Annual Review 2012-13

This review highlights work initiated and led by the AONB Partnership team or things into which we put significant effort, though much of it involved working closely with other organisations.

The annual review helps to demonstrate the value of the AONB and the team (not just in economic terms but in environmental and social terms too) and shows some of the ways in which our team provides services and technical expertise which add to the work of others and help them achieve things which they could not achieve alone.

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From the Chairman

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2012-13. It’s been another busy and productive year for the team in Stanhope and their many partners across the North Pennines.

Though the weather put a stop to much of our peatland restoration work, the project goes from strength to strength and a new collaboration with the Yorkshire Peat Partnership is leading towards a bid to the EU LIFE Fund.

Our hay meadow work moved into a new phase, with work towards our new Nectarworks project, which has since secured around £400,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our pilot Altogether Archaeology project has now been given a further three-year lease of life with £300,000 from the HLF, and we continue to be grateful to the support given to us by the HLF in the North East and nationally. With this mind, I’m delighted to say that as one HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme (Living North Pennines) came to an end, we received a Stage 1 pass from them for a second scheme, this time worth around £2.5million and in the Allen Valleys; work is well underway to turn our aspirations, and those of the community, into reality.

We continued to help people to explore, understand and enjoy the beauty of the North Pennines landscape, producing trail publications, running events, working with our three Destination Management Organisations and with local tourism associations too. Towards the end of the year I was proud to launch our new visitor-focused website, Explore North Pennines.

We have expended a great deal of effort in our work to take on Bowlees Visitor Centre in Upper Teesdale. Like some of our other work, this too was affected by the extended winter weather, but after a £250,000 revamp with support from HLF and the North Pennine Dales LEADER programme, we will be open in early summer. It is a bold venture for the AONB Partnership, in difficult economic times, but we are determined to make it succeed.

2013 is the 25th anniversary of the AONB designation and the 10th anniversary of the area winning European Geopark status – you can read in this review our continued efforts to use our geological heritage to support education and tourism. I hope you enjoy it and that you join the team and partners at our many events and activities in the year ahead.

It’s a pleasure to introduce this annual review and I’d like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all the staff team for their hard work and enthusiasm over the year.

Cllr Eddie Tomlinson
Chairman
North Pennines AONB Partnership
Landscape and geodiversity

We have supported the conservation and enhancement of our landscapes and geodiversity through direct activity on the ground, engagement with the development and strategic planning process, promotion of guidance, increasing our capacity and the development of new partnerships.

Highlights:

- We secured a stage 1 pass from HLF for a £2.5m Landscape Partnership Scheme for the Allen Valleys.
- Provided strong technical advice and comment in relation to planning applications and policy.
- The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership received official recognition from Defra and new collaborations have developed as a direct result.

Some of our achievements this year:

- We secured a stage 1 pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our second Landscape Partnership Scheme, focusing on the Allen Valleys; development work got underway.
- Continued to encourage best practice through promotion of the North Pennines Planning and Design Guides.
- We commented on over 30 planning applications and scoping studies and provided pre-application advice to developers.
- Geological advice and support were provided to many partners from the area.
- Cable undergrounding work has continued in partnership with the Distribution Network Organisations, through the second round of funding for Protected Landscapes as part of the Distribution Network Price Control Review. Work has progressed on a scheme for Newbiggin, Cumbria with Electricity North West. With Northern Powergrid we have carried out development work for schemes across County Durham and Northumberland, including completion of undergrounding in Teesdale and Weardale.
- Through further training we have increased the ability of the team to respond to planning applications affecting landscape character and visual amenity.
- The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (LNP) received official recognition in July 2012. The LNP now has a board and six working groups, developing work across six priority themes: High Nature Value (HVN) Farming, Woodland Creation, Biodiversity/Carbon Offsetting, Hay Meadow Restoration and Management, Ecological Networks Mapping and Peatland Restoration. Funding for work on woodland and HNV farming was secured from Natural England.
Land management and biodiversity

Our work in this important area has gone from strength to strength this year. We worked with a variety of landowners and other partners to conserve and enhance our hay meadows, peatlands and woodlands. Developing community-based wildlife recording has also been a focus.

Highlights:

- A record year for local seed spreading on our hay meadows through our Hay Time project.
- 2,500ha of bare/eroding peat was surveyed and our bare peat restoration got underway in earnest.
- Our collaborations with other peat programmes has led to the development of a Pennine Peat Partnership and work towards an EU LIFE bid.
- Over 600 recorders have now submitted over 8,500 wildlife records through our WildWatch project.

