FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Forest of Bowland AONB

Landscapes for life .org.uk

FOREST OF BOWLAND
One of the AONB Family

Introduction

Background

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Forest of Bowland as a protected landscape, and also the start of our fourth statutory AONB Management Plan (2014-2019).

In order to provide a snapshot view of the area, and also to reflect on the impact of protected area status the AONB Unit has researched a number of agreed indicators. These indicators will also provide a baseline to measure progress against for future years and to inform the development of our next AONB Management Plan, to be prepared in 2018/19.

Indicators

The indicators below have been chosen to reflect the breadth of work undertaken by the AONB Partnership in delivering the Management Plan, and in some cases to identify issues and concerns which may be a focus for future activity. All indicators were measured at some point during the year 2013/14, ie April 2013 to March 2014 for the purposes of this report.

Indicator	Description	2014 data
Management Plan Outcome 1: An Outstanding Landscape		
CG	Condition of registered geological sites	100% favourable
CH	Condition of heritage assets	0.12% of sites 'at risk'
CS	Condition of SSSIs	85.5% in favourable and recovering condition
LD	Number of Neighbourhood Plans	0
LM1	Land management: number of agri-environment agreements	529 agreements, of which 135 are at Higher Level (HLS)
LM2	Land management: area of land in agri-environment agreements	84% in Environmental Stewardship, 50% at Higher Level
VA	Visual amenity	3303m of electricity cable was buried underground
WC1	Woodland creation and management: number and area of new woodland since 2006	120 woodland creation grants covering 397.6 hectares
WC2	Woodland creation and management: number and area of woodland management and improvement grants since 2006	237 woodland management and woodland improvement grants covering 432.01 hectares
WM	Woodlands in positive management	60% of woodland is in a managed condition
WQ	Water quality in rivers	49% of rivers are in good ecological condition, 46% are in moderate condition

Management Plan Outcome 2: Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities		
AH1	Affordable homes: new affordable homes built in 2013	12 new affordable homes built
AH2	Affordable homes: affordability index	Ratio of income to house sales is 1:12
AS	Access to basic services	45% of settlements have access to basic services
BA1	Business activity: number of businesses in production in 2013	66
BA2	Business activity: number of registered companies in 2013	492
FS1	Farm size in 2010	27% of farms are under 20ha, 27% are over 100ha
FS2	Farm type in 2010	14.6% of farms are in dairying, 68% are hill farms
PP1	Population patterns: age distribution	23% under 19 yrs, 16% 20-39, 33% 40-59, 24% 60-79, and 5% over 80 yrs
PP2	Population patterns: employment type	5.7% unemployed, 9% in forestry, farming & fishing, 9.7% manufacturing, 13% wholesale & retail, 25% in education, health & social care employment
ST1	Strength of sustainable tourism: no. of sustainable tourism partners	30 partners
ST2	Strength of sustainable tourism: businesses demonstrating commitment	94% promote AONB qualities 88% feel AONB is important to business
Management Plan Outcome 3: A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape		
AC1	Access to the countryside: promoted routes	65 promoted routes on website
AC2	Access to the countryside: routes easy to use	56% of routes classed 'easy to use'
EC1	Effective communications: website visits	7000 visits to website per month
EC2	Effective communications: social media	1195 Twitter followers, 201 Facebook likes
VL1	Volunteering & skills: volunteer days	Friends of Bowland 50 days
VL2	Volunteering & skills: no. people trained	124
Management Plan Outcome 4: Working in Partnership		
PA1	Partnership action: partner activity	
PA2	Partnership action: membership	Friends of Bowland 47, BEx 108
VM	Value for money	34% of AONB funds raised externally, leverage ratio is 2:1

Contents

An Outstanding Landscape

CG   condition of registered geological sites

Background

Within the Forest of Bowland AONB there are 26 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) which are notified and monitored by Geo Lancashire. There are also 5 Geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are designated and monitored by Natural England.

Indicator CG

100% of RIGS and geological SSSIs were in favourable condition in the AONB in 2014

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014 and GeoLancashire

Interpretation of data

In the Forest of Bowland geological sites are either natural exposures or rock faces created as a result of quarrying. In either case, in order for sites to be in a favourable condition they need to be kept free of vegetation.

CH   condition of heritage assets

Background

Within the Forest of Bowland AONB English Heritage states that there are 819 Listed buildings (12 Grade I, 36 Grade II*, and 771 Grade II), 20 Scheduled Monuments, and 2 Registered Parks and Gardens (Stonyhurst is Grade II* and Gisburn Park a Grade II).

There are also 20 Conservation Areas: sites which are designated locally to assist in the management of areas of special architectural or historic interest.

Indicator CH

1 heritage sites within the AONB is considered to be 'At Risk' in 2014 that's **0.12%** of all sites in the area

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014

The heritage site considered by English Heritage to be 'at risk' is a scheduled ancient monument at Ashnott lead mines near Newton in the Hodder Valley. This site is currently being assessed for improvement works.

An Outstanding Landscape

CS   condition of SSSIs

Background

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are England's very best wildlife sites, and they support key habitats and species which may find it difficult to survive in the wider countryside. Most SSSIs are in private ownership and their management is a shared responsibility with Natural England which is the body responsible for designating SSSIs and for monitoring their condition according to the following classification:

- Favourable
- Favourable but recovering
- Unfavourable, no change
- Unfavourable, declining

Under 'Biodiversity 2020', the Government's strategy for wildlife, Natural England has a target to ensure at least 50% of SSSI are in favourable condition, and at least 95% are in favourable or recovering condition by 2020.

In the current AONB Management Plan our target is to ensure that at least 50% of SSSI area is in favourable condition, and100% is in favourable or recovering condition, by 2019.

