed up to a further 10 years as part of his Environmental Stewardship agreement. Working with the Local Farmer, Natural England, Forest of Bowland AONB Team, Lancashire Countryside Service, Nether Wyresdale Parish Council, Access Lancashire and the parish, improvement works were undertaken to bring the whole route up to current Access for All standards including opening it up for use by wider mobility scooters and Trampers and upgrading the footpath surface. In addition improvements have been made for the visually impaired including the addition of a tapping rail and provision of Braille text on the new series of interpretation panels developed by Duncan Byrne. Funded through DEFRA's Environmental Stewardship Scheme for Wyre Farm, this five panel series has been installed along the 1 mile length of the way each focused on a particular aspect of the area – the Millennium Way, the River Wyre, Birdlife, Gateway to Bowland and Farming.

This improvement work has been carried out to a very high standard, and could not have been possible without the support of the farmer who owns the land and two local contractors, who also work as Parish Lengthsmen.



Tramper user on the Scorton Millenium Way
© Tarja Wilson, Forest of Bowland AONB

Fence repair on the Scorton Millenium Way
© Tarja Wilson, Forest of Bowland AONB

Pushchairs on the Scorton Millenium Way
© Tarja Wilson, Forest of Bowland AONB

For further information please contact:

Tarja Wilson
Lancashire County Council
Countryside Service
01200 448000
tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast &
Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Active Wyre

The promotion of health and wellbeing of our residents continues to be a priority for Wyre Borough Council and this year in partnership with Sport England and the Primary Care Trust a new physical activity programme called Active Wyre has been produced. This programme is available on the Wyre website, and those activities which are in Bowland are on the Festival Bowland website. It includes a wide range of physical activities open to all including countryside recreation activities, such as guided walks, health walks and cycle rides, sporting and dance activities, it is a project supported by the Wyre Sport and Physical Activity Alliance and is helping to encourage people to "Change 4 Life", part of the NHS campaign to increase the uptake of physical activity. Many of the activities are in the Forest of Bowland and many are free to take part in. They include canoeing on the River Wyre at Garstang, family cycle rides, Bleasale Monday walks, Fantastic Fungi walk, Super 8 bus walks, Scorton Legstretcher and the Garstang Arts and Music Festival.

Active Wyre

Wyre Borough Council
LIVE WYRE LOVE WYRE



Active Wyre participants
© Wyre Coast & Countryside Service

For further information please contact:

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast &
Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Enjoyment



Bowland Festival 2008 & Festival Bowland

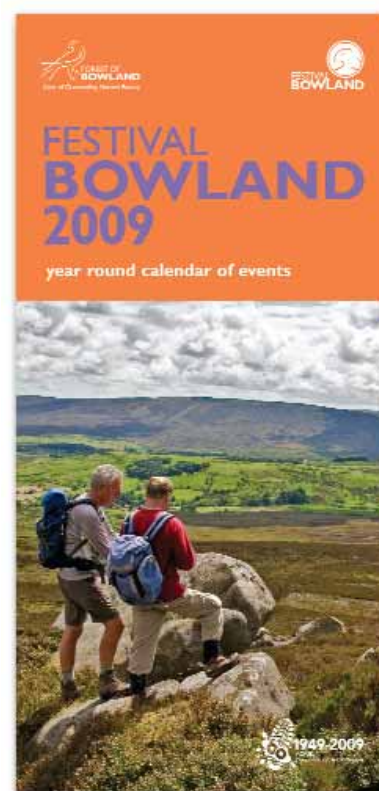


A packed programme of events for Bowland Festival 2008 enabled local people and visitors alike to celebrate the birds, wildlife, landscape and culture or the AONB from 1 – 8 June.

The festival offers a unique opportunity to discover more about all aspects of the AONB through a series of events and activities run by local experts. The festival encouraged people to discover the area's exceptional birds and wildlife; to explore its heritage and to enjoy its landscape.

