Dales

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

A newspaper for the residents of the Yorkshire Dales National Park

Winter 2018

AMBITIOUS NATIONAL PARK PLAN LAUNCHED

An ambitious new plan - continuing a long-term vision for the National Park, backed up by 50 measurable new objectives to pursue by 2024 - has been adopted.

The *Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2019-24* is the single most important statutory document for the National Park. In effect, it provides a work programme for a whole range of organisations operating in the area over the next five years.

The new Plan covers a range of locally critical issues, such as the future of upland farming after Brexit, connection to superfast broadband, and protection and enhancement of wildlife - including measures to tackle illegal persecution of birds of prey.

Prepared over the last 18 months by a partnership of 16 public, private and voluntary sector bodies, and shaped by two rounds of public consultation and Government policy, over 100 organisations will be directly involved in implementing it.

Some of the objectives are designed to build on the successes of the past five years - for instance, improving the condition of public rights of way, restoring degraded peat bog, increasing the economic value of tourism, and delivering natural flood management projects.

Others are new - and much more ambitious; for example, creating an environmental land management scheme that better rewards farmers, and finding ways to attract younger working-age people to live in the area.

The Plan is the first to cover the new western extension of the National Park and supports projects such as the £3.5 million Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which aims to reveal, celebrate and conserve the area's hidden assets.

Several objectives prepare for fundamental change as the country leaves the Common Agricultural Policy, looking to support farmers and landowners in the management of priority habitats and species and improving the condition of rivers and woodlands, as well as extending the successful national trial of a 'payment by results' approach to agri-environmental farming.

Promoting the National Park as a leading sustainable tourism destination is another key aim, developing new events and attractions based on its special qualities and local distinctiveness, and encouraging more overnight stays and more visitors in the quieter months.

Delivery of National Park purposes cannot be achieved without strong, self-reliant communities. A drift of young people away from the area is no longer balanced by new households moving in - causing a shortage of workers and falling pupil numbers at schools - and public sector austerity has reduced spending on housing and public transport.

The Plan's response is for local councils and the National Park Authority to work together on a range of measures to attract younger working-age people into the area. That includes ambitious targets for new, more affordable housing, and supporting the use of existing services and developing new ones, such as high speed broadband and mobile networks.

Predicting the future is difficult. During the last Plan period the National Park was extended and the UK voted to leave the European Union. It is likely that other unforeseen changes will emerge during the next five years and not all of the objectives will be achievable.

The Plan is ambitious and some objectives are more challenging than others. Six are highlighted as currently being a long way short of the funding they would need, but are included because of their potential contribution to National Park purposes. They include repairing hundreds of disused field barns, upgrading the Coast to Coast path to a National Trail, and reinstating the Wensleydale Railway. All the bodies involved in writing the Plan have made a joint commitment to seek and lobby for the necessary funding to deliver these objectives.

More details about the *Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2019-24* - including the organisations that will deliver it, the cost of each objective, and progress over the next five years - will be available next year at **www.yorkshiredalesmanagementplan.org.uk**



Smardale Viaduct in the Westmorland Dales: the new Management Plan is the first to cover the extension area of the National Park



The North Young Rangers group gets to grips with fixing wind-damaged trees at Lake Semerwater nature reserve

Young Rangers make waves

Aged between 11 and 16 and love being outdoors? Keen to learn more about our amazing National Park and play a part in looking after it? Then Dales Young Rangers could be for you.

Based in the north, west and south of the National Park, the three groups meet once a month to carry out practical conservation work around their local area, and have turned their hand to everything from drystone walling and laying footpaths to removing invasive non-native plants and painting railway huts.

It is an exciting opportunity for young people to experience working alongside National Park Authority staff, partner organisations and landowners in the Yorkshire Dales. Members get to find out what they do, how they do it, and have a go themselves.

Task days involve getting out and having fun in all weathers.

This summer, the North Young Rangers worked with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust at their nature reserve by Lake Semerwater to manage a tree planting scheme which helps slow the flow of water from the surrounding hills.

The day began with them travelling across the water to the task site by canoe, thanks to Low Mill Outdoor Centre - sustainable transport using only self-power and team work. One enthusiastic paddler pronounced it "awesome".

Young Rangers Officer Rachael Addison is putting a call out for new recruits to our North and West groups.

"We are also looking for volunteers to help our learning and engagement staff lead these task days", she said." A great role for anyone who wants to help young people enjoy the many opportunities the National Park has to offer."

The North and West groups are funded by BIG Lottery Fund through the Green Futures partnership programme, while the South group is part-funded through Stories in Stone, a conservation and community programme centred around Ingleborough, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Both schemes are led by local charity Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

For more information about Dales Young Rangers, visit their Facebook page @dalesyoungrangers, or contact Rachael Addison on 01969 652366 or rachael.addision@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Welcome to this winter edition of *Dales*

As the nights close in, it is worth reflecting on what has been happening over recent months. As well as being glorious in terms of weather, the summer has been a hectic one for us at the National Park Authority.

