



# FOREST OF **BOWLAND**

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# Contents



Four-spotted chaser, Gisburn Forest

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Cover Image  
Above Ogden Reservoirs, Pendle © G Cooper

Before becoming Lancashire County Council's first ever Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change in 2021, I held the portfolio for Health & Wellbeing. In my previous role, it was easy to see the opportunities that being outdoors in the countryside or in a local green space can offer people to help improve their health and wellbeing. However, it was also clear that not everyone can easily access these places, and people are sometimes not even aware of what they have to offer. So, I was very excited to learn in autumn last year that the AONB team had been successful in securing a grant to support a new 'Connecting People and Nature' project. This project builds on the successful work delivered as part of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership (which completed late in 2022) to offer more people from a diverse range of backgrounds the opportunity to discover and benefit from our outstanding landscape.



**County Councillor  
Shaun Turner**

*Chairman of the Forest of Bowland  
AONB Joint Advisory Committee*

**T**he past year has seen the AONB Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme Team and Local Assessment Panel make fantastic progress; offering grant support to farmers and land managers across the AONB for over 100 projects, which not only deliver the programme outcomes (nature, climate, people and place), but also help farming businesses prepare for the Government's new Environmental Land Management schemes. For me, some highlight 'stats' from programme delivery so far include: 410 hectares of existing habitat improved for biodiversity; over 9 kilometres of new hedgerows planted; 16 projects making landscape more inclusive for visitors; and 15 projects helping to improve the resilience of nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

Having now passed the decade mark for AONB Partnership work in restoring peatland habitats, it now feels like we have seen a real step change with an 'upscaling' of activity over the last year or so. This

has been helped significantly with the AONB team having a dedicated Peatlands Officer (supported by Lancashire County Council funding) to develop and deliver these restoration efforts. Not only has the AONB Partnership been able to access the Government's Nature for Climate funds over the last year, but we are also now part of efforts to secure private sector investment as part of the 'Great North Bog', a coalition of peatland partnerships across Northern England.

Restoration of peatland is a very visible demonstration of how we can help nature's recovery, but, as we know, the Forest of Bowland is much more than just heather moorland and blanket bog. With this in mind, the AONB team have been working with farmers, landowners and land managers, alongside a range of other environmental organisations and recreational user groups to help develop a 'Nature Recovery Plan' for the area. Although the Forest of Bowland still hosts some amazing flora and fauna, like the rest

of the UK, the area is also experiencing a general decline in biodiversity. The new plan will set out ways to help reverse these declines. The team expect to consult on a draft plan in summer 2023, with a final plan published later in the autumn. So do look out for those!

Lastly, I must once again make special mention of all the great work by our AONB partner organisations including Wyre Coast and Countryside Service, Champion Bowland, all the Rivers Trusts (Lune, Ribble and Wyre), RSPB, Friends of Bowland, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and the Ernest Cook Trust. Without all your efforts and brilliant partnership working we would not be where we are today. Onwards and upwards!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Turner', written in a cursive style.

*County Councillor Shaun Turner*



# An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage

## Highlights for 2022–23



The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) is now in its third year. This financial year the FiPL team awarded just under £1.1 million to projects. Through the programme, farmers (including Croasdale House Farm, pictured) and land managers were supported to carry out projects encouraging nature recovery, mitigating the impacts of climate change, providing opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and supporting nature-friendly sustainable farm businesses. Successful projects so far can be viewed at: [www.forestofbowland.com/farming-protected-landscapes](http://www.forestofbowland.com/farming-protected-landscapes)

Contact: [bowlandfipl@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:bowlandfipl@lancashire.gov.uk)



The Wyre Rivers Trust has been working with farmers to develop an innovative Soil Health Index. Healthy soils store carbon, enhance water quality, protect against flooding, support food production, and improve biodiversity. Soil degradation is a major cause of pollution in rivers and can exacerbate flooding in the Wyre Catchment. The Soil Health Index allows the WRT to produce a quantitative value of soil health, pinpointing areas for improvement with recommendations for land management practices that reduce soil degradation and restore soil functioning.

