

# Sustainable Bowland project report 2006-08



This project is supported by the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB),  
and received funding from the following organisations



## **SUSTAINABLE BOWLAND AN EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT 2006-2008**

### **FINAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES**

#### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Sustainable Bowland was a two year externally funded project, which aimed to implement the high priority actions identified in the Forest of Bowland's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (Jan 2005). The project was delivered by the Forest of Bowland's AONB Unit, and funded through the NWDA programme Pathfinder in Practice, via the Lancashire Economic Partnership; together with grants from Lancashire County Developments Ltd and the Lancashire Rural Tourism Initiative (funded by the Lancashire Rural Recovery Programme). For financial and output reports please see appendix A – Final Project Report

The project employed a small team of 3, one full time and 2 part time staff taking on the roles of community projects, business development and information. The team was supervised and assisted by the AONB Unit's communities and funding officer and reported to the Sustainable Tourism Working Group. Some delivery was also provided by Lancashire County Council countryside officers. The team was based in Clitheroe in premises provided by Lancashire Rural Futures.

#### **DELIVERY OF ACTIVITIES**

Details of the project objectives can be found in appendix B – Review of AONB sustainable tourism strategy action plan.

In brief, the objectives were to:

1. Promote a range of sustainable activities and experiences, to promote quiet enjoyment of the AONB, and to increase opportunities for people to find out about the special qualities of the area
2. Involve the community in developing projects to promote and interpret the area's special qualities
3. Support the development of enterprises based on local products
4. Manage the movement of visitors to minimise adverse impacts on communities and the environment
5. Develop and improve communication and involvement between the AONB and tourism enterprises and tourism information staff

***1. Promote a range of sustainable activities and experiences, to promote quiet enjoyment of the AONB, and to increase opportunities for people to find out about the special qualities of the area***

1.1 This area of work focussed on delivering new infrastructure on the ground – ie new and improved bridleways, cycleways, and tramper trails. It also included interpretation and promotion of these routes, and of the AONB's sustainable tourism offer in general.

This objective also encompassed encouraging businesses to improve their environmental performance; supporting new and sustainable tourism businesses; developing packages of accommodation and activities and strengthening the visitor payback scheme

1.2 Nine new routes were developed in the course of the two year project at a cost of £59,607 (£39,607 NWDA matched with £20,000 from Lancashire County Council's local transport plan). These were:

- I. Scorton picnic site access for all route
- II. Wyresdale Park bridleway
- III. Nether Wyresdale access for all route
- IV. Grizedale tramper trail
- V. Lots House Farm bridleway
- VI. Cobble Hey Farm tramper trails
- VII. Landskill Farm tramper trails
- VIII. Broadgate Farm tramper trails
- IX. Gisburn Forest mountain bike trails



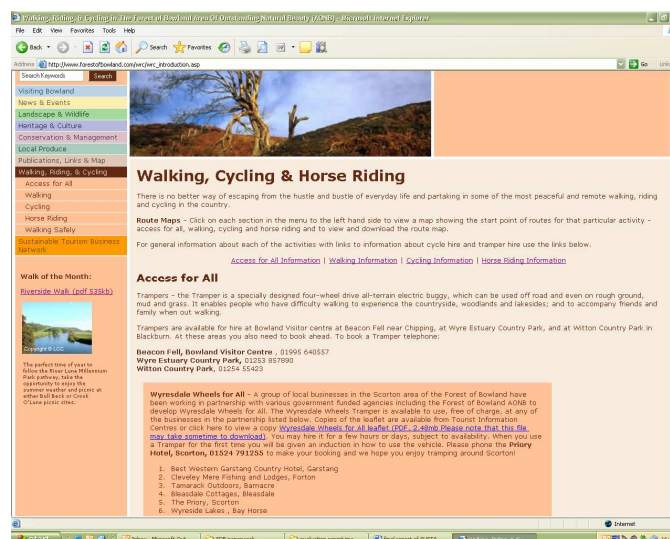
Grizedale tramper trail and bridleway





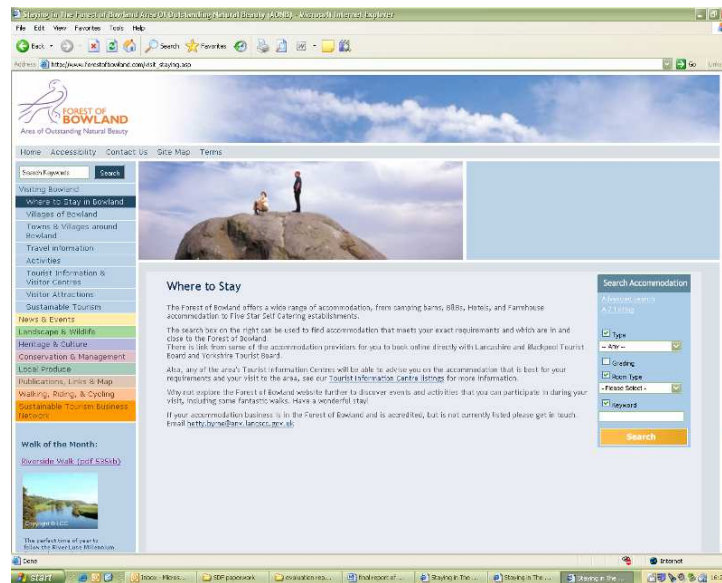
Testing out a trampler at Scorton picnic site

