

A large, vibrant photograph of a meadow filled with yellow and green wildflowers, with rolling hills in the background under a clear sky.

BOWLAND MEADOW MAKERS PROJECT

2020 — 2022

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Makers Project Officer**

Appendix to Plantlife Meadow
Makers Evaluation report May
2022

1. Introduction

YDMT have carried out meadow restoration projects in the Forest of Bowland (FOB) since 2012, through a variety of funding opportunities, and various project titles, totalling 155ha of meadow restoration to 2020. In 2020, due to the continuing Hay Time projects over the last decade, the AONB already had a good list of sites ready to go for this project. YDMT were very happy to team up with Plantlife and the other partners to contribute to this nationwide project. The support and backing of Plantlife, also enabled the employment of a Meadow Makers Trainee, which we had not had the facility to offer in the past.

This report will put into context the role that the Forest of Bowland Meadow Makers project played in this national project and the contributions made to the outputs.

2. Project Aims

Across the whole project the aims and outcomes were:

- Undertake the restoration of species rich grassland

OUTPUT: Restoration of 500ha species-rich grassland at 100+ sites across seven landscapes, using the tried and tested natural seeding approach to retain local characteristics

- Deliver Peer to Peer Connection Programme to help individuals upskill in meadow management.
- Deliver advisory service and workshops for meadow conservation management
- Deliver Challenge Talks on the role of species rich grassland in nature-based solutions and inform participants on grassland management methods

OUTPUT: Deliver 4-6 Challenge talks

- Deliver National Meadows Day events.
- Align with universities to create student research projects around project sites or subject area.
- Undertake job retention and recruitment

OUTPUT: 41 jobs are supported - retain 6 existing staff and create 11 new posts (including six trainees) and at least 24 jobs in the local economy are boosted through capital work delivery

- To evaluate the project and to draw up a legacy plan.

Alongside this the project set out to undertake skills development, knowledge exchange and digital collaboration to support land managers and trainees. There was also the objective of delivering a nationwide engagement programme connecting 7000 people in local and wider communities to grassland heritage, improving their experiences and wellbeing.

Prior to commencement, the FOB project aimed to carry out 24.21 hectares of restoration across 11 sites.

Employing a trainee and retaining a project officer, we aimed to connect further with landowners throughout the FOB and engage communities with both educational and recreational activities in line with the aims and objectives of the Green Recovery Challenge fund, Heritage Lottery and Plantlife.

3. Outcomes

Within the Forest of Bowland AONB we exceeded our aims across all the expected outcomes. The table below shows how we contributed to the national project and the total outputs we achieved in the AONB.

Table 1: Outputs relating to

Project aim	Planned national output	Achieved nationally	Achieved in FOB AONB
"Restoration of species rich grassland"	Restoration of 370ha species-rich grassland at 109 sites	395.85ha across 100 sites	39.7ha across 14 sites
"Heritage will be in better condition"	Advice provision will support restoration of another 130ha meadows	101.4 recorded	95.6ha across 6 sites
"A wider range of people will be involved in heritage".	7000 people experienced meadows	12164 people experienced meadows	3438 people experienced meadows in person. Social media " followers " and web site visits exceeded 50,000
"People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions".	1250 Meadow Makers access meadow making training and knowledge sessions	270 confirmed	120 people attended both online and in person training courses. 18 landowners took part in land management group learning sessions.
"People will have greater well-being".	2500 people will improve their wellbeing through participation in nature connection events and activities.	1174 recorded	850 people attended wellbeing activities, volunteer sessions and events across the Forest of Bowland.

4. Restoration Methods

Ground preparation

Prior to any seed introduction all sites had the grass cut and cleared in July or August and the ground chain harrowed to remove the dense thatch that can develop at the base of the crop, and to create bare ground for the seeds to make contact, allowing it to germinate. This action also creates light and space in a dense grass sward allowing room for flowers to come through.