The Bowland Festival 2008, like previous years was a huge success with hundreds of people coming to the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to take part in a wide range of events. These events have helped us showcase the special qualities this beautiful area has to offer and share with others what makes this area such a special place for people and wildlife.

The Bowland Festival will no longer take place in June, instead the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership will continue to work together with landowners, local experts and business in the area to continue to provide a wealth of events and opportunities for people to explore the area's special qualities throughout the year – Festival Bowland! Check out our Festival Bowland events and many more at www.forestofbowland.com



Learning about hen harriers at the Bowland Festival
© Forest of Bowland AONB

For further information please contact:

Susan MacDonald
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

Provision and services for visitors

Wyre Countryside Service Rangers and volunteers patrol and manage the following key visitor sites: Brock Picnic Area and Valley, Nicky Nook and Grizedale Valley and Delph Quarry lay by and Harris End Fell lay by.

Wyre's Countryside Rangers and Volunteers completed 579 Patrols, meeting 7,057 visitors and collecting 69 bags of litter. 207 of these patrols were Volunteer Patrol Days. They also continued the bi-annual survey of promoted walking routes within the AONB: Scorton area x8, Calder Vale x8, Delph Quarry, Brock Valley, and sections of the Wyre Way and Scorton Millennium Way. A total of 54 miles of public right of way surveyed within the AONB.

The service has continued improving access in the greater Garstang area by replacing a further four stiles with kissing gates. This now makes the Greenhalgh Castle Circular walk from Garstang completely stile free. The kissing gates were provided by LCC Public Rights of Way Team and were installed by Wyre Countryside Volunteers.

In addition the new Greenhalgh Castle interpretation panel is now erected along the route portraying an artists impression of what the original castle would have looked like helps to interpret the history of Garstang during the English Civil War. Garstang Soroptomists, who have researched the information for the panel and helped to fund the panel, invited the Mayor of Garstang to officially open the improved circular walk and local people using trampers also attended the guided walk up to the castle ground by kind permission of the local farmer. This project was part funded by Garstang Market Town Initiative and the Green Partnerships Award.

Wyre Borough Council Countryside Service works with statutory and voluntary partners, agencies, local communities, youth groups and volunteers to undertake the careful management of the natural and cultural resources in the western edge of the Forest of Bowland AONB.

New bridleway links in North Bowland

Two new concessionary bridleways linking Wray across to Roeburndale West have been created. These routes take you through some of the most outstanding countryside in the Forest of Bowland: Hindburndale and Roeburndale. Roeburndale West links into the Salter Fell track and North Lancashire Bridleway.

The new routes crosses three farm holdings with work been carried out by local contractors who also farm in the area with funding from Environmental Stewardship, Lancashire County Council and the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Riders will be testing the routes as part of a 'Sport Endurance' event to be held at the end of May 2009, with several taking the opportunity to spend a night on a field in Wray village. Plenty of food for the local midges!



Walker

© Graham Cooper - www.forestofbowlandimages.com

Horse walker

© Tarja Wilson, Lancashire County Council
Countryside Service

For further information please contact:

Tarja Wilson
Lancashire County Council
Countryside Service
01200 448000
tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast &
Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Garstang Walking Festival

Garstang is one of the key gateways for visitors to the Forest of Bowland from the West. Wyre Borough Council in partnership with many local organisations helps to organise an annual Walking Festival in Garstang. The festival usually takes place the second week in May.

Highlights of the 2008 Festival included the Wyre Way Challenge a 4 day 46 mile walk from sea at Knott End to the source in the Trough of Bowland. This is always very popular and people come from far and wide to have a go at the Challenge. Also new for 2008 was the Garstang Cheesy Trail a walk following the route of one of the new

cheese trails developed in western Bowland which help to celebrate the quality of one of Lancashire's most famous foods – Lancashire Cheese. On this walk customers get the chance to taste some cheese at Dewlay and see how it is made. The Festival provides a great way to promote the natural and cultural heritage of Garstang, the Lancaster Canal and the Forest of Bowland and brings together a wide variety of volunteers from the local community who are wonderful advocates of the area. Look out on the Festival Bowland or Wyre Borough Council websites for details. www.wyrebc.gov.uk/find/garstangwalkingfestival



