

# NORTH PENNINES NEWS

Spring & Summer 2008

## *INSIDE ...*

Management Plan Review .....	3	Allendale Double .....	6
Green is the New Gold .....	4	New AONB Publications .....	11
Weardale Quality Meat .....	5	Improvements at Bowlees ....	14

**NORTH PENNINES**

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## A letter from the Chairman



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Spring and Summer 2008 edition of North Pennines News. As ever, there's such a lot going on in the AONB, both from the AONB Staff Unit and from others, that it's hard to know where to begin.

We've now seen a second full year of the Partnership's Hay Time project, with over 100 meadows surveyed in 2007 and a fascinating Hay Time history project which captures the memories of farmers who worked these fields many years ago (page 16). The team is busy developing a second lease of life for the project beyond 2009.

Through the Rockworks project, the team continues to do great things in getting people out and about enjoying our fascinating geological heritage. New leaflets have appeared recently focusing on some of Weardale's treasures, the Stanhope Fossil Tree and Frosterley marble (page 11). I was especially pleased to see thirty people attend this winter's evening geology classes in St John's Chapel. More geological learning events are planned this year (page 16).

The arrival of the new staff to run the AONB Partnership's Living North Pennines project means that this exciting new work can begin in earnest. Look out for a special feature on this project on page 8.

It doesn't seem like five minutes since the first statutory AONB Management Plan was produced but, on page 3, you'll see how work is already underway to produce the second version of the plan. You can make your views heard, so please do.

It was great to hear that Allendale had won the title of Calor Village of the Year and the whole community deserves credit for this fine achievement. In this edition you can find out more about this, and other awards, from which this vibrant community is benefiting.

We've got lots of business news in this issue too. From green tourism businesses to quality local produce, there is lots to be proud of and to promote in our local economy. Learn how to green your business on page 4, and read about quality Weardale meat on page 5.

Finally, this is the last edition of North Pennines News that will be produced under my Chairmanship of the AONB Partnership. I've been involved from the beginning, working to support the designation of the AONB, which finally came into being 20 years ago. It has been very satisfying to see the development of the AONB Partnership and its Staff Unit and to see the range of work done by them grow enormously. It has been particularly pleasing to see how local communities have increasingly come to value the designation and to get involved in, and benefit from, the work of the team at Stanhope.

There is, as ever, a long way to go and much work to do. What has been achieved is just the beginning and I wish all those who live and work in the North Pennines AONB every success in the future.

CLlr Bob Pendlebury OBE DL  
Chairman, North Pennines AONB Partnership

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Front cover image: Upper Weardale © Shane Harris/NPAP

# KEEPING THE NORTH PENNINES SPECIAL

Over the last nine months, work has begun on updating the new North Pennines AONB Management Plan, due to be published in March 2009. This new plan will build on and develop the successes of the existing, inaugural five-year statutory plan, ensuring that it remains relevant and useful to those working in the North Pennines over the next five years. Now is the time for you to make *your* voice heard and make a positive impact on the North Pennines.

If you'd like to learn more, you can find the North Pennines AONB Management Plan for 2004-9 at [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk).

## Aspirations for the new plan

The main purpose of the new Management Plan, like the existing one, will be to:

- Identify the special qualities of the AONB, and highlight those at risk of change;
- Map out the vision for a future of the AONB, agreed by those living and working in the area;
- Identify general principles of management and policy, supported by working objectives and actions, which can be developed over the lifetime of the Plan.

"We are very proud of the efforts of the Partnership and those others working and living in the AONB in meeting the challenging aims of the plan," commented Chris Woodley-Stewart, North Pennines AONB Officer and Geopark Manager. "Now is the time to be thinking ahead to what we can achieve over the next five years."



Management Plan Workshop at the 2007 Annual Forum © Shane Harris/NPAP

## Shaping the future: how to get involved

The draft AONB Management Plan 2009-14 will be available for consultation between **late August and October 2008**. Everyone is welcome to give their views.

### Website

The full draft plan with appendices and the Strategic Environmental Assessment will be available online at [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk). All those on the AONB consultation list will be alerted by email, and hard copies will be available for those without internet access.

### Consultation events

A series of **drop-in consultation events** will be held at the following venues. We would welcome your views so please do come along to talk to members of the Staff Unit:

4 September	3-7pm	St John's Chapel Town Hall
11 September	3-7pm	Masonic Hall, Kirkby Stephen
17 September	3-7pm	Middleton-in-Teesdale Village Hall
23 September	3-7pm	Castleside Village Hall
1 October	3-7pm	Alston Town Hall
7 October	3-7pm	Allendale Village Hall
15 October	3-7pm	Castle Carrock Village Hall
22 October	3-7pm	Melmerby Village Hall

Copies of the draft plan will also be available and comments invited at the following shows:

21 August	Brough Show
25 August	Blanchland and Hunstanworth Show
6-7 September	Wolsingham Show

### Inspection at public venues

There will also be copies of the Draft Plan made available for consultation in September and October at public venues throughout the AONB. See [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk) or call the Staff Unit on 01388 528801 for details.



# GREEN IS THE NEW GOLD!



**G**reen beacons of tourism excellence are sprouting up across the North Pennines AONB and European Geopark! Nine North Pennines businesses joined the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) during the 2006/07 financial year. This network of 'tourism environmental beacons' has increased to over 30 during 2007/08.

More and more visitors are booking with businesses that take a green approach to their products and services. To help businesses to tap into this lucrative market whilst making substantial cost savings, the GTBS provides an environmental accreditation that can be used to increase marketing potential. The accreditation scheme equips businesses with the knowledge to make their operations more sustainable through a whole range of measures.

## Joining the GTBS

The AONB Partnership, supported by staff from Green Business UK – the not-for-profit company behind the national scheme – ran two 'Joining the GTBS' seminars in October 2007. As a result of attending these events, 23 new tourism enterprises have joined up to improve their environmental performance and thereby pursue the green pound.

The recent expansion of GTBS members in the area has been made possible through funding secured by the North Pennines AONB Partnership Staff Unit from Natural England, via the West Durham Rural Pathfinder. In the Cumbria part of the North Pennines this funding has been augmented by support from the Tourism and Conservation Partnership ([www.ourstolookafter.co.uk](http://www.ourstolookafter.co.uk)). GTBS promotion in the parts of the AONB in Northumberland and County Durham has also been supported through a regional initiative, led by the One NorthEast Tourism Team.