Green hay

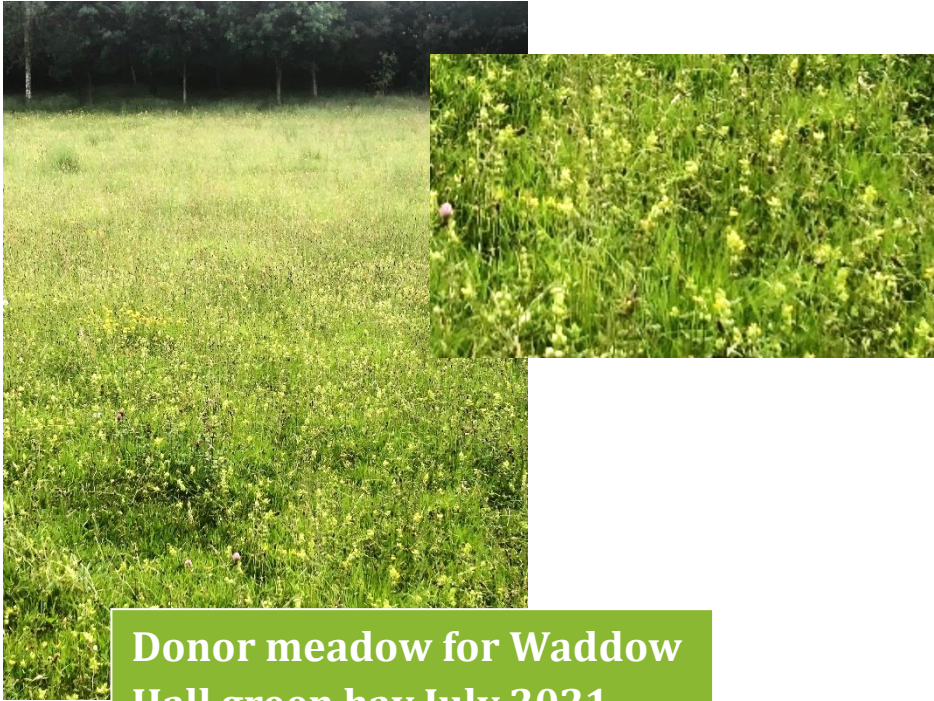
One site (Waddow Hall) received "green hay" from Blackhouse Farm in Slaidburn.

The crop is cut and collected when enough of the seed has set, then transported to the restoration site where it is spread using a similar method to muck spreading.

The transfer must be done within an hour, as the grass heats up pretty quickly once cut, which can destroy or reduce the viability of the seed.



Green hay crop as it arrives at left, and the crop being spread, on the right. Waddow Hall July 2021



Donor meadow for Waddow Hall green hay July 2021

Brush harvesting

The majority of restoration work was carried out using brush harvested seed from 8 different sites around the Forest of Bowland & Yorkshire Dales, as the majority of restoration sites were beyond the one-hour transfer time/distance. The seed was collected in July and taken back to Bell Sykes Farm where it was dried ready for distribution to the receptor sites.



Joseph (MM trainee) and Peter Blackwell (contractor) emptying the brush harvester above, sorting the "chaff" at right.

Plug plants

Over 11,500 plug plants were grown and planted by volunteers and landowners across all the sites. The majority of these – over 9000, were grown and planted by the volunteers at Hermitage Community Field, Crook of Lune, Lancaster.

Plug plants are used to add in the species that are difficult to transfer in either green hay or brush harvesting. Some are late flowering species such as great burnet and knapweed, and others just don't germinate very well from green hay such as vetches. Other species may prefer damper areas such as meadowsweet or ragged robin and are therefore grown and planted in suitable places around the meadows.



Plug planting with Wray Scouts group at Hermitage Field, October 2021



Plug plants ready to go in at Studio Bakery, October 21.

5. The Sites

The 14 restoration sites were spread across the AONB, with some just outside the boundary; varied greatly in size, topography and landscape setting.

Some sites are privately owned, and others have public access; Hermitage Field is community managed. Each site was surveyed for grass and floral species in 2020 or 2021 and again in May 2022. Soil samples were taken to record the baseline carbon in the soil and, if not previously carried out, to ensure the soil conditions were suitable for restoration work.