Len Blacow, Wyre Coast & Countryside Service with Fred Talbot at the Garstang Walking Festival
© Wyre Coast and Countryside Service

For further information please contact:

Alison Boden
Wyre Coast & Countryside Service
01253 887220
countryside@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

Coordination & Management



Reviewing the Management Plan

How the current plan was produced

The new AONB Management Plan 2009-2014, was published in March 2009 and succeeds the 2004, 1999 and 1995 plans in guiding the work of the Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

The current Management Plan is the product of a targeted consultation exercise, together with an extensive literature review – the details of which are set out in pages 10-12 of the new Plan, available as a downloadable PDF at www.forestofbowland.com

Consultation

Production of the new AONB Management Plan has involved targeted consultation with both 'communities of place', i.e. people who live and work within the AONB, and 'communities of interest', i.e. organisations with an interest or 'stake' in how the AONB is managed.

The consultation exercise was designed and undertaken by Countryside, a private consultancy, in partnership with the AONB Unit. The consultation exercise was begun in 2008/09 with a series of local workshops for 'communities of place' in village halls. At each event, participants were required to work in groups using specially designed mind-mapping toolkits to discuss and record ideas relating to: a) the special qualities of the AONB, determining what people value about the landscape; b) the key issues affecting the AONB; and c) ideas and aspirations for the future. Issues and ideas were recorded on maps of the AONB, where possible. This stage of the consultation alone generated more than 1,200 individual comments. A one-day event was held at Chipping over a weekend to encourage participation among people who may not have been able to attend the dedicated workshop sessions. A selection of local producers were invited to set up stalls and other attractions, helping to broaden the appeal of the event.

Five half day workshops were run with interest groups and organisations concerned with the AONB – the 'communities of interest'. Participants were required to review and update the content of the previous plan and add new objectives or actions for consideration. A different process was used to consult with communities of interest - this involved use of a wall-mounted toolkit, containing all of the visions, objectives and actions from the previous Management Plan. Participants were required to review and update the content of the previous plan and add new objectives or actions for consideration. Each workshop focused on a different aspect or 'theme' of AONB management, those being: natural and cultural landscape; economy and community; enjoyment, health and wellbeing; and general coordination/management. Discussion of climate change issues was incorporated as a cross-cutting theme at each workshop; a dedicated workshop on climate change was also undertaken as part of this programme, to explore the topic in detail.

In April last year we held one two-hour workshop with local schoolchildren aged 13-14 years, held at Bowland High School. This event involved the same consultation process as used in the other workshops, the aim being to engage specifically with young people and ensure their values, ideas and aspirations were considered as part of the Management Plan review.

A one half-day workshop with the AONB Unit, undertaken in April 2008 was used to discuss and comment on early results from the consultation exercise, and to develop a new structure for the Management Plan.

A consultation postcard was also produced and comments were also invited via a web-based consultation form, which again requested feedback on: a) the special qualities of the AONB; b) the key issues affecting the AONB; and c) ideas and aspirations for the future.

Workshop at Eldroth

Workshop at Hornby
© Countryside

Don McKay
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Coordination & Management

How the results of the consultation were used

The results of the consultation exercise were combined and used to review, re-draft and reinforce the Management Plan's objectives, actions and visions.

Firstly, the results from consultation with communities of interest, i.e. partner organisations and other stakeholders, were used to produce a new set of draft objectives and actions for the AONB - i.e. based on those from the previous Management Plan, but including many changes and new ideas. Secondly, the results from consultation with communities of place, i.e. people who live and work within the AONB, were used to produce a series of reports, containing transcripts of the comments obtained at each of the five workshops. These individual reports allowed locally-specific issues and ideas to be more easily identified and incorporated within the Management Plan, where appropriate. Thirdly, all of the results from consultation with communities of place, i.e. all five workshop reports were combined to form a single document. The combined results were then analysed in order to:

- Identify the key issues, ideas and aspirations by looking for patterns and trends in the results - i.e. areas where the same, or similar, comments have been made by multiple participants.
- Identify unique, or uncommon, comments that may require further consideration to avoid loss of potentially useful information.
- Identify and make note of any detailed or specific comments that may be used to inform other work, for example comments with potential to inform project planning and delivery.