There are 21 SSSIs in the AONB area, covering 16,382ha or 20.4% of the total area (on average, in England SSSIs cover just 7% of the total land area.)

In addition the AONB contains several Special Areas of Conservation, a very large Special Protection Area under the European Birds Directive, and Stocks Reservoir is an Important Plant Area, another European designation. The AONB also contains 456 county wildlife sites which cover around 10% of the total land area.

Indicator CS

In 2014 in the Forest of Bowland AONB:

6.7% of the total area of Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) were in favourable condition

78.8% of Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) were in unfavourable but recovering condition

In total **85.5%** of sites were in favourable or recovering condition

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014

Interpretation of data

There are a number of smaller SSSI in the AONB which are designated as upland hay meadows, raised mires and ancient woodland. However, the largest SSSI units still in unfavourable and recovering condition are on the upland fells of Bowland, and are designated for their expanse of blanket bog and heather moorland which provides important sites for breeding bird communities (hen harrier, merlin and peregrine) protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, and the presence of a large colony of lesser black backed gulls. These units are all in management agreements to reduce over grazing and burning and in many areas the peat is being restored through a variety of actions including grip blocking, re-profiling and re-vegetating. However, managing the bird populations reliant on these habitats is much harder to predict and it is this problem which needs to be overcome before the SSSIs can be considered to be in favourable condition.
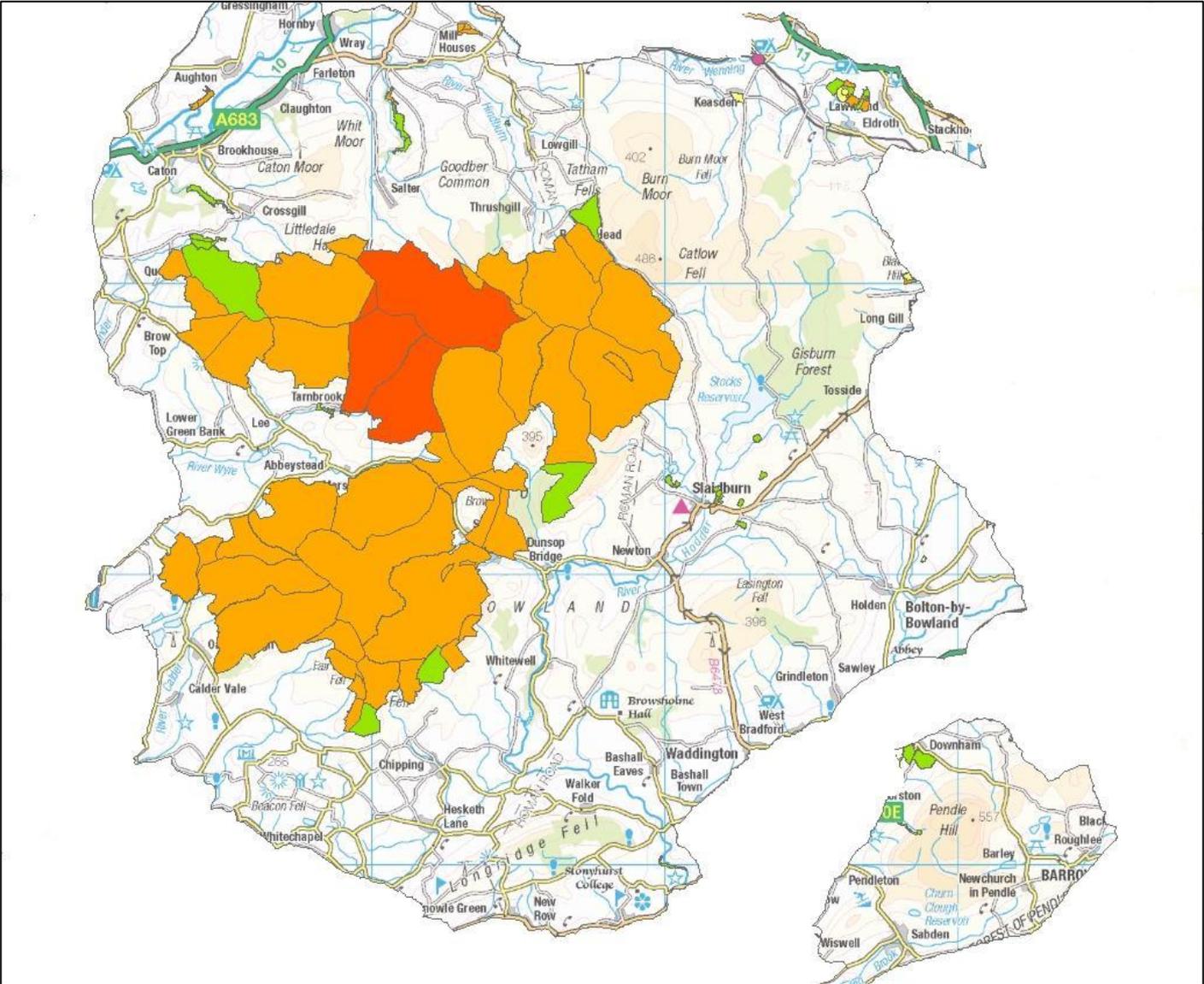
Map of the AONB showing SSSI condition

Key:

- 🟩 Favourable
- 🟥 Unfavourable, declining
- 🟨 Unfavourable, no change
- 🟧 Unfavourable, recovering

An Outstanding Landscape

LD   locally managed development

Background

The Localism Act of 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to plan for new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans.

Neighbourhood forums and parish councils can use these new powers to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. These are described legally as 'neighbourhood development plans.' The policies they contain can, for example, outline where new homes can be built and what they might look like.

Having a number of neighbourhood plans within the AONB would be advantageous in that they would represent community wishes and there would be opportunity for AONB values to be reflected within the resulting policies.

