

Howardian Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Annual Report

2017/18

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HOWARDIAN
HILLS
One of the
AONB family

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

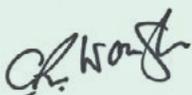
I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the 2017/18 Review of the work of the AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

Life never seems to get any quieter and it's been another busy year, with the new staff structure settling down and major projects to concentrate on.

One of our biggest initiatives for many years is the Ryevitalise project, which covers the River Rye from Bilsdale to Nunnington. The North York Moors National Park is the lead partner, but a large part of the project area is within the AONB. Staff from both organisations are working hard commissioning surveys and discussing potential projects with landowners, to feed into the main bid document. If our Stage 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is successful this will bring £1.8m of HLF money to the area, in a bid worth £3.4m in total. The 5-year programme will then deliver work on improving water quality, re-connecting people with the river, water level management and restoring the Rye's habitats and wildlife.

The Howardian Hills is an important area for geology but no comprehensive survey has ever been carried out. In 2017 we initiated a survey of 85 sites believed to be of scientific or educational interest, and the results are expected in summer 2018. A new partnership to tackle issues on the Public Rights of Way network in the AONB had a good start, with 24 new roadside fingerposts installed and two batches of gate replacement carried out by the National Park's Modern Apprentices Team. We also photographed 99% of the roadside fingerposts, to help with future replacement when necessary. Another joint HLF-funded project with the National Park, on Turtle Doves, has also started and is showing great promise for the 2018 survey season.

We were pleased to welcome the publication of Defra's new 25 Year Environment Plan, with amongst other commitments a proposal to set up a review of AONBs and National Parks. The Health & Harmony consultation has also kept us busy, and we look forward to seeing how these initiatives develop during 2018 and beyond.



Cllr Robert Wainwright
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 JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

During 2017/18, the members of the JAC were as follows:

North Yorkshire County Council

Cllrs Caroline Patmore & Caroline Goodrick

Ryedale District Council

Cllrs Robert Wainwright & Fiona Farnell

Hambleton District Council

Cllr Christine Cookman

Natural England

Ailsa Kirkup

Parish Councils (Ryedale) - Sally Brown

Parish Councils (Hambleton) - Chris Stratton

Country Land and Business Association - Sir William Worsley

National Farmers Union - Rebecca Hesketh

Ramblers - Philip Catterall

Forestry Commission - Jim Smith

The JAC met twice in 2017/18:

16th November 2017: Hovingham Village Hall. Members discussed the proposed 2018/19 JAC budget and the timetable for the 5-yearly Review of the AONB Management Plan scheduled for 2018/19. There was also a 'virtual tour' of the work carried out by the Staff Unit during 2016/17.

19th April 2018: Hovingham Village Hall. Members discussed the work achieved in 2017/18 and approved the Business Plan and Action Programme for 2018/19. They also considered a comprehensive response to the Defra consultation paper; 'Health & Harmony: The Future for Food, Farming & the Environment in a Green Brexit'.

Officer Steering Groups

The Core Partners Group convened on its regular quarterly cycle.

The AONB Unit

In 2017/18 the Unit comprised:

AONB Manager Paul Jackson
(1 FTE)

AONB Officer Liz Bassindale (4 days/wk)
(1 FTE) Francesca Pert (1 day/wk)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2017/18

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Defra	120,138	Staffing	89,013
North Yorkshire CC	32,300	Office costs	6,806
Ryedale DC	6,566	Partnership running costs	3,715
Hambleton DC	7,300	Publicity/Research	4,635
Historic England	0	Management Plan	0
Donations	50	Natural Environment projects	35,199
		Historic Environment projects	18,063
		Sustainable Development & Rural Economy	15,565
		Young People (JRC, etc)	182
In-year	£166,354	In-year	£173,178
<i>Brought forward – General Fund</i>	(66,868)	<i>Carried forward – General Fund</i>	(63,173)
<i>Brought forward – Historic England</i>	(4,206)	<i>Carried forward – Historic England</i>	(1,077)
	£237,428		£237,428
		(Resources from grant recipients, volunteers, match funding, etc)	142,119
		Total Value of AONB Unit Activity in 2017/18	£315,297

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. The Plan must be reviewed every 5 years, by law.