## Greening Grants

During the 2007/08 financial year the AONB Partnership was delighted to be able to support 13 green tourism projects in the North Pennines through its 'Greening Your Tourism Business Grants Scheme' (GYTB).

The variety of projects supported under the scheme included: heat store at Cromer House Camping Barn; improvements to a



Improving the micro-hydro sluice arrangement at Brignall Mill



Installing new LED cabinet lights at the Weardale Museum



Laying thermafleece at East Briscoe Farm Cottages

micro-hydro scheme at Brignall Mill; loft insulation at Lowbyer Manor Country House and Thermafleece insulation at East Briscoe Farm Cottages; low energy lighting at Blackton Grange, Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre and Deneholme; enhanced recycling facilities at Killhope Museum and the Durham Dales Centre; new LED cabinet lighting at the Weardale Museum; improved double glazing at

YHA Ninebanks; tree planting at Red Brick Barn, and owl boxes at Deneholme.

"The grants awarded were for sums between £100 and £500 at up to 50%," said Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism Officer for the AONB Partnership. "This meant that we were able to 'pump-prime' schemes to significantly improve the environmental performance of the businesses which applied. Together with the opportunity to gain credit under the Green Tourism Business Scheme, it was a win-win situation for the business, the environment, and visitors to this spectacular part of England."

The GYTB Grants Scheme was supported by Natural England, via the West Durham Rural Pathfinder. Recipients of the grants had to be either existing members of the GTBS or intending to join the green tourism accreditation scheme. They were available to support any work associated with gaining credit under any Green Tourism Business Scheme Measures.

## Walking the Talk

The North Pennines AONB Partnership gained its Gold Green Tourism Business Award in April 2007. "We found the whole process very helpful in making sure we had our own green credentials in order," said Shane. "The Staff Unit formed a dedicated Green Team to look at our office processes in detail – the result was increased recycling, composting in the kitchen, energy saving measures, travel planning and more lift sharing, as well as instigating local projects to offset the Staff Unit's annual mileage."

### Find out more

- For information on the AONB Partnership's Environmental Policy, visit [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk) (About Us/The Environment)
- Go to [www.green-business.co.uk](http://www.green-business.co.uk) to find out more about the Green Tourism Business Scheme
- If you're a tourism business in the North Pennines keen to join the GTBS contact Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism Officer for the AONB Partnership on 01388 528801 or email [shane@northpenninesaonb.org.uk](mailto:shane@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)
- To discover who has joined the GTBS in the North Pennines, visit [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk) (Exploring/Green Tourism)

# 'MEATING' DEMAND FOR LOCAL PRODUCE

A new initiative selling Weardale Meat has been launched in the North Pennines.

'Weardale Quality Meat' is a collaboration between Weardale farmers, retailers, the local abattoir, Church, Community Partnership and the North Pennines AONB Partnership. The initiative aims to give farmers a fair price for their excellent Swaledale lamb and native breed beef while offering customers the opportunity to buy good value, local meat.

Despite high prices for meat in supermarkets, upland farmers are getting the same prices for their lamb as they did 20 years ago. This situation has led to concerns that upland farming is not going to be sustainable unless something is done to help.

The landscape we value in the North Pennines is, in part, the result of



© EBLEX

generations of low intensity farming. Simon Wilson, Area Co-ordinator with the North Pennines AONB Partnership, who has been involved in the initiative, explains:

"The type of farming that takes place within the dales of the North Pennines AONB

has a direct influence on the quality of the landscape. Farmers and farming are an important part of the heritage, management and community of the area. When Rob Brown, the local Curate, came and talked to me about the idea, it made such common sense. I buy meat from farmers in the dale, but realise that others might not have that opportunity. It is great to see a broad group of interested people working together in this way."

The Weardale Quality Meat initiative aims to improve the situation. Farmers are being invited to join in and the public, retailers, pubs and restaurants are all

being encouraged to buy local.

The scheme has received start up funding from the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Sustainable Development Fund and is being co-ordinated through the Weardale Community Partnership.

Boxes of Swaledale lamb and native breed beef are available by order for collection or delivery, and come with recipe information.

For further information (including leaflet requests) or to place an order, ring Lisa at the Weardale Community Partnership on 01388 529500 or visit [www.weardalemeat.co.uk](http://www.weardalemeat.co.uk).



## ARE YOU 'WILD ABOUT' THE NORTH PENNINES?

The North Pennines is a stunning upland landscape with great potential for the development of tourism based on its special qualities. In November 2007 almost 90 delegates attended an AONB Partnership organised seminar called 'Wild about the North Pennines: Encouraging Nature Tourism in the AONB'.

"The event brought together a wide range of people, involved in tourism and conservation, to inspire future efforts to promote nature tourism in the area," said Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism Officer for the AONB Partnership.

In the morning session, the 90 delegates:

- Discovered what makes the North Pennines special from Chris Woodley-Stewart (AONB Officer & Geopark Manager)
- Were inspired by the experiences of Tom Brock – CEO of the Scottish Seabird Centre
- Looked at the potential of the market with Katie Read from the Natural Economy Northwest initiative
- Examined nature tourism in action at



Blue Gentian © Val Wilson

YHA Langdon Beck with Ewan Boyd – Hostel Manager

- And considered how to strike a balance between conservation and nature tourism with Keith Bowey – Northern Kites Project Manager.

In the afternoon delegates broke off into small workshops to expand on the morning's presentations under the themes of: Products, Providers and Packages; Markets, Marketing and Messages; and Striking the Balance.

The seminar highlighted the potential for the continued development of nature tourism in the North Pennines: the wildlife, landscape, plants and geology of the area provide a strong foundation on which to build tourism products and packages.

Opportunities to move forward are plentiful and include: a 'toolkit' for the promotion of nature tourism in the area; visitor payback promotion; increased promotion and uptake of the GTBS; national TV exposure; increased co-operation across administrative boundaries; production of an annual guide highlighting wildlife tourism; production of itineraries, and better integrated and promoted public transport.

This one-day event was organised by the AONB Partnership's Staff Unit in conjunction with Cumbria Tourism, County Durham Tourism Partnership, and Northumberland Tourism.

For more information visit [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk) or contact Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism and Communication Officer with the AONB Partnership on 01388 528801 or via email: [shane@northpenninesaonb.org.uk](mailto:shane@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

# ALLENDALE DOES THE DOUBLE

**C**ongratulations to the North Pennines village of Allendale which is celebrating a double success after scooping two prestigious awards in the last year.

Residents are celebrating Allendale's new status as the country's top village, having been announced overall winner of the Calor Village of the Year for England competition in October 2007.