1.3 As part of our effort to improve the AONB website and to provide web based information and activities, we decided to create a section of downloadable maps for walking, riding and cycling. The webroutes were designed to be easily printable from a standard desktop black and white printer. Two templates were created – one for short walks and another for longer routes. These templates then enabled us to create 35 web routes, each of them providing a simple map and walking directions, together with information on length, terrain, time, public transport connections, local facilities (toilets, car parks, shops, cafes and pubs) and, on the longer walks, GPS co-ordinates. These web routes were extensively promoted to businesses and tourism information staff, and as a result are the most visited section of our website (eg 10,531 unique visits between July 07 and June 2008) For details visit: [http://www.forestofbowland.com/wrc/wrc\\_introduction.asp](http://www.forestofbowland.com/wrc/wrc_introduction.asp)

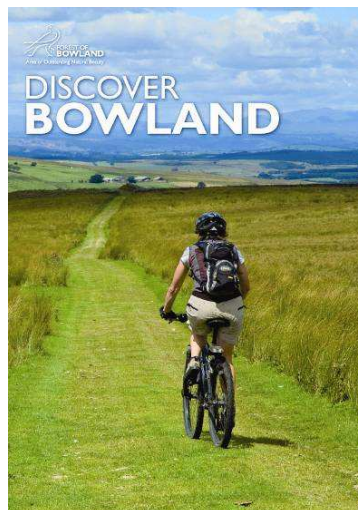


This project cost £6844. See also appendix C

1.4 As a concluding piece of work for the project we produced the first Visitor Guide for the AONB – Discover Bowland - in March 2008. This brought together information gathered throughout the project, and highlighted the new sustainable tourism offer of the area. The accommodation section is drawn from our online accommodation search, developed by New Mind in conjunction with LBTB and Yorkshire Dales & Harrogate Tourism Partnership, see [http://www.forestofbowland.com/visit\\_staying.asp](http://www.forestofbowland.com/visit_staying.asp)



The Visitor Guide was professionally designed and printed and distributed widely in the region via our ongoing distributors Brochurelink and through the Tourist Information Centres and tourism businesses around Bowland. This project cost £8750 to design and print 10,000 copies



The Visitor Guide

1.5 Whilst we had originally planned to create new visitor map guides to the AONB this plan was superseded by an effort to make more of our visitor information web based and sustainable. Thus towards the end of the programme we decided to deliver this element commercially via a partnership with Harvey Maps. We offered Harveys a grant of £10,000 (via our sustainable tourism grant support to businesses) and they were able to produce a first edition of 3000 copies of a 2-sided, cyclists and walkers map of the entire AONB. This is now available for sale at £9.99 to break even, and then a second edition will be produced at Harvey's expense. The map has been well received by retailers and users alike.



Launching the Harvey map of Bowland

1.6 Introducing a green accreditation scheme was always part of our planned activity, however this was delayed until the second year of the project as we wanted to ensure that any scheme adopted was acceptable both to the businesses and to the Europarc Federation. The Forest of Bowland AONB was awarded the European Charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas in 2005 as a result of our application and the development of a strategy for sustainable tourism. The Charter Partner award is given to businesses who operate within the protected area and who also fulfil several criteria, including a green tourism accreditation. The GTBS (Green Tourism Business Scheme) is now becoming the accepted standard throughout the UK (with nearly 2000 businesses now inspected), and in March 2007 we set up a contract with them, in partnership with LCDL and LBTB. This enabled us to enter 18 businesses for the award, and the participants were then trained, audited and inspected on their environmental performance. The participating businesses, which included a village hall, cycle hire, visitor attractions and accommodation providers, were presented with their awards in November 2007 by the Duke of Westminster, at the Forest of Bowland's sustainable tourism forum, held in Abbetstead village.





GTBS winners receive their awards from His Grace the Duke of Westminster

This project cost £5000 and brought in £15562 match funding, generated 13 training outputs and supported 16 businesses in corporate and social responsibility. The project also offered small grants to 6 of the participating businesses to enable them to improve environmental performance.

