



Forest of
Bowland
National
Landscape

REMOVING BARRIERS: ACCESS FOR ALL

25-26 JUNE 2024

Thank you for supporting the Forest of Bowland
National Landscape's accessibility event

Made possible thanks to funding from
DEFRA Accessibility Funding and
Lancashire County Council





THANK YOU!

Our sincere thanks must go to all the funding partners, volunteers, workshop leaders, providers, suppliers and attendees that made this event possible; it provided a great opportunity for sharing and learning.

This was our idea of what Access for All can be and we were thrilled with how the event was received.

But we know that it only scratches the surface.

We hope it will act as a template for attendees to do something similar, or 'pick and mix' the elements you found most helpful and relevant to your organisation.

We would love for you to go forward and deliver your own celebration of what's possible.

Just please remember to invite us along!

Hetty Byrne

Sustainable Tourism Officer, Forest of Bowland National Landscape

Sarah Dornan

Countryside Access Officer, Forest of Bowland National Landscape

Debbie North

Access the Dales

EVERYBODY WELCOME

Places at this free accessibility event were reserved quickly, and the two-day celebration attracted a varied cross section of attendees.

Approximately 90 people were welcomed on Day 1, and 110 on Day 2.

Attendees came as representatives of other National Landscapes teams, National Parks, Forestry England, The National Trust, Natural England, Local County and District Councils, as well as NHS, primary schools, emergency services, Rivers Trusts, and many other local organisations, charities and businesses.

While many organisations were local to the area, the event also attracted visitors from Kent, Wye Valley, The Lake District, Northumberland, and even Fife and London; demonstrating the far-reaching demand for accessible events such as this.

Organisers were also thrilled to welcome staff from ParalympicsGB who were onsite filming for Every Body Moves (EBM); ParalympicsGB's grassroots participation programme championing inclusion.

Look out for footage of the event on everybodymoves.org.uk where you'll also find lots of information and opportunities for the disabled community to be more physically active.



The Marketing Lancashire team also joined us at the event and shared the experience with their 2000 monthly website visitors: marketinglancashire.com/news/spotlight/forest-of-bowland-accessible-to-all/

‘A recent Ramblers survey showed that 11 million people are missing out on accessing the countryside simply because of a disability... and that’s appalling isn’t it?’

‘While planning and organising the Access For All event, we have never claimed to have all the answers.

‘The aim is simply to start some helpful conversations and share some great examples of good practice.

‘We want everyone to share their ideas and enthusiasm for making the countryside more accessible.’



Debbie North - Disability Access Ambassador for the Countryside.



Access the Dales
Making the
inaccessible accessible

One of the event organisers, Debbie is passionate about making all-terrain wheelchairs more readily available. Through her charity Access the Dales she has helped establish multiple hubs where all-terrain wheelchairs can be borrowed for free (or for a donation) granting access to breathtaking landscapes that would otherwise remain out of reach to many.

[access-the-dales.com](https://www.access-the-dales.com)

WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

Sessions on day one:

British Sign Language
Tourism
Autism
All Terrain Wheelchair Walk
Dementia
Connecting People and Nature
Mental Health

Plus:

Pizza
Campfire and music
Bat walk
Camping



Sessions on day two:

Bushcraft
Forest Bathing
Nature/Sound
Story Time Movement
Foraging
Alpacas
Charcoal Sketching
All Terrain Wheelchair Walk
Mindfulness and Nature
Navigation



WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

British Sign Language

Sue Gardam spoke about her role as a Deaf Link worker for [n-compass](http://n-compass.org.uk) in Lancashire, supporting people who are Deaf in overcoming barriers to services that are essential in day-to-day life.

Delegates then heard from Mark Heaton about his life experience as a Culturally Deaf person and native BSL user, including his school days at Royal Cross in Preston.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Cultural deafness is sometimes referred to as 'Deaf' with a capital D as opposed to 'deaf'. This is because many people in this community see themselves not as disabled, but as part of a linguistic minority.