## Calor Village of the Year

The annual prize rewards vibrant, self sustaining communities which, irrespective of size, have made the best of local opportunities to maintain and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Managing Director of Calor, Alex Davis, suggested that Allendale could become a model village to inspire other communities through their success.

"Winning the title of Calor Village of the Year for England is a fantastic achievement. Only the most vibrant, enterprising and caring communities get through to the final. Our congratulations go to Allendale. We hope that Allendale will act as a best practice example for other villages, inspiring them on how to become and remain sustainable."

## Best Rural Retailer

However, Allendale's success has not stopped there. Hot on the heels of their Calor win, the village has also received recognition for the high quality service offered by one of their local retailers.

Cheerful staff and a well-stocked shop clinched the Allendale Co-op a place in the Rural Retailer of the Year Competition, a Countryside Alliance award that recognises and rewards thriving local communities.



Allendale Co-op staff celebrate at the award ceremony in London. (L-R): Diane Bailey, Matt Coulson (Manager), Ben Baldock (Director) and Kathleen Murray

Having seen off stiff competition in the regional finals to become Best Rural Retailer in the North East region, the shop sadly missed out at the national finals in February. Despite this, staff and directors of the store remained upbeat. Store Manager, Matt Coulson said: "It was the customers who nominated us, so it's nice for them that we have got this far. We are all very pleased."

Richard Dodd, a judge on the North-East panel said: "Allendale Co-op got dozens of mentions with special praise singling out the fact that the staff's cheerful attitude makes it the heart of the community. In an era where village shops are increasingly threatened it is great to see Allendale really celebrating and appreciating what a small shop can bring to a community."

## Rural development

The Allendale area is also benefiting from several rural development initiatives. The Allen Valleys Tourism and Visitor Network (AVTVN) is working to increase visitor potential for the area and to coordinate assistance to its tourism business members. One such example is the Allen Mills development.

This old lead smelting works is currently being transformed into business units with leisure, tourism and heritage in mind. The Allen Mills is situated on the leafy outskirts of Allendale and has a

great deal of well-preserved industrial archaeology, lending a strong sense of settled antiquity.

There are plans for a café, garden centre, brewery and a working water wheel for sustainable electricity generation, representing a significant draw for tourists. The first few businesses are planning to be operational in time for this summer's visitors.

At times, rural communities can seem under serious threat. Shop closures, rising house prices and employment concerns hit the headlines regularly as the media sound the death knell for local life as we know it. So it is wonderful to be able to share some good news about life in the villages of the North Pennines. Allendale represents the many communities in the AONB who are passionately promoting local services and lifestyles.

The North Pennines AONB Partnership works with local communities to help promote sustainable development, tourism and employment, ensuring local life continues to be rewarding and fulfilling for residents of this beautiful part of Britain.

For more information about the awards mentioned above, visit:

[www.bestruralretailer.co.uk](http://www.bestruralretailer.co.uk)  
[www.calorvillageoftheyear.org](http://www.calorvillageoftheyear.org)



Allendale residents celebrate success © Hexham Courant

# ENTERPRISING ALSTON

Two new initiatives are leading the way in sustainable services for residents and visitors to Alston.

## Youth Hostel flourishing

If you are driving past Alston Youth Hostel this summer and wonder at the empty car park, don't take it as a sign that this local accommodation provider is struggling. In fact, Alston YHA is going from strength to sustainable strength thanks to a new lease of life as an 'enterprise hostel'. Although the car park is often empty, the new bike shed and comfortable rooms may well be full, as the hostel welcomes ever-more pedal-powered guests and pedestrians.

One year ago, the YHA announced a radical review of their network, with the potential closure of 32 hostels across the UK. Small communities who rely on the hostels as a source of income, as well as hostellers who use YHAs as an affordable way to travel the country, greeted the news with dismay. However, 12 months on, Alston YHA has shown that there is a rosy future for hostel owners willing to rise to the challenge.

It was 2006 when the YHA decided to close and sell the business, giving two employees, Dave and Val Lowson, the opportunity to buy the property in partnership with Phil Webster. With long experience of youth hostel customer care, they now manage the youth hostel under a YHA Enterprise contract and are enjoying delivering a friendly, good value stay to guests.

Since being bought from the YHA, Alston hostel has been re-established as a popular and convenient stop-over for C2C cyclists, Pennine Way walkers and visitors travelling to and through the North Pennines AONB.

As a large percentage of guests are cyclists, secure bike storage is a priority. A bigger, better bike-shed with capacity for 20+ bikes has been built, with a workstand, tools and bike washing equipment available. The high numbers of guests arriving under their own steam support the YHA's environmental policy of encouraging more sustainable modes of transport.

Double glazing throughout has reduced energy consumption and other appropriate improvements to facilities are planned,



© Anastasiya Shanhina

which will help achieve environmental performance targets at the same time as increasing the comfort for youth hostellers.

"Hopefully, current trends will continue, securing the future of the youth hostel and environmentally sustainable tourism will go from strength to strength at YHA Alston," said Phil Webster.



Alston Youth Hostel © Philip Webster

## Library service to grow

Alston YHA is not the only organisation to be thinking laterally about how to maintain high quality services in the face of sometimes challenging circumstances.

Whilst many local branch libraries are facing closure or reduced hours, Alston Library is aiming to more than double their opening times with an ambitious plan to combine the library and Tourist Information Centre.

The plan involves moving Alston's county council-owned library into Alston Town Hall and integrating it with the existing Tourist Information Centre,

provided by Eden District Council. The project, currently in the planning stage, is expected to provide a joined up service, providing the full range of tourist information, a public lending library service as well as a customer access point for both Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council.

The new service will benefit both local people and visitors, who will be able to access a wide range of services and information from the one location. This provides a unique opportunity to significantly improve public services provided in Alston and will bring together services currently provided by different agencies, thereby increasing efficiency and customer access.

The new service would mean that the library, which is currently only open for 12.5 hours a week, would be open for a similar number of hours as the current Tourist Information Centre, which opens 48 hours per week in the summer, and 30 hours per week in the winter. Fully trained staff would be able to provide an integrated service, providing for both library users, visitors to the area and those with other information inquiries.

These are two shining examples of how individual business owners and forward-thinking organisations can turn challenges into opportunities with benefits for themselves and the communities they serve.

