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Howardian Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB NEWS

Issue 21

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Looking after our Historic Heritage

The Howardian Hills AONB contains 79 Scheduled Monuments (SMs), the majority of which are Iron Age burial mounds that are 2,000 to 3,000 years old. Many of these were becoming overgrown and damaged by vegetation such as bracken, scrub and brambles. The deep bracken rhizomes can disturb any buried funerary remains, whilst scrub and brambles provide cover for rabbits and other animals to dig burrows that have the same damaging effect.

In April 2015 we started the Monument Management Scheme (MMS), supported by significant grant aid from Historic England. The aim was to survey all the SMs in the AONB, carry out beneficial management works and then re-survey to check the results. The main purpose was to remove SMs from the national Heritage at Risk Register, which catalogues the monuments that are at most risk of significant harm. The target was for eight monuments to be removed from the Register, with work to at least 15 others to prevent their decline.

Following the surveys we carried out work on 42 SMs over a 6-year period, using volunteers and contractors to cut down scrub, spray bracken and pull out brambles. The AONB Team even played their part, crushing bracken on four sites to trial this method of control.

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Photos:

Page 4 Cause and Effect,
Ryevitalise

Page 6 Hovingham Landscape,
Liz Bassindale

All others: **AONB Unit**



▲ Round barrow (tumulus) in young forestry plantation

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

- Planted 212m of hedge and 18 in-field or boundary trees
- Restored 18m of stone wall
- Contributed to delivery of the NLHF-funded Ryevitalise Project
- Delivered the ELM Advocacy Project, funded by Defra. 165 land managers contacted and advice given to 14 farmers. Six applications to Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship supported

Biodiversity

- 1 pond restored
- Control of Himalayan balsam at Jeffrey Bog, Pretty Wood and Muggdale & Barker Woods SINC, River Derwent SSSI and Wath Beck
- Scrub and tree management works on Coulton Fen SINC
- Conservation grazing of 6 SINC or other important sites by Exmoor ponies
- Cutting of 45 Special Interest Road Verges
- Contributed to the delivery of the NLHF-funded Turtle Doves Project
- Visited Thorpe Grange SINC to monitor condition

Geological sites

- Assessed 1 site for scrub management works
- Agreed scrub control works for Slingsby Quarry LGS

Historic Environment

- Bramble sprayed on 12 Scheduled Monuments (SMs); bracken crushed on 5 SMs; bracken sprayed on 6 SMs; brush cleared from 1 SM; 2 SMs re-seeded. 76 SMs surveyed by volunteers or AONB Team. Final Report and Grant Claim submitted to Historic England
- Restored 6 traditional village name signs in Foston, Grimston and Gilling
- Visited limekilns at New Piece Moor, Maidensworth Farm and Hovingham Spa to assess condition. Scrub removal works carried out on 2 limekilns

Planning and Consultations

- 128 planning applications scrutinised and comments submitted on 35 schemes. Objections or Strong Reservations lodged in 16 responses
- 5 Forestry Commission Felling Licence consultations and 5 Woodland Management Plans appraised for impact on the AONB
- Commented on national policy consultation documents by submitting local evidence/perspective to the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) as necessary
- Commented on the MHCLG consultation on Planning for the Future
- Liaison with Northern Powergrid on overhead electricity cable undergrounding; schemes completed at Grimstone Top and Oswaldkirk. Schemes for potential implementation during RIIO-ED2 confirmed

Enjoying the AONB

- Removed litter from at least 10 sites in the AONB and reported fly-tipping incidents
- Monitored on-going issues: unauthorised mountain bike trail-building and verge damage caused by parking in various locations. Issues exacerbated by COVID-19
- Contributed towards the North York Moors area Outdoor Guide and Sit Back & Enjoy The Ride leaflet
- Funded a temporary outdoor arts exhibition at Welburn
- Continued a project to assist NYCC with resolving Public Rights of Way issues in the AONB

- Popular village loop path at Crayke re-surfaced
- Steps repaired at Stonegrave, 2 stiles replaced with kissing gates at Hovingham and route cleared at Newburgh

Communities, Schools & Education

- All Junior Ranger Club sessions cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 12-page activities booklet emailed to past attendees
- Funding provided for managing community nature areas at four locations, to put up 50 swift nest boxes at Castle Howard and Coneysthorpe and to replace wooden railings at Coneysthorpe
- Promoted a series of events to address Loneliness issues

Publicity

- Maintained the 14 AONB Gateway Signs
- Published and distributed our annual Newsletter (AONB News) and 2019/20 Annual Report
- Managed the AONB website and a presence on Twitter

Sustainable Development

- Continued the Sustainable Rural Communities project run by Community First Yorkshire
- Provided funding towards composting toilets at Autism Plus (Gilling)
- Started a waste plastic tree protection project