Indicator LD

> Number of neighbourhood plans developed: 0

Source: AONB data

One plan is currently in development in the parish of Bolton by Bowland and Gisburn Forest.

LM   land in environmental management

Background

Natural England is a key partner in the AONB Partnership and a member of the Department for the Environment Farming and Rural Affairs family (Defra). Natural England administers agri-environment schemes which provide funding to farmers and other land managers to deliver effective environmental management. The current scheme, Environmental Stewardship, closes in 2014, and has two tiers of funding: Entry Level and Higher Level. The individual agreements each have a lifespan of ten years.

Indicators

LM1: number of agreements

> In March 2014 in the Forest of Bowland AONB area:
> **529** Environmental Stewardship agreements were live, and of these
> **135** were at Higher Level

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014

LM2: area of land in agreements

> **84%** of farmed land within the AONB was in Environmental Stewardship, including **50%** by area at Higher Level

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014

Interpretation of data

In total these 529 agreements paid out £3,742,945 to farmers and landowners in the Forest of Bowland AONB in the 12 months to April 2014.

In a predominantly agricultural landscape like the Forest of Bowland, Environmental Stewardship, and its predecessor Countryside Stewardship have been the main tool for delivery of positive land management for wildlife. Over the last twenty years the schemes have been responsible for funding farmers and landowners to:

- restore and create many kilometres of hedgerow and dry stone wall
- restore blanket bog
- reduce stocking levels
- restore and manage traditional hay meadows
- manage grassland for breeding wader birds
- restore historic buildings

From 2016 the new environmental land management scheme will combine agri environment with woodland grant schemes, and there is likely to be a reduction in funding and a tightening of criteria. However there is potential for increased activity at a landscape scale and for meeting multiple objectives which will continue to benefit the AONB landscape.
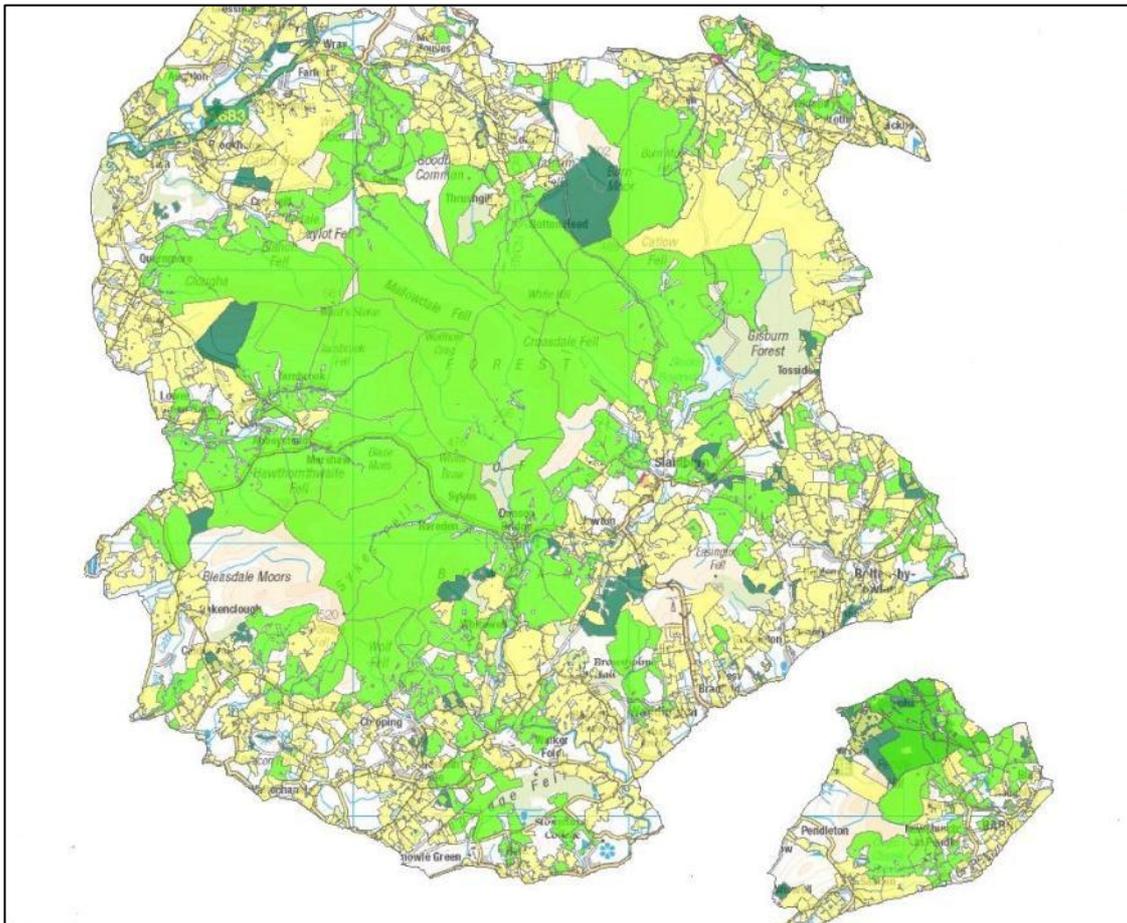
Map of the AONB showing agri-environmental scheme coverage

■ Countryside Stewardship
■ Higher level stewardship
■ Entry level stewardship

Forest of Bowland AONB

An Outstanding Landscape

LQ   landscape quality

Background

Our intention is to produce a photographic record of the unique Landscape Character Areas which make up the Forest of Bowland AONB during 2014 as the 50th Anniversary year. These images will record accessible GPS fixed point views of each character area and will be used as a baseline for comparison in future years and to monitor any notable changes in landscape quality.

