

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE NATIONAL PARKS – SPRING 2015



The News from around the Parks includes updates and information supplied by the National Park Authorities and Societies. We would encourage Parks and Societies to always supply news updates if possible so that we have the best possible summary of what's happening. If information is not supplied, the Editor has filled in the gaps himself

## **Brecon Beacons National Park**

### **Brecon Beacons Park Society**

**Circuit of Wales – Grand Prix Motorcycling Track, Ebbw Vale:** The Society has been active in objecting to plans for a major development of a Grand Prix Motorcycling Track with a lot of associated development to the south of the Park and north of Rassau. While the development does not directly affect the Park, there are indirect effects, such as noise and light pollution, traffic across Llangynidr Mountain road, effect on peat within the National Park and diversions of footpaths.

The Society has sent a letter to the Planning Inspectorate in the Autumn, objecting to the CoW Section 16 application to deregister the common land. Since then, the applicants have had the opportunity to respond to all objections and representations and a copy of their response was received in early December. Objectors, including the Society then responded to the applicants comments by the 23 December deadline. There has been concern about a Circuit of Wales Estate Landscape and Ecology Management Plan that was not seen by all objectors at the right time, including Gwent Wildlife Trust. The application is to be heard at an enquiry – date still to be confirmed. However, a Pre-Enquiry meeting took place on 28 January.

**Life on Cribarth and Cwm Tawe through the Ages:** Members enjoyed an illustrated talk by Arwel Michael on 4 February on Cribarth and Cwm Tawe at a meeting in Crickhowell. Arwel has been gathering information since he first walked the hills there as a boy. Attendees were fascinated by his collection of maps and photos showing how life has changed over the past few decades in one of the most extraordinary places in the National Park.

### **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority**

**New Nature Fund grant helps restore National Park landscapes:** Repairs to a damaged peat bog and a popular footpath will start in mid-February, after Brecon Beacons National Park Authority secured a Nature Fund grant from the Welsh Government which will enable the Authority to airlift thousands of tonnes of heather brash and crushed stone to the top of Waun Fach - the highest hill in the Black Mountains.

Earlier this year the Welsh Government approved a £200,000 Nature Fund grant which has been given to Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to support practical action on the ground to enhance biodiversity and develop a continuous improvement programme to restore damaged peat bogs in the National Park. The first phase of the funding has been used to fund the use of helicopters to deliver thousands of tonnes of stone and heather brash to the affected areas on Waun Fach. For the next two weeks it is anticipated that the helicopters will make more than 1,000 airlifts to complete the work.

Waun Fach is not the only popular walking route to have received improvements via helicopter delivery, with the Offa's Dyke path on Hay Bluff receiving hundreds of tonnes of crushed stone and heather brash in the middle of January 2015 to repair the erosion problems surrounding the paths. This work was partly funded by Rights of Way Improvement Plan funds, an annual grant provided to the Authority by the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales.

**Residents invited to contribute to research view on reducing visual impact of existing power lines in Welsh National Parks:** Residents who live in the Brecon Beacons National Park and Snowdonia National Park were invited to share their local knowledge for a project to reduce the visual impact of pylons in late January 2015.

Back in November 2014, National Grid identified two sections of overhead power lines crossing the river Dwyrd in the Snowdonia National Park, near Porthmadog and the Brecon Beacons National Park, near Abergavenny as having a significant visual impact on the landscape.

The company held public events in these areas so that local people could share their knowledge of the area and help to contribute to the initial research. National Grid is currently investigating whether it is possible to mitigate the impact of these transmission lines in the National Parks.

To help inform this initial research, the public events were planned for local people to share their views and local knowledge. Members of the project team were also on hand to answer questions and provide additional information about the project.

**New discovery named after Sir David Attenborough:** A new species of wild flower, *Hieracium attenboroughianum*, Attenborough's Hawkweed, which was found a decade ago in the central Brecon Beacons in South Wales has been named in honour of Sir David Attenborough. This is the first time that a new plant species found in the UK has been named after the world famous naturalist and TV presenter. The Attenborough Hawkweed is one of a group of closely related plants which belong to the daisy family and has probably evolved in the Brecon Beacons since the last ice age. The hawkweeds are close relatives of dandelions and have similar looking flowers.

It can be found on the rocky ledges on Cribyn, one of three spectacular peaks of the central Brecon Beacons which belong to the National Trust. In late June/early July the hawkweed colours the rocks yellow with its delicate dandelion like flowers and can be easily seen from the main path up to Cribyn.

The new plant was first studied in 2004 when Joe Daggett, Graham Motley, Dr Tim Rich and Paul Smith found it whilst looking for the rare Summit Hawkweed, which was found on the adjacent Pen-y-fan. More than 300 plants of the Attenborough's Hawkweed were found flowering profusely on the rocky ledges, safe from the sheep which graze the mountains. It took another ten years of study and comparison with related species to be sure it was new.

To read more about this wonderful discovery and Sir David Attenborough's reaction

to the news please visit the National Trust site here:  
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1355881615769/>

**National Park receives Member Charter revalidation:** Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has successfully achieved its re-assessment for the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development from the Welsh Local Government Association.

The pledge to give its Members the best training and support possible has been reaffirmed by Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and follows on from being awarded the Basic Charter in 2009 and the Advanced Charter in 2011 – which was revalidated at the end of last year. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council are now the only two Local Authorities awarded with the Advanced Charter.

Twenty-four National Park Authority Members undergo a detailed induction programme as part of a 4-5 year framework of development, which includes not only specific induction for decision making through committees, but also site visits, meeting community representatives and spending time with our staff ‘on the ground’ to develop their understanding of the work carried out across the Park.

**Samantha Sinclair**

PR and Events Officer / *Swyddog Cysylltiadau Cyhoeddus a Digwyddiadau*  
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority / *Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau*

## **The Broads National Park**

### **The Broads Society**

**Branding:** The Broads are now to be known as The Broads National Park. This is a bit of an enigma as it is not legally so and the BA remains the BA. The positive outcome is that this subject will now be removed from any future Broads Plan. Otherwise, the Society doesn't expect to see much change and as the Sandford Principle, except in very rare situations, would not have applied as it has now been superseded by the European Habitat Directive. The Broads Society supports a healthy tourist industry as it brings much needed revenue to the area as well as providing much needed employment. Also, members of the Society feel that the Broads are more than just a National Park. The name ‘The Norfolk Broads’ has been internationally recognised for nearly 100 years.

**Hoveton Great Broad:** This issue will be concerning the Society well into 2015. We expect the planning application for the canoe trail etc will have been passed. This does not deal with the problem of Public Access both from the land and water. We understand that many at the BA are not happy about this and, of course, the final test will be if Natural England are successful in their bid for Lottery Funding, which will require a significant element of public access. We are pleased that following our representations NE are looking at alternative arrangements for temporarily sealing off the Broad whilst conservation work is taking place.

**Moorings Strategy:** In addition to our concerns over Hoveton Great Broad, there are several important issues we will be concentrating on in 2015. The first of these is the Moorings Strategy Review Update. We are grateful to Paul Savage (chairman of our Northern Rivers sub-Committee) for his important work on this subject. To put it as simply as possible: Following several reviews, reports and meetings it is becoming clear that the BA will in the future have a problem maintaining existing moorings, let alone providing additional much needed facilities. This is due to a number of factors – the loss of ‘casual moorings’ (where the boating public were used to mooring to any section of suitable bank) mainly due to the EA’s policy following flood defence works where a sloping bank is now the preferred option to vertical banks, which has meant that much of the existing piling in these locations is being removed to limit the high cost to either the EA or the landowners of maintaining such banks. Many of the more recent moorings have been ‘hard engineered’, i.e. steel sheet piling with ladders and chains giving a distinctly urban look. Whilst safety measures are welcome the possible threat of litigation in the event of an accident is leading to the possible closure of such moorings along with the future cost of maintaining these facilities. It would appear that the BA are suggesting withdrawing or closing some of these moorings. We at the Society are proposing a joint approach with the NSBA and BHBF to see what can be done to reverse this trend.