Contact: [heather@wyreriverstrust.org](mailto:heather@wyreriverstrust.org)



The Pendle Hill LP scheme created and upgraded 7km of routeways. This year the major achievements were the improvements to Heys Lane, connecting Roughlee and Barley; the Coalpit Lane section of the Pennine Bridleway near Gisburn; and resilience work on Pendle Summit so the paths created there can withstand the increase in visitor footfall and the impacts of climate change for years to come. A new guide 'Summit Else' opened up new walks for explorers around the hill.

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In June 2022, the Environment Agency worked with United Utilities and Ribble Rivers Trust to empty the gravel trap at Langden Brook abstraction in-take, reintroducing 800 tonnes of gravel downstream; improving important habitat for fish like salmon and trout. During 2023, Ribble Rivers Trust fish surveys successfully found young salmon present at the site in notably more numbers than the last six years, which is excellent news!

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# An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage



Following a very wet spring, deep ruts were causing vehicles to deviate off the track across Stanley Common to the north of Chipping, disturbing wading birds and causing damage to the surrounding land. Re-cambering, drainage and areas of stoning up have now improved the condition of 1878m of the route; alongside a closure during peak breeding season to minimise wildlife disturbance. Work with LCC's Rights of Way team and Lancashire Rural Task Force resulted in two successful prosecutions following Traffic Regulation Order signage and on-the-ground staff presence.

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Close to Longridge Fell, Four Acre Lane was a kilometre of impassable bridleway, with the quirk of being recorded as an unclassified county road on satnavs. This resulted in cars attempting the route, before becoming stuck, when lack of room to turn round would lead to the need for help from local farmers. Recent surfacing and drainage work mean that the route can now be walked, ridden or cycled without problem and signage discourages the use of satnavs. Bollards allow bridleway use and local farmer access.

Contact: [sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.dornan@lancashire.gov.uk)



Following the success of the Discovery Grant (more than 6300ha surveyed and 22 restoration plans created) in winter 2022/23, the AONB Partnership commissioned and oversaw restoration of more than 50ha of eroding peatlands. Having secured £1.4m in restoration funding last year, the AONB unit has bid for a further £2.4m funds to carry out further work, with the aim of carrying out restoration work on 390ha of eroding peatlands across the Bowland Fells by April 2025.

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A footpath and concessionary bridleway link the Nick of Pendle to Sabden village via Churn Clough reservoir. Lack of maintenance and wet winters had resulted in deep, wet sections, which were pushing users onto the surrounding moorland, widening the track and eroding path-side vegetation. A clever network of stone water bars and drainage channels now redirects water from the track towards the nearby watercourse. Gates have also been rehung to open and close from horseback, without the need for a rider to dismount.

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# An Outstanding Landscape of Natural and Cultural Heritage



2022-2023 meadow restoration projects were funded through Farming in Protected Landscapes, working with eight sites covering a total of 20ha. Sites were enhanced using brush harvested seed from two Bowland sites with species rich hay meadows. Over 3500 plug plants grown from locally sourced seed were planted out with the help of volunteers, local guides & scout groups. 18 wellbeing and educational workshops and events, including meadow walks, talks, meadow related crafts and National Meadows Day, attracted 340 attendees.

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Wyre Coast and Countryside staff and volunteers worked with the Forest of Bowland Farming in Protected Landscapes team to develop a project in Bleasdale. Here, volunteers worked many hours to install finger posts, waymarkers, kissing gates, field gates and seating to achieve an accessible and well signed nature trail. A further project, at Cobble Hey Farm, is in development. Both projects include an objective of improving access to nature and improving appreciation and understanding of the importance of farmland in Bowland for nature.

Contact: [countrysideservice@wyre.gov.uk](mailto:countrysideservice@wyre.gov.uk)



Brock Valley is a well-known route linking with Lancashire's premier country park, Beacon Fell. Age and weather had resulted in embankments slumping and sections of boardwalk becoming particularly dangerous. Thanks to joint work with LCC's Public Rights of Way team, what was a precarious route is now a much easier 'starter' route into the AONB. Part of the Wyresdale Estate in Scorton, Nicky Nook is another very popular area. Again, working with LCC, improvements here included replacement and new steps, surfacing and drainage works.