- As a (very general) rule, there are two different types of deafness; 1) People who have lost their hearing or are hard of hearing and who likely wear hearing aids or may lip read 2) Culturally Deaf people who have BSL rather than English as their first language and are entitled to a BSL interpreter as a reasonable adjustment under the Equalities Act.

(People who lipread are entitled to a lipspeaker or speech-to-text relay worker as a reasonable adjustment).

n-compass.org.uk



WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

Autism - with Debbie North

This session explored inclusive ideas for fun in the outdoors and autism-friendly ideas which can be easy to implement.



DID YOU KNOW...?

- Visual timetables provide a reassuring structure. Especially images to represent 'now' and 'next'.
- Visual communication lanyards can provide an alternative non-verbal means of communication.
- You could try simple activities like making sensory toys using natural items like pine cones, or creating 'nature bracelets' using a band of upturned sticky tape and decorating it with gathered materials.
- The best way to make your site more accessible is simply with information. Could you provide a video walk through for people to watch before visiting? Eliminating the unknown and feeling more prepared can prevent overwhelm.

WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

Tourism – The Marketplace and I art exhibition



This session explored different viewpoints and opened up conversations around accessibility by sharing artworks produced by people with disabilities to represent their personal experiences of commercial settings.

Dr Leighanne Higgins and Dr Killian O’Leary are consumer researchers at Lancaster University investigating accessibility barriers to commercial settings for people with disabilities. Following a collaborative arts-based project, they now use these artworks to conduct company-focussed accessibility training.

lancaster.ac.uk/lums/research/research-initiatives/marketplace-and-i/

WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

Tourism - The Marketplace and I

'There is no such thing as fully accessible. There are often things that may benefit one group of people but create challenges for others, so it's important to consider as many different perspectives as possible when making decisions about accessibility.

'I know that can be difficult, and has led to lots of companies worrying too much about doing the 'wrong' thing and opting to do nothing instead.

'The absolute best thing you can do is be completely honest and transparent. Share as much information as you can so that people can make informed choices about what's right for them.'

Dr Leighanne Higgins

DID YOU KNOW...?

- You can arrange a [free accessibility audit](#) of your company, to find practical ways to make your organisation more inclusive.
- In 2019, the UK economy missed out on £2billion monthly by failing to cater to disabled demographics.
- It's estimated that, when calm, an autistic or neuro-divergent brain operates around 40% faster than a neurotypical brain.
- Information on your website is incredibly helpful. Can you describe your setting and use photos and videos to illustrate? What about detailing door widths and describing the available seating?
- Rita Ebel also known as 'Lego Oma' (Lego Grandma) has created countless Lego mobility ramps for local businesses which have become something of a tourist attraction in Hanau, Germany.

FANTASTIC FEEDBACK

'There was a beautiful moment on the ATW walk through the forest where I was racing along having fun with the representatives from ParalympicsGB and it was just so refreshing to be able to be fully part of the activity and not excluded because of my limitations.'



All-terrain wheelchair walks occurred throughout the day with delegates getting to grips with different models from various specialist manufacturers including Trammer, Terrain Hopper, Mountain Trike, GM4X and TGA.

WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

Dementia – with Sue Hinds, Head of Innovation, Research and Development at [Dementia Adventure](https://www.dementiaadventure.org)

This session guided delegates through an introduction to the organisation and its work in providing supported breaks, training, and research. Sue highlighted the health and wellbeing benefits of nature and being outdoors for individuals with cognitive impairment and suggested practical ways to engage a person with dementia in nature.

Little bouquets of flowers were brought out to see what conversations these sparked. Such colourful and aromatic flowers can be a great multi-sensory way to spark joy and evoke memories.