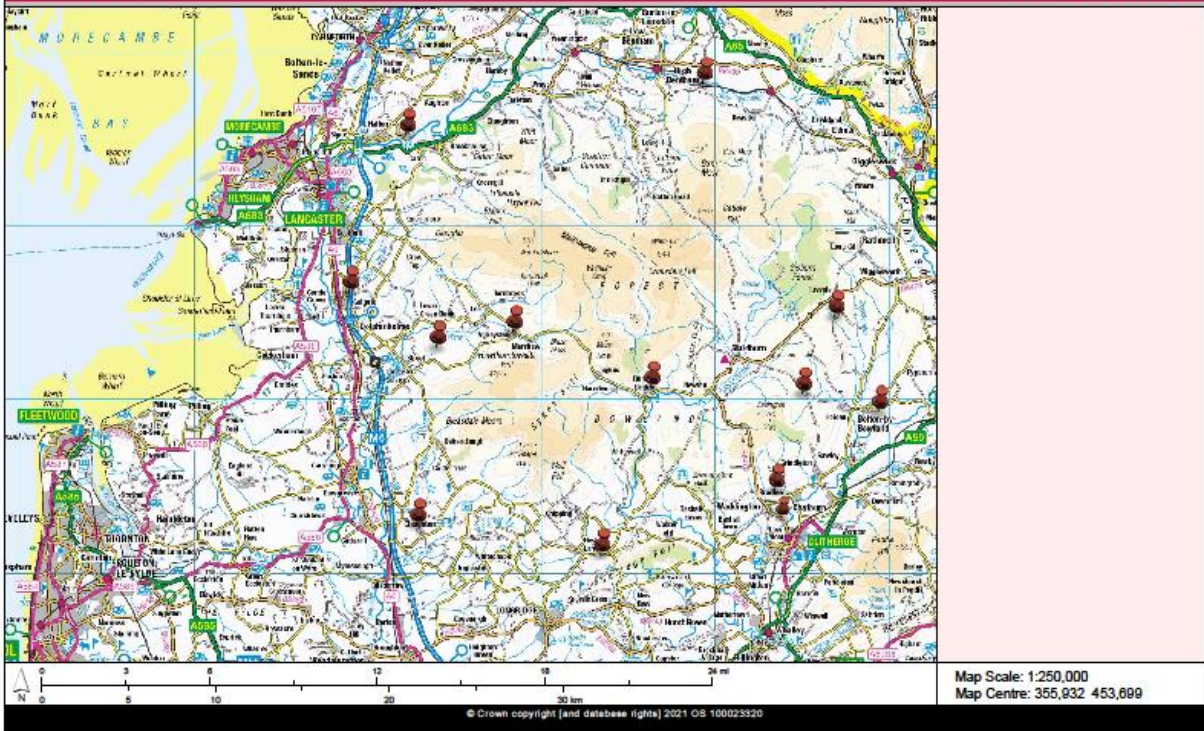
The table below shows the location of the sites, the size in hectares and type of restoration work carried out. Each site has an individual report prepared which includes before and after species lists, soil sample test results and follow-on management advice.

Table 2: Site locations and size

Location	Hectares	Restoration works
Bolton-by-Bowland	3.73	Plug plants and rush management
Thornley, Nr Chipping	1.82	Ground preparation, brush harvested seed & plug plants
Tosside	2.9	Ground preparation and brush harvested seed
Hermitage Field, Crook of Lune	2.25	Ground preparation, brush harvested seed & plug plants
Mewith	.17	Brush harvested seed & plug plants
The Gathering Fields, Over Wyresdale	1.8	Ground preparation, Summer & late brush harvested seed & plug plants
Cloughton-on-Brock	5.4	Ground preparation and "green" brush harvested seed
Waddow hall, Waddington	1.63	Ground preparation and green hay
Abbeystead Estate	6.9	Late brush harvested seed and plug plants
Wood End farm, Dunsop Bridge	1.5	Spring bulbs, brush harvested seed & plug plants
West Bradford	3	Brush harvested seed, plug plants
Glebe House, Ellel	2.1	Ground preparation, brush harvested seed & plug plants
Studio Bakery, Bolton-by-Bowland	2	Brush harvested seed & plug plants
Gazegill Organics, Rimmington	4	Brush harvested seed

Meadow Makers Restoration Sites 2022

Author: Carol Edmondson



The map above shows the Meadow Makers restoration sites marked at dropped pins demonstrating the spread across the AONB.

