Autumn 2016

News from Around the Parks is compiled and edited by the Campaign for National Parks. For any enquiries, please contact gemma@cnp.org.uk
**BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Cycle across the Brecon Beacons**

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has launched a brand new touring route for cyclists this summer as part of its National Parks Week celebrations. The new route, which takes cyclists on a 56 mile (90km) ride across the Park, starts in Llandeilo in the west and ends at Abergavenny in the east and takes in some of the most breath-taking scenery the Park has to offer along the way. Visit Wales Year of Adventure Ambassador – Maria Leijerstam, the first person to cycle to the South Pole, officially launched the route in August along with a group of local cyclists.

Different sections of the route are designed to suit different users and it is designed to be accessible by rail at each end. Development of the route was part funded by Visit Wales [www.breconbeacons.org/cycleacrossthebeacons](http://www.breconbeacons.org/cycleacrossthebeacons).

**Gurkha Path – the Nepali Community give back to Brecon**

The Gurkha community of Brecon in the Brecon Beacons National Park have restored a path leading from the town to Fenni Fach. The restoration, which is the result of six months’ work, was opened at a ceremony attended by the mayor of Brecon and Mahadev Thapa, chair of the Brecon Nepalese Society. The Gurkha community were determined to respond to the extraordinary generosity shown by the people of Brecon after the earthquake devastated Nepal in 2015. They approached the National Park Authority to help them find a worthwhile local project to work on. The previously anonymous path was named the Gurkha Path in recognition of their commitment to restoring it.

Guptaman Gurung, the volunteer coordinator from the Brecon Nepalese Society, commented, “Approximately 70 Gurkha families have made Brecon their home and the local authorities and the local communities have been really supportive both in helping us to settle down and in the aftermath of the Nepali earthquake. In return we wanted to give something back and this project absolutely fulfils this desire. We were looking for a local project as many of the volunteers didn’t have transport and we wanted something which veteran Gurkha soldiers who had settled in Brecon could get their teeth into. With that aim in mind and having approached the National Park Authority, we took up this challenge and never in my wildest dreams did I think it would gather so much attention and publicity. Awarding the name Gurkha Path has added an extra dimension of which all the families are very proud.”

**Brecon Beacons Food Festival**

The annual Brecon Beacons Food Festival took place at Brecon Market Hall on Saturday 1 October. The festival, now in its 19th year, showcased a fantastic selection of local food and drink, with most of the produce travelling less miles than the visitors themselves. Festival goers sampled a range of award winning produce, often sourced and made within the Brecon Beacons National Park including handmade crackers, artisan butter and cheese, sustainable meats and locally brewed beer. More unusual finds included Polish “Pierogi” (filled dumplings), pickled quails eggs and laverbread salami. Exhibitors welcomed visitors to taste the produce and happily gave out recipes and cooking tips, all accompanied by the sounds of Welsh music, celebrity chef cooking demonstrations and entertainment from Derek Brockway and Sue Charles from the BBC Wales Weather team.
THE BROADS SOCIETY

National Park Societies Annual Conference
The National Park Societies Annual Conference took place between 21 to 23 October in The Broads this year. There was a vibrant choice of speakers on many differing topics affecting National Parks and AONBs. These, combined with study visits to both the North and South Broads added up to a truly special weekend for those with a passion for National Parks, conservation, re-generation, examples of how to create a sustainable tourist destination within a National Park, as well as debates on the many serious issues threatening our vulnerable landscapes.

The Three Rivers Way
In July the first phase of a wonderful new shared use path, linking the two villages of Hoveton and Horning on the Northern Broads, was opened. This is the first section of a vision for a much longer route that will eventually link four key villages in The Broads. The launch of the route marks a significant achievement for the community group behind the idea – the Three Rivers Way Association - which has campaigned vigorously for eight years to get the path built. The creation of Phase I of this project has come about through positive community action and a brilliantly successful working partnership between Norfolk County Council’s Highways and Transport Department, The Broads Authority, and the Three Rivers Way Association.

The Three Rivers Way Association will be continuing to campaign for the completion of the route to make it easier for people of all abilities to travel safely and independently to neighbouring village centres, to enable everyone to get more exercise, to reduce the number of short car journeys and help the local economy by improving tourism. An innovative new self-service bike hire scheme has been provided as part of the first phase and bikes are available in automatic docking stations at three locations along the route. The system has been supplied by Hourbike and is similar to those installed in cities such as Sheffield, Oxford and Lincoln. However, this is the first such system that the Society is aware of that is installed in a rural location to appeal predominantly to visitors.
First in the world affordable eco-homes
Local residents have started to move into 18 new, first of a kind, Passivhaus eco-homes in the village of Christow, in Dartmoor National Park. The Stafford Close project has been led by the Christow Community Land Trust (CCLT), a voluntary collection of villagers, in partnership with local affordable housing provider, Teign Housing, Dartmoor National Park Authority and Teignbridge District Council. It is believed that these are the first Passivhaus homes to be built in a National Park anywhere in the world. Fourteen of these homes have been let as affordable housing to local people. The Passivhaus standard of build means that energy bills will be as low as £50 a year for residents with clean, fresh air constantly circulating around their homes.

Although they are relatively common in parts of Northern Europe, Passivhaus schemes are still relatively new to the UK and particularly rare for affordable housing. The land was donated for £1 by Teignbridge District Council and Dartmoor National Park Authority supported the CLT through the planning process. This has become a landmark development recently featuring on BBC’s Countryfile programme as a model of its kind.

Donate for Dartmoor launched
Dartmoor National Park Authority has officially launched their new Donate for Dartmoor scheme with help from the Totnes Ramblers. Donate for Dartmoor has been set up to raise money for a variety of conservation projects across the National Park. There are three separate funds – Recreational Dartmoor, Natural Dartmoor and Historic Dartmoor – so people can choose to support an area of work that means the most to them. Members of the Totnes Ramblers enjoyed a nostalgic walk along Nun’s Cross Path near Princetown to hand over a cheque for £5,000 to the scheme. It was particularly significant for the group as this generous contribution was a bequest from one of their members, Edward Franklin, who recently died. Andrew Chadwick, chairman of Totnes Ramblers said, “Edward Franklin always loved walking on Dartmoor, especially around this area. He would have been very happy to know his money was being used on a project to restore and repair a 4km stretch of this popular bridleway from Nun’s Cross Path to Eylesbarrow, so that others may enjoy walking in this beautiful landscape”.

People can donate money online or through the donation boxes at Visitor Centres, but they can also donate their time as DNPA also have a range of volunteering tasks working alongside our rangers, ecologists and archaeologists. For more details, visit www.dartmoor.gov.uk/visiting/donate-for-dartmoor

Planning for the future of Dartmoor
Dartmoor National Park Authority is taking the first step in reviewing Dartmoor’s local plan. The Authority has a current local plan for the National Park, but things have changed a lot since it was produced; the UK has been through recession, seen a new national planning framework published, and witnessed the arrival of Neighbourhood Planning, and a new Government that is making major changes to affordable housing.