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The National Grid-funded Quernmore & the Conder Valley Landscape Enhancement Initiative aims to mitigate the impact of National Grid's electricity transmission infrastructure along the north-western boundary of the AONB. The programme focuses on creation and management of traditional boundaries, along with small-scale woodland planting, through offering grants to local landowners and farmers. During the second year of the scheme over 800m of new hedgerow were planted, 700m hedgerow managed or restored, 70m dry stone wall rebuilt and 550 woodland trees planted.

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## A special place for birds and other wildlife

The upland moorland habitats of the Bowland Fells and the surrounding farmland are home to a range of rare and endangered birds, from the iconic hen harrier, the symbol of the AONB, to curlew and lapwing.

**T**he RSPB is working together with landowners and farmers across the Forest of Bowland AONB to safeguard the future of these characteristic species.

Hen harriers are one of the UK's most threatened bird species, and the Bowland Fells have been their most important stronghold in England for many years. 2022 was the most successful breeding season for hen harriers in more than three decades, with 14 successful nests in Bowland (11 on the United Utilities Estate, 3 on other estates), fledging a total of 50 young. These numbers are a great success for everybody involved, however, the recovery of hen harriers in the rest of England still has a long way to go.

Curlew and other waders are in decline nationwide; they still occur in good numbers in Bowland, however, there are concerns that breeding productivity is too low. The RSPB are surveying wader numbers and

breeding success on a range of farms across the AONB and are working together with farmers to protect and improve important areas of wader habitat. In 2022 we received funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme for nest protection and monitoring equipment. This enabled us to gather invaluable information on the breeding success of curlew and other wading birds, as well as protecting high risk nests from ground predators. We are also working with the Ribble and Wyre Rivers Trusts to ensure selection of suitable tree planting areas to avoid negative impacts on breeding waders.

Bowland also hosts England's largest colony of lesser black-backed gulls, which is of international importance but not without its problems. Many local farmers raise the issue of gulls stealing sheep food and predating wader nests and chicks. Therefore, understanding the potential conflict between species of conservation concern (gulls and waders) is a difficult one that requires thinking outside the box and trialling of new methods of land management. The RSPB successfully undertook a FiPL funded project trialling a particular design of sheep feeder, which showed that gulls stopped visiting fields if their access to sheep food was removed.



Female hen harrier © M Demain

*“ The RSPB’s work over several decades in the Forest of Bowland has only been possible with the invaluable input and support from the local farmers and landowners ”*



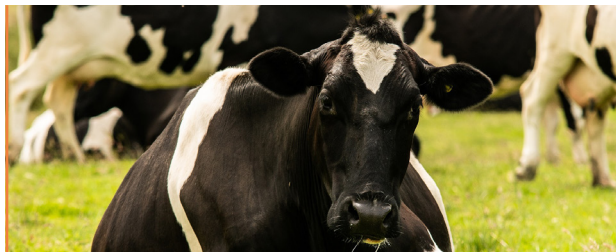
# Resilient and Sustainable Communities

## Highlights for 2022–23



One of the last projects to complete as part of the Pendle Hill LP Scheme was the Sabden Tramper and Trail. Thanks to support from the National Lottery we were able to purchase a new Tramper vehicle and to upgrade a circular trail around Churn Clough. The village hall offered space to store and charge up the Tramper and a group of volunteers now manage bookings and inductions. It's a real community asset. More information and bookings here: <https://www.forestofbowland.com/sabden-tramper>

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The Forest of Bowland Farmer Group launched in February 2023, developed by the Forest of Bowland AONB through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. It aims to act as a contact group for farmers within the Forest of Bowland AONB to provide support and connectivity during the agricultural transition. The group is free to sign up to, and includes regular email updates, quarterly e-newsletters, and four 'on farm' and in person events – communicating relevant farming information for the area.

