Westmorland Dales

Landscape Partnership Scheme

Final Evaluation

Shirley Muir Associates

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WESTMORLAND DALES

Made possible with Heritage Fund

Contents

Executive Summary 2

Background 2

Achievements and Impacts 2

Lessons Learnt 5

1. Introduction 7

1.1 Background 7

1.2 The Scheme 7

1.3 Evaluation Methodology 7

2. Scheme Management 8

2.1 Project Management 8

2.2 Partnership Working 9

2.3 Community Engagement 11

2.4 Meeting the Challenges 13

3. Revealing the area's hidden heritage 15

3.1 What WDLP wanted to happen 15

3.2 What WDLP achieved 15

4. Conserving what makes the area special 22

4.1 What WDLP wanted to happen 22

4.2 What WDLP achieved 22

5. Engaging people in enjoying and benefitting from their heritage 29

5.1 What WDLP wanted to happen 29

5.2 What WDLP achieved 29

6. Sustaining the benefits of the scheme in the long-term 39

6.1 What WDLP wanted to happen 39

6.2 What WDLP achieved 39

Executive Summary

Background

This is an independent evaluation report commissioned by the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership (WDLP) and produced by Shirley Muir Associates. This summary outlines the key achievements and lessons learnt.

Achievements and Impacts

The WDLP Scheme was a five-year, £3.25m programme, managed by Friends of the Lake District (FLD) and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The WDLP scheme was very well managed and it successfully delivered its aims. The way that the Board and Management Group operated was effective, with decisions reached by consensus. The Scheme Manager was integral to productive partnership working and the successful delivery of the scheme. The dedication and enthusiasm of the WDLP team was remarked upon by partners and the community, such as this comment from a partner:

> *"It is the most brilliant staff team possible, they work really well together"*

Relationships between partners have flourished through WDLP, with close links made between organisations, some of which had previously not worked together. Some partners are already planning more projects in the area and this could be an important part of the legacy of the scheme. A member of the Management Group said:

> *"The challenge at the beginning was that the partners had not worked collectively in the area… Partners have worked as part of a team in the Westmorland Dales. It has been really productive, way more than expected".*

The engagement of Cumbria GeoConservation, in particular, provides a good demonstration of how one partner's knowledge and enthusiastic input can make a mark on the area and on other partners' interests.

Community engagement has been central to the success of the WDLP, both in terms of how people have been involved with heritage and the way that the team has helped to strengthen the community network. Community engagement is unpredictable and is often focussed around a few individuals; the team acted as a catalyst by supporting people and groups to care for their local heritage and to make links with others. It is also notable that 86% of the respondents to the online survey knew that it was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. One person commented:

> *"The National Lottery Heritage Fund is a brilliant idea. It brings communities together and passes on fantastic knowledge and skills. Thank you."*

The Covid pandemic was a significant challenge. The team developed new ways to engage the community online and resumed in-person activities when possible. Some projects were delayed or went ahead with less community engagement than planned. The move to online events was effective and over 4,000 people attended or viewed webinars.

Staff changes/lack of capacity in partner organisations was another challenge that caused delays in project delivery. Although gaps were filled and ultimately projects were delivered, there was added pressure to complete large projects late in the programme.

As a result of the WDLP scheme, there is a much better record of the heritage of the area. The archaeological surveys and excavations revealed and recorded a wealth of data. At Little Asby, for example, there was evidence of humans interacting with the environment dating back to Mesolithic times; and the survey of Great Asby Scar revealed over 1,200 records where previously there had been only 59 known sites. Surveys of dry stone walls, field barns and small-scale heritage features added to the knowledge of built heritage. Eight Local Geological Sites were reviewed; twelve new sites were added to the database; and the special qualities of the area's geology has been recognised. Surveys were undertaken of 52 species-rich grasslands and 21 river sites.

The heritage is revealed and better explained through the events programme and a range of interpretation across the scheme, including welcome panels, map boards, geology panels, a booklet pack, leaflets on walks and other topics, and creative interpretation that engaged artists and storytellers with schools and the local community. The Interpretation Plan, prepared early in the delivery phase, identified key themes and has directed implementation.

People have been engaged and have gained skills. Volunteers were engaged throughout the scheme in a variety of ways, including recording and conserving heritage and contributing to interpretive content. Altogether, there were 1,750 volunteer days contributed across the scheme and 637 training days delivered. Volunteers were generally very satisfied with their experience. They said they had learnt a range of skills and they had gained a better understanding of, and connection to, the Westmorland Dales and its heritage. They also benefited in other ways, such as meeting people, being out in the open and an active way of life. This was particularly important after Covid. Volunteers often got involved in a variety of projects and sometimes acted as a catalyst in the local community. For some the experience was life changing, such as the person who gave this feedback and then went on to work as a trainee field archaeologist:

> *"More than anything else, the two weeks over two seasons I've spent excavating on Little Asby has inspired me towards some life changing decisions to get more involved in archaeology – so, thank you!"*

The apprenticeship scheme was seen as a great success. The apprentices acted as ambassadors for WDLP; and the work that they did was appreciated by partners and local communities alike. Eight people completed the apprenticeship, six of whom are now in employment and one is in full-time education. One apprentice summed up their experience as follows:

> *"Since the apprenticeship, I have never looked back. I love my job. The apprenticeship was really successful and the best route in for my career."*

Key features of the built heritage are in better condition. Major conservation and restoration work was carried out at Smardale lime kilns, a Scheduled Ancient Monument previously identified as at risk. Two field barns were restored, dry stone walls were repaired and three other heritage features were restored by local groups who applied for WDLP Love Your Landscape grants.

Key features of the natural heritage are in better condition, with habitat restoration focussed on grassland, river corridors and woodland creation. The output targets were well exceeded, with over 33 hectares of habitat restored in total.

Landowners and farmers have been engaged, working with partners through management agreements to create and maintain habitat improvements. The Farmer Network has extended its work in the area and will continue to work with farmers to maintain their sustainability in future. The *Our Common Heritage* oral history project and exhibition made an extra effort to engage farmers, some of whom were hard-to-reach by usual methods, in revealing and celebrating the heritage of the commons.

More people have experienced and learnt about the heritage of the Westmorland Dales. There were more than 8,000 attendances across 263 events, which is impressive given that Covid affected two of the five years of the scheme delivery. Feedback from events and an online survey shows that people enjoyed their experience and that they learnt about the area's natural and cultural heritage, such as:

> *"The activities have allowed me to extend my passion in archaeology and history within the Westmorland Dales."*

> *"It has deepened my understanding of the area, its heritage and wildlife."*

Young people were engaged in creative education and interpretation through projects with nine primary schools and four secondary schools and in other activities outside school. Primary headteachers were very positive about their experience, commenting in particular that it had been very beneficial for small and isolated rural schools, such as:

> *"There has been variety, a wide range of expertise and experiences for the children. It could affect the children's future decisions."*

The WDLP scheme has helped establish a sense of place for the Westmorland Dales. Surveys and interviews showed that most people feel that the profile of the Westmorland Dales has increased as a result of WDLP, although there remains a concern among some that a significant increase in visitor numbers could affect its special qualities. This is summed up well by one comment:

> *"It's good that we now have a geographic identity - it makes it much easier to promote the area to visitors and to describe it to them. The visitors who come are of a good sort and they fit in. It's a good thing that more people are coming to visit and for the right reasons. Our economy needs the visitors."*

There was a strong case made for the WDLP scheme to bring the knowledge and management of the recently designated Westmorland Dales area up to the same standard as the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The evaluation shows that it has largely achieved this aim, reflected in this comment from a WDLP Board member:

> *"Thanks to the NLHF, the Westmorland Dales is up to speed with the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park".*

There is a great opportunity to embed the future management of the Westmorland Dales and partnership working within the new Yorkshire Dales Management Plan, currently under revision.

Lessons Learnt

The recruitment process was thorough and resulted in good appointments of the WDLP team, which has been effective and has provided good continuity throughout the programme.

There was good co-ordination through the Management Group between the Lead Organisation (FLD) and Accountable Body (YDNPA). However, it was noted that having one organisation with both roles would have avoided some organisational complications. The Lead Organisation is a relatively small organisation, which limited the support it could provide to the WDLP team and its activities.

There was scope for more natural heritage projects to be included in the scheme, but the lack of staff resources in partner organisations in the development phase seems to have been a key limiting factor. There was also a missed opportunity to map the habitat improvements as proposed and achieved. It could help to plan and demonstrate whether there is improved habitat connectivity and, therefore, increased landscape resilience.

The task to record the archaeological finds on the Historic Environment Record is challenging because of the wealth of archaeology uncovered, compounded by delays caused by Covid and staff changes and by a change in the database used. A plan is in place to complete the task over the final months of the scheme.

There could have been better volunteer co-ordination within the WDLP team if one person had been given the overall responsibility for the volunteers. However, this did not have a significant impact on what was a very successful volunteering programme.

Adaptability was key to addressing the challenges, particularly the Covid pandemic and staff capacity or changes in partner organisations. Ultimately, however, these challenges led to delays in some projects, leading to further difficulties in managing the programme.

There are risks associated with delivering large capital projects very late in the scheme. There was an understandable push to complete two projects (the planned sculpture of a bank engine at Tebay roundabout and the river restoration at Bowber Head) in the final few months, in order to meet full programme spend and to attract match funding. This led to added pressure on staff and uncertainty about budgetary issues and project completion on time.

The restoration of the built heritage did not achieve all of its targets for several reasons. The original plans were ambitious, inflation led to substantially increased costs, and the budget for Smardale lime kilns almost doubled when detailed surveys revealed that more work was required than had been costed. Increases between cost estimates in the development stage and detailed costs in the delivery stage, when work is tendered, often causes a challenge for projects, especially for major capital works.

Partners could have engaged better in co-ordinating and promoting the events programme and could have provided more feedback from their event participants and volunteers. However, the wealth of participant feedback collected and collated by the WDLP team provided good evidence to show that the events programme was well received.

The impact of the WDLP scheme on tourism could not be measured for a number of reasons. The area has very few honeypot sites where reliable visitor surveys can be carried out; and

baseline surveys were cancelled due to Covid. The pandemic had an immense effect on tourism, making it impossible to identify the impact of WDLP. The engagement of local tourism businesses was delayed until very late in the scheme, so that it has not been possible to measure the impact of their involvement.

It is recommended that the WDLP encourages partners and community groups to meaningfully engage in the consultation for the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan. The future management of the area will be guided by the plan and it is an important part of the WDLP legacy. Consultation could include organising specific workshops for the Board, WDLP partners and/or community groups and using the WDLP contact database to promote consultation opportunities.