Finally, the key issues, ideas and aspirations emerging from consultation with communities of place were compared, and wherever possible, combined with the draft objectives and actions emerging from consultation with communities of interest. Effort was made to ensure that all key ideas resulting from both consultations were included in the final draft objectives and actions. It should be noted that no significantly conflicting ideas or aspirations were identified between the groups consulted.

The new draft objectives and actions that emerged from the consultation process were then amended and updated further in response to key information obtained during a review of literature, including local and regional policy documents and plans.

The two county and six district councils together with Natural England have now approved the new Management Plan which will be used to guide and direct the work of the AONB partnership through to 2014, but in a fast changing world we shall probably be beginning to revise and update the Plan long before the end of 2012.

With thanks to Paul Mahony at Countryside for the original text from which this has been adapted



Workshop at Slaidburn
© Countryside

Cover of the Management Plan

Don McKay
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Coordination & Management

Review of Governance

In early 2009 we went through a Review of Governance during which we held a number of AONB Unit and Partnership meetings.

As a result of these meetings each action that the AONB was identified as delivering within the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan 2009-14 was split between the AONB Unit Team, clearly identifying for each action a lead officer and level of priority. This division of roles and responsibilities is now reflected in the heading up of proposed theme and task & finish groups explored as well as the following changes to the team's job titles.

AONB Sustainable Tourism & website development Officer – **Hetty Byrne**

AONB Community Projects Officer – **Martin Charlesworth**

AONB Development & Funding Officer – **Cathy Hopley**

AONB Communications Officer – **Susan MacDonald**

AONB Business Development Officer – **Mike Pugh**

AONB Landscapes Stories project officer – **Sandra Silk**

Whilst going through this process a gap became very evident in the delivery of many of the actions relating to our core purpose 'to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural landscape'. With this in mind the AONB will be seeking funding to appoint a new full time post of 'Landscape and Biodiversity Officer' for the Forest of Bowland AONB Team.

In addition, discussions were held on how to improve the current partnership structure. It was agreed that the existing Officers Technical Committee be disbanded and replaced by a number of new and existing theme groups focussed much more on the delivery of the Management Plan and on planning ahead. The Partnership Management

Group comprised of Natural England and the County and District councils which currently uses electronic means of communication will continue to operate but will meet formally at the request of any partner if they have the support of at least one other partner. In addition a number of 'task and finish' groups will be set up to tackle specific pieces of work identified as current priorities, each with a nominated lead member of AONB Unit staff or Countryside Officer:

Theme Groups

- Access and Recreation
- Land Management
- Sustainable Tourism working group and Forum
- Climate Change
- Education
- Volunteering
- Landscape and Biodiversity

Task and Finish Groups

- Lancashire Green Tourism steering group
- Landscape Stories steering group
- Environmental Stewardship renewals programme
- SDF panel

It is hoped that these changes will enable all partners to fully participate in the delivery of the Management Plan and in shaping reporting to the JAC.