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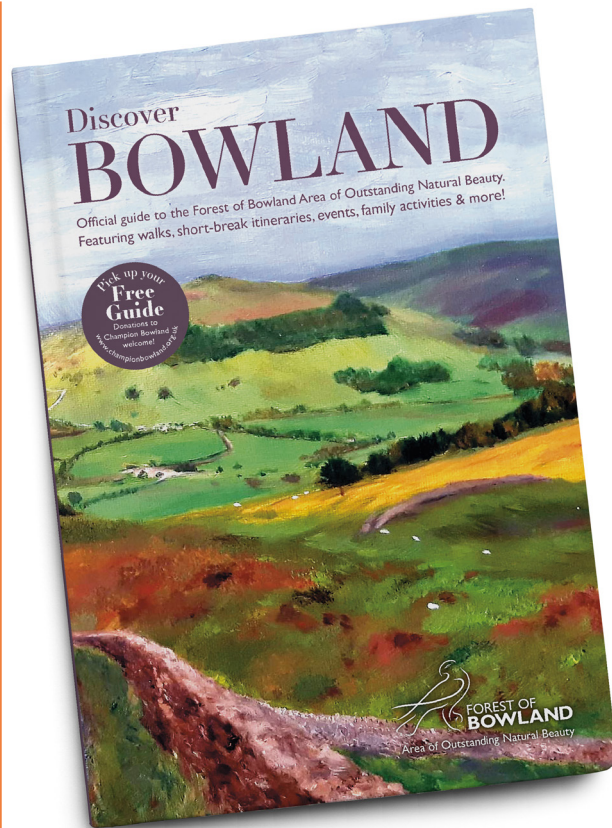


The Forest of Bowland AONB pages on [VisitLancashire.com](https://www.visitlancashire.com) performed well, with over 279K views. The area also featured in three seasonal digital campaigns, receiving an additional 610k page views. The summer campaign reached over 1million people through social media, attracting a range of media coverage; including an AONB feature in National Geographic magazine. Marketing Lancashire's #LancashireDay campaign led with a prize draw to win an Eco Escape in the Forest of Bowland and reached 47.3million people in 48 countries. The Taste Lancashire conference in Clitheroe included guest speaker, Hairy Biker, Si King

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The 116-page 2023 guide includes features about the fantastic work of the AONB Partnership, including habitat restoration work for peatlands and hay meadows, as well as a series of short break itineraries and useful information on accommodation and events. Along with offering practical advice and information on making the most of holidays and short breaks, the Discover Guide also showcases the increasingly diverse tourism options in the amazing landscapes of Bowland.

The guide is available in print or digitally:  
[www.forestofbowland.com/discover-bowland-guide-0](http://www.forestofbowland.com/discover-bowland-guide-0)

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The Wyre Coast and Countryside team patrolled and cared for popular sites and rights of way; removing litter, updating site information, carrying out habitat management and leading guided walks, with volunteers giving 4,874 hours to support this important work. Volunteers also supported partners with tree planting, leaky dams, traditional boundaries, access improvements and invasive species management. Wyre Council embarked upon a combined Sports Pitch Strategy and Public Open Space Audit and the development of a Green Infrastructure Audit and Strategy.

Contact: [countrysideservice@wyre.gov.uk](mailto:countrysideservice@wyre.gov.uk)



During 2022-23 we welcomed 14 businesses to the sustainable tourism business network which now totals 110 members. Champion Bowland and the AONB continue to support the visitor destination website: Discover Bowland, alongside 39 businesses that have page listings and are contributing £100 annually to Champion Bowland.

The Discover Bowland guide was launched at The Fleece Inn, Dolphinholme and was attended by over 40 members of the network, who enjoyed an introduction to Dark Skies Discovery with astronomer Robert Ince.

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# Resilient and Sustainable Communities



The Environment Agency has been expanding the coverage of flood warnings across the Forest of Bowland, including at Caton, Sabden and Bolton-by-Bowland. This means that 232 homes can now receive warnings, giving them valuable time to prepare for the risk of flooding. More information about what do in a flood can be found here: <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

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The Pendle Hill Fund was a pot of £90,000 made available to community groups as part of the Pendle Hill LP Scheme. The fund supported 24 projects, ranging from small scale environmental improvements to village heritage trails. Over 300 people volunteered time worth £41,000 and 23 events were held. We loved the village signposts, benches, and visits; we also admired the young farmers walling in the rain; schoolchildren acting out radical stories; and the Roman Road seekers. As a legacy of the fund, small grants will remain available via Champion Bowland.

