

RIGHTS OF WAY

North Yorkshire County Council recently carried out a Best Value review of its Heritage and Rights of Way sections. The main result of this has been the decision to amalgamate these units to form a new Countryside Service. Having the AONB divided between two Rights of Way teams – one based in Fulford and the other in Pickering, was an issue that was also tackled. That situation was confusing for farmers and path users, as well as increasing the liaison work needed by the AONB Unit. The current teams will complete the improvement works to gates, signs, etc. in the Crayke, Husthwaite, Hovingham and Nunnington areas.

After that (April 2005), all Rights of Way issues in any Parish that is within or partly within the AONB will be dealt with by Brian Mullins and Aidan Rayner at the Pickering Rights of Way Office. They can be contacted on (01751) 472031 or aidan.rayner@northyorks.gov.uk

AONB GATEWAY SIGNS

One of the most frequent questions we get asked is "where exactly is the boundary of the AONB?" As the AONB covers the area of rolling hills that separates the Vales of York and Pickering, it is relatively easy to spot in some places. For example, on the A64 you come into the Howardian Hills when going up Whitwell Hill and leave them when going down Golden Hill into Malton. We have always wanted to provide better information on where the boundaries are, in the same way that the North York Moors National Park boundaries are signed, and finally we have Government approval to do it. We have approval from the Department for Transport to erect 14 Gateway Signs in specific locations on roads leading into the AONB. Mindful of the need to use a sympathetic design, we have chosen a sign that fits on a stone plinth only 1m square. These plinths will be built in reclaimed stone, to match the ones found at the entrances to many AONB villages. We are currently seeking quotes, with a view to starting construction work in the autumn.



Fiona Scully with one of the Gateway Signs.

AONB DISCOVERY PROJECT

School children in the AONB are to be treated to a five-year project discovering their natural environment and heritage. This is thanks to a grant of £25,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which has enabled various school field trips and activities to be run free of charge to the schools. The project aims to encourage young people to find out about their local wildlife and to value where they live. It is being run in partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The project got underway with its first round of school day field trips earlier this summer. All twelve primary schools in or near the AONB will take part in at least two events during the five-year life of the project. The school day activities incorporate national curriculum topics such as food webs, comparing habitats, identifying and classifying species, and using different surveying techniques.

The children are using a site near Crambe to put their new skills into practice. The site is gradually being restored from a Christmas tree plantation to unimproved grassland, through an agreement between the landowner and the AONB team. The children will be taking scientific recordings of the vegetation over the next five years, to see how the site develops and how the wildflowers emerge again.



Children on the Discovery Project near Crambe.

The second part of the Discovery Project gives the children the opportunity to become Young Rangers and take part in a Ranger Club. This involves a week of activities using creative and fun ideas to learn about wildlife, geology, cultural heritage and archaeology. The Ranger Clubs will be held at local village halls and the first one was in Hovingham in August.

WINNERS OF MAGNIFICENT HAMPER AT THE RYEDALE SHOW

The AONB display at Ryedale Show this year offered a superb opportunity to win a luxury hamper. Local businesses in the area kindly donated items towards the hamper, including a family pass to Castle Howard, a home-made meat pie, lavender beer, honey, sloe gin and chocolates. The hamper was the first prize in our testing countryside quiz. This was divided into four categories and required the correct identification of different birds, wildflowers, and native trees and shrubs. Ryedale Folk Museum also loaned us some interesting tools and artefacts from a bygone age and people had to work out what each item was used for.

The winners of the quiz, with an impressive score of 90%, were Georgina Sanderson and her grandmother Sylvia Leckenby, from Helmsley.