There is an opportunity to continue some Westmorland Dales activities, such as the programme of guided walks that the Scheme Manager has proposed to lead as a volunteer. Partners accepted that when the WDLP scheme ends there will inevitably be a significant drop in activities, but they perhaps missed an opportunity to plan how they could better co-ordinate their activities to sustain some of the successes of the Scheme.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This independent evaluation report was commissioned by the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership (WDLP) and produced by Shirley Muir Associates. Shirley worked closely with the WDLP team throughout the programme to first prepare an Evaluation Plan and to establish effective methods for monitoring and evaluation. The final evaluation methodology is described in section 1.3 below, which shows how views were collated and analysed. The final evaluation assesses how far the scheme achieved its original objectives and highlights lessons learnt.

1.2 The Scheme

The vision of the WDLP scheme is to:

> ***"Unlock and reveal the hidden heritage of the Westmorland Dales, enabling more people to connect with, enjoy and benefit from this inspirational landscape."***

It is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The scheme has four objectives:

- Revealing the area's hidden heritage;
- Conserving what makes the area special;
- Engaging people in enjoying and benefitting from their heritage; and
- Sustaining the benefits of the scheme in the long-term.

It was managed by Friends of the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority; and the other delivery partners were: Cumbria GeoConservation, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Eden Rivers Trust, Lune Rivers Trust, The Farmer Network, Woodland Trust and Electricity North West. The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust provided significant match funding for the scheme. These and other partners were engaged in the Board, providing guidance and direction. There were 21 projects, later increased to 22, grouped into three areas of work relating to the themes of natural heritage, cultural heritage and connecting heritage. They were delivered by the WDLP team and partner organisations working with landowners, volunteers, community groups and others.

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

An Evaluation Plan was prepared at the start of the scheme, which set out the four objectives, the outputs and outcomes they were intended to achieve and the methods for measuring them. An Interim Evaluation was conducted in early 2022, which identified that the Scheme had progressed well, despite the challenge of the Covid pandemic, and made some minor recommendations to assist with the remainder of the Scheme delivery. This Final Evaluation builds on the information and analysis gathered at the interim stage and, in order to gather further evidence, the following methods were used:

- Review of documents, including progress reports to the Board, Management Group and NLHF; finance reports, risk register and end of project reports
- Evaluation exercises at Board and Management Group meetings
- Evaluation exercise with the WDLP team
- Interviews and meetings with the scheme manager

- Individual interviews with eight people representing the team, partner project leads and local communities
- Interviews with three school head teachers
- Informal interviews with a range of attendees at the Westmorland Dales Day in July and the WDLP Celebration Event in September 2023
- Review and analysis of participant feedback from events and webinars
- Online survey of participants
- Online survey of volunteers
- Review of the draft evaluation report with the WDLP Management Group and Board

The evaluation process has been iterative, beginning in the development phase and working with the WDLP team throughout the delivery to develop an appropriate and effective methodology.

2. Scheme Management

2.1 Project Management

The WDLP scheme was very well managed, demonstrated by research conducted for both the Interim and Final Evaluations; and by the successful delivery of the programme. The way that the Board and Management Group operated was effective, with decisions reached by consensus, which is a good model for a partnership.

The split between the Lead Organisation (Friends of the Lake District) and Accountable Body (Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority) did not cause significant problems, although the Management Group felt that it would have been a lot simpler if it had been the same organisation. It resulted in some practical issues, such as increased costs for IT systems and the need for complicated back office software to allow two systems to work together while keeping them separate. The year-end process was also described as 'problematic'; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) is the Accountable Body but the Scheme Manager is not accountable to YDNPA, nor are the scheme finances subject to the same management processes and controls.

> *Lesson learnt: The division of responsibility between the Lead Organisation (FLD) and Accountable Body (YDNPA) has been managed well through the Management Group. However, there is a general consensus that having one organisation with both roles would have removed some organisational complications, such as IT and financial processes.*

It was noted that while the YDNPA brought security and experience, the area's residents were not familiar with its operation, so the scheme was seen as "a good way in" for the Authority. This was supported elsewhere in the evaluation, such as in the online survey and informal interviews, where it was noted that some local people had initially been sceptical about being part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, but that now they could see the benefits.

The YDNPA provided significant match funding for the scheme and considerable staff support from a range of disciplines, including historic environment, countryside management, legal and rights of way, which was not supported directly by the NLHF grant. It took over the delivery of the *Distinctly Westmorland Dales* project and supported many other projects with staff input and expertise. In return, as YDNPA commented, the WDLP has been hugely beneficial toward its purposes and duty.

The WDLP scheme was delivered by the partnership, rather than being strongly led by either FLD or YDNPA. However, one area identified in the evaluation that could have been more robust was the role of the Lead Organisation in supporting the WDLP staff team and having a presence at events. FLD is a small organisation whose staff resources are limited and whose management structure did not lend itself well to employing and managing a separate team. There was also some work required at the start by the WDLP team to establish a robust set of policies, procedures and guidelines for engaging volunteers. FLD did not lead on any of the projects – the oral history project that they had planned to deliver was moved to the WDLP team due to lack of staff time and the delay caused by Covid. Their limited staff resources meant there was a lack of FLD presence at events, which the WDLP team felt was disappointing. The team did, however, appreciate the promotion and publicity activities provided by the Communications Officer seconded from FLD for one day per week.

Lesson learnt: The Lead Organisation is a relatively small organisation, which limited the support it could provide to the WDLP team and its activities.

The Scheme Manager successfully managed the development and delivery of the scheme and provided a central role and good communications with the Management Group and Board. His calm and effective approach was apparent throughout the delivery and the evaluation; and was commented on positively by members of the Board and Management Group. People involved in his recruitment said that *"they got the right person from the start"* and that he *"has taken a lot of stress from them".* During interviews with project leads in partner organisations, almost everyone referred to good communications and to receiving good support when required from the Scheme Manager and the WDLP team.

The team was described as positive and approachable during interviews with partners and community groups. Partners' comments included that it is the "*most brilliant staff team possible, they work really well together"* and "*it is a joy to work with the team"*.

Comments from community and heritage groups include, *"The team was brilliant"; "The team is approachable and helpful";* and *"It was good to have the team based in the community".*

Lesson learnt: The time and effort taken in the recruitment process before the start of the WDLP was key to appointing an effective Scheme Manager, who has been integral to the successful delivery of the programme. The same applies to the appointment of the WDLP team, who have been consistent and have provided good continuity throughout the programme.

2.2 Partnership Working

The Board and Management Group have worked effectively and partnership working has developed further as a result. A Management Group member commented that,

"The reason it has worked is down to long-term relationships, trust and understanding, honesty and openness".

Another commented on how the partnership had developed to deliver the WDLP scheme:

"The challenge at the beginning was that the partners had not worked collectively in the area. Twenty-two projects is a lot to deliver. Partners have worked as part of a team in the Westmorland Dales. It has been really productive, way more than expected".

Consultation with project leads in partner organisations revealed that they feel part of a genuine partnership.

One of the aims of the WDLP scheme was to bring the recently designated area up to the same standard as the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park or, as a Board member described it, to *"bring it to life"*. The YDNPA did not have extra resources for the larger area but a Board member commented that now, *"thanks to NLHF, the Westmorland Dales is up to speed with the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park"*.

The role of the YDNPA has been important in developing and delivering the scheme and will continue to be important in delivering its legacy. It was noted in the Board meeting that the WDLP has raised the profile of the Westmorland Dales *within the Authority*, for example with officers and members who were previously unfamiliar with it. It has also raised the profile of partners in the area. The YDNPA needed to establish itself in the area and, through the WDLP, it has made links with partners there, like Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT), Eden Rivers Trust (ERT) and Cumbria GeoConservation. The Management Plan for the Yorkshire Dales National Park is delivered through a partnership and a new Management Plan is currently being prepared. This is an opportunity for the partners in WDLP to ensure that their priorities for the area and those identified through the scheme are embedded in the future plan (see Section 6.2.1 on legacy).

Partners also commented that they have developed closer working relationships with others; for example, ERT said it now has a different relationship with YDNPA and FLD as a result of the scheme and is planning another project in the Westmorland Dales area.

The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) has been a valuable partner in terms building relationships and in providing significant match funding. Its representative highlighted the value it has received in return in an increased profile in the newly designated area of the National Park.

The Lune Rivers Trust joined during the delivery phase and has become a valued partner, demonstrating that Landscape Partnerships have the ability to evolve.

While most members of the Board and Management Group were satisfied with the balance of the partnership, there were two issues raised in the interim evaluation that largely relate back to the design of the scheme. One was whether the natural environment was under-represented in the scheme and the other was whether more could have been done to engage farmers.

Natural heritage projects were few in number – only five (now six with the addition of the Lune Rivers Trust) compared to ten for cultural heritage – but the budget is broadly in balance between the three themes (natural, cultural and connecting heritage). Discussions with partners revealed that it was mainly due to the opportunities and potential projects that were put forward at the development stage. For example, Natural England did not develop any specific projects for delivery. The reasons for this appear to be the lack of staff time to engage in the development stage and the changing nature of farm subsidies at that time.

Lesson learnt: Cultural heritage projects have achieved the WDLP aim to bring the area up to a similar status with the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park in terms of archaeological data. There was scope for more natural heritage projects in the scheme, but this was limited in the development phase by the lack of staff resources and, therefore, input from relevant organisations.

Some Board members, would have liked to see more support for, and engagement with, farmers in the scheme in order to help address a perceived confrontation between countryside conservation and farming. However, the primary aim of this scheme is to protect heritage and there are other, more appropriate mechanisms, for supporting agri-environment practices. Farming conservation interests were represented in the WDLP through The Farmer Network, which managed the *Sustaining Farming* project. The Chairman of the Board was successful in engaging the CLA and the National Farmers Union on the Board. The farming community was involved in many of the projects including an exploration of the intangible farming culture of the area and its future through the *Our Common Heritage* project; and the field barns and dry stone walls projects helped to conserve farming heritage.

2.3 Community Engagement

Partnership working has extended very well into the wider community. The success of the events programme in engaging people in heritage is explored in more detail in Section 5, but it is also clear that WDLP has had a positive impact on developing the community network in the Westmorland Dales. It was demonstrated in evaluation interviews, some of which were formally arranged with community and heritage group representatives, while others took place informally at the Westmorland Dales Day and the Celebration Event. All were overwhelmingly positive and the key points raised include that:

- Groups have achieved things they could not have done without the support received from WDLP, both in terms of funding and advice
- Groups and individuals have also made links with other groups and organisations to achieve more than they could do themselves
- Groups have been strengthened by their involvement
- Links made with other groups can last beyond the lifetime of the scheme
- WDLP has raised awareness of how special the area is among the community
- WDLP has highlighted the links and co-dependence between different aspects of the landscape and heritage
- It has responded to the needs and priorities of the community
- Local communities have seen the benefits

It was evident that the WDLP has been a catalyst among the local community, where engagement in one project has led to others. The enthusiasm of groups and individuals has been garnered and supported by WDLP, leading to results on the ground and changes in some communities. A good example is Keith Cooper, a local resident of Great Asby, and what he describes as 'the ripple-out effect', as shown in the case study below.