Key to LCAs:

A Moorland Plateaux

D Moorland Fringe

G ULF with Parkland

J   Valley Floodplain

M Forestry & Reservoir

B Unenclosed Moorland Hills

E Undulating Lowland Farmland

H ULF with Settlement & Industry

K Drumlin Field

N Farmed Ridges

C Enclosed Moorland Hills

F ULF with Wooded Brooks

I   Wooded Rural Valleys

L Rolling Upland Farmland
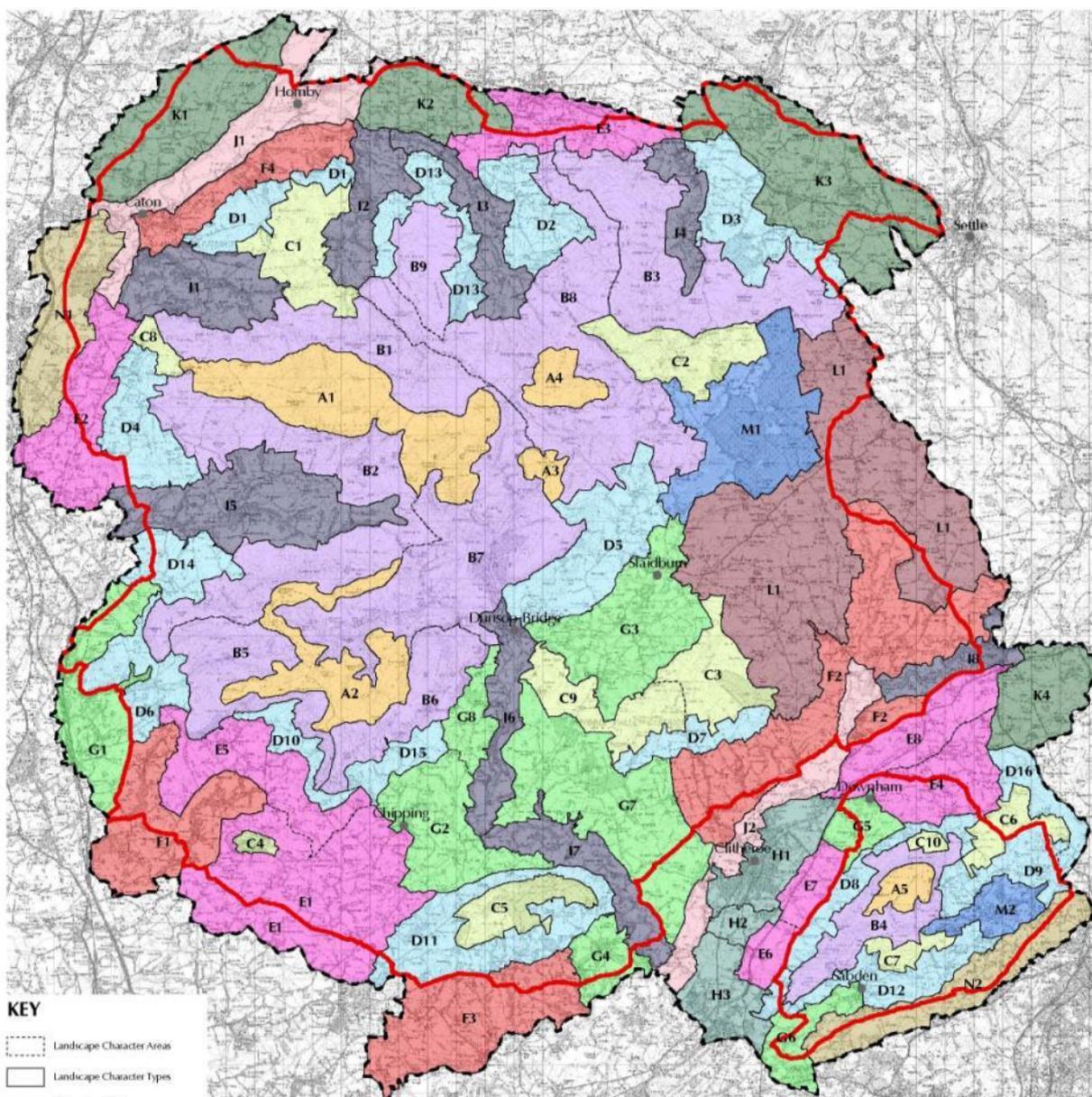
Source: Forest of Bowland AONB Landscape Character Assessment, 2009 (Chris Blandford Associates)

An Outstanding Landscape

VA visual amenity

Background

Ofgem (the Government department responsible for regulating the gas and electricity markets) has a target of undergrounding up to 5% of power cables in protected landscapes. In recent years the Forest of Bowland has benefitted from a number of such schemes under Electricity North West's direction. The Ofgem target is in response to the Countryside and Rights Of Way Act 2000 which sets out statutory duty of care to protected landscapes, and the work forms part of a £5.4m five-year OFGEM Undergrounding for Visual Amenity (UVA) programme to replace lines identified as being most visually intrusive in the North West.

Indicator VA

In 2013 3303 metres of electricity cable was buried underground

Source: AONB data

Interpretation of data

In Spring 2014 the natural beauty of Beacon Fell Country Park, which welcomes more than 200,000 visitors a year, was successfully restored thanks to the removal of electricity poles and power lines. Electricity Northwest working alongside the Forest of Bowland AONB and Lancashire County Council Countryside Service replaced the power lines with 250m of underground cable to improve the views from the fell close to the Bowland Visitor Centre.