Robin Godber, Chairman, The Broads Society

## **The Broads Authority**

**Broads to be called a National Park:** Broads Authority members have voted by an overwhelming majority to brand the Broads a National Park.

A three-month consultation of interest groups showed that 79% of consultees approved of the proposal. For 25 years the Broads has had equivalent status to a National Park but is defined under different legislation due to its third equally weighted purpose of managing the navigation. Until now it has been known only as a member of the National Park family.

Members agreed not to pursue the long held ambition to become a National Park by law as the branding gives the area all the benefits it needs.

The Authority will use the name to refer to the Broads with immediate effect and support other organisations in doing so.

**New canoe launch points improve access:** The Broads Authority has created two new canoe launch points and eight on-line canoe trails to meet the growing popularity of canoeing.

A £12,000 launch point on the edge of Norwich which enables canoeists to paddle through the heart of the historic city was opened by the Lord Mayor and the Chairman of Broadland District Council.

The canoe port is part of a suite of new facilities being planned with the Wensum River Parkway Partnership to help small boats access the river into Norwich.

The Authority has also built a new canoe launch point with parking in the tranquil waters above Wroxham Bridge.

**Stakeholder surveys will shape services:** The Broads Authority recently carried out its largest ever survey of stakeholders and the results of these will help shape the way the area is managed.

The independent surveys were carried out by Insight Track who asked respondents from four specific groups – residents, private boat owners, hire boat operators and visitors – a range of searching questions. Topics ranged from trends in boat use to how the Broads is promoted. The Authority is now undertaking an analysis of the responses to inform future strategy and policy.

The results can be found with the [committee papers](#) which went to the Broads Authority on 23 January.

Hilary Franzen, Press officer

## **Dartmoor National Park**

### **Dartmoor Preservation Association**

**Make the Small Things Count – Plantlife and the DPA:** Our (Campaign for National Park) 2015 Park Protector Award winners Plantlife are holding an event for the Dartmoor Preservation Association, starting from Newbridge car park on 8 July to brief members on two important projects. The day is being split between a lichen walk and an introduction to the new National plant Monitoring Scheme. The lichen walk is part of the Make the Small Things Count Project and will enable people to gain an understanding how tree type and woodland conditions can affect epiphytic lichens. The session on the Monitoring Scheme will look at survey methodology and some of the habitats that are to be surveyed. Participants will have the opportunity to practice some of their ID skills.

### **Dartmoor National Park Authority**

**Dartmoor Junior Ranger Programme launched:** Dartmoor National Park Authority's headquarters at Parke were very busy over one weekend in December last year with the first group of newly recruited Junior Rangers joining members of the Education Team and the Ranger Service to launch a year-long pilot programme of activities.

Dartmoor's Education and Ranger Services wanted to develop a programme of practical voluntary opportunities that connect young people to Dartmoor's special qualities and encourage them to become ambassadors for the National Park, promoting messages about care, active enjoyment and wise use.

If successful, Dartmoor National Park Authority will run further programmes in future years. It is aimed at the age range 13 – 15 specifically to build on the success of Dartmoor National Park Authority's highly popular Ranger Ralph Club which provides for families with children in the 5 – 12 age bracket. Education and Ranger staff were pleased with recruitment – the programme reached maximum numbers very quickly.

All activities will provide real conservation work experiences and also cultural/social topics, some examples.....

- Farming & land use - farm visit with activities
- Habitat management - hedgerow planting, woodlands, forestry, bird boxes, surveys
- Historic environments - stone walling, archaeology, listed buildings
- Visits - museums, information centres,
- Landscape - litter picks, tourist issues, invasive species, wetland management, dark skies, path maintenance
- Activities - orienteering, hill walking, cycling, rock climbing

In addition Junior Rangers will be working towards their 8 day John Muir 'Explorer' Awards.

**Cuckoos calling:** The distinctive call of the cuckoo can be heard across Dartmoor each spring between April and June. Sadly cuckoo numbers have declined by almost 70% nationally in the last 20 years and the iconic sentinel of spring now can no longer be heard across most parts of Devon. Within this picture of decline, Dartmoor holds nationally important populations of cuckoo which are thought to be stable within the National Park (in 2005 numbers were estimated to be about 100 males).

Since 2013 advances in satellite tagging technology have enabled the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) to track the incredible journeys of cuckoos between Dartmoor and the Congolese rainforest where they spend most of the year. Following the success of the Flight of the Cuckoo project working with Devon Birds, the BTO and the University of Exeter to find out more about the complex lifecycle of this iconic bird, the project will continue during 2015.

Anyone who sees or hears a cuckoo is being asked to report their observations on a live recording map on the Devon Birds website. In 2014 more than 728 records were reported with over 600 records for Dartmoor. You can track the location of our satellite tagged cuckoos by following the link from our website [www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/cuckoo](http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/cuckoo)

**Superfast broadband:** Collaboration between Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks with the Connecting Devon & Somerset programme is set to transform rural communities with superfast fibre broadband internet speeds.

Connecting Devon and Somerset is working in close partnership with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, to achieve additional funding for broadband connectivity as part of the current programme. This has so far resulted in extra funding of over

£700,000 to extend coverage for superfast broadband in hard to reach communities across the two parks with speeds of up to 24mbps.

Once engineering work is completed by the Connecting Devon and Somerset programme, more than three quarters of all premises in Dartmoor and 69 percent in Exmoor will be given the opportunity to sign on by the end of 2016. This has been made possible by the additional funding secured by the Connecting Devon and Somerset partnership and the support of Devon and Somerset County Councils.

The funding will bring superfast broadband service within reach of rural communities and businesses based in the National Parks; allowing them to use tools that can improve how they work, improve productivity and reduce costs.

**Cobra Heads on Dartmoor:** The sound of the blacksmith's hammer could be heard in Princetown in late January as a new Dartmoor boundary marker was created at the Princetown Forge. The marker was made to replace an original which was stolen from Eylesbarrow last year. The marker, originally one of four placed on the moor in the latter part of the nineteenth century, is known as a 'cobra head' due to its unusual shape, resembling the hooded head of a cobra.

Four iron posts 18" tall, resembling a cobra with flattened head are recorded in the Ordnance Survey boundary remark book of 1881 in which sketches show their exact location. All were inscribed with FB (Forest Bounds) on their east facing side, and WB (Walkhampton Bounds) on their west facing side.

The Forest of Dartmoor originally belonged to the Crown and was known as a Forest as it comprised the King's hunting ground. In 1337 it was granted to the Black Prince, who was also the Duke of Cornwall, by his father King Edward III, and has remained part of the Duchy of Cornwall's holdings since then.

Originally 4 iron markers were erected in a straight line from Great Mistor to North Hessary Tor and South Hessary to Eylesbarrow.

The Great Mistor marker has now been replaced by an army flagpole used to fly the red warning flag whilst firing is taking place; the North Hessary location has been covered by an Ordnance Survey triangulation point, and the South Hessary cobra head, damaged a few years ago, has recently been repaired and replaced.