View from Dunsop Fell

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For further information please contact:

Don McKay
Forest of Bowland AONB
01200 448000
donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

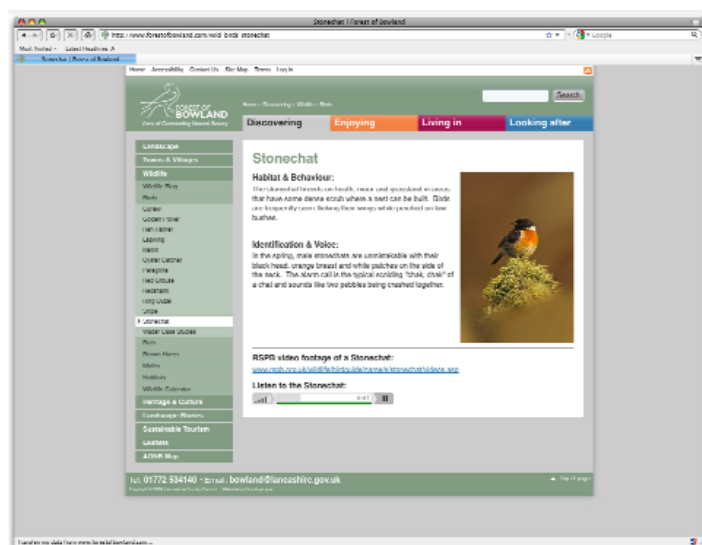
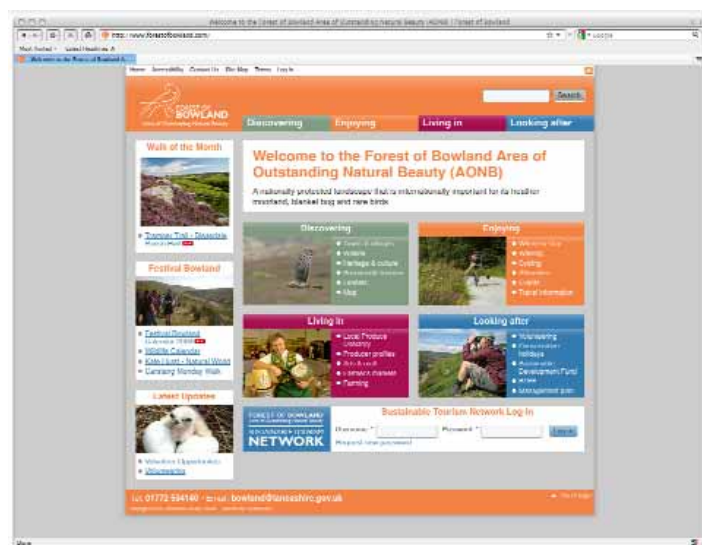
Coordination & Management

Website Developments

Since October 2008 preparations have been underway to develop and launch a new Forest of Bowland website. While the old site attracted many visitors and provided a wealth of information, the volume of web pages meant that navigation of the site was becoming difficult. The new site brings together four mini sites into one Content Management System; this has enabled easier navigation, and also utilises the Forest of Bowland branded colours which makes it instantly recognisable.

Content within the site has also been developed to enable greater interactivity and to provide a resource that visitors can return to and find new information. Some of these developments have been possible by funding secured from Natural Economy North West to develop the wildlife elements of the website. Developments have included:

- Incorporating the 'Sense of Place' approach into the website by highlighting the special qualities of the area and providing examples of places to go and things to do.
- Improvement of the wildlife section, and particularly the section on birds, to include information on places to go to see them, how to identify them including video and sound clips, and how to 'tread carefully', i.e. not disturb ground nesting birds.
- Inclusion of an RSS feed from an aggregate wildlife blog, developed through the Lancashire Green Tourism project by tourism businesses undergoing GTBS. Visit www.bowlandwildlife.org.uk
- New interactive calendar highlighting wildlife to see at particular times of the year and walks to enjoy, along with details of Festival of Bowland events.
- Expansion of walking section to include downloadable walks focussing on wildlife and landscapes to see in the AONB – e.g. hare watching, hen harrier spotting and wader walks, moorland trails, river rambles and woodland walks – these are self guided walks incorporating a map and directions, along with information on what to see and pencil sketches of the wildlife.
- Incorporation of information gathered for our recent printed 'Discovery Guide' to improve information for visitors to the area, and signposting them to businesses with a strong commitment to sustainable tourism.



