

NORTH PENNINES NEWS

Spring & Summer 2006

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NORTH PENNINES

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty





A letter from the Chairman

Dear readers,

Welcome to the Spring and Summer edition of North Pennines News, the magazine which updates you on the activities of the North Pennines AONB Partnership and other organisations in the area.



It has been a busy and productive time for the AONB Partnership with the launch of three major new projects aimed at conserving, enhancing and celebrating the peatlands, geological heritage and hay meadows in the North Pennines: Peatscapes (page 3); Rockworks (centre pages); and Hay Time (page 10). In addition the 'Unique North Pennines' Landscape Partnership Scheme has passed Stage 1 and can now be submitted as a fully developed HLF application to hopefully secure the full grant of £1.95 million for a £2.7 million programme of work (page 14). Exciting times indeed!

Work to raise awareness and understanding of the area's special qualities is also in full swing this summer with four festivals: Northern Rocks (centre pages); Plants on High (page 12); Geotours and Rockwalks (centre pages); and the Roof of England Walks Festival (back page). The AONB Partnership has also been working in close cooperation with Cumbria Tourist Board on a joint initiative to market the sustainable tourism offer of the area and with the ONE NorthEast Tourism Team on rolling out the Green Tourism Business Scheme (page 6).

Finally the walling apprenticeship project is moving forward well (page 5), prospects look bright for water voles in the area (page 4), the Wheels to the Wild Cycle Route is nearing completion (page 7) and the Sustainable Development Fund has supported many excellent projects in its first year (page 13).

Cllr Bob Pendlebury
Chairman, North Pennines AONB Partnership

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PEATSCAPES PROJECT UP AND RUNNING



In the North Pennines you'll find 30% of England's upland heathland and 27% of its blanket bog

The North Pennines AONB Partnership is pleased to announce that the new Peatscapes project is now up and running. With the recent appointment of Paul Leadbitter (Project Manager) and David Bennett (Field Officer), Peatscapes, the first project of its kind in the north, will influence and deliver lasting and sustainable land management practices in the upland peatlands found in the North Pennines AONB.

Peatscapes staff will be working with land managers, farmers, and environmental organisations to deliver reduced run-off, improve Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) condition,

reduce water colour problems and improve the carbon storage capacity of the peatlands, whilst recognising that the habitat is also an important economic resource. Chris Woodley-Stewart, North Pennines AONB Officer said: "The Peatscapes team will work with the widest possible range of people who manage, use and enjoy the peatlands in the North Pennines. Peatscapes will also push to advance the science, thinking and land management practices on this globally important resource."

Peatscapes is dedicated to securing a sustainable future for the upland peatlands in the North Pennines. Peatlands in the

North Pennines represent some of the best intact examples in England of these internationally significant habitats.

"Peatlands are important for a number of reasons, including a water retention function that reduces flooding; reducing water colour in drinking water, carbon storage/sequestration which has implications on the impacts of global warming and an important economic role including activities such as grouse shooting and grazing," highlights Paul Leadbitter, Peatscapes Project Manager.

While the peatland resource of the North Pennines is relatively intact, there are some environmental challenges that need to be addressed. Drainage ditches (grips) dug over the last 60 years are still in place and are lowering the water table in lots of peatland areas. This drainage leads to degraded peatlands and a host of associated hydrological issues.

Inappropriate burning does occur in some areas; which has the effect of changing the structure of the plant and shrub layers which impacts on the formation of peat. High levels of grazing of sheep in some areas can also cause erosion and diversity problems in the peatlands.

The Peatscapes team will streamline, centralise, co-ordinate and celebrate the current conservation, restoration and monitoring efforts occurring on peatlands in the North Pennines AONB. The project has been funded over 3 years through the generous support of the Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, English Nature and Northumbrian Water.



David Bennett (left) and Paul Leadbitter



Controlled heather burning in the North Pennines © NPAP

For more information about Peatscapes contact Paul Leadbitter at the AONB Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (paulpeatscapes@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

RATTY GETS 'LEG UP' AT BURNHOPE

Following the completion of Northumbrian Water's new award-winning water treatment works below Burnhope Reservoir a novel idea emerged for the old works — to create a new wetland feature.

Ecological studies undertaken as part of an environmental impact assessment identified a healthy population of water voles along Burnhope Burn just below the old treatment works. "However the population was vulnerable as its range was limited by rocky outcrops along the stream sides, restricting the opportunities for burrows," explains Stuart Pudney, an ecologist working with the water company.

Abandonment of the old works provided an ideal opportunity for Northumbrian Water to meet one of its Biodiversity Action Plan targets and a regional target for the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan by creating a new wetland feature specifically designed for the water voles. The bank sides of the new pond were carefully profiled to suit the burrowing requirements of the voles



Hide at Burnhope Reservoir © Northumbrian Water

and native planting, including aquatic and marginal plants like bogbean, water marigold and yellow flag iris, was undertaken to provide both shelter and food sources. Water level control will prevent burrows from being flooded and can also allow lowering for maintenance purposes.

Public facilities include an accessible viewing hide, a layby with space for

several cars and a surfaced footpath to the hide. "As the wetland establishes itself it is hoped that people will be able to see water voles feeding and swimming across the pond - fingers crossed," added Stuart.

For more information contact
Northumbrian Water on 0870 6084820

ANOTHER WATER VOLE SUCCESS

The AONB Water Vole Project, beginning this summer, will help conserve and enhance the important populations of this rare mammal found in the North Pennines.

Sarah Tooze, North Pennines AONB Area Coordinator (North), the member of the AONB Partnership Staff Unit responsible for getting this joint project off the ground, says, "Once common and widespread across Britain, the water vole has suffered a long-term decline in both numbers and distribution which has accelerated dramatically in the last 20



Spot the elusive water vole! © Kevin O'Hara & Northumberland Wildlife Trust

years." Recent surveys by the Vincent Wildlife Trust suggest that the population has declined by approximately 93% across the UK over the last 15 years.

Currently, survey and conservation work is being undertaken by the three Wildlife Trusts — Cumbria, Northumberland and Durham. All three counties have important water vole populations in the North Pennines. Steve Lowe from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust said: "Research suggests that water voles function as 'metapopulations', meaning that a cluster of colonies will interact, helping to sustain their genetic diversity. It's therefore important to develop conservation strategies at the landscape scale". For this reason a partnership has been formed between the AONB Partnership, the three Wildlife Trusts and the Environment Agency to create a nine-month post.