In 2017/18 we:

- Continued with delivery of the 2014-19 Management Plan
- Developed the Review schedule for preparation of the 2019-24 Plan and started work on scoping the amount of revision needed to the Objectives and Actions

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.



Tree planting, Ganthorpe

Work funded or facilitated by the JAC in 2017/18 included:

- 500m of hedge planting/gapping-up; 100m of hedge laying
- 324m of wall restoration
- 1 copse and 4 in-field or boundary trees planted/replaced
- Continued control of Himalayan balsam at Fairy Dell, Jeffrey Bog and Mugdale/Barker Woods SINC; also at Crambeck in the River Derwent SSSI and along Wath Beck
- Carrying out rotational scrub management at Terrington Carr SINC, as well as scrub removal at Peel Wood & Grasslands SINC, Littledale SINC, Amotherby Lane SINC and Cawton Fens SINC; starting control of rhododendron at Coulton Moor
- Conservation grazing of 4 SINC or other important sites by Exmoor ponies
- Management works on 34 Special Interest Road Verges
- Continuing involvement with the North Yorkshire Local Geological Sites Partnership and also commissioning a Geodiversity Audit to survey and map the AONB's most important geodiversity sites. 153 sites identified; permission received to survey 85 sites. 11 site surveys completed, with the remaining 74 scheduled for summer 2018
- Developing the HLF-funded Turtle Doves Project within the AONB, with site visits arranged, schools involved and volunteers trained for Spring 2018 surveying
- Organising a Farmers' Update event in Helmsley, jointly with the NYMNP. Presentations were given on Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Ryevitalise Project; also by the NFU and Farm Advisory Service. 85 attendees; 30% of them Young Farmers; c.30% from the AONB

- Attending the first meeting of the Ryevitalise Lowland Farmer Cluster, looking at training needs for local farm businesses
- Monitoring the situation with tree diseases, particularly after some follow-up Plant Health felling at Gilling following a *Phytophthora ramorum* outbreak in 2015
- Continuing the targeted programme of survey and management work on Scheduled Monuments, particularly those on the At Risk Register, using volunteers where possible. Four-year funding received from Historic England. Monument Management Scheme Year 3: bracken sprayed on 17 SMs
- Grant assistance towards the restoration of the lake at the Yorkshire Arboretum (part of the Grade I Registered Park of Castle Howard)
- Restoring 7 traditional village name signs and casting 6 replicas to replace modern signs, in 7 villages
- Continuing liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding. Schemes were completed at Nunnington (with final removal of the poles) and Ganthorpe. A partial undergrounding scheme for BT overhead lines was agreed for Nunnington (West) in 2016 but had yet to be implemented. BT also looked retrospectively at the Cawton and Crambe schemes and has initiated a removal scheme at Cawton

In addition to initiating and grant aiding work itself, the AONB Unit also gives advice to applicants and/or comments on applications submitted for agri-environment scheme funding and woodland management licensing:

- 5 Felling Licence Applications and 1 Woodland Management Plan appraised for impact on the AONB



Wall restoration, Grimston



Scrub clearance to restore species-rich grassland, Yearsley

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 Lists of planning applications and scrutinises 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 in certain circumstances.

Larger/more significant applications examined in 2017/18 included: the erection of extensions to three different properties in Stonegrave, the erection of a new dwelling at Musley Bank, the erection of a three storey extension at Little Terrington, the erection of a two-storey extension to a Listed Building in Oulston, the erection of significant extensions to a cottage at High Stittenham, retention of smallholder buildings near Crayke, conversion of farm buildings (linked to the conservation deficit at Newburgh Priory) at Yearsley and outline permission for up to 9 dwellings (linked to the conservation deficit at Newburgh Priory) at Oulston.