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The Friends of Bowland helped plant a hedge for a farmer in Chipping, thinned spruce trees for United Utilities on Longridge Fell and pulled balsam for them. We pruned and maintained orchard trees for the Studio Bakery in Bolton by Bowland and picked apples for someone with 'far too many' to be given away at an environment day. We had several enjoyable walks - in sunshine and rain - and welcomed new members.

Contact: [friendsofbowland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofbowland@gmail.com)



Champion Bowland is an independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation managed by eight Trustees on a voluntary basis. Their main focus is to work with the network of tourism providers to encourage visitors and local people to help Keep Bowland Beautiful. Its Discover Bowland destination website, [www.discoverbowland.uk](http://www.discoverbowland.uk), features businesses in and around the AONB committed to sustainable tourism. It manages over £20,000 of funds in support of AONB projects, as well as running its own Small Grants Fund offering, currently, up to £750 to community groups or individuals.

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## Eco Escapes Project

Eco Escapes develops and promotes sustainable tourism and active travel in Lancashire's protected landscapes: Forest of Bowland and Arnsdale & Silverdale AONBs, supported by Lancashire County Council's Rural Recovery Fund.

The Eco Escapes project aims to reduce the carbon footprint of visitors travelling to and within each of the AONBs while enhancing the resilience of the rural economy by travelling light, treading carefully, shopping local and staying longer.

The initiative encourages visitors to take the train and discover Lancashire's unique limestone coastline at Silverdale or explore the remote uplands of the Forest of Bowland on foot or by bike or e-bike.

The Eco Escapes website: [www.ecoescapes.org.uk](http://www.ecoescapes.org.uk) provides car-free sustainable travel plans which link main stations and visitor attractions and highlight visitor destinations which support sustainable tourism. Visiting these destinations helps support Lancashire's rural businesses – which were hit hard during Covid – and build momentum behind a new model of less carbon-intensive tourism.

At the heart of the project is a collection of bespoke Eco Escapes itineraries to help visitors make the most of their time in

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Lancashire's AONBs. Each itinerary focuses on a different area or aspect of the Eco Escapes offer: from walking and cycling tours to railway walks and foodie tours.

Visitors can choose between exploring nature-rich wildlife reserves, easy woodland walks, challenging upland hikes, exploring local history and great local food and drink from artisan producers at friendly country inns and cafes. Sustainable tourism businesses, which included 16 hospitality and accommodation providers across the two AONBs, also completed green tourism training and accreditation as part of the Eco Escapes initiative.

Eco Escapes is designed to help rural businesses develop a distinct brand and strong messaging to welcome visitors who are receptive to arriving via public transport and keen to explore both destinations on foot, by bike (and e-bike) and by bus or train. It also encourages visitors to linger a little longer and spend money with hospitality and accommodation providers.

A sustainability symposium was organised on March 21, 2023, at Clitheroe's Holmes Mill. This was an opportunity to share best practice and to learn more about sustainable and inclusive tourism in the Forest of Bowland, and the Eco Escapes project. For a summary of the event visit: [www.forestofbowland.com/symposium-final-thoughts](http://www.forestofbowland.com/symposium-final-thoughts)



“It's about discovering the county's wonderful natural environments and the wildlife that makes its home there, as well as making connections: between town and country; visitors and residents; people and nature.”

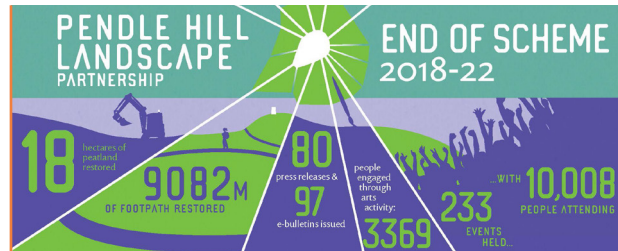


# A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

## Highlights for 2022–23



Mind, Body, Nature Connection Walk



The Pendle Hill project ended in late 2022. The scheme met all of its targets and was described as “one of the best, if not the best, examples of a group of partners working together in a holistic, interdependent way to deliver a programme of activity that can truly demonstrate, the whole scheme being greater than the sum of the individual parts.” We had so much fun improving the heritage and environment, meeting new people and learning new skills. See our films here <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCATXMI5MsExn4wqpn4Dsr6Q/videos>