Lesson learnt: The way that the WDLP team has helped to grow a stronger community network has been through identifying and responding to opportunities, as well as providing events and activities. Community engagement is unpredictable and is often focussed around a few individuals; the team has been adaptable; it has supported people and groups to care for their local heritage and to make links with others.

The Ripple-out Effect

Keith Cooper has been involved in WDLP in a number of ways and has made connections through the scheme that have added value to his own experience and to that of the community. He described WDLP as providing "*the opportunity to pursue the investigation of the local history and landscape in a structured way and a way of engaging with other people*".

He is the secretary of the Lunesdale Archaeological Society and took part in the archaeology work at Little Asby. He was also engaged in the small-scale heritage features survey and the dry stone wall survey in Asby Parish with volunteers, carrying out fieldwork and document research. He had already digitised the Tithe Map and one of the Manor Court books for a previous project on field names, which made the document research easier. Keith commented that the people who did the dry stone wall survey now look at the landscape through entirely different eyes, describing it as "a ripple-out effect". He also commented on people's enthusiasm and delight at the discovery of the arrowhead at Little Asby Common.

Keith was inspired by a WDLP webinar, presented by Drew Woodward of the Crosby Ravensworth Tree Group. He decided to try to set up a tree group for Asby and organised an inaugural meeting, which was attended by between 40 and 50 people. The late Dave Freak, first Chair of Asby Tree Group, submitted a successful Love Your Landscape grant application to WDLP to buy tools and materials, such as tree guards. Volunteers planted 200 trees and 0.5km of hedgerow in the first year and 600 trees and 2km hedgerow in the second, in conjunction with three local landowners. They are also seeking funding to create footpaths in one woodland area, as well as a bushcraft area and an outdoor classroom for the local school that will double up as an outdoor worship area for the local church. The plan was developed by a member of the new tree group, who is an ex-tree officer from Kent.

Keith said that the Asby Tree Group would not have happened without WDLP.

There were more links to come. Keith was involved in the traditional farm buildings survey, as part of a team of six members of Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group, each performing different tasks. They completed the survey of more than thirty barns in Asby Parish and then began in Crosby Ravensworth, but it was more difficult to get landowner permission there. He asked for advice from Drew Woodward on which landowners to contact first and that led in turn to other landowners having the confidence in the project to give their permission for surveys to be undertaken – another ripple-out effect.

It is this engagement with landowners and managers that Keith hopes to foster through the Asby Tree Group. He feels that there can be a disconnect between the farming community and local residents, many of whom are 'incomers'. This can be a problem when it is the former who manage the land and the latter who want to plant trees. He has brought the two elements together in the planting schemes and hopes that the tree group will continue to provide some "community glue".

Keith believes that there has been a greater coming together across the Westmorland Dales, in settings such as the Annual Landscape Forum. He also said that for a lot of people who engaged with the environment in the past as individuals, such as through walking or birdwatching, WDLP provided a very new way to engage with the wider landscape in the company of others.

2.4 Meeting the Challenges

There have been significant challenges affecting the delivery of projects or the scheme as a whole, including the Covid-19 pandemic, staff changes, inflation and the change from Cumbria County Council to Westmorland & Furness Council and Cumberland Council. This section explores the two key challenges of Covid and staff changes, their effects and how they were addressed.

2.4.1 The Covid-19 Pandemic

Community engagement was a key part of the scheme but it was halted by the pandemic in 2020, just as it was beginning to grow. Events and activities were resumed as restrictions were eased in early 2021, but at first they were outdoors and of a smaller scale; and some volunteers and members of the public were unable or unwilling to return. The WDLP team said that it was a difficult balance between providing events and opportunities that people wanted and acting responsibly for public safety under frequently changing guidance. There was a successful move in the meantime to host webinars online, which were very popular, and more in-person events were held in 2021, but it was not until the 2022 programme that the full level of engagement could be realised.

While the move to webinars for events was successful, there is a limit to what can be achieved with the community online. For example, the Interpretation Officer said that she had attempted to consult communities online but it had not proved to be a worthwhile way of engaging with them.

Cultural heritage projects were postponed and Covid-19 also impacted on the delivery of projects in other ways. Contractors were working under restrictions and a lot of work was pushed back, which meant that major capital works, such as the river and lime kilns restoration and the interpretation, were delayed until very late in the delivery stage. Other time constraints, such as ecological requirements and the weather and site conditions, added to the risk that the projects may not be completed in time. For the river restoration work, this also had a significant implication for the availability of match funding. With careful management and some good fortune with the weather, those works are being completed, but there was added pressure on the team toward the end of the scheme.

Although the risk of a pandemic was not foreseen, one member of the Board commented that it brought to life the importance of a risk register. The Board said that it and the team had been adaptable and were able to successfully manage the effects of the Covid pandemic.

In summary, events were moved online and in-person events resumed as and when possible; projects were implemented later than planned and/or went ahead with less community engagement than intended; and overall the scheme delivered its planned outputs.

2.4.2 Staff Changes and Capacity

Staff changes in partner organisations impacted on project delivery in various ways. A significant delay to the *Monuments at Risk* project was caused by the change of the Senior Historic Environment Officer at YDNPA. The post was unoccupied for five months, which meant that the project could not go ahead, but it also led to pressures on the team of three people in historic environment at YDNPA, who had to cover other aspects of the post during that time. It was

difficult for staff to devote the time needed to deliver WDLP scheme projects, including *Digging the Past* and *Gamelands Stone Circle*, which had already been impacted by the Covid pandemic.

There is a natural turnover of staff in any organisation and this can have a cumulative effect on a partnership scheme. The Woodland Trust (WT) lost a staff role which was not replaced, which would have delivered the community engagement element of their project. Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT) lost the member of staff who was delivering the wildflower meadow project, leading to a five-month gap, but fortunately most of this was over the winter season so the project was able catch up.

At Eden Rivers Trust (ERT) there were two changes of project manager for *Changing the Course, Slowing the Flow*. It was a large, complex project with costs and designs produced in the development phase, in consultation with local landowners. Subsequently, new staff were initially not as familiar with the way the project was designed, costed and funded and also had to manage other factors that led to difficulties and delays in delivery (see section 4.2.1). The lack of continuity from start to finish can be a problem for an individual project, whose effect may be felt across several projects in a Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Staff capacity at Eden District Council to deliver the *Distinctly Westmorland Dales* project became an issue when Council members prioritised Covid-19 recovery. YDNPA stepped in to deliver the project, although it was delayed to the latter stages of the project, so it has not been possible to undertake all that was planned or to evaluate its effect on tourism.

Similarly, staff capacity at FLD to deliver the *Our Common Heritage* oral history project, again combined with the impacts of the pandemic, led to the decision to move the project management responsibility to the WDLP team's Cultural Heritage Officer and later to the Interpretation Officer. It was mentioned by several interviewees that this project became huge; it was noted that it added to an already busy work programme for the officers and that ultimately the whole of the WDLP team became involved.

The WDLP team was fairly consistent except for a gap in the WDLP Interpretation Officer post for a large part of 2020. She did, however, prepare a detailed Interpretation Plan before she left, which guided future work. The Cultural Heritage Officer left in July 2023, a few months before the end of the scheme, to take up another post. She was subsequently contracted to complete some additional work for the scheme after she left, including writing a summary report for the *Little Asby through the Keyhole* project and organising a final event in October 2023.

The Apprentice Team worked as planned – even throughout the Covid pandemic – until the Apprentice Supervisor left in spring 2022. Her role was taken over by the YDNPA Access Ranger for the remaining months, supported by the wider ranger team, which enabled the successful completion of the second tranche of apprenticeships, ending in March 2023.

Lesson learnt: The significant challenges were the Covid pandemic and staff capacity or changes in partner organisations. Adaptability was the key to meeting both challenges. For Covid, new ways of delivering events and activities were developed. In order to address staff shortages, different approaches were taken according to the circumstances; for example advertising the role or reallocating some responsibilities to partners or other members of the team. Ultimately, however, both challenges led to delays in some projects, leading to further difficulties that had to be managed late in the scheme.

3. Revealing the area's hidden heritage

3.1 What WDLP wanted to happen

The planned WDLP outcomes for this aim are that:

- ***There is a better record of the heritage of the area.***
- ***People are engaged in surveying and recording the area's heritage and have gained skills and volunteered time.***
- ***There is an enlarged pool of skilled volunteers who are able to continue after the scheme ends.***

The relevant NLHF outcomes are:

- ***Heritage is identified and better explained.***
- ***People have developed skills.***

3.2 What WDLP achieved

One of the driving forces behind the development of the WDLP scheme was to bring the knowledge and understanding of the area's heritage up to a similar standard to that of the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It has achieved the following key outputs through the scheme:

- Over 2,100 archaeological and built heritage features surveyed
- 50 archaeological trenches and pits excavated
- 12 new local geological sites designated
- 73 wildlife sites surveyed
- 61 booklets, leaflets and panels produced

Those outputs, along with further details provided below, demonstrate that the planned outcomes have been met: there is ***a better record of the heritage of the area*** and ***heritage has been identified and is better explained***.

Section 3.2.6 below highlights how volunteers were engaged in *'Revealing the area's hidden heritage'*; showing how people have been ***engaged in surveying and recording the area's heritage and have gained skills and volunteered time.*** Wider community engagement is described later in section 5, *'Engaging people in enjoying and benefitting from their heritage'*.

3.2.1 A better record – archaeology

There were five archaeological surveys or excavations involving volunteers at Great Asby Scar, Little Asby Common, Ravenstonedale, Gamelands Stone Circle and Pendragon Castle.

The Great Asby Scar archaeological landscape survey engaged and trained 27 volunteers over 30 survey days and also involved the WDLP apprentices. It revealed over 1,200 records where previously there had been only 59 known sites on the 11km^2 area of upland rough grazing and limestone pavement. It revealed evidence of human activity dating back to Bronze Age burial mounds; settlements through the Iron Age and Romano-British period; subsequent agricultural common land and associated buildings; and field enclosure in the 19th century.

The *Little Asby through the Keyhole* project engaged 59 volunteers and a local school in two seasons of archaeological excavations on Little Asby Common in 2021 and 2022, on sites of interest identified from previous surveys commissioned by FLD. The excavations revealed the

impact of people on the environment dating back to the Mesolithic period, with increased activity from the Neolithic era onwards, including pastoral and arable farming. Finds included an arrowhead and a fragment of a Langdale axe head. A peat core was taken at Sunbiggin Tarn and pollen analysis showed the development of arable farming from the Neolithic period through the Bronze Age.