Lee Rankin, currently a Countryside Ranger with Durham County Council, will be joining the AONB Staff Unit as the new Water Vole Officer, based in the AONB Partnership Office in Stanhope. Lee will be working with a wide variety of individuals and organisations to develop and produce an action plan to deliver the Regional Biodiversity Action Plan targets for water voles in the North Pennines.

The plan will address issues such as: connecting habitat for water voles to prevent isolation of colonies, encouraging re-colonisation, and identifying priority locations to target resources.

Alastair Laverty, Biodiversity Technical Specialist for the Environment Agency, which is funding this first phase concludes: "Further funding will be sought to follow up this initial phase of the project with targeted conservation work".

In the first instance please contact Sarah Tooze, North Pennines AONB Area Co-ordinator (North), on 01388 528801 (sarah@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) for further information

WALLING PROJECT UPDATE

The AONB Partnership's Dry Stone Walling Apprenticeship Scheme is well on the way to becoming a reality with the offer of a grant from Defra's Rural Enterprise Scheme. The project will provide ten apprenticeships in the craft of dry stone walling and will begin mid summer this year.

Dry stone walls are an important feature of the protected landscape of the North Pennines AONB. The majority of the walls were built in the 18th and 19th century and are mainly of sandstone. Because of their age and the nature of the stone used approximately half are now in a state of disrepair or dereliction. Although many landowners are accessing grants to repair and rebuild dry stone walls, there is currently a lack of skilled dry stone walling craftsmen available in the area.

"There are limited opportunities for those wanting to train to become skilled wallers," says Sarah Tooze, North Pennines AONB Area Coordinator (North). "Wallerers are often unwilling to take on apprentices because they cannot afford the drop in earnings that this would entail. This project is intended to help address this problem by working in



Drystone Walls are an important element in the North Pennine landscape © Shane Harris/NPAP

partnership with existing wallers to take on an apprentice for one year."

The apprentices will be trained on the job, as they earn a wage, but also take part in formal training and assessments with BTCV towards an NVQ Level II in Environmental Conservation and the Lantra Certificate in Dry Stone Walling. The employing wallers will receive compensation so that the reduced amount of walling work they are able to undertake while training an apprentice does not affect their overall income.

The AONB Partnership Staff Unit is working closely with BTCV and the Northumbria Branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association to get this project off the ground. We would like to hear from anyone interested in taking part; either as an employing waller, or an apprentice.

For more information please contact Sarah Tooze at the North Pennines AONB Partnership Staff Unit on 01388 528801.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AONBs

It is 50 years since the Gower was designated as the first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of



*Rossili Bay in the Gower Peninsula AONB
© City & County of Swansea*

AONBs are taking place throughout England and Wales and in the North Pennines the AONB Partnership is working with Parish Councils to plant a tree in at least 50 parishes as part of our contribution to the marking of this significant milestone.

What is happening?

The AONB Partnership is contacting every Parish Council within (or partly within) the AONB boundary and inviting them to take up the offer of a free tree and tree stake. The tree is likely to be what is known as a 'standard' (approx 6-8 feet high). Parish Councils will be able to choose a tree from a list of locally sourced native species.

Parish Councils would simply have to agree with the AONB Staff Unit the proposed location of the tree and arrange for its planting. We are aiming to co-ordinate the planting for Sunday 3 December 2006 to coincide with National

Tree Week; it is also the weekend prior to the 6 December, which is 50 years to the day since the first AONB designation.

Other AONBs

To highlight the 50th Anniversary milestone there is an exciting range of events and activities taking place in other AONBs around the country. Visit www.visitaonb.org.uk to discover what else is happening in the other 49 AONBs throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Getting involved

If you would like to get involved in this celebration and plant a new feature tree in your Parish, please contact the AONB Partnership on 01388 528801 or info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk You could be creating something under which future generations can celebrate 150 years of AONBs!

GREEN TOURISM

ONE NorthEast Tourism Team and Green Business UK have announced that they will be working with the North Pennines AONB Partnership and other protected landscape organisations in the North East, including those for the Northumberland Coast AONB and Northumberland National Park, to roll out the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS).

The accreditation scheme typically results in: 10-30% cost savings; a 'green' marketing edge; enhanced image and customer satisfaction. The initial phase will start with a seminar in Hexham in June with the rollout of the scheme over the next three years. It is hoped that 110 businesses will join. Businesses are being invited to register their interest in taking part in the pilot phase, which will involve a wide cross-section of tourism businesses from accommodation providers to attractions and retail businesses. The GTBS has over 900 members in Scotland and England.

To enter the GTBS businesses are required to reduce their impact on the environment, by implementing a number of practical measures covering business management, communication, energy efficiency, water savings, waste minimisation, green purchasing, transport,



Finding out about the geology of the North Pennines - © NPAP/Shane Harris

and wildlife.

Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism Officer for the North Pennines AONB Partnership, said: "We are delighted to be supporting the introduction of this scheme in the parts of the North Pennines in the

NE Region. Most of the tourism offer in the AONB is directly dependent on the area's high quality environment and this scheme is a way for tourism businesses to ensure that their impact on the environment is kept to a minimum.

To register your interest contact Janet Smith, ONE NorthEast Tourism Team, on 0191 2296841 (janet.smith@onenortheast.co.uk). Alternatively contact Shane Harris on 01388 528801 (shane@northpenninesaonb.org.uk). If you are a tourism business in the Cumbria part of the AONB, contact Claire Stott at the Conservation and Tourism Partnership in Ambleside on 015394 34630 (claire@lakespartnership.org.uk) to find out about their 'Responsible Tourism' scheme. Visit www.green-business.co.uk to find out more about the GTBS.

MARKETING NATURE!

Almost 5,000 people have responded to a joint marketing campaign between Cumbria Tourist Board (CTB) and the North Pennines AONB Partnership. Activity kicked off in March this year with a 20,000 direct mail campaign and was followed up with an e-newsletter entry sent to 40,000 people and a promotional page on CTB's website. Funding for the campaign came

from CTB and the Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (STIPA) programme – an initiative from the AONB Partnership, funded by ONE NorthEast and the EU INTERREG IIIc programme.