Due to the success of the scheme the Forest of Bowland AONB, in partnership with LBTB and LCDL, is planning to run the GTBS scheme throughout Lancashire from 2008-2011.

*'This programme really alerted us to our energy usage and measures have been taken to help us both reduce and control our costs'*

Michael & Marie Lawson, Wolfen Mill & Stafffield Hall Country Retreats

1.7 The action plan prioritised the 'encouragement of provision of sustainable and low impact activities' in order to increase the tourism offer of the area. We decided to do this via a small grants scheme, offering businesses the opportunity of a grant to cover up to 40% of costs incurred in providing a new sustainable tourism resource, up to a maximum of £15,000. This grant support was funded by all 3 partners. The development work was largely carried out by our own business development officer, with significant input from Lancashire Rural Futures business advisers. All grants were appraised by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group. Businesses supported were:

- I. Backridge Farm – new website
- II. Bleasdale Cottages – information and facility barn
- III. Broadgate Farm – bird hide and accommodation
- IV. Cycle Adventure – new cycle hire business
- V. Dale House – new camping barn
- VI. Greenhall Farm – new pony trekking centre
- VII. Halls Arms – redeveloped public house
- VIII. Maidenbridge Gallery – art exhibition
- IX. Pye Nanny nursery – new refreshment kiosk and information
- X. Yorkshire Dales Guides – GPS trails

*'The Sustainable Bowland team has supported a wide range of projects and activities which have contributed to the enjoyment and preservation of the unique Bowland experience.'* Mark Carson, Lancashire County Developments Ltd.



Riding out from Greenhall Farm



Facing North – the exhibition at Maidenbridge Gallery

In total our grants to these businesses reached £57,939, bringing in £114,306 of private match funds. They also generated 8 businesses supported outputs, created 4 new businesses, and 4.5 new jobs

1.8 As part of the development of an improved offer of sustainable tourism within the AONB, the action plan had also identified a need for more accommodation and activity packages, whereby visitors could book the two elements in conjunction. This was felt to be important as it would enable visitors to gain a greater experience and understanding of the area. Activities were to be primarily 'quiet enjoyment' and included cycling, conservation volunteering and birdwatching. Again we supported this development via a small grants scheme, offering grants to businesses and organisations, and also by developing promotional packages ourselves, such as the Birding in Bowland leaflet and programme which brought together 'bird friendly' accommodation providers with an RSPB advertisement and programme of guided walks and talks.



Projects supported:

- I. Birding in Bowland – leaflet, posters, website pages, RSPB advert and programme of activities, central bookings taken by Clitheroe Travel
- II. BTCV – a series of conservation working holidays, our grants supported the costs of experienced trainers to support the volunteers
- III. Clitheroe Travel – setting up of a computerised booking system for packages and for Bowland Festival events
- IV. Fishing in Bowland – marketing leaflet promoting places to fish and local accommodation, and website pages
- V. Wyresdale wheels for all – promotional leaflet for a business led scheme providing an off road vehicle for people with mobility problems and linking to places to stay and trails to use in the area
- VI. Off the Rails – set up costs for new cycle hire and holiday business based in Settle using a variety of accommodation in Bowland



This project cost £12,736, and generated £11,785 match funds. It also generated 2 businesses supported outputs.

*'As the public's perception changes the "Sustainability Credentials" of tourist businesses will become increasingly important, and thanks to initiatives by the Forest of Bowland AONB we are now perfectly positioned to take advantage.'*

Colin Clifford, Off the Rails

1.9 The Bowland Tourism and Environment Fund had been set up several years previously, but the action plan identified this as an area for development, whereby visitors to the area could contribute to projects which conserved and enhanced the AONB. The scheme was re launched in Summer 2006 with a new postcard and badge scheme – whereby donors gave £1 in return for an AONB pin badge and a postcard, giving entry to a free prize draw for a weekend break at a hotel. Our business development officer was responsible for this work, and he also streamlined the distribution and collection process and increased the number of collection boxes from 35 to 93 by the end of the project. In partnership with LBTB, and Ribble Valley district and Lancaster City Council the fund was also re launched and an increased number of applications and projects have been supported in the two years of operation.

## ***2. Involve the community in developing projects which promote and interpret the area's special qualities***

2.1 The action plan recognised the AONB's ambition to engage the local community more, and also to promote the local distinctiveness of the area. This work was largely undertaken by our community projects officer who worked with around 30 community groups during the two year project. This work area also included our Sense of Place project, and the publication of village leaflets which enhanced the sustainability of our small villages and the services they offer.

