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Howardian Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB NEWS

Issue 20

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Targeting Rural Crime

A 'poacher watch' had existed in the Helmsley and Howardian Hills area for more than 20 years, predominantly made up of farmers, gamekeepers and associated local residents. As a result of the difficulties experienced in contacting the Police via the 101 system, and the lack of feedback received by those reporting suspicious activities, the watch participants had become frustrated. This was mainly due to the perception that the Police did not consider poaching and associated rural crimes to be sufficiently important to react to, as well as a lack of understanding of when 999 should be used to contact the Police. The activities of the 'poacher watch' scheme had therefore been largely wound-down.

A chance meeting between Rural Task Force PC Mark Atkinson and members of the Howardian Hills AONB Team rekindled the idea that a 'rural watch' involving the local community should exist. With illegal activities ongoing in the area, and the potential links to wider rural crime, the AONB felt that they might be able to provide support to a new Watch.

A meeting for local farmers, gamekeepers, residents and Parish Councils took place in April 2018. From this the Helmsley Mobile Rural Watch (HMRW) was born. Twenty volunteers underwent the North Yorkshire Police (NYP) volunteer vetting process, with others becoming involved on an informal basis. A HMRW Coordinator was appointed to conduct administration duties. [Cont'd p.3].



▲ PC Mark Atkinson and Coordinator Tony Mills with some of the Rural Watch equipment

In this regular feature we tell you about some of the work that the AONB Unit funded or facilitated during the last financial year.

Landscape

- 293m of hedge planting/gapping-up and 22 in-field or boundary trees
- 10m of dry stone wall restoration

Biodiversity

- Control of Himalayan balsam at Mugdale/ Barker Woods SINC, Crambeck in the River Derwent SSSI and Wath Beck
- Scrub management on Peel Wood & Grasslands, Amotherby Lane and Coulton Fen SINC
- Conservation grazing of 5 SINC or other important sites by Exmoor ponies
- Management works on 45 Special Interest Road Verges
- Continuing involvement with the North Yorkshire Local Geological Sites Partnership including passing site citations for 16 sites to Ryedale DC for the formal notification process and carrying out scrub control on Slingsby East Quarry LGS
- Contributing to the delivery of the NLHF Turtle Doves Project and funding establishment of 3 additional Turtle Dove plots
- Giving detailed Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship advice to 14 farmers. Four applications submitted as a result of advice visits; at least 4 more likely for 2020
- Contributing to the launch of the NLHF-funded Ryevitalise Project

Historic Environment

- Continuing the programme of survey and management work on Scheduled Monuments
- Restoring 1 traditional village name sign
- Scrub removal works on limekilns at Ness and Hovingham and a historic mill site at Welburn

Planning

- 125 applications scrutinised by the AONB Manager in 2019/20; comments submitted on 47 schemes

- 3 consultations on development on the A64 scrutinised with comments submitted. Section of timber-clad vehicle restraint system installed as part of full VRS installation
- Commented on national policy consultation documents by submitting local evidence/perspective to the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB)
- Submitted comments on the Hambleton Local Plan and the MHCLG consultation on revisions to Permitted Development Rights for 5G mobile phone masts
- Supported enforcement action against overhead BT lines adjacent to Newburgh Priory Park

Enjoying the AONB

- Removing litter from at least 10 sites in the AONB on a regular basis
- Supporting 5 Dark Skies events
- Continuing assistance to NYCC with resolving Public Rights of Way issues in the AONB - providing details for 30 new/replacement roadside fingerposts and identifying improvements to 3 gates at Hovingham (implementation delayed by COVID-19)

Communities, Schools & Education

- Four Junior Ranger activity sessions in partnership with The Yorkshire Arboretum
- Liaison with the principal organisations involved in community work in the AONB, via the regular Community Development Officers' Group

- Funding for equipment for Helmsley Mobile Rural Watch
- Scoping and landowner liaison work in Gilling, as part of the Ryedale Villages Natural Flood Management Project run by the River Derwent Partnership
- Awarded grants for community nature projects at Autism Plus (Gilling), Slingsby and Crayke
- Provided funding for improvement works at Amotherby, Oswaldkirk and Hovingham Village Halls

Publicity

- Maintained the 14 AONB Gateway Signs
- Published and distributed our annual Newsletter and 2018/19 Annual Report
- Managed the AONB website and maintained a presence on Twitter
- Provided the Ryevitalise Education Officer with contacts for AONB schools; successful after-school club held at Hovingham Primary School
- Attended the Ryedale Show and Countryfile Live

Sustainable Development

- £5,700 awarded to Sustainable Development projects, assisting a variety of schemes addressing environmental, social and economic objectives
- Continuation of a Sustainable Rural Communities project run by Community First Yorkshire

Financial Statement 2019/20

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Defra	124,306	Staffing	98,694
North Yorkshire CC	36,900	Office costs	6,949
Ryedale DC	5,066	Partnership running costs	4,303
Hambleton DC	5,800	Publicity/Research	3,514
Historic England	4,647	Management Plan	2,395
Donations	5	Natural Environment projects	23,523
		Historic Environment projects	13,706
		Sustainable Development & Rural Economy	22,609
		Young People (JRC, etc)	877
In-year	£176,724	In-year	£176,570
Brought forward – General Fund	(55,040)	Carried forward – General Fund	(55,194)
Total	£231,764	Total	£231,764
		(Resources from grant recipients, volunteers, match funding, etc)	165,382
		Total Value of AONB Unit Activity in 2019/20	£341,952

Establishing Rural Watch

The AONB offered grants to both North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and HMRW to buy specialist equipment for use on joint patrols, including night-vision binoculars, torches, dash-cams and a mobile Automatic Number Plate Recognition camera.

