

News from around the Parks

Any items in italics are from the CNP staff. Apologies for any stylistic errors, which are caused by the variety of formats in which the reports are received. Some reports have been edited for length.

Brecon Beacons NPA – Mary Taylor

National Park's online reporting system leads to successful prosecution of off-roaders.

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's new online reporting system has led to its first successful prosecution of illegal off-roaders using a restricted byway in the National Park.

Last month at the Brecon Magistrate Court, three off-roaders from South-West England pleaded guilty to driving on the restricted byway at Sarn Helen, after being caught red-handed by Police and National Park Wardens in October last year. The off-roaders were caught after a concerned member of the public submitted a report using the National Park's online reporting system which then led to immediate action undertaken by Dyfed Powys Police to apprehend the offenders.

Podcasts breathe new life into National Park walking experience

Some people walk the walk (in the Brecon Beacons that is) and some people talk the talk but with the launch of four new audio podcasts in the Brecon Beacons National Park you can now listen to the talk as you walk. Just plug in your ipod or MP3 Player headphones, press play and let our locals take you on an insider's tour of the Upper Swansea Valley this summer.

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has turned two of its most popular and interesting locations near Craig-y-nos Country Park in the Upper Swansea Valley into downloadable podcasts for visitors to find out more about the area's rich cultural heritage as they walk. Produced by InHeritage and Audio Trails, these are the latest additions to a series of audio trails and podcasts by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, with six produced in the last three years.

Three of the new podcasts, designed to complement the newly published walk card, 'The Rise and Fall of Penwyllt', focus on the childhood memories of three former residents who grew up in the famous brick and lime works village before the area suffered a massive economic downturn. Visitors will gain a fascinating insight into this once vibrant Welsh community as they walk back in time to explore home life, community life and industrial life during the 1930's and 1940's. The fourth 20-minute podcast explores the National Park bog conservation project at Waun Fignen Felin dubbed 'Black to Green'. Also located in the Upper Swansea Valley above the Dan-yr-Ogof National Nature Reserve, Waun Fignen Felin has undergone massive restoration over the last five years to try and rejuvenate the eroded peat bog using locally sourced gorse and heather mulch.

Take a walk on the dark and mystical side of Talgarth

A notorious whipping tree, a secluded witches' pool and secret burial mounds are just some of the secrets and myths in the history of Talgarth waiting to be explored thanks to a new walks booklet launched last month. And if you need to steady your nerves afterwards you can always try the original 'Whipping Tree Ale' specially created for the occasion.

Created by Destination Talgarth, 'Walks around Talgarth' and a new ale from Rotter's Brewery called 'The Whipping Tree Ale' were launched at The Tower in Talgarth in late May.

The free new booklet features five beautiful self-guided circular walks suitable for all ages ranging from one mile to eight miles with spectacular views over Talgarth and as far as the Brecon Beacons. It has been supported by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and

funded by Collabor8 – which is 50% funded by the ERDF Interreg IVB North West European Programme.

Brecon Beacons Park Society – Charles Henderson

No report received.

Broads Authority – Rashmi Varma**European funding will promote green tourism**

A total of 500,000 euros of European funding has been made available to promote green tourism on the Broads over the next three years by STEP –Sustainable Tourism in Estuary Parks --- part of the Interreg Two Seas programme. The money will be used to fund a variety of tourism projects. STEP is also a learning exchange between the three partners. The first workshop was held at the end of June when staff from the Biesbosch National Park in the Netherlands and Kruikebe in the Schelde Estuary, Belgium, visited the Broads to learn about green tourism.

Branding the Broads

Tourism businesses are working with the Broads Authority in a new campaign which promotes the Broads as 'Britain's Magical Waterland'. The new brand was unveiled on July 1st to the tourism and business community along with a drive to raise the visitor experience through the UK's first gold standard scheme to improve customer service. A toolkit of marketing resources is available for use in promotional material to enable all Broads businesses to unite in one clear message. The new Broads tourism website www.enjoythebroads.com was also launched. This and the branding campaign have been funded by the European STEP programme.

Transporting raw sugar by river could be viable

A study has concluded that transporting raw sugar by river from Great Yarmouth outer harbour to British Sugar's factory at Cantley could be viable once sufficient volumes are attained. The study into the cost of road, river and rail transport was commissioned in response to residents' concerns about increased lorry traffic after the Broads Authority granted planning permission for an extension to the sugar beet factory that would allow for the processing of raw cane sugar during the summer.

Broads Society – Paul Howes**Three Rivers Race**

At the beginning of June, Horning Sailing Club ran the 50th Three Rivers Race, a unique test of seamanship run entirely on inland waters, requiring competitors to sail 50 miles mostly along rivers, drop their masts four times while racing and finish within 24 hours!

Entries reached an all-time high of 174 boats and about 550 competitors from around the country, including many intrepid pensioners who had sailed in the very first race. With thousands of spectators at the start and around the 50-mile+ long course, sailing can indeed be a major spectator sport!

Heigham Sound and Upper Thurne

This area is, once again, proving to be a pressure point between different users of the Broads waterways/reedbeds/marshes and abutting land. About a dozen boats in the race mentioned above had to abandon the race because they were not able to cross Heigham Sound even at high water. After nothing has been done for many years, sailors are now desperate for the Authority to perform its statutory duty and keep the waterway navigable.