[dementiaadventure.org](https://www.dementiaadventure.org)



Connecting People and Nature – with Cathy Hopley from the Forest of Bowland NL team

This informal discussion session highlighted the main health benefits of connecting people and nature, and considered what methods we might utilise to make these valuable connections.

Cathy showcased some of the projects that the Forest of Bowland National Landscape team have been involved with in recent years, such as [72 Seasons](https://www.forestofbowland.com/72-seasons) and the People Enjoying Nature and Connecting People And Nature projects, as well as explaining how the impact of this work is measured.

'A research project, 72 Seasons, was designed to help more people connect with nature, and it showed astonishing results. Participants reported improved sleep, reduced loneliness, and feeling more connected. There's a lot of research into why nature is good for us, it can reduce blood pressure and improve mood.'

[forestofbowland.com/connecting-people-nature](https://www.forestofbowland.com/connecting-people-nature)

WONDERFUL WORKSHOPS

Mental Health – with Cognitive Behavioural Therapist Kelly Robinson

This session focussed on the 'Natural Health Service'; sharing the benefits of nature and the outdoors for wellbeing, as well as tips on how you can make nature work to support your mental health.

Kelly is an advocate for taking time to spot 'glimmers' in day to day life instead of focusing on the negative triggers that make us feel anxious or threatened; take time to really notice and bask in little moments of peace or joy wherever and whatever they may be.

The session also highlighted the work of Mind Over Mountains – an innovate charity that combines walking in nature, mindfulness and professional support to help people restore and sustain their mental health and wellbeing.

'In a survey last year, 91% of participants reported a lasting mental health benefit from attending a Mind Over Mountains event, with reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression as well.'

mindovermountains.org.uk



INTERESTING HIGHLIGHTS

Foraging – with Pete Compston of Pendle Plant Craft

'You don't need to be a qualified botanist to get started with foraging, you just need to learn the etiquettes of gathering wild food and build confidence in your own knowledge.'

'Aside from its practical benefits (who doesn't like free food?) foraging is also great for mental wellbeing. It's the most accessible way to get out into nature and fully engage with it. The act of being in the outdoors and getting to know your natural environment is a great way of reconnecting with our surroundings. Doing it as a group can be even better, sharing skills and knowledge is empowering and it can be a form of active therapy.'

DID YOU KNOW...?

- 'We have easy access to all manner of nutritious wild food in this country. You could have a full three hour foraging session within three square feet.'
- 'Including just a tiny amount more wild food in your diet can dramatically improve your gut biome.'
- 'It's estimated that between 92-96% of all illness, virus and diseases is in some way inflammation related, and wild foods without anti-inflammatory properties are few and far between'.
- 'Even a little will do you good. You don't need to eat only wild food. Sprinkle nettle seeds on your takeaway if you like!'



Pendle Plant Craft is a non-profit, welcoming community with a cabin HQ at Lomeshaye Marsh Nature Reserve.

Pete and other volunteers run regular free foraging walks for all, as well as free cooking and crafting gatherings.

INTERESTING HIGHLIGHTS

Bushcraft Skills – with Outdoors 4 All Together

This session explored a range of fun forest activities which could be adapted to different needs, such as fire lighting, hammered natural fabric art, and making s'mores.

'People might be referred to us because of isolation, loneliness or mental health issues. But we don't need to know why they're here. There's no pressure to tell us about their experience. We provide a safe space for people to come and interact with nature, and enjoy all the benefits that come with spending time outdoors. 'It's incredibly rewarding. We often find that people are quite hesitant at first, and don't necessarily have high expectations of how much they may benefit. But more often than not, the improvement in wellbeing is obvious, even after just a few weeks.'

Steve Tomlinson



DID YOU KNOW...?

- Traditional flint and steel fire lighters are available with easy-grip handles.
- An opened cotton pad provides the ideal initial dry base for capturing sparks and lighting a fire.
- You could try savoury s'mores with a Babybel cheese melted between two crackers. (Why not wrap the discarded wax around a knotted piece of string as a candle or firelighter?)