Digging the Past focussed on Ravenstonedale, where around 26 test pits were dug in the summer of 2022, engaging volunteers and local residents in discovering more about the village's past. Medieval finds were recovered from 18 of the pits, the earliest from the 12th Century, supporting other evidence to suggest it was founded at this time.

At Pendragon Castle, as part of the wider *Monuments at Risk* project, an archaeological excavation was undertaken on a suspected sow kiln. It was thought to be a large size for this type of kiln and assumed to be part of construction and restoration works at the castle in the 1660s. The excavation revealed that the depression in the earthwork was indeed a sow kiln dating from the 12th century when the castle was first built.

Lessons learnt: The archaeological surveys and excavations were very effective in adding to the heritage record, partly because the records in the area had previously been scant (which was one of the driving forces behind the development of the WDLP scheme) and partly because the surveys were directed by previous findings.

The wealth of archaeology uncovered led to a huge task to add all of the new records to the Historic Environment Record (HER). This was compounded by delays caused by Covid and staff changes and by a change in the database used (from HBSMR to HEROS). In theory, more staff time should have been built into the projects for the task, but it is difficult to see how that could work in practice when other, more practical or urgent work inevitably gets prioritised. There is a proposal currently under consideration for a short contract for the YDNPA to employ the former WDLP Interpretation Officer to complete the record in the final months of the scheme.

3.2.2 A better record – built heritage

A successful programme of surveys carried out by trained volunteers revealed a wealth of information about dry stone walls, traditional farm buildings and small-scale heritage features.

A survey of 37 dry stone walls was undertaken by trained volunteers under the direction of Dr David Johnson in the Parish of Asby in the spring and early summer of 2022. This revealed five distinct types of wall, the earliest dating back to pre-conquest and early monastic times, through to the parliamentary enclosures of the 19th century. The survey was one of the most detailed of its kind; it helped to identify walls for conservation work and led to a publication setting it in a wider context.

A survey of traditional farm buildings by 35 trained volunteers was undertaken from 2019 to 2023, including simple surveys from Public Rights of Way and more detailed, measured surveys where access was permitted. In total 223 buildings were recorded, including field and bank barns, as well as more unusual buildings, such as a hogg-house and a hennery-piggery.

A survey of the small-scale heritage features of ten settlements was undertaken by local volunteers, led by the Cultural Heritage Trainee in 2021 and 2022. This included the recording of

features ranging from churn stands and gate stoops to telephone and post boxes. It proved to be an effective way of engaging people in local heritage.

Lesson learnt: The surveys of dry stone walls, traditional farm buildings and small-scale heritage features also added substantially to the heritage records. They were each more extensive than originally thought, leading to more pressure on staff to manage the process and the volunteers.

3.2.3 A better record – geology

The *Revealing the Foundations* project has designated 12 new Local Geological sites, which have been added to the Cumbria Biodiversity Database Centre (CBDC) website, and reviewed the eight existing sites. The geology of the area is now shown on one map, having previously been mapped on four separate geological sheets. A record has been made of the special qualities of the area's geology. For example, geological terminology uses many local names; the international time division of Carboniferous Limestone is known as the Asbian, named after Great Asby.

Fourteen factsheets have been produced covering publicly accessible existing and new sites. Through involvement in the scheme, members of Cumbria GeoConservation have also produced three additional walk leaflets, plus one for landowners, explaining how Local Geological Sites may be considered as Public Assets. People were encouraged to learn more about geological sites through guided walks as part of the Westmorland Dales events programme and by taking part in four self-guided geo-trail routes and ten new Geocaches (or Earthcaches).

Cumbria GeoConservation provided a summary of the activity logged at the ten Earthcaches, totalling 141 logs across the ten sites over the two years to July 2023. Comments from participants include:

"Really enjoy these Earthcaches as they broaden our knowledge and test our powers of observation."

"Wow! Great things to see here. Learnt a lot with the geokids."

"Couldn't believe our luck to find we were going past this Earthcache. We absolutely had to stop to have a look and learn about limestone pavements. Wow!"

The publication of the geology book *Revealing the Foundations* will provide a lasting legacy of the geology project. Members of Cumbria GeoConservation will continue to have an input into the geology of the Westmorland Dales and will contribute articles to learned geological journals to disseminate information and provoke wider interest.

Lesson learnt: The active involvement of Cumbria GeoConservation in the WDLP scheme has been key to the success of this element and is also a demonstration of how the knowledge and enthusiasm of a particular partner can prompt wider action and co-operation, as noted by several other partners in the scheme. It has made its mark on the geology of the area and on other partners' interests.

3.2.4 A better record – wildlife

In total there were 73 wildlife sites surveyed against a target of 40. CWT has surveyed 52 species-rich grasslands (mainly meadows) and the Lune Rivers Trust carried out surveys at 21 sites, mainly electro-fishing and one White clawed crayfish survey.

The CWT surveys were the first step to inform the meadow management and improvement described in section 4 below, as well as reviewing sites previously restored and planning sites for future work that will continue beyond the lifetime of the WDLP scheme. They have been added to the CBDC.

3.2.5 Interpretation

This objective is not only about recording but also revealing and interpreting the heritage for local residents and visitors to understand and enjoy. Interpretation has been a project in its own right; it was inherent in the events programme; and it underpinned all of the other projects to a greater or lesser extent.

The interpretation project included:

- 8 welcome panels at key locations in the area, e.g. Kirkby Stephen Railway Station
- New 'map boards' in 7 villages
- 2 geology panels at Smardale
- A Welcome leaflet for the Westmorland Dales
- A 'Delve into the Westmorland Dales' booklet pack focusing on geology, churches, legends and the farming landscape
- Creative interpretation, including sounds of the Westmorland Dales and retelling legends with primary schools and a local storyteller
- Numerous heritage walks and 25 webinars (reported in section 5: *Engaging People)*

The way that interpretation has reinforced other projects varies from, for example, walks leaflets and the factsheets for the geology sites, to significant input to the *Our Common Heritage* oral history project. *Our Common Heritage* was successful in engaging the older farming community in recording their memories and stories from the past. The 28 interviews captured the significance of common land to the farming and landscape heritage; and are held in Kendal Archive. It resulted in a popular travelling exhibition, which has been to Shap, Appleby and is now at Rheged. Extra effort was made to contact and engage farmers who were hard-to-reach by the usual methods.

> *Lesson learnt: The range of written and active interpretation across all of the projects and the scheme as a whole has helped to bring the heritage of the Westmorland Dales to life. The Interpretation Plan, prepared early in the delivery phase, identified key themes and has directed implementation.*

An arts project evolved through a long period of consultation that was interrupted by Covid. A sculpture of a bank engine has been agreed for installation on the roundabout at Tebay, to celebrate the area's railway heritage and highlight it for visitors to the area. Delays caused through the consultation procedure and the requirements for planning and highways permission and, currently, a traffic management statement, resulted in capital works being planned very late in the scheme. It is added pressure for the staff as the scheme is drawing to a close; and options for ensuring its completion are still under consideration.

Lesson learnt: The proposed sculpture of a bank engine at Tebay roundabout has been delayed, leaving it very late to be planning a large capital project and adding pressure to the work programme as the scheme is reaching its conclusion.

3.2.6 People are engaged and have gained skills

Volunteers were engaged and trained throughout the scheme with the WDLP team and partners. They contributed to the success of surveying and recording, including archaeology, built heritage and wildlife, and were also engaged in conserving heritage and inputting to interpretation. Altogether, there were **1,750 volunteer days** contributed across the scheme and **637 training days** delivered. Volunteering opportunities included:

- **Surveys:** including wildflowers and grasses, walks, bumblebees, traditional farm buildings, walls, interpretation, archaeology, geology and heritage features
- **Archaeological excavations:** Little Asby Common and test pits at Ravenstonedale
- **Oral heritage interviews and transcriptions:** interviews with famers
- **Interpretation:** providing inputs for leaflets, information boards, exhibitions and publicity
- **Conservation, habitat restoration and access work:** tree, hedge and wildflower planting, raking verges, hedge laying and improving footpaths
- **Events**: walks, talks and displays

The Interim Evaluation assessed the volunteer feedback from the Great Asby Scar survey and Little Asby Common excavation. It concluded that:

> There was a high level of volunteer satisfaction with the event organisation and the knowledge and skills they had gained. The volunteers **learnt a range of skills and techniques**; some were new to archaeological excavation and others were building on existing skills. Most **people enjoyed meeting other volunteers and experts** and the way that they worked together. **Everyone gained a better understanding of, and connection to, the Westmorland Dales and its heritage**.
>
> There was a range of comments about what people enjoyed most. A common thread was meeting other volunteers and experts and there were comments about the activities undertaken, for example,
>
> *"Excavating, as ever, but also seeing a trench through from de-turfing to backfilling – and seeing the flint arrow-head!"*
>
> There were also comments about interpreting the history of the site, such as,
>
> *"Making sense of the hidden history of the landscape"*,

A survey was carried out for the final evaluation that was answered by 17 volunteers; a mix of people who had done archaeological surveys and excavations; surveys of barns, dry stone walls, small-scale heritage features or wildflowers; oral histories; and/or geology activities. The results showed that:

- The **volunteers' knowledge and understanding had increased**; with most (76%) saying it had increased 'a lot'.
- **Their skills had increased**; with just over half said their skills had increased 'a lot'.

- **People gained other benefits** from their engagement, particularly meeting/chatting to other people; fresh air/being out in the open; and an active way of life/exercise. This was seen as particularly important after Covid.

A question was asked in the volunteer survey to test whether their participation would lead to further engagement with other heritage organisations. Of the fourteen people who answered the question, only one said they were not sure; others said that they already are involved, or will become involved, in volunteering with other heritage organisations.

It was a life changing experience for at least one of the volunteers. He gave the following feedback after his engagement in the 'Little Asby through the Keyhole' project:

> *"More than anything else, the two weeks over two seasons I've spent excavating on Little Asby has inspired me towards some life changing decisions to get more involved in archaeology – so, thank you!"*

He later got in touch with the Cultural Heritage Officer to say:

> *"I also wanted to mention that for the past three months I have been working as a trainee field archaeologist for a company based down here in Devon, and to thank you, because before the Little Asby TTK excavations in 2021/22 I had never even picked up a trowel before. It was largely those two weeks spent in the Westmorland Dales, plus the people that I met, that persuaded me down the course I am now on - I'm loving the work, and looking forward to seeing where it all takes me!"*

In summary, the archaeological and other survey projects were successful in engaging and training volunteers, despite the delays and restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic. Some projects were delayed and some went ahead with fewer people.