The local plan will cover issues such as; house extensions, design, the environment, listed buildings, housing, business, farming, tourism, quarrying, and land for development. The process of reviewing the plan will take until 2018, and there will be a number of opportunities for people to give their views along the way. Visit www.dartmoor.gov.uk/localplan to find out more.
EXMOOR SOCIETY

Archive project
The two-year archive project came to a successful conclusion on 30 June. It has met all of its targets, and more, including total re-organisation of all the material which is now catalogued and can be accessed on The Exmoor Society website. Researchers can use all the facilities including an outstanding collection of maps whose value is only now being realised. Digitisation of several collections of slides and negatives, some dating back to the 1890s, has made them available for use. A full programme of walks, talks and events has been undertaken. As a result of the success of this project, fundraising has been set up for a new project which began on 1 July. Work will continue on finalising the cataloguing and conserving material but the emphasis now is on using the archives to help the understanding of Exmoor’s special qualities.

Exmoor’s Moorlands – Where Next?
More than ten years ago, The Exmoor Society published a report called Moorlands at a Crossroad. They decided to revisit the report and publish a follow up. The Society commissioned Robert Deane, the author of the 2004 report, to do the work and Exmoor’s Moorlands – Where Next? was published at the Spring Conference in April. It recommended five themes for action over the next ten years: planning for environmental change; deepening public involvement; building on what has been achieved; improving the effectiveness of moorland management and strengthening new values and benefits provided by moorland and other landscapes. The Society achieved considerable publicity over the findings of the report including making a general statement on the views expressed by George Monbiot about rewilding Exmoor.

Farming
The Exmoor Society trustees discussed the State of Farming 2015 report and agreed that further work needed to be done in conducting a survey of a representative sample of Exmoor farm businesses in context with other upland farms and All-England Less Favoured Area farms. Salient points are now being drawn up from the survey for a short discussion paper. The Society is also involved in the Campaign for National Parks Working Group on Upland Farming.

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Over the Hills
The Two Moors Way, one of the South West’s most popular walking routes, was re-launched as part of its 40th anniversary year at a celebration event at Simonsbath on Exmoor recently. The Two Moors Way was first established in 1976 linking the two National Parks in the South West via a 102-mile walking route between Ivybridge on the southern border of Dartmoor with Lynmouth on the rugged north coast of Exmoor.

A series of initiatives have been worked on to celebrate the 40th anniversary through a partnership between Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon County Council and other interested bodies. This work has included the re-establishment of the Two Moors Way Association to provide support and promotion of the route, numerous trial improvements, and the launch of a new pocket guide and website – www.twomoorsway.org

Launch of the Two Moors Way © ENPA
Dan James, sustainable economy manager at Exmoor National Park, said, “The Two Moors Way incorporates the coast, two National Parks and over 100 miles of breath-taking scenery. At 40 years old the route was beginning to look a bit tired and most of the information available had become quite dated. It has been a great opportunity to bring different partners together to give the route a welcome boost. It’s hard to know exactly how many people walk the route, but conservative estimates suggest thousands of people complete the full walk each year, with many more using it for day walks, all contributing to the economy of some of the area’s most rural communities.”

New web films, a visitor passport scheme and business engagement workshops will follow in the coming months alongside support and training for volunteers to help maintain the route into the future.

Rights of Way improving
Recent surveys show that 93% of Exmoor National Park’s public rights of way are open and easy to use. The surveys are carried out by volunteers following nationally agreed criteria.

Ceri Rapsey, rights of way support officer says: “Our rangers and field services team have been working hard to improve the rating and the result shows a continued increase over recent years. We are very grateful to our fantastic volunteers who help us to survey the paths. Our rights of way network is one of the special features of Exmoor and is key to unlocking the immense potential for outdoor recreation within the National Park. Along with our Access Land and permitted access, it offers unrivalled access on foot, horseback or bicycle for everyone to enjoy.”

The public rights of way network is managed and maintained by Exmoor National Park Authority which has delegated powers from Devon and Somerset County Councils. This means that most maintenance duties, signing, surface repairs etc. are undertaken by Exmoor National Park Authority. The National Park Partnership Plan identifies the maintenance of a first class rights of way network as one of its 12 priorities for action and rights of way are also one CareMoor for Exmoor’s priorities for fundraising this year.

Work starts on remote path
Work is underway to repair a remote path near Long Chains Combe in Exmoor National Park which was recently one of the projects involved in the BMC’s Mend our Mountains crowdfunding campaign.

For Exmoor, the aim of the project was to raise enough money to airlift stone into a remote part of the moor to improve the surface of an important path which is part of the Two Moors Way. BMC’s Mend Our Mountains raised £7,500 for this work with another £4,500 coming from CareMoor for Exmoor, the Authority’s donation scheme for Exmoor National Park.

Sue Applegate, rights of way and access officer at Exmoor National Park said, “We were surprised and delighted at the amount of money we raised by this innovative project which will enable us to improve the surface of an ancient route, one of Exmoor’s most remote and rugged tracks.

To repair a path we would normally use material that is on site but in this case there was simply not enough suitable material for the scale of the job. Because of its remote location a helicopter was the most efficient way of getting it there. The work would probably not have been able to go ahead without this funding and we are really grateful to everyone that donated from all over the UK and even as far away as the USA. We are also grateful to local businesses XMAN Events and Encounter Walking Holidays for donating rewards as well as the staff from BIH (Onshore) Ltd and local contractor Steve Atkins who worked with our National Park Rangers to lift the stone in.”
Extensions: Lake District and Yorkshire Dales

The Friends of the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales Society, the Lake District National Park Authority and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority all featured the extensions which took place this year.

1 August 2016 was the new dawn for the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks as their boundaries were extended. The Yorkshire Dales grew by 24 per cent and the Lake District by three per cent.

The Friends of the Lake District celebrated by watching the dawn over the new extension area and providing early risers with bacon and eggs. Their policy officer, Alison Lax said, “These areas have always been special and valued in Cumbria, but now it adds a level of national recognition. They should have been part of the Parks in the first place. The landscape’s qualities are on a par with everything that was included in the Parks previously.”

The Lake District National Park Authority celebrated by running free activities such as bike rides, garden tours and guided walks. Richard Leafe, chief executive of the LDNPA said, “Many people have campaigned for this extension for a long period of time, so this is an historic day for the Lake District National Park and one that deserves celebration. This extension represents unfinished business for the Park and the new boundary line will be more fitting, following the natural landscape. This extension was largely supported by the communities, showing that there continues to be a high level of support and recognition for the good work that is done in National Parks.”

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority held a celebration event in the village of Orton. This was attended by Defra’s Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Lord Gardiner of Kimble who said, “This is an exceptional achievement, making one of the jewels in the crown of the British countryside even bigger and brighter. The National Parks are not just important for the nation’s economic health. They greatly benefit our physical and mental wellbeing, produce great British food and are havens for our most precious plants and animals. People from home and abroad come to enjoy them and we need to make sure they are protected and well maintained, which is why this extension to the National Parks is so important.” Also present were Michael and Robin Dower, sons of John Dower, widely considered to be the ‘founding father’ of National Parks in the UK.