# SPOTLIGHT ON ... THE LIVING NORTH PENNINES PROJECT

**What have school children, saplings, water voles and historic buildings got in common? They are all set to benefit from an exciting new scheme called Living North Pennines, made possible with nearly £2 million help from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).**

Over the next three years, conservation, landscape and education specialists from the North Pennines AONB Partnership Staff Unit will work with three local communities to help them conserve and enhance the natural beauty and wildlife in their area, as part of a £3.1 million project. That means planting trees, helping endangered species, saving 'at risk' buildings and improving access and enjoyment of the area. Here is a flavour of what's to come:

## Keeping the water vole afloat

This lovable little creature is finding it hard to make a home in our area and has suffered a massive decline in population. Conservation Officer, Andy Lees, will be working to ensure the water voles can keep their heads above water so that we don't lose these animals from the North Pennines forever. Andy will also be working to improve public access to reservoirs and waterways in the area, so you can enjoy closer encounters with our wonderful wildlife.

## More trees please!

Woodland Officer, Lis Airey, will be working to plant 250 hectares of small upland oak and ash woodlands, restoring a lost feature of our natural environment. Her experience will help land owners manage their woodland to encourage wildlife and to improve the landscape. She'll also be running seminars to empower community groups to take care of trees in their local area. One of the first woodlands to be established will be at Barhaugh Common, with more to follow over the next three years.

## Education and inspiration

Abi Wylde and Emma Boor will be working to help local people enjoy, understand and learn from the world around them. Children and community groups are being encouraged and supported to explore their environment through art, film, puppetry, creative writing and more. There will also be a wealth of interpretation activities helping people enjoy and understand the environment, such as guided walks and oral history projects. By increasing



*The Common Sandpiper which you might see on a walk by the reservoir this summer © Kaphoto*



*The endangered water vole*

## Meet the Team

The AONB Partnership offices have been a hive of activity recently as staff make room for not one but seven new colleagues. All staff are specialists in conservation, education or interpretation, recruited from as far afield as Glencoe in Scotland for their ability to deliver a first class project for the communities of the North Pennines.



- 1 Jon Charlton
- 2 Abi Wylde
- 3 Andy Lees
- 4 Emma Boor
- 5 Elisabeth Airey
- 6 Libby Marks
- 7 Nicola Cullens

## Jon Charlton

### LNP Project Manager

Jon is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the project meet their targets, fundraising and liaising with partners and supporting the work of the rest of the team. Jon finally realised an ambition to live in the North Pennines in September 2006 when he and his family relocated here from Derbyshire where Jon held a senior role in a conservation charity managing a series of major projects.

"Living North Pennines is a fantastic project and I am extremely proud to be a part of it. We have some wonderful projects in store and an extremely talented team to deliver them over the next three years," says Jon.

enjoyment and education about this part of England, we aim to help its continued unique character for generations to come.

### In the footsteps of pack ponies

We will be developing a series of horse rides exploring some of the historic routes that were used for moving lead and other materials from the mines to some of the surrounding towns and to the world beyond.

### Conserving historic treasures

We will also be working with owners of four of the most important historic structures in the North Pennines to conserve them for the enjoyment of generations to come. Shildon Engine House, Muggleswick Grange, Ninebanks Tower, and Whitesyke and Bentyfield Mines are all Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk register. Through the Living North Pennines project, they will be saved from further damage and made accessible to the public. Skilled local workers will use traditional North Pennines materials and techniques, such as horselogging.



*Above: Middleton-in-Teesdale, which is one of the communities that will benefit © Shane Harris/NPAP*

*Right: Shildon Engine House, one of four buildings being saved from dereliction © Briden and Moore*

*Below: Traditional horselogging will be used on conservation projects © Elisabeth Airey*



### Abi Wylde Community Interpretation Officer

Abi has come from the National Trust for Scotland in Glencoe where she ran the education and interpretative events programme. She is looking forward to helping local communities to tell the stories about what makes the North Pennines special in fun and exciting ways.

### Andy Lees Conservation Officer

Andy has worked for the Durham Biodiversity Partnership for the past four years and previously managed the conservation team of an environmental charity. He is now looking forward to conserving the unique wildlife of the North Pennines and helping others to enjoy it too.

### Emma Boor Education Officer

Emma will be supporting teachers and education providers to use the North Pennines as an outdoor classroom, celebrating its uniqueness and helping recognise the value of outdoor learning. She is also a freelance puppeteer.

### Elisabeth Airey Woodland Officer

Elisabeth is looking forward to creating new woodlands, and increasing tree-based knowledge in North Pennines communities.

### Libby Marks Communications Officer

Libby joins the team from a publishing background. She is looking forward to promoting the work of her colleagues in the local and national press, promoting the North Pennines far and wide.

### Nicola Cullens Administration Officer

Before joining the LNP team Nicola worked as a primary school teacher in Frosterley. A resident of Alston, she is proud of the North Pennines as a place to work and live.

You can contact the team by 'phone on 01388 528801  
or by email: [info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk](mailto:info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk)

# NORTH PENNINES TOP TWENTY

On 8th June, we'll be celebrating 20 years since the confirmation of the AONB designation for the North Pennines. To help celebrate this, here are 20 special things for you to see or find out about in the area, as selected by the North Pennines AONB Partnership Staff Unit.

## 5 major AONB team achievements

- 1** The AONB became Britain's first **UNESCO European Geopark** and a founding member of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network, and established the Rockworks geotourism and education project.
- 2** We have given **over 150 grants** to local community and business projects.
- 3** We have secured £3.1 million of funding for the **Living North Pennines** project that will create new woodlands and new opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside, along with new conservation works on rivers, reservoirs and historic buildings.
- 4** The AONB Partnership's **Peatscapes** project has blocked 203 km of moorland grips (drains), with much more work to come, making a positive contribution to habitat restoration and carbon storage.
- 5** The Partnership's **Hay Time** project has advised 107 farmers, restored 63 hectares of hay meadow and surveyed 450 fields, as well as producing a series of walk leaflets and ID guide.

## 5 great places to visit

- 1 Killhope, the North of England Lead Mining Museum, Upper Weardale**  
This fully restored 19th century lead mine provides an insight into the mining heritage of the area providing hands-on opportunities for the young and the young at heart.  
  
