

Howardian  
Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# Annual Report

2012/13



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HOWARDIAN  
HILLS  
One of the  
AONB family

## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 2012/13 Review of the work of the AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

The AONB Partnership approach to management continued to find favour with the Coalition Government, and was endorsed again by the Defra Minister Richard Benyon MP when he spoke at the National AONBs Conference which we co-hosted in York in July 2012.

Turning our attention more this year to initiatives which support the rural economy, we are working in partnership with a number of organisations to both develop and promote the sustainable visitor experience available within the AONB. Much of this is being done under the umbrella of the LEADER programme, which has brought significant funding and assistance to local community projects as well as rural businesses.

Welcoming Liz Bassindale back to the team after her Maternity Leave, we again managed to complete a significant number of projects. Major restoration works were completed on stone walls near Brandsby; new hedging was planted at various locations; and our schools twinning project successfully completed its third phase. Quite a few of the SDF community projects had to be postponed by the wet or cold weather, but have now been completed in 2013/14.

We know that even tougher times lie ahead in terms of funding from both Defra and the local authorities, but we plan to continue using our resources wisely to bring the best results for the AONB, its communities and economy.



**Cllr Clare Wood**  
Chairman  
Joint Advisory Committee

## ADMINISTRATION

Local Authorities are responsible for the management arrangements in the AONB, which falls within the County of North Yorkshire and the Districts of Ryedale and Hambleton. AONB policy and programmes of work are overseen by a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), supported by Officer groups. The Core Partners Group consists of representatives of the 4 main organisations (see list below). The AONB Partnership Group takes in a wider range of organisations and interests and helps with developing ideas/projects.

### The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

During 2012/13, the members of the JAC were as follows:

#### **North Yorkshire County Council –**

Cllrs Caroline Patmore & Clare Wood

#### **Ryedale District Council –**

Cllrs Robert Wainwright & John Hicks

#### **Hambleton District Council –**

Cllr Christine Cookman

#### **Natural England –**

Nancy Stedman & Justine Clark

#### **Parish Councils (Ryedale) –**

Gaynor de Barr (pt-year); Stephen Gibson (pt-year)

#### **Parish Councils (Hambleton) –** David Pontefract

#### **Country Land and Business Association –** William Worsley

#### **National Farmers Union –** Stephen Prest & Rob Hicks

#### **Ramblers –** Dr Geoff Eastwood

#### **Forestry Commission –** Richard Pow

#### **The JAC met twice in 2012/13:**

**5th November 2012:** Hovingham Village Hall. Clare Wood was re-elected as the JAC Chairman and Christine Cookman as the Vice-Chairman. Members discussed the proposed 2013/14 JAC budget, the results of the recent AONB Visitors & Users survey and the first draft of the New Agricultural Buildings Design Guidance.

**4th April 2013:** Barton-le-Street Village Hall. Members discussed the work achieved in 2012/13 and approved the Business Plan and Action Programme for 2013/14. They also received a presentation on the 'Moors and More' local distinctiveness project and approved the final version of the New Agricultural Buildings Design Guidance.

The JAC carried out its tour of works and projects on 27th July 2012, visiting sites in both the Ryedale and Hambleton areas of the AONB.

### Officer Steering Groups

The Core Partners Group convened on its regular quarterly cycle. The AONB Partnership Group met in April 2013 to review progress made with implementing the Objectives of the AONB Management Plan over the previous year. This meeting was held in the early evening and sparked a lot of networking between the Parish Council representatives.

## The AONB Unit

In 2012/13 the Unit comprised:

AONB Manager . . . . . Paul Jackson  
(1 FTE)

AONB Officer . . . . . Francesca Pert (– Aug '12)  
(1 FTE) Liz Bassindale (Aug '12 –)  
Rebecca Thompson (Dec '12 –)

AONB Assistant . . . . . Maggie Cochrane  
(0.5 FTE)

## AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Management Plan is the key document setting out specific objectives for the sustainable management of the Howardian Hills AONB. Engaging in the strategic plans and actions of other organisations, to promote the Objectives contained in the Management Plan, is an important role for the AONB Unit.

In 2012/13 AONB staff engaged with the strategies of a number of organisations, including:

- Ryedale DC Local Plan Strategy
- North Yorkshire Timber Freight Quality Partnership
- Ryedale DC draft Economic Action Plan

## ENJOYING THE AONB

The Public Rights of Way network continues to be managed to a generally high standard, with minor maintenance/improvement works continuing over the whole network. More complex path routing issues are being resolved gradually, depending on their complexity, whilst volunteers are still making a significant contribution to path management.