Unfortunately the Eylesbarrow cobra head was broken off and removed in a wanton act of vandalism in 2014. Dartmoor National Park and the Duchy of Cornwall have funded the making of this new cobra head at the Princetown Forge. Later this year it will be fixed in the position of the original on the crest of the hill at Eylesbarrow by the National Park Conservation Works Team.

Mike Nendick, Communications Officer, DNPA

# **Exmoor National Park**

## **Exmoor Society**

**Unlocking Exmoor's Heritage – Archive Opening:** Last year was a momentous one for the Exmoor Society. The Archive project, “Unlocking Exmoor's Heritage” was started and is now well under way, funded by the Exmoor National Park Authority, the private sector and the Society's own resources. At the same time, thanks to a benefactor, the Society has been able to move office premises to the centre of Dulverton.

The Exmoor Society has amassed a unique collection of archive material relating to the contested chequered and changing history of National Park status since the Society's creation. The collection includes books, letters, reports, pamphlets, press cutting and releases, photographs, maps and pictures and a complete run of the *Exmoor Review*.

Now they are housed in an environmentally-controlled archive store with a separate library covering a range of Exmoor-related topics and a Resource Centre for use by anyone with an interest in Exmoor, its history and current issues such as sustainable tourism and the survival of hill farming. This is due to the fantastic work of a full-time archivist employed to sort out all the material.

To celebrate and highlight this resource for Exmoor, an official opening is taking place in Dulverton Town hall on Thursday 19 March at 2pm. The Centre will be opened by Graeme Bonham-Carter, who lives in Canada and is son of Victor Bonham-Carter, President of the Society for over 30 years.

Rachel Thomas, chairman of the Exmoor Society, said the new Resource Centre provided a lasting legacy for Exmoor of the fight to retain National Park status and the need to campaign for retaining its special qualities.

**Links with Campaign for National Parks:** The Exmoor Society has applied to re-join CNP as a full member in order to support CNP's core campaigning work for National Parks in this important election year.

**Exmoor Mires Project:** The Exmoor Society has been involved with the Delivery Group supporting the Mires Project on Exmoor. It has contributed to the group by making sure all the objectives are carried through, particularly in relation to the landscape, open access and historic environment and that there is a financial contribution to farmers from South West Water with land in the project areas. Problems have arisen recently due to Natural England's funding being much reduced. Capital resources being allocated to the Mires Project leads to the danger other important moorland issues, such as scrub encroachment, without funding.

Arabella Amory

## Exmoor National Park Authority

**Right to Build Vanguard:** Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks are leading the way on self-build housing opportunities. A joint expression of interest by the National Park Authorities has been given the green light by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) to proceed as a 'Right to Build Vanguard'. The two Westcountry National Parks are amongst just 11 pilot areas in the country.

Local people interested in building their own home in the community where they live or work are being invited to register their interest. This will enable a better understanding of the interest in self-build, and may lead to more sites coming forward to meet local needs.

Despite the gap between house prices and incomes both National Park Authorities have a strong track record in delivering affordable housing on small sites, and see self-build housing as potentially playing an important role in meeting local need for housing in the National Parks in the future. Any proposals for self-build housing will be subject to the relevant planning policies for each National Park.

**Moor to Enjoy on Exmoor:** In a ground breaking partnership Exmoor National Park Authority is working with the Health and Wellbeing Boards of Devon and Somerset, the first of its kind in England, to demonstrate how access to green space can reduce the need for drug based interventions or development of long term conditions.

Andrea Davis, Chairman of Exmoor National Park Authority and Member Christine Lawrence, have both been instrumental in enabling the project to happen. "Addressing health and wellbeing at an early stage has huge benefits both for the individual and, in the longer term, reduces the burden on already squeezed health and social care services" said Andrea. "National Parks are special places for their landscapes and opportunities for recreation. At the same time as enjoying ourselves, we are also benefiting from our 'natural' health service, reducing the need for visits to the GP or admissions to hospital."

The project will enable people who experience mental, emotional and physical health challenges to get involved on Exmoor as part of a programme to improve their health and wellbeing. It is primarily aimed at reaching communities that would not normally consider visiting Exmoor. Ultimately, the project will give skills, knowledge and confidence to health and social care professionals and groups to enjoy Exmoor independently without the support of the project officer.

**New Visit Exmoor website showcases unique experiences:** A brand new Visit Exmoor website, [www.visit-exmoor.co.uk](http://www.visit-exmoor.co.uk) has been launched featuring a bold new design, fresh inspirational content and a whole host of new functions. The new site will play a central role in future marketing efforts to attract new visitors to the area.

The site makes full use of the Exmoor brand which incorporates the National Park, the area's heritage coastline and the Quantock Hills and covers the whole of the Greater Exmoor area including all of West Somerset and the Exmoor National Park. It contains a whole wealth of practical information from accommodation, food and

drink and attraction listings, to transport information, local visitor centres and much more. In a new development the site also contains a much higher level of inspirational content ranging from 60 top experiences (celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park) to enhanced integration of blogs, videos and social media feeds.

The site has been developed through the Exmoor Tourism Partnership with funding support from West Somerset Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor Tourist Association and support from the EU Interreg funded COOL tourism project.

Clare O'Connor, Exmoor National Park Communications Officer/ANPA External Affairs Co-ordinator

## **Lake District National Park**

### **Friends of the Lake District**

**Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary extensions:** FLD continue to actively push for a positive announcement following the Public Enquiry; **Pylons:** A campaign is in progress and there is good news to report. In relation to National Grid's North West Coast Connections consultation, we're actively campaigning for National Grid to adopt its Offshore South route option to minimise damage to the landscapes and environment of the LDNP and south Cumbria while securing future electricity supply as distinct from its preferred Onshore South route (*see also [fld.org.uk](http://fld.org.uk)*)

Some good news is that Electricity North West removed 540 metres of overhead power lines in Longsleddale in October at a cost of £82,000.

**Fell Care Days:** This is very much a success story. Since we initiated our Fell Care Days in 2011, these mass volunteering events run by FLD with partner organisations, including the NPA and National Trust, have gone from strength to strength really having a positive impact upon both participating volunteers and local communities. Consequently, we are doubling our efforts for 2015! (*see also [fld.org.uk](http://fld.org.uk)*)

**LDNPA's property sales** – some concerns. We understand the financial pressures that led LDNPA to change its property portfolio so significantly, particularly disposing of popular and iconic land such as Stickle Tarn. We wish to ensure that future owners understand National Park purposes and are committed to its long term stewardship. So we have requested that conditions be attached to the sale of properties where this commitment is vital.

Marion Temple, Friends of the Lake District

## **Lake District National Park Authority**

**One of the most sustainable destinations on Earth:** In December 2014 Lake District visitors were recognised as holidaying in a greener way following an award by the Global Sustainable Tourism Review (GSTR), which named the Lakes ‘one of the most sustainable destinations on Earth’.

The list of Top 100 ‘green’ global destinations was drawn up by 30 international tourism sustainability experts, it awards destinations that have taken measurable progress in taking sustainability seriously.

The Lake District was scored across 50 criteria including nature, environment, culture and traditions, social well-being, green economy. The highest score was allocated to its certified green tourism policy.

Richard Leafe, chief executive for Lake District National Park, said:

“We have been working hard through the National Park Partnership to create a truly sustainable destination. It’s marvellous to have this work recognised by this award. Our pioneering carbon budget, new sustainable transport options and our encouragement for renewable energy generation are a few of the projects that are helping us improve our sustainability.”