*Killhope Wheel © Killhope*
- 2 Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre, Nenthead**  
A museum dedicated to showing and telling the story of the mineral mining past of the North Pennines.
- 3 High Force, Upper Teesdale**
- 4 Bowlees Visitor Centre, Upper Teesdale**  
Recently reopened, this is a great place to start exploring the area on foot or on bike. A rocks and minerals display is new for this year.
- 5 Blanchland, Derwent Valley**

## 5 great views

- 1 High Cup Gill / High Cup Nick**  
From High Cup Nick there is a spectacular view down High Cup Gill to the Eden Valley. This dramatic valley on the western flanks of the AONB is ringed by cliffs of the Whin Sill, one of the North Pennines' most distinctive and famous geological features.
- 2 Hartside into the Eden Valley**
- 3 Staward Gorge into the West Allen Valley**
- 4 Cronkley Fell towards Falcon Clints, Upper Teesdale**
- 5 Lambley Viaduct into the South Tyne Valley**



High Cup Nick © Natural England/Steve Westwood

## 5 great wildlife sights

- 1 Black grouse lekking**  
'Lekking' is the courtship display of male black grouse in spring. Grouse gather on 'lekking' sites in the early morning to compete for the attention of females. Once seen and heard, this dramatic display is never forgotten. Visitors are advised to go on supervised lek-watching trips to ensure the birds are not disturbed.
- 2 Teesdale flora**
- 3 Hay meadows in flower**
- 4 Red squirrels**
- 5 The return of upland wading birds in spring**



Black grouse lekking © Laurie Campbell

# CHAIRMAN TO STEP DOWN

Mr Bob Pendlebury, who has been Chairman of the AONB Partnership since its inception, is stepping down in May. He will not be standing for election to the new County Durham Council and this will bring to an end over 40 years of local government service.

Bob has had a long involvement in the North Pennines AONB Partnership and its predecessor bodies and has presided over a period of huge expansion in its work and influence.

In his time Bob has been Leader of Durham County Council, Deputy Lieutenant of County Durham and held many other roles across the breadth of local government. In 2000 he was awarded an OBE for services to tourism when chair of the Northumbrian Tourist Board. Bob has been a lifelong lover of the countryside (reflected in his constant championing of environmental matters) and has been very active in the Ramblers Association for many years.

Chris Woodley-Stewart, AONB Officer and Geopark Manager, said: "Bob has had a long, active and successful career in public service. He has been a constant advocate for the benefits of AONB designation and a great source of support to me and the team. Most importantly perhaps, he is a very straightforward and decent man and I've always trusted his judgement implicitly. I hope Bob will continue to attend Partnership meetings as an honorary member and that we'll continue to have the benefit of his wisdom in the future."



# NEW AONB PUBLICATIONS

The North Pennines AONB Partnership has recently produced three new publications. The North Pennines Pocket Guide 2008/09 is the new look guide to the AONB and European Geopark, whilst two geological publications shed light on the Stanhope Tree and Frosterley Marble.

## Pocket Guide

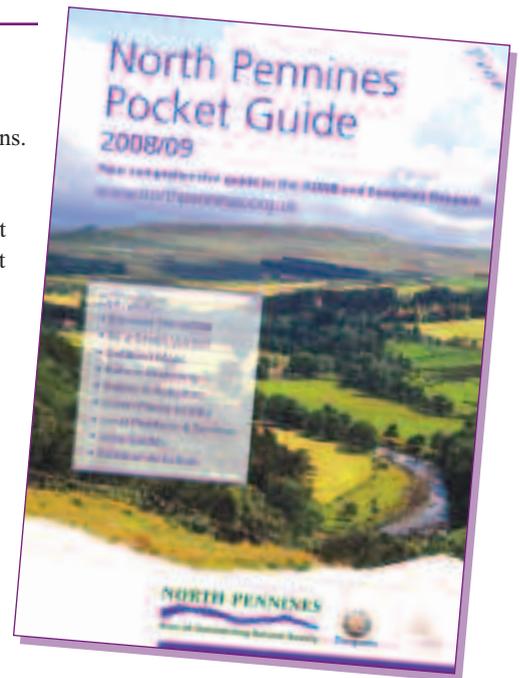
For the past five years the AONB Staff Unit has produced a visitor guide for the North Pennines. The 2008/09 Pocket Guide builds on the success of the guides which have gone before it. "We've changed format from A4 to A5 and expanded some sections and added lots of completely new information," says Shane Harris, Sustainable Tourism Officer for the AONB Partnership.

The 72-page guide provides information on what makes the area so special and helps people discover the North Pennines for themselves. Sections include:

- Green accommodation
- Nature watching, including birds, hay meadows, moorlands, reserves, and geology and landscape
- Events and activities, including full information on the North Pennines AONB Events Programme 2008
- Detailed maps and area guides to Teesdale, Weardale, Derwent Valley, Alston Moor and East Fellside, and the South Tyne Valley and the Allen Valleys
- Attractions
- Outdoor activities, including walking, cycling, horse riding, and fishing.

## Geological Leaflets

The two new leaflets have been produced by the AONB Partnership's Geodiversity Officer, Elizabeth Pickett, as part of the Rockworks project, mainly supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



## Stanhope Fossil Tree

The Stanhope fossil tree grew in a tropical rainforest 320 million years ago, when the North Pennines was near the equator! Like all fossils, it tells a

fascinating story of ancient life in the distant past. The AONB Partnership's new leaflet brings the story of the fossil tree to life. Discover the fossil tree in front of St. Thomas' Church, Stanhope Market Place.

## Frosterley Marble

Imagine a shallow tropical sea, alive with corals and other sea creatures – this is the North Pennines 325 million years ago! Frosterley Marble formed in this sea, and the new leaflet tells the fascinating story of this special rock – how it formed, why it has been prized for centuries and where you can see it today.



To get hold of paper copies of these new publications contact the AONB Partnership Staff Unit on 01388 528801, [info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk](mailto:info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) or visit [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk) (About Us/Publications) and download pdf versions.

# WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

**D**o you know your biodegradability from your biodiversity? If not, don't worry, you are not alone!

A recent survey carried out by the North East Biodiversity Forum has found that 68% of people in the North East are unfamiliar with the term 'biodiversity' even though they are knowledgeable about other environmental issues like 'global warming' and 'conservation'.

Biodiversity simply means the variety of life: the rich diversity of species and habitats and the way they interact. Any one who is interested in plants, animals and the environment is actually interested in biodiversity.

The growth of our population means that biodiversity is increasingly coming under threat. As human use of the landscape grows, we put pressure on the other species who share our planet, making it harder for them to survive. Scientists believe that we have entered a period of mass extinction not seen since the age of the dinosaurs. Estimates vary, but the rate of species extinction is believed to be between 100 to 1,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate.