Anglers are very sensitive to the possibility of dredging causing an attack of prymnesium algae killing fish in probably the UK's finest pike fishery. Conservationists are concerned that the blockage of Heigham Sound has restricted water flow into and out of Hickling Broad (a lake with no natural water source) and led to the disappearance of most life forms from the Broad. The Authority has begun an experiment of using cages to house dredging spoil and recreate a barrier line of reed alongside the channel through the Sound.

However, it will not be enough to house much of the dredging spoil needing to be removed. Dredging spoil is traditionally side-cast onto banks but local landowners (the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and RSPB) have refused to allow it over many years.

Tensions are rising, not helped by recent weedcutting by the Authority in nearby waterways killing fish fry as well as weed.

Cantley Sugar Beet Factory

This large factory sits on the bank of the River Yare downstream of some of the finest nature reserves in all of Broadland. It operates for just the winter months processing sugar beet harvested at that time. It now appears that sense is being seen and the factory may operate for part of the year on imported cane sugar. Development proposed last year was postponed by the Authority's planning committee pending further study. Major objections had been made to the prospect of 120 or so truck movements per day from the port of Great Yarmouth through the town and the Authority's executive area, and then down narrow Norfolk roads to the factory. One study has recently reported that at planned volumes, it may well be more economic to move the cane by river, a move suggested by the Society when the prospect of extending the factory's operating period was first mooted.

Dartmoor NPA – Diana Moyse

Mires on the Moors

The Mires on the Moors Project is a five year partnership project to restore blanket bog on Dartmoor and Exmoor. South West Water has allocated £4.1 million to the project through the Water Companies' programme of periodic review, currently PR09.

A substantial share of the funding will allow a four year pilot project on Exmoor, which ends in 2010, to be extended. On Dartmoor, limited trials have been undertaken on three sites, over the past two years, to explore the feasibility of restoration, to test different techniques and practical delivery of the ground. The new project will continue to explore the potential for restoration on Dartmoor including hydrological monitoring and further pilot restoration work and is likely to attract £1.7m of the South West Water funding.

Dartmoor contains around 8,500 ha of blanket bog - a habitat which is recognised as a priority habitat under the EC Habitats Directive and the primary reason for the notification of the Dartmoor Special Area for Conservation and the moorland Site of Special Scientific Interest. Blanket bog forms on the gentle slopes of moorland above 400m, where water run-off would have been slow in the past, allowing bog mosses and other specialised plants to build into layers of peat at least 50cm deep. Such areas support unique plant communities and also nesting habitat for wading birds but some areas are suffering from drying out and erosion.

The Mires on the Moors Project aims to restore blanket bog to good condition with the following benefits;

- **enhanced condition of the blanket bog habitat and associated species including wading birds;**
- **improvements to water quality and supply;**
- **reduced erosion of existing peat and an enhanced capacity of the bog to store carbon**

Fourteen sites, totalling approximately 110 hectares have been identified for consideration and potential restoration over the next 5 years. Priority has been given to areas of blanket bog of high biodiversity value which are threatened by erosion.

Project Partners responsible for delivery of the Project are: South West Water, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Duchy of Cornwall, Natural England and the Environment Agency. These partners will form a Project Board and the Dartmoor Commoners' Council will be a

co-opted member of the Board because of their particular interest in the work. Dartmoor National Park Authority will be the co-ordinating partner and will host the project. An Advisory Group will also be established to enable effective communication with a range of interests, including user and special interest groups, the Dartmoor Access Forum and the MOD. It is intended that two staff will be recruited to implement the project and it is hoped that the project will formally start with the Project Officer in post by the autumn 2010.

Military Training

Military training, live firing and dry training takes place over about 15% of the National Park. Permission for Defence Estates to enter negotiations for a new licence to train on Dartmoor (Okehampton and Merrivale ranges) was granted by Ministers in January 2009. DNPA has 'lobbied' for any new licence to be split into two parts: part 1 the private legal document and part 2 a public document specifying responsibilities and requiring the preparation of a management plan for the Training Area to 'further National Park purposes'. The Duchy of Cornwall have agreed to this format save for the requirement to 'further National Park purposes' arguing that this goes beyond current statute and the Management Plan will 'have regard to'.

A draft Management Plan will be issued for consultation in the next few weeks with the aim of taking a final draft to the Dartmoor Steering Group at the end of Nov/Dec 2010. The document is important as it provides an opportunity to require and develop a costed action plan (linked to the licence) which will be an important lever for positive management in a time of financial austerity where discretionary spend is likely to be cut hard.

Ecosystem Services Pilot

Dartmoor and Exmoor NPA are collaborating with Natural England on a joint ecosystem services pilot. The Dartmoor part of the project contains two work strands. The first strand (being led by Natural England) is focused on valuing the ecosystem services delivered by the National Park. The second strand (led by DNPA with support from DCC, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, South West Water and RSPB) is looking at agri-environment delivery:

- How can farmers be better engaged and empowered to help design and deliver agri-environment schemes?
- Do current schemes provide an adequate framework for delivery of ecosystem services or do changes need to be made.
- Future funding for ecosystem services: work on a private-sector agri-environment schemes with South West Water and work on CAP reform post 2012.

Dartmoor Preservation Association – James Paxman

Budget Cuts

Dartmoor National Park Authority announced the 5% budget claw back requested by Defra and at a public meeting has asked stakeholders to start to consider how the Authority should approach the question of prioritising services. Authority members have overwhelmingly emphasized that the key function of planning should be the highest priority. Local publicity appeared to indicate that the Ranger Service might be under some threat.