The big issue has been the development and launch of the National Park Management Plan - a rather dry title that underplays the importance of what is a critical document.

In essence, it tries to tackle some of the big issues that face the National Park and its communities, setting out fifty new objectives to be achieved over the next five years by all those bodies that work within the area.

There are things that the National Park Authority will lead on, but also many where other bodies will be playing the lead role - whether that is the district and county councils, statutory environmental agencies, or local charities like the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust. In fact, there are over 100 organisations directly involved in delivering one or more of the objectives - so you can see why it has taken some time to put together!

It is well worth looking at the final document (see our cover story) and many thanks to all those who contributed to it, whether individually or through other bodies.

Putting the Plan together has not been easy, but the really serious work of delivery starts now. Let's not kid ourselves, many objectives are extremely challenging in the current climate, and some will only happen if significant new funding can be found.

But, with a good headwind and a willingness to engage, we are very hopeful that this extraordinary landscape, and the communities in which we live and work, will be enhanced for future generations.



David Butterworth
Chief Executive

Carl Lis OBE
Chairman

Hen harriers fledge in National Park



By Ian Court, Wildlife Conservation Officer

It was a privilege to be involved in monitoring the pair of hen harriers that nested in the Cumbrian part of the National Park this year.

A charismatic species, the hen harrier should be widespread in the uplands of northern England - but it is rare. Although there is enough suitable habitat to support several hundred breeding pairs, there were only nine successful nests in 2018.

Unfortunately, the hen harrier's preferred breeding ground is heather moorland, the majority of which is managed for driven grouse shooting. These birds of prey will take adult and young grouse that, in some circumstances and at particular breeding densities, can impact on the surplus required for driven grouse shooting, and there is a long history of illegal persecution.

Following the Cumbrian pair's discovery by Natural England staff in May, they were closely monitored during the breeding season. We marvelled at the spectacular mid-air food passes as the male brought in a steady supply of field voles to feed his mate. She always fed away from the nest, so it was fantastic when we saw her start to take food into the nest - a sure sign that there were young to feed.

Over the following weeks, the male had to work hard to feed his growing family and it was extremely satisfying when we saw the first signs of the young as they stretched their wings in the nest, which was in the middle of a dense rush bed.

Just before they made their first flights, Natural England fitted lightweight satellite transmitters with solar-charged batteries on two of the young - named Mabel and Tom after the landowner's grandparents - so that their movements could be tracked. There was huge relief when the youngsters left the nest - the first successful breeding in the National Park since 2007.



The four hen harrier chicks in the rushes in July (Natural England)

The bad news at the time of going to press is that Mabel has gone missing.

We know that she had been up to Teesdale, venturing as far north as Allenheads, before returning to the Dales and lingering in the Tan Hill area for a while. There were regular transmissions until 2 October 2018 when the last signal was received, north of Ravenseat Moor in the Little Smale Gill area in Cumbria.

We are greatly concerned. Although something may have happened to Mabel's transmitter since the last fix at that location, a large proportion of satellite-tagged harriers simply 'disappear', with no trace of the birds or their transmitters ever found.

Hen harriers, along with some other birds of prey, are at significant risk from persecution. In remote areas like the Dales, finding evidence is always going to be difficult, so this is where we need you to play your part.

We need you to be 'our eyes and ears' when out and about in the countryside. If you see anything suspicious or are concerned that a wildlife crime may have taken place, please contact North Yorkshire Police on 101. Alternatively, speak to the RSPB in confidence, by calling the Raptor Crime Hotline on 0300 999 0101.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Dales is published twice a year by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. It reports on our work and is delivered to over 15,000 households in the National Park.

National park authorities have two purposes:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the parks by the public.

In carrying out these purposes, national park authorities also have a duty to seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.

To fulfill these purposes, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority offers services that provide help and advice on a wide range of issues, including environmental conservation and enhancement, planning, historic buildings and sites, tourist information, and footpath and bridleway management.

For specific enquiries about *Dales*, contact the editor, Sarah Nicholson, on 01756 751618 or sarah.nicholson@yorkshiredales.org.uk.

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The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority strives to be widely recognised as a centre of expertise and excellence in conservation and recreation policy and practice, and in the quality of the landscape, and to deliver efficient and welcoming services. We aim to inspire local communities and businesses to ensure it is a thriving area, one that is treasured by those who live here and those who visit. We welcome your comments and suggestions about our work.

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THE PHENOMENAL SPREAD OF ASH DIEBACK DISEASE



By Geoff Garrett, Senior Trees & Woodlands Officer

If you haven't spotted the signs of ash dieback before, you can't have missed them this summer. Despite it being the height of the growing season, young ash trees could be seen across the National Park, their branches bare.