> *Lessons learnt: Volunteering has been a successful aspect of the WDLP scheme, although it has added to the team's workload. Volunteers were engaged in different projects and it was not clear who had overall responsibility for volunteers; and there could have been better co-ordination within the team.*

Volunteers often got involved in a variety of projects and sometimes acted as a catalyst in the local community. A good example of community engagement and the links between projects was provided by Ravenstonedale Parish History Group, as follows.

Ravenstonedale Parish History Group

The involvement of the Ravenstonedale Parish History Group with WDLP is a good example of how community engagement grew locally, leading to a stronger local identity and more links with other activities and groups. A member of the group explained more about their engagement during an interview for the evaluation.

The History Group successfully applied for a WDLP Love Your Landscape grant to improve the storage of the Parish Archives in their care in the former chapel, now Ravenstonedale Community & Heritage Centre. As a result, they were able to acquire archive-standard storage materials and monitoring equipment for relative humidity and pests, to better preserve the local archives.

Members of the group were involved in the small-scale heritage features survey, some in Ravenstonedale and some in other villages too. One member said that people learnt a lot about Ravenstonedale, discovering gate stoops, cart stops, churn-stands, hogg-holes and different type of stiles, and commented that, *"Once you see one, you can't stop looking for others".*

The 'Digging the Past' archaeological test pits in Ravestonedale were successful in engaging not only members of the History Group, but also the wider community, including landowners, tenant farmers, householders and tenants. The finds included post-medieval ceramics, green glazed pottery, iron nails, glass and some medieval finds now housed in Kendal Museum.

Also in Ravenstonedale, St Oswald's Church applied for a WDLP Love Your Landscape grant to replace the badly weathered information board about the Gilbertine monastic ruins by the Church. Members of the History Group commented on the content for the board and for two new information 'map boards' for the main villages in the Parish – Newbiggin-on-Lune and Ravenstonedale as well as the content for the booklet 'churches of the Westmorland Dales'. All of this has generated knock-on interpretation projects undertaken within the community, including refreshing printed publications in the church about the Gilbertine community and its influence in the parish and a revised history of St Oswald's Church, taking advantage of new research unearthed by members of the Parish History Group.

During the evaluation interview, the member of the Ravenstonedale Parish History Group described the WDLP as 'brilliant' and very interesting to be involved with, commenting that the WDLP team and YDNPA officers were enthusiastic and professional. She feels that the WDLP has enabled the community to implement things that it had wanted to do; it has raised awareness of how unique the area is; and it has strengthened local groups and forged links between them.

The Ravenstonedale Parish History Group is now working with the Cumbria Local History Federation to put resources online to make them available to a wider audience, including to catalogue, scan and digitise photos, something they could not have done themselves. They also have the continuing use of the equipment provided as a legacy of the WDLP oral history project.

4. Conserving what makes the area special

4.1 What WDLP wanted to happen

The planned WDLP outcomes for this aim are that:

- ***Key features of the natural and built landscape are in better condition and better managed.***
- ***Wildlife habitats are better connected and the landscape is more resilient.***
- ***People are engaged in conserving the area's heritage and have gained skills and volunteered time***
- ***Landowners and farmers are engaged in managing the landscape heritage and have gained relevant skills.***

The relevant NLHF outcomes are:

- ***Heritage is in better condition***
- ***People have developed skills***

4.2 What WDLP achieved

Using the partners' existing knowledge of key features in the natural and built landscape, augmented by the new data gathered through the scheme (described in Section 3), a series of projects was developed to conserve wildlife habitats and historic buildings and monuments. Together, they achieved the following key outputs:

- 33.2 hectares of habitat restored
- 17,628 trees planted
- 7 historic buildings and monuments conserved

4.2.1 Key features of the natural landscape are in better condition and better managed

The targets and achievements for wildlife habitat outputs are as follows:

- 26.34ha of meadow have been enhanced/restored, exceeding the target of 20ha.
- 11.3ha woodland have been created, exceeding the target of 10ha.
- 1,255m hedgerow have been restored against a target of 3,000m.
- 6,602m hedgerow have been created, exceeding the target of 1,000m.
- 2.84km of river channel have been restored/protected, exceeding the target of 2km.
- 10.0ha of riverine habitat have been restored/protected, well exceeding the target of 1ha.
- In addition to woodland planting, 7,198 trees have been planted, well exceeding the target of 1,800.
- 34 additional natural flood management measures have been implemented to date, exceeding the target of 20.

Overall, the targets for the natural landscape outputs have been exceeded. As a result, ***key features of the natural heritage, particularly grassland, woodland and river corridors, are in better condition and better managed***. The three partners – CWT, WT and ERT – are well-placed to deliver these improvements and have management agreements with landowners to try to ensure that the outcomes will be maintained in future.

The CWT focus has been on meadow restoration, through plug planting and appropriate management regimes, and engaging the public and volunteers through events including plant identification, seed collection and storage, planting and scything.

The WT was able to plant more trees than expected but without as much community engagement as had been planned, due to a staff change in the organisation.

Lesson learnt: Natural heritage conservation projects have been successful and partners have increased their outputs where possible, such as a greater area of meadow restored and woodland planted. It seems that more opportunities could have been identified with partners in the development phase.

ERT carried out river restoration schemes that have a significant and immediate environmental impact. The following is an example of their work with CWT at Bowber Head Farm.

Changing the Course, Slowing the Flow

This ERT project has achieved habitat improvements and, as a result of the restoration of natural processes, it aims to slow the upstream flow rate in the Lyvennet and Scandal Becks, both tributaries of the Eden. In the long term, this will contribute to reducing flood risk and mitigate against the effects of climate change.

A site visit took place to CWT's Bowber Head Farm for this evaluation, guided by the Wildlife Trust's Site Manager. The Trust acquired the farm and is in the process of restoring large areas of wildflower meadow through appropriate management and with the addition of plug planting with native species. It was clear that the Trust has the knowledge and expertise to restore the land and increase biodiversity, working with local graziers where appropriate, and is committed to both short and long term improvements. The opportunity arose to improve the beck at the farm through ERT's *Changing the Course, Slowing the Flow* project, although it was quite late in the programme. The work was tendered and planning permission was acquired, but the weather and ground conditions left a very narrow window for the work to be completed in September during the period when in-river works are allowed. The site visit took place just before work started and it was reassuring to see the detailed conservation considerations that had gone into designing the scheme, as well as the potential benefits that will ensue as part of a holistic approach to improving biodiversity at the farm. A second site visit took place at the end of September when the in-river works were almost complete.

The project includes the creation of wetland scrapes upstream, which will add to the biodiversity benefits to be gained from the changes to the watercourse. The Trust has engaged volunteers in meadow management and planting and organised public events to tell people about the meadows; some events were under the auspices of WDLP and others will continue beyond the lifetime of the scheme.

The main contract at Bowber Head Farm has recently been completed, including in-river works and the pond and scrapes creation, with the fencing and planting work scheduled for early 2024. A number of factors contributed to why this element was delivered so late in the scheme. The whole *Changing the Course, Slowing the Flow* project was large and complex and required further development work during the delivery stage; in some cases the landowners changed their views and in others the more detailed design work showed that some proposed projects were not feasible. This was exacerbated by changes in project managers at ERT. As a result, the final project at Bowber Head was proposed very late in the delivery stage. As late as August 2023, it was still uncertain whether the project would go ahead, due to the timing required for tendering the work and gaining permissions, followed by unfavourable weather and ground conditions and the need to complete the in-river works in September.

That the project brought in a significant proportion of the match funding for the scheme made it attractive to keep it as a large project with several elements. It is difficult to judge whether the project was overambitious or how it could have been managed more effectively to avoid the late delivery. There remains some uncertainty whether the full spend and match will be achieved.

Lesson learnt: The 'Changing the Course, Slowing the Flow' project achieved significant environmental improvements and brought in important match funding. It was a large and complex project, which led to some difficulties and delays in delivery. Its completion at Bowber Head Farm in the final few months of the scheme led to added pressure on staff and uncertainty about whether the full spend and match will be achieved.

The network of habitat improvements achieved through WDLP is complemented by other conservation work going on in the area, such as new woodland planting on Crosby Ravensworth Common led by Natural England, with similar conservation aims leading to further landscape enhancement.

There was a planned WDLP outcome that '*Wildlife habitats are better connected and the landscape is more resilient'.* Although it is difficult to provide evidence in the short term to demonstrate that the landscape is more resilient, a map showing the new woodlands, hedgerows, improved meadows and river restoration could show how the scheme has connected and improved habitats.

Lesson learnt: There was a missed opportunity to map the habitat improvements as proposed and achieved. It could help to plan and demonstrate whether there is improved habitat connectivity and, therefore, increased landscape resilience.

4.2.2 Key features of the built landscape are in better condition

The key built heritage features identified were: four at risk Scheduled Ancient Monuments, traditional farm buildings, dry stone walls and Gamelands Stone Circle.

The four Scheduled Ancient Monuments highlighted in the development phase that were classed as at risk by Historic England were: Smardale lime kilns, Pendragon Castle, Crosby Ravensworth Sheiling and Barrow.

The Smardale lime kilns provide a good example of the benefit of a Landscape Partnership Scheme in bringing together partners to prioritise and achieve significant work to protect key heritage

buildings in the cultural landscape. The lime kilns sit within the Smardale Gill Nature Reserve, owned by CWT, and works were required to stabilise the kilns and conserve them for the future for people to enjoy as part of the historic landscape. Unfortunately, it became clear that considerably more work was required than originally thought, requiring double the proposed budget. The partnership approach through WDLP was instrumental in prioritising and completing the conservation work.

At Pendragon Castle, the excavation of the sow kiln revealed its history although conservation work to the castle was not carried out. However, a nearby barn and dry stone walls were prioritised under the scheme for conservation work as part of a wider landscape approach.

Work was not pursued at the Crosby Ravensworth Sheiling and Barrow partly due to lack of staff time at YDNPA (see section 2.4.2) and later because the budget was reallocated to cover increased costs at Smardale lime kilns. The conservation works required at Crosby Ravensworth were described as "likely to be low key" and can be progressed in future by YDNPA.

It was originally intended to restore five traditional farm buildings but, in practice, it only proved possible to restore two because of the nature and cost of the repairs, partly due to inflation over the five years of the scheme. Applications were invited from interested landowners and farmers and assessed and prioritised by a panel drawn from partners. The top two barns at Raisbeck, on the Coast to Coast route, and at Pendragon Castle were restored in 2022. A third building had been proposed but resources were inadequate and the available money was reallocated to the conservation of Smardale lime kilns, whose cost had increased significantly.