Beacon Fell Country Park: Before   After undergrounding

photography by Graham Cooper

Forest of Bowland AONB

An Outstanding Landscape

WC   woodland creation and management

Background

Up until 2014 the Forestry Commission has been responsible for administering the England Woodland Grant Scheme which includes a number of woodland grants to support the creation, assessment and management of woodlands. Key targets for the scheme of particular relevance to the AONB are to:

- expand the area of woodland with public access
- bring woodland SSSI into favourable condition
- assist the delivery of priority habitat and species action plans for woodlands
- create new woodland

Indicator s

WC1: number of woodland creation grants in the AONB since 2006, and area covered

> 120 woodland creation grants covering 397.6 hectares

Source: Forestry Commission © Crown copyright 2014

WC2: number of woodland management and improvement grants since 2006, and area covered

> 237 woodland management and woodland improvement grants covering 432.01 hectares

Source: Forestry Commission © Crown copyright 2014

WM   woodlands in positive management

Background

Natural England estimate that 6637 hectares of the AONB is covered by woodland, just 8.2% of the total area of the Forest of Bowland, and this is roughly half broadleaved and half coniferous.

Indicator WM

> 60% of total woodland area in the AONB is in a managed condition

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014

Interpretation of data

Many of the AONB woodlands are small, isolated and often on the steep slopes of cloughs, and this makes management difficult due to access, costs and viability. Bringing more woodland into positive management would be advantageous for biodiversity, the landscape and the economy; and the AONB supports this wherever possible.

An Outstanding Landscape

WQ water quality in rivers

Background

Under the European Water Framework Directive the ecological status of rivers and canals is classified to be either:

- High
- Good
- Moderate
- Poor
- Bad

The EU target is for all rivers to achieve at least 'Good' status by 2015, and as this looks increasingly unlikely to be met, interim targets are also in place for 2021 and 2027. In the UK the Environment Agency is responsible for meeting this target, and others, set under the Water Framework Directive.

Indicator WQ

In March 2014 within the Forest of Bowland AONB:

48.8% of river length is classified as being in good ecological condition

45.9% of river length is classified as being in moderate ecological condition

Source: Defra, Protected Landscapes datasets 2014

Interpretation

Within the Forest of Bowland AONB there are three Rivers Trusts working alongside the Environment Agency to improve water quality. In 2011, Ribble Life, a river catchment partnership for the River Ribble was established and this was followed by the establishment of Living Lune and Wyre Waters partnerships in 2013. These partnerships are all working to develop catchment-based management plans with stakeholders ranging from farmers and landowners to conservation and fishing groups. The length of rivers in good ecological condition is already showing regular improvement.

River Hodder: Graham Cooper

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

AH   Affordability of homes

Background

Affordable housing is that which is described in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as 'social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing' and is defined as that which is 'provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.'

The affordability of buying homes is an additional issue, with house prices now far exceeding normal household incomes across the country. Within the AONB it has become noticeable that some housing is becoming increasingly exclusive and expensive and this may have an impact on the ability of people on average incomes to purchase homes within the AONB. This in turn may affect the make-up of the resident population and may lead to labour shortages in some areas and a predominance of retired or commuting workers within the resident population.

In a more positive light the impact of the AONB and the high quality natural environment on house prices can be seen as a benefit as it attracts additional investment into the area.

Indicator AH

There are two indicators used here

AH1: new affordable homes built

> 12 new affordable homes were constructed in the AONB in 2013, at Dunsop Bridge

Source: AONB data

AH2: affordability index

> The affordability ratio of mean income compared to average house sale prices in the AONB in 2013 was **1:12**

Source: AONB data drawn from Land Registry and ONS: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2013

Interpretation of data

The new affordable homes built in Dunsop Bridge as part of a partnership between the Duchy of Lancaster and Ribble Valley Homes were the first to be constructed in the village for nearly a century. This reveals one of the major obstacles to affordable homes in the AONB, as the designation of this protected landscape may in fact restrain development, even when urgently needed by local residents as buying and renting on the open market is increasingly unaffordable.

The mean income for Lancashire was £24,569 (ASHE data) and the average house price sale in 2013 for the postcode areas within the AONB was £292,000 (Land Registry data). This compares to a ratio of 1:6 in the rest of Lancashire where the house price average is £145,000 according to Rightmove. It can be seen therefore that location and landscape quality has a significant effect on house prices.

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

AS   access to basic services

Background

Access to services in rural communities is governed by location and access to transport. In a sparsely populated area like the AONB (total population 21,000 over 800 sq km) provision of basic services is scattered and 'nodal' villages have developed, often providing a cluster of services for a larger hinterland of hamlets and farmsteads.

In this case basic services are classified as provision of:

- a school
- a village shop (where you can buy bread and milk)
- a bus service that runs at least one day a week and is not a school service.

Additional features such as a pub or a village hall did not make very much difference to the data.

Indicator AS

In the Forest of Bowland AONB in 2013 **45%** of settlements had access to 2 or more basic services.

Source: AONB data

Interpretation of data

The provision of services is key to retaining a healthy and sustainable local community in rural areas, however it is limited by value for money and viability. So, for example, as spending cuts bite at a local authority level, rural bus services, which require a higher subsidy per passenger, will become increasingly under threat of a reduced service or complete withdrawal. Schools are similarly dependent on subsidies as low pupil numbers can create pressure for closure, and village shops are often already struggling for survival.

The map below shows the distribution of the 17 villages with access to 2 or more basic services in 2013. As this illustrates, the majority of these villages are on the margins of the AONB area where population is higher and public transport networks are better. The exceptions: Wray, Chipping, Dunsop Bridge and Slaidburn act as nodal villages serving large agricultural areas, and often the shop and bus service are supported by visitors as well as residents.