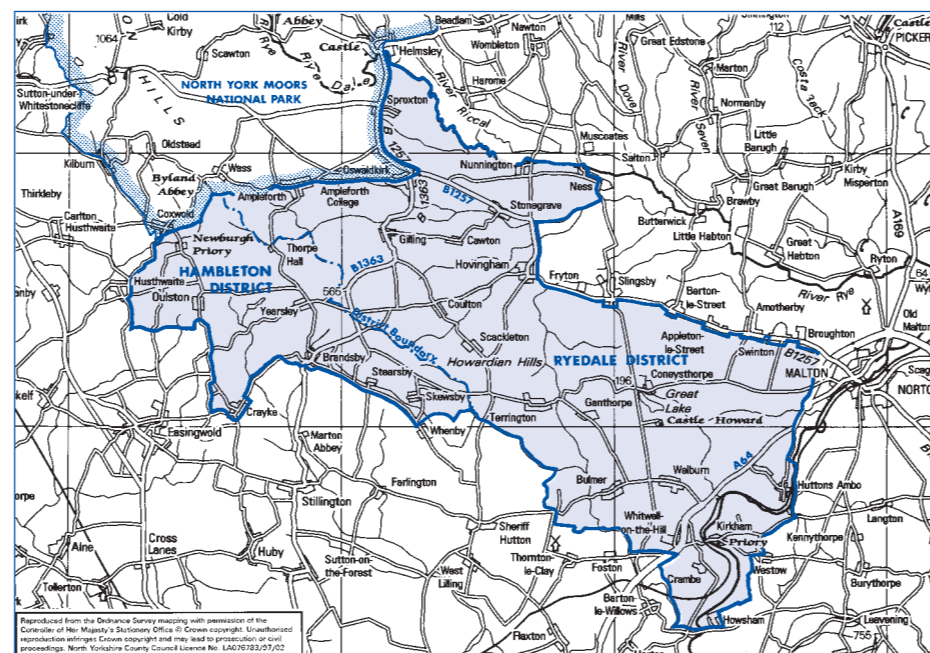
The proud winners of our local produce hamper - Georgina Sanderson and Sylvia Leckenby.

'HAVE YOUR SAY' VILLAGE CONSULTATION EVENTS

Following last year's Events in AONB villages, we are now collating the answers to the questions and requests. In many cases

services or schemes are in fact already in existence, but appear not to be well-known. We will therefore be sending a 'fact-sheet' to Parish Councils, giving details of some of the services available within or close to the AONB.

The Howardian Hills AONB FACT FILE



- The Howardian Hills covers 204 sq. km (79 sq. miles).
- The area was confirmed as an AONB in 1987.
- About 5,800 people live in the area.
- Over 15% of the area is wooded.



This Newsletter has been produced by the Howardian Hills AONB JAC

EXMOOR PONIES – TWO YEARS ON

In one of our previous Newsletters, we introduced the Exmoor ponies that we are using to graze some of the most valuable grassland wildlife habitats in the AONB. The work that started in 2002 has been expanded and now includes 7 sites, with a total of 9 different grazing compartments. The ponies have done a tremendous job and we are beginning to see diverse mosaics of permanent grassland developing. We hope to complete the fencing of another site near Terrington this year, with a view to bringing that into conservation grazing management in 2005.

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Howardian Hills

AONB NEWS

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Issue 5

October 2004

A NEW PLAN

Over the last 18 months the work of the AONB Unit has been dominated by the production of the new AONB Management Plan. This document contains principles and objectives to help conserve and enhance the area over the next 5 years and beyond.



A detailed consultation exercise was carried out, to ensure that the Plan is as comprehensive as possible – some of you may remember coming to the village 'workshops' we held. Over 1,700 people provided their thoughts and views on the future of the Howardian Hills and this information was either incorporated into the new Plan or passed to the relevant organisation.

The final plan was approved by the AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) in January 2004 and was then formally adopted by the three constituent local authorities (North Yorkshire, Ryedale and Hambleton). This is a requirement placed on them by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act. The Management Plan has now been printed in its final format and has been distributed to local farmers, interested organisations, Parish Councils and the village shops in Welburn and Terrington. Three of the key themes from the new Management Plan are detailed in a separate article.

Launching the Plan at the Yorkshire Show in July, Ben Bradshaw (Minister for Nature Conservation and Fisheries) said,



Ben Bradshaw MP (right) and Cllr Percy Featherstone (JAC Chairman), at the launch of the Management Plan at the Yorkshire Show.

"AONBs are an important part of our national scenic heritage. Finding ways in which to maintain the attractiveness of these areas, whilst also meeting the economic and social aspirations of those who live and work there, is a challenging task. I welcome the Management Plan launched today as a big step forward in meeting this challenge."

ANNUAL REPORT: April 2003 – March 2004

In what is now a regular feature of our Newsletters, we tell you about the work that the AONB Unit completed during the last financial year.

Landscape

- 2.4km of new hedge planting and 0.2km of hedge laying grant-aided by the Joint Advisory Committee.
- Repairs to 35m of roadside walls also grant aided.
- 46 specific development proposals scrutinised. Comments submitted on 18 schemes, where a potential impact on the AONB landscape was identified.

Landscape/Biodiversity

- Eight successful applications submitted to the Countryside Stewardship Scheme on behalf of local farmers. We wrote letters of support for a further 15 applications.
- One application submitted to the Woodland Grant Scheme.
- 6 Woodland Grant Scheme consultations appraised for impact on the AONB; comments submitted on 1 scheme.