Repairs to dry stone walls were targeted by need, identified through the survey carried out by volunteers, and with links to the restored barns. Fewer walls were repaired than originally planned. This was partly due to the lack of available wallers, who were occupied on large contracts, often linked to Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) grants. Those grants are available in the area so it was appropriate to target fewer walls through the WDLP scheme.

A major undergrounding of overhead wires project took place at Raisbeck in the vicinity of Gamelands Stone Circle. It was not intended to improve condition of the stone circle, rather it enhanced its setting with removal of unsightly wires.

Under the *Love Your Landscape* scheme, local groups applied for grants to protect and restore local heritage features. These were the Gilbertine ruins in Ravenstonedale, a Grade II listed footbridge at Kirkby Stephen East Station and a scheduled medieval well at Grange Hall, a former monastic grange near Great Asby.

Lesson learnt: The restoration of the built heritage did not achieve all of its targets for several reasons. The original plans were ambitious, inflation led to substantially increased costs, and the budget for Smardale lime kilns almost doubled when detailed surveys revealed that more work was required than had been costed. Increased costs between the development and the delivery stage, when work is specified in detail and tendered, often cause a challenge for projects, especially for major capital works.

4.2.3 People are engaged and have gained skills

Volunteers have been engaged throughout the scheme as described in section 3. As well as surveying a range of built and natural features, the WDLP team and partners have engaged volunteers in practical conservation. CWT engaged their volunteers in meadow management and plug planting and ERT volunteers planted trees and other bankside vegetation as part of the river restoration schemes; and opportunities were offered more widely for others to become involved in those activities through WDLP media and promotion.

Overall the targets for engaging people have been exceeded across the scheme. Feedback gathered, described in Section 3 above, demonstrates that their knowledge and skills increased and that they gained other benefits from their engagement.

The apprenticeship scheme and trainee placements successfully engaged and trained people. There were eight people who completed the apprenticeship. The Cultural Heritage Trainee completed a placement with YDNPA, gaining experience in a range of heritage recording and management tasks. There were two training placements planned with The Farmer Network, which provided practical experience and certificated training, but only one of the two people completed the course.

Of the eight apprentices, six are in employment, one is in full time education and one is currently volunteering with a partner organisation.

An evaluation of the first cohort of apprentices was carried out, which concluded that:

- All four apprentices said they were very satisfied with the apprenticeship overall
- They were very positive about the skills and qualifications they have gained
- They enjoyed the experience and would recommend it to others
- They found the work varied and interesting
- Their training and development was good
- There were sufficient tools and equipment
- The team worked well together
- They enjoyed working with and learning about the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Westmorland Dales and Friends of the Lake District
- The college training was good; more time for college work may be helpful
- The Covid pandemic had an impact on practical and college work and on opportunities to work with other teams, but it was well-managed.

One apprentice summed up their experience as follows:

> *"I have really enjoyed this apprenticeship and feel it really has given me the ideal foundation upon which I can build a career in the conservation sector. I would recommend this apprenticeship to anyone who is wanting that, whether they are a school-leaver or a career changer because it is worth it."*

It was more difficult to evaluate the second tranche of apprentices in the same depth due to staff changes and the difficulty of finding a gap in their busy programme.

The apprentices, and the work they undertook, were seen and appreciated by partners and the local communities and were mentioned in interviews and informal consultation. People said that

they acted as ambassadors for the WDLP scheme, particularly during the Covid pandemic, when their work in the environment continued to be seen to make a difference. Others highlighted the importance of the apprenticeship in bringing in young people to landscape management. Their work contributes to the legacy of heritage conservation on the ground and, when they work with local communities, such as at Tebay churchyard and at Ravenstonedale, they also leave a legacy within the communities themselves.

Lesson learnt: The apprenticeship scheme was seen as a great success. They acted as ambassadors for the WDLP scheme; and the work that they did was appreciated by partners and local communities. The scheme was very well supported by the YDNPA; and a range of partners provided opportunities to give the apprentices a range of practical experience.

The work that the apprentices did is a legacy of the scheme, as are the apprentices themselves - taking their skills into future employment. One of the former apprentices is now employed by West Cumbria Rivers Trust (WCRT) and was interviewed for the final evaluation. As soon as she completed her apprenticeship, she began as a trainee with WCRT for a year, where she set up two volunteering groups, and then was kept on as a Project Assistant. She worked on an application to NLHF for a project in West Cumbria that will include apprentices. The bid was successful, and the four-year project began in September 2023.

She is now a volunteer co-ordinator and noted that the practical experience she gained as an apprentice was very valuable and said:

> *"Since the apprenticeship, I have never looked back. I love my job. The apprenticeship was really successful and the best route in for my career."*

4.2.4 Landowners and farmers are engaged in managing the landscape heritage and have gained relevant skills.

The engagement of landowners and farmers is crucial to the continued conservation of the landscape and key heritage features. The habitat improvements implemented by partners, i.e. CWT, WT and ERT, are carried out in agreement with landowners and farmers. They have entered into management agreements, for example to maintain wildflower meadows and riparian habitat improvements.

In total, there are 31 management agreements in place and 94 farmers and landowners have been engaged in WDLP through a range of projects.

Moreover, if landowners and farmers are able to sustain their livelihoods, then the farmed landscape becomes sustainable. If farm businesses are in good shape, farmers have the resources to maintain walls and barns and keep up traditional practices like commons gathering. This is the principle behind The Farmer Network (TFN) project, '*Sustaining farming in the Westmorland Dales*'.

The project provided training courses on a mix of environmental topics and animal health and welfare; training vouchers for farmers; financial support for young farmers to undertake training and work placements; and events to engage and inform the public. Public events did not go ahead

in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid, but the three that were held in 2022 and 2023 were very well attended (each one by between 24 and 54 people) and visitor feedback was positive.

TFN staff commented that there is now an established group of farmers in the Westmorland Dales that they know and who know each other. TFN has also developed good links with ERT and CWT through the scheme. They said that the relationship between YDNPA staff and Westmorland Dales farmers is in its infancy and that there is a need to nurture it and make sure that the relevant YDNPA staff and the farmers are in touch with each other. This is especially important as Yorkshire Dales Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) grants will be available.

TFN is continuing to work with Westmorland Dales farmers and secured additional resources from the local authority to hold a farm diversification workshop in Appleby in May and from Defra for a 'Farm for the Future' event in the autumn. They have also applied to the Westmorland & Furness Council's Share Prosperity fund to continue to engage farmers.

Lesson learnt: Farmers have been engaged appropriately in the scheme and the management agreements they have entered into will ensure the continued maintenance of the improved habitats. The Farmer Network has extended its work in the area and will continue to work with farmers to improve their sustainability in future.

5. Engaging people in enjoying and benefitting from their heritage

5.1 What WDLP wanted to happen

The planned WDLP outcomes for this aim are that:

1. ***More people, including more visitors, experience and enjoy the heritage of the Westmorland Dales.***
2. ***People have increased knowledge and a better understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage, including the role that farming plays in shaping the landscape.***
3. ***A wider range of people, including more young people, is engaged in the heritage of the area.***
4. ***People share their knowledge and encourage others to enjoy the area, such as walking guides and local tourism businesses***
5. ***The profile of the Westmorland Dales is raised***
6. ***The contribution of the National Lottery Heritage Fund is understood by participants***

The relevant NLHF outcomes are:

- ***People have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions***
- ***A wider range of people is involved with heritage***
- ***The local area is a better place to live, work or visit***

5.2 What WDLP achieved

There are three types of project delivering this aim:

- **Events and activities for visitors and residents**
  There was a comprehensive programme of events and activities that engaged people in a variety of ways throughout the course of the WDLP scheme. Underpinning those activities was the community development work that the team undertook, building relationship and networks throughout the area. There were four key threads:
    - 'Celebrating and Engaging' events and activities
    - Artistic engagement
    - Learning in Landscapes
    - Westmorland Dales Volunteers

- **Volunteering**
  This is reported in Section 3 above, under the outcome that ***People are engaged in conserving the area's heritage and have gained skills and volunteered time***

- **Projects that encourage more visitors and locals to linger longer and discover more**
  These are a mix of improving routes – 159 access improvements were undertaken – and providing resources for people to use and learn about the heritage of the area in their own time. They included interpretation and projects like 'Discovering the Westmorland Dales', which identifies and promotes routes; and 'A Way Through', which provided interpretation on the history of journeying through the Westmorland Dales landscape.

The impact of the events and activities programme was measured by analysing the feedback gathered after the events and via the WDLP participant survey undertaken for the final evaluation.

5.2.1 More people, including visitors, experience and enjoy the heritage of the Westmorland Dales

The Community Engagement Officer co-ordinated a programme of events and activities for visitors and residents, though it was also very much a team effort. It was well planned and well received. She observed that, had her role been full-time role rather than 0.6fte, she would have had more scope to deliver events alongside her other community development work. She would also have welcomed more input from partners to enable her to co-ordinate and promote their events alongside those of the team. The Covid pandemic seriously affected delivery, and although a six-month extension allowed the outputs to be achieved, the programme was still squeezed into a shorter time frame than planned. The move to online webinars was effective in reaching a wider audience.

The 'Celebrating and Engaging' events and activities for visitors and residents achieved the following **key outputs**. These data were provided by the WDLP Community Engagement Officer:

Community Development Activity	**Number**
Community groups engaged	40
People attending/viewing webinars	4181
People attending other online events	410
People viewing films	7659
John Muir Awards	16
Landscape Forums	3
Events across the 21 scheme projects	263

Activity/event attendance across the 22 scheme projects	**Adults**	**Children**
Educational visits	339	2227
Guided Walks	595	195
Informal Arts/ Celebrations	1093	555
Interpretive/Exhibitions/Stands	1432	185
Survey	32	7
Talks/Presentations/Forums	976	60
Training	635	98
TOTAL	**5102**	**3327**

The total of 263 events is impressive, given that Covid affected two years of the five years of the scheme delivery. There were over 4,000 people attending or viewing webinars, which demonstrates the demand for, and popularity of, the online presentations. In total there were 8,429 attendances at events, of which 60% were adults and 40% children, another impressive statistic given the Covid restrictions.

Lesson learnt: These figures demonstrate that the events and community development work undertaken by the WDLP team and partners has successfully engaged more people in the heritage of the Westmorland Dales.

The quality of their experience is explored in the next section.

5.2.2 People have increased knowledge and a better understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage, including the role that farming plays in shaping the landscape.

There were two main methods used to demonstrate whether the events achieved the intended outcome that people have increased knowledge and a better understanding. These were:

A. Analysis of the participant feedback routinely collected after the events
B. Online survey conducted for the final evaluation

A. Participant Feedback

Participant feedback was consistently collected and collated by the WDLP team. From an evaluation perspective, this is a strength of the programme, providing a wealth of useful information about whether people enjoyed their experience, developed skills and learnt about heritage. Guidance was produced for partners to collect feedback from volunteers and event participants, but this was not followed.