Dartmoor Mires Project

New initiatives are being pursued to try to improve the prospects for the Dartmoor Pony. There are a number of groups on Dartmoor concerned with the native pony and there are different opinions about their management. A coordinating forum has been set up to try to find common ground on proposals that can be advanced to secure a better future for the pony whilst at the same time delivering market benefits for the farmers. A recent "out of season" pony sale provided encouraging prices for ponies held back from last autumn's sales and brought on to basic levels of handling and halter training.

EcoSystems Services Pilot

Further meetings have been held to determine the nature of the EcoSystem Services pilot project that is to operate in the South West. On Dartmoor the work is to proceed in two separate workstreams. The first of these involves the continued exploration of the identification of individual ecosystem services, their valuation, the beneficiaries, and appropriate management techniques. The second stream arises from proposals from the Dartmoor Commoners Council and centres around the devolution of more decision making and accountability to the local level to deliver landscape outcomes according to agreed objectives.

Exmoor NPA – Andrea Davis**Triumph at Chelsea**

The Two Moors Festival Garden, supported by the Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks' Sustainable Development Funds, scooped a double at the Chelsea Flower Show - a Gold Medal and the award for Best Courtyard Garden in the Show. The garden had a Westcountry feel - through Gothic willow arches could be seen moorland in the distances, with a solitary hawthorn amongst Molinia grasses. There was granite from Dartmoor and cobbles from Exmoor and the garden lies in the lee of the church, with planting characteristic of the region.

Designed to celebrate the tenth anniversary of The Two Moors Festival, the garden highlights the links between music, flowers, gardens and the open countryside. By drawing the elements together and involving the local community, Christina Williams, the garden's designer hoped to increase the awareness of the cultural qualities of the South West and inform people of the unique environment of the two moors.

Awards for WSMR

The West Somerset Mineral Railway project, a consortium led by Exmoor National Park Authority, was awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2007 to conserve and interpret the Mineral Line, which was used in Victorian times to transport iron ore from the Brendon Hills to Watchet. The Project has now received two prestigious awards. After recently being short-listed in the 2010 European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards, the Project has been Highly Commended by the Jury. The Project's architects, Jonathan Rhind have also received the RICS South West Highly Commended Building Conservation Award for what the judges described as an "impressive educational and leisure resource".

Young Champions

The Mosaic 'youth transferability' project has concluded its 'action research' stage with a celebration of achievements held at the X Centre in Exeter. 'Young Champions' recruited from Barnstaple and Bideford have been involved in a range of activities that will help them enthuse to other young people the opportunities to be enjoyed in Exmoor National Park.

The Champions have also 'youth proofed' the National Park Centre at Dunster. They are currently helping the Interpretation Team with a pocket guide for young people and giving advice on how to make the Authority's website more young person friendly.

Exmoor Society – Arabella Amory**Exmoor Society Spring Conference 'Energy Exmoor'**

A large audience attended the annual spring conference hosted by the Exmoor Society and the Exmoor National Park Authority. Several speakers presented the potential of renewable energy from Exmoor sources. Successful schemes were illustrated and debate held on the appropriate ones for the National Park. Mark Robins, RSPB, outlined the importance of responding to the challenge of global warming by reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Tim Stokes from ENPA stated that Somerset Forum 21 had said that a reduction of 19,560 tonnes of CO2 per annum could be achieved within Exmoor by 2025 through micro renewable energy technology. There was strong objections from the

audience on any 2MW wind turbines being erected in the park as opposed to smaller ones located in the right places. A clear endorsement was given for increasing energy from bio-mass. It was recognised that the scale of renewable energy technologies needed would have important implications for the landscape and built environments of the Park. However, it was also recognised that with careful planning, design and appropriate scale it should be possible to avoid detracting from Exmoor's special qualities.

Exmoor Society's Education Fund

The Society continues to financially support the Exmoor Curriculum at Dulverton Middle School which gives local children the opportunity to learn about Exmoor and allows them to participate in a wide variety of activities. The Society now wishes to extend the curriculum to other schools in the area and has set up an Education Fund for this purpose. A small event was held recently which raised over £6,000 for the Fund. For more details: info@exmoorsociety.com

National Park Societies Conference 2011

It is the turn of the Exmoor Society to hold the Conference in 2011. We can confirm the date is 4th-5th November 2011. It will be held in Holnicote House, Selworthy and the cost will be £125 per delegate inclusive.

Lake District NPA – John Kerr

The Partnership's Plan – the Management Plan for the National Park 2010-2015

The Lake District National Park Partnership has created the new Management Plan for the National Park. We facilitated this process as an equal member of this unique Partnership. 'The Partnership's Plan' is so called because the Partnership wants it to be *their* five year 'business plan'. It contains partner-led actions that make the Vision for the National Park happen. Actions will be reviewed annually. The draft plan was published for consultation in May, closing in early July. The Partnership expects to adopt the final plan in September, making it the first National Park Management Plan to be produced in this way.

Core Strategy

We held the two week Hearing for our Core Strategy in May. The Inspector will report at the end of August and we hope to adopt our Core Strategy in October. We are confident that the innovative approaches expressed in our Core Strategy will be supported, including how we will help sustain our sparse rural communities; regenerate tourism at strategic locations around Windermere; promote our sustainable transport framework across the Park and climate change-proof our entire approach to spatial planning. The abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy will not affect our timetable or the Strategy's soundness.