Source: AONB data
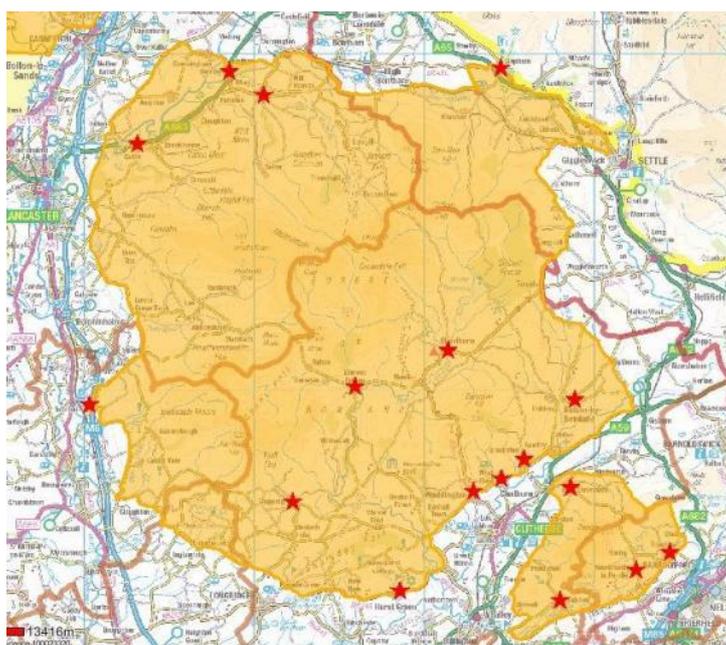
Forest of Bowland AONB

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

BA   business activity

Background

The Forest of Bowland, although sparsely populated, produces an economic value to the tune of over £40m pa. This is generated by a variety of businesses including agriculture, production, services and retail/leisure (source: The Economic Profile of the Forest of Bowland, 2013, by Rural Futures and Rural Solutions)

Indicator BA

BA1: production companies paying business rates

> **66** businesses were engaged in production in the AONB in 2013

BA2: registered companies

> **492** companies were located in the AONB according to Companies House data, 2013

Source: Economic Profile of the Forest of Bowland, 2013, Rural Futures & Rural Solutions

Interpretation of data

These two indicators show that the AONB is a healthy business environment, and at the present time business is doing well.

Cobble Hey Farm & Gardens Visitor Attraction

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

FS farm size and type

Background

With the majority of the land area of the AONB being used for agriculture, the way in which it is farmed is important to its appearance and 'health'. The annual census of farming, carried out each June by Defra, provides us with useful data, which although largely outside of the AONB Partnership's control, does help to identify issues and trends which may be addressed by partners in the future. The latest data provided for the AONB area is from 2010.

Indicator FS

FS1: farm size

> In 2010 in the AONB:
> **27%** of farms were under 20 ha in size, and **27%** were over 100ha

FS2: farm type

> In 2010, **14.6%** of all 678 AONB farms were dairy farms, and **68%** were hill farms

Source: 2010 Defra June agricultural survey

Interpretation of data

As the annual farm census provides us with previous years data this is one of the few indicators we can compare back in time and view changes. However, it is important to note that the 2010 survey excluded all holdings under 5ha in size, so indicator FS1 cannot be realistically compared.

In 2007 there were 153 dairy farms in the AONB, compared to 99 in 2010, and 446 hill farms compared to 462 in 2010 ie 13.9% dairy and 40.6% of all farms respectively: showing a considerable loss of dairy herds and a shift to a predominance of hill farming.

Cattle above Whitewell: Graham Cooper

Forest of Bowland AONB

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

PP population patterns

Background

This data is taken from the 2011 census using 'output areas' (the geographical units in which the data is collected) which are entirely, mostly, virtually or partly within the AONB boundaries. This means the data is not exactly cut to the AONB, but it is the best estimate which we can approximate and hopefully this same list of output areas can be used to collect data at the next census in 2021 for comparison purposes.

Indicators

PP1: age distribution

In 2011 in the AONB:

23% of the population were under 19 years old

16% aged 20-39

33% aged 40-59

24% aged 60-79

5% were over 80 years old

Source: 2011 census (ONS)

PP2: employment

In 2011 in the AONB:

5.7% of the working population were unemployed

9% were employed in farming, forestry or fishing

9.7% were employed in manufacturing

13% were employed in wholesale, retail or motor trades

25% were employed in health, social care and education

Source: 2011 census (ONS/Nomis: official labour market statistics)

Interpretation of data

The chart below shows the age distribution of the AONB population in 2011 compared to the UK average. This demonstrates the lack of young working age people (20-39 years) in the area, and the over representation of people over 40 and over 60. This is probably due to young people migrating away for education and career development, and a number of people moving into the area either as retirees or in middle-age. Viewed in connection with the house price affordability data this may reflect on the difficulty young people have in purchasing reasonable priced property in the AONB.
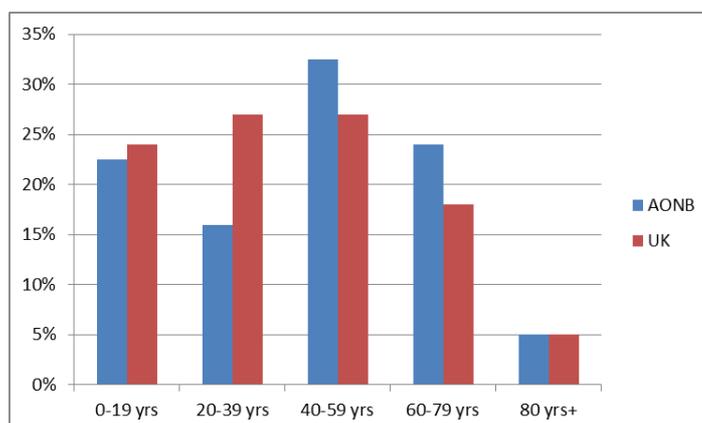
Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