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Festival Bowland celebrates the nature, landscape, culture and heritage of the Forest of Bowland AONB. 100 events, ranging from online storytelling and dark skies to in-person history talks and art workshops, attracted over 1700 attendances. Children's workshops proved popular, as did forest bathing, meadow activities and the annual Lord of Bowland Lecture. Once again, Garstang Walking Festival featured many opportunities to enjoy springtime in Bowland. The programme is possible thanks to the hard work of the event organisers, volunteers and landowners involved.

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Ribble Rivers Trust's Rivers in the Classroom programme brings freshwater science into schools across the Ribble Catchment. By encouraging pupils to expand their knowledge of local rivers, the Trust aims to spark a love of rivers, inspiring future conservationists. Now, thanks to support from the Hodder Consultative, the Trust have been able to add angling sessions into the Rivers in the Classroom package. Several primary schools in the Bowland area have already been fishing, and the Trust have found many budding anglers!

Contact: [admin@ribbletrust.com](mailto:admin@ribbletrust.com)





## A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape



In May 2022, the Wyre Coast & Countryside team launched the first Garstang Well-being Walks in partnership with the Ramblers Association, with weekly walks designed to be suitable for all. This year's Garstang Walking Festival (coordinated by the Friends of Garstang Walking Festival) took place from 30th April to 8th May. The Cloughton Estate walk and upland fell walks proved very popular, whilst a new event with the Wyre Rivers Trust focused on the wildlife of the River Brock. Event attendances for the year totalled 632.

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Health & Environmental Action Lancashire (HEAL) was a Green Recovery Challenge Fund partnership programme co-ordinated by the Ribble Rivers Trust. The aims of the project were to connect people with nature across the Ribble, Lune and Wyre catchments; protect species; create and restore habitats and safeguard jobs in Lancashire's environmental sector. The AONB worked with five groups from Blackburn, Nelson, Burnley and Colne, to deliver training in traditional boundary skills, including dry stone walling and hedge laying.

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Dry stone wall © G Cooper



# A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape



“ I feel connected to my surroundings and like I'm close to god, close to Allah.”

Artwork from the 72 Seasons project  
© The Evaluator

## 72 Seasons

Back in 2020 the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership carried out a creative research project to identify the value that the landscape of Pendle Hill provides to our health and wellbeing.

This research was carried out by 'The Evaluator', it was called '72 Seasons' and it enabled participants to notice nature whilst benefitting their own wellbeing. Over 300 people took part, and you can read all about it here: <https://www.pendlehillproject.com/project/whats-hill-worth>

As this original research took place during the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns, the work was carried out online and was not very inclusive. We therefore decided to run the project again in 2022 in a more targeted and face-to-face fashion to test its versatility and effectiveness.

The 2022 programme was run over 12 weeks and led by facilitator Farrah Imtiaz. Farrah worked with three groups from her local community: an after school club; a youth group; and a women's covid bereavement group from the DEEN Centre in Brierfield. These groups were targeted because of the lack of representation in our initial research by young people or by people from local Pakistani heritage communities.

The groups followed the seasons from May to July via a specially created 'Seeking the Seasons' workbook which introduced them to the micro seasons and illustrations by Cath Ford. Tasks and questions were set for participants to respond to, and measures of wellbeing were also recorded.

Farrah also provided a range of workshops, walks and activities for the groups, to support the idea of finding better wellbeing within nature. The workshops included clay making, tasbeeh making (like rosary beads), painting inspired by Rumi poetry and decorating prayer mats and hijab. She found the connections between her Islamic faith and her love of nature were very strong, and she shared this with participants to great effect. The workshops were interspersed with natural walks, exploring places close to home and also the Pendle Hill landscape. These visits were empowering for many who had never visited before, and it showed them the routes and confidence to return again: being beneficial for their physical and mental wellbeing.