The most successful innovation of the HMRW has been its WhatsApp Group - the first one to be supported by NYP on a trial basis. The Group now has over 165 members, who regularly post information on suspicious activities taking place in our area in 'real time', irrespective

of the time of day. Monitored by NYP, it has rapidly become the community tool for reporting the movements of suspicious individuals entering the area.

Richard Wainwright, a HMRW member, stated: *"As a farmer who is regularly plagued by night-time visitors, I've found the Helmsley Rural Watch, in particular the WhatsApp Group, amazingly effective. North Yorkshire Police working with the rural community and helping each other towards a common goal to reduce rural crime, to me is working really well."*

The activities of the HMRW are starting to bear fruit. The 100 or so poaching incidents per year are now made up of fewer poachers who are visiting the area repeatedly, whereas before it was an open space for all and sundry. The use of new powers, such as under Operation Figaro, is also starting to shift the persistent offenders to other areas.

For more details of HMRW please contact the Coordinator on 07971 590458 or at tonymills2@me.com

Ryevitalise – Catchment restoration support

Ryevitalise is a £3.4 million Landscape Partnership Scheme running until summer 2023 supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, North York Moors National Park, Howardian Hills AONB and partners, and inspired by local communities.

We work with volunteers and communities across the catchment to conserve, enhance and restore the natural and cultural heritage of the area, enabling people to reconnect with the history, wildlife and landscapes of the River Rye and its tributaries.

The Ryevitalise catchment covers 413km² centred around the River Rye, including the Holbeck and Wath Beck.

James Caldwell, Ryevitalise Catchment Restoration Officer, is working with land managers in the Ryevitalise area to provide best practice advice and identify opportunities to access grant funding through bespoke Ryevitalise Conservation Agreements.

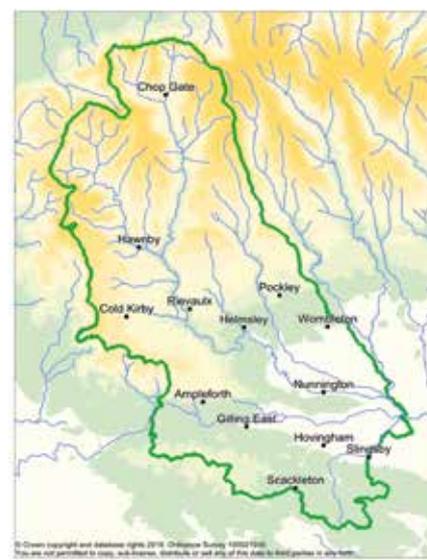
Successful conservation grants will focus on key options to improve water quality, slow the flow of water and create better and more connected habitats, all of which will benefit both species and our local communities. Typical options include strengthening riparian and woodland habitats, creating marshy or species-rich grassland and installing water improvement measures.

Conservation agreements are created following site visits to identify areas where conservation opportunities can be delivered, complementing existing schemes such as Countryside Stewardship so as to avoid double-funding. Ryevitalise Agreements will run for the next 13 years, including capital grants and annual area payments for habitat management options.

If you are a land manager working within the area and would like to support the work of the project, please get in touch with James at j.caldwell@northyorkmoors.org.uk



▲ James Caldwell, Catchment Restoration Officer



▲ The Ryevitalise area

Are you looking for a grant?

Open to landowners, individuals, community groups, charities, local authorities, schools, churches and more, the AONB Project Fund offers grants which support projects that conserve and enhance the landscape, cultural heritage, communities and biodiversity of the AONB. Grants are usually in the range of £100 to £3,000 and normally provide up to 50% funding. In exceptional

circumstances higher value grants and grants of up to 100% can be given.

The Project Fund has supported a diverse range of schemes in the past including hedge planting, stone wall repairs, pond restoration, seeding of Turtle Dove plots and repairs to Listed Buildings at Risk.

Community projects supported by the Fund include village and school wildlife

areas, eco-renovation of community buildings, a community art exhibition, setting up allotments, managing conservation churchyards and creating environmental education resources.

If you have an idea that you think might be eligible please look at the Grants page on the AONB website for further information or call the AONB office.