Unfortunately we are all too familiar with the idea of endangered species in the North Pennines. No one wants to see the loss of iconic local creatures like black grouse, red squirrels or water voles, but it can be difficult to feel passionate about the loss of species which are hard to even see or identify: the chalk carpet moth, the dingy skipper or the round-mouthed whorl snail.

However, there are many good reasons for the conservation of biodiversity.

Biodiversity means:

- **Balance**

By upsetting the balance of nature, we put our own survival at risk. Take peatlands as an example. Approximately 27% of England's peatland is in the North Pennines. They absorb and lock up carbon dioxide, one of the gases produced from the burning of fossil fuels that is causing global warming. If we do not protect our peat, this carbon dioxide will be released back into our atmosphere. A good example of how local activity can be a threat at a global level.

- **Sustainability**

The biodiversity of an area tells us whether we are growing and developing our society in a responsible way. By being aware of biodiversity, through monitoring and conservation, we can ensure we take measures to protect the planet for future generations.

- **Beauty and business**

What would a walk in the country be without the sights and smells of different flowers and wild herbs, without the glimpse of a curlew or a lapwing in flight? Biodiversity is essential to our enjoyment of the living world and it is vital to the businesses that benefit from tourism and leisure activities.

Biodiversity is particularly important in the North Pennines because our natural assets attract visitors from around the world. Without the richness of plant, animal and bird species in the AONB, the income for businesses in the area would suffer.

## *What is the North Pennines AONB Partnership doing to protect biodiversity?*

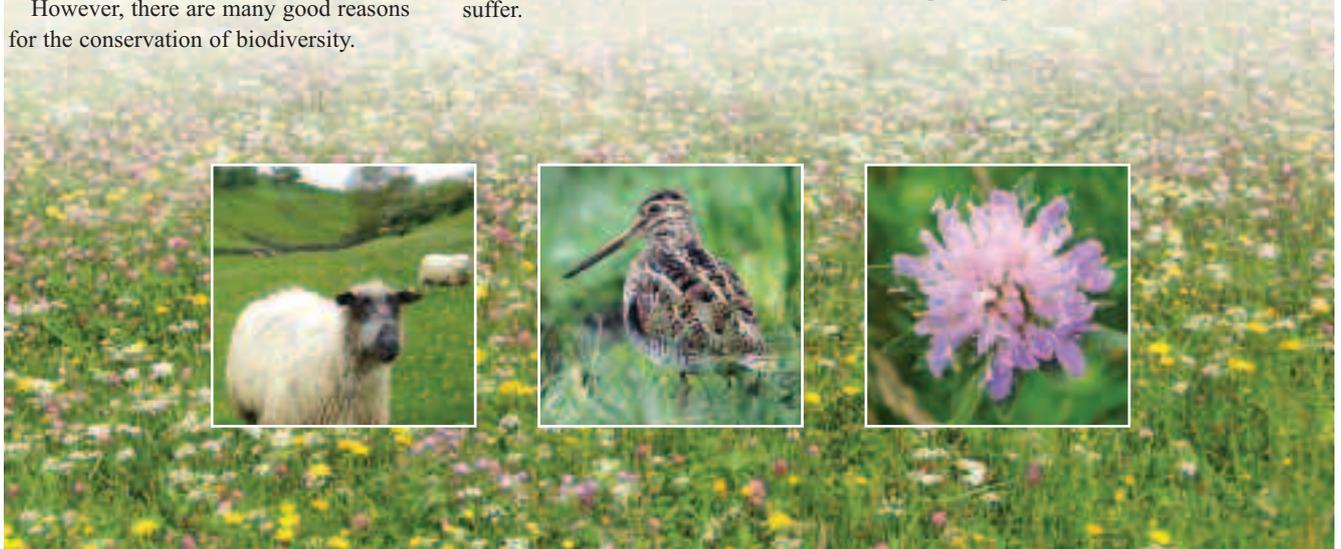
The North Pennines AONB Partnership is running a number of initiatives to protect biodiversity, including conserving the water vole, protecting our peat and restoring native woodlands.

One project that you might spot the results of this summer is 'Hay Time', run by Rebecca Barrett and John O'Reilly. The vibrant photograph below shows the beauty of biodiversity: a species rich hay meadow full of colourful flowers. Without the work of the Hay Time project, this lovely sight might become less common in the North Pennines. Rebecca explains:

"Upland hay meadows are one of the rarest grassland types in the country. There is less than 1,000ha left in the UK (equivalent to less than 4 square miles!) Of this, some 400ha are in the North Pennines AONB.

Through the Hay Time project, the North Pennines AONB Partnership is working to secure the future of some of our best upland hay meadows and with them the unique wildlife communities and farming traditions that reach back generations.

Hay Time was launched in May 2006. By October 2009 we aim to have enhanced and restored at least 140ha of meadows across the AONB by harvesting seed from species rich meadows and spreading it on sites that have lost their special species."



Main: Haymeadow in summer. Insets (L to R): Teeswater sheep, Snipe © Andy Hall (rspb-images.com), Field Scabious © Jenny Dicker

# BLACK GROUSE FACE NEW THREAT

A report on the potential impacts of climate change shows that Europe's birds face a future crisis, with some species at risk of extinction unless urgent action is taken. The North Pennines' iconic black grouse is just one of the birds identified as being in jeopardy. Thankfully, many organisations are already hard at work to give wildlife in North Pennines the best possible chance of survival.

Published in January, The Climatic Atlas of European Breeding Birds highlights the potential for a major change in the mix of bird species occurring in northern England.

The Atlas was produced by scientists from Durham University, the RSPB and Cambridge University and predicts significant changes for the wildlife of the north of England by the end of this century.

The report suggests that the climate of northern England will become increasingly unsuitable for some specialist upland birds, including black grouse, ring ouzel and twite. The RSPB is working, along with others, to ensure that the right habitats are provided for these species to give them the best chance of survival.

The findings pose new challenges for the work of the area's conservation organisations. RSPB Regional Conservation Manager, Peter Robertson, said: "The climate in southern England is predicted to become increasingly unsuitable for some birds that nest there now, including lapwing, snipe, redshank and curlew. As these birds are forced to move north, our work to conserve these species in Northern England becomes even more important in order to ensure their continued UK survival."

## Helping hand

One example of how landowners and farmers can help black grouse is sensitive planting that provides shelter for birds during winter months.

Andrew Norman, who owns 65-acre Thimbleby Hill Farm near Stanhope, won a Forestry Commission grant to enable him to do just that, creating a winter refuge and feeding area for the endangered bird.