PP population patterns

Interpretation of data: PP2

The table below shows the main employment sectors in the AONB compared to the UK average. This demonstrates the over reliance on agriculture, forestry and fishing, which is to be expected in a rural area, however at less than 10% of the AONB working population this suggests the sector is not as dominant as it once was. The high numbers in health, education and social care probably reflects a high number of commuting residents involved in these sectors.
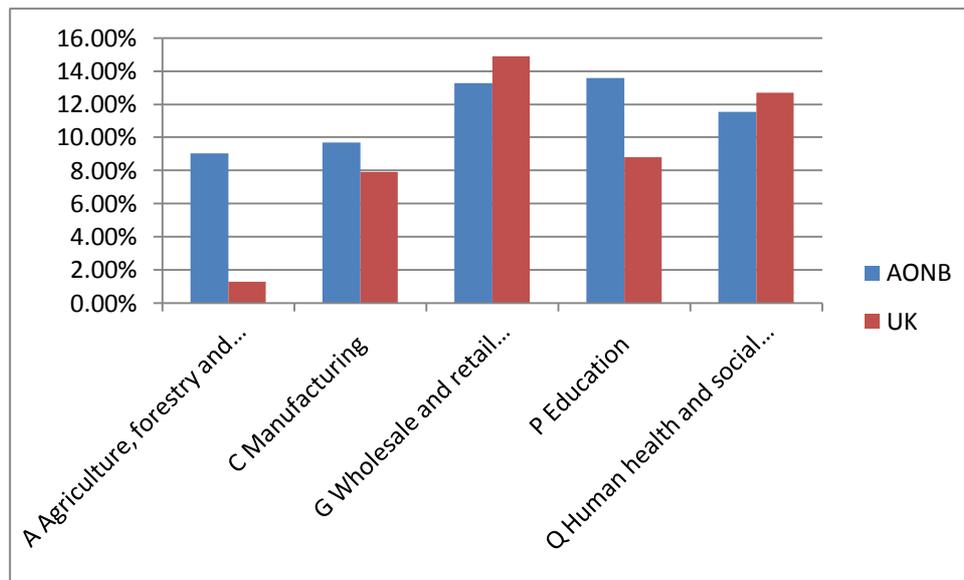
Haymaking at Hareden: Graham Cooper

Forest of Bowland AONB

Resilient and Sustainable Rural Communities

ST strength of sustainable tourism

Background

The AONB has promoted sustainable tourism and supported sustainable tourism businesses in the area for over eight years. Therefore these particular indicators were chosen to reflect the impact that activity and support has had on the sector.

A 'sustainable tourism partner' is a business which:

- is an active member of Bowland Experience Ltd (the sustainable tourism business network, a social enterprise)

- supports Champion Bowland (the AONB's charity, led by businesses)

- has a recognised, relevant Quality accreditation as agreed with the AONB – usually QIT

- has a current (or has held for at least 4 years) eco-tourism accreditation such as Green Tourism Business Scheme or similar recognised by the Sustainable Tourism forum.

- is willing to share experience with other Bowland businesses and visitors

Indicators

ST1: number of 'sustainable tourism partners'

In March 2014 there were **30** 'sustainable tourism partners' in the AONB

Source: AONB data

ST2: sustainable tourism businesses demonstrating commitment to the AONB

94% of businesses promote the special qualities of the AONB
88% feel that the AONB environment is important to their business
92% are confident about their business performance in the next 6 months

Source: Forest of Bowland Business Monitor, November 2013 (QA Research)

Interpretation of data

Out of a total of over 200 tourism related businesses in the AONB (accommodation providers, attractions and food and drink establishments) around 110 are members of the business network Bowland Experience, and of these 30 regularly engage with the AONB Partnership as tourism partners.

A six monthly survey of BEx members is taken to gauge the health and attitudes of businesses, and some of these are measured against Visit England statistics. The statistics quoted above show that the majority of Bowland tourism businesses work with the AONB to promote the area, and believe that the landscape is essential to their marketing offer. In general, businesses in the AONB slightly exceed business satisfaction and performance levels compared to the rest of the country, suggesting that the Forest of Bowland is good for business.

A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

AC access to the countryside

Background

Providing good quality physical access to the countryside, for all people; and also promoting that infrastructure, is vital in connecting people with the countryside so that they can explore, learn and enjoy the outstanding landscape.

The AONB works closely with Lancashire County Council and other agencies to provide a network of footpaths, bridleways, tramper trails and concessionary routes. Since 2008 the AONB has promoted a number of popular and educational 'download' walks on its website. These routes are designed and checked by officers and in many cases they are monitored and maintained by volunteers. Routes can be short or long distance and vary in their focus from wildlife, to heritage or simple breathtaking views. Download walks also promote village services, public transport and local sustainable tourism businesses: they are the most frequently visited page on www.forestofbowland.com

Indicator AC

AC1: promoted routes

In 2014 there were **65** promoted routes in the AONB, and an average of 50-100 downloads of walks were made per month from our website.

Source: AONB data

AC2: routes easy to use

In 2013 **56%** of surveyed routes in Lancashire were classed as 'easy to use'

Source: Lancashire PROW report, LCC

Interpretation of data

In 2008 Natural England calculated that there were 1269km of public rights of way in the AONB: a massive network requiring maintenance and way-marking. The AONB currently runs a volunteer scheme whereby individuals undertake to check the promoted routes and to log any significant problems using the county council's on-line system, and they also undertake small scale maintenance such as way-marking, repairs and vegetation control.