▲ Defibrillator in Hovingham



▲ Wildlife and quiet area, Slingsby School

Next Steps - Cornfield Flowers into the Community



▲ Cornfield Flowers

The Cornfield Flowers Project in Ryedale and the whole of North East Yorkshire is a way of embracing wild flowers, fresh air and solid friendships. It involves people from everyday walks of life; they have joined-in by hearing about it in the Next Steps café in Church Street, Norton, or at one of the many rural 'pop-up' venues which Next Steps also runs. Our allotments provided a stage in 2019 to showcase the wild flowers alongside organic veg and fruit which is used in our cafe's daily menu. Come and visit us if you wish to find out more or to volunteer your time.

Next Steps Well-being Centre supports people with mental health problems and well-being issues and works to prevent isolation and loneliness in Ryedale by providing a drop-in centre, activities and outreach groups. We are a user-led organisation and work closely with GPs and the Community Mental Health teams to ensure that people who are affected by well-being issues are supported, as well as those who suffer from isolation/loneliness and mental health issues. Our ultimate aim is to develop self-confidence for members, improve their work prospects and access to statutory services, help support positive family relationships and prevent loneliness and isolation.

Keeping It Local

The advantages of buying local for both people and the planet are wide-ranging and not just limited to keeping local businesses afloat. Buying local supports smaller more specialist businesses, reduces carbon footprints, brings communities together, increases

the freshness of food and supports British producers. Many people will have altered their shopping habits during the COVID-19 lockdown, both supporting and being supported by businesses who were agile in adapting to the new circumstances.

Set up by North Yorkshire County Council soon after the start of the pandemic, the North Yorkshire Buy Local directory allows users to search for service providers by postcode, key word or service type. As lockdown measures ease we should remember how important the local shops and businesses were and continue to support them whenever we can. If you own a business you can still register, or update your existing entry to show how you're continuing to adapt. If you're a consumer, why not explore what's on offer if you haven't already? You can find it here: <https://buylocal.northyorks.gov.uk/>



Accommodation



Food suppliers



Getting around



Professional services



Property services



Retail

▲ [Buying Local](#)

Plastic Tree Protection - the 5 Rs

A key strand of our work to improve the natural environment of the AONB is the funding of native broadleaved tree planting and hedgerow restoration. Tree failure is expensive and frustrating so tree shelters, guards and spirals are used to protect saplings through their establishment period (approximately 5-8 years). Currently the vast majority of tree protection is made from plastics which are not biodegradable.



▲ [Used tree guards awaiting recycling](#)

Guards should be removed after use and reused or recycled, but they rarely are. Having funded or advised on many projects over the last 25 years, it's a legacy that we're now trying to get to grips with.

This is what we're planning to do:

Reduce – signposting to Forestry Commission guidance and other experts on whether individual tree protection is always necessary.

Remove – updating AONB grant conditions to make removal obligatory; using volunteer help or funding to remove old guards.

Reuse – Trialling methods of removal that allow reuse in another planting scheme.

Recycle – Researching and signposting landowners to recycling facilities; considering setting up an area-wide recycling scheme.

Recover – As a last resort, guards can be sent to the Waste Recovery Plant at Allerton Park for recovery or incineration to generate electricity.

The complete removal of tree guard waste from the AONB environment is a big ambition and won't happen overnight. But we think that by working with landowners, volunteers and waste management services we can make significant progress.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-protection-the-use-of-tree-shelters-and-guards>

Francesca Pert (AONB Officer)

AONBs – The Bigger Picture



The **AONB Management Plan** guides everything the AONB Team does, by combining local thinking with national strategies. In the last two years the UK Government has shone a spotlight on protected areas, demonstrating the national context within which the Howardian Hills AONB sits.

The Government's ambition is to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

In 2018 it published '**A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**' to set out how this

might be achieved. You can find the document at www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan

As part of the 25 Year Plan the Government commissioned Julian Glover to lead a comprehensive **Designated Landscapes Review**, which published its report in September 2019. It aimed to answer the question: 'What does the nation need from national landscapes today?' The resulting recommendations highlight the opportunities within our national landscapes for addressing the twin crises of climate change and health.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf

At their 2019 conference in Colchester the AONB network pledged to 'protect what remains and recover what has been lost in our natural environment'. The targets are now documented in **The Colchester Declaration** and action will be delivered through locally prepared **Nature Recovery Plans** for each AONB.

Further information on these initiatives can be found at www.landscapesforlife.org, with the Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan for the period 2019-2024 available at <http://www.howardianhills.org.uk/library/management-plan/>

Howardian Hills AONB Fact File



The Howardian Hills are:

- A unique combination of Jurassic limestone geology, glacial processes and human settlement, formed over thousands of years
- Approximately 70% farmland and 18% woodland, punctuated by traditional villages and grand historic estates
- A diverse mosaic of wildlife habitats and landscape features
- Best explored on foot to discover their intricate, hidden places
- Designated as an AONB since 1987, covering 204km²

Landscapes
for life
.org.uk

HOWARDIAN
HILLS
One of the
AONB family

This Newsletter has been produced by the Howardian Hills AONB JAC