If you took a closer look you could see the lozenge-shaped scars at the base of those dead branches - the sure, dreaded sign of a fungal pathogen called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* that has blown in from Asia and wreaked carnage in European ashwoods.

The disease has spread phenomenally quickly since the first UK case was confirmed in 2012.



Tree with ash dieback on the road just west of Garsdale Station

Ancient semi-natural woodland covers about 1% of the National Park. About 80% of this woodland is made up of ash, making it the iconic tree of the Dales.

Ash takes a long time to come into leaf, then, at the first hint of a frost in the autumn, the leaves drop off. This means certain plants can thrive, such as water avens, St John's wort and celandine; plants which take many years to spread, like Dog's mercury and herb paris. It is this mix which makes an ash wood so special.

Diagnosing ash dieback has to be carefully done, because the trees can also suffer from canker or wind damage. A single, isolated ash in a field is less likely to be affected by dieback - the wind will blow away the fungal spores before they can settle. It is ash woodlands that are most heavily affected because of spores swirling within the trapped air.

The fungus develops on shoots, or on fallen ash leaves, before producing fruiting bodies - just a few millimetres high - in spring and summer. The spores from these fruiting bodies infect ash trees via the leaves.

The disease blocks the vessels in the tree along which nutrients flow. The leaves fall off, the branches die back to the trunk, often forming that lozenge-shaped scar, before the disease spreads upwards to affect the crown.

The tell-tale sign to look for is a bronzing of the branches, starting at the tips.

With ash the dominant tree of the Dales, just as it is in parts of the Lake District and the Peak District, losing it will be nothing short of disastrous. There is currently no cure.

Big trees with big trunks will last longer - it could be years before we see them dying back. Ash trees are not going down without a fight, but the consensus is that they are losing. The disaster will unfold over the next 20 years or so.

It may well be that ash keeps regenerating and dying - over and again - until the 'Darwin effect' kicks in and trees with immunity begin to grow. Important research is being carried out by the Forestry Commission to try to identify and develop ash trees that are most tolerant to the disease.

The National Park Authority has responded to the spread of ash dieback by removing ash from all new tree-planting schemes.

But while there is little we can do to tackle the disease itself, there is a lot we can do to manage the decline of ash by making sure that the spaces they leave are filled by other native trees. We've always planted a mix, using hawthorn, holly, hazel, alder, and sometimes oak. So even if we lose ash, we've still 'future proofed' and got the right structure of trees when - and the expectation is when, rather than if - ash makes a comeback.

AIMING FOR THE PEAK OF HEALTH



By Kate Hilditch, Area Manager South

This summer we asked you to 'Pitch in for Whernside' as part of a crowdfunding campaign to repair a seriously-eroded footpath on one of the best-loved walking routes in the National Park.

The total figure raised was £9,892 - a really fantastic effort, even if we didn't reach our full ambition.

Two hundred and ninety two people pledged money, with rewards ranging from Yorkshire Three Peaks woolly hats to a three-night guided break with HF Holidays - and even a Three Peaks deckchair (pictured).

We are very grateful to our supporters who donated rewards, as well as to everyone who gave to the campaign.

The 12 month-long fundraising project began late last year and is aiming to reach the £46,000 needed to create a new 200 metre section of stone pitching on the summit route known locally as Bruntscar. It is part of the British Mountaineering Council's national Mend Our Mountains: Make One Million scheme which is supporting projects in each of the UK's 15 National Parks.



Our overall total has now reached £30,000, so we've still got some work to do, but we're well on the way to our target.

Find out more at **mendmountains.thebmc.co.uk/yorkshire-dales**

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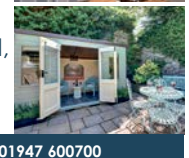
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RIGHTS OF WAY MAINTENANCE

From squeeze stiles and hand gates to signposts, culverts and bridges, there are over 19,000 pieces of infrastructure on public rights of way in the National Park - all of which are maintained by the National Park Authority.

While many of these remain the legal responsibility of the landowner, because they are in a National Park the Authority provides the grant aid, materials and labour to repair and maintain them as it helps us to achieve our second purpose - helping people to get out and enjoy everything the area has to offer.

Due to a rigorous care programme and a lot of hard work by rangers and volunteers, 90% of the infrastructure on rights of way is currently in condition 1 - that is, in good order and safe and easy to use.

The 2,623km of footpaths and bridleways in the National Park are surveyed annually by our Dales Volunteers. Armed with a list of infrastructure items on each route, they walk from start to end, assessing the condition of every ladder stile bridging a wall and length of boardwalk underfoot.

Judging whether they are in condition 1, 2 (needing minor repairs) or 3 (needing urgent work), they input the data onto a database linked to GIS mapping data, which then creates the Access Rangers' ongoing work programme. Condition 3 items are prioritised, followed closely by 2, as if the latter are left too long they could easily become the former.