Some of our achievements this year:

**Hay meadows**

- We surveyed 117 hay meadows (and have now surveyed 1211 in total).
- Our volunteer botanists surveyed 15 meadows.
- Seed in green hay was spread on 42.8ha in 24 meadows bringing the total area where seed has been spread to 236ha (93 fields).
- We analysed all the botanical data that has been gathered since 2006 to evaluate the impact of the green hay harvesting and spreading work we have coordinated.
- We wrote to all of the 112 farmers who have been involved in the project to let them know the results of our data analysis and the impact of seed addition.
- All harvesting and spreading operations were funded through agri-environment schemes.

**Peatlands**

- This year we blocked 11km of grips in the North Pennines restoring over 57ha of blanket bog; our programme was dramatically affected by the snow.
- We completed the National Peat Depth and Carbon Storage survey for Natural England. We now have a better understanding of England’s peat and how much carbon is stored in peatlands.
- We have over 50ha of bare peat currently under restoration treatment with another 90ha being planned for the next year.
- We are working with Northumbrian Water Ltd to monitor the effects of peatland restoration on water colour.
- We are working with landowners such as the Ministry of Defence and Natural England to develop bare peat restoration projects totalling 90ha.
- Over 2,500ha of bare and eroding peat has been surveyed across the North Pennines AONB.
• In conjunction with the Yorkshire Peat Partnership we are developing the Pennine Peat Partnership. This will act to restore peatlands across the Northern Upland Chain Local Natural Partnership covering the Northumberland National Park, the North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale AONB.
• We are funding 10km of grip blocking work across three sites in the Northumberland National Park.

Woodlands

• We have continued to comment on felling and woodland planting proposals by Forestry Commission.
• We helped five landowners with the development of their woodland management plans and started a further one which was put on hold due to land registration issues.

WildWatch North Pennines

• We are half way through this three year community biodiversity recording and training project, which began in January 2012.
• There are 603 registrants, and 8,592 wildlife records have been submitted, linking directly to the environmental records centres in the North East and Cumbria.
• Fifty-seven wildlife recording training events were run this year (68 in total over the course of the project to date).
• Three local volunteer wildlife groups (Allen Valleys, South Tyne, Weardale) have been established.

Mine Water Remediation Stakeholder Engagement Project

The AONB Partnership continues to support the Environment Agency and Coal Authority’s investigations and proposals for metal mine remediation schemes in the North Pennines. This year we have:

• Liaised with landowners over access permissions for ground investigations.
• Coordinated statutory body stakeholder consultation meetings for proposals on the Rookhope Burn and Euden Beck, both in the Wear catchment.
• Carried out a consultation process with residents of Carrshield, in the West Allen, regarding the remediation proposals for Barneycraig Mine.
• Liaised with local residents in Carrshield over ground investigation works at Barneycraig Mine.
• Coordinated first stage negotiations for the purchase/leasing of land at Cowshill between a landowner and The Coal Authority.
• Made links with work that overlaps the mine water project, such as Tyne Rivers Trust Nent Diffuse Pollution Project, and the Tyne Sediments Project.

Nenthead spoil heap stabilisation trial

• Twelve months of monitoring have now been completed in partnership with the Tyne Rivers Trust. This has provided preliminary findings on the effectiveness of trial
treatments through monitoring the movement of the slope, the volume of spoil being eroded, and the concentrations of metals in the run-off following high rainfall events.
**Historic environment**

Our rich historic environment makes a significant contribution to the natural beauty of the North Pennines. Our community archaeology project, Altogether Archaeology, and our work on historic building restoration have enabled hundreds of local people to play an active role in the study and management of our heritage.

**Highlights:**

- Our successful pilot community archaeology project, Altogether Archaeology, received an additional three years of funding and therefore our 480 volunteers could continue their work.
- We have supported the development of a new company, Epiacum Heritage, focussed on Whitley Castle (Epiacum) Roman Fort, near Alston.
- Work was completed to consolidate Whitesyke and Bentyfield Mine.