Lancashire county council's annual survey monitors at least 5% of all public rights of way in the county, but it is currently impossible to extrapolate AONB-only results. Their results for 2013 indicate that the main reasons for routes failing to meet the 'easy to use' criteria are poor way-marking, signposts and obstructions.
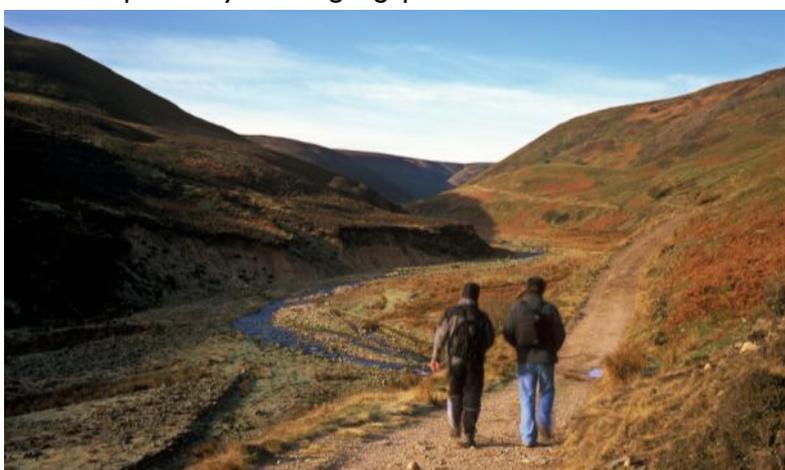
Walkers in Langden Valley: Charlie Hedley

A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

AD audience development

Background

The AONB is keen to ensure that residents and visitors respect the special qualities of the area and increase their understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of Bowland. Audience development is largely delivered via Festival Bowland: a year round programme of events, and also by supporting a range of community, schools and arts events.

Indicator AD

In 2013 **120** events were organised as part of Festival Bowland, attracting **1618** participants

Source: AONB data

Interpretation of data

The AONB Partnership runs a range of opportunities for local people and visitors to enjoy and explore the area. Festival Bowland is one of several initiatives, others being run by local groups such as Friends of Bowland and by local authorities who run walking for health programmes, walking festivals and other rural initiatives including touring theatre

EC effective communications

Background

It is vital that the AONB Partnership communicates effectively with its partners, local residents and visitors. In an increasingly technological age, a website and the use of social media has superseded the publishing of leaflets and the use of traditional media, although we do still produce publications and work with the local press.

Indicators

EC1: website visits

In 2013 there were on average **7000** unique visits per month to www.forestofbowland.com

Source: AONB data

EC2: social media performance

In May 2014 'forestofbowland' had **1195** followers on Twitter and **201** 'likes' on Facebook

Source: AONB data

www.forestofbowland.com

A Strong Connection between People and the Landscape

VL volunteering and skills development

Background

Providing opportunities for volunteering enables the AONB partnership to deliver more activity on the ground, whilst also providing positive personal experiences, and sometimes career development for individuals. Most of our volunteering activity is delivered through the new group, Friends of Bowland; but also via other partner organisations such as Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the various Rivers Trusts, RSPB and Lancashire County Council's volunteer ranger service.

Indicator VL

VL1: volunteering

> In 2013 the Friends of Bowland delivered **50** volunteer days of activity

VL2: training

> In 2013 **124** people received training in AONB led projects

Source: AONB data

Interpretation of data

As the Friends of Bowland develops as a group and continues to run fortnightly or monthly volunteer days they expect their activity numbers to increase. We wish them well.

The AONB Unit itself supported 124 people with training needs, made up of 12 people attending Green Tourism open days and 10 people attending an Access for All familiarisation trip (these were primarily business owners and employees); 12 people trained in archaeological survey techniques, and 10 in using archive records as part of the 'Leap in the Park' project; and 80 volunteers learnt how to build dry stone walls and lay hedges in the traditional Lancashire style as part of our traditional boundaries programme.

Surveying the Pale, 2014

2014 Hedgelaying competition

Forest of Bowland AONB

Working in Partnership

PA partnership action

Background

The Forest of Bowland AONB is managed by a partnership of public, private and voluntary sector partners with interests spanning heritage, wildlife, business and land management. The AONB Management Plan is a statutory document which all funding partners sign up to in order to enable co-operative delivery of objectives. Delivery of these objectives will be monitored in future years via an on-line interactive system.

As the AONB itself does not have a constitution or a formal membership, commitment to the partnership is measured via membership of two linked organisations: the volunteer body 'Friends of Bowland' and the tourism business network and social enterprise: Bowland Experience Ltd.

Indicator PA

PA1: partner activity

> In 2013 the interactive Management Plan was regularly updated by the AONB Partnership

PA2: membership

> In 2013 the Friends of Bowland had **47** members, and Bowland Experience had **108**

Source: AONB data

Interpretation of data

The interactive AONB Management Plan was created in order to enable all partners to log activity and track the delivery of actions. As part of our new Management Plan (2014-19) a new system is being developed and it will be easier to assess partner activity and to create reports.

The continued growth of both the Friends of Bowland and Bowland Experience is due to the dedication and commitment of volunteers, supported wherever possible by the wider Partnership.

VM value for money

Background

The AONB Partnership receives funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the constituent local authorities, and United Utilities. The AONB Unit is employed to support delivery of the AONB Management Plan and in order to do this effectively external funds are also raised to deliver specific programmes and projects.

Indicator VM

> In 2012/13 the AONB Partnership received £506,200 in funding, of which **34%** (£172,400) was raised externally.
>
> The leverage ratio was therefore **2:1**

Interpretation

The amount of externally raised funds will vary from year to year depending on programmes of activity and the success rate of applications for funding. In 2012/13 the major source of external funds received (£130,000), was from the Environment Agency to deliver a major peat restoration project on the Bleasdale Fells. Additional funds were secured from Lancashire Environment Fund (LEF) to deliver the Lancashire Witches Way (£34,000) and £8,400 was given by

Natural England to support the new Land Manager's Forum to commission research work on the economic impact of the AONB. In addition the Bowland HayTime project was also externally funded by Lancashire Environment Fund

Volunteers hedgelaying