**Weatherline Update:** In December 2014 and through to January 2015, the Lake District National Park’s Weatherline service was profiled across a number of media, including BBC Countryfile, The Times and even Norwegian daily newspaper – Aftenposten.

The Weatherline service has been running for almost 40 years by telephone message and more recently as a website [www.lakedistrictweatherline.co.uk](http://www.lakedistrictweatherline.co.uk) recording weather from the fell top assessors’ daily treks up to Helvellyn. Assessors’ reports are combined with Met Office mountain forecasts to give the fullest possible picture to people planning their trip out.

In December Graham Uney was selected from more than 100 applicants as a new fell top assessor, joining seasoned pro Jon Bennett who began his eighth year this season, to brave driving rain, snow drifts and wind chill temperatures plummeting to minus 16C.

Running from December to Easter, the role sees a team of two working alternate weeks for Weatherline. The phone and online service helps protect 15 million visitors and locals from conditions that can change rapidly and fatally on the fells.

The story of the fell top assessors climbing England’s third highest peak on a daily basis – including Christmas day - continues to capture the media’s interest, with further filming planned by ITV Countrywise in February.

**UNESCO World Heritage Status Sought:** The Lake District is bidding for UNESCO World Heritage status in 2016, led by a partnership of organisations that includes the Lake District National Park.

Once the nomination has been submitted in 2016, it will undergo a demanding 18-month process of scrutiny and evaluation by UNESCO before an announcement in 2017.

If successful, the Lake District would be an internationally recognised location, in the company of the Great Wall of China, Egypt's pyramids, the Taj Mahal and Cumbria's own Hadrian's Wall.

The first part of our engagement campaign was launched in February, including a website: [lakesworldheritage.co.uk](http://lakesworldheritage.co.uk), led by the National Park communications team. The aim is to engage with communities, visitors and businesses and for them to share their stories of what life is like in the Lake District.

The website has been created using innovative content curation software that pulls social media posts through from a range of publicly available accounts and hashtag subjects, such as #lakedistrictbid. These are moderated by relevance to the three campaign themes of identity, inspiration and conservation.

The posts are shared via the newsfeed on the home page of the website, meaning people with similar interests in the Lake District and the bid for World Heritage Status can view a stream of content in one place.

The website marks the start of the World Heritage campaign and the partnership will be working closely over the coming months to generate awareness and opportunities for involvement.

Sarah Calderbank, Lake District National Park Authority, PR and Social Content Editor

## **New Forest National Park**

### **New Forest Association**

**Secondary Schools Conference 2015:** The New Forest Association is joining forces with the National Park Authority in organising a conference on the Forest specifically for students in secondary schools in or near the New Forest on 10 July at Brockenhurst. Up to ten schools are expected to participate each sending around ten delegates. Most of the day will be in workshops on subjects including the history and heritage of the Forest together with matters such as conservation and protection of the National Park. Each school will prepare a report and make a feedback to the conference at the end of the day. Last year's conference receive a very positive feedback form the students about their concern for the future of the Forest.

Bob Morris

## **New Forest National Park Authority**

**New Forest Commoners face Grant Challenges:** Changes to payments that farmers receive to help them rear animals or grow crops are posing unique challenges for New Forest commoners.

The Single Payment Scheme - part of the European-wide Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) - is being replaced, and the New Forest's commoners and farmers are turning to the New Forest Land Advice Service to help them comply with new rules.

Commoners make use of ancient rights attached to their property to turn out livestock onto the open areas of the New Forest. Due to this unusual method of rearing and managing livestock, the new criteria pose some rare challenges in the National Park. Many commoners own or rent small parcels of land, below the minimum amount needed to claim payments, as they mainly use the common land of the New Forest to graze their stock. Some also don't have access to broadband or computers to complete the application process, which is due to move online in 2015.

The Land Advice Service is helping by:

- Advising on how the use of common land can be taken into account when assessing a commoner's right to payments
- Giving payments advice over the phone and in person to commoners and farmers
- Running drop-in sessions with talks from agricultural experts
- Providing internet access to those without computers.

New Forest Land Advisor Rhys Morgan said: 'By helping commoners to apply for their grants, the Land Advice Service is supporting the ancient tradition of commoning which, through grazing by free-roaming animals, shapes the unique landscape of the New Forest.'

**Calls for views on updating action in New Forest National Park Management Plan Informal consultation: 20 October to 19 December 2014:** Organisations in the New Forest have been asking people for their thoughts on how efforts should be focused to care for the New Forest up to 2020.

Many of the organisations responsible for looking after the New Forest have come together to draft a Management Plan update, suggesting a series of priority actions for the Forest between 2015 and 2020.

The New Forest National Park Management Plan contains a broad strategic and aspirational approach designed to guide the long-term management of the National Park. First published in 2010 following widespread public consultation, the long-term vision and objectives remain relevant today, but it is time to update the actions in the

plan, looking ahead over the next five years. It is on this draft of updated actions that views were sought over a two month period running until Christmas.

New Forest National Park Authority Chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre said: 'The actions in this draft update cover a wide range of topics, but the underlying theme is the conservation of the special qualities of the New Forest. It is important that we all work together to look after this exceptional place, and I am pleased that this update is very much a joint venture involving many of the Forest organisations'.

**New study marks step forward in project to reduce impact of power lines on protected landscapes:** Power transmission line with high landscape and visual impact identified in the New Forest National Park

- £500m fund available to reduce visual impact of lines in nationally protected landscapes
- Results of independent study commissioned by National Grid and other key bodies published today

Plans to reduce the visual impact of electricity infrastructure in nationally protected landscapes across England and Wales are gathering momentum, following a new study by National Grid.

A section of transmission line in the New Forest National Park near the village of Hale has been identified as having a significant landscape and visual impact.

It is one of 12 sections of transmission lines in eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks that have been shortlisted following an independent study overseen by leading landscape expert Professor Carys Swanwick.

New Forest National Park Authority Chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre said: 'The high voltage electricity pylons that cross the New Forest National Park have a significant visual impact as they stride so conspicuously across the landscape. We are pleased that the stretch near to the village of Hale, in the north part of the National Park, has been shortlisted and look forward to working with National Grid over the next few months looking at technical feasibility and engaging with stakeholders. There would undoubtedly be great benefits to the landscape of taking the cables underground or screening them from certain vantage points. This opportunity is very much welcomed as part of the National Park's work to protect the Forest.

Hilary Makin, Communications manager

# **North York Moors National Park**

## **North Yorkshire Moors Association**

**Polyhalite Mine, Planning Application Update:** A planning application was submitted to the NPA and to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council (R&CBC) by York Potash Ltd (YPL) on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014. The "Straddle Application" is for the Mine Head site within the National Park and a Mineral Transport System (MTS) consisting of a 36km tunnel with a conveyor from the mine head to Teesside routed mostly under the National Park. The MTS will require 4 additional mine shafts to provide access and ventilation. One of these is at the mine head site another is well within the National Park while a third shaft is a matter of metres outside of the Park boundary. In addition to this, another application has been submitted to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council for a Materials Handling Facility (MHF) to process the polyhalite at the end of the MTS. From this point the granulated product is sent by another overland conveyor to a new harbour development on the river Tees. A Development Consent Order (DCO) application for a Harbour Facility on the Tees Estuary was submitted in December to the planning inspectorate with an acceptance date due on the 16<sup>th</sup> January. However York Potash Ltd withdrew the application on the 14<sup>th</sup> January. A resubmitted DCO is not expected until April.