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT...

THE VENUE

The event was held at Gisburn Forest, Lancashire's largest woodland, a Forestry England site which provided the perfect outdoor setting for our activities with all the accessible, well-maintained trails we could hope for.

Thank you to Chloe, Iain and all the team for your help, and for leading an informative bat walk.

forestryengland.uk

THE FOOD

Angela and the team at Gisburn Forest Hub Cafe kept everything running smoothly and did a great job of making sure everyone was happy and well fed.

facebook.com/gisburnforestcafe

THE WHEELCHAIR PROVIDERS

One of the highlights of the event for many, was that generous suppliers had made a selection of all-terrain wheelchairs available for the duration, which visitors could learn about and try out for themselves.

GM4X – Paratreker

gm4x.co.uk

Mountain Trike

us.mountaintrike.com

Terrainhopper

terrainhopper.com

TGA

tgamobility.co.uk

Tramper

tramper.co.uk

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT...

WORKSHOP LEADERS

A big thank you to all our workshop and activity leaders, for providing the skills, materials and knowledge to create such a valuable event for all. You'll find an index of contact details at the end of this doc



CHANGING PLACES

We had access to a mobile Changing Places unit for the duration of the event. While conventional accessible toilets support some people's additional needs, they don't work for everyone. Changing Places facilities feature more space, a peninsular toilet, changing bench and hoist.

www.revolootion.org.uk/

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped at the event, as well as Bowland Pennine Mountain Rescue and all the emergency services.

Removing Barriers: Access for All

Forest of Bowland National Landscape hosts a celebration of what's possible

A free accessibility event held in Gisburn Forest proved to be a resounding success, with every spot on the two-day symposium quickly reserved.

Hosted by The Forest of Bowland National Landscape team and Access the Dales, the event was described as an 'exciting celebration of what's possible', and was designed to help organisations, businesses and individuals learn more about accessibility, share examples of best practice and engage in inclusive activities in a beautiful outdoor setting.

Activities included bushcraft skills, foraging, forest bathing, charcoal sketching and more, with workshop discussions focused on autism, dementia, mental health, inclusivity in the outdoors and tourism.

A variety of all-terrain wheelchairs were also available for the duration of the event for delegates to try out for themselves.

Organisers were delighted to welcome staff from Paralympics GB who were filming for their Everybody Moves programme during the event.

Sustainable Tourism Officer for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape Hetty Byrne explains: 'Feedback from the event has been incredible and very humbling. We were joined not only by visitors from the local area, but also from Kent, the Wye Valley, the Lake District, Northumberland, and even Fife and London. 'We were thrilled that the event was so well received and opened up some really important conversations around accessibility and inclusivity. We had a lot of interest, and we probably could have filled the places twice over – which shows the strong demand there is for inclusive activities and opportunities to learn more.

'Delegates were keen to take part in a host of outdoor workshops while sharing ideas with each other and learning from our session leaders.

'We know we've only scratched the surface of what's possible, and we hope that attendees will take lots of ideas away and be inspired to create their own events or implement what they've learned on a day-to-day basis.'

Sarah Dornan, Countryside Access Officer for the Forest of Bowland National Landscape said: 'Events like this provide a wonderful opportunity to come together and share experiences and best practice. We are proud to showcase what's on offer in Bowland and delighted that we could offer this event to people for free, which was made possible via DEFRA Accessibility Funding'.



PRESS RELEASE

FANTASTIC FEEDBACK

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts.
These were some of the messages about the day:

'Life changing and mind exploding.'

'A fantastic and inspiring event giving valuable insights into the barriers to access and some of the amazing work that is going on to improve access for all. It was a great opportunity to gain knowledge and ideas from organisations already delivering amazing programmes of work and I found the all terrain wheelchair walk and demonstration of equipment particularly helpful. Thank you very much for delivering such a valuable event which had such a warm and welcoming atmosphere to it too.'