The Yorkshire Dales Society held an event at Westmorland Dales, a newly protected area of the Dales. Attendees included David Vose, senior advisor for Natural England and policy officer for the extension, Ian McPherson vice chair of YDNPA and YDS member and Sir Martin Holdgate, president of the Friends of the Lake District. All discussed the need for better transport connectivity, perhaps setting up a bus similar to the YDS’s DalesBus. This was the star of BBC4’s recent TV programme All Aboard! The Country Bus - a two-hour bus journey through the Yorkshire Dales.
FRIENDS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

Planning Inspector dismisses White Moss Common appeals
Friends of the Lake District has received notice that the inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has dismissed two appeals relating to the proposed commercial developments at White Moss Common near Ambleside in the Lake District. At a recent hearing attended by Friends of the Lake District planning officer Laura Fiske, a number of issues were raised including the potential impacts on the character, appearance and relative tranquillity of the area. In his decision, the inspector concluded that both developments would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area resulting in conflict with the adopted development plan.

Laura Fiske, Friends of the Lake District planning officer said, “The proposed developments would have formalised a relatively wild landscape in the open countryside, introducing inappropriate built features and levels of use which would have altered the character of the area and limited the opportunities for tranquil reflection which are currently enjoyed at White Moss. We are particularly encouraged by the inspector’s recognition of the importance of the National Park designation in this case and the principle that where there is a conflict between National Park purposes there should be greater weight attaching to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and heritage of the National Park.”

‘Landscape Flood Fund’ helps restore Rights of Way
In December 2015, Cumbria was hit by devastating floods. Whilst the county is gradually getting back on its feet, the physical scars on the landscape are still visible but Cumbrian people continue to show their resilience with the county open for business over the summer season this year. Friends of the Lake District has been running a ‘Landscape Flood Appeal’ which has received the largest appeal response it has ever had; the level of donations demonstrating the strength of feeling that people have for the landscape of the Lake District and Cumbria. The appeal raised £60,000 and the membership charity has been able to add another £40,000 to the pot for access work from a legacy received from a generous donor. Donations to the charities landscape flood appeal have been spent on supporting a range of projects.

Contributions have been made to the repair costs of the path surface at White Moss Common near Grasmere. The money has helped to fund a new bridge at Barbondale, near Kirby Lonsdale in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and work will start later in the year on a new bridge at Whinfell near Kendal on the Dales Way. The charity has also ensured that all of the repair work being carried out has a remit to incorporate improvements to the resilience of the footpaths and bridges to better withstand future weather events.
Pioneering solar project marks new era for Lake District National Park
The Lake District National Park head office is now generating its own electricity thanks to a joint initiative between the Park and Community Energy Cumbria Ltd (CEC) supported by members of Community Action for Sustainability. A 30kw solar photo voltaic array on the roof of the Lake District National Park (LDNP) head office in Kendal is powering computers, lighting and electrical equipment throughout the building. It marks a pioneering approach to how the Park manages its assets for the greater benefit of the community. The new 107 panel system will make a significant environmental impact, reducing CO\textsubscript{2} emissions by nearly 10 tonnes per annum for at least the next 20 years. Phil Davies, a founding director of CEC said, “We’ve used local renewables firms to carry out the solar PV work, so we are proud to support local businesses. Profits will be directed back into projects that help groups and individuals in Cumbria to realise their community or environmental ambitions”

Richard Leafe, chief executive of the LDNPA said, “This is a really important contribution to our carbon reduction targets. We’ve already cut carbon emissions by 39% since 2008 across our operations. But equally importantly, this exciting partnership means that we can achieve this in a way that supports skills and businesses across Cumbria.”

Lake District offered a warm welcome this summer
“We’re ready for the summer” was the message from the Lake District National Park in July ahead of the schools holidays across the country. The Lake District was hit hard by last winter’s floods, but the National Park, together with businesses and communities, have worked hard to repair as much as possible in time to welcome visitors this summer.

Graham Standring, area ranger for the Lake District National Park said, “With more than 17 million visitors to the Lake District every year, we know how important the summer season is for everyone who visits, works and lives in the National Park. We’ve prioritised the most damaged routes and while there’s still work to do, we will have repaired 14 key sites by the end of July, meaning the vast majority of the Park is open and ready to welcome visitors.”
NEW FOREST ASSOCIATION

Mapping the New Forest

There is increasing evidence that recreational pressure on the New Forest National Park is causing damage. In the last 10 years there has been either a decline or marked decline in several species of ground nesting birds. There is such concern that the New Forest Association (NFA) has earmarked significant funds for research into the interaction of recreation and nesting. Fifteen million people live within a 90-minute drive of the Park and it is estimated that new housing within 50km alone in the next 20 years will result in an additional million visits per annum. In the area immediately adjacent to the New Forest another 25,000 new houses are planned.

To fully understand the threats, the NFA is developing more effective methods to collect, store and present research data. The App Field Trip GB is currently being used to collect data, which is stored on custom forms on a mobile phone or tablet using GPS signals. Once data is collected, it will be stored on a multi-layer map, becoming a single source showing designations, land use, species population, roads, car parks and so on. Initially this can identify areas around the Park suitable for Sites of Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) and Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs), both very relevant to NFA campaigns, and to study the effect on the Forest’s undisturbed areas of rearranging car parks. To see the map visit http://giscloud.com/phil_ag/NFA_Planning

Article about on Latchmore Brook

During the 19th Century, the well-meaning Victorians straightened a number of watercourses up and down the UK. In recent times, the weaknesses of such a policy, particularly in terms of flood risk and changes to habitat, have been highlighted, resulting in many stream restorations up and down the country. The New Forest itself has undertaken several restoration schemes, generally with great success; areas have regenerated themselves far faster than expected in some cases. One of the most recent applications involves the Latchmore Brook. Despite support for the project by ecological organisations including the RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, Ringwood Natural History Society, British Dragonfly Society and the New Forest Association, a virulent protest group has grown, the Friends of Latchmore, which insists it should be scrapped. Objectors have had their generally subjective views widely published on social media and in the press and even the local MP has been drawn in on the side of the objectors. Fortunately, throughout the discussion, the NFA has been careful to stay professional, relying on scientific evidence and data while trying to avoid emotive statements. However, the objectors have gained more publicity, leaving the NFA to realise there is a lesson to be learned; organised and proactive online and press strategies are important to winning an argument as much as well-reasoned information.

The Forestry Commission’s Fungi Policy in the New Forest

The NFA are pleased that the Forestry Commission (FC) are implementing a “Look, Don’t Pick” rule regarding fungi foraging on the New Forest SSSI under their stewardship. The NFA have actively campaigned for this since July 2015, when after careful consideration they decided that calling for an Epping Forest style ban was the most clear cut solution, with its obvious precedent.

The NFA is taking the precautionary principle that on a SSSI, especially with fungi amongst its notified features, under heavy pressure from recreation, that fungi should be protected, part and parcel with the whole of this habitat. Scientists are only now discovering the role of fungi in the network of nutrient and chemical sharing within woodlands. The fruiting bodies that foragers prize are depended upon by at least 600 species of invertebrate using them as micro-habitats to fulfil their life cycles. Foragers against the ban ignore the fact that even in the forage friendly cultures of mainland Europe, their National Parks have equal and often more stringent rules including conservation led Strict Protection Areas. The NFA hope enforcement may be hard hitting on pickers taking undue advantage of the forest, whether commercial or not; and education for casual foragers. The message is the same, this is a protected habitat and landscape, leave the fungi to nature and the autumn display for all to see.
NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Arts Festival
The New Forest Arts Festival is celebrating success after hosting over 40 events during June in its first year. Encouraging visitors and residents to engage in the Forest’s rich creative community and explore new parts of the Forest, the Festival hosted a diverse range of events in over 20 locations. Some of the more unusual venues included a treehouse, a pub and a castle. Led by the New Forest National Park Authority with local creative organisations, the Festival celebrates the Forest’s landscape and culture through a variety of art forms.