**Some of our achievements this year:**

**Altogether Archaeology**

- Funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a new 3-year Altogether Archaeology project, which began in September 2012. The project has 480 registered volunteers and plans to complete a range of work under ten basic themes, ranging from the Stone Age to the 20th century.
- Volunteers completed an excavation at Dukesfield Arches, Hexhamshire. The results of this project were essential in enabling the Friends of the North Pennines to secure a HLF grant to conserve and interpret the arches, part of an historic lead smelting plant.
- The volunteers excavated the floor of the Buddle House at Killhope Lead Mining Museum, Weardale, uncovering in situ machinery sealed within the floor. The results are critical to the planned redevelopment of the Buddle House as an education room at the museum.
- Working with professional archaeologists from Durham University, our Altogether Archaeology volunteers completed a very detailed topographic and geophysical survey of the great stone circle at Long Meg, Little Salkeld, as part of a wider initiative looking at activity throughout the North Pennines during the Stone Age.

**Epiacum**

- Our historic environment officer, Paul Frodsham, worked closely with the owners of Whitley Castle (Epiacum) Roman Fort, Alston, to set up a new company, Epiacum Heritage Ltd, and to secure grants to deliver a range of successful public events at this very important site.
- Through our Altogether Archaeology project our volunteers, in partnership with Epiacum Heritage Ltd, completed the second annual molehill survey at the fort, resulting in the recovery of many artefacts that collectively will tell us much about activity on the site during Roman and later times.
Miner-Farmer landscapes

- The Miner-Farmer project on Alston Moor, led by English Heritage in association with the AONB Partnership, was largely completed. This has recorded the archaeology of Alston Moor in great detail for the first time, including the discovery of many previously unknown sites, including several prehistoric settlements.

Consolidation of buildings and structures

- Following our earlier consolidation of several of the AONB’s most important structures, work was completed to record and consolidate Whitesykes and Bentyfield Mines, funded by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- We continue to support the work of the Historic Chapels Trust at Westgate Chapel in Weardale. Progress in the last year has included the completion of a programme of emergency repairs funded by English Heritage, local charities and public donations.
Enjoying and understanding the North Pennines

Encouraging local people and visitors to explore, enjoy and understand the area is an important aspect of the AONB Partnership’s work.

Highlights:

- A new outdoor activities web portal – explorenorthpennines.org.uk was developed and launched.
- We have continued to develop Bowlees Visitor Centre towards our opening in the summer of 2013.
- Through the AONB Partnership’s WildWatch North Pennines project we involved over 60 young people in wildlife-based events and activities.
- Social media continues to grow with Twitter and Facebook followers doubling during the year.
- The AONB Partnership has surfaced a long stretch of the Pennine Way National Trail in Upper Teesdale.

Some of our achievements this year:

Geological interpretation/publications

- Between May and October we ran three successful ‘Rocky Weekends’, based in Dufton, Allendale and Bowlees. These were packages of geologically themed walks and talks. The aim was to encourage people to have fun and interesting short breaks in the North Pennines while also using local accommodation.
- We ran several guided geological walks and talks throughout the year as part of the AONB Partnership’s events programme, and also for local groups, societies and festivals.
- A new self-guided trail leaflet for the Bowlees-Holwick area, based on the life and times of Victorian lead miner-poet Richard Watson, was produced and distributed.
- We began a new project, in partnership with the Friends of Killhope, to record and celebrate the area’s past fluorspar mining industry. This has mainly involved recording the memories of former miners and others involved in the industry.
- New interpretation panels were produced for Killhope Borehole and its scientific significance.
- We helped produce a new panel interpreting the Stanhope Fossil Tree in Weardale.

Publications and the media

- We consulted on whether we should continue to produce the North Pennines Pocket Guide; the outcome was that we should. Work began on producing the 2013-14 guide.
- The Spring and Summer 2013 edition of North Pennines News was produced and distributed to 14,000 households in the North Pennines using Royal Mail Door-to-Door. One thousand copies were distributed to the Eastern Fellside using a distribution agent and a further 3,000 were distributed at events and shows by members of the staff team.
- Forty-four press releases were issued this year – resulting in over 200 stories in the media.
Six e-news bulletins were issued through the course of the year – keeping 1,500+ contacts up to date with the work of the AONB Partnership.

We continued to engage through our social media channels: our Twitter followers continue to grow, doubling to over 3,000 by the end of April and is now growing at several hundred per week; our Facebook fanpage ‘likes’ also doubled to 500+; and we launched a Pinterest account part way through the year – reaching almost 100 followers.