### During 2012/13:

- 3 guided walks/evening talks were held, attended by 65 people
- A team of up to 4 volunteers worked on path maintenance in the AONB at least every other week, up until October 2012
- Litter was removed from at least 10 sites in the AONB, on a regular basis throughout the summer
- The CAN DO Lime & Ice Project continued into its fifth year
- A comprehensive Visitor & Users Survey was completed, including a comprehensive survey of car parking

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2012/13

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Defra	133,636	Staffing	91,134
North Yorkshire CC	40,205	Office costs	17,136
Ryedale DC	5,684	Partnership running costs	2,984
Hambleton DC	6,800	Publicity / Research	7,957
Heritage Lottery Fund (balance in-hand)	15,705	Management Plan	0
LEADER	12,448	Sustainable Development Fund	7,920
FEP preparation	2,465	Natural Environment projects	35,548
Donations	45	Historic Environment projects	9,243
		Enjoying the AONB	6,765
		Young People (JRC, etc.)	30
	<b>£216,988</b>	Young People (Schools Twinning)	27,809
<i>Brought forward</i>	<i>48,616</i>	<i>Carried forward</i>	<i>57,734</i>
		<i>HLF carried forward</i>	<i>1,344</i>
		(Resources from grant recipients)	335,848
		<b>Total Value of AONB Unit Activity</b>	<b>£542,374</b>

## CONSERVING AND ENHANCING NATURAL BEAUTY

This is the primary objective of AONB designation and the JAC attaches great importance to carrying out work on the ground in the AONB, working in partnership with local farmers, landowners and communities.

### Work funded or facilitated by the JAC in 2012/13 included:

- 700m of hedge planting/gapping-up
- 199m of wall restoration
- 280m of wall-side scrub removal
- 61 new in-field/hedgerow trees planted
- Continued control of Himalayan balsam along 5.8km of Wath Beck
- Continued clearance of rhododendron in Park Wood Fishponds SINC
- Conservation grazing of 8 SINC or other important sites by Exmoor Ponies
- Management of species/vegetation on or affecting 6 other SINC or SSSIs (by volunteers or contractors)
- 6 SINC re-surveyed, including a new site at Yearsley
- Support for 2 village/school wildlife enhancement projects
- Management works on 45 Special Interest Road Verges
- Excavation of 2 features by the Yearsley Moor Archaeology Project volunteers
- Restoration of the ha-ha at Gilling Castle, tree clearance from a section of former Gilling Castle park pale and renovation of guttering at Pond Farm, Crambe (Listed Building at Risk)
- Contribution towards 10 heritage restoration projects principally funded by the Ryedale DC LEADER Scheme
- Advice given to 4 land owners on the management of historic features
- Progress made with the undergrounding of electricity wires in Bulmer



Restored wall; Oulston

In addition to initiating and grant aiding work itself, the AONB Unit also gives advice to applicants and/or comments on applications submitted to the two main national grant schemes:

- 3 farmers/land managers advised about Entry Level or Higher Level Stewardship
- 2 Higher Level Stewardship Farm Environment Plans prepared
- 9 English Woodland Grant Scheme application consultations appraised for impact on the AONB

## COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

Our 4-stage project to twin primary schools in the AONB with ones in Hull and York continued. The Junior Ranger Club also continued, with 3 activity sessions held during the school half-terms and holidays.

### In 2012/13 the programme consisted of:

#### Rural:Urban Schools Twinning Project

- 15 Round Two visits completed
- 8 Round Three visits completed

#### Junior Ranger Club (April)

- Spring has sprung – 13 children

#### Junior Ranger Club (June)

- Mini-beasts and more – 13 children

#### Junior Ranger Club (November)

- Amazing Autumn – 13 children

### Communities:

- Projects funded in 2 villages
- Supported the Ryedale Rural Community Awards



Learning orienteering on a Schools Twinning Project day

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The AONB Management Plan is delivered via the policies and actions of many partner organisations, but we also make use of a number of sources of specialist help and assistance.

### In 2012/13:

- The Native Woodland Development Officer continued to work across the National Park and AONB areas
- We continued our active involvement in the LEADER Local Action Group and the HLF-funded Lime & Ice Project 'Yearsley through the Ages'
- We continued to work with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to run the Rural:Urban Schools Twinning project, using HLF and LEADER funding
- We supported the LEADER Local Distinctiveness Project 'Moors and More'
- We continued to work with a partnership focussed on the River Rye, to develop a project to tackle invasive species, river quality and sedimentation on a catchment scale, and with the B-lines Project in the northern/eastern segments of the AONB
- We are developing a Green Traveller Guide to the Howardian Hills, alongside one being prepared for the North York Moors
- We provided input to an NYCC mountain bike route leaflet based on Hovingham
- We are working with Castle Howard to publish 2 mountain bike routes, at Welburn and Coneysthorpe
- Volunteers helped us with 9 projects or tasks, equating to over 139 person/days of assistance worth £12,300