"The campaign centred on Alston and the North Pennines," explains Keri Smith, Brand Development Manager with CTB.

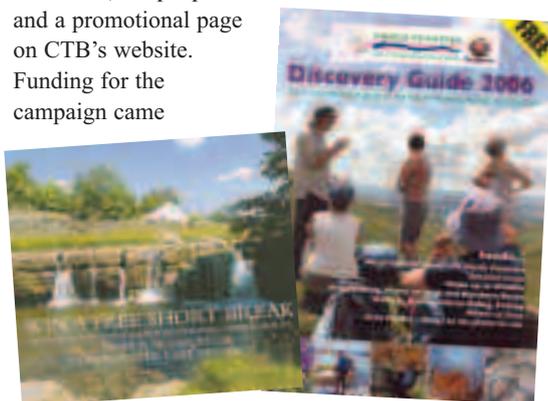
"The direct mail was based on a profile developed from last year's Alston benchmarking exercise and the response has been fantastic. Conversion research will be carried out later in the year to judge the effectiveness of the initiative and quantify the economic impact."

The campaign is based around a competition to win a short break for two at Lowbyer Manor Country House in Alston.

People entering the free prize draw were sent copies of the 2006 North Pennines Discovery Guide. "We were delighted to offer the Discovery Guide as fulfilment for the campaign," says Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism and Communications Officer for the AONB Partnership. "An opportunity to highlight the nature-based and outdoor recreation offer in the North Pennines to a brand new audience was too good to miss," he added.

If you would like to get hold of a paper copy of the 2006 Discovery Guide call 01388 528801 or send an email to info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

Alternatively the full guide is also available on the AONB Partnership's website www.northpennines.org.uk – click on 'Exploring the North Pennines'



WHEELS TO THE WILD

As part of the work associated with the status of the North Pennines AONB as a UNESCO European and Global Geopark, the 'Wheels to the Wild Cycle Route' has been created. The ride, branded as a 'geology and landscape' cycle route, is one of the elements of the Rockworks Project – see centre page for more details.

"Cycling and geotourism are important elements in developing sustainable tourism within the AONB," said Chris Woodley-Stewart, North Pennines AONB Officer. "People visiting the area to cycle and to see landscape and geological features help to support accommodation providers and other service related businesses."

"The route runs through the heart of the North Pennines and is approximately 70 miles long," said Elizabeth Pickett, Geodiversity Officer for the North Pennines AONB Partnership. "It is anticipated that it will take cyclists between two and three days to complete," she continued. The ride follows quiet roads and tracks and starts in Wolsingham, passing through Frosterley, Stanhope, Rookhope, Allenheads, Nenthead, Alston, Garrigill, Middleton-in-Teesdale and returns to Wolsingham via Hamsterley Forest. It also

includes three linked day-rides.

Off road opportunities for the route have also been identified and the work undertaken includes physical route improvements, cycle service improvements such as cycle parking, promotion through a route guide with an accommodation and services section and marketing through various avenues. The project also includes the publication of a 'Cycling Opportunities in the AONB' leaflet, which co-ordinates the cycling offer across the whole of the North Pennines.

The main funding for creation of the route has come from Wear Valley Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Other funding has come from the Countryside Agency and the Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas project, funded by One NorthEast and the EU INTERREG IIIc programme.

Simon Wilson (North Pennines AONB Area Co-ordinator, East) who has been contributing to route development says:

The guide will be available to buy in late June. For more information contact the AONB Partnership Staff Unit on 01388 528801 or visit www.northpennines.org.uk



© kg photography

"This initiative develops the cycling product in the North Pennines and will provide up to six days, self-guided, riding in the AONB. By considering the whole product for visitors and due to specific funding, we have been able to invest directly in accredited serviced accommodation businesses, particularly in Weardale, to improve the welcome they are able to give cycle tourists."

REDS IN THE WOODS

The manager of Killhope, the North of England Lead Mining Museum, Ian Forbes, says that: "as the plight of our native red squirrels moves higher up the national agenda, the remaining population in the North Pennines is increasingly becoming recognised as an asset to be protected and celebrated."

Killhope staff were delighted when they discovered, several years ago, a thriving colony of red squirrels in the woods which surround the museum. Volunteers built an observation hide and a squirrel feeding station near one of the museum's woodland walks, and squirrel watching became a new attraction at Killhope. Visitors have been thrilled to see these charming animals and for many, particularly visitors from the south of England, a visit to Killhope has provided their first ever sighting of a native red squirrel.

Realising that Killhope was a wonderful place to see red squirrels in the



© Marcus Byron

heart of the North Pennines, museum staff developed a partnership to improve access and produce interpretation about the life of the squirrel and its fight for survival.

Working with BTCV, the Friends of Killhope, the AONB Partnership's Staff Unit and Red Alert, Killhope has installed a new fully accessible squirrel hide in the museum's woods with squirrel and bird feeders nearby. An interpretation panel in the hide tells the story of the squirrels' year and further interpretation panels form a 'squirrel trail' round the woods. To complete the project pupils from Fyndoune Community College have been planting tree screening around the hide.

This is a great addition to the museum,

made possible by the Friends of Killhope, BTCV's 'People's Places' scheme and the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Sustainable Tourism in Protected Area's (STiPA) project.

To help the whole family enjoy the woodland walks, museum staff have put together 'Sam Squirrel' young explorer activity backpacks which can be borrowed free of charge and taken round the woods. "It was an added bonus when the backpacks won a Durham Wildlife Trust Conservation Award as the 'Rural Community Winner' in 2005," added Ian.

Contact Killhope, the North of England Lead Mining Museum on 01388 537505 (killhope@durham.gov.uk) or visit www.durham.gov.uk/killhope for more information

SPOTLIGHT ON ROCKWORKS



High Force, England's biggest waterfall - © Teesdale Marketing

Rockworks is the AONB Partnership's new four year project aimed at making the most of the area's amazing geology. Through the Northern Rocks Festival, children's clubs, events and trails, resources for schools, training events and evening courses, the geology of the AONB and UNESCO Geopark will be brought to life in imaginative and exciting ways which also aim to support the local economy.