In conclusion, the project was very successful: the new people we worked with saw their connections to nature increase and their wellbeing improve. They exercised more and their levels of anger dropped. The young men, in particular, saw their scores rise the most from very low start points.

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## Membership of the Joint Advisory Committee

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### Lancashire County Council

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County Councillor G Mirfin  
County Councillor S Turner

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### North Yorkshire County Council

County Councillor S Myers

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### Craven District Council

Councillor S Handley

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### Lancaster City Council

Councillor J Pritchard

---

### Pendle Borough Council

To be confirmed

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### Preston City Council

Councillor A Hindle

---

### Ribble Valley Borough Council

Councillor Mrs R Elms

---

### Wyre Borough Council

Councillor J Ibison

---

### Lancashire Association of Local Councils

Ms C Kynch

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### Yorkshire Local Councils Association

Mr C Price

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### United Utilities

Mr M Upton

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### Environment Agency

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### Natural England

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### Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Mr R Horner

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### Bowland Land Managers' Forum

Mr A Taylor

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### Ramblers Association

Mr D Kelly

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### Champion Bowland

Mr M Pugh

---

### Friends of Bowland

Ms M Pilkington

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### Moorland Association

Neil Kilgour

The Terms of Reference of the Joint Advisory Committee are available at [www.forestofbowland.com/joint-advisory-committee](http://www.forestofbowland.com/joint-advisory-committee)

Papers from meetings of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee can be viewed [here](#).