For this reason it is important to be proactive, as well as reactive. A five-year rights of way maintenance plan sets targets for each area of the National Park. Our ambition by 2022/3 is to see 95% of rights of way infrastructure in condition 1.

Other factors can influence the work programme. For example, catastrophic events like the flooding caused by Storm Desmond in winter 2015 which washed away bridges. Popular footpaths, such as those in the Three Peaks area, might have a much shorter lifespan due to sheer number of users compared to quieter areas like the Howgills and Arkengarthdale.

Day-to-day infrastructure maintenance is down to our 12 Access Rangers - it makes up about 80% of their workload. They are supported by our four countryside apprentices and Dales Volunteers - without whom we couldn't achieve half of what we do. This includes specialist drystone walling teams working across the National Park on its 3,000 stone stiles.

Shown across these pages are some recent examples of the scope of the Authority's public rights of way maintenance work.



Former railway platform stone flags have been used to repair a footpath in Raydale

Stone flags find new home

Large flagstones that once formed the edges of old railway platforms have been recycled to repair a footpath in Raydale.

Dales Volunteers and rangers worked hard over three days in May to get the heavy flags on site near Marsett and lay 60 metres. The footpath forms part of one of the most popular routes in Upper Wensleydale: a circular walk around Lake Semerwater.

The reclaimed stone - from recently refurbished Kirkham and Wesham Station in Lancashire - was generously donated by J Murphy & Sons Ltd, with the intention of giving something back to the landscape and benefitting the wider community.

With many rights of way in remote locations and on environmentally sensitive sites, paths can be tricky to restore. Improvement projects have to balance the long-term conservation needs of the area with the demands placed on it by walkers.

Laying stone flags on this boggy stretch of path stops people spreading wider and trampling the surrounding vegetation. As well as providing a dry walking surface, it will help to conserve Marsett Rigg, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is home to rare plant species.

The three 40-foot trailers of donated flags have now been laid at five sites across the National Park, improving the condition of around 400 metres of paths for users.

Heritage brought back into view

A traditional feature of the Dales industrial past in Wharfedale has been revealed once again, thanks to the work of Authority staff and volunteers.

Structural consolidation and protective fencing work had been carried out at Long Ashes lime kiln in Threshfield some 25 years ago, but in the intervening years nature had tried its best to reclaim the site, with trees and scrub obscuring the feature.

Landscape improvement work this August has seen the site cleared of overgrowth so that the view of the kiln from the public footpath that runs from Skirethorns Lane to disused Threshfield Quarry has been restored.

A staff work party shortly afterwards saw the protective fencing around the site renewed and the old interpretation board reinstalled, having been restored to its original condition in the Authority workshop at Grassington.

A traditional feature of the Dales landscape, lime kilns were used to convert the local limestone into mortar for building and agricultural lime for improving grassland. Inclusion on the Authority's footpath annual strimming list should see that this historic feature remains on public view for years to come.



Access Ranger Rob Wilson inspects the former lime kiln at Threshfield

Help for Heroes help us

For the last few years, the Authority's northern rangers have been working with Phoenix House, the Help for Heroes recovery centre at Catterick Garrison. The purpose-built facility provides a welcoming, supportive and inspirational atmosphere for both serving personnel and veterans who may be sick or injured.



Participants on The Pathfinder Experience programme help out with Askrigg footpath repairs

One of their many programmes is The Pathfinder Experience, designed to help with the transition from military life to a happy, fulfilling one as a civilian.

Working with National Park rangers for a day on each of the first two phases of the course offers participants the opportunity to spend time outdoors in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The groups have helped with footpath surfacing, tree planting, and maintaining gates and stiles on public rights of way.

Louis Nethercott, the Career Recovery Programme Delivery Lead, said: "Being outdoors in the fresh air can help the course participants process their thoughts, and completing a physical task gives a positive, tangible result after a day's work. The individuals have said they gain clarity and perspective following a day in the Dales with the rangers."

Find out more at **www.helpforheroes.org.uk**

Sensitive site repaired

A sustainable solution to a highly sensitive site with an erosion issue was achieved by the ranger team in the south of the National Park

Last year, Kettlewell Church committee approached us, concerned that the public footpath which crosses the grounds of the church was becoming eroded and muddy. The footpath, which links a popular campsite to the village, was becoming increasingly damaged and, to avoid this, people were taking alternative routes through sensitive areas of the graveyard.

Due to the sensitivity of the site, any solution to address the erosion problem had to have minimal impact.



Staff on a training day help repair the path at Kettlewell Church

The Area Ranger produced a specification agreed by the committee which included installing timber edging boards, laying down a geo-textile membrane to suppress weed growth, and infilling the timber edging with compacted aggregate.

The majority of the work was completed by Authority rangers and staff on a training day. Nearly 100 metres of footpath was constructed using around 12 tonnes of aggregate, which was transported to site by wheelbarrow from the church entrance. The finished path provides an all year round sustainable route for all.