Financial Summary

Forest of Bowland AONB Joint Advisory Committee Budget

	Actual 2008/2009 (Out-turn prices) £'s
EXPENDITURE	
Salary, N.I and Superannuation	181,043
Outbased premises costs	12,559
Travel and subsistence	8,265
Central, departmental and technical support	58,146
Core activities	33,955
Projects/Information	238,425
TOTAL COST TO BE RECOVERED	532,393
INCOME	
Government Grants	
Natural England	301,833
Natural Tourism	5,000
Contributions	
United Utilities	6,900
Other Project Contributions	34,888
County Councils	
Lancashire	77,326
North Yorkshire	6,900
District Councils	
Craven	6,900
Lancaster	6,900
Pendle	6,900
Preston	6,900
Ribble Valley	6,900
Wyre	6,900
SUB TOTAL – LOCAL AUTHORITIES	125,626
	474,247
CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT COSTS (in kind)	
Lancashire County Council	58,146
	532,393

Membership



Langden Valley © Graham Cooper - www.forestofbowlandimages.com

Lancashire County Council

CC Jean Yates
CC Mary Wilson

North Yorkshire County Council

CC David Ireton

Craven District Council

Cllr Donald Whaites

Lancaster City Council

Cllr Tony Johnson

Wyre Borough Council

Cllr Roger Brooks

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Cllr Rosemary Elms

Preston City Council

Cllr Anthony Gornall

Pendle Borough Council

Cllr James Starkie

Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils

Michael Helm

Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Cllr Colin Price

United Utilities

Ian Grindy

Environment Agency

Daniel Bond

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Andrew Gouldstone

Landowners and Farming

Position not filled

Ramblers Association

David Kelly

Natural England

Susannah England

Editor's note: Following changes resulting from the recent County Council elections Jean Yates is no longer a County Councillor

The Committee and its constituent bodies are playing the major role in ensuring that the Forest of Bowland Management Plan is implemented. The role of the Committee and its Terms of Reference, is as follows:- The Joint Advisory Committee supports and encourages and active partnership between all of the agencies involved and co-ordinates management over the whole of the AONB.

The aim is to:

- promote the AONB at national, regional and local level,
- ensure that the AONB is conserved and managed effectively,
- work to assist the social and economic well being of the AONB commensurate with the conservation of its special qualities,
- provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas,
- consider any issues likely to affect the area adversely and agree action,
- make recommendations for new initiatives

Contact

Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Stables
4 Root Hill Estate Yard
Whitewell Road
Dunsop Bridge
BB7 3AY

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
bowland@lancashire.gov.uk
www.forestofbowland.com

AONB Unit

Don McKay

AONB Officer

Tel: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07973 928312
Email: donald.mckay@lancashire.gov.uk

Susan MacDonald

AONB Communications Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07973 925312
Email: susan.macdonald@lancashire.gov.uk

Cathy Hopley

AONB Development & Funding Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07891 537835
Email: cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk

Martin Charlesworth

AONB Community Projects Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07989 258675
Email: martin.charlesworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Hetty Byrne

AONB Sustainable Tourism & Website Development Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07989 258671
Email: hetty.byrne@lancashire.gov.uk

Mike Pugh

AONB Business Development Officer

Tel/Fax: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07989 258672
Email: mike.pugh@lancashire.gov.uk

Lancashire County Council Area Countryside Officers

Dave Oyston

East Lancashire including Pendle Hill

Tel: 07771 995615
Email: david.oyston@lancashire.gov.uk

Dave Padley

Bowland East

Tel: 07860 578558
Email: david.padley@lancashire.gov.uk

Tarja Wilson

Bowland North and West

Tel: 01200 448000
Mobile: 07887 830853
Email: tarja.wilson@lancashire.gov.uk

Other Countryside Services

Alison Boden

Wyre Coast & Countryside Service

Tel: 01253 887220
Email: aboden@wyrebc.gov.uk
www.wyrebc.gov.uk

United Utilities

Bowland Estate Office

Tel: 01200 454400
www.unitedutilities.com