World Heritage Site

In 2007 the government began a review of their World Heritage Policy. Aware of growing pressure from a growing number of sites bidding for inclusion on the UK's tentative list, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport needed to be sure that continuing to nominate sites was the right thing to do. DCMS has concluded that the UK should continue to nominate sites to UNESCO but it would do so with a shorter, stronger tentative list. This is what DCMS have said:

"Local authorities, and others, throughout the UK including the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies will have the opportunity to nominate such sites for assessment by an independent expert panel. A new 'Tentative List' of candidate sites will then be drawn up for submission to UNESCO in 2011"

The Lake District is again being considered for inclusion on the tentative list. For more information contact Steve Ratcliffe, Director of Planning and Partnerships:
Email: SteveRatcliffe@lakedistrict.gov.uk
Tel: 01539 792668

Friends of the Lake District – Andrew Forsyth**Extensions to the National Parks**

The consultation period formally closed on 17 March, with the exception of those Parish Councils within the current Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks, which were given an additional period (until 22 May) following a procedural misunderstanding.

Natural England Board papers for the Board meeting on 26 May show that evaluation of the 1,000 responses received is now taking place. The Natural England Board visited the proposed extension areas on the 31st March to see the landscape quality and opportunities for open air recreation and to consider some of the issues raised during the consultation. It is understood that the majority (70-80%) of the responses are in favour, although many raise specific issues, and that only one local authority (North Yorkshire County Council), with the ability to cause a Public Inquiry to be convened should it persist, has objected. This is on the basis that the areas identified do not meet the first criterion, that of natural beauty.

We managed to avoid the extensions becoming a contentious election issue and had the bonus of an opportunity to brief Richard Benyon (then the Shadow but now) the Undersecretary of State at Defra with responsibility of National Parks before the election, when he called in at Friends of the Lake District. We will be following up with the new MPs who have all or part of their constituencies within the areas affected.

Honister ZipWire

The owner of Honister Slate Mine, Mr Mark Weir, has proposed the development of a 1000 metre 'zipwire' from the top of Fleetwith Pike to the car park at the slate mine, as part of his contribution to Cumbria Tourism's 'Adventure Capital' programme. Whilst receiving wide press coverage when it was announced, the planning application has only recently been validated and it is understood that the Development Management Committee will consider it at the August meeting.

Friends of the Lake District has objected! The site lies within Area of Distinctive Character 13 of the LDNP Landscape Character Assessment, an area which epitomises all that is most celebrated about the Lake District and one which reflects all of the Special Qualities of the National Park as defined in the extant Management Plan. This high-speed recreational activity would be a gross incongruity in an otherwise tranquil landscape, notwithstanding the mine workings themselves. It would be close to a number of well-known and well-used Rights of Way and the application has deficiencies in assessment of noise and recognition of the effects of extending the visitor season. In all Friends of the Lake District has identified 13 policies with which this conflicts! We expect this number to be unlucky for Mr Weir!!

Miterdale Forest Design Plan

Much of Friends of the Lake District's early impetus came from opposition to conifer planting on the central, open fells and on 23 June this year the harvesting and removal of another small part of that forestry started at Miterdale Head. Friends of the Lake District has been engaged with the development of the Forest Design Plan (FDP) for the area and the Forestry Commission is planning to fell and extract around 3000cuM over the next 3 months on the south side of the valley, which is already linked to the existing forest road network. Next year a road infrastructure will be required in order to cross the valley floor and we will comment on the plans for this, as we have done on the FDP. Currently the harvesting of the northern and eastern blocks which require access across the valley bottom looks likely to be delayed into 2011.

New Forest NPA – Bob Morris**New Chief Executive appointed**

Alison Barnes has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of the New Forest National Park Authority with effect from 1st June 2010.

Alison joins the Authority from Natural England where she was Regional Director for London. She was the organisational lead on Landscape, Green Infrastructure, the Olympics and Thames Gateway, Chair of Greening the Gateway Partnership and a Commissioner for the Mayor's London Sustainable Development Commission.

Alison is very well qualified for the challenging job in front of her. She has an undoubted passion for the New Forest and already knows the New Forest well, having grown up in Wimborne. I am confident that she will also make a very positive contribution to the national parks movement as a whole.

Contact: barrie.foley@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Forest Watch joins forces to tackle rural crime

Sergeant Louise Hubble is the face of a new partnership project to tackle rural community issues including wildlife and environmental crime in the New Forest.

The officer is heading Forest Watch – an initiative led by the New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire Constabulary and partners to look at everything from fly-tipping to poaching, arson and nuisance vehicles.

Forest Watch also relies on expertise from the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, National Farmers Union and New Forest District Council.

Contact: barrie.foley@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Pioneering service for land-managers

A unique new service to provide advice and practical help for farmers, landowners, tenants and commoners in the New Forest has been launched.

The New Forest Land Advice Service aims to support land managers for the benefit of the environment.

Set up by the New Forest National Park Authority, Natural England and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, it is the first time a National Park, Natural England and a non-profit organisation have joined together to provide such a service. The partnership means a greater range of expertise is available for a wider range of landowners.

Contact: julie.stubbs@newforestnpa.gov.uk

New Forest Association – Peter Roberts

NFA officers met the new NPA Chief Executive, Alison Barnes, early in her tenure and were pleased to find that she is approachable and someone we hope to be able to do business with. In the light of a couple of recent legacies we are reviewing how we might best operate. The Campsite Survey that we commissioned is now ready for publication. This will provide an important benchmark of the extent and condition of the campsites within the Crown lands of the National Park.