2.2 Local distinctiveness projects were held at:

- I. Tosside – re building a dry stone wall
- II. Length of Cheese - local food promotion at the Three Fishes
- III. Barley village hall – enhancing the exterior of this redeveloped community resource centre
- IV. Hornby – cat and rat fountain
- V. Slaidburn village archive – up grading their display and exhibition systems and improving their IT capacity
- VI. Bolton by Bowland – the village stocks and a signpost were improved
- VII. Roeburndale – a public toilet was installed at a remote Methodist chapel
- VIII. Slaidburn primary school – a potter worked with the children to create individual pot barns resembling those in their local landscape
- IX. Knowle Green – garden festival
- X. Chipping – numerous white railings have been repainted by volunteers around the village
- XI. Bleasdale village hall – improvements to the kitchen and development of a heritage room to interpret the local history of the area
- XII. Thorneyholme school in Dunsop Bridge – improved boundary walls and fences
- XIII. Chipping – improvements to the war memorial and garden
- XIV. Newchurch – improvements to the village centre – planting, pathways and walls.
- XV. Downham – support for the holding of the 'Great Milk debate' about the future of dairy farming in the area, hosted by the local Womens Institute
- XVI. Bentham – a photography project based around life in the town and surrounds on a single day in June 2007, culminating in a month long exhibition
- XVII. Eldroth – interpretation panel
- XVIII. Roughlee – village improvements alongside the river
- XIX. Roeburndale – further improvements to the Methodist chapel
- XX. Slaidburn – support for the village hall website

- XXI. Wennington – village improvements including a noticeboard and benches
- XXII. Gisburn – support for the redevelopment of the village playing fields
- XXIII. Slaidburn - repairs to the war memorial
- XXIV. Newton – replacement of modern signage with traditional style signposts
- XXV. Sabden – creation of a new war memorial for the village
- XXVI. Twiston – installation of a memorial stone at the Quaker burial ground
- XXVII. Caton – installation of a village noticeboard
- XXVIII. Chatburn – installation of a village noticeboard
- XXIX. Scorton – installation of a traditional style lamppost by the church
- XXX. Slaidburn and Chipping - historical project on researching sheepwashes



The improved war memorial gardens at Chipping



Roughlee village centre

*'Community actions delivered as part of the Sustainable Bowland programme have clearly demonstrated that there is a desire and a willingness amongst the communities of Bowland to be involved and participate in projects which both improve the environment and community life. Valuable lessons have been learned about how best to facilitate and support community action. These need to be considered by a number of organizations as they look to deliver on their commitments to community engagement.'*

Andy Ashcroft, Rural Policy and Projects, LCC

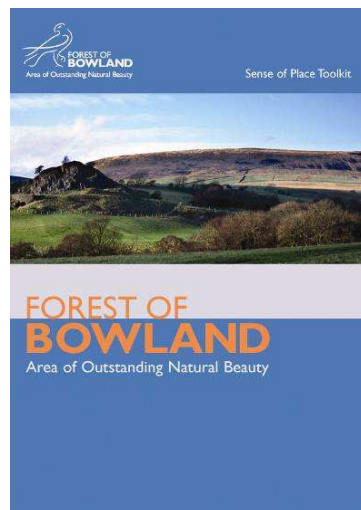


2.3 In all of these projects the idea for the work came from the local community and our officer acted as a facilitator – making enquiries, identifying funds, organising volunteers and so on. In order to help these projects deliver, we offered small grants or contributed to the costs, this came to £48,000 in total over the two years, with match funds of £106,000 being raised by the communities, and £8550 of volunteer time being input.

2.4 The Sense of Place project was instigated in the summer of 2005, with a large scale community consultation. This asked people what was special about the Forest of Bowland, and what they would encourage visitors to do and see on a trip to the area. The resulting information was put together as a 'toolkit' for businesses (as a publication, CD and web resources) – providing them with easy to understand information and messages about the AONB, plus lots of suggestions on how to build their own sense of place within their business. The toolkit was augmented by a series of training courses held throughout the two year project. The toolkit has gained a very good reputation and has been held up as an example of good practice both nationally and regionally by tourism experts and academics.

See also appendix C

This project cost £11,500 and trained 77 people



Sense of Place toolkit

2.5 Village leaflets combine interesting and attractive information about an area, together with a suggested local walk, and details of local businesses providing accommodation, food, retail opportunities and community services. The leaflets were produced in response to requests for support from small businesses, and provided a collaborative marketing vehicle which also encouraged local level sustainability. Leaflets were published by the AONB unit free of charge, but any subsequent reprints will be funded through the businesses. Leaflets are also available online, on our own and village websites. In total we published 10 leaflets at a cost of £16,975:

- I. Slaidburn
- II. Chatburn
- III. Hornby
- IV. Wray
- V. Bentham

- VI. Bolton by Bowland and Tosside
- VII. Chipping
- VIII. Dunsop Bridge and Newton
- IX. Calder Vale
- X. Pendle