Events this year included an outdoor performance of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, workshops, a series of concerts by local bands and a diverse range of exhibitions. Many of the events within the Festival were free or discounted thanks to Heritage Lottery Funding, making them accessible for families of all ages, children, adults with learning disabilities and the more mature generation.

Our Past, Our Future round up
A multi-million pound landscape partnership scheme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund is celebrating early successes as it helps restore and protect the New Forest and its heritage. Led by the New Forest National Park Authority with 10 key partners, the Our Past, Our Future scheme is a unique opportunity to restore lost habitats, develop Forest skills and inspire a new generation to champion and care for the Forest.

Activities so far include an archaeology dig for volunteers, rural skills training courses and tree planting on a grand scale at the National Trust’s Foxbury site. This was the location for a visit by HLF chief executive Ros Kerslake over the summer, who voiced her support for the scheme and praised the progress it has made so far. Over the coming months and years the scheme will continue to restore habitats for wildlife, support commoners to continue their ancient way of life and ensure that the New Forest thrives despite modern-day pressures. For more information visit www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership
NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre takes shape
The Northumberland National Park Authority’s flagship project to create The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre on Hadrian’s Wall is gathering pace. Financed primarily through £7.8 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), The Sill will deliver an ambitious outreach programme of cultural events, education work and community engagement connected to the landscape.

The state-of-the-art all-weather facility at Once Brewed in Bardon Mill is on schedule to open to the public in summer 2017, and will also be home to a new 90 bed Youth Hostel designed to offer people a modern, high-quality visitor experience. It is expected to attract over 100,000 visitors per year and is set to deliver substantial economic benefits within the Park and beyond by contributing an estimated £2.5 million per annum to the North East economy.

Its aim is to orientate people of all ages and backgrounds with other parts of Northumberland by providing a gateway for them to explore the wider county and other protected landscapes including the North Pennines and the Northumberland Coastal Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Sill will also play a strategic role in delivering the Northumberland National Park Authority’s objective to open up the landscapes of the Park and surrounding areas to under-represented groups and residents of urban areas.

Northumberland National Parks tech-inspired partnership with Simon Armitage is poetry in motion!
An exciting development for The Northumberland National Park Authority has been the launch of ‘Poems in the Air’, its unique collaboration with the iconic poet Simon Armitage CBE, to create a digital treasure trail of spoken poems that can only be accessed on mobile devices at specific locations throughout the Park. The project is part of the Sill: National Discovery Centre Arts and Culture programme. The app technology offers visitors a 21st century way to activate poetry with an element of discovery to encourage people to explore the Park.

It features a collection of six new poems by Simon which are inspired by serene hidden gems and secret places within the Park. Using the ‘Poems in the Air’ free mobile app visitors can follow in Simon’s footsteps and listen to him reading his poems in the exact places that inspired them. Unusually, Simon’s collection of poems will not be published or visualised in any way, they will only exist as voice recordings, and to experience them, visitors have to make their way to the specific location then activate the recording on a mobile phone or tablet.

Simon spent time with Northumberland National Park Rangers at their favourite places to explore ideal locations for the project. He said, “I was excited by the concept of poems that are not written down, and only exist within landscape. It was a simple idea aiming to combine poetry and the landscape to engage people with six places across the Park through the power of the spoken word. The concept appealed to me because in terms of the landscape it is very non-interventionist, relying on the invisible airwaves and whatever communication devices people happen to bring with them.” To find out more visit www.poemsintheair.co.uk
Northumberland is a stellar place to gaze at the heavens
This year marks the third anniversary of Northumberland receiving the International Dark Sky Park designation. It is Europe’s largest area of protected night sky at 572 square miles. Due to its perfect skies it was awarded gold tier status by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), making it officially the best place in England for people to enjoy the heavens. Earlier this year, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) released the most detailed ever satellite maps of England’s light pollution and dark skies. The maps showed that Northumberland National Park has the darkest skies in England with 96% of the area having pristine night skies and very little light pollution elsewhere.

The Authority works closely with communities, businesses and key partners to share lighting best practice and offer planning advice on how all developments, large and small, can help protect the Dark Sky Park. Through The Sill activity programme, the Park Authority is celebrating the third anniversary by hosting a range of Dark Sky events throughout the National Park between October and January. They include Astro Photography workshops, stargazing evenings with expert commentary and advice from the Park’s Starmakers and moonwatch and meteor nights.

Dark skies in Northumberland © NNPA
NORTH YORK MOORS ASSOCIATION

Change for NYMA
The North Yorkshire Moors Association has changed its legal status. A decision was taken in 2015 to apply for a change from a non-incorporated charity set up in 1985 to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). After a special general meeting held in January 2016, at which their members gave support for the change, an application was submitted in July to the Charity Commission. In a surprisingly short time the application was accepted and on 16 September the North York Moors Association became a CIO with a new charity reference number 1169240. A CIO is a form of charity introduced under the Charities Act 2011 which confers a stronger legal status, and all existing charities are being gradually encouraged to move to this new status.

Sirius Minerals Plc Polyhalite Mine
The proposal to build the largest mine in Europe in the North York Moors National Park is still some way off becoming a reality. Sirius Minerals is trying to raise the US$3.5 billion which it needs to carry out this project. The initial US$1.63 billion called ‘phase one funding’ is for the construction of the mine head, the sinking of the shafts and construction of a 37 kilometre underground tunnel containing a conveyor from Whitby to Teesside. This will take the polyhalite to a handling plant at Wilton before overhead conveyors take the final product to a new bulk handling port facility on the Tees. ‘Phase one funding’ is said to be a 50/50 mix of equity and structured capital which is another term for borrowing. A fairly recent financial report suggests that the equity would be made up of a share issuance of up to 2 billion shares. Sirius needs cornerstone institutional investors but up till now they have not appeared. It is possible that the project is considered too high a risk with no guarantee of the company achieving the market it needs for selling up to 20 million tonnes per year of polyhalite.

Thank heavens for little birds!
This is a story of a fruitful collaboration with Campaign for National Parks concerning a planning application with a successful and somewhat unusual conclusion. NYMA with the support of Campaign for National Parks made a request to the planning inspectorate that the determination of an appeal by the applicant of an airfield development at South Moor Farm should be changed from a written exchange of documents to an appeal hearing. After reviewing the matter the inspectorate agreed to a local hearing. It is clear that a hearing provides the opportunity for wider disclosure of information and at the hearing, the presence of an ornithologist with specialised local knowledge, made a significant difference to the outcome.