Northumberland NPA – Peter Nicholson

No report received.

North York Moors NPA – Steve Scoffin**New Zealand secondment**

Catherine Tudhope from New Zealand's Department of Conservation is working with the North York Moors National Park Authority for a little over five months. She has been contributing to the development of an external communications strategy, the review of the Authority's management plan, and consultation on the landscape character assessment. She has given presentations to the Members and our four Parish Forums on conservation in New Zealand and New Zealand National Parks.

Catherine.tudhope@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk

Update on LEADER

In its first year, the Moors, Coast & Hills LEADER Programme granted £1,534,838 to 33 community projects which in turn have brought in an additional £1,987,710 of match funding to the area.

The LEADER Programme has also set up a Sustainable Community Halls Project to provide support for community buildings to encourage them to become more viable and sustainable and a Small Scale Enhancement Scheme for communities in the North York Moors National Park to offer funding up to £5,000 for regeneration and environmental projects. For more information on both of these projects, go to

www.moorscoastandhills.org.uk or email mike.horrocks@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk

New apprenticeship scheme

The Authority is building on the success of its existing apprenticeship scheme by joining forces with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and Askham Bryan College to offer six young people from the Borough a year's apprenticeship in environmental conservation. The apprentices will work alongside Rangers, Field Staff and the Cleveland Way Maintenance Ranger in the north of the National Park and will be supervised by Steve Ward, who has recently completed an advanced apprenticeship with the Authority.

Contact richard.gunton@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk for more information.

North Yorkshire Moors Association – Gareth Fawcett

The 25th Annual General Meeting of the Association was held in Hutton-le-Hole village hall this year, because this is where the inaugural meeting took place in 1985.

In that year the guest speaker was the Rt. Hon William Waldegrave M.P. who was at the time junior minister in the Environment Department.

Four high profile events will be the highlights of this our 25th year.

An Eye to Perceive

Firstly, we have published a new book which rolled off the press on June 11th just in time for copies to be available at the AGM. The book, called "An Eye to Perceive" is written by Derek Statham, President of the Association and formerly North York Moors National Park Officer. Derek has written what is a personal memoir of his experience during the time he was National Park Officer. He has generously agreed to donate the lion's share of the retail sales of the book to the Association.

The History Tree

The History Tree Project is well under way. The stump of the Copper Beech which once stood at the front of the Danby Moors Centre will become an item of great interest to young and old alike. They will be able to examine the carefully crafted and engraved plate which uses the annular rings of the tree to identify people and events of note, at points in time over the last two hundred years. The project has been funded through LEADER money and is due to be unveiled on the 25th of July which is also National Park Open Day 2010. An accompanying leaflet is planned for later so that visitors can learn more about the people

and events which appear on the History Tree and a time capsule containing the work of school children is to be placed in the bowl of the tree.

International Year of Biodiversity

The third event is the development of an area of land Attached to Park Wood between Castleton and Danby for Woodland and Wildlife habitat improvement .A botanical survey has been completed and the next stage is bracken treatment in August before tree planting starts, hopefully in the autumn. This project is taking place as our contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity 2010.

Cornfield Flowers Project

We were asked by the National Park last November if we could take on two employees who were to be appointed as project officers for the prestigious Cornfield Flowers Project.

Council agreed to this venture and as employer of two part-time project officers we are now part of the management group of the project. This group consists of Carstairs Countryside Trust, North York Moors National Park, and Rydale Folk Museum. Funding of some £140,000 has been raised by Carstairs Trust and the National Park to cover Phase 3 of the project over the next five years. Funding has come through LEADER money and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Wages and all costs are to be met through this funding.

Peak District NPA – Geoff Nickolds

Sports stars launch Peak District National Park recreation strategy

World-renowned mountaineer Andy Cave and Olympic mogul skier Ellie Koyander helped launch the Peak District National Park Authority's new recreation strategy, *Active in the Outdoors*.

Both stars live in the national park and encouraged others to use its landscape to keep fit. *Active in the Outdoors* sets out how the Authority can work with partners to promote healthy activities while conserving the landscape and wildlife.

Geoff Nickolds, lead Authority member for recreation, said: "We are determined this will not be a strategy that just sits on a shelf. We will ensure this document guides the provision of outdoor activities and widens opportunities for residents and visitors."

See www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/recreation

Interest sought to help manage Roaches estate

Partners are being sought to help the Peak District National Park Authority manage the Roaches estate for the benefit of local residents and visitors.

The 975 acre (394 ha) estate in Staffordshire is a popular climbing and walking area, protected by national and European law.

The estate, including moors, farms and woodland, was bought by the Authority in 1980 to conserve it for current and future generations, and has been considerably improved in the last 30 years.

Adverts have now been placed in specialist magazines inviting expressions of interest in:

- Working with the authority to manage the estate
- Taking a long-term lease to manage the estate or
- Buying the land with strict conditions to ensure public access is maintained and the area is protected

A similar process recently saw a National Trust/RSPB partnership take on a 15-year lease to manage the Authority's Eastern Moors estate, near Sheffield.

Roger Clarke, lead member for asset management, said: "The Roaches is one of those iconic places that makes the national park so special and we want to keep it that way for future generations while delivering value for money for tax payers."

The deadline for expressions of interest is July 30 2010.