Village leaflets in a Bowland Box

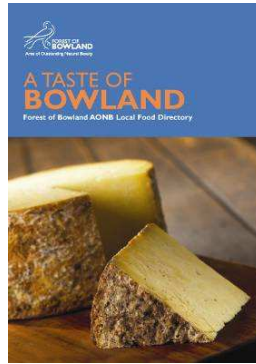
2.6 In order to encourage the display and distribution of publicity such as the village leaflets we entered into a contract with Brochurelink, who arrange supply of publicity to TICs and tourism businesses. This is on a demand basis, and has greatly improved our distribution system. We also invested in locally sourced and crafted wooden leaflet racks to display our literature, and put together 'bedroom browsers' for guests staying with accommodation providers. Both of these latter initiatives were only available to our Network members (see below).

### ***3. Support the development of enterprises based on local products***

3.1 Supporting local producers means that money spent in the area is re-invested locally, and there are spin off benefits such as reduced food miles, congestion and pollution. In the Forest of Bowland, buying local produce also means a better return for local farmers and enables them to carry on farming in the traditional and sensitive manner required to conserve the special landscape. Promoting local products is seen as an important part of sustainable tourism as visitors are key consumers, and it is also beneficial to educate them about food and farming during their stay. We embarked on several local product initiatives in the first year of the project:

3.2 We compiled a data base of local artists and craft workers, and arranged an event at Alston Hall to bring them together with local retailers in order to encourage the sale of their products to visitors and local consumers. Over 70 people attended.

3.3 A detailed database was also compiled of food and drink producers and this was then published on line as a searchable database, [http://www.forestofbowland.com/producerprofiles/pp\\_search.asp](http://www.forestofbowland.com/producerprofiles/pp_search.asp) and in printed form as our 'Taste of Bowland' local food directory.



Again we held an evening event to bring the producers together with eating establishments and retailers, to encourage the development of local supply chains. Over 100 people attended this event at Samlesbury Hall, run in conjunction with LEADER+. It cost £9000 to design and print two editions of Taste Bowland. See also appendix C

3.4 We supported the development of new local products via another small grants scheme, offering businesses up to 50% of costs incurred in research and development, and production, of new local products. The producers supported were:

- I. Bowland Outdoor Reared Pork – building of a new cutting plant
- II. Dolphinholme House Farm – research into the production and branding of goats cheese
- III. Uncle Bobs Ice Cream – marketing costs associated with the launch of this award winning ice cream

In total we granted £15600 worth of support to local producers, raising £48,236 match funds, generating 2 new jobs and supporting 2 businesses into new markets.

#### ***4. Manage the movement of visitors to minimise adverse impacts on communities and the environment.***

4.1 Sustainable transport is essential to the development of sustainable tourism initiatives. In addition to encouraging visitors to walk, ride or cycle within the AONB, the sustainable tourism strategy also aimed to encourage visitors not to use cars at all wherever possible. This project consisted of research and implementation phases.

4.2 In mid 2006 we invited tenders for the creation of a sustainable transport study of the AONB. This was to investigate the current situation in terms of public transport provision, to look at good practice elsewhere in the UK and Europe, and to suggest actions which the AONB might take. The resulting report was produced by JMP and Transport for Leisure in March 2007. Download copies are available at:

[http://www.forestofbowland.com/publ\\_plans.asp](http://www.forestofbowland.com/publ_plans.asp)

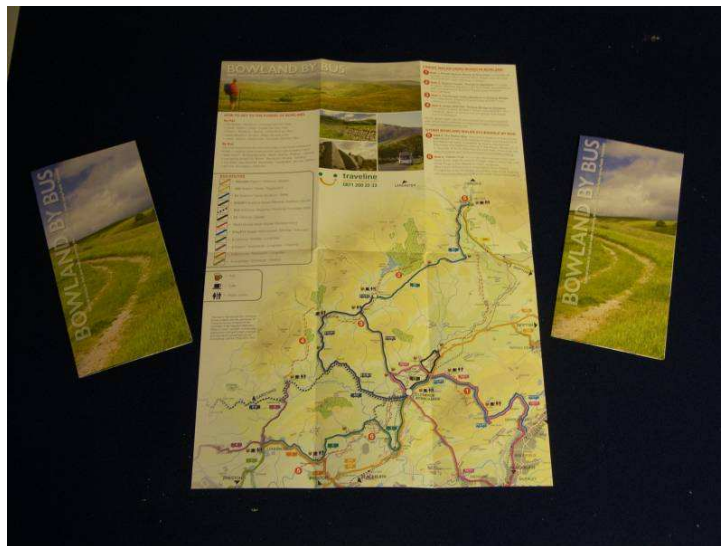
The key recommendations of the report were to:

- Deliver effective promotion and marketing of existing public transport
- Provide sustainable transport for the Bowland Festival and other public events
- Co-ordinate and develop cycling opportunities in the AONB
- Develop a Bowland Experience bus
- Support the development of the Dales & Bowland community interest company



4.3 As a result of the report we undertook the following projects:

- I. Creation of 5 bus walks as downloads on our website
- II. Integration of public transport information into all publications (eg village leaflets, webwalks, Discover Bowland etc)
- III. Grant support for the production of a new leaflet by Dales & Bowland community interest company 'Bowland by Bus' which details bus services available and walks and attractions accessible by bus in the AONB



Bowland by Bus leaflet

We are also actively offering support to the Bowland Transit Club and their weekly guided walks programme; to cycling development projects in north Bowland; and we will continue to support communities who lobby for the retention and development of public transport within the AONB.

In total this project area cost £17,300

## ***5. Develop and improve communication and involvement between the AONB and tourism enterprises and information staff***

5.1 Communication and the development of relationships were identified as key needs within the Forest of Bowland's strategy for sustainable tourism. This was in order to improve the understanding of the AONB and its special qualities, and to increase commitments to the principles of sustainable tourism throughout the industry.

5.2 Provision of printed and online information has increased substantially during the course of the project: we have produced 15 new publications and added several new features to the website – including searchable databases for accommodation and local products, downloadable webwalks and a section for sustainable tourism businesses. The latter is open to Network members and enables them to book on courses online, access resources and chat with other members.



5.3 Over the two years our information officer also published 7 seasonal newsletters for businesses and partners. These were high quality printed newsletters, distributed to over 200 contacts, informing people about the project, its activities, and supported businesses. The newsletters can also be downloaded from our website at [www.forestofbowland.co/cons\\_tourism\\_newsletter.asp](http://www.forestofbowland.co/cons_tourism_newsletter.asp) Feedback from the newsletter was consistently good. Total costs reached £6420

5.4 Our information officer was also responsible for organising training and familiarisation visits. Training included the Sense of Place workshops mentioned above, as well as day courses on Green Tourism and Marketing. Familiarisation visits were originally targeted at TIC staff, but widened to include tourism business operators in 2007. Six visits were held in total – each one focussing on a different area of the AONB and taking participants to view attractions, business partners, short walks and other activities. The aim was to help them gain an understanding and appreciation of the AONB and to pass this on to their visitors. We also ran a visit to meet businesses involved in the Mary Towneley Loop bridleway, in order to assist the development of our own bridleway work.



Familiarisation visit to Dalehead Chapel at Stocks Reservoir



Visiting Peers Clough Farm on the Mary Towneley Loop

Familiarisation visits generated 64 training outputs, other training days generated 30 outputs and total costs were just £2878

5.5 The Sustainable Tourism Business Network was launched in January 2007 at a business event held at Dalesbridge. The Network is a club for tourism businesses who are committed to sustainability within the AONB. Membership is free, although a signed commitment and agreed action plan is required. Members are eligible for free training and advice, they also receive publicity materials direct from the AONB and can use the business network section of our website.

<http://www.forestofbowland.com/BusinessNetwork/index.asp>

One other advantage of joining in 2007 was eligibility to join the pilot GTBS scheme, and the members who passed the scheme then automatically became 'European Charter Businesses' – the first in Europe. Charter businesses receive preferential marketing and promotion within the AONB. The Network now has over 65 members and meets 2 to 3 times a year to exchange views, develop collaborative projects and hear guest speakers.

*'We have found the Network useful as it offers networking at its best - a non competitive atmosphere where members can give and receive useful advice to or from fellow members.'*

*Advice received has certainly helped our eco-development , has given us confidence to carry out projects already conceived, and provided plenty of ideas for the future.'*

*Ann Shaw, Parkfoot Holiday Homes*

See also Appendix C



## **EVALUATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE BOWLAND PROJECT**

The Sustainable Bowland project was delivered by the AONB Unit, with support from Lancashire County Council as responsible body. The project reported on activity and expenditure and made claims to the Lancashire Economic Partnership on a quarterly basis. The Partnership also carried out annual monitoring visits, and carried out a re-appraisal, or variation, of the project in year 2 to ensure targets and budgets were met.

As the information in Appendices A and B show, the Sustainable Bowland project was largely successful in meeting its planned objectives, spend, outputs and milestones. However, there were a few areas where work did not go to plan and these are detailed below, together with lessons learned and plans for the future.

### ***1. Meeting objectives and lessons learned***

#### ***1.1 work with tourism associations***

There has been minimal direct input to tourism associations (although we have worked with Wyre, Pendle, and Ribble Valley) and their role in the working group stopped when their member fell ill. This work will be picked up on in the future by the working group, the AONB unit and LBTB.