The appeal hearing was held over the course of one day on 19 July and was very well attended by objectors on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year. The planning inspectorate gave notice on the 16 September that the appeal was dismissed. The grounds for the dismissal were based on the disturbance likely to be caused to two species of birds which are present in a nearby breeding site. They are the Nightjar and Goshawk, the latter of which is a species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The Inspector concluded that, “I take into account the conservation of wildlife is explicit in the statutory purposes of the National Park, and that having regard to the Sandford Principle, this harm must carry greater weight than the stated benefits. Therefore having regard to all other matters before me, the appeal is dismissed”.

NORTH YORK MOORS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Restoration of plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites
Putting into reverse environmental decline of ancient woodlands is a key objective for the North York Moors. With over 6,400 hectares included on Natural England’s Ancient Woodland Inventory there is much work to be done. Of particular concern are those ancient woods that have been converted to commercial conifer plantations. These woods commonly referred to as PAWS (Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site) amount to more than 3,700 hectares in the Park, of which approximately 45% is managed directly by the Forestry Commission.
The full restoration of these woodlands to appropriate tree species will in most cases take many decades to complete, but there is a grave urgency to starting the restoration process, which initially focuses on protecting and enhancing surviving features of both ecological and cultural interest.

More than 500 hectares of PAWS restoration has been initiated in the National Park over the last four year period. This includes work carried out by the Forestry Commission, private landowners, and other groups as well as the Authority’s own projects. In addition to this figure, the North York Moors Authority has secured a further approximately 190 hectares through the biodiversity elements of HLF funded ‘This Exploited Land Project’. Despite good progress to date it has to be acknowledged that there are still significant practical, economic and commercial factors restricting the ambition to restore all PAWS.

**New Cleveland Way walk provides stunning views**

In August, the North York Moors National Park Authority opened a new 5.3 mile long easy access circular walk in the National Park suitable for trampers, mobility scooters and wheelchair users. Starting at the iconic Sutton Bank National Park Centre, renowned for ‘the finest view in England’, visitors can enjoy the outstanding views across the Vale of Mowbray to the distant Yorkshire Dales. It also takes in some of the Cliff Bike Trail so sightseers can appreciate winding and meandering through the woods and across the fields.

The National Park Authority is keen to provide access to visitors of all abilities and works closely with a Disabled Access Group to see what can be done on pathways to ensure this is possible. This stile and step free walk provides greater access for people with impaired mobility, enabling them to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.

**Update on Education - The ‘change you want to see’**

The NYMNPA believe National Parks are a perfect place for schools to come and explore the natural environment, helping promote these unique spaces for future generations. Our education team provide an array of activities throughout the year and have recently been involved in the Archbishop of York Youth Trust. The Trust, set up in 2008, exists to empower young people to ‘be the change you want to see’ in their schools, communities and the world. The charity reaches out to young people, engaging and empowering them and one way of doing this is through the Young Leaders Award, known as the Archbishop Award.

This year children from three local primary schools participated in the award scheme with our education staff and Rangers providing them with several practical tasks to help their local communities. Activities included working on a footpath in Goathland, clearing mud off the path before laying limestone and whinstone; bracken bashing to help clear a path to the historic bee boles near Glaisdale that houses 77 bee boles, the largest number ever recorded in England and Scotland! And working in Danby Dale on a bridleway leading to Wolf Pit, home to a ‘dancing stone’ where local legend suggests dancing on it will keep you young!

Following the successful completion of the tasks, an awards ceremony was held for the children at The Moors National Park Centre where the children received their certificates and badges. Practical conservation tasks for school groups are so worthwhile and a topic for discussion at the moment is how the NYMPA might increase opportunities for young people to volunteer in line with the aspirations in Defra’s 8 point plan.
FRIENDS OF THE PEAK DISTRICT

Pop goes the permission!
The Friends of the Peak District were recently able to celebrate properly the end of their 13 year-long campaign against illegal quarrying at Backdale on the scenic Longstone Edge. They joined with former members of the Save Longstone Edge Group (SLEG) and the National Park Authority for a celebration walk and picnic on the Edge, including popping some fizz to mark the removal of planning permission by dint of a prohibition order. The Friends worked with Campaign for National Parks to help create new national legislation that made this possible. It was also the end of an era as SLEG has now dissolved itself and given its remaining campaign funds to the Friends to allow us to continue our vigilance.

Fracking coming soon?
The Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive and other allied bodies recently held a drop-in meeting in Dronfield, on the eastern edge of the Peak District to explain the statutory oversight of fracking, presumably to allay local concerns. This is heralding likely applications for exploration and Ineos, one of the local licence area holders, is already negotiating with landowners for permissions for seismic and other tests. The FPD imagine that developers are buoyed by the permission given in North Yorkshire (and now in Lancashire) and are accelerating their plans. FPD recently adopted a new fracking policy (available on request) which has a presumption against fracking because of impacts on countryside, amenity and the environment but also because it would damage the needed transition to a low carbon energy mix.

Membership development
Earlier in the year, FPD appointed Rob Parratt, a former membership recruiter with the RSPB, to lead a face-to-face membership drive to help grow number of people supporting the Friends. Probably like many National Park societies, the FPD membership demography is seriously skewed and they need to recruit a younger cohort of supporters for the future and to keep core, unrestricted income available. The initiative has been funded by strong legacy income in the past two years, which seems appropriate in terms of intergenerational investment in the organisation. Rob has attended many shows and events for FPD and has been very successful at bringing in new members and also spreading the word about the work. The PDNPA have also kindly licensed the FPD to recruit at a number of their popular visitor venues, which the Friends will soon trial.
Buds, Berries and Leaves

‘Buds, Berries and Leaves’ is the latest Community Science survey to be launched by Moors for the Future Partnership – as residents and visitors to the Peak District and South Pennines continue to help record how the moorland environment is responding to climate change. The survey has been designed to encourage volunteers to note the timings of seasonal events – such as leaf-opening, flowering, fruiting and leaf-fall – in four well known upland plants: Bilberry, Rowan, Crowberry and Heather.

Community Science project manager Sarah Proctor said, “By observing when these seasonal events happen from year to year, we hope to be able to pick up patterns and trends over a long time frame. This will help to answer questions about whether spring is getting earlier, and if so, what effect are changing temperatures and weather patterns having on our moorlands.” For more information visit www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/community-science

Encouraging news for upland farmers

Support from the National Park has helped provide improved opportunities for many Peak District farmers under the Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme. The new mid-tier funding options support severely disadvantaged land, which accounts for 86% of all farmland in the Peak District National Park. Farmers who deliver effective environmental management on their land can apply for a payment of £16 per hectare for low input grassland management, e.g. reduced fertiliser use. Additional supplementary payments are now available for hay making (£85/ha), cattle grazing (£45/ha) and lenient grazing (£44/ha), all of which will benefit wildflowers, bees, butterflies and farmland birds.

Suzanne Fletcher, countryside and economy manager at the Peak District National Park, said, “Alongside other stakeholders, we have lobbied Defra and Natural England and it is positive news that there are improved opportunities for so many of our farmers. We will be keeping a close eye on how scheme applicants get on this year. We need to ensure that our Peak District upland farmers continue to access funding support.”