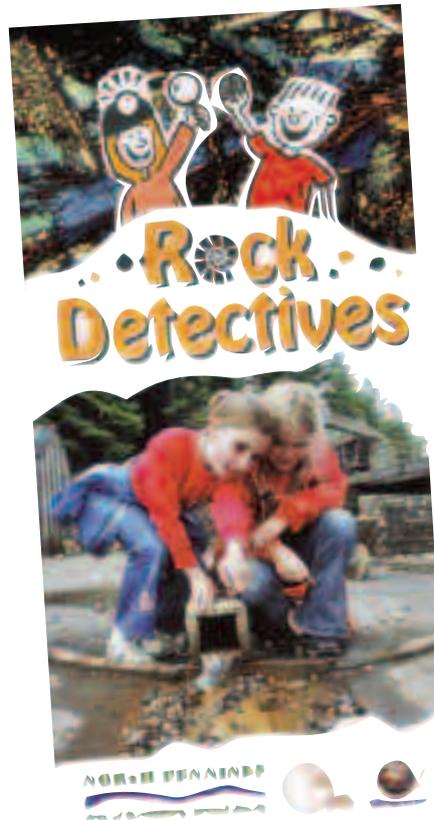
As part of the Rockworks project, Dr Elizabeth Pickett has been employed as the AONB Partnership's new Geodiversity Officer, the first such post within any of the 41 AONBs in England and Wales. Elizabeth comes to the AONB Staff Unit after a 10 year stint with the British Geological Survey where she worked on geological mapping, as well as writing and illustrating popular and scientific publications.

Rock Detectives Surpasses Expectations!

Rock Detectives is the AONB Partnership's new children's geology club for 6 to 12 year olds, with the emphasis on fun and discovery! The clubs are hosted by three of our partner organisations, East Cumbria Countryside Project, Harehope Quarry Project and Fawside. They meet every other month in Weardale and at Talkin Tarn (less frequently at Allendale) and are promoted through an attractive leaflet which highlights a year's events.

Events for the year include quarry visits, fossil cast making, museum visits and much more. Membership is only £1 and after that all events are free. Members also get a free Rock Detectives T-shirt and an attractive bag for keeping your Rock Detectives kit in!

Geodiversity Officer Elizabeth Pickett said, "We weren't sure what kind of interest Rock Detectives would generate, but with almost 200 members it has surpassed our expectations! It's great that so many kids are interested in finding out more about how exciting geology can be."



Further information about the Rock Detectives clubs is available from the AONB Partnership or by contacting Fawside (01434 683334), East Cumbria Countryside Project (01228 561601) or Harehope Quarry Project (01388 528599).

Supported by...



The, £600K, four-year, Rockworks programme aims to conserve and interpret the world-renowned geological heritage found in the North Pennines and use it as a tool for sustainable development. It is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Countryside Agency and LEADER+.

Wheels to the Wild Cycle Route

Look out for the article on this geology and landscape themed cycle trail, also part of Rockworks, on page 7.



New Teachers' Pack Supports Geo-education



More children could soon be discovering the AONB's unique geology © NPAP/Shane Harris

Another aspect of Rockworks is the production of new materials to help teachers make the most of the North Pennines' geological heritage for delivering the National Curriculum. Though geology is only rarely taught as a stand-alone subject, it is possible to use a study of geology to inform much of the rest of the curriculum, particularly at primary level, though also in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in 16 plus teaching.

Durham University and Harehope Quarry Project have been contracted by the AONB Partnership Staff Unit to produce the new pack. They are working with the Staff Unit to create an invaluable and attractive resource that will include background information, lesson ideas,

worksheets, photographs and illustrations, plus a 'rock box' with samples of local rocks and minerals for hands-on study before and after work in the field.

It is hoped the packs will be ready in time for the 2006 Autumn Term, after trials with a local school.

Northern Rocks Festival

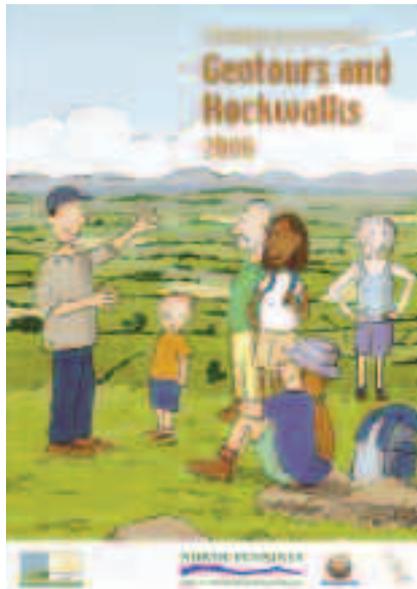
The North Pennines Festival of Geology and Landscape, between May 20 and June 4, is going from strength to strength as it builds on the last year's success. The two weeks are packed full of almost 60 events and activities to help local people and visitors unlock the geological secrets held within the folds of the North Pennine landscape.

Geotours and Rockwalks

Also as part of the project, the AONB Partnership is working with a number of other organisations and individuals to run a series of guided visits to the AONB and Geopark this year.

Called Geotours and Rockwalks, the programme consists of a series of themed walks and guided minibus tours to help people discover and explore the amazing rocks and landscapes of the area. The events include walks through High Cup Nick with return transport, journeys along the Teesdale Time Trail and a 'Pennine Highlights' tour of geological sites and features. As well as staff from the AONB Staff Unit, other organisations helping to put on this programme include the British Geological Survey, East Cumbria Countryside Project, Ladycross Quarry and Nature Reserve, North Pennines Heritage Trust and local geologist Brian Young.

The 18 events are running between April and October and are promoted in a brochure available from the AONB Partnership. Geodiversity Officer Elizabeth Pickett said, "We hope the



Geotours in particular will attract new audiences who either don't have access to a car or who would really like to explore the countryside in a greener way".

There'll also be short walks on the Geotours, so it won't all be getting on and off a bus - there'll be plenty of chances to stretch your legs too!"