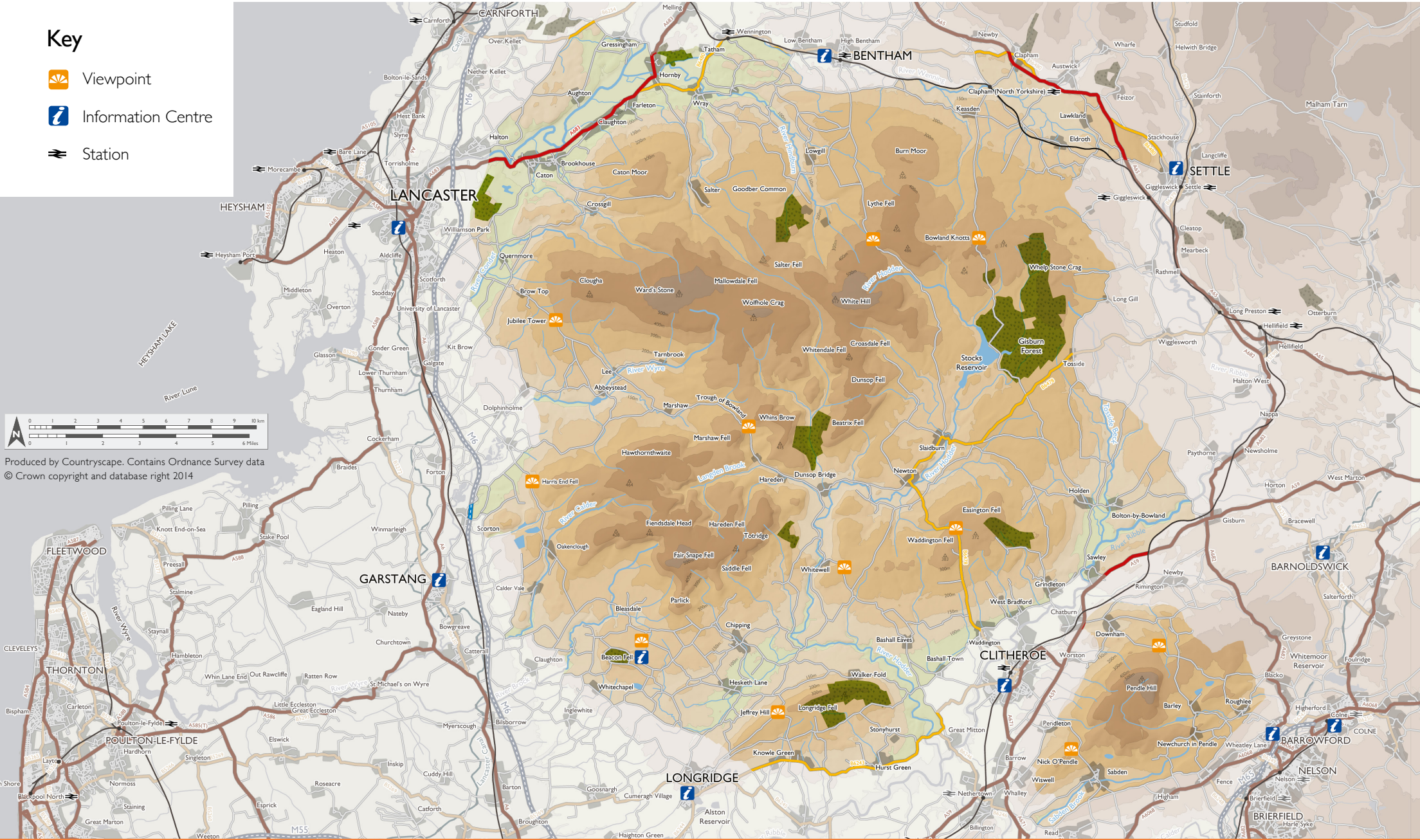
Bluebell wood near Wennington



# Map of the Forest of Bowland AONB

## Key

-  Viewpoint
-  Information Centre
-  Station



Produced by Countryside. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014





## Forest of Bowland AONB

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Mike Coleran – p10

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In-Situ – p10

Marketing Lancashire – p7

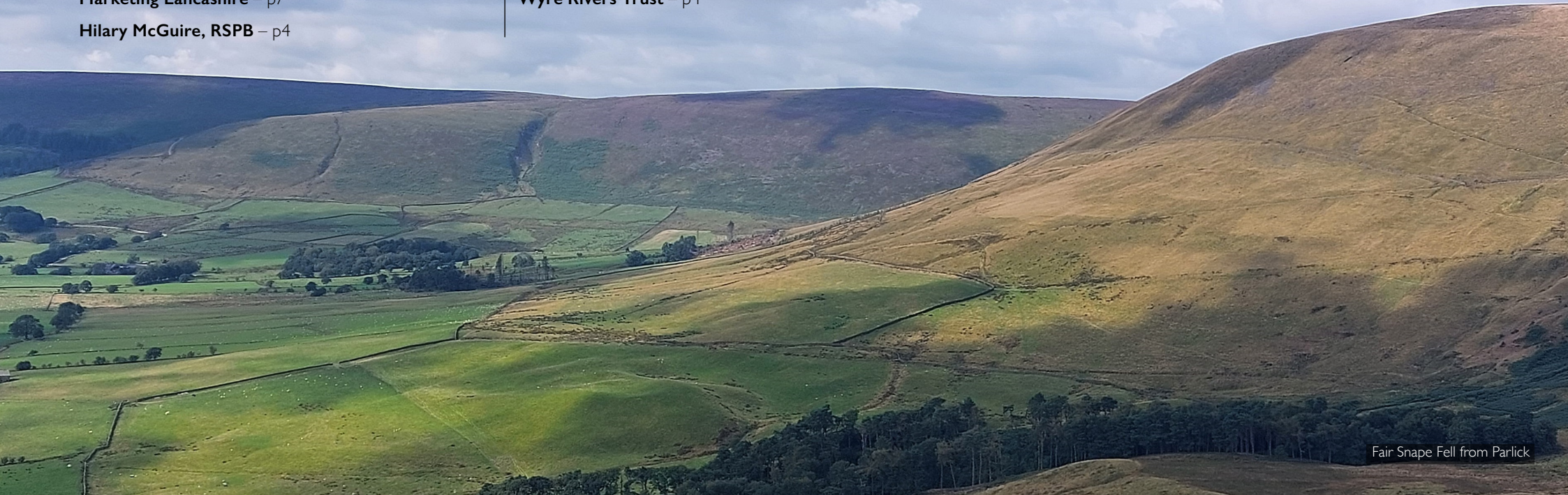
Hilary McGuire, RSPB – p4

Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership – pages 4,11

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Fair Snape Fell from Parlick

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