Financial Statement 2020/21 (provisional)

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Defra	126,046	Staffing	100,160
North Yorkshire CC	41,200	Office costs	6,694
Ryedale DC	5,066	Partnership running costs	3,156
Hambleton DC	5,800	Publicity/Research	2,690
Historic England	8,218	Management Plan	0
ELM Advocacy Project	7,202	Natural Environment projects	41,154
Reimbursement of grant	10,000	Historic Environment projects	15,172
		Sustainable Development & Rural Economy	16,949
		Young People (JRC, etc)	0
In-year	£203,532	In-year	£185,975
Brought forward – General Fund	(55,549)	Carried forward – General Fund	(73,106)
Total	£259,081	Total	£259,081
		(Resources from grant recipients, volunteers, match funding, etc)	156,645
		Total Value of AONB Unit Activity in 2020/21	£342,620

Monument Management Scheme

Between June 2015 and March 2021 a total of £71,027 was spent on the MMS programme. Historic England provided £36,134 of grant aid to support AONB Team staff/travel/office costs, external professional assistance and volunteer expenses. AONB match funding of £20,213 was then put in to carry out practical site management works. The value of the volunteer contribution was £10,600, with other miscellaneous income amounting to £4,080.

By the end of the project, 16 monuments had been recommended for removal from the HAR Register; 6 monuments had been recommended for a reduction in risk status from Vulnerable to Low/Not at Risk; and work had been carried out on 20 other monuments to prevent their decline.

As well as improving the condition and management of the Scheduled Monuments within the Howardian Hills, the AONB Team is also significantly more knowledgeable now about the issues affecting these important sites and how to tackle them.



▲ Round barrow cleared and awaiting re-seeding with grass

Environmental Land Management and Farming in Protected Landscapes

The Howardian Hills AONB, alongside all other AONBs and National Parks in England, recently received a small amount of funding from DEFRA to help farmers consider current opportunities to improve the environment. This included looking at how their farm businesses can adapt as Government payments change to become focused on the provision of 'public goods', such as enhancing habitat for farmland birds or improving water quality.

Fraser Hugill, a local farmer and farm adviser, was contracted to help us deliver this work. He visited 13 farms in the AONB to advise on the current

opportunities available through Countryside Stewardship and locally available funding, and also to discuss potential opportunities for the future.

Fraser said *"Every farm I have visited has shown an enthusiasm to do more for the environment, and we have had really productive conversations on how environmental management can be integrated into commercial farm businesses."*

The visits have resulted in five farms expressing an interest in moving forward with Countryside Stewardship applications this year, with support

from the AONB. If successful, these applications will deliver a range of options that will benefit the environment, such as feeding farmland birds through the winter and providing flower-rich habitats through the summer.

A farm walk was held in early June, where farmers were invited to discuss how the AONB can support them over the coming years, alongside the current opportunities available through Countryside Stewardship and the Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership.

A major new opportunity is now available through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Farmers and land managers can apply for funding for projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover/enjoy/understand the landscape and cultural heritage, or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. For more details please visit our webpage at www.howardianhills.org.uk/about-us/grants, or see www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes



▲ Farm walk discussing a variety of current topics

Are you looking for a grant?

The AONB Project Fund is open to landowners, community groups, charities, schools, village halls, churches and more. It offers grants towards projects that support the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage and communities of the AONB. Grants are usually in the range of £100 to £3,000 and normally provide around 50% funding. In exceptional circumstances higher value or percentage grants might be offered.

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 take a look at the Grants page on the AONB website for further information or send us an email (info@howardianhills.org.uk).

AONB Project Fund contributed to improving Love Lane in Crayke ▶



Cause and Effect

The Howardian Hills team are collaborating with the Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership (supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund) and the National Trust at Nunnington Hall to create an exhibition which will celebrate the geography and life of the River Rye.

The watercourse is essential to life, both human and wild, and the river's form is constantly changing. Through art we hope to offer an alternative way of making sense of this watery world.

Artists Paula Hickey and John Arnison aim to capture the transformative power

and captivating beauty of the Rye. Their contrasting artistic practices have been enriched through our joint exploration of the Rye's landscapes and the fluvial processes that shape them. Looking from fresh perspectives Paula and John hope to evoke a sense of nature's processes and constant flux. The exhibition aims to reconnect people with the river and inspire them to explore beyond the areas they know. In turn this will nurture future engagement and stewardship that goes beneath the surface.

Cause or effect? We invite you to come on a journey to see your river as you have never seen it before. A programme of workshops, talks and hands-on activities will run alongside the exhibition, allowing visitors to extend their exploration or capture their own response to the work presented.