#### ***1.2 produce a map/menu/listings of activities/things to do***

We had originally planned to produce a new AONB map plus 4 area maps to illustrate places to visit, walks, rides, viewpoints etc. However, this was beset with problems of where to draw the boundaries, repetition of information for 4 areas, duplication with the village leaflets and the relatively small scale of our area to be divided into 4 parts.

This neighbourhood scale and locality working is favoured by local government and central government agencies, but does not seem as appropriate for the visitor agenda – visitors don't see the lines or the sense in dividing up the area. We therefore decided to concentrate on activities instead – fishing, birding, biking, and (still to do) walking – to tie into the accommodation and activity work – and we supplemented this with developments on the website and the production of a Discovery Guide for the whole AONB, plus the new Harvey Map.

#### ***1.3 activity and accommodation packages***

We were lucky to be able to support both BTCV and Off the Rails in their work to provide a package of accommodation and activity within the AONB. However, developing other packages was not so easy. The birding work offered a package of accommodation and birdwatching, but in practice most participants did not stay in the area – despite us advertising it nationally via RSPB. We will continue to investigate the market for staying visitors and look at alternative booking arrangements – eg online or via the accommodation provider, and in conjunction with LBTB.

#### ***1.4 Encourage provision of sustainable activities and facilities***

We had an aim of supporting 8 sustainable tourism projects, with no real understanding of how these would emerge. In reality these projects were initiated by the businesses themselves, with some support from us and much by LRF, and were not entirely due to our project driven agenda. We are very dependent on private enterprise and the state of the local and national economy, although our offer of funding support may have encouraged the sustainability angle of these projects. We

also found that the target number of new businesses and jobs was over optimistic, and we were working to too short a time scale (see 3.2 below). In fact, rather than see lots of new business start ups, existing enterprises were expanding to increase their profitability, or moving into sustainable tourism to take advantage of a new market. With LRF's role now having disappeared we will be more dependent on tourism officers, LBTB, and our own work on the ground to support new and expanding sustainable enterprises into the future.

#### *1.5 Visitor payback scheme: BTEF*

Although the prize draw scheme was not cost effective, the strength of the scheme has been to get 90+ businesses hosting the donation boxes, plus the personal contact this has provided via the business development officer to the AONB unit . Previously the scheme was serviced by Ribble Valley BC and we did not benefit from or build the relationships – but it is a very time consuming process and we are now experimenting with involving volunteers. The projects supported by the fund also need better promotion by all partners.

#### *1.6 local products work*

Despite the success of our database and directory, local producers are operating on a knife edge, partly due to rising feed and fuel prices. We had wanted to develop an original plan to involve village shops or a central carrier/distributor in local distribution, but this did not take off due to problems of storage, transport etc – and no business opportunity developed. We decided to leave this work to other agencies such as Made in Lancashire who may be better placed and working at a larger scale than us. LBTB also took on the quality agenda via Taste 08. The AONB will continue to promote and champion local producers wherever possible, through its own work, by encouraging businesses to buy local, and via updating the database online.

#### *1.7 provide information and training*

Although our official output figure for training days is just 113 (target was 160), this masks the fact that some enthusiasts came along to several familiarisation and training events but can only be counted once. We also provided training and familiarisation for businesses within the Yorkshire part of the AONB (10% of the AONB is outside of the NW region) – and again these could not be included in our claims. Actual attendance on training days therefore exceeded 190 places.

#### *1.8 strengthen viability of local services*

We have offered support wherever possible – eg to shops, post offices, producers, village halls, bus services – but our additional promotion has to be set against the general economic situation and its impact on rural areas – eg changes in funding to village halls, the closure of Post Offices and local shops, and bus service cuts. These impacts probably outweigh our positive work during the period of the project.

#### *1.9 support communities to undertake projects that reflect the special qualities of the AONB*

In reality communities have their own agenda which they wanted us to help them deliver before they would help us – eg one wanted a new village hall kitchen before a heritage room; others had priorities such as repairing the war memorial and tidying up the village. We offered support wherever possible and built up capacity and awareness of local distinctiveness, and this was often subsumed into the community projects. In reality a lot of the general village improvement projects have improved the tourism offer, and we also feel that attitudes to tourists are now much more positive than before.

## **2. Meeting spending targets**

2.1 Appendix A illustrates total project spend and compares this to the targets set in the 'variation' agreed in September 2007.

2.2 Figures are largely on target, the notable discrepancies being where we substantially over achieved in bringing in community match funding and private sector match, and so increased over all revenue spend by 21%.

2.3 The slight underspend in match funds from LCDL was due to late supply of an invoice from the GTBS project, which could not then be submitted in the final claim.