Slowing the flow in Cumbria

Western area rangers have installed an artificial channel or flume on a small stream in Cumbria, fitted with equipment designed to capture data on water flow.

The joint Lancaster University and Lune Rivers Trust project aims to assess the effectiveness of natural flood management projects around the county.

The data provided by the monitoring equipment will provide a baseline and should reflect any impact of works in the uplands, such as tree planting, leaky dams, and blocking drainage channels known as grips.

The flume was installed across a small beck on the northern edge of Sedbergh. With the permission of the landowner and consent from Cumbria County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority, the work involved temporarily blocking the stream and installing a bypass pipe to create an environmentally safe work area.



Rangers install a flume across a Sedbergh beck fitted with kit designed to capture data on water flow

The stream bed was prepared and the flume installed on a layer of concrete, exactly level. The sides, front and back were infilled and made waterproof so that all the water flowing down the stream would flow through the flume.

The rangers were assisted by Gareth McShane of Lancaster University, who was working on the project across the county. Each site was different and required a flexible and inventive approach to the installation. Some head scratching was obligatory!

Sedbergh pupils repair Adam Sedgwick Trail

Sedbergh School students spent three days working in baking heat this summer alongside rangers to repair parts of the Adam Sedgwick Geological Trail.



Students work alongside a Dales Volunteer on repairing the Adam Sedgwick Trail near Sedbergh

Pupils in the school's Design & Technology department also helped make viewpoint posts, waymarkers and an information panel.

A total of 12 students were on site by the banks of the River Clough, a few miles east of Sedbergh town, each day from 3 to 5 July. Seven Dales Volunteers, as well as seven rangers, were on hand to help and offer guidance, and two work placement students from Settlebeck School also pitched in.

Despite the very hot conditions, a great deal was achieved in this beautiful location, which has views west to the Howgill Fells and east into Garsdale.

By the end of the third day, a stone aggregate surface had been created on all the worn sections of the route - about 250 metres in all. Viewpoint and additional waymarker posts were installed, steps were either constructed or repaired at several locations, and gorse was cut back.

Head of D&T at Sedbergh School, Simon Arnold, said: "Our pupils were delighted to get involved with the project as part of Sedbergh School's Challenge Week. They learnt many new skills and showed true Sedbergh spirit and resilience working in the searing heat. I am very proud of all that they achieved."

DEFRA FUNDS EXTENSION OF FARM PAYMENT PILOT

The Environment Secretary announced this summer that a 'Payment by Results' project piloted in Wensleydale will be the first agri-environment scheme directly funded by the UK.

Michael Gove said such schemes were "the future".

Nineteen farmers are in the Wensleydale scheme, which is being delivered by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and project managed by Natural England.

During the three-year pilot the farmers were incentivised through a new system of 'payment by results' rather than being paid to follow detailed management prescriptions. They have been rewarded for producing either species-rich meadows or good habitat for breeding waders, such as curlew, snipe, lapwing and redshank: the better the habitat, the higher the payment.

The pilot was originally funded by the EU until this September; Defra's decision means it will be extended for at least two years. The Authority is now in talks with Defra about further funding, which would allow the possibility of expanding this results-based approach to the whole farm, including walls, barns and soil.

Secretary of State for Defra, Michael Gove, said: "Under the Common Agricultural Policy, agri-environment schemes have been overly bureaucratic and inflexible. This has impeded innovation for farmers who are passionate about the environment and want to see real change.

"The Payment by Results pilot marks a shift in how we think about rewarding farmers for their work. This approach signals how we see the future of farm payments, where farmers deliver public goods for the environment which we all enjoy.

"I am delighted to extend this scheme and look forward to seeing further evidence of its success as we plan for our future outside the EU."

Authority Chairman, Carl Lis, said: "The pilot has been a hit with farmers because it has been designed and delivered locally - and because it puts the farmer back in control of how the land is managed, rather than having to follow very detailed and rigid prescriptions.

"With support from our farm team advisers, and the Natural England Project Manager, the 19 farmers in the scheme have produced some excellent environmental results in a short time."

For more information on the 'Payment by Results' scheme, please contact Helen Keep, Senior Farm Conservation Officer, on 01756 751611. For advice on the grants and schemes available to farmers and landowners, visit **www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/farming**

PROJECTS WITH BIG IDEAS WANTED

Applications are being invited to the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), which still has nearly £90,000 in the pot for this financial year.

The fund is open to community groups, businesses and individuals. It provides a simple and accessible source of money for community heritage, wildlife and other initiatives.

So far in 2017/18, 15 projects have been awarded grants, with the largest receiving nearly £16,000 and the smallest just a few hundred pounds. The following case studies give an idea of what SDF can support.

People in the village of Killington have been working to reduce the community's dependence on 'carbon energy'.