New kitchen; Appleton-le-Street Parish Hall

## PLANNING ISSUES

The Joint Advisory Committee is consulted by the Local Planning Authorities on certain developments in the AONB, in line with an agreed protocol. The AONB Manager also monitors the Weekly List of planning applications and calls-up details of any smaller schemes which might potentially have an impact on the AONB. Consultation responses are dealt with by the AONB Manager, in consultation with the JAC and Chairman for more contentious proposals.

Larger/more significant applications examined in 2012/13 included an agricultural workers dwelling at Scackleton, a grain store at Oswaldkirk, a grain dryer building at Crayke, two agricultural buildings at Sproxton, and in particular the construction of 30 new houses at Ampleforth. There were also a significant number of applications for new farm storage buildings.

### During 2012/13:

- 126 applications were determined by the Local Planning Authorities. 97% of these were approved
- 65 of the applications were scrutinised in detail by the AONB Manager
- Comments were submitted on 45 schemes, where a conflict with AONB Objectives was identified, improvements could be made or support was given
- Objections or Strong Reservations were lodged in 10 of those responses; the District or County Council followed the JAC's recommendation of refusal, or the applicants amended or Withdrew the proposals, in 8 of the cases where a decision was required
- 46 consultations on other development (primarily within roads or verges) were also scrutinised – comments submitted on 10 schemes
- Design Guidance on New Agricultural Buildings & Infrastructure was prepared

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Sustainable Development Fund distributed £7,920 to projects, assisting a variety of schemes addressing environmental, social and economic objectives.

### In 2012/13 the Sustainable Development Fund assisted:

- A pilot project to run 3 Geonaut taster sessions at local primary schools to develop understanding of AONB geology
- Refurbishment of Appleton-le-Street Parish Hall at Amotherby, including works to increase energy efficiency of the building

## PUBLICITY

Stories achieving coverage in print in 2012/13 included the Good Life events, Lime & Ice exhibition launch, SDF projects, contentious planning applications, 25th Anniversary seats and the LEADER Tourism Network project.

### In 2012/13 we:

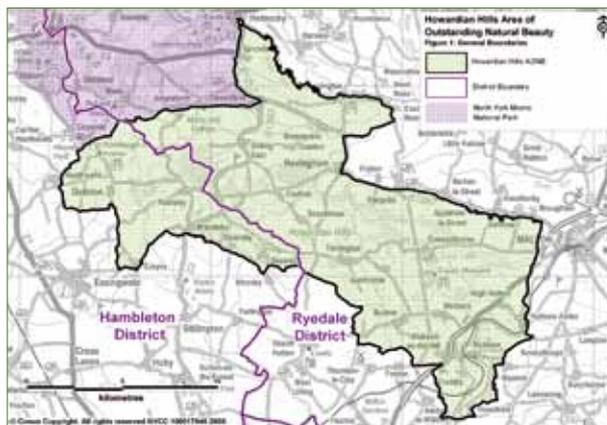
- Maintained the 14 AONB Gateway Signs
- Obtained at least 34 known press mentions for projects/AONB, equivalent to at least £42,000 of advertising space
- Hosted a travel writer from the Guardian, who took a 2-day route through the AONB from Kirkham to Crayke
- Used the AONB display boards at 7 events
- Maintained stocks of the AONB general information leaflet at Tourist Information Centres and other outlets
- Published and distributed our annual Newsletter (AONB News) in October 2012
- Published and distributed our 2011/12 Annual Report in December 2012
- Continued to manage the AONB website – 6,550 Visits by 5,288 Unique Visitors
- Attended the Ryedale Show
- Installed the first 25th Anniversary log seat, with an accompanying press release and photo. Secured timber for the remaining 24 seats and identified potential locations



Log seat; Castle Howard

## 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 9,300 people live in or immediately adjacent to the area
- Around 18% of the area is wooded



## NATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Howardian Hills AONB is part of the national 'family' of 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is an important umbrella body that co-ordinates lobbying on behalf of all AONBs, responds to national consultations and organises training events. Support and participation in NAAONB activities brings many benefits for the Howardian Hills and is important for staff development.

### In 2012/13:

- We co-hosted the National AONB Conference in York
- We attended the Northern Chairmen's meeting and the NAAONB AGM
- AONB Unit staff attended 2 Northern AONB Group meetings and 1 seminar

## AONB CONTACTS

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