The application for the mine head and MTS has stalled because of the need for additional information on a number of key issues and is not expected until the middle of February. This is a very complex project in terms of consenting regimes and is certainly the largest planning application ever handled by the NPA. It has already cost the National Park around £1million.

**Moors Rambler Bus Service:** In April 2014 the Moorsbus service which operated for many years with the support of National Park funding was withdrawn because of cuts in the National Park budget of around 40%. In order to get a replacement bus service started a Community Interest Company was formed, Moorsbus CIC together with a supporting charity named Friends of Moorsbus. NYMA agreed to sponsor one of the planned routes running from Darlington to Pickering for a trial period operating on Sundays between the start of July and the end of September. The service called the Moors Rambler offered guided walks within the Park each week giving people without their own transport an opportunity to visit the North York Moors National Park and if they wished to take advantage of the walks on offer. In the trial period the Moors Rambler operated by Arriva from Darlington and the Moors Explorer run by EYMS from Hull clocked up 1746 passenger journeys. The success of the 2014 Moors Rambler and the integrated Moors Explorer means that NYMA will provide funding for this year for the Moors Rambler and we are hopeful that this service will be expanded to start in June.

**NYMA's 30<sup>th</sup> Year:** NYMA is thirty years old this year and we are aiming to link two of our current projects with this anniversary. Our Park Wood Biodiversity Project will be given a boost by planting 30 trees this year and hopefully this will be a Spring planting. The other project is "The History Tree" which is being re-launched at the

National Park Centre at Danby with a new mounting for the engraved plate which identifies famous people from in and around the National Park who have contributed to the rich cultural heritage of the area. The plate will generate a heritage trail and will be supported by a booklet for visitors to explore the locations of these famous local people.

Tom Chadwick Chairman NYMA

## **North York Moors National Park Authority**

**First Tour de Yorkshire visits North York Moors:** The North York Moors is made for cycling and the inaugural Tour de Yorkshire will challenge riders as they pass through our rich tapestry of landscapes, from high moor and market town to forest, coast and dale on Day 1 (1 May 2015) of this three day race.

Starting in Bridlington and finishing in Scarborough, Day 1 of the Tour de Yorkshire is predominantly in the North York Moors taking in Forge Valley, Dalby Forest, Thornton le Dale, Rosedale, the villages and heritage of the Esk Valley before heading out to our honey pot coastal villages of Robin Hood's Bay and Fylingthorpe. Discussions are underway about how we can maximise coverage of the North York Moors leg of this prestigious race.

Hosted by Amaury Sport Organisation and Welcome to Yorkshire, and supported by British Cycling, the Tour de Yorkshire will be a 2.1 UCI Europe Tour Event, guaranteeing participation of some of the world's leading cyclists and providing a fitting legacy to last year's visit of the Tour de France. <http://letour.yorkshire.com/>

**Grants support upkeep of traditional features:** Farmers and landowners in the North York Moors have benefited from grants totalling £64,400 last year to plant and restore hedges and dry stone walls. The funding came from the National Park Authority's Traditional Boundary Scheme (TBS) which was set up to assist the maintenance of these key characters of the local and national landscape and its Habitat Connectivity programme which aims to link up and improve important habitats.

This year's grants will support the restoration of over 2,600 square metres of dry stone wall, the planting of 2,330 metres of hedgerow plus around 560 metres of coppicing and laying of existing hedgerow. In addition to being aesthetically pleasing, these traditional features provide boundary markers and shelter for stock, help to reduce soil erosion and provide homes for wildlife across the National Park.

Despite the cuts to its core funding, the National Park Authority is hoping to offer the TBS grants again this year to help with the cost of rebuilding dry stone walls and planting or restoring hedges that are unlikely to be restored under existing agri-environment schemes. More information on the grants can be found at [www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/tbs](http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/tbs)

## **Funding secured to lure more visitors to the North York Moors coast**

Businesses and communities in the North York Moors' coastal villages are set to benefit from £455,000 thanks to funding secured by the National Park Authority from the Coastal Communities Fund. The 'Sea Life, See Life' project will showcase the natural, fishing, artistic and culinary heritage of villages such as Robin Hood's Bay, Staithes and Runswick Bay to attract more visitors.

Running from February 2015 to December 2016, the project will support at least 100 businesses and create 80 indirect jobs along the coastline between Saltburn and Cloughton.

Although led by the National Park Authority, 'Sea Life, See Life' will be a partnership project with local businesses and communities who have already been instrumental in securing the funding. Small-scale infrastructure projects such as interpretation and public artwork will be delivered and a Mobile Display Unit will be used to 'take the coast to the people' in urban areas.

The project will involve a strong public relations and social-media led campaign and will include various events and activities including the development of an interactive trail in Staithes to capitalise on CBeebies' Old Jack's Boat which is filmed in the village. Workshops and skills training will arm local businesses with a greater local knowledge to enable them to pass on ideas for high quality experiences to visitors and encourage them to support local supply chains to strengthen the North York Moors' economy.

Rachel McIntosh, Communications Officer

## **Northumberland National Park**

### **Northumberland National Park Authority**

**The Sill gets Heritage Lottery Fund grant:** There were celebrations all round earlier this month (Feb) as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help more people explore and learn about the nation's finest countryside, has been awarded a grant of £7.8m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Sill will become the country's first national landscape discovery centre, giving more people than ever before, the chance to experience the countryside's special and often hidden treasures.

It will revolutionise everyone's ability to find and experience nature and the great outdoors, inspiring, involving and engaging people from all walks of life in the natural and cultural heritage of Northumberland.

The Sill will deliver a comprehensive programme of interpretation, education, research and events that will inspire people to celebrate, value and conserve the unique natural and cultural heritage of the Northumberland landscape. It's set to attract more than 100,000 visitors each year, and will offer an all-weather and year-round facility that provides hostel accommodation, retail facilities and a café.

Both NNPA and YHA are celebrating the latest stage of all the hard work and dedication by the people and organisations involved in this flagship project. The

partners hope this achievement will act as a springboard to help raise the remaining £2.2million funds needed to ensure the project reaches its full potential.

**New National Park archaeology teaching resources help children get hands on history:** An engaging new series of Education Loan Boxes, covering eras from prehistory through to the early medieval period, are being made available free of charge to schools and youth groups by Northumberland National Park Community Archaeology. The Boxes have been sponsored by the North Pennines AONB Partnership as part of the "North of the Wall" Altogether Archaeology partnership project between the North Pennines AONB Partnership and the Northumberland National Park Authority.

The boxes bring history to life for young minds, with replicas of ancient artefacts, real archaeological tools, and scale models of ancient sites within the North Pennines and Northumberland National Park. They can be used independently or alongside free teaching packs including Topic Outlines, in-class Presentations and Activity Booklets downloadable from the National Park website. There are also tips on arranging excursions to archaeological sites in the area.

Written specifically for Key Stages 2 and 3 in the updated UK National Curriculum, these resources aim to give teachers local case studies, information on the latest archaeological research and thinking, contact details for "hands-on" heritage demonstrators in our area, as well as fun activities for teaching the fascinating history and archaeology of our region.

**Northumberland International Dark Sky Park celebrates a year of awesome stargazing activity:** Northumberland National Park and Kielder Water & Forest Park celebrate the first anniversary of becoming an International Dark Sky Park. This 1500 Kms<sup>2</sup> is the largest Dark Sky Park in Europe and one of the largest in the World. The International Dark Sky Association (IDA) awarded the designation to the area with Gold Tier status for the high quality and lack of light pollution of the starscape.