The variety is mind boggling. People can: join themed walks and view the North Pennines through fresh eyes; sign up for geological holidays and find out how to 'read the landscape'; 'touch the rock' with a qualified climbing instructor; explore old lead mines with expert guides; attend talks and discover how toothpaste links to the rocks and minerals dug from the North Pennines; find out the impact ice sheets have had on the area; join a rock safari, get lost at Low Force and take up the watercolour landscape challenge! What more could you possibly ask for?



Places are limited and booking is essential for most events. Call the AONB Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) or visit www.northpennines.org.uk and click on 'Exploring the North Pennines'

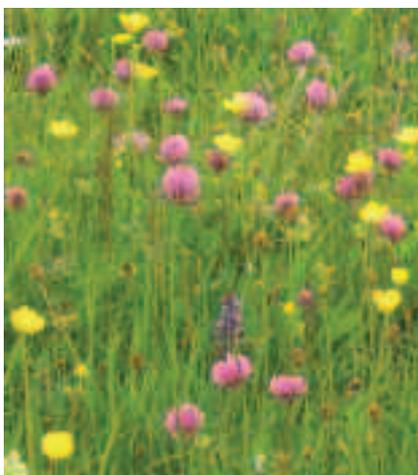
HAY TIME!

A major new £230,000 project to help look after the important hay meadows found within the North Pennines AONB has started. The North Pennines contains over 40% of the UK's remaining upland hay meadows and as such is a very important area for this stunning habitat. The project will also increase public awareness, enjoyment and understanding of the upland hay meadows found in the area.

Working together with farmers in the North Pennines, the Hay Time project will harvest wildflower seeds from species-rich meadows and use these to enhance meadows that have lost some of their characteristic plants over recent decades. Farmers participating in the project may be eligible for funding from agri-environment schemes.

Hay Time is a partnership between the North Pennines AONB Partnership, the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. The project is funded by the Tubney Charitable Trust, Defra's Rural Enterprise Scheme, delivered by the Rural Development Service; English Nature, the Countryside Agency, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the North Pennines AONB Partnership.

Hay meadows in the North Pennines are one of the most important habitats in Northern England. Largely lost from the rest of the country, these meadows survive thanks to traditional farming practices, in particular the late cutting of the crop in July or August. John O'Reilly, the new Hay Time Project Officer, is part of the AONB Partnership's Staff Unit.



Hay meadow in the North Pennines © Fiona Corby



Turning the hay crop in a meadow in Upper Teesdale © Shane Harris

Over the next three and a half years he will be working closely with farmers across the North Pennines AONB. He will be establishing and producing:

- Systems for collecting and distributing high quality local hay meadow seed
- Contracts with agricultural contractors to operate the specialised machinery for hay meadow seed harvesting
- Demonstration sites where hay meadow restoration techniques can be showcased
- Training on land management techniques to benefit hay meadows
- User-friendly, guidance on the importance of upland hay meadows and how to look after them.

John is keen to make contact with farmers who are interested in participating in the project, either through having seed harvested from their meadows or through having their meadows enhanced through the addition of seed. John said: "Hay Time is an important and exciting project and I am delighted to be part of it. Having worked in North Pennines hay meadows in the past I understand how special this habitat is and how dependent it is on careful farm management. I am looking forward to working closely with hay meadow farmers in the North Pennines and believe that by working together, the future for our wonderful hay meadows will be much brighter."

In a similar vein an Upper Teesdale farmer is set to ensure his hay meadows bloom after signing one of the region's first Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)

agreements. Richard Spry, of Newbiggin House, Newbiggin, Upper Teesdale, is among the first farmers in the area to sign up to HLS and his agreement includes a commitment to carry out work to conserve and enhance the species-rich hay meadows on his farm.

"We were in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme and when our agreement ended in April last year, HLS seemed the logical follow on," explained Mr Spry. "It's only a small farm of just over 20 hectares, but we have four hay meadows, one of which has quite a rare sub-species of lady's-mantle and as part of the agreement we'll be collecting seeds from here to help rejuvenate the other fields."

Karen Purvis, an adviser for the Rural Development Service in the North East, added: "More than 900 farmers and land managers across the region have now signed Environmental Stewardship agreements. Mr Spry's agreement focuses on conserving and improving his hay meadows and links in with our recent funding, through the Rural Enterprise Scheme, of the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Hay Time project."

For further details on the new Hay Time project in the North Pennines contact John O'Reilly, Hay Time Project Officer or Rebecca Barrett, North Pennines AONB Area Coordinator (North) on 01388 528801.

THE ROOKHOPE BOREHOLE *by Brian Young*

The internationally famous ore deposits of the North Pennines have attracted research from the earliest days of geological science. The Rookhope Borehole, drilled for the University of Durham's Department of Geology in 1960 and 61, was one of the area's most important contributions to world geological science. In view of the interest in this borehole at the display of its results at the 2005 Northern Rocks Festival, this brief article provides a brief update of recent events at Rookhope.

The borehole's importance

Generations of miners recognised a zonation in the distribution of minerals in the Pennine veins, though only in the 1930s was the significance of this realised by a young PhD student from Durham. Kingsley Dunham reasoned that this could indicate a body of granite deep beneath the area that might explain the origins of the deposits. Gradually, other lines of geological evidence added weight to this hypothesis, notably observations from the emerging science of geophysics, which predicted that granite might be present at between 300 and 600 metres beneath Rookhope. Government funding enabled the drilling of the borehole which reached granite at 390.5 metres. The results led to a major re-thinking, not just of the geology in the North Pennines, but of the origins of similar vein deposits worldwide.

Boltsburn miners' bothy

The borehole core was stored in the former Boltsburn miners' bothy at Burnside Cottages in Rookhope, a building donated to the Durham Geology Department by the Weardale Lead Company at the time of drilling. This became something of a place of pilgrimage for researchers studying geology in the North Pennines and the origins of lead and fluorspar deposits.

However, the University's decision to sell the building in 2005, meant that a new home had to be found for the core. In collaboration with the University of Durham Department of Earth Sciences, the British Geological Survey has taken the 25 tonnes of core into safe keeping at its headquarters, the Sir Kingsley Dunham Centre, Keyworth, Nottingham. It is planned to return parts of the core to Durham University, Killhope Museum, and elsewhere in the area, for display and interpretation.

This world famous borehole core remains safe and accessible for future research and interpretation.