Lesson learnt: The way that participant feedback was collected and collated by the WDLP team is to be commended.

The feedback was analysed for the interim and final evaluations, which demonstrates that people enjoyed the events and learnt about a wide range of heritage.

In the first section of the feedback form, participants were asked to score the following aspects: the knowledge you gained; your enjoyment; meeting your expectations; and the event's organisation. The scores for each were consistently very good, showing that **the events were well-planned and well-executed.**

People were asked to say what they learnt and what they enjoyed about the event. There is very good evidence that **participants enjoyed their experience and that they learnt about heritage.** Almost all the comments were positive; some were about specific areas of learning, for example:

> *"The nomenclatures and origins of farming tools used in this Victorian era. The sense of community especially with the neighbourly 70 horse ploughing event."*
>
> *"Practical manual skills involved in hedge laying. Working out where a tree could best be laid, and how much trimming to do. Finding ways to secure the latest tree laid."*

Others were broader, such as:

> *"It was a really inclusive, friendly set of leaders and participants who stimulated and shared lots of observations, ideas and knowledge about the geology, the landscape, the environment etc."*

In answer to 'what did you enjoy most about the event', there was a variety of answers; the knowledge and enthusiasm of the presenters were often mentioned, for example:

> *"Everything. In particular the knowledge of the presenters, their immense enthusiasm and the presentations themselves. Well structured, the right length and excellent pictures."*

"The diversity of all the projects and immense knowledge and enthusiasm from the speakers."

Positive feedback was also provided under the open question of 'any other comments', such as:

"Absolutely brilliant day. Would love to be waking up to do it all over again. Thanks so much. I really, really enjoyed it!"

"I would just like to say that everything that (my husband and) I have attended which has been organised by this Partnership has been top quality and I'm sorry that your funding is coming to an end. Many thanks for all your hard work, knowledge and enthusiasm and for raising the profile of this lovely part of the country."

The feedback was used by the team to improve the events programme, such as repeating popular events like the hedge-laying course and bumblebee identification. In response to feedback gathered at a public drop-in event, the Community Engagement Officer delivered a set of wool heritage skills workshops, including spinning, weaving, knitting and a wool heritage talk in 2023. The artistic heritage skills workshops, such as willow weaving, were very popular and a series of four sessions were organised to build on the initial skills learnt.

There were indications in some people's answers that their engagement led to **a change in ideas and actions** personally or in a wider context, such as:

"Able to learn a lot about the area in which I live. Will be able to appreciate it more in the future from what I have learnt."

"An excellent program that provides a good foundation of values that will help to guide changes in the life and economy of the area in the coming years."

B. Online Survey

The online survey was conducted toward the end of the scheme and was promoted widely through WDLP channels. It was answered by 128 people:

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Residents	83	65%
Visitors	22	17%
Workers	8	6%
Other	15	12%

It explores how people felt about their experience, knowledge and skills, which is reported here, and asked wider questions about the Westmorland Dales and the Landscape Partnership, reported in the following sections.

Most respondents had taken part in WDLP activities and events. 96% said **they had enjoyed their experience**; almost all of those said they had enjoyed it 'a lot'. When asked to say a little about why they answered that way, the responses were very positive about the events and the WDLP as a whole. Many mentioned learning and several referred to the organisation of events, for example:

"The activities have allowed me to extend my passion in archaeology and history within the Westmorland Dales."

"It has deepened my understanding of the area, its heritage and wildlife."

"Speakers and tutors have been excellent. There's been good publicity and it's been easy to join in. The projects have been interesting e.g. archaeology project and heritage craft workshops."

91% of respondents said **they had learnt about the local area, landscape, nature or heritage** as a result of their involvement. When asked to say a little about what they have learnt, the most popular responses were about **history, landscape and geology**.

Wider feedback on people's experience came via the interviews with people in the community, with examples of people and groups working together in ways they had not done before. The case studies of the Ravenstonedale Parish History Group (Section 3.2.6) and the 'Ripple-out effect' (Section 2.3) are good examples.

Understanding the role that farming plays in shaping the landscape

There was a specific reference in the objective to understanding the role that farming plays in shaping the landscape. This was achieved through specific projects, such as The Farmer Network public events (see section 6.3) and the *Our Common Heritage* exhibition. The wildflower meadows project is an example of work on the ground with related volunteer engagement and wider public events. Farming also ran as an important thread throughout the interpretation, as it was one of the four themes within the strategy; for example, one of the booklets in the 'Delve into the Westmorland Dales' pack is on the farmed landscape.

5.2.3 A wider range of people, including more young people, is engaged in the heritage of the area.

The following table was provided by the WDLP Community Engagement Officer and usefully categorises the event attendance according to the key audience groups that they were intended to attract. She reported that while the majority of events were inclusive and aimed at all audiences, some were targeted towards widening the range of people involved and to addressing barriers to involvement, such as transport issues for schools; access for people with disabilities; and improved interpretation and information to increase confidence in attending.

Total number of people attending events & activities recorded as key audiences.					
Key audiences		Events delivered	Number of adults	Number of children	Total number of people
Events for all audiences		101	3415	364	**3779**
Residents/ Local people	Families and Children	9	151	223	**374**
	Schools	66	182	2188	**2370**
	Parish Councils and Community Groups	2	45	1	**46**
	Young People	18	152	277	**429**
	Farmers and Land Owners	21	371	156	**527**
Visitors		5	230	40	**270**
Tourism Businesses		3	89	0	**89**

Total number of people attending events & activities recorded as key audiences (cont.)					
Key audiences		Events delivered	Number of adults	Number of children	Total number of people
Volunteers		29	342	1	**343**
Under-represented Groups	Older Children and Young People	3	0	47	**47**
	Elderly People	1	50	0	**50**
	People with Disabilities	5	75	30	**105**
TOTAL		**263**	**5102**	**3327**	**8429**

One of the key targets was to engage more young people through the *Learning in Landscapes* project with schools. The outputs were as follows:

- 9 primary schools engaged
- 4 secondary schools engaged
- 2566 primary and secondary primary and secondary pupils and teachers engaged
- 7 teachers trained

In addition, across other aspects of the scheme, there were:

- 61 training events
- 8 arts-linked training sessions
- 635 training days – adults
- 98 training days – young people

Three headteachers were interviewed for the evaluation and their responses were overwhelmingly positive. They said their schools had been engaged in a variety of activities that were a *"mix of creativity and learning"*, with comments on the activities such as *"absolutely amazing", "exceptional"* and *"celebrating what is special about living in this rural community"*.

They welcomed the opportunity for the children to learn about the local environment and they each commented on the knowledge and skills of the WDLP Community Engagement Officer. Two mentioned that travel costs to other areas are usually prohibitive and one said,

> *"Small schools like ours really struggle with our budget so this project has really helped. It has made a big difference for the children".*

They valued the experience of the schools working together on the arts projects, saying that the art work was very memorable for the children and that the collaboration was great for small, rural isolated schools. One person commented that it was, *"Not just what they have learnt but how".*

They all mentioned bringing in different expertise and knowledge and were appreciative of the arts and creative input. One said,

> *"There has been variety, a wide range of expertise and experiences for the children. It could affect the children's future decisions".*

Artistic engagement was a key feature of community engagement in other ways, delivered through specific projects, such as the heritage and arts skills training workshops and the 'Singing Drumlin' Aeolian sound sculpture, and added value to the interpretation work.

The following table was provided by the Community Engagement Officer, summarising the highlights of the arts engagement and the number of events or people:

Artistic Engagement Highlights	Numbers
Artists engaged across the WDLP	23
Informal arts celebratory events	28
People attending informal arts celebrations	1648
Artistic workshops with Schools	49
Heritage art skills training sessions	8
Community willow sculpture installed	1
Sleeping giant sculpture installed	1
Orton community bus shelter mural refreshed, shelter painted and revitalised	1
Brass, drums and trains soundtrack	1
People attending finale sound art celebration/installation – Singing Drumlin	450
Tebay Roundabout Sculpture consultation and design	1

The Summer Play Scheme was delivered by 'Stomping Ground', who worked with children under 13 who were referred for a number of reasons, such as Sanctuary Seekers, young carers, children experiencing the care system or with mental health challenges, or receiving free school meals. Stomping Ground provided an evaluation of their Summer Programme in July 2021. It demonstrated that they worked closely and very carefully with children who needed extra attention, drawing them into activities with patience and appropriate approaches.

5.2.4 People share their knowledge and encourage others to enjoy the area, such as walking guides and local tourism businesses

There is good evidence that people have shared their knowledge through events, such as guided walks attended by 790 people, and webinars, which have attracted over 4,000 participants or views. In person presentations have been attended by over a thousand people and films have been viewed online 7,659 times. The feedback described in the previous sections demonstrates that people have gained knowledge and enjoyed their experience.

The continued distribution of the interpretive material that has been produced is integral to achieving this outcome. A plan is currently being designed by staff at YDNPA to store and distribute leaflets and booklets after the end of the WDLP scheme.

The engagement of local tourism businesses through the *Distinctly Westmorland Dales* project was significantly affected by the Covid pandemic and subsequently hampered by staff capacity at Eden District Council, when Council members prioritised Covid-19 recovery. A survey had been carried out that helped to direct future work with the businesses, but the project was delayed and then delivered instead by YDNPA, but not until 2023. It has not been possible to measure the impact of the project at this stage.

To date, 89 tourism businesses have been engaged through the survey, workshops and other events. YDNPA is producing a 'Sense of Place' toolkit to encourage businesses to use the special

qualities of the Westmorland Dales to promote their business and the area. It contains ideas for businesses on how to:

- Tailor their marketing to reflect the area, its special qualities and 'sense of place'
- Improve their customer relations and visitor welcome
- Enhance their own understanding and enjoyment of the landscape

It includes chapters on Exploring Outdoors, Dark Skies, Local Food and Produce, and Heritage and Stories. It has provided workshops on topics, such as social media and dark skies, and signposts businesses to the many online and printed resources produced across the scheme.

Local businesses have also benefited (and will continue to do so) from the leaflets and other information provided by the WDLP scheme.

It is unfortunate that the local tourism project was not delivered earlier in the programme but tourism businesses were engaged in other ways and its delivery late on allowed it to draw on much of the research and information produced.

Lessons learnt: The Covid pandemic and a subsequent lack of staff capacity delayed the engagement of local tourism businesses until very late in the scheme, so that it has not been possible to measure the impact of their involvement.