During 2017/18:

- 92 applications were determined by the Local Planning Authorities in the calendar year 2017. 93% of these were approved
- 97 applications were scrutinised in detail by the AONB Manager in 2017/18
- Comments were submitted on 29 schemes, where a conflict with AONB Objectives was identified, improvements could be made or support was given
- Objections or Strong Reservations were lodged in 12 of those responses (relating to 9 cases); The Local Planning Authority: Approved 3 schemes; Refused 3 schemes; Approved 2 schemes following re-submission/amendment
- 7 schemes were amended in response to less significant comments
- 1 consultation on other development (primarily within roads or verges) was also scrutinised – comments submitted on 1 scheme

In other planning-related issues we:

- Commented on national policy consultation documents by submitting local evidence/perspective to the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) as necessary
- Submitted comments on the Ryedale Local Plan: Local Sites Consultation; Hambleton Local Plan: Easingwold Area Plan Alternative Sites and Local Green Spaces; North Yorkshire Minerals & Waste Joint Plan: Addendum of Proposed Changes
- Circulated the New Farm Buildings & Infrastructure Design Guidance to local farm building construction companies
- Updated the AONB Design Guidance for Highways Works and presented it to the NYCC Highways Asset Management Team for discussion and adoption

ENJOYING THE AONB

The Public Rights of Way network continues to be managed to a generally reasonable standard, although the age of some of the infrastructure means that continual maintenance/improvement works are required over the whole network. More complex path routing issues are being resolved gradually, depending on their complexity.

In 2017/18 work included:

- Uploading the Easy Countryside Trails leaflets to a newly created page on the AONB website and promoting the routes to various groups. Grant support provided to Sight Support Ryedale to test and provide reviews of the Trails
- Removing litter from at least 10 sites in the AONB, on a regular basis throughout the summer, and monitoring/reporting fly-tipping incidents
- Delivering a new project to assist NYCC with resolving Public Rights of Way issues in the AONB:
 - Photographing 99% of all the roadside fingerposts, to record the distance and destination information. Overhanging or encroaching vegetation also cut back as necessary
 - Making and installing 24 new/replacement fingerposts
 - 18 further fingerposts made and due for installation Summer 2018
 - Packages of work completed by the NYMNPA Modern Apprentices Team at Bulmer and Welburn (work at Crambe delayed due to wet ground conditions)



Vegetation cut back to enable photographing of sign, Ganthorpe



Gate repaired by National Park Modern Apprentices, Bulmer

COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

Our Junior Ranger Club continued, with 4 activity sessions held during the school half-terms and holidays.

In 2017/18 the programme consisted of:

Junior Ranger Club (Easter)

- Springtime Activities – 22 children

Junior Ranger Club (May)

- Summer Fun – 22 children

Junior Ranger Club (October)

- Amazing Autumn – 24 children

Junior Ranger Club (February)

- Wonderful Winter – 26 children

Communities:

- Continued liaison with the principal organisations involved in community work in the AONB, via the regular Community Development Officers' meetings
- Held a meeting with North Yorkshire Police to discuss extending a Rural Watch initiative from the Yorkshire Wolds into the Howardian Hills
- Provided funding for nature areas at Amotherby Churchyard and Slingsby School
- Continued involvement in Ward Mapping/Planning Project with the Hovingham and Ampleforth Wards



Taking bark rubbings at a Junior Ranger Club day, Yorkshire Arboretum

PUBLICITY

Promotion of the AONB has continued via our Newsletter, Annual Report and attendance at the local agricultural show. Increasingly our profile is being raised via the leaflets and publicity being produced in partnership with other organisations, as detailed in the 'Enjoying the AONB' section.

In 2017/18 we:

- Maintained the 14 AONB Gateway Signs
- Completed the design and production of 7 new display banners
- Published and distributed our annual Newsletter (AONB News) in October 2017
- Published our 2016/17 Annual Report in September 2017
- Managed and developed the new AONB website
- Maintained a presence on Twitter - issuing information, publicising the practical work being carried out in the AONB and re-Tweeting as appropriate
- Mailed out supplies of our 'Rides & Rambles' leaflet to accommodation providers in the AONB
- Attended the Ryedale Show
- Gave presentations to the York Ornithological Club and Welburn Gardening Club

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We distributed almost £10,900 to Sustainable Development projects, assisting a variety of schemes addressing environmental, social and economic objectives.