The Chatsworth Estate receives Peak District environmental seal of approval

The Chatsworth Estate has been awarded the Peak District Environmental Quality Mark (PDEQM) by the Peak District National Park for its sustainable ways of working. The PDEQM is only presented to businesses that actively support the local economy, protect and enhance the local environment, invest in people and communities, and celebrate what’s special about the Peak District National Park. The PDEQM label gives customers confidence that their purchases are helping to look after the Peak District environment, as well as support local people and communities. The independent awards panel, which judges applications according to strict criteria, praised the Chatsworth Estate’s approach to sustainable land management, transport for visitors and employees and the introduction and use of renewables with a project in the pipeline for the coming year including a hydro scheme on the river Derwent.

PDEQM director Faith Johnson said, “We are delighted to welcome Chatsworth into the scheme. It is exciting to have such a prominent and diverse business on board; it’s by far the largest business in the scheme and its comprehensive and detailed application shows a real commitment to sustainability across its many operational areas.” The Peak District Environmental Quality Mark, and its sister scheme in Staffordshire, have over 80 award-holding businesses, who all share the same ethos of energy and waste reduction, combined with sustainable development and conservation of the local area. More information at www.eqm.org.uk

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**FRIENDS OF PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK**

**Contemporaries of St David buried at St Patrick’s Chapel, Whitesands Bay**

A three-week-long excavation last June, at Whitesands Bay, near St Davids, revealed the medieval place of worship was not the earliest use of the site, and that remains discovered below the cemetery may date back into prehistory. Some of the Christian burials uncovered are from the early 6th century AD, when St David – now Wales’ patron saint – was a bishop. It has been suggested that some of the people buried in St Patrick’s Chapel would have been contemporaries of St David – they might even have known him.

They were not necessarily compatriots though. Research by the University of Sheffield on skeletons from similar sites in Pembrokeshire has revealed that some of the people buried in them were not local, but came from Ireland and continental Europe. Initial results from St Patrick’s Chapel suggest a similar pattern, making Whitesands Bay rather cosmopolitan. The excavation was carried out to avoid archaeology being lost forever to the sea, after winter storms in 2014 exposed the graves. Since the first dig, the remains of almost 100 skeletons have been excavated. The chapel, from where St Patrick is said to have set sail for Ireland in the 5th century AD, was a ruin over 400 years ago but its location has never been forgotten.

**Pembrokeshire Coast path pioneers at Pembrokeshire County Show**

The fascinating story of the creation of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail came to life at this year’s County Show. Two of the original team who helped to construct this internationally acclaimed walking trail in the 1960s met with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority staff who help manage the Path today.

Paul Hosgood, from Fishguard, started work driving a bulldozer known as a ‘Bristol tractor’ carving out the first bit of the Coast Path, and George Edwards, from nearby Goodwick, was part of the follow-up team creating the Coast Path between 1965 and 1970. Paul recalled, “At the age of 18 I was working for the contractor who supplied the tractor, Roy Morris, and was told I would be driving the tractor. We took delivery of the tractor on a Saturday afternoon, was given the weekend to get used to it and on the Monday went for our first excavation at Dinas – which didn’t quite go to plan!” George Edwards and his father Willy were Council lengthsmen, and George followed the tractor with picks and shovels for twelve months, and continued to maintain the Coast Path after it was opened, clearing the path and helping to erect stiles and signposts.

**Bluestone Resorts make preliminary planning application for restoration of Blackpool Mill**

Bluestone Resorts (through their agents) have put in a preliminary planning application to the PCNPA, for major works at the historic Blackpool Mill location in Canaston Woods, near Narberth.

Their proposals can be summarised as: conversion and restoration of the existing Blackpool Mill and ancillary buildings to provide a heritage tourist facility, construction of a light, narrow gauge steam railway with associated station and platform; in the adjacent meadow, construction of an all-weather events barn and associated facilities, cycle Parking, car Parking, site infrastructure including drainage, services along with hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatments. It should be stressed that this is the preliminary stage and there will be consultation before the full application is submitted. No doubt Campaign for National Parks, the Alliance for National Parks Cymru and the various Park societies will be following this application with much interest. FPCNP will be submitting their thoughts in the near future.
PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Barefoot walk your way to an Iron Age adventure at Castell Henllys

A new barefoot walking trail, among the first of its kind in Wales, opened this summer at Castell Henllys Iron Age Village. Designed and created by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, which owns and manages Castell Henllys, the 150m woodland walk is the first dedicated Barefoot Trail to open in a UK National Park.

Meandering along the pretty River Nant, the trail includes eight different surfaces for walkers to feel under their shoeless feet; from crunching flint gravel to squelching clay, from tree stumps to wood chips, all sourced locally.

Rebecca Evans, the Park Authority’s interpretation officer, said: “The Barefoot Trail is a sensory treat, allowing yourself to feel the textures beneath your feet, and tune in to the sights and sounds of nature such as the birds and the flowing water.”

The trail route and each surfaced section were created by a team of trainees who are working with the National Park Authority as part of the Skills in Action project, which is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Skills for the Future scheme. The project included raising the level of the existing riverside footpath which was prone to flooding, with the trainees working under the leadership of Castell Henllys warden Dylan Evans, with additional help from the North warden Team.

The trail also includes an accessible footpath that is suitable for wheelchairs and buggies, so people can miss out any sections they don’t wish to walk through. For more information about Castell Henllys visit www.castellhenllys.com

Discover story of William Smith’s remarkable maps at Oriel y Parc

This autumn at Oriel y Parc Gallery and Visitor Centre in St Davids, discover the story of William Smith, the man who developed what is regarded as the first true geological map of any country. Reading the Rocks: The Remarkable Maps of William Smith will be on display in the main gallery at Oriel y Parc until 26 March 2017.

Oriel y Parc manager, Jenn Jones said, “Smith’s striking maps showed the country in a way that had never been seen before. Today they are viewed as works of art in their own right, having been painstakingly coloured by hand. The maps clearly show Pembrokeshire’s varied geology and give an insight into what lies beneath the diverse National Park landscape we see today. Sitting alongside modern exhibits, this collection bridges the gap between the worlds of art and geology and demonstrates how they have impacted on each other. More than 200 years after his monumental A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales, with part of Scotland was published, Smith’s beautifully hand-coloured maps are icons in the world of geology.”

Two different editions are fully displayed in this exhibition along with unique documents and smaller maps, all depicting the story of Smith’s life and work. Smith transformed the understanding of rock strata, and discovered that fossils could be used to identify rock sequences. His work had great practical application for locating coal and other raw materials, at a time when the industrial revolution was in full swing.
SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

**Mend our Mountains campaign**

The British Mountaineering Council’s campaign, Mend Our Mountains, has made a valuable contribution towards the cost of repairing an essential section of the Watkin Path leading to the summit of Snowdon. In Snowdonia, it was decided that the Watkin Path would be the main beneficiary of the campaign – coincidentally, this was the first footpath ever to be designated a public footpath in Britain, thus officially opening the countryside for walkers.

Due to the thousands of walkers who walk along the Watkin Path every year, together with unstable scree, this piece of footpath over the years has eroded and braided, and habitats have been destroyed. In addition, the substantial work that needed to clearly re-define the path for walkers, as well as its location, over 1,000 meters above sea level, makes repairing it a difficult task. Without the Mend our Mountains campaign it would have been almost impossible to carry out the work required on one of Britain’s most popular mountains.