**Bowlees Visitor Centre**

- We have expended a great deal of effort in our work to take on Bowlees Visitor Centre. Like some of our other work, this too was affected by the extended winter weather, but after a £250,000 revamp with support from HLF and the North Pennine Dales LEADER programme, we will be open in early summer 2013. It is a bold venture for the AONB Partnership, in difficult economic times, but we are determined to make it succeed.
- Bowlees will be a place to which local people and visitors will be assured a warm welcome, an interesting range of activities and the opportunity to enjoy good food in pleasant surroundings. It provides the ideal starting point from which to explore the unique beauty of Upper Teesdale and the wider North Pennines AONB.

**Working with schools**

- In partnership with the Wear Rivers Trust, Killhope Museum and the Harehope Quarry Project we supported six Sunderland Primary Schools with field visits into the North Pennines.
- Allendale First School took part in two tree planting events at High Broadwood Hall and pupils at Bowes First School planted over 30 trees in their school grounds.
- Six undergraduate students from Durham University’s Conservation Society took part in a peat depth measurement activity.
- Twenty five 17-18 year olds from a Whitley Bay School attended an evening event - ‘Time Matters’ - where the links between peat development, archaeology and ‘space and time’ were discussed.
- Through our WildWatch North Pennines project we involved 60 young people in wildlife workshops, invasive plant control on the South Tyne River and small mammal trapping in the school grounds of Samuel King’s Secondary School, Alston and Allendale Park.

**Explore North Pennines**

- We developed and launched our new visitor-facing explorenorthpennines.org.uk website, using interactive mapping to allow people to discover the wealth of things to do in and around the AONB.

**Footpath maintenance**

- We surfaced a large part of the Pennine Way National Trail at Low Force in Upper Teesdale, allowing more people to experience the stunning landscapes of the AONB without damaging its fragile habitats.
Economy and business

The economy of the North Pennines is characterised by a multitude of small and medium sized enterprises.

A stunning landscape rich in wildlife, history and community, provides us with many services; only by supporting the things that keep it special can these vital services be provided into the future. Our landscape provides us with food, jobs, timber and building materials from farming, forestry, grouse moor management and small-scale quarrying for local stone. The high quality landscape also underpins the area's visitor economy which indirectly supports many local services.

Highlights:

- Successful Heritage Landscape Skills project.
- Continued good work on the Lottery-Local Food funded North Pennine Dales local food project - Lovefood - with our main partners Teesdale Marketing Ltd and South Durham Enterprise Agency.

Some of our achievements this year:

Lovefood - North Pennine Dales Local Food Project (in which we are a partner with Teesdale Marketing Ltd and Durham County Council):

- We have continued to support the Lovefood project, which is now in its third year. There has been a full events programme, utilising the trailer and mobile kitchen. Other work through Lovefood has included support for UTASS, support for business startups, educational programmes and capital investments.
- Our work in Lovefood has enabled us to secure valuable equipment for helping to fit-out Bowlees Visitor Centre.

Heritage Landscape Skills

- In 2010, the AONB Partnership was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Skills for the Future’ grant of £109,000 to pay for 60 months of training in dry stone walling and conservation and land management, over a four year period.
- In 2012, we were awarded a grant extension of £54,000 which represented a further 30 months of traineeship payments. This extension enabled the Partnership to train a further three wallers and an additional conservation and land management trainee.
- Two trainees achieved their Lantra/Dry Stone Walling Association Level 2 in dry stone walling in Sept 2012. One is currently working near Lanchester, Co. Durham and is helping to train a new trainee. The other has been doing general building work with stone carving.
- Our second Conservation and Land Management Trainee began in June 2012 and the third began in September 2012. They have attended a number of external training courses, been supported in their work by partners at the National Trust, RSPB, Durham Wildlife Trust and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, as well as AONB Partnership staff. They have recently led the following projects: Explore North
Pennines website; developing easy access routes; Dark Sky Discovery Sites - as a result of this work, we have been offered a grant of £4,000 from Durham University to progress the marketing and business support for Dark Skies Discovery Sites.

- We maintain two databases of people interested in conservation opportunities and in walling skills and also give individual advice to people looking for routes into these fields.
Community and culture

Supporting local communities in work to conserve, enhance and celebrate our natural beauty is one of our most important roles.