More details: www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/roaches-estate

Environmental awards for more than 90 Peak District businesses

A pub, a chocolate-maker, a high-class restaurant and a farmers' co-operative are all among the latest businesses to receive the Peak District National Park's Environmental Quality Mark.

A presentation ceremony for this year's winners brought the total number of businesses that can display the Environmental Quality Mark to 93. The award goes to small shops, food producers, caterers, craft producers and farms that positively benefit the environment of the national park. Standards are rigorously checked so that customers can be assured they are buying ethical, local produce.

See www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/egm

Friends of the Peak District – Philip Hetherington**Constitution**

FPD has been the Peak District National Park's Society for 15 years, at the same time pursuing CPRE's objectives in the Peak District. It has been run by CPRE (Peak District & South Yorkshire), but its membership has been separate.

We recently gained approval (from CPRE) for FPD members to become members of our CPRE branch. These arrangements will provide clear labelling for our activities in South Yorkshire and in the Peak District that will help us develop membership.. They will also enable FPD members to vote at branch meetings and to become trustees.

Off Roding

Abuse of ancient rights of way by motorbikers and 4x4 drivers is one of the most aggravating issues in the Peak District. Recent attempts to reach consensus, by agreed codes of practice, seem to hold little chance of success.

Derbyshire County Council and the PDNPA have jointly published management plans for the eight most damaged routes, identifying works costing £1m. With almost no budget available, FPD is gravely concerned that these works cannot be completed. We believe that TROs should be used to prevent further damage and disturbance.

We have helped in the establishment of local action group, Forum for Ancient Byways, and together will be encouraging DCC and the National Park Authority to protect these routes against illegal and unsustainable use.

Peak Hydro Forum

Following on from FPD's highly successful micro hydro project reports, we are now helping form a local hydro forum to share experiences and good practice and hopefully move forward more schemes, especially community driven sites. We have received grant funding to deliver 3 hydro forum meetings plus three 'how to' workshops before the end of 2010.

Pembrokeshire Coast NPA – David Ellis**Pembrokeshire Coast Path hits forty years**

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path is 40 years old this year. The first designated National Trail in Wales, the Path is 186 miles (299 km) long and stretches from Amroth in the south of the National Park to St Dogmaels in the north.

Its spectacular views captivate hundreds of thousands of local people and visitors every year. And it's not just walkers. A few sections of the Path are open to horse riders and cyclists and more and more stretches are becoming accessible to wheelchair users and the less able, with 400 stiles removed in the last ten years.

Pembrokeshire timber heats up with RDP funding

Pembrokeshire Timber will be expanding with a Timber Heat Treatment Project receiving substantial joint funding from the Rural Development Plan for Wales and the Sustainable Development Fund for Wales.

A partnership project of Coed Cymru, Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, it provides an essential stockpile of timber sourced from Welsh woodlands for the timber industry to use in many applications from beams to flooring.

It will also fund the post of a Project Manager with the existing project already employing ten people and supporting and stimulating the management of Welsh woodlands and supporting economic and local employment.

Kestrel project fleges results

Concern for declining kestrel numbers prompted the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership, which includes the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, to examine the threats to successful kestrel breeding, particularly in Pembrokeshire.

Although it is not fully understood why the population of breeding pairs of kestrels has declined, this project is indicating what kestrels need in terms of conservation and habitat protection in order to successfully breed in Pembrokeshire.

Nest boxes were sited where kestrels had been seen hunting, and last year three pairs of kestrels used the boxes, fledging a total of 13 chicks. It is hoped the nest box project will help to gradually stabilise and increase the kestrel population over the next few years.

Friends of Pembrokeshire National Park – David Holmes**Welsh National Park Societies' Weekend in St Davids 11 to 13 June 2010**

The FPNP hosted a weekend of events based around St Davids. Members of the Snowdonia Society and the Friends attended. On the evening of Friday 11 June a reception was held at Oriel y Park and the new Director of PCNPA Tegryn Jones addressed the meeting. On Saturday one group was given a guided walk, by Senior Ranger Phil Lees, from St Justinian's via Ramsey Sound to St Davids, and a second group was given a guided tour of Ramsey Island. In the evening a dinner was held at Oriel y Park followed by a talk by Andy Middleton on Sustainable Tourism. Finally on Sunday a group walked from St Justinian's to St Davids Head. The weekend was considered to be a great success by everyone who attended.

Joint FPNP and PCNPA Adventure Booklet

Work has begun on a new version of an Adventure Booklet for Children which will be used by Park Rangers when they visit primary schools in Pembrokeshire. Funding for the booklet has come from local businesses, PCNPA and FPNP. Work on the booklet, which will replace an earlier version, will be a joint venture between the NPA and the Friends.

Proposed Wear Point Wind Farm

As reported in March, FPNP are opposed to the construction of four 105m high wind turbines at Wear Point on the edge of the Milford Haven waterway and very close to the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. Unfortunately planning permission for these turbines was approved in May by Pembrokeshire County Council by a vote of 9 to 8 in favour.

david.j.holmes@talk21.com

Tel: 01646 680 547

Scottish Campaign for National Parks – Robert Maund**Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park**

The Friends of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP) are gearing up to fight controversial plans which could result in some of the most iconic views in the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park coming under threat from clusters of wind turbines between 130 and 220 feet (40-70m) high.