The borehole on display during the 2005 Northern Rocks Festival © Shane Harris/NPAP



Removing the borehole from Boltsburn miners' bothy © Stuart Clarke/BGS



Borehole cores in the miners' bothy © Stuart Clarke/BGS

More information on the place of the Rookhope Borehole in the area's natural heritage may be found in: FORBES, I, YOUNG, B, CROSSLEY, C and HEHIR, L, 2003, *Lead Mining Landscapes of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, Durham County Council (ISBN 0 902178 20 2), available in local bookshops and Tourist Information Centres.

Information on details of the borehole results and on gaining access to the core may be obtained from the British Geological Survey, Sir Kingsley Dunham Centre, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG. Tel: 0115 936 3100.

PLANTS ON HIGH FESTIVAL

Plants on High – the North Pennines wild plant festival aims to offer a wide range of activities for people young and old to discover and enjoy our fantastic plants and habitats. Running from 9 June to 23 July, the festival is packed full of almost 50 events and activities.

The festival is an initiative of the North Pennines AONB Partnership and has only been possible through the close co-operation of over 30 individuals and organisations.

Did you know?

- Some plant species in Upper Teesdale are relics from the last Ice Age and are thought to have occurred in the same location for up to 12,000 years
- Nine species of lady's-mantles are found in the North Pennines of which two are nationally scarce



Harebells in an Upper Teesdale hay meadow
© NPAP/Shane Harris



Mountain Pansy at Sinderhope
© NPAP/Rebecca Barrett

- Unusual and special groups of plants colonise areas contaminated by toxic waste from past lead mining activities
- The AONB is home to 23 species of Red Data Book plants
- The North Pennines contains 40% of the UK's remaining upland hay meadows and 30% of England's upland heathland

Plants on High – the North Pennines wild plant festival aims to offer a wide range of activities for people young and old to discover and enjoy our fantastic plants and habitats. Running from 9 June to 23 July, the festival is packed full of almost 50 events and activities.

If you enjoy walking, the festival includes 33 guided walks ranging from half a mile to 11 miles. During these

walks, not only will you see some stunning scenery but you will be in the company of a plant expert who will be able to point out the special species you see on the way. Beginner botanists can learn the basics of identification during a number of special walks and those with more experience can take up the challenge of identifying more tricky species such as grasses or lady's-mantles.

If you are interested in artistic activities, the programme contains a great range of creative events using plants as inspiration – from the use of plant dyes, to felt making and photography. Other events will explain about the cultural significance of plants, how the rotted remains of plants help to preserve archaeological finds, why roadside verges are especially important and which species are safe to eat! So, why not join us and find out more about why the North Pennines is so special for plants.

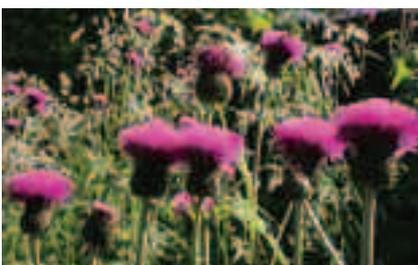


Meadow cranesbill © NPAP/Shane Harris

For a copy of the full Plants on High programme contact the North Pennines AONB Partnership Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) or visit our website at www.northpennine.org.uk and click on 'Exploring the North Pennines'

TEES BANK FLOWERS

With funding from the AONB Partnership's Small Grant Scheme, the Upper Teesdale Botany Group has produced a series of three leaflets describing the flowers that



Melancholy thistle © Shane Harris/NPAP

can be seen along the River Tees between Scorberry Bridge and High Force.

Each leaflet covers a short section of the Tees Bank, 1 mile or less in length, and gives details of how to identify plants and facts about them. The following are extracts from Leaflet 2 – Flowers between Wynch Bridge and Holwick Head Bridge:

Sneezewort (July-August)

The chalky-white flower heads are arranged in a loose 'umbrella' at the top of the 20-60cm stem. It occurs on damp, neutral or acid soils. Used to ease stuffy heads and toothache; dried and ground it is used as snuff.

Melancholy Thistle (July-August)

A tall, spineless thistle with usually only one large, purple-red head per stem and white 'felted' undersides to the leaves; it likes damper meadows and waysides. The leaf extract soaked in wine 'expels superfluous melancholy ... and makes Man as merry as a cricket'. Locally known as 'shaving brushes'."

The leaflets are available from Tourist Information Centres in Middleton, Barnard Castle and Stanhope and at Bowlees Visitor Centre.

SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The first year of the North Pennines AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has seen just over £100,000 provided by the AONB Staff Unit to support new work to bring benefits to people, economy and environment in the area. Funding for the SDF has come to the AONB Partnership from Defra, via the Countryside Agency.

The first year's funding supported 7 projects, including:

- Renewable energy and grey water treatment work at Langdon Beck Youth Hostel
- Work to extend the Farmhouse Kitchen at Holwick using traditional materials and allowing an expansion of the business
- Support for sustainable tourism initiatives in the Allen Valleys and for the development of the community facility at Deneholme, through Fawside
- Conservation and interpretation of Smallcleugh Mine at Nenthead, by the North Pennines Heritage Trust.

Other recipients were RSPB for work at Geltsdale Nature Reserve in Carlisle District, the Harehope Quarry Project in Weardale and Killhope - the North of England Lead Mining Museum.

After a further trawl for applications for

the coming year's programme, £86,000 has already been committed, with several strong applications on hold pending further information from the applicants. Projects offered grants for the coming year include the next phase of the North Pennines Black Grouse Recovery Project, an extension to (and a geologically themed interior) at Ninebanks Youth Hostel, a North Pennines Sculpture Workshop at Eggleston and the development of the Old School House in Sinderhope as a community facility.

"The successful call for projects means that no new applicants are being sought for the 2006-07 financial year," said Chris Woodley-Stewart, North Pennines AONB Officer. "But if you have a potential project for 2007-8 the AONB Partnership would be more than happy to advise you on their suitability for support from the SDF," added Chris.

Initiatives that are based within or benefit the North Pennines AONB, which aim to support environmental, social and economic prosperity could be eligible for



funding of between £3,000 and £30,000. Suitable projects might include: appropriate renewable/green energy schemes; sustainable transport projects; innovative products or initiatives connected to land management; community youth schemes with an environmental or heritage aspect; nature, landscape or historic environment conservation

activities; sustainable tourism projects, including infrastructure or product development; and projects which directly address actions in the AONB Management Plan.