The occasion was marked with stargazing events with astronomers at Kielder Castle, Clennell Hall, Alwinton, Bowlees Visitor Centre and Once Brewed National Park Centre on Hadrian's Wall from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> December.

Alex McLennan, Recreation & Public Affairs Manager for the Forestry Commission (North East) will shortly be launching a permanent dark skies exhibition at Kielder Castle: "England's forests are natural dark sky wildernesses. At Kielder and Hamsterley in Durham we've established dark sky viewing venues for visitors and local people alike," he said.

## **Peak District National Park**

### **Friends of the Peak District**

**Take Back the Tracks:** Our campaign to protect green lanes continues and a further TRO (traffic restriction order) has been agreed by the PDNPA, protecting Leys Lane, near Great Longstone from 4x4 and trailbike use. But, working in close partnership

with the Peak District Green Lanes Association (PDGLA), we have realised that fighting each lane, case by case, is too slow. PDGLA have therefore led a sustained campaign to get a clause inserted in the Deregulation Bill that would cause all remaining unclassified green lanes in NPS and AONBs to be downgraded to restricted byways (with no motorised rights). Despite strong support from Peers, the amendment will soon be formally withdrawn in exchange from the Government of a promise of a review of legislation and a working group to examine the problem.

Elsewhere, we continue to be concerned about Derbyshire County Council's apparent disregard for National Park purposes when recently, and without consultation, they started "repairs" to a rugged, historic byway on Rushup Edge, which threaten its essential character. Working with mountain bikers, the BMC, the PDNPA and the Local Access Forum, DCC have now declared a moratorium while user groups comment. We hope DCC will heed the myriad concerns.

**Pylons:** We were perversely pleased when National Grid's landscape study of all pylon lines in NPs and AONBs recognised that the Peak District had three lines in the top five for worst visual impact, thus enhancing our hopes that the line that runs through the majestic Longendale valley will be put underground in due course. However, we know that we are just one of several contenders in this "contest" and of course we wish our fellow NPSocs equal luck! But if this line is one of the chosen, it will be a fitting result as we have campaigned hard on this issue for nearly a decade, including helping submit vital evidence to OFGEM after which they increase the VIP fund from £100 to £500m. The next steps for the Peak will be decided at a local workshop convened by National Grid in late March, to which we have been invited.

**TransPennine connectivity:** We were kept very busy in November and December by a series of choreographed announcements by the Government on road improvements aimed at increasing E-W connectivity, especially between Manchester and Sheffield. As we said in a local radio interview, if we thought the potential road schemes would actually make a difference to solving congestion, we would happily discuss them seriously. Unfortunately, all they would do is damage the National park and adjacent countryside and give very little (and temporary) relief to affected communities.

Instead, we proposed a cheaper, more effective package of measures but the Department of Transport has refused to test them fully. At the same time, the prospect of a deep bore tunnel was suggested (a feasibility study is proposed). We welcome that but for rail not road. We also raised the issues in a constituency surgery meeting with Patrick McLoughlin, Peak District MP and Secretary of State for Transport, before Christmas and he has suggested we meet in Whitehall for a proper discussion of the issues.

Andy Tickle

## **Peak District National Park Authority**

### **Planning charges to be extended to National Park householder developments:**

Charges for pre-application planning advice for householders intending to make changes to domestic properties are to be introduced in the Peak District National Park from 1 April. People planning to build extensions to their homes or make alterations that need planning permission, will be able to get advice from planners to help inform their ideas. This does not guarantee approval, but incorporating the advice should help more people achieve positive outcomes. The decision by the Authority comes in the light of a 36% cut in the National Park's budget since 2011. Many other local authorities already charge householders for pre-application advice. Advice for listed building works will still be free.

**New animated film shows youngsters how to be safe in National Park:** A new cartoon is helping youngsters understand how to behave in national park countryside to be safe and to enjoy their visit. The film, commissioned by the National Park Authority, is aimed at 11-25 year olds, who visit the park on school visits or with family and friends. It encourages youngsters to have a good time but highlights the dangers posed by lighting fires and dropping litter.

**Peak District National Park to be renamed in China:** The Park has been chosen to star in a new GREAT marketing campaign which is designed to encourage the Chinese to learn more about some of Britain's best places to visit by giving them a new name. It is one of 101 places of interest in Britain which have been selected by national tourism agency Visit Britain to feature in a campaign, which invites Chinese people to come up with the most fitting, amusing, meaningful and memorable Chinese names for British places, events and things. The new Chinese name for the Peak District is to be unveiled in March.

**New Chief Executive announced for the Park:** Sarah Fowler, a senior official at the Environment Agency, has been appointed the new Chief Executive of the Peak District National Park, replacing Jim Dixon.

Sarah took over the role at the end of January following a decade with the Environment Agency – most latterly as Head of Field Services. She also worked for the RSPB, English Nature (now Natural England) and started her career at the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. Sarah said the Peak District was a truly inspiring place: "I am delighted to lead the dedicated staff of the National Park, who are its guardians."

## **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park**

### **Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast**

**New video to promote National Park Walkability Project:** A Support for Life Grant obtained by the Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park is helping people of all abilities to enjoy the spectacular countryside and coast around them. The new video, created by film-maker Mark Bond, features a snapshot of the wide range of

groups, who make use of the project, detailing their experiences and explaining how being part of Walkability has benefited them.

Walkability project co-ordinator Paul Casson said: "This video provides several great examples of what Walkability is all about, helping people of all abilities get out and about into the beautiful Pembrokeshire countryside."

Since July 2011 Walkability has supported over 600 groups, reaching over 6,000 participants at 150 venues around Pembrokeshire.

**Inshore fishing in Pembrokeshire:** Friends of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park will be able to see some of their members' handiwork when they attend a talk on "Sustainable future for inshore fishing in Pembrokeshire" on 26 February. The event is taking place at Broad Haven Community Centre, adjacent to the YHA, and has recently been renovated by a Friends work party. The talk is being led by Jerry Percy, executive director of Low Impact Fisheries in Europe, and should provide a fascinating insight into the benefits of inshore fishing in the county. The event kicks off at 7pm for 7.30pm.

## **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority**

**Community alliance reveals trench history for all to see:** A unique World War 1 practice trench system in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park is now more visible for visitors thanks to a partnership with a local history group. Members of Penally History Group worked with the Park Authority's Interpretation Team to produce an information board explaining the history of the trench site on the Penally MOD Range.

The project was funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant as part of the history group's World War 1 exhibition. The information board is on the cliffs next to the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail and overlooks the trenches where troops were trained before being sent to war in France.

The Penally Range Practice Trenches system is believed to be the only complete surviving example in the UK. The board explains to visitors the unique and historic landscape before them and the importance it played in training troops for the battlefield. It also contains an extract from a poem written at the Front by Captain Hon. Colwyn Phillips of Lydstep.

Project co-ordinator David Glennerster, of Penally History Group, said: "With the help of group members and the Park Authority we have been able to provide a nostalgic reminder of the training undertaken and the sacrifice made by the troops in World War 1."

National Park Interpretation Officer Rhowan Alleyne added: "This is a really positive example of the work we carry out with communities in the National Park, giving support and advice and helping them to realise their objectives. It's been a pleasure working with the History Group members and learning from them about the fascinating history of Penally."

**£70,000 Pembrokeshire Coast Path repairs completed:** Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has completed more than £70,000 repairs on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail in the last 12 months, in the wake of the damage caused by last year's severe storms.