Andrew has planted a four-acre woodland with black grouse in mind, including built-in open spaces, long grass



Helm Images © Brian Irving

and widely planted native trees such as birch, rowan and hawthorn.

Andrew explains: "Creating this wood is something I've wanted to do for quite a while. There's a black grouse lek fairly close-by but the birds need to find cover during the winter to escape the harsh weather. That's what this woodland has been designed for so hopefully, as the trees mature, it will find itself on the local flight path."

## Turning the corner

Although times have been hard for the black grouse, conservationists hope that, thanks to more sensitive land management, the species may have turned the corner after years of decline. A count done last spring revealed that the English population, 80% of which is in the North Pennines, had passed a significant milestone with over 1,000 males being recorded, up from 800 in 1998.



Andrew Norman on Thimbleby Hill Farm near Stanhope

It is hoped that the good work being done by organisations across the North Pennines will not be undone by the wider problems of climate change.

## Time to act

The RSPB's atlas suggests that bird habitats in the UK will on average shift nearly 550 km north-east and reduce in size by a fifth.

The estimates used in the Atlas are based upon a model of climatic change which projects an increase of global average temperature of about three degrees centigrade since pre-industrial times.

"This report provides further evidence that our changing climate seriously threatens our precious wildlife. We can help wildlife by creating a diverse range of habitats in our countryside, towns and cities whilst providing the highest protection and care for our most precious sites. However, we also need to make deep cuts in carbon emissions to protect wildlife habitat, as much as 80% by 2050," says Peter Robertson.

Mark Avery, the RSPB's Conservation Director, agrees saying "We must heed the wake up call provided by this report and act immediately to curb climate change. We need urgent action to cut greenhouse gas emissions, and to redouble our efforts for nature conservation, if we are to avoid calamitous impacts on birds."

# VISIT BOWLEES IN 2008

**D**urham Wildlife Trust's Bowlees Visitor Centre has reopened to the public. Open every day from 10.30am to 5pm, it is a great place to get information on walks, cycling and events in the area, pick up a snack and take in the exhibition about the local area.

Located about 3 miles up the dale from Middleton-in-Teesdale, Bowlees is a great starting point for circular walks to High Force, Holwick and further afield. The Centre has a range of books and maps available for sale, and a permanent exhibition on the geology, history and unique wildlife that makes Upper Teesdale so special.

New for 2008 is a rocks and minerals display funded by West Durham Rural Pathfinder through the North Pennines AONB Partnership and put together by local geologist Brian Young.

"The way a landscape looks reflects the rocks that lie beneath it, the changing climates that have shaped it over millions of years and the way humans have exploited and adapted the natural features. Nowhere are these factors more apparent than in Teesdale," said Brian.

"This new exhibition at Bowlees Visitor Centre brings together examples of the rocks and minerals that are the bones of the dale's landscape and uses them to explain some of the events of long ago that can be read from these stony records. Also included is a selection of some of the varied minerals that have been dug from the ground to make many everyday, and not so everyday, items. Teesdale is also home to some very special minerals, some almost unknown anywhere else on earth. People are welcome to come and explore these at Bowlees."

## It Rocks!

Sunday 18 May and Monday 26 May,  
2-4pm

Dress for mess and for a short half mile walk. Suitable for children. Please book on 01388 528 801.

Venue: Bowlees Visitor Centre

Cost: £5 per family (up to 5 people, £1 each per extra person)

As well as the display, there are also two special puppet and promenade shows produced by local artists from Wild Boor Ideas and Twisted Digits. Details are below. For more information on Bowlees Visitor Centre and the work of Durham Wildlife Trust please contact Bowlees Visitor Centre on 01833 622292 or Durham Wildlife Trust on 0191 5843112.



Doreen Collinson, Centre Manager, and Jim Cokill, Durham Wildlife Trust Director

## CELEBRATING THE MINERAL VALLEYS PROJECT

**D**urham County Council and Groundwork (West Durham & Darlington) are close to completing their part of the five-year Mineral Valleys Project, which has created ten new self-guided walks and made fantastic improvements to footpaths, bridleways and byways of the AONB (and lots of other work further afield).

Groundwork (West Durham & Darlington) has increased public understanding of Weardale settlements through interpretation boards and walk leaflets. Durham County Council's Access

and Rights of Way team has improved gates, stiles and waymarking along the Weardale Way, from Cowshill to Sunderland Bridge and has worked with local communities to produce seven walking routes with interpretive leaflets, five of which are within the AONB.

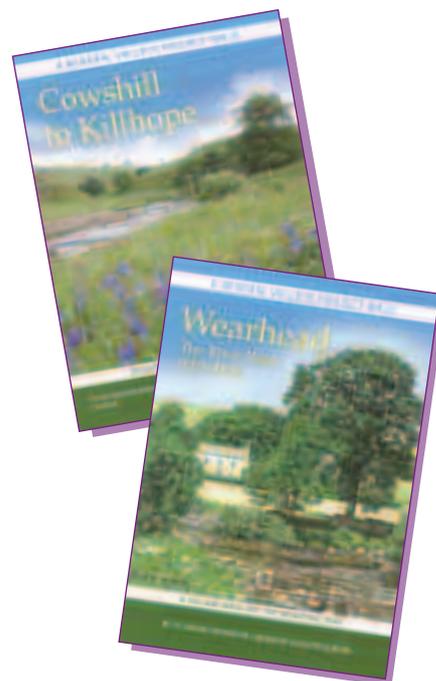
The Mineral Valleys Project will be celebrated with a Festival of Walks from the 25th to 31st May 2008. The walks range from village circulars to longer walks across open country, so there is something for everyone.

The complete pack of ten self-guided walk leaflets will be available at the Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope, and Bishop Auckland Tourist Information Centre from May.

The Mineral Valleys Project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, led by Natural England, and can be contacted on [mvp@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:mvp@naturalengland.org.uk)

Information on the guided walks can be found in Country Durham magazine available from Tourist Information

Centres, or by contacting Elaine Field on 0191 383 3355, [elaine.field@durham.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.field@durham.gov.uk)



Walking around Ireshopeburn

# MAKING TRACKS

Precious peatlands in the North Pennines are being threatened by moorland tracks. Peat management is a crucial element in promoting carbon storage and so increasing numbers of tracks are a growing concern.

The North Pennines AONB contains some of the largest expanses of peat in England. There are 90,000 hectares of peatland in the AONB with a carbon dioxide storage capacity of over 660 million tonnes. How these peatlands are managed is vital to whether they are a sink, store or source of carbon dioxide. One of the main objectives of the AONB Partnership's Peatscapes project is to ensure a sustainable future for our peat. There are three major threats to the North Pennine peat resource: drainage, inappropriate burning and overgrazing. However, an emerging threat to this future has now been identified.