Their biggest project – managed by the Killington and District Sustainable Energy Trust (K-SET) – has been to install a 'screw turbine' at the Broad Raine Weir on the River Lune. A fish pass has been constructed so that fish can swim upstream safely when the 50 kW hydro system is operating.

An SDF grant of £16,000 supported this fantastic community-led renewable energy source and the installation of a small interpretation panel telling visitors about the scheme and fish pass.

Secretary of K-SET Maureen Lamb said: "We want to show that even a small village can make a difference if the will is there."



Killington residents at the site of the hydro scheme, (front), Maureen Lamb, (back left), Melanie Southall, John Harrison, Paul Snelling, Nick Chetwood and Tim Moore holding Finlay Mayor

Great things are happening at Cumbria Wildlife Trust's stunning Smardale nature reserve near Kirkby Stephen.

The reserve is to be linked to Waitby Greenriggs nature reserve, further along the old Stainmore railway line, with an accessible walkway. A new car park featuring railway-style cabins where visitors can find information explaining the wildlife that can be seen at Smardale, such as the Scotch argus butterfly, orchids and red squirrels, is also being created.

The project has received a grant of £15,820 from SDF.

David Harpley, CEO of the Trust (now retired), said: "Smardale nature reserve is an important wildlife habitat, and the new car park and visitor information will make it much easier and more enjoyable for people to access it."

Agriculture Bill could be good fit for Dales farmers



Farming in the Dales is entering a 10 year period of massive change because of Brexit and the Government's new policy on farm payments, writes Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Chairman Carl Lis.

The Agriculture Bill provides the legal framework for the phasing out of Direct Payments by 2028, and the introduction of a new Environmental Land Management system to reward the production of 'public goods'.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park is a farmed landscape. So, the National Park Authority's starting point is that we would like to see the number of farm holdings in the National Park retained, or even increased. We want - and need - sheep and cattle on the fell sides, as they have been for centuries. But that does not mean trying to keep everything exactly the same as it is now.



Haytime in Keld, Swaledale

We all know that farming - and the way it is supported by farm payments - will have to change and the potential opportunities presented by the Bill are exciting. It is a once-in-a-generation chance to change a system that, for years, has been loaded in favour of lowland farmers and big commercial interests.

But we must also be cautious. There is no doubt that, if the proposed agricultural transition is badly managed, the economy and environment of the Dales will suffer.

Direct Payments have been propping up Dales' farm incomes for years; it is here that the impact of their withdrawal will be felt most keenly. Even so, the Authority believes it is right to scrap them. Direct Payments are a sticking plaster over market failure. They disguise the fact that upland farmers are working tirelessly yet struggling to make any money from the food and breeding sheep that they produce. In my experience, farmers would far rather get an extra £30 per lamb at the mart than receive such handouts.

So, where's the good news? First, there is now increasing evidence that, for many of the 'typical' Dales sheep farms, the profitability of the business can be significantly improved by cutting inputs and moving to lower - not higher - stocking rates. A fair few farmers are already proving that by stocking only as many animals as the farm can naturally support, they can increase profit margins.

This is the key to explaining why the Agriculture Bill could be a good fit for Dales farmers. If farmers choose to move towards lower-input farming with better profit margins, then they will also be putting themselves in prime position to benefit from the new payments for protecting or improving the environment. It should be a 'no brainer' that the new Environmental Land Management system - and its highest level of payments - should be targeted on National Parks. We will lobby tirelessly - alongside bodies such as the Northern Hill Farming Panel - to try to make sure that there is no reduction in the overall level of support for farmers in the National Park, so that the new system properly rewards those farmers who are providing the most public benefits.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution, not least because of the range of different farm sizes and types, notably dairying, in the National Park. That is why we have been saying consistently that the new Environmental Land Management system must be locally-designed and locally-tailored. The Authority is already helping to pilot a new style of agri-environment scheme in Wensleydale that makes payments on species-rich meadows and good habitat for breeding waders. It is effective and popular because the farmers retain full control of how their land is managed, and are able to use their knowledge and skills to enhance the environment. A few weeks ago we were delighted when the scheme became fully-funded by the Government.

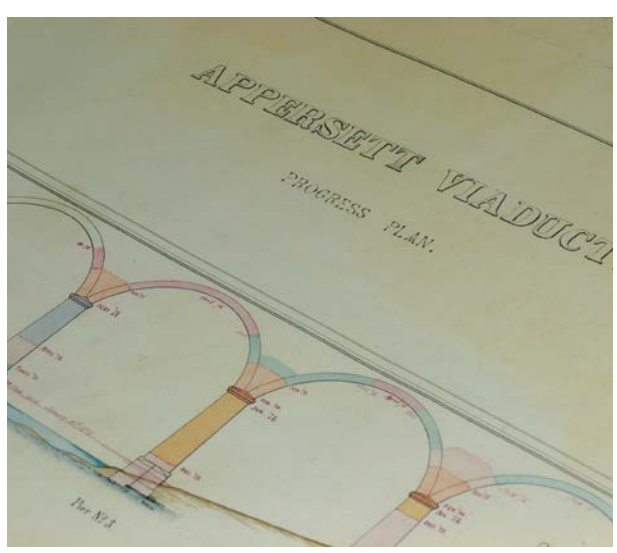
The Agriculture Bill should lead to more such schemes coming forward, with better payments for a wider range of public goods. We will work closely with local farmers and land managers in the coming years to shape - and deliver - some of the new schemes. In ten years' time, my hope is that Dales farmers will be producing locally-distinctive, high-quality food in a way that also produces an outstanding range of public benefits and secures their farm's long-term economic viability.