Sustainable Development projects assisted in 2017/18 included:

- Continuation of a Sustainable Rural Communities project run by Community First Yorkshire, assisting with community planning
- Support for the Walking Group at Sight Support Ryedale, to come out into the AONB
- Support for refurbishment of the Slingsby maypole
- Wall restoration at Hovingham Village Hall
- Support for printing the Swinton Parish Plan



Wall restoration, Hovingham Village Hall

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 2017/18 we:

- Continued to assist with development of the main Ryevitalise Project programme documents (ecological surveys, data mapping, LCAP) and also with individual projects: Wooded Wonders, Education, Citizen Science, Walking routes, farmer champions, volunteering, Paradise Initiative, Trout in the Classroom. Stage 2 bid scheduled to be submitted in Autumn 2018
- Continued to participate in the Biodiversity Action Partnership for Ryedale, Scarborough and the AONB
- Participated in the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership, including providing funding for the part-time co-ordinator
- Participated in the North York Moors Native Woodland Partnership
- Arranged for Volunteers to help us with 17 projects or tasks, equating to over 139 person/days of assistance worth nearly £7,900

- £3k secured from HDC & RDC as a contribution to the Geodiversity Audit; £50k secured from Defra by River Derwent Partnership for Natural Flood Management project, with 2 of the 4 villages involved being in the AONB; successful application written for LNP funding, to enable Moorswork to buy a fen mower
- Successfully out-sourced work to: carry out a Geodiversity Audit. Significant assistance also provided to major projects that should bring significant and widespread funding/benefits to the AONB: HLF Ryevitalise Project, HLF Turtle Doves Project, Cornfield Flowers Project
- Worked jointly with the North York Moors National Park on: Native Woodland Partnership; Dark Skies Week; developing the Ryevitalise project for Stage 2 HLF Landscape Partnership funding; HLF Turtle Doves Project; technical help with the AONB Monument Management Scheme; post-Brexit agri-environment scheme development



Undergrounding overhead electricity lines, Nunnington (before)



Undergrounding overhead electricity lines, Nunnington (after)

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.

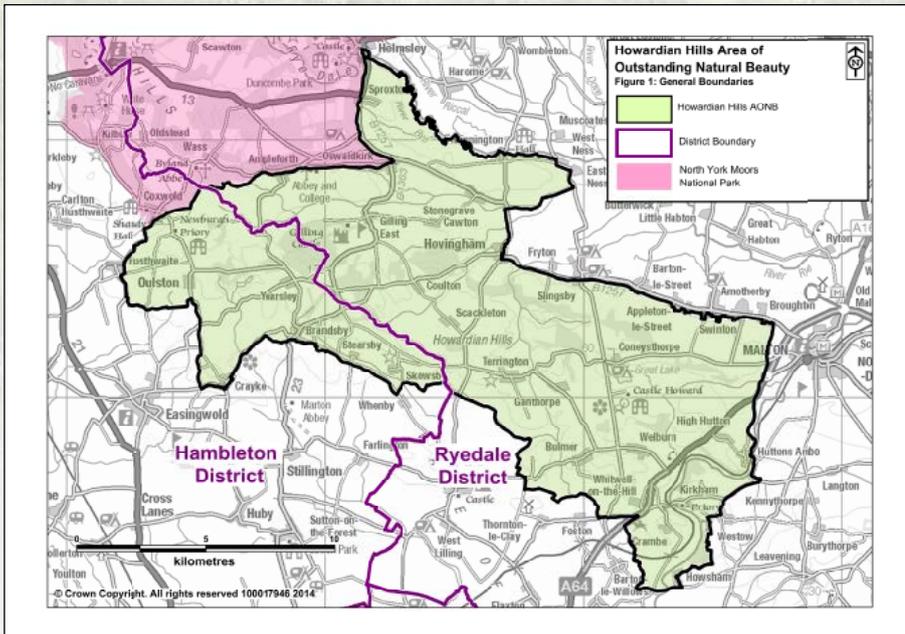
In 2017/18 we:

- Attended the national AONB Forum in July
- Attended the national Chairmen's meeting/NAAONB AGM in November
- Attended 2 Northern AONB Group meetings

- Participated in specific meetings with Defra, as part of a small AONB Family Working Group, on Performance Metrics and Future Agri-Environment Schemes
- Commented or shared good practice in many national internet forum discussions on AONB projects/management

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



AONB CONTACTS

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