There has been an increase this year in our work with local people to help them interpret what's special about where they live. We have continued to support local community projects through our Sustainable Development Fund.

Highlights:

- Over £40,000 was given in Sustainable Development Fund grants or Small Grant Scheme funding to 22 projects with a total value of more than £250,000

Some of our achievements this year:

- Sustainable Development Fund and Small Grants Fund - examples of projects supported include: yurt accommodation at Killhope Museum; electric car charging points at Ninebanks Youth Hostel; brown signs on Alston Moor; the North Pennines Wool Group; and the Eden Foodival Festival.
- We worked with local photographer David Taylor and The Forge Studios in Allendale on a photographic exhibition which celebrated the geological heritage of the North Pennines AONB and Global Geopark. The images all had a QR code which linked users to the relevant page on our website and The Forge held one of our rock boxes to allow visitors to get close-up and personal with the rocks that form the basis of our landscape.
- We ran a sense of place workshop for tourism businesses based on Alston Moor, in partnership with Cumbria Tourism and Nurture Eden. The day was well attended and will result in the production of a handbook which summarises their local knowledge.
Increasing knowledge of the AONB

There is still much that we don’t know about the nature, history and economy of the North Pennines.

There are many organisations working to improve our collective knowledge and the AONB Partnership Staff Unit has begun to increase its role in gathering the information and data which will lead to better decision making and improved use of resources.

Highlights:

- We continued to manage the National Peat Depth and Carbon Storage project.
- We began an exciting new project to test the effects of new designs of access track on blanket peat.
- A major research effort on the impact of our work in restoring upland hay meadows has shown a positive outcome.

Some of our achievements this year:

- Forty-six upland hay meadow sites have been monitored before and after seed addition to see which plant species have established and these have been compared to a further 14 ‘control’ sites where seed has not been added. We were pleased to find that harvesting and spreading has been successful in the majority of cases, introducing key species such as yellow rattle, red fescue, meadow buttercup, red clover, pignut, lesser trefoil and great burnet. There is also evidence that plants like wood crane’s-bill, rough hawkbit and bird’s-foot trefoil are beginning to establish at some sites. These changes show that the addition of seed in green hay has helped to shift vegetation composition towards that typical of a traditional North Pennines upland hay meadow.
- We continued to work with Natural England to manage the National Peat Depth and Carbon Storage project. There are now new maps and estimates of peatland carbon storage across England – these will be published during summer 2013.
- We began coordinating an experiment to test the effects of new designs of access track on blanket peat.
- Four peer reviewed scientific papers resulting from our funded research projects were published by our university partners.
- We submitted a report to the Environment Agency, recording the achievements and quantifying impacts of our peatland work over the last six years.
- We worked with Northumbrian Water Ltd and Durham University to begin monitoring the effects of bare peat restoration on water quality.
- Long term vegetation monitoring is continuing to track changes and inform our decisions on seven peatland restoration sites.
Working at the national level

This year we continued to play a role in supporting the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) to work for the AONB Family across England and Wales.

The Director continued to serve as a Board member and director of the NAAONB and he held the portfolios for the Conference and for Collaboration between the AONB Family members. The Association continues to do outstanding work in the fields of influencing national policy, supporting training and development for staff, developing and supporting collaboration and promoting the value and importance of AONBs and the wider Protected Landscape Family.

In July 2012, we co-hosted the annual NAAONBs ‘Landscapes for Life’ Conference, in York.
What it cost and how it was paid for

This is a detailed breakdown of our income and expenditure for 2012-13.

Expenditure

*includes accommodation, equipment, office costs, print & publicity, Partnership running costs, financial management and seven posts.

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<td>Peatscapes</td>
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<td>Haytime</td>
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<td>Living North Pennines</td>
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# Income

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<td>Carried forward funds**</td>
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**Sums carried forward from previous years against peatland, hay meadows and other work (from Biffaward, EA)**

# Reserves

Our reserves are £140,570.82 (£74,000 of which is uncommitted).
The North Pennines is one of England’s most special places – a peaceful, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty. In recognition of this it is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is also a Global Geopark – an accolade endorsed by UNESCO.

This publication provides a summary of the work carried out by the AONB Partnership Staff Unit during the 2012-13 financial year.

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The AONB Partnership has a Green Tourism award for its corporate office

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another format.

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Braille Audio Large Print

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... as part of their support for the North Pennines AONB Partnership