6. Events

Involving local communities, schools and other groups in addition to landowners is a key outcome of all the Forest of Bowland meadow restoration projects. These events help raise awareness of the restoration work we do, the importance of meadows, and what benefit they are to local wildlife populations. Through the Meadow Makers project our Trainee, Joseph was able to take on some of this role and expand on our previous community engagement work.



Abbeystead School group
at Hermitage Meadow



Getting grubby at The
Gathering Fields

The events included:

- Moth ID events for the scouts and school groups at two locations – The Gathering Fields and Bell Sykes Farm in Slaidburn
- School groups coming out to learn all about meadows.
- Meadow walks at Bell Sykes
- Plug planting volunteer sessions
- Seed propagation
- Scything
- Bumble bee online and field events
- Creating a mini-meadow workshop
- Poetry walks and workshops.
- Streetlife, school and social prescribing groups spent time at the Gathering Fields retreat, learning some plant ID and other land-based skills, but most importantly, just enjoying the beautiful nature and landscape of the countryside.

A total of 850 people learned something about meadows and their wildlife through these events.



Poster for the moth event at Bell Sykes Farm July 2021

National Meadows Day 2021

Our flagship event held at Bell Sykes Farm in Slaidburn in 2021– National Meadows Day, despite the wet weather and Covid 19, was a great success, with all walks and events on the day having full attendance. Not many invertebrates were recorded, but the mornings' moth trap was popular with old and young visitors alike. Wood turning and carving, wool spinning, scything demonstrations, rag rugging, face painting, plant school, and meadow walks kept everyone well entertained, along with an opportunity to buy "Hay Time" Gin from Goosnargh Gin – each bottle sold means a donation to Champion Bowland.

Over 100 people came and took part in the activities on the day.

For further events in the Forest of Bowland see [here](#)

For further information on hay meadow restoration in the Forest of Bowland AONB contact our Project Officer carol.edmondson@lancashire.gov.uk



Austrian scythes



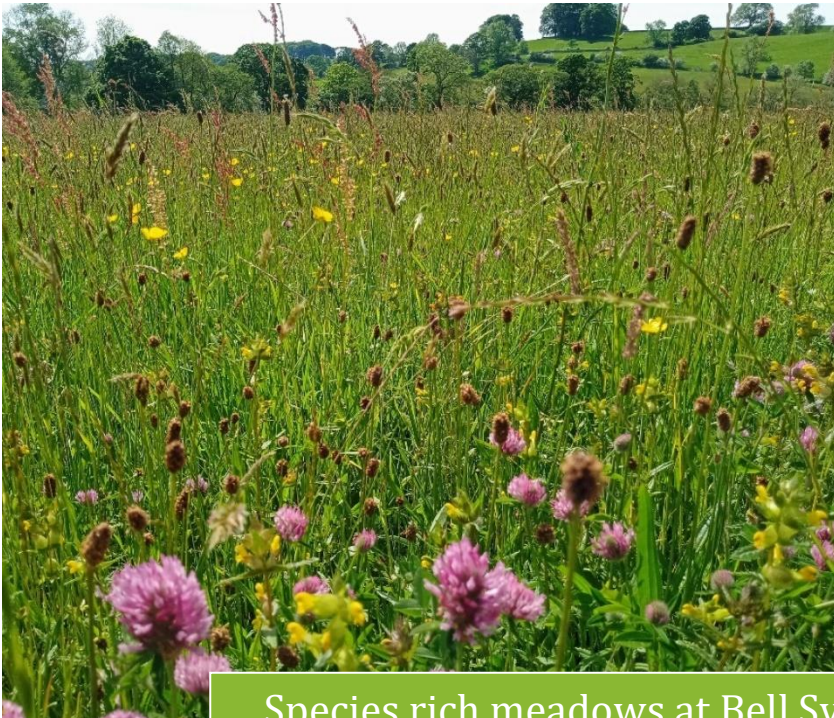
Hand spinning



Hand Lathe

Plant ID on the artists
inspiration meadow
walk





Species rich meadows at Bell Sykes
Farm, Slaidburn