The SDF complements the AONB Partnership's Small Grants Scheme, which since its launch in 2002 has supported over 90 projects aimed at caring for and celebrating the AONB.

A leaflet outlining both the SDF and the Small Grants Scheme is available. For more information please contact the AONB Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) or visit www.northpennines.org.uk – for further guidance and to download 'Expression of Interest' forms.

YHA's RENEWED FOCUS

The YHA has undertaken a national strategic review and has decided to strengthen its focus on young people while continuing to 'welcome all'. "We need to put more resources where needed – in destinations that attract young



Langdon Beck YHA in Upper Teesdale
© Shane Harris/NPAP

people in groups, with their families or travelling independently," says Ian Baker, YHA's Deputy Regional Manager in the North West. For years the North Pennines has boasted no less than seven Youth Hostels. Three of these – YHA Baldersdale, YHA Alston and YHA Kirkby Stephen will close and be sold at the end of the 2006 season.

This leaves four hostels in the North Pennines. Ian Baker explains, "It's a bit like going from the Magnificent Seven to the Fantastic Four! We will still have a good geographical spread and plenty of beds in the area. The remaining hostels have either been refurbished in recent times or are undergoing improvements now. YHA Edmundbyers and YHA

Dufton are popular hostels each with their own atmosphere, YHA

Langdon Beck has its nationally renowned environmental credentials being augmented by a building project just completed, and YHA Ninebanks, which is privately owned and operates within our YHA Enterprise Scheme, will have work going on this season building new bedrooms and a new dining room."

To find out more contact Ian Baker, YHA's Deputy Regional Manager in the North West on 017683 71296.



UNIQUE NORTH PENNINES

A major project which will bring about a wide range of exciting wildlife and community initiatives in the North Pennines AONB cleared its first hurdle last October. The project called 'Unique North Pennines - a Landscape Moulded by People', can now progress and be submitted as a fully developed application to hopefully secure the full grant of £1.95 million for a £2.7million programme of work.

There are six separate programmes within the project, each focusing on a specific aspect of the North Pennines. For instance, one of the programmes will create a whole range of new native woodlands and improve the management of others. Other strands include work to protect some of the most important historic buildings of the area, such as the Shildon Engine House near Blanchland.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is making £41,000 in development funding available to work out the fine detail of all these

 Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund



Native woodlands in the AONB will benefit from the project © Teesdale Marketing

plans over the next 18 months. If this second stage is successful, work on projects will start during 2007. A new member of staff, Nick Mason, has joined the Staff Unit from the RSPB in Newcastle, to help develop the project. One of his most important tasks will be to work closely with the communities of Alston, Blanchland and Middleton-in-

Teesdale to ensure that the Stage 2 bid takes account of local priorities.

Assistant AONB Officer Peter Samsom said: "This is excellent news for the North Pennines and it is thanks to the involvement of many people and lots of organisations over a number of years that we have come this far."

Keith Bartlett, Regional Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund, added:

"The distinctive landscape of the North Pennines has a wealth of natural and industrial heritage that is very special to the area. It is great news that we're supporting a scheme that helps so many people come together to help conserve and enhance it for future generations to explore, cherish and enjoy."

For more information please contact Nick Mason or Peter Samsom at the AONB Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

TRANSYLVANIAN LIME-BURNERS

Peter Kempsey tells North Pennines News readers about a European Union funded limekilns project:

"At the end of May 2005 a group of people from the area spent ten days living with Romanian farmers, watching and helping in the process of making lime. Our group included two stone-masons, a painter and decorator, architect, conservation officer and planning consultant.

The use of lime rather than cement in the conservation of old buildings is both more sustainable in terms of production and also more effective in reducing problems of water penetration and frost damage to stonework. Lime was produced across the UK and there are many field kilns scattered around the North Pennines. Since the introduction of cement kilns have fallen into disuse.

The purpose of the visit was to see how Romanians make lime in the traditional manner and to see whether we could replicate this here and also possibly start to fire up some of the many old kilns in the North Pennines. We took part in the whole process, going by horse and cart to

gather stone from a limestone outcrop and cave, and logs in the forest for the fire.

A limestone vault was made in the 'cuptor' (kiln) and more limestone was piled on top of this. The top was capped with a mud made from river-sand. The next evening it was lit and a 24-hour watch was kept to keep the fire burning. When the kiln reached a certain heat, a dramatic corona of flames came out of the top and when these flames turned white the lime was ready.

When the cuptor had cooled down, the lime was loaded onto a cart and early next

day the family took the horse-driven cart to the nearby market in Beius. We joined them later and witnessed them sell all their lime. In Romania country folk buy lumps of lime and slake it themselves, also mixing dye with it to make paint.

It was a memorable experience which will be re-awakened in spring 2006 when the Romanians come to the area for a burn in a restored North Pennines kiln and in a Romanian style cuptor!"

More information from Peter Kempsey on 01434 381906.



Building a cuptor in Romania

AREA CO-ORDINATOR CORNER

The Area Co-ordinators are the first points of contact for the geographical area they cover. They seek to identify, develop and deliver projects linked to the purpose of AONB designation – to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Each of the Area Co-ordinators also has a specialist area of responsibility: West – Historic Environment; East – Access and Recreation; and North – Land Management.

EAST

• **Simon Wilson**
(simon@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

Cycling has continued to occupy much of Simon's time lately, with the development of the Wheels to the Wild Cycle Route project now nearing completion (page 7). Simon is continuing to assist applicants to the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Small Grant Scheme, as well as advising people on other funding opportunities. A second leaflet promoting Open Access is on the horizon, including opportunities to walk between accommodation. Recent exciting developments include an equestrian strategy for Cumbria, funding secured to produce a public transport timetable for the AONB and work with partners to improve access along the Teesdale Railway Path.