A huge book containing the Midland Railway's original 1870s drawings for the now closed Garsdale-Hawes branch line was looking worn and faded – until a group of enthusiasts decided to take action.

The Book of Bridges, stored at the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes, is more than two feet high and a yard wide. The pages have now been cleaned one at a time and a full restoration carried out by paper conservators Stephen and Pamela Allen from Durham.

The project received an SDF grant of £1,000, roughly a third of the total needed.

Appeal Organiser Ruth Annison said: "These are the original drawings for the Garsdale to Hawes branch line and we are very privileged that they have survived. It's nice to see an old book looking good again."



TAKING THE LEAD

By Calum Stott, Access Ranger (Westmorland Dales)

Every day, hundreds of dogs enjoy the National Park's sights and smells with owner in tow - and who can blame them for taking the lead.

But it's no walk in the park. The safety and enjoyment of every dog and its family is important when out and about. And there are rules to be understood and followed.

The police and National Farmers' Union are keen to raise awareness among dog owners and the farming community about responsible ownership and the prevention and reporting of livestock worrying incidents.

In a joint report by the National Police Chief's Council this year, North Yorkshire Police recorded 329 cases of worrying and 280 deaths between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2017.

In 79% of these cases, the owner wasn't present. While it remains important to keep dogs on leads, this figure suggests a bigger issue - that dogs are not being supervised at home, but are escaping and committing attacks. This has led to a strong new instruction: check that your dog is secure.



Access Ranger and National Park resident Calum Stott and his dog Trigger take a walk in Wensleydale

The National Park Authority will be running new free 'Dales Dog Days' next year to help owners understand how to walk their dogs responsibly and make it a fun and safe experience for all - call us on 01756 751612 to sign up.

Everyone loves a day out in the countryside and dogs are welcome on selected guided walks in our annual events programme – as long as they are well-behaved and can negotiate stiles. Our self-guided 'Miles Without Stiles' routes also offer lots of great barrier-free opportunities for dog and owner, and the National Park has 786km of gate-only bridleways to enjoy.

Check our website or call in at a National Park Centre for details.

If we all follow the rules, share our stunning countryside and respect the people and animals living here, it will be a better, happier experience for everyone – two and four footed.

The NPCC report on the issue of livestock worrying can be found at **www.npcc.police.uk/Publication/livestock%20worrying.pdf**



WHAT TO KNOW...

Keep your dog on a lead

At all times around livestock, and during the lambing and ground nesting bird season (1 March to 31 July), on open access land.

Legally, your dog must always be under close control on public rights of way, preferably on a lead.

There may be other local or seasonal restrictions (eg. on grouse moors).

Never let your dog chase animals or birds

It can cause them great distress. Ground nesting birds can be scared away from their nest, meaning their eggs will get cold and the chicks die.

The stress can kill sheep and cause pregnant ewes to abort their lambs.

A farmer can legally shoot a dog that is worrying livestock.

Clear up after your dog

Bag it and bin it. Diseases transmitted to livestock through dog faeces can cause impaired vision and neurological symptoms, and can be fatal.

Look out for instructional signage on gates and posts or call into a National Park Centre for further advice (dogs welcome!)

Keep your dog wormed

Dog waste on grazing land can pass worms and parasites to other dogs, livestock, wildlife and you, so it is just as vital to clear up after your dog in the countryside as it is in the town.

Check your dog is secure at home

In the vast majority of livestock worrying incidents, the owner wasn't present, suggesting dogs have escaped gardens and boundaries.

Look out for ticks

Ticks can be found in long grass and on wildlife. If you should find one on your dog, remove it as soon as possible to prevent risk of disease.

Take care of yourself and your dog

If cattle chase you, drop the lead and get out of the field. Don't risk getting hurt trying to protect your dog - unlike you, they will be able to outrun the cows.

The Dales scenery is spectacular, but there are many hazards to consider, such as mineshafts, caves and sink holes, which are easy for dogs to fall down. Always keep yourself and your dog to the line of the path.

Reporting uncontrolled dogs

Anyone witnessing an incident should contact the local police on 101, giving details of the location, type of livestock, nature of injury, dog, owner and a vehicle registration, if possible.