Cause and Effect will run from February to July 2022 at Nunnington Hall. If you want a look behind the scenes and follow the creation of this exhibition head over to Paula's blog at <https://wipjournal.wordpress.com>



▶ *A short film will accompany the exhibition; here John Arnison is being filmed photographing at Blow Gill.*

Plastic Tree Protection Use and Waste Management

Here we summarise progress on this topic since the last AONB News (www.howardianhills.org.uk/library/newsletters). More detailed information is available on our website www.howardianhills.org.uk/library/guidance-and-information-notes

Research: A new Forestry Plastic Working Group established by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust are trialling plastic-alternative products and searching for solutions to tree plastic pollution. Also a study comparing planting with and without tree protection has been published by the Plastic Waste Innovation Hub at University College London www.plasticwastehub.org.uk/news/hub-research-shows-environmental-impact-of-plastic-tree-shelters-in-new-publication

Action on the ground: Since May our volunteers have removed 6,000 plastic tree shelters from Hall Moor near Fryton! Also in April a staff team trialled removing rabbit spirals from 100 metres of hedge. Hedge planting schemes grant aided by the AONB will now only use industrially compostable tree spirals - we fund the difference in price compared to standard PVC spirals.

Key recommendations from all these activities are:

- Don't default to protection, check if it is necessary using Forestry Commission guidance.
- If using protection plan in clear 'end of life' time, process and funds for removal and disposal.
- Don't put it off. Removing plastic protection as soon as plants are mature enough makes it easier to remove, reuse and recycle them.
- Recycling is the best disposal option: Tubex now offer a tree shelter recycling scheme for genuine Tubex products and Agricycle, via Derwent Buyers Group in Malton, recycle Correx and Tubex plastic tree shelters.
- If reusing, wash and dry shelters before re-fitting to avoid cross-contamination or biosecurity concerns.
- If you can't recycle then recover energy from the waste: local Yorwaste collections go for incineration at the Allerton Park Waste Recovery plant.



▲ *Volunteers clearing tree shelters at Hall Moor, Castle Howard*

- Request help. The AONB Project Fund may be able to contribute to the cost of tree shelter recycling schemes. The AONB Volunteers are able to assist with a limited number of removal initiatives each year.
- Offer help! More person-power is needed to remove all our redundant plastic tree protection waste. Please get in touch to join our volunteers or if you have an established group who could help.

Volunteering

The Howardian Hills AONB has a fantastic team of volunteers. In the summer months the group clears Himalayan balsam from Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and cuts and rakes botanically rich churchyards and grasslands. In the autumn and winter we move on to mostly fen cutting and scrub clearance. Recently the group have also added the collection of tree tubes for recycling to their achievements - work that we will return to again in the future. Some of our volunteers also help with running activities for families and on our stand at local shows and events.

The conservation tasks take place fortnightly on Mondays and we are looking for some new members for the team. You don't need to be able to attend every task or to be skilled in countryside work. You just need to be willing to learn new skills, work as part of a team and to have a moderate level of physical fitness (it's a bit of a walk in to some of the sites but we take it steadily).

If you are interested in joining the group please email info@howardianhills.org.uk to find out a bit more about what we get up to.



▲ *Volunteers cutting and raking the Appleton-le-Street Churchyard SINC*

Landscapes for Life Week

Landscapes for Life (L4L) Week is a week (and a bit) long celebration of our precious and varied Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This year it is running from 18th



▲ Storm clouds gathering over Hovingham Estate

to 26th September. The UK's 46 AONBs will be promoting the indispensable benefits of our protected landscapes and inviting you to experience the countryside in novel ways. During the week we also aim to raise awareness of important issues relating to our AONBs via Twitter (you can follow us on [@Howardian_Hills](https://twitter.com/Howardian_Hills)). With the threat of COVID-19 still near some events will be hosted online. Discover more by following [@AONBFamily](https://twitter.com/AONBFamily) on social media or heading to www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/events/landscapes-for-life-week. If your organisation is running an event in the Howardian Hills during L4L Week which promotes a deeper understanding of or engagement with our landscape then please let us know.

Staff changes

After 25 years working in the Howardian Hills AONB, with 20 of those as Lead Officer, Paul Jackson will be retiring in early September. From preparing Countryside Stewardship applications to commenting on planning applications, Paul helped set up the AONB Unit in 2002.

The new AONB Manager is Estelle Hook. She has over 25 years' experience working in the environmental sector, including over 12 years as a member of the Norfolk Coast (AONB) Partnership staff team. She has a good understanding of the management of protected landscapes and the new challenges they face. She is looking forward to moving to the Howardian Hills to take up the Manager role, joining the well-established partnership and staff team, and becoming much more familiar with its wonderful landscape and communities.



▲ New AONB Manager Estelle Hook

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
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.org.uk

HOWARDIAN
HILLS
One of the
AONB family

This Newsletter has been produced by the Howardian Hills AONB JAC