**Two appeals rejected**

An Inspector from the Welsh Government’s Planning Inspectorate rejected two appeals by the owner of an old cottage in Llanuwchllyn near Bala. One appeal was against a listed building enforcement notice and the other against an enforcement notice. Ty’n y Ffridd is a single storey stone cottage built in the mid-nineteenth century. Due to its special architectural features (and an important historical record of agricultural life and lifestyle in the nineteenth century), the traditional materials used in its construction, and the fact that it was a single storey dwelling with an attached byre (uncommon in that part of Snowdonia), the cottage was listed as Grade 2 Listed Building.

In 2007, Listed Building Consent and planning permission were given to the owner to build an extension and to convert the byre to provide more accommodation. However, according to the Inspector James Ellis LIB, the completed work on the property was very different from the original plans which were approved in 2007 and which had consequently adversely affected the character of the listed building. Work carried out on the cottage did not comply with the original plans, and further work carried out had not received any permission at all. The dry stones walls and the byre had been demolished, the extension was nearly twice the length of the original cottage, unsuitable stones were used for the extension, a porch was added which was incompatible with the rest of the cottage, the old traditional windows had been replaced by modern windows, the original red chimney pot was replaced by a black and metal chimney pot and roof details had also been changed. In addition, a concrete block wall structure was built for installing an oil tank, significant excavation work was carried out as well as a retaining wall being built without planning permission.

The Inspector noted that the owner would have to remove the extension, remove the porch and install natural Welsh slate above the front door, replace the windows with traditional windows, replace the chimney pot, change the details of the roof, rebuild the byre exactly the same size as the original byre, rebuild the dry stone walls, remove the retaining wall, refill the excavated land to its previous levels and remove the concrete block wall and oil tank. He has two years to comply.
Cader or Cadair Idris?
The interesting and unusual discussion at Snowdonia National Park Authority’s planning committee in April encouraged officers and members to consider the origin of place names in the Park. In particular, which form is correct, Cadair Idris or Cader Idris?

Until fairly recently Snowdonia National Park Authority used Cader Idris in its signage and publications. However, whilst working in partnership with Natural Resources Wales at the Dôl Idris site in Tal y Llyn recently, to ensure consistency and following guidance given to Natural Resources Wales by the Welsh Language commissioner’s office, it was decided to adopt the ‘Cadair’ form. However whilst discussing details of a planning application, some of the Authority’s members expressed their views that Cader is always used locally and is in fact the correct form to use. Although the general view is that Cader refers to Idris the giant’s chair (cader / cadair = chair in English), ‘cader’, according to Titus Lewis’ Dictionary published in 1805 does in fact mean fortress or stronghold.

As director of planning and cultural heritage, and following the opinion of members together with the form that is used locally, Jonathan Cawley wrote to Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh language commissioner’s office, to seek clarification on the correct version. Following further research and discussion at the Authority’s meeting in June, members resolved to use Cader Idris and encourage the use of Cader Idris on any signage placed on Authority property.

A Welsh version of the text from Snowdonia National Park Authority is available on request.
A27
The A27 trunk road runs east-west almost the length of the National Park, within, bordering or close by, and Government plans improvements at various pinch points. Highways England has consulted recently on options for a Chichester bypass: the Society have acknowledged the need to reduce congestion but do not wish to see a 70 mph expressway for fear it would encourage more traffic, adding to problems elsewhere along the road. The South Downs Society have maintained a strong objection to any suggestion of reintroducing bypass options passing north of the city (and close to the National Park) which had been dropped before the consultation. They continue to engage with emerging plans for other congested sections of the road at Arundel, Worthing/Lancing and east of Lewes.

Council honeypots for sale?
In the 1920s Eastbourne Council acquired a large tract of the chalk downland within the borough. The majority has continued to be farmed but the council maintains the key coastal strip for public access, including famous Beachy Head.

The council, strapped for cash, now intends to sell off the farms, claiming that access is safeguarded on its rights of way and that the planning powers of the National Park Authority will suffice to ensure future protection. The South Downs Society, in collaboration with other concerned environmental organisations, is lobbying Eastbourne Council to retain the land in the knowledge that ownership is the best means of control. The Society is also suggesting – if disposal does proceed – ways of securing landscape, access and wildlife protection and enhancement in the sale, together with improvements that might be made to the retained coastal strip, calling on some of the sale income.

Meanwhile East Sussex County Council seems likely to offer its flagship Seven Sisters Country Park to a ‘good home’, presumably in the public or voluntary sector. This may lead to improved management compared with what ESCC has been able to provide. The Society will offer public support to the prospect of ownership by either the National Park Authority or the National Trust.

Gatwick airport
A Government announcement is expected on increasing airport capacity in the south east. The possible expansion of Gatwick, involving a second runway and third terminal, has long been mooted. The Airports Commission recommended in July 2015 that Heathrow should be expanded with a third runway, rather than Gatwick with a second. No decision has been issued and it is known that voices within Government differ on the outcome. Via the MPs who cover the National Park, the Society has expressed its concerns about possible impacts of an expanded Gatwick on the National Park: Changed flight paths and more frequent flights above the Park, meaning additional noise at extended hours, reduced tranquillity and effect on some wildlife, increased air pollution and contribution to climate change from extra flights, ditto from increased road traffic generated by extra passengers and associated commercial traffic e.g. servicing and retail deliveries, pressure for major highway improvements arising from the above, with likely impact on the National Park, including A27. A number of local MPs have welcomed and endorsed the Society’s comments.
Mysterious prehistoric farmers and missing Roman road revealed

In July, with the South Downs National Park Authority’s three-year Secrets of the High Woods community archaeology project in its final months, they were finally able to reveal news of their biggest finds: the lost route of a Roman road and the surprising extent of prehistoric farming on the South Downs before the Romans arrived. The discoveries were made after airborne laser scanning (LiDAR) technology was used to map part of the South Downs National Park hidden under woodland for hundreds of years.

Speaking about the extensive prehistoric field systems revealed during the project, James Kenny, archaeology officer at Chichester District Council, said, “The find raises so many questions. Who was growing these crops and who was eating all of this food? We haven’t found signs of settlement so where were they living? The scale is so large that it must have been managed, suggesting that this part of the country was being organised as a farming collective on a very large scale.”

£1.44 million lottery funding will help endangered heathland wildlife

Ambitious work to restore and reunite areas of rare heathland in the South Downs National Park will start this autumn thanks to a £1.44 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). South Downs heaths are not only home to rare plants and animals – such as the sand lizard, woodlark and silver-studded blue butterfly – they are also important spaces for people. But heathland currently covers just one per cent of the South Downs National Park and has shrunk into ‘islands’ where isolated plants and animals are far more vulnerable to local extinction. The Heathlands Reunited project, led by the National Park Authority with 10 partner organisations, aims to create and improve heathland at 41 sites – covering an area greater than 1,200 football pitches over the next five years.

Heathlands are man-made and only exist because our ancestors used them to dig peat for fuel, harvest heather and graze animals, unwittingly creating a unique ‘mosaic’ of habitats which many plants and animals now can’t survive without. A staggering 60 per cent of heathland species are dependent on bare, sandy, south facing ground. A key part of the SDNPA’s work will be with the local people who use and enjoy the heaths, for example to get involved in scraping patches of bare earth or even encouraging communities to adopt and take responsibility for their heath.