In the latest version of the first draft Local Plan for the National Park, large tracts of high quality and sensitive scenic landscapes have been identified as suitable areas of search for wind turbine developments by the National Park planners, and the conservation groups are urging Park Authority members to declare the Park as a 'no go area' for wind turbines when they meet shortly to consider responses to the Local Plan consultation exercise.

We consider that there is no place for commercial scale wind turbines in National Parks. The supplementary guidance issued by the Officials came very late in the process and seemed as big a shock to Board Members as it did to us, but they failed to stand firm. On 23 June, the Park Authority has the opportunity to reject the approach recommended by the Officers and bring themselves into line with Scotland's other National Park, the Cairngorms, and every other National Park in the UK. To fail to do so will put Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NP and the credibility of Scottish National Parks at great risk.

Cairngorms National Park

On 11 June, the Park Authority approved a controversial proposal for 1500 houses, business and public buildings at An Camas Mor across the Spey from Aviemore. This so called 'sustainable community' would lie entirely within the National Scenic Area and was found wanting by the Reporters into the National Park Local Plan who said in their conclusions, "It appears that An Camas Mòr has been designated as a strategic settlement in the finalised CNPLP without adequate assessment of whether that role remains necessary, appropriate, and justified. This is a considerable shortcoming given the potential for harm to the established strategic settlement of Aviemore, which other planning policies aim to protect and grow. Turning to national planning policy, An Camas Mòr could be justified by settlement capacity and constraint, but again we have been shown insufficient evidence to justify the proposal in these terms."

In their recommendations they said, "Accordingly, given the considerable uncertainty that we have described above, especially about environmental issues including the lack of an appropriate assessment, and about the housing land position, we cannot endorse the proposal for a new settlement at An Camas Mòr."

SCNP considers that decisions of the kind described put the credibility of Scottish National Parks at serious risk.

Snowdonia NPA – Denis McAteer**Hafod Eryri**

One year since its official opening, Hafod Eryri has received awards and high praise for its architecture and construction. The building won the "Construction Skills Welsh Project of the Year" awarded by the RICS Wales and the RIBA has concluded that Hafod Eryri should be one of seven buildings in Wales to be praised for the quality of their design and contribution to the local environment. Hafod Eryri is also one of 22 buildings that the Prime Minister has shortlisted for this year's Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award. Since the opening of the new centre on Snowdon, nearly 1/2 million people visited the mountain between mid June and the end of October last year – an increase of 27% on the previous year's figures.

Buzzing around and enjoying the fruits of your labours

In partnership with Welsh Bee Keepers Association (WBKA) and CALU Bangor University (Centre For Alternative Land Use), SNPA is offering a unique opportunity for those living within the Park to keep bees! Anybody can attend a training course through WBKA, gaining a qualification which will enable them to keep bees and this will also allow the participant to apply for a grant through the Park in order to purchase a traditional beehive.

Also, SNPA, again in partnership with CALU is eager to hear from National Park residents interested in extending existing orchards or planting new orchard trees. Help will be given by providing information on cultivating and managing mature trees, assistance in planting and establishing native trees as well as improving traditional boundaries.

Snowdonia bus offer for £1

The Sherpa bus service takes you all over northern Snowdonia and from the end of March will cost only £1 for every journey as part of the Snowdonia Green Key initiative. Buses run from Llanberis, Pen-y-Pass, Capel Curig, Betws y Coed, Llyn Ogwen and Bethesda and can connect walks, beauty spots and a whole range of mountain destinations ensuring that local residents and visitors to the area enjoy Snowdonia by means of sustainable transport. The initiative is a partnership between Gwynedd Council, Conwy County Borough Council, the CCW, SNPA, Visit Wales and the Department of Enterprise Innovation and Networks that focus on a sustainable transport networks in Snowdonia National Park.

Cymdeithas Eryri/Snowdonia Society – David Lewis**Memorandum of Understanding**

The Snowdonia National Park Authority and the Snowdonia Society have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding which commits them to work in partnership – and with others in the public, private and voluntary sectors – to achieve their shared aims, while acknowledging that differences of view will arise from time to time. It sets out principles and agreed approaches for communication, consultation and joint working. Over and above general public consultation exercises, SNPA will provide opportunities for the Society to contribute to formulating strategic policies and proposals which relate to its statutory purposes and duty. The Memorandum also makes provision for liaison meetings every six months between the Chair of SNPA and its Senior Management Team and the Society's Officers and Director.

Dry Stone Walling Competition

The Snowdonia Society's 27th Dry Stone Walling Competition was held at Hafod y Llan on the slopes of Snowdon on 13 June 2010 as part of Open Farm Sunday. People came from all over North Wales and beyond to compete for trophies and cash prizes in Professional, Semi-professional and Amateur categories. Their task was to strip down a traditional field boundary wall before rebuilding their individual stint in about seven hours. The competition had the generous sponsorship of RWE nPower and the Cemlyn Jones Trust and was supported and hosted by the National Trust. It drew on the expertise of the North Wales branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association, which provided the judges.

Office move

The Society is moving its office from Tŷ Hyll (the Ugly House) at Capel Curig to an EU-funded building opened in 2004 at Brynrefail (the village at the other end of Llyn Padarn to Llanberis). Among other considerations this will greatly improve conditions for staff. The Caban is a co-operative enterprise which provides small units for local businesses and organisations, and also runs a busy café listed in the Good Food Guide. We now have the opportunity to decide how the house and gardens at Tŷ Hyll can best be used to further the Society's objectives, and Trustees are discussing a number of possibilities.