'Honestly one of the best conferences I've been to, inspirational, interesting and I learnt loads and have come away feeling like I got a lot from it. Thank you to the whole team for organising it, I hope there will be future similar events.'

'It was refreshing to be around like-minded individuals with a shared mission ... making the outdoors accessible for all! It was a privilege to be involved in the diverse range of workshops, which allowed us, as practitioners, to generate ideas for our settings. We can't wait to come again!'

'Lovely people organising and running the event, helpful and friendly/approachable. Good range of workshops and all REALLY interesting particularly Dementia Adventure and Foraging. Loved trying out the all terrain mobility scooters and the networking/gathering useful contacts was so helpful.'

FANTASTIC FEEDBACK

'As a police officer, I had my doubts about the value in this event for me. As it turned out there was so much relevant content and learning to be had. I found many of the inputs around mental health, dementia and autism very informative and I have learned information which will definitely help me assist people in crisis. The events on day two were really interesting and it was a great opportunity to network. I have made several new contacts who we will be working with in the future. It was brilliant to see the event go so well, and receive such a great attendance.'



'Excellent event, well organised and a good number of delegates. I would certainly attend another event run by this team.'

'Great event, loved the organisational and public days structure. This is the model we dream of copying for an adventure themed weekend.'

'One of my best working days of the year so far! A pleasure to attend.'

'I thought it was a very well organised event. The catering was exceptional. The groups were all very informative and interesting and lots to take away and process. I met new people and formed new friends! I cannot fault it - can't wait till next years event!!!!? I just wish I could have attended all of the sessions - thank you to everyone involved.'

FANTASTIC FEEDBACK

'Thank you for an incredible day last week in Gisburn Forest. I had the best time. **I haven't smiled that much in a long time.** There was a beautiful moment on the ATW walk through the forest where I was racing along having fun with the representatives from ParalympicsGB and it was just so refreshing to be able to be fully part of the activity and not excluded because of my limitations.'

'The event was excellent - organised, professional, well-run. It covered an interesting range of topics relating to the outdoors. Being able to test the machines on display was really helpful. Thank you for everything.'

'I especially enjoyed using one of the incredible Terrain Hoppers. They perform so well and enabled me to confidently move around and tackle challenging terrain. **It allowed me to almost forget my disabilities because I wasn't being held back by them. That's such a rare and precious thing for me**'.



CONTACT DETAILS

Access the Dales

<https://www.access-the-dales.com>

Forest of Bowland National Landscape

<https://www.forestofbowland.com>

N-Compass (Deaf Link)

<https://www.n-compass.org.uk/our-services/wellbeing/deaf-link-service>

The Marketplace and I - Dr Leighanne Higgins and Dr Killian O'Leary

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/lums/research/research-initiatives/marketplace-and-i/>

Dementia Adventure

<https://dementiaadventure.org>

Connecting People and Nature

https://www.forestofbowland.com/connecting_people-nature

Mind Over Mountains

<https://mindovermountains.org.uk>

Bushcraft - Outdoors For All Together CIC

<https://www.outdoors4alltogether.co.uk>

Forest Bathing

<https://rewildingoutdoortherapy.co.uk/>

Nature / Sound

<https://www.thegatheringfields.co.uk/>

CONTACT DETAILS

Story Time Movement

<https://www.bowlandfitness.com>

Foraging

<https://www.pendleplantcraft.co.uk>

Alpaca Walking

<https://www.visitwoodendfarm.co.uk/index.php/alpaca-experience>

Changing Places

changing-places.org

Mobile Changing Places: RevoLOOtion

www.revolootion.org.uk/

Bowland Mountain Rescue

<https://www.bowlandpenninemrt.org.uk>

All-Terrain Wheelchairs

gm4x.co.uk

us.mountaintrike.com

terrainhopper.com

tgamobility.co.uk

tramper.co.uk