South Downs Dark Night Skies Festival

In June 2016 the South Downs National Park became the world’s 11th International Dark Skies Reserve – only the second in England. But the question many people asked was: what does this actually mean? What is being done differently now that the reserve is in place?

The first South Downs Dark Night Skies Festival will take place in the third and fourth weeks of February 2017 to coincide with half-term weeks in Hampshire and East and West Sussex. The middle Saturday, 18 February, will be the main focus for the SDNPA with a family activity day as events and opportunities for more serious stargazers during the evening (weather permitting). The aims for the festival are to celebrate and raise awareness of South Downs International Dark Skies reserve status; engage key groups with stargazing activities as encouragement to appreciate, understand and take action to protect our dark skies; engage key partners to celebrate our dark skies under festival banner and using South Downs identity; and support tourism providers to benefit from dark skies status as encouragement to appreciate, understand and take action to protect our dark skies.
Yorkshire Dales National Park

YORKSHIRE DALES SOCIETY

Barn conversion dilemma
The YDNPA’s updated 2015-2030 Local Plan (currently with the Planning Inspector and expected to be published by the end of the year) contains more flexible guidelines to make it easier to convert roadside barns into housing for local people. The Authority’s rational for this is that the conversion of barns plays an important part in the goal to promote local affordable housing and to help communities face the future more securely. These buildings are a special feature of this National Park and this added flexibility means the Authority can look after more of them and bring them back into use – which, in turn, conserves this wonderful landscape and helps to keep it alive.

In anticipation of approval of the Local Plan there are now a significant number of planning applications being submitted for roadside barn conversions. The YDS appreciates why the Authority is modifying its approach in this way but is concerned that the cumulative impact of such conversions, some of which appear to test the concept of ‘roadside’, may change the special landscape and character of the Dales. The Society wonders if such, often expensive, conversions really will deliver affordable housing. They will continue to scrutinise carefully such planning applications and raise our concerns where appropriate.

New president and patron
YDS are delighted that Sir Gary Verity has agreed to become their new president. Sir Gary is the chief executive of Welcome to Yorkshire and was responsible for bringing the 2014 Tour de France to Yorkshire, which he spoke about at the NPS Conference in the Dales in October 2014. He lives in the Dales, about which he is passionate.

The Society hope that his association with them will help raise their profile. They are also very pleased to welcome adventurer Alastair Humphreys as a patron. Alastair, born in the Dales, is an adventurer, author and motivational speaker. As well as expeditions such as cycling round the world, walking across India and rowing the Atlantic, Alastair was named as National Geographic Adventurer of the year for his pioneering work on the concept of microadventures – an adventure that is close to home, cheap, simple and yet effective. Alastair has been very helpful in encouraging YDS to become more active with social media and he is kindly tweeting about YDS to his own thirty five thousand followers.

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Positive results for National Park planners
Planners in the Yorkshire Dales National Park gave the thumbs up to 94% of applications submitted last year, according to latest figures. Additionally a survey conducted by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority showed 89% of applicants and agents were satisfied with the service regardless of whether their application was approved or refused.

Whitehall rules say decisions on planning applications must be made within certain time limits and, in the financial year 2015/16, 86% of major applications, 91 per cent of minor applications and 93% of other applications were decided on by the Authority within the appropriate limit. The figures also show that every application involving agricultural buildings was approved, along with 97% of other business applications.

Robert Heseltine, the Authority’s member champion for development management, said, “Planning issues are always a sensitive area – you very rarely please all of the people all of the time. The National Park Authority does come in for criticism from time to time over individual planning decisions but these figures show that we are an efficient service and that we have positive policies and make positive decisions. In terms of appeals against our decisions, only 18% were allowed and I believe this is the best rate of any local Authority in North Yorkshire. It shows we are getting it right first time in most cases.”
Swaledale barns in the spotlight

Dilapidated barns within Muker Parish in Upper Swaledale will be receiving special attention over the next 18 months in a bid to give them a new lease of life. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority’s Muker Barn Restoration Project will see local builders using traditional materials, techniques and craft skills to conserve the barns for future generations.

The scheme will be paid for partly from a £100,000 legacy with additional funding provided by the Authority and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust. As well as repairing the buildings, the project aims to support a broad range of training events focused on built heritage skills, working alongside skilled local craftspeople.

The physical restoration work will be complemented by another National Park Authority project called ‘Every Barn tells a Story’, which will record the history and the stories of the barns. ‘Every Barn tells a Story’ has been awarded £65,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), with the Authority contributing £20,000, and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust £5,000.

Julie Martin, the Authority’s member champion for cultural heritage, said, “Each of these barns has a unique place in the landscape of Swaledale and in the social history of the farming communities that built them. But many of them are in a bad state. Together, these two projects mean we will be able to work with farmers and residents in Muker Parish to help reverse some of that decline. At the same time, we will be able to record and share the buildings’ stories with our visitors.”
Outdoor Recreation Plan bearing fruit in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park

Improving and expanding the ways that people can access and enjoy the stunning National Park is key role of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, and a priority for many communities, businesses and organisations. When the National Park Authority published the National Park’s £8.7m five year Outdoor Recreation Plan in 2013 their aim was to transform access across the Park. This year has been significant, as the National Park Authority see the work of the first few years of the Plan delivering on the ground with more than 450 miles of pathways opened up through a wide range of projects.

‘Scotland’s National Parks: The Mountains & the People’ is the most significant long-term access partnership project being supported by the Park Authority. The project is repairing and improving paths on the most iconic hills across both of Scotland’s National Parks. Another fantastic example is the Loch Earn Railway Path which completed its second phase in August on the Tynreoch section of the path between Lochearnhead, St Fillans and Comrie. The Path will form part of the cross-Scotland Pilgrim’s Way, from Iona to St Andrews, and is a priority within Scotland’s National Walking and Cycling Network.

Along with increasing access, the Outdoor Recreation Plan is also about making it easier for people to find information. The National Park Authority have produced routes cards and itineraries for cycling and walking, and routes are in development for kayak trails on inland and sea lochs. Find out more at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

New National Parks in Scotland

The Scottish Campaign for National Parks and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland are jointly campaigning for the Scottish Government to establish at least seven more National Parks in Scotland. Their case is set out in their keynote report Unfinished Business. Active local campaigns are under way in at least two of the seven proposed areas. In the Borders a local campaign for a National Park in the area has set up a website, raised funding for a feasibility study from the Big Lottery Fund and is holding a stakeholder event on 17 November in Jedburgh, at the heart of the proposed National Park. In Galloway the local Authority published a feasibility study and a local campaign for a National Park for Galloway (NP4G) has formed.

In the run-up to the May 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, SCNP put great efforts into encouraging Scotland’s political parties to commit to more National Parks in their manifestos. This paid off handsomely: a majority of MSPs (67 out of 129) now represent the four parties committed to more National Parks. Over the coming months the SCNP will work with MSPs from all these parties to investigate the best way to turn this clear political support into progress on the ground. This could involve for example a Parliamentary Reception, Motion or Debate. SCNP received high-profile publicity on BBC Scotland’s Landward programme and in the Scots Magazine.