Christmas tree removal to restore unimproved grassland, Crambe.

Biodiversity

- Two applications under the Forestry Commission's JIGSAW scheme now implemented – 5.1ha (13 acres) of new native woodland planted.
- New fencing installed around 2 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), to allow conservation grazing.
- Sycamore seedlings removed from alder woodland SINC.

- Removal of Norway spruce Christmas trees at Crambe, to restore unimproved grassland next to River Derwent SSSI.
- Conservation grazing of 6 SINCs by Exmoor ponies.
- Invertebrate survey of veteran trees carried out.
- Management carried out on 25 Special Interest Road Verges.
- Restoration of 4 ox-bow ponds at Sproxton.



Ox-bow pond restoration, Sproxton.

Cultural Heritage

- City of Troy Maze maintained.
- Village water pump at Terrington restored.
- 8 old village name signs, fingerposts and mileposts repainted.

Rights of Way

- Comprehensive programme of new gates, fingerposts and bridges completed in the parishes of Brandsby cum Stearsby, Dalby cum Skewsby, Coneythorpe, Ampleforth, pt. Byland, Hovingham, Sproxton, Oswaldkirk, Slingsby, Fryton.
- New gates installed in Yearsley and new signs installed in Nunnington and Stonegrave.

Publicity

- DFT approval received for Gateway Signs (see separate article).
- At least 6 known press mentions for projects/Management Plan.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Countryside Agency	106,408	Staffing	68,743
North Yorkshire CC	56,090	Office costs	16,509
Ryedale DC	5,980	JAC administration	2,061
Hambleton DC	3,800	Management Plan	9,366
Parish Councils	205	Research Projects	2,765
English Nature	1,000	Countryside Management	25,758
Forestry Commission	200	Publicity and Interpretation	4,348
Environment Agency	1,400	Rights of Way	48,919
		Community Initiatives	1,561
Brought Forward	8,652	Carried Forward	3,705
	£183,735		£183,735

AONB UNIT NEWS

This last year has seen another major step forward for the AONB Unit, to improve the efficiency of our work.

In December 2003 we moved office, from County Hall in Northallerton to Wath Court at Hovingham. Although technically outside the AONB (by about 30yds!), it means we are now only 20 minutes away from any part of the AONB. We can respond much more quickly to urgent matters or requests for visits and we are also more accessible for people to visit us. The contact details for the new office are given on the front of the Newsletter. Please feel free to call in and see us if you want to discuss any aspect of AONB management. It is advisable to telephone and arrange a convenient time, as we cannot guarantee that there will always be someone in the office.

There have also been changes on the staffing front. Sue Wright joined us in December, as our part-time (15 hrs/week) Administrative



New AONB Office, Hovingham.

Assistant. As well as the day-to-day running of the office, she also helps with publicity and promotion events. Susan Bragg is currently away on Maternity Leave, having given birth to a baby girl in June. Congratulations to her and her partner, Nick. Fiona Scully has joined us from Ipswich Borough Council, to provide cover until Susan returns.

Management Plan

- 12 village consultation events and 5 school events held.
- AONB Partnership Group meeting held.
- Draft Plan produced for consultation in October 2003.
- 5 village exhibitions held.
- Farmers and Landowners consultation meeting held.
- Comments collated and Plan amended.
- Final Plan produced in February 2004 and adopted by local authorities.
- Plan submitted to Defra before 31st March 2004 deadline.

Unit administration

- AONB Unit office re-located to Hovingham.
- New part-time AONB Administrative Assistant appointed.

THREE MANAGEMENT PLAN THEMES

To provide a very short taster of the new AONB Management Plan, we have drawn-out three key themes.

A living and working landscape - The Howardian Hills is a traditional lowland agricultural area, depending heavily upon farming and forestry. Whilst diversification of farm and Estate enterprises is necessary in order to maintain incomes, the continuation of a 'traditional' agricultural infrastructure is considered to be critical to maintaining the social and environmental character of the area.



"Natural Beauty And Tranquillity", Welburn.

Local communities - Issues of major concern to local communities include speeding traffic, affordable housing, village services and isolation. Despite being the main responsibility of other agencies, and therefore outside the direct influence of the AONB Committee, the Management Plan does however contain objectives to help tackle these issues wherever possible, linked by the theme of sustainable rural development.



The Howardian Hills AONB - designated in 1987.

WHAT IS AN AONB?