The combination of extreme weather and high tides washed away bridges, undermined steps and meant some parts of the Coast Path had to be resurfaced or realigned.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority maintains the Path with funding from Natural Resources Wales, but the Welsh Government made additional funds available to repair storm damage along the 870-mile Wales Coast Path. Since then, the National Park Authority Warden Teams have been working to repair and improve the path while carrying out their usual maintenance and cutting work across the 186-mile route.

Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail Officer Dave MacLachlan said: "Many of the repairs were finished in time for the start of last year's busy summer season, but the unprecedented spread and scale of the damage meant that some of work had to be completed later. "The National Park Authority's Warden Teams must be commended for completing these repairs as quickly as possible, with close communication with coastal landowners."

Some of the more complex repairs required the use of specialists such as engineering geologists, who provided additional insight into cliff stability. Overall the repairs carried out by the Authority amounted to more than £70,000 with the majority of funding coming from grant aid and some funding support from landowners.

## **Snowdonia National Park**

### **Snowdonia Society/Cymdeithas Eryri**

**Campaign work:** Campaign work has included submissions to the Welsh Government Review of Designated landscapes and the Nature Recovery Plan, along with some very successful input to scrutiny of the Planning Bill. We also provided information on off-roading in the National Park to the cross-party group on Rural Affairs.

We've been busy campaigning on the North Wales Local Transport Plan consultation, for local bus services in and around Snowdonia, and for more respect for the National Park and all who use it responsibly. Recent issues include the publicity shoot by LandRover which resulted in damage to Moel Eilio, to the upset of local people, and after they had been urged by the statutory bodies to find a less sensitive location.

The Society has responded to a number of renewable energy applications. Two are of particular concern at present - the first is a large windfarm at Llanrwst which is currently going to appeal. The other is the Glyn Rhonwy pumped storage scheme at

Llanberis which was granted planning permission on the basis of a 49.9 MW output and is now seeking permission to double that capacity, effectively ruling out the assurances that were given that cables would be undergrounded.

We are working with the National Park Authority on practical issues such as litter and footpath maintenance, on development of Dark Sky status, and as a core member of the new Snowdon Partnership, tasked to review and take forward management of the iconic mountain.

We have secured three-year funding from Natural Resources Wales to develop and expand our practical conservation work and volunteer programme through our Snowdonia Ecosystem Project. And we are delighted to be currently recruiting for a new engagement officer based at our flagship property Ty Hyll (the Ugly House).

John Harold, Director

## **Snowdonia National Park Authority**

**Seeing Stars Campaign:** During February, residents and businesses in Snowdonia will be able to find out more about the Authority's effort in gaining an International Dark Sky Reserve status for Snowdonia. On behalf of the Authority, Director of Planning and Heritage Jonathan Cawley said,

"We can't ignore the benefits of being an area which has been designated as a Dark Sky Reserve. The area's wildlife will be protected, the quality of the environment will be improved, and there will be a new natural attraction to draw new visitors to Snowdonia during quiet periods of the year. This in turn will improve the local economy and the dark sky of Snowdonia will be protected for future generations. We will not insist that night lights should be switched off and we will not ask anyone to spend large sums of money on changing all their lights! All we ask is for people to adjust their use of light. It's important for us to explain what we're trying to achieve and have the cooperation of the residents of Snowdonia in this respect."

A series of drop-in sessions have been organised at Trawsfynydd, Dolgellau, Capel Curig, Ysbyty Ifan, Bala and Beddgelert along with a conference to be held at Plas Tan y Bwlch on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Cwm Idwal's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday:** During the last week of November, Cwm Idwal in Snowdonia, one of Wales's most iconic landscapes, celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Cwm Idwal is managed in partnership by Natural Resources Wales, Snowdonia National Park Authority and the National Trust, working closely with local landowners. It was designated as Britain's first National Nature Reserve in 1954, and has been managed ever since to conserve and enhance its outstanding features whilst encouraging visitors to enjoy and study its spectacular geology and plant life. Today, it is visited by more than 125,000 people every year and is one of the finest

places to see how glaciers shaped the dramatic landscape. The Cwm is also renowned for its arctic alpine plants including the Snowdon Lilly.

To mark the Reserve's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, a special event was held at the Ogwen centre. Speakers included Warren Martin, one of Cwm Idwal's first Wardens, representatives from Snowdonia National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales and the National Trust, together with naturalist and broadcaster Bethan Wyn Jones. The event also marked the beginning of an important year in collecting information in the Cwm. Guto Roberts, Cwm Idwal Partnership Officer explained further:

"Cwm Idwal's wildlife has been studied over many years. During the year, we will be conducting new surveys of small mammals and invertebrates – so that we can track changes and to help steer the next phase of conservation management here. Secondly, we will ask visitors to use Bird Track ([www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/about](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/about)) to build a current picture of the birds seen in Cwm Idwal. Finally, we will be encouraging visitors to share their impressions and experiences of this special place by posting photographs of Cwm Idwal on Cwm Idwal's Facebook page and its Twitter account, @Cwm\_Idwal and by using the hashtag #Cwmlldwal60."

**Top Award for School Design:** The purpose of the RTPI awards is to recognise, applaud and publicise examples of good planning practice in Wales and, at the RTPI Wales Planning Awards evening held in Cardiff recently, the Wales Planning Award 2014 was awarded to Ysgol Craig y Deryn, Llanegryn.

The school was opened in 2013 and today, it has 110 primary school pupils. It is a good example of a low impact building, which is a large development, set within a rural area of national significance. Modern and traditional techniques, building materials and technology have been combined to create a sustainable building, using low levels of energy and carbon. The long-term cost of the building was also considered, and its future impact on the environment, habitats and biodiversity of the area. It also reinforces the sense of place, as well as the social well-being and the linguistic heritage of the area which will in turn benefit and sustain future generations.

Judges Huw Evans, Roger Tanner and Mike Cuddy, praised specifically the design, materials and the sustainability of Ysgol Craig y Deryn, as well as the work made in advance of engaging with the community. The scheme they said is a great example of a planning authority overcoming community objection and political sensitivity by delivering a high quality socially important scheme in a very sensitive landscape.

Llinos Angharad, Communications Officer

# **South Downs National Park**

## **South Downs Society**

**Fracking:** During parliamentary debate on the Infrastructure Bill, the Energy Minister, while confirming government support for fracking, responded to widespread concerns by exempting national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest from the prospect of licences being granted. South Downs National Park Authority last year refused an application for an exploratory drill from a company which was likely to undertake any subsequent extraction by fracking, the refusal being based on the environmental impact of the exploratory operation itself. SDS had spearheaded the opposition. The Society issued a press release welcoming the Minister's commitment to safeguarding the national park, while expressing continuing concern about implications for the wider countryside and climate change.

## **Extended planning control for agricultural operations?**

In productively farmed countryside there has long been disquiet about the lack of planning controls over the farming industry. Attention has been focused recently on this issue by the establishment of a pig-rearing operation at a prominent site close to the South Downs Way on the chalk ridge overlooking the Adur Valley in West Sussex. The visual impact of the pig "arcs", the destruction of the grassed landscape, vehicular traffic, noise, smell and leachate have all generated vigorous objections but the NPA has maintained that its development management powers are very limited. A retrospective application to retain five silos on the farm was approved but triggered legal action from local residents in the form of an assertion that the NPA should have recognised that the scale and impact of the whole farm operation amounted to "development" and been subject to a scoping opinion for EIA. In January a High Court Judge adjourned a hearing in order to invite the Secretary of State to comment: the case is likely to be resumed in March.