NORTH (JOB SHARE)

• **Rebecca Barrett**
(rebecca@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)
and
• **Sarah Tooze**
(sarah@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

Whilst being kept busy by the Hay Time project (page 10) and the Plants on High Festival (page 12), Rebecca has started planning for this year's series of Conservation Workshops. She has also helped to co-ordinate a number of applications to the SDF and Small Grant Scheme. Work will soon begin on a new self-guided hay meadow walk leaflet near Allendale. Sarah has also been busy organising the Plants on High Festival. Following a successful application to Defra for a Rural Enterprise Scheme grant for a walling apprenticeship scheme Sarah is tracking down further funding to enable work to start this year (see page 5).

WEST

• **Katharine Birdsall**
(katharine@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

Katharine has been working closely with Durham County Council, other members of the Historic Environment Working Group and the North Pennines LEADER+ Team to develop the North Pennines AONB Community Archaeology Project. If funding bids are successful, the project should begin in the mid-summer. The Celebrating Chapels project is now also a step closer to fruition, with recent work being undertaken to better define the project ahead of the submission of an HLF Your Heritage bid. Work with Cumbria community groups also continues.

Contact the Area Co-ordinators at the AONB Staff Unit on 01388 528801

SOUPER!

According to Christine and Richard Peart, owners of the Weardale Soup Company, "there is nothing better on a cold, wet day than a bowl of hearty soup."

The company, based in Westgate, has developed from Christine's passion into a thriving cottage industry within the North Pennines.

The organic and gluten free soups are available in handy containers and include excellent versions of old favourites such as cream of leek, potato and onion, with some true connoisseur choices, with a regional touch, like cream of mushroom with juniper as well as summer soups for the warmer months, such as strawberry.

Christine and Richard sell their soups direct to shops and also have regular stands at local and northern farmers markets. They sell though mail order and, by appointment, from the garden gate.

"Things are going well and we are looking to expand whilst remaining a true cottage industry," says Christine.

"Though we get all our produce from as near the area as possible, we would love to use vegetables from Weardale or the North Pennines but as far as we are aware, there are no local certified organic growers. If anybody knows different, we would love to hear from them," added Richard.



- Contact Christine and Richard on 01388 517384 (weardalesoup@aol.com)
- For info about local produce/products and farmers' markets, get hold of a copy of the 2006 North Pennines Discovery Guide, by calling 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) or visit the 'Exploring the North Pennines' directory on www.northpennines.org.uk

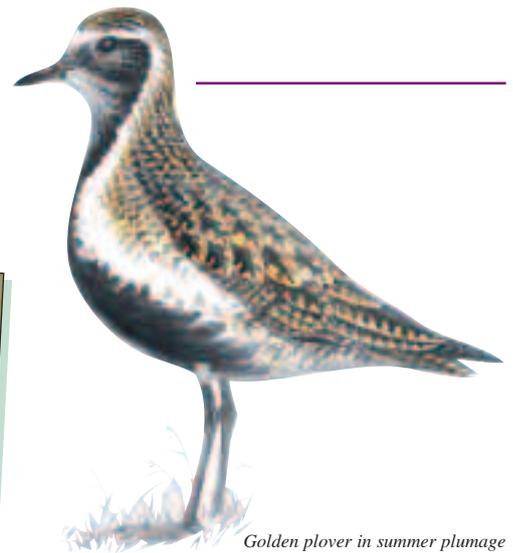
WHAT'S THAT BIRD?

A new free leaflet is available for people who would like some top tips for identifying birds in the North Pennines AONB. This attractive, weather-resistant publication depicts 21 species of birds that you are likely to see when out walking on the open moor or alongside our rivers and streams. Brief descriptions give an easy-to-use guide to the immediate appearance or 'jizz' of each bird and there are 36 beautiful illustrations by wildlife artist Mike Langman. The guide also indicates how easy or difficult it is to see different species and shows their size in relation to a standard 10cm bar.

The identification guide is a companion to the North Pennines AONB Partnership's book *Birdwatching in the North Pennines*. Copies of both the book (£4.50) and the guide are available from



Tourist Information Centres in the AONB or by contacting the Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)



Golden plover in summer plumage
© Mike Langman

These publications have been funded through the AONB Partnership's Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas project (STiPA), which draws in funds from One NorthEast and the EU INTERREG IIIc programme.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Conservation Workshop

On Thursday 13 July the AONB Partnership is running a workshop for conservation professionals on the conservation and management of calaminarian grassland. These special grasslands occur on soils that have levels of heavy metals, such as lead, zinc, chromium and copper, which are toxic to most plant species. The greatest extent of the habitat occurs on artificial sites associated with past mining activities. The North Pennines AONB supports some of the most extensive, structurally varied and species-rich examples of riverine Calaminarian grasslands in the UK. This workshop, which is being held in Garrigill, will provide an introduction to the conservation and management of this interesting habitat. Further details from Rebecca Barrett, North Pennines Area Coordinator (North) on 01388 528801 (rebecca@northpenninesaonb.org.uk).

Roof of England Walks Festival

This year the Roof of England Walks Festival is being held in and around Blanchland and the Lord Crewe Estate. The Festival, which is now in its 11th year and moves around the AONB,



Roof of England Walks Festival 2005 at High Cup Nick
© NPAP/Shane Harris

continues to be popular with experienced and less experienced walkers alike. "A wide range of people are working together to make the festival a great success", says Simon Wilson from the AONB Staff Unit. "This year we have been able to organise a range of walks discovering different aspects of the village of Blanchland and Lord Crewe Estate, with expert leaders, including an accessible walk for people with limited

mobility". The Festival is being held over the weekend of the 8 and 9 of July and includes advance booking and drop-in walks. To request a brochure detailing the walks and how to book places, contact the AONB Staff Unit on 01388 528801 (info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) or visit www.northpennines.org.uk (click on 'Exploring the North Pennines').

Web Update

The content of the North Pennines AONB Partnership's website – www.northpennines.org.uk – has been considerably improved in recent months. The 'Exploring the North Pennines' directory has had lots of new pages added. Why not visit and discover the improvements for yourself? You'll find new pages on: outdoor activities; the Plants on High Festival and Geotours & Rockswalks; the Wake up to Wildlife initiative; the new Teesdale Time Trail; Getting to the North Pennines and Getting Around; Art and the Landscape; Local Products and Produce (including Farmers' Markets); links to many other useful websites; Tourist Information Centres; a brand new publications directory; and much, much more!