Contact: David Lewis drlewis27@yahoo.com

South Downs Society – Richard Reed**National Park Authority**

The NPA held its first formal meeting on 20 April and elected Margaret Paren as Chairman. Margaret is a long-standing member of CPRE Hampshire and more recently of the South Downs Society. As a leading member of the South Downs Campaign she presented compelling evidence for the inclusion of the Western Weald at the second Inquiry. At its meeting on 15 June the Authority agreed a system of delegation of planning to local authorities and in its shadow year is taking over the advisory role of the defunct South Downs Joint Committee, from which the planning staff members have been transferred.

South Downs Society

Following the Society's AGM last month Robert Cheesman became the new Chairman. Robert was on the executive of the South Downs Campaign. The meeting was addressed by Richard Shaw, interim Chief Officer of the South Downs NPA. The Society is continuing to build relations with the NPA and organize its structure and operations appropriately.

In the planning field the Society is concerned that developers are pressing hard with applications for winning sand from the widespread reserves within the Park, apparently to lodge them before the NPA becomes operational and while the future of regional planning on minerals remains uncertain.

South Downs Network

The new network held its inaugural meeting on 19 June. It approved its terms of reference after deciding that Parish Councils, seen as a third-tier local authority and substantially represented via their own association on the Park Authority, would not be eligible for membership. It plans to develop strong email communications with its members (currently around 40 but expected to increase) and to seek consensus on major issues to take up with relevant authorities.

The election to its Executive Committee of the seven principal members (see the report to CNP March Council) and of four of the remaining five places was approved, as was the appointment of the South Downs Society as secretariat. Brian Cheater was elected to be the Network's first Chairman. Warm thanks were expressed to Ruth Chambers, interim Chairman, who had skilfully steered the ship that looking likely to founder into calm waters.

The meeting was addressed by Margaret Paren who gave an update on the NPA's work. She explained that the government's 10% cut - against 5% for the other Parks - was from the £8.1 million bid made by the NPA. On planning she made it clear that partial delegation to local authorities would not remove control from the NPA and the powers could later be taken back from all or individual local authorities if desired. The NPA will be concentrating on its internal development during the summer and plans to make an impact on the public in the autumn.

(Richard Reed may be contacted through downsmen@btconnect.com)

Yorkshire Dales NPA – Malcolm Petyt**Hydro Power**

Schemes for harnessing water power to provide electricity in the Dales are gathering pace. The village of Bainbridge (where the NPA has its main office) is promoting its own scheme and inviting the public to buy shares. The Authority is contributing a grant of £50K from its Sustainable Development Fund, which has previously assisted schemes at Gayle Mill, Yore Mill at Aysgarth and Linton Falls.

In 2008 the Authority commissioned a survey of sites around the Dales, and identified a number to be investigated further. It has now announced a new fund to offer communities grants of up to £5K to conduct feasibility studies into these and other possible schemes.

Youth Hostels

Some of us remember being able to walk for a couple of weeks around the Dales, staying at a different hostel every night: Burley – Linton – Kettlewell – Aysgarth – Grinton – Keld – Garsdale Head – Dentdale – Ingleton – Stainforth – Malham.... Sadly, more than half of those have gone, and the YHA is now considering a further reduction in its network. This news provoked some passionate contributions to the last meeting of the Authority.

While it is wrong for one organisation to criticise another for the way it feels it has to run its business in order to survive in a changed society, one wonders whether fine (and quite expensive) hostels in tourist cities are really in tune with what one remembers as the stated purposes of the YHA: “to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside...”

Boundary extension proposals

The consultation period for the proposals to extend the boundaries of both the Dales and the Lakes National Parks has now ended, and it is hoped that Natural England will announce its recommendations later this year.

Officers and certain committed Members have attended numerous public meetings to explain how national park status will affect those living in the areas. Impressions gained suggest that many more individuals are in favour of than against the proposals, but several local authorities are concerned about loss of powers or representation – and sadly, certain Members appear to have been working against the extensions in spite of a nem. con. vote at the meeting of the Authority where they were discussed.

Yorkshire Dales Society – Colin Speakman**Affordable housing**

Given the acute shortage of affordable and local needs housing in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the National Park Authority is carrying out a public consultation to update its Housing Policy. The Draft Policy contains 38 possible sites and suggests amending the designation of over 20 villages to broaden the scope for further sites to be brought forward. Even so, the Authority estimates this will only provide a small proportion of what could be needed. The Society will be looking carefully at the criteria for designation and will make a detailed response.

Brackenber Wind farm - a Pyrrhic victory

A proposed wind farm at Brackenber, near Gargrave in the fine Craven drumlin landscape just outside the National Park, was turned down by the Planning Inspector after a public inquiry on the grounds that it would adversely affect the amenities of local residents. However the Inspector did not accept the damage it would do to the landscape on a site highly visible from the National Park would outweigh the national need for renewable energy, a fact no doubt noted by future developers. On the other hand proposals for massively taller turbines at Chelker Reservoir close to the Park boundary, which would have had a major impact on the skyline at Bolton Abbey, have been withdrawn by the applicants.

Dales & Bowland CIC success

The network of Sunday and Bank Holiday DalesBus services to and within the Yorkshire Dales National Park operated by the Yorkshire Dales Society's Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company has secured a huge success, with an increase of just over 56% (over 20,000) passenger journeys in 2009/10 compared with the previous year. New routes have been added this year, including services from York and Ripon to Grassington and from Harrogate to Malham.