**Development management: added value:** In the South Downs around 90% of the approx. 4,000 planning applications each year are determined by the district and county councils under an agency agreement. SDS closely monitors the decision making of the NPA's own Planning Committee but is now in discussion with the NPA on its mechanisms for monitoring the "added value" which it brings to the decision making of the agency authorities.

Steve Ankers, Policy Officer

## **South Downs National Park Authority**

**Local Plan:** The South Downs National Park Authority has begun to publish the first pieces of evidence for its Local Plan. The first complete draft will be published this Autumn.

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/news/press-notice/key-plan-for-south-downs-future-first-evidence-published](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/news/press-notice/key-plan-for-south-downs-future-first-evidence-published)

**HLF funding:** At the start of January, we heard that a joint bid with Brighton and Hove City Council to the HLF Parks for People scheme to restore Stanmer Park was successful. We received a development grant of £291,000 and the Council will now go ahead and develop detailed plans to support its bid for around £4m funding to restore Stanmer's historic landscape and buildings.

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/news/press-notice/hlf-say-yes-to-stanmer-bid](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/news/press-notice/hlf-say-yes-to-stanmer-bid)

**Dark Skies:** As part of our bid to make the South Downs an International Dark Skies reserve we launched an online pledge where people living in and around the South Downs could show their support for the application. To date, more than 1,140 have taken the pledge.

Jo Glyde, Communications Officer

## **Yorkshire Dales National Park**

### **Yorkshire Dales Society**

**Quarry transport:** The problem of heavy lorries transporting quarry products has been a source of controversy in Ribblesdale for many years. The news that two of the quarries (Dry Rigg and Arcow) are merging their operations and, in return for a relatively short extension of permission to operate, were prepared to re-establish a railhead and thus reduce road traffic by at least half was welcome news. The operators of third quarry (Horton), which has the longest remaining permission, declined to do the same. The company has recently sought an extension of operation for its Ingleton Quarry, and this may present an opportunity to negotiate a change in their attitude.

**Caravan site development?:** A caravan site has existed near Hawkswick in Littondale for many years. While not a thing of beauty, it has not been obtrusive in the landscape except to those approaching over roads and tracks from neighbouring dales. Now the site has been acquired by a company which owns several holiday sites across the north, and one of our local members drew our attention to glossy brochures which indicated the intention to "upgrade" the facilities in various ways, including the provision of large luxury lodges. So far permission has only been sought for new signs to the site, which have been modified in response to comments, but the Society and others will be watching for future developments.

**Re-thinking our ways of working:** The Society has been considering the ways in which it operates, both in its committees and its public activities. With the intention of becoming more pro-active and better prepared, the Policy Committee has begun to devote part of each meeting to one major area of policy, with contribution from a visiting expert to stimulate discussion. The Events, Communication and Membership Committee is seeking to modify our programme of events, with fewer of the well-trying

“Walk followed by Talk” and new events including “Vibrant Communities” (visiting specific settlements to see aspects of life and history) and “Classic Countryside” (longer walks with a theme such as geology, heritage, farming, botany etc).  
Malcolm Petyt

## **Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority**

**National Park Authority accepts cut in affordable housing:** Plans to build more affordable homes in the Yorkshire Dales National Park to help local communities survive have been cut by more than half by new housing rules introduced by the Government. The changes mean local planning authorities no longer have the power to insist that a proportion of new homes planned for a site should be built as affordable housing. In the National Park, half of all the houses built would have been affordable homes.

The Government initially consulted on a proposal whereby developers should not be required to provide affordable housing on any sites where fewer than 11 houses were going to be built.

After protests from all the local authorities in North Yorkshire, including the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA), the Government gave national parks, and some rural areas, the option of having a lower threshold of six.

YDNPA Members have now very reluctantly agreed to adopt this lower threshold, which means there will now be no requirement for developers to build affordable housing on sites for fewer than six houses in the National Park. And on sites between six and 10 houses, the Authority will now only be able to ask for a ‘commuted sum’ – a cash payment from the developer in lieu of actually building the affordable homes.

The changes are likely to lead to a significant cut in the number of affordable homes built in the National Park, according to Authority Chairman Peter Charlesworth: “This Government decision is a severe blow to the housing objectives of this Authority, the district councils within the National Park and rural areas in general. Thirty sites in the National Park are allocated for housing and these were originally expected to yield up to 115 new affordable homes.

“But the new changes – even taking into account the lower threshold for National Parks – mean that we can require affordable housing on only five of the 30 sites, which will provide only 50 affordable homes. It’s not good news for the future viability of local communities who are already under severe pressure but we have no option but to accept these changes in national policy and try to make the best of it.”

**National Park business goes crackers over red squirrels:** Businesses in the Yorkshire Dales National Park are being given the chance to help look after endangered red squirrels. From December, local entrepreneurs have been invited to sponsor a feeder set up at a special red squirrel viewpoint at Snaizeholme, near Hawes.

The viewing area lies in the heart of the Widdale Red Squirrel Reserve and was created by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the local landowner to allow people to watch the animals as they feed in their natural habitat. Although it is remote, the Little White Bus offers visitors an 'on-demand' service, picking up visitors from the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes.

The first business people to take up the offer are Neil and Jane McNair, who run Low Mill Guest House in Bainbridge. Neil said: "We loved being able to see the red squirrels at the special viewing area and we know it's something many of our guests will enjoy having the chance to do too. We think it's a great opportunity to be able to support this project, along with other businesses in Hawes."

Kathryn Storey, the National Park Authority's Tourism Officer, said: "We're very pleased to be able to offer this opportunity to local businesses – and we are very grateful to Neil and Jane for taking the lead in sponsoring the red squirrel feeder during December.

"We are hoping a business will cover every month of the year. A £50 donation will pay for food for a month and, in return, the sponsors will be listed on our 'Nature in the Dales' website at [www.natureinthedales.org.uk](http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk) and they will receive a certificate they can display in their businesses. We think the scheme provides a great way of linking conservation with local businesses, while supporting the service provided by the Little White Bus."

The Yorkshire Dales is widely recognised as an important habitat for red squirrels – the only native species of squirrel. Red squirrels are restricted to the north western area of the National Park and it is this area that provides the front line between the reds and the greys in Northern England. Not only do grey squirrels out-compete red squirrels for food, but they also carry a pox virus which can be fatal to reds. It is estimated there are fewer than 140,000 red squirrels left in Britain compared with an estimated 2.5 million non-native grey squirrels.

**New lease of life for National Park monuments:** More historic monuments are being saved from falling into ruin in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

With funding from English Heritage, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority experts have been working with local landowners and volunteers to reduce the number of scheduled monuments that are on the national 'Heritage At Risk' register.

As a result, the number of monuments at risk has fallen from nine to five. This represents just 2.5 per cent of the scheduled monuments, compared to the national average of 15 per cent.

One of the successes, the Bolton Parks mine on the Castle Bolton Estate in Wensleydale, contains a well-preserved dressing floor where ore rich material was processed to retrieve a pure ore for smelting into metal. The Authority's Dales Volunteers carried out a package of restoration work including rebuilding the dry stone boundary wall to assist in keeping rabbits off the site.

Another is the cupola smelt mill and flue on Grassington Moor, a ruined lead smelting mill and a network of more than 1.7km of ground level flues that took

poisonous gases away from the smelters working in the mill to a 20m high chimney. The complex forms part of the larger Grassington Moor scheduled monument, which covers some 203 hectares. The project included restoration work funded by English Heritage, as part of the Yorkshire Dales Industrial Monument Management Scheme.

Nick Oldham, Media officer

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