It was not an explicit aim of WDLP to increase visitor numbers, although it was hoped that it would contribute toward visitors staying longer or visiting in the shoulder months. It was not possible to explore the impact of the WDLP scheme on visitor numbers because the area is large and remote with very few honeypot sites to carry out visitors surveys; and because the plans to carry out surveys in 2020 at Smardale Nature Reserve were cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, so there was no baseline. It would have been difficult anyway to demonstrate the impact of the WDLP scheme on visitor numbers, given the huge effect of Covid on tourism. Other factors could also potentially increase visitor numbers, such as the development of the Coast to Coast route. It would be useful to measure the impact of WDLP after five years if the outcomes are sustained in the meantime.

The opportunity was taken at the end of the scheme to repeat the Participatory GIS (PGIS) survey using the template established by Natural England, which is intended to captures site locations that are special or meaningful to people. A previous survey was carried out in the development phase and the results showed that 43 people placed a total of 170 markers on the online map. Unfortunately, when it was repeated in 2023, the response was insufficient to show whether more people were aware of the Westmorland Dales or places to visit; 51 people placed 121 markers on the online map. It is thought this may be down to consultation fatigue following other surveys and engagement opportunities. Perhaps more specific questions could have been asked rather than repeating the Natural England template, although the other evaluation surveys had covered the relevant issues.

5.2.5 The profile of the Westmorland Dales is raised

There is a dilemma at the heart of the question about raising the profile of the Westmorland Dales. There had been some public resistance to the inclusion of the Westmorland Dales in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The additional protection that its status offers may be seen as a

barrier; and there is a concern that raising the profile of the area may attract too many tourists, which would harm the special qualities of the area.

In the online survey, people were asked what 3-5 words they would use to describe the Westmorland Dales. Arranged as a word cloud, it can be seen that 'beautiful' and 'peaceful' are key characteristics, particularly as they occur singly as well as in combination with others, and there are similar words, such as 'quiet' and 'tranquil'. This explains the concern about increasing the profile leading to increasing tourism.



When asked what does "the Westmorland Dales mean to you personally", the most common words used were 'place' and 'home'.

Throughout the evaluation interviews and surveys there has been a general agreement **that the profile of the Westmorland Dales has been raised**. For example:

- At the Westmorland Dales Day, a local farmer with a campsite said that the Westmorland Dales now has a strong identity and the WDLP has helped to achieve that. She felt that the Westmorland Dales had been a forgotten corner but now the Westmorland Dales identity will bring in tourists – the right sort – that will help the economy.
- A visitor to the Westmorland Dales Day said they had been coming to the area for years. They didn't used to call it the Westmorland Dales but they do now.
- At the Board meeting, it was noted that the profile of the Westmorland Dales had been raised, with one member noting that in the past, *"There had not been a sense of place around the Westmorland Dales and it was a challenge to achieve that"*.
- At the WDLP Celebration event, a FLD Trustee said that WDLP had been managed very well. He felt that it had brought together all the different aspects of the landscape, natural and cultural heritage. He described it as a complex landscape that, thanks to WDLP, is now better understood.

The WDLP online survey included a question to explore how people feel about the increased recognition of the 'Westmorland Dales' name or brand. 110 people answered the question.

45 responses were positive, such as:

> *"It's good that we now have a geographic identity - it makes it much easier to promote the area to visitors and to describe it to them. The visitors who come are of a good sort and they fit in. It's a good thing that more people are coming to visit and for the right reasons. Our economy needs the visitors."*

A further 9 responses were positive, but with caveats, for example:

"Pleased the area is being recognised and cared for, but hoping the possible resulting increase in visitors doesn't adversely impact its environment, tranquillity and sense of remoteness."

16 responses were negative, expressing concerns about the potential negative effects of increasing tourism, such as:

"Much as I love the Westmorland Dales I wouldn't like it to get commercialised as has happened in other areas."

"Hopeful that increased attention on the Westmorland Dales will not mean loss of tranquillity and can avoid influx of cars, litter etc."

Most of the remaining 40 responses are generally positive but without direct comment on the question, such as:

"I look forward to revisiting it' and '*I love being here."*

5.2.6 The contribution of the National Lottery Heritage Fund is understood by participants

In the WDLP survey carried out in summer 2023, the majority of respondents (93%) had heard of WDLP and when asked to rate the WDLP from 1 to 5 based on their experience, 88% respondents scored 4 or 5 stars, giving an average of 4.44.

It is notable that 86% of the 128 respondents in the survey knew that it was funded by the NLHF.

In the 'any other comments' section in the survey, the most numerous comment, from fifteen people, was that they would like to see the scheme extended is some way, such as:

"I really hope more funding can be found to continue with the projects, walks and workshops in this area. There isn't enough going on round here for locals and the project will be sorely missed."

"I hope the Partnership can continue as so many good schemes are short term and their value can be lost. For a relatively small amount of funding there can be huge benefits to local schools, families, young people and the community, keeping people together and involved."

"It's such a shame that this initiative is coming to an end. Something like this needs to be permanently in place so that the projects begun through the partnership will continue, to the benefit of all who live, work and visit. Places like this need to be valued and protected."

There were some unsolicited comments referring to NLHF in the events' feedback, such as:

"The National Lottery Heritage Fund is a brilliant idea. It brings communities together and passes on fantastic knowledge and skills. Thank you."

"A huge THANK you to June, Nicola and Penny and to your funders, for my place on this lovely workshop. I am very lucky!"

6. Sustaining the benefits of the scheme in the long-term

6.1 What WDLP wanted to happen

The planned WDLP outcomes for this aim are that:

- ***The Landscape Partnership forms the basis of a long-lasting relationship for the management of the Westmorland Dales***
- ***The Westmorland Dales name continues to grow in strength as an integral part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park***
- ***The legacy of the WDLP scheme will continue to benefit the area long after it has finished***

The relevant NLHF outcome is:

- ***The legacy continues to meet all of the NLHF outcomes in the above sections***

6.2 What WDLP achieved

6.2.1 The basis of a long-lasting relationship for the management of the Westmorland Dales

The WDLP has operated successfully as an effective partnership, as described in Section 2, and relationships and trust have become established. While the Landscape Partnership has formed the basis for a potentially long-lasting relationship, it is not intended that a similar structure will continue to specifically co-ordinate the management of the Westmorland Dales, as is currently operated through regular meetings of the Board. There will be a drop-off in activities at the end of the scheme and a risk that the relationships and joint working will slowly tail off.

However, it is the duty of the YDNPA to co-ordinate the management of the National Park, including the Westmorland Dales, which it does in partnership with other organisations. There is a management plan covering the Yorkshire Dales National Park, setting out policies and proposals, which are agreed and implemented by the partnership. The YDNPA is currently consulting partners and communities on a new draft of the management plan for the Park, which provides an ideal opportunity to consolidate and extend the work achieved through the WDLP.

It is recommended that the WDLP encourages partners and community groups to meaningfully engage in the consultation for the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan. This could include organising specific workshops for the Board, WDLP partners and/or community groups and using the WDLP contact database to promote consultation opportunities.

6.2.2 The Westmorland Dales name continues to grow as an integral part of the YDNP

The Westmorland Dales name has become established, as described in Section 5.2.5. It has the advantage that it follows the pattern, used throughout the rest of Yorkshire Dales National Park, of naming the dales, such as Wensleydale and Swaledale. There are signs that announce to road users when they arrive in the Westmorland Dales; and there has been a wealth of interpretation developed using the brand, including boards, booklets and leaflets. The WDLP website will be maintained by FLD for at least five years. There is an annual Westmorland Dales Day in Kirkby Stephen organised by a group of local interested people to promote the town as a gateway to the Westmorland Dales, which survived Covid and has grown from a single day to a whole weekend. FLD has committed to support it in future and WDLP will pass on its Westmorland Dales gazebo and flags to the group. Some of the larger villages also promote themselves as being part of the

Westmorland Dales, such as Orton whose community website states it is now known as 'Orton in the Westmorland Dales'

The restructuring of the local authorities means that 'Westmorland & Furness Council' could also be an opportunity to promote the Westmorland name in future.

Lesson learnt: The WDLP scheme has helped to grow the Westmorland Dales name and will continue to do so through some of its legacy, such as the interpretation and the toolkit for local businesses. The brand is likely to grow because of its current level of establishment and its incorporation in the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan.

6.2.3 The legacy of the WDLP scheme will continue to benefit the area long after it has finished

The legacy of the project is considered in detail in a separate document prepared by the Scheme Manager and agreed by the Board. It outlines the legacy of each project, how it will be maintained by partners after WDLP has finished and identifies future potential related projects.

There is no intention to continue the partnership, as such, beyond the end of the scheme. The Management Group expressed the view that WDLP had achieved its aim of ensuring that the Westmorland Dales was recognised as part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and that there will be no requirement for the Board to meet after the scheme ends or for a Westmorland Dales Forum. The management of the Westmorland Dales will be included in YDNPA policies and practices and there are already several subject-based forums, such as for biodiversity. They said that the spirit of collaboration and co-operation will continue, but there is no function for the Board beyond the lifetime of the scheme. Resources are limited and there is now a focus on the new 'Three Counties' funding bid.

Some community members and a few partners (YDMT and Cumbria Geoconservation) expressed the view that they would like to see some co-ordination continue, which is understandable given the success of the scheme and the community interest and networking it has generated.

The Scheme Manager is offering to host six guided walks per year as a volunteer with FLD in future. There was also a suggestion that an annual Landscape Forum and other local activities could be done at a low cost, perhaps £5,000 p.a., but that would require the commitment from one (or more) of the partners. At the time of writing this report, there was no partner wishing to pursue that role, although YDMT had expressed an interest. This does seem to be a missed opportunity, but perhaps understandable given the pressure on partner organisations' time and resources.

Comments made during informal interviews with community groups and individuals, and in the online survey, indicate that people are disappointed that the scheme is coming to an end, which is to be expected, but in particular that networking opportunities will be lost, such as through the annual forum. One person argued that the database of contacts should be used before the end of the scheme to ensure that people are put in touch with other groups and opportunities in the area and can get signed up to their mailing lists. Another suggested that the Annual Forum could continue in a similar format, rotating around five or six venues, with a different organisation responsible for organising each one. These are both good suggestions that would help to secure the legacy of the scheme.

Lesson learnt: Each WDLP project will be maintained by partners, as set out in the legacy plan. From the start, a large part of legacy planning has been based on the aim of the scheme to bring the Westmorland Dales in line with the rest of the Yorkshire Dales National Park so that its future management would be included in the Park's Management Plan. In doing so it has perhaps missed an opportunity to plan how partners could continue to work together in future to better co-ordinate their activities to sustain some of the successes of the scheme. However, some partners are working together to plan more projects in the area and this could be an important part of the legacy.