2.4 Staff costs were slightly higher than forecast, due to annual pay rises and increased hours for the part time staff not being foreseen.

## **3. Meeting output targets**

3.1 The variation to the project (see appendix A) in 2007 led to some changes in the NWDA output targets, and to the additional outputs. These new targets were then largely met by the project.

3.2 The major change was due to the fact that original forecasts for 'new businesses created' (output 3a-3d) were not achievable in the timescale of the project, as new businesses had to be trading for at least 12 months before they could be claimed – this meant all business creation work would have had to take place in the first 6-9 months of the project. In reality only one business met this definition (Halls Arms) and the other 4 were claimed as additional outputs 'businesses created but not yet trading for 12 months'.

3.3 We failed to meet the target of a new social enterprise being set up, as there were no viable projects or organisations in the tourism sector. A potential project, the Wyresdale Wheels for All did not wish to go down the route of setting up a new organisation when existing practice was suitable. We also worked closely with the Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company on transport projects.

3.4 The 'businesses supported with respect to corporate and social responsibility' output was not met as several businesses failed to produce the necessary evidence in time for the final claim.

3.5 As mentioned above (1.7), the training output (6c) was not met due the problem of not being able to count businesses attending several different courses more than once; and our Yorkshire clients not being eligible.

## **4. Plans for the future**

4.1 Now that the project has closed, the AONB unit is working hard to retain the valued and productive members of staff, and the relationships that they have built with businesses and communities over the last two years.

4.2 Our work with communities will now go a separate way from tourism, and we have submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to work with four identified community groups on a 'Your Heritage' project entitled 'Landscape Stories'. This will largely build on the local distinctiveness projects developed by Sustainable Bowland and will still produce outcomes of benefit to visitors and to people who live in the AONB.



4.3 As part of our current AONB Management Plan Review, the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism will be incorporated into the Management Plan, and actions derived from it will become part of the plan also. This means that sustainable tourism work will be incorporated into the mainstream of activity for the AONB Partnership. The Strategy itself will be revisited and reviewed prior to 2010 when we have to re apply for our Charter from the Europarc Federation. This will also entail the demonstration of delivery of the action plan, and formation of a structure, partnerships and so on.

4.4 All of the above means that the AONB Unit needs to continue working with our partners and businesses in sustainable tourism, and so we are seeking funds to support a full time member of staff for the next 3 years. This will be split between two officers – business development and information – who will also carry out other duties for the AONB Unit. This externally funded work will focus on the ‘roll out’ of GTBS across Lancashire, the creation of new sustainable tourism business ‘clusters’ and improved promotion and marketing of the sustainable tourism offer of Bowland and Lancashire. We will also work to continue the development of the Business Network, the visitor payback scheme, the AONB website and communication with all partners.

4.5 Other areas of work we would like to deliver in the future include:

- Holding an annual Sustainable Tourism Forum (which is a requirement of the European Charter)
- Managing a bi annual visitor survey and enterprise survey
- Visitor satisfaction survey or comment card, in conjunction with businesses and TICs
- Exchange visits to other Charter parks
- Continued development of tramper and pushchair walks, and grading of promoted routes
- Investigate possible use of shooting tracks for tramper use
- Offer accessibility training to businesses and TICs
- Gisburn Forest mountain bike development, promotion and business cluster
- Liaise on listing/calendar of events – tie in with walking and cycling festivals
- Healthy walking and health agenda
- Joint planning with TICs to develop gateways – branding etc, Pendle and Wyre as priorities
- Further develop website – foreign languages, interactivity, business pages
- New routeways – links to Pennine Bridleway, local networks, accommodation, promotion
- Develop climate change angle – low carbon holidays etc
- Support work of BTCV and LWT as conservation holiday and volunteering opportunities
- Continue familiarisation visits
- Continue to develop links with Yorks Dales National Park as a new Charter Park and neighbour
- Support improvement of visitor experience at Beacon Fell
- Seek to develop walking and horse riding holiday opportunities
- Support Bowland Festival and Arts
- Work with HLF project to recruit and train volunteer guides and interpreters
- Seek to develop web based information on ‘open farms’ and those providing educational opportunities as part of the European Year of Food and Farming

- Continue to support projects providing information and activities for bus users in the AONB, and integrate public transport information into events, walks information and other AONB activities
- Further promote the Visitor Code
- Support the production of a buildings and highways design guide for the AONB to encourage enhancement of special features
- Continue to develop the BTEF, looking at ways individual businesses can contribute. Promote the fund more widely to communities and consider its future without Leader + charter mark income
- Create seasonal trails to extend the season
- Investigate possible opportunities for good quality campsite and pub accommodation to improve the availability of overnight and short break accommodation
- Seek to promote the Bowland product (quiet enjoyment) to specialist outdoors press