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of land that is deemed to be of such high landscape value and national importance that it warrants special protection. There are 37 AONBs in England covering about 15% of the country and they have been described as the jewels of the English landscape. AONBs are designated by the Government and have the same protection and status as National Parks. This means that AONBs receive additional resources to help protect and enhance the landscape and wildlife value of the area and have tighter planning controls. A statutory duty is also placed on Local Authorities to consider the long-term management of the areas, through the production of 5-yearly Management Plans.

ALL CHANGE FOR MAIN GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEMES

The Government's main grant schemes for conservation management of farmland and woodland are being radically changed. In an article aimed primarily at farmers and landowners, Defra and the Forestry Commission explain the latest proposals for the Environmental Stewardship and English Woodland Grant Schemes.

Environmental Stewardship

Defra is due to launch a new Agri-environment Scheme called Environmental Stewardship (ES) in early 2005. This Scheme will replace the existing Countryside Stewardship Scheme, although current agreements will continue. It will have similar objectives to the existing scheme: biodiversity, protection of historic and landscape features and access. In addition, there will be the new primary objective of resource protection, and new secondary objectives of flood protection and genetic conservation.

Environmental Stewardship is one scheme with three strands:

- Entry Level Stewardship (ELS)
- Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS)
- Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)

ELS aims to tackle countryside environmental problems such as diffuse pollution, loss of biodiversity and damage to the historic environment. Part of the application procedure will involve preparing a simple Farm Environmental Record (FER), which will show the location of features (e.g. hedges, ponds) on a map. Most applicants will be able to do this easily themselves. There will be a wide range of over 50 options to choose from (e.g. hedgerow management, low input grassland, buffer strips, arable options), to cover all farm types. Each option will earn 'points' and farmers choose from the list of options until they reach a 'points target', which is related to their farm size. Reaching the 'points target' earns a flat rate payment across the whole farm of £30 per ha. ELS will be open to all land managers and acceptance will be guaranteed, providing the scheme requirements are met. There will be quarterly start dates for the agreements, which will last for 5 years. **No grants will be given for capital works** (these will be available under HLS).

OELS aims to give confidence to farmers to stay in or enter organic farming. This scheme will have the same design as the main ELS, with similar management options. The payment rate will be £60/ha (but the points target will still be 30 per ha). Where farms have part organic and part non-organic land, there will be a joint application form to cover the whole farm.

HLS aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas. A regional targeting statement for the Howardian Hills will provide detailed information on how HLS will be targeted in this area.

The HLS application will usually need to be underpinned by an ELS agreement or application, so that farmers entering the HLS are also in the ELS. A Farm Environment Plan (FEP) must be prepared before an application is submitted – in most cases an adviser employed by the farmer will do this and Defra will make a payment towards the cost. HLS will be discretionary, so applications will go through an assessment procedure and entry to the scheme is not guaranteed.

There will be a long list of HLS options to cover most situations. These will be linked to the environmental features present on the farm and there will be grants for a wide range of capital works. As with ELS, there will be quarterly start dates and the ELS and HLS elements will be combined into a single 10-year agreement.

ES information packs should be available towards the end of 2004. Anyone interested in applying for ES should contact Defra at the Northallerton RDS office on (01609) 767400.

English Woodland Grant Scheme

In 2005 the Forestry Commission (FC) will be launching the new English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS). This will replace the current Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and will also incorporate Defra's Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (FWPS).

EWGS is designed to support sustainable management of existing woodlands and also the creation of new woodlands, through the following grants:

- Woodland management planning and woodland assessment.
- Sustainable management of woodlands.
- Environmental, social and economic improvements to woodlands.
- Regeneration and restoration of woodlands.
- Planting new woodlands.
- Agricultural 'income forgone' payments.

Currently, arrangements exist for **Woodland Regeneration Grant** (WRG) for the years 2004/05 & 2005/06. WRG is a contribution towards the cost of establishing replacement trees in existing woodland. The level of contributions varies; activities receiving the greatest support include conversion to broadleaved woodland and restoring ancient woodland sites.

Also now launched are the **Woodland Management Planning Grant** (WMPG) and the **Woodland Assessment Grant** (WAG). These two grants are designed to support the sustainable management of woodlands. They enable woodland managers to increase the knowledge of their woodland resource, to assist with the planning of future management.

The FC will be running a series of seminars for woodland owners and agents before the launch of EWGS, to provide details of the other elements of the scheme as they are confirmed. If you are interested in finding out more, then please contact the Forestry Commission at the Crockey Hill office on (01904) 448778.

NOTE: The new AONB Management Plan can be used by farmers and landowners to identify important sites on their land, which could be entered into one of these schemes. Further advice is available from the AONB Unit on (01653) 627164.



Autumn colours, Terrington Moor.