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DAIRYING PROJECT GETS UNDER-WHEY

If you know what to look for, the legacy of Wensleydale's dairying heritage is all around, in butter pats and kit stands, cheese press stones and dairies.

Dairying has been at the heart of the Wensleydale economy since before records began and is still thriving today. The 'Dairy Days' project, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund and run by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, aims to research and then share the tale of this unbroken thread, offering a new depth to the story for both visitors and locals alike.



Posing with milk churns, Yorescott Farm, Askrigg, 1960s (Ann Holubecki Collection)

During the last seven months we have been recording the memories of people who have been involved in dairying and milk processing, and delving into the stories behind the objects held at the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes. We've trained people to survey farm buildings and related archaeological sites, from Iron Age cattle pens through to nineteenth century barns, and they started work in the field this November.

Ultimately, the project will be providing opportunities for everyone to hear, see and share the stories of dairying, including walk leaflets, interpretation panels, posters for tourism businesses, and an exhibition at the Museum.

Visit our Dairy Days blog at **blog.yorkshiredales.org.uk** to hear some of the oral history recordings so far and to follow this fascinating project as it progresses. If you would like to get involved, contact Karen Griffiths on 01756 751619 or karen.griffiths@yorkshiredales.org.uk.

Rural childhood memories come home

Isolated, older people have been reconnecting with their rural childhoods, forming new friendships and strengthening community ties, thanks to a project which is helping them access the countryside once again.

For the last two years the National Park Authority's learning and engagement team has been working with Age UK Settle who have been invaluable in helping to identify some of the more isolated people within the community and involve them in the 'Country Connect' project.

Many of the group were brought up in the countryside, but now have no way of accessing it on their own. The project has enabled them to re-connect with their past and share new experiences, as well as creating friendships, with those who first met through the project now regularly seeing each other outside of the group days.



The Country Connect group learn about fleeces on a visit to a working Dales farm

The trips have a different theme each time and explore different parts of the National Park. The group has visited working farms, the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes, Bolton Abbey to see the bluebells in flower, and Ribblehead Station to learn about the history of the railway.

On a lambing time visit to Hurries Farm near Airton, the sheep unfortunately crossed their legs - but there was a new arrival who had been born the previous day, and who the visitors loved meeting.

Group member Audrey said: "I love getting out into the Dales. The trips take us to places we wouldn't be able to get on our own.

"Meeting up with the girls, making new friends and catching up with each other on the bus ride and over coffee and cake is a treat."

Mark and Rachel Wilson hosted a fantastic day at Gill Garth Farm near Selside, with the opportunity to meet farm animals, learn the difference between hay and silage, and enjoy a shearing demonstration and comparison of fleeces from different breeds.

Rachel said "We really enjoyed the Age UK visit, we felt this was probably one of the most worthwhile we'd had. To hear them talk about their memories of farming and tales of wool spinning and the nostalgic smell of hay meadows - I think we could have spent longer just chatting. I hope they enjoyed it as much as we did."

The visits won't stop here. The Authority will continue to work with Age UK and other groups who would otherwise struggle to visit the Dales. We can help organise transport and have a fantastic team of volunteers to provide support on the day.

If you know of any group who would benefit, please contact Cat Kilner, Learning & Engagement Officer on learning@yorkshiredales.org.uk or 01756 751623

School visits help us learn from each other

Students and teachers from local schools have been working with the National Park Authority on some exciting new projects this summer.

Over 300 children from seven schools in Craven District came together to create a living meadow in the village square as part of Grassington Festival.

Each school took charge of two pieces of turf planted with haymeadow seeds, with pupils watering the soil and recording how it was growing over a six week period. During the festival, all the pieces were collected and laid in the square as a living flower-filled meadow for everyone to enjoy.

It was difficult to keep the thirsty meadow moist for two weeks in the heat of June, but the turf survived and is now living outside Aysgarth Falls National Park Centre.

The Authority also hosted three science teachers from Wensleydale School in Leyburn on a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) work placement.

The teachers spent the week with staff across the teams to find out how the organisation looks after the National Park. They reported back that they had received good careers guidance for their students from specialist officers and that they now felt confident to talk to their students in more detail about career options with the National Park Authority, as well as bringing information about the National Park into lessons.

Over the next few months, we will work with the teachers to develop and deliver curriculum-based learning focussed on real life examples, with the aim of following up with some field study visits next spring.

The placement was organised and funded by the National STEM Learning Network.

Authority learning and engagement staff are currently trialing a new river studies fieldwork day at GCSE level - secondary schools will be able to book this day for a fee from next spring - and working with The Edge Foundation to develop Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) careers modules based on the National Park, which will be available as downloads from our website.

We continue to offer work experience opportunities to local students via their school, and have been pleased to provide placements with the ranger and communications teams this year, among others.

For more details, please contact Catherine Kemp, Education & Events Manager on learning@yorkshiredales.org.uk or 01756 751641



Kettlewell School pupils with their wildflower meadow turf