Moorland tracks are roads built on peatlands in order to allow easier and deeper access onto the moors. While individually moorland roads may seem innocuous, when viewed as a whole a different picture emerges.

"A recent survey commissioned by the AONB Partnership identified a total of 992 km of moorland roads, of which 457 km were found to be on peaty soils," says Paul Leadbitter. "This equates to about 300 hectares of peat that has been covered by new tracks."

With increasing numbers of applications for the building of new moorland roads (and many built without permission), the North Pennines AONB Partnership is working with Natural England, the Environment Agency, and local authorities to better understand organisational responsibilities and how the track building process works. There is a need to better use the legislation that protects NATURA 2000 habitats such as blanket bog and ensure that these internationally important ecosystems are protected in the long term.

A better balance needs to be struck between the need for moorland roads and the services that peatlands provide in terms of carbon storage, water management and biodiversity.

Through the Peatscapes project, the AONB Partnership is meeting with



*Land erosion caused by tracks*  
© Paul Leadbitter/NPAP

planning authorities and providing information about the importance of peatlands and their role in ensuring a sustainable future for North Pennines peat. For more information please contact Paul Leadbitter on 01388 528801 or paulpeatscapes@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

# GREEN GELTSDALE GETS GOLD!

Spring is in the air and, following a hard winter, wildlife is beginning to return to RSPB Geltsdale in the northwest corner of the North Pennines AONB. "In the fields and meadows lapwings, curlew and redshank are starting to arrive in numbers," says Dave O'Hara from the team which looks after this huge upland nature reserve.

On the moorland hill tops wardens are anticipating a good breeding year for the endangered hen harrier, a graceful bird of prey that has suffered in the past through persecution. It shares the fell with other raptors such as peregrine falcon and merlin, along with the short-eared owl, all of which are possible to see during the breeding season.

The RSPB reserve has recently opened a number of trails that explore the variety of habitats the area has to offer. The new visitor centre at the refurbished Stagsike Cottages, supported through the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Sustainable Development Fund, provides a welcome



*Stagsike © RSPB*

stop-off point. At the centre you can also see CCTV footage from hen harrier and barn owl nests!

Geltsdale has also achieved a Gold Award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS), one of only five businesses in the whole of Cumbria to gain this level of award. The reserve was supported by the North Pennines AONB Partnership and the Tourism and Conservation Partnership in their bid to

receive this green accolade. The Gold Award was achieved by implementing environmentally sound practices such as blanket bog restoration and the creation of new native woodland with the Bruthwaite Forest tree planting scheme.

A series of spring and summer events is planned at the reserve to highlight key species, including black grouse safaris and hen harrier radio-tracking walks. The wardening team is also encouraging people to contact the reserve with any sightings, or even better, nesting attempts by hen harriers in the North Pennines AONB.

- For more information from RSPB Geltsdale at Stagsike Cottages, call 01697 746717
- RSPB Hen Harrier Hotline 0845 4600121
- Find out more about the GTBS at [www.green-business.co.uk](http://www.green-business.co.uk)

# HAY TIME HISTORY WEEKEND

The annual cycle of hay making has shaped not only the landscape of the North Pennines but the lives of those who have lived and work here. In recognition of this, and in partnership with Beamish, the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Hay Time project is planning a special event this June to celebrate the history of hay meadow management in the North Pennines.

**The History of Hay Time** will run for four days from Thursday 12 June to Sunday 15 June at St John's Chapel Town Hall, Weardale.

The event is specifically for primary schools on the Thursday and Friday and will be open to the general public on the Saturday and Sunday.

At the event people will be able to take part in a number of activities including:

- Handling and talking about tools and equipment used in the past for hay making

- Listening to extracts from oral histories with hay meadow farmers from days gone by
- Watching a display of old photographs of hay making

- Hearing about some of the special language, history and wildlife of hay meadows
- Touching and smelling different sorts of hay
- With experts on hand, we are inviting people to bring along any hay time tools or farm artefacts that they would like to find out more about
- Children will have a chance to dress up



*Hay time in Teesdale in the 1950s © R. Hooper*

In traditional farming clothes, take part in artistic activities and enter competitions.

So why not come along and share your memories or learn about your ancestors!

Later in the summer a team from Beamish will be demonstrating hay making using horse-drawn machinery on a farm in Weardale. Keep an eye on our website for further details: [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Geology Study Programme

Following the success of the 2007 course - Geology and Landscape of the North Pennines - local geologist Brian Young will lead a similar series of evening talks and field visits on behalf of the AONB Partnership in 2008. Running over eight weeks this autumn, the course will explore the geology and landscape of the North Pennines. We haven't finalised dates and a location yet but if you contact the AONB Partnership with your details on 01388 528801 or [info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk](mailto:info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk) we will send you further information.

### Go Fishing

Fishing is fantastic fun for children and the whole family. It's so easy to learn, makes a great family day out and is the perfect way to make friends and above all, have fun. So why not bring all the family along to the best attended still water trout fisheries in the UK at Derwent Reservoir and enjoy catching trout, in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere? Family permits are

available allowing parents or guardians plus any number of children under 17 years to fish for £25. Up to two children under 17 can also fish for free when one parent or guardian buys a day permit costing £20.

If you are new to the sport lessons are available with fully qualified instructors and they run regularly throughout the season. Lessons are available, tackle is provided and you will learn everything you need to know to get you hooked on angling! To find more visit [www.nwl.co.uk/gofishing](http://www.nwl.co.uk/gofishing) or phone Derwent Reservoir on 01207 255 250.

### New Regime at Trust

As a result of a decision taken last year to re-structure, the North Pennines Heritage Trust has appointed a Business Manager, Tim Haldon and a Development Officer, Carol Robinson, instead of having a Chief Executive post. Tim's role includes finance, project administration and overall management of site facilities. Carol's role involves fundraising, developing new projects and working with partners and stakeholders. Visit [www.npht.com](http://www.npht.com) or call 01434 382294 for more details.

### North Pennines News Survey

After some years in the same format, North Pennines News is being reviewed. We want to produce a magazine that you want to read, so your feedback is integral to what we do next.

If there's a survey enclosed with your magazine, we'd be grateful for your feedback. You can also complete the survey online at [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk).

To say thank you for completing our quick survey, we're giving the first twenty respondents their choice of two top guides to the North Pennines.