



Nidderdale  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# Annual Review

April 2021-March 2022

[nidderdaleaonb.org.uk](http://nidderdaleaonb.org.uk)



Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of 233 square miles located on the eastern flanks of the Yorkshire Pennines, stretching from the high moorland of Great Whernside south and east towards the edge of the Vale of York.

Designated as one of the UK's protected landscapes in 1994, the AONB is home to over 16,000 people, as well as important habitats and wildlife, dark night skies, a rich history, and a diverse landscape.

Based in Pateley Bridge, our small team of experts and volunteers work to ensure that the environment of the AONB is protected and that the landscape continues to evolve in a sustainable way in the future.







# Volunteering across the AONB

Volunteers donate their time, energy and expertise across the AONB to deliver a hugely varied range of roles and tasks. In total volunteers have:

- Donated a staggering 1,190 days of time (or over three years of one full time person!).
- Worked on over 100 sites across the AONB.

## Nidderdale Conservation Volunteers

Nidderdale AONB's Conservation Volunteers are a hands-on group carrying out practical conservation tasks across the AONB including woodland management, scrub clearance, footpath repair, pond restoration and fencing. In the last year they have:

- Organised 45 separate work days visiting 35 sites of conservation importance.
- Worked a total of 2,815 hours or the equivalent of over 400 work days.
- Worked on 380 hectares of land of conservation importance.







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## Adder Watch

Adder, the UK's only venomous snake, is disappearing from the UK countryside. In its third year Adder Watch is the AONB's citizen science project - surveying and collecting data on the distribution of adders and using that information to target where to make habitat improvements. This year we have:

- Deployed 17 trained volunteers across 11 sites contributing a total of 55 days volunteer time.
- Discovered new populations of adders previously unknown to naturalists.
- Mapped and prioritised areas where habitat conditions could be improved to bolster adder populations.

Plans for next year will be to continue with training for the volunteers, expand the surveying programme and work with landowners to make habitat improvements.



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# Land Management Support and Advice

Our land management team grew over the last year with the launch of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and team, plus another Beyond Nature project officer. They have been working with landowners and farmers across the AONB to:

- Reduce carbon emissions and seek opportunities for increased carbon storage.
- Increase resilience, profitability and environmental sustainability of the AONB's farming industry.
- Provide advice and support to the farming community during agricultural transition.
- Provide farmers and landowners with practical help and advice on Environmental Land Management Scheme and Agri Environment Schemes.
- Support farming industry-led initiatives including Facilitation Funded groups, the Northern Upland Chain Farmer Panel and the Yorkshire Dales Farmer Network.
- Work with land and property owners and businesses to develop innovative ideas for new land uses that enhance natural beauty and opportunities for people to enjoy it.

The team have:

- Worked with more than 400 farmers and landowners in the AONB on helping them access schemes, grants and providing advice.
- Provided advice and support for farmers and landowners to access Higher level and Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship to a value of £1,024,494 covering 1,374 hectares of land.
- Worked on Beyond Nature schemes across 19 farms covering 6,298 hectares of land undertaking carbon audits, soil sampling, tree planting, moorland management, bird surveys and peat restoration.
- Worked with landowners to plant 10 hectares of trees and create 5km of new hedgerows.

## Headwater for Healthy Rivers

This year has been the conclusion of a £300,000 Water Environment Grant (WEG) - an ambitious project to improve the health of key waterbodies in the Humber river basin district delivering:

- Identification and reduction of erosion and sediment loads, as well as pollutants such as phosphate and ammonia. This has been achieved by implementing changes to land management practices, creating new riparian habitat and installing leaky dams.
- Surveying and removal of Himalayan balsam, an invasive non-native species.

In the final year of the project between April 21 and March 22 the project:

- Worked across 28 farms on 39km of riparian habitat.
- Treated 15 hectares of Himalayan Balsam.
- Planted 1,500 metres of hedgerow and 1 hectare of woodland.
- Installed 20 leaky dams, 9,500 square kilometres of sediment traps and 2km of riparian fencing.

In partnership with local landowners, contractors and volunteers work will continue on the eradication of Himalayan Balsam with an extension of the project being planned and new innovative approaches tested including rust trials.



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## Farming in Protected Landscapes

A new three-year Defra-funded programme was launched in the summer of 2021, which aims to support those who live and work in AONBs and National Parks across the UK. The programme offers financial support for one-off projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide better access or engagement with the landscape, or increases the business resilience of farms.

Three new staff were appointed in the summer of 2021 to deliver the FiPL programme in the AONB. In the first year the allocation of £289,000 was used to support 49 projects:

- 1 ha of woodland creation.
- 1 project to improve the soil quality.
- 17 projects helping to reduce flood risk.
- 9 projects helping landowners understand how land use can deliver for climate outcomes.
- 1 new permissive path.
- 2 projects delivering educational visits.
- 3 projects to make the landscape more inclusive for visitors.
- 3 projects to support greater public engagement in land management.
- 3,000 metres of hedgerows planted.
- 5 ha of positive management on SSSIs.
- 420 ha of habitat improvement for biodiversity.
- 10 ha of improved habitat connectivity.
- 1 historic structure surveyed for restoration.
- 18 projects increasing the resilience of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses, contributing to a more thriving local economy.
- 500 metres of dry-stone walling restored.

Funding decisions are made by a newly formed Local Assessment Panel which met five times in the first year of the programme. The Panel has included representatives from:

- Nidderdale AONB
- Natural England
- Wharfedale Naturalists
- Nidderdale AONB Joint Advisory Committee
- 1 tourism business representative
- 2 Farmer Representatives
- 2 Young Farmer Representatives

# Working in Partnership

## The Skell Valley Project

Working in partnership with the National Trust this four year, £2.5million National Heritage Lottery Fund project is in its first year. With a newly appointed project team delivering across 15 main projects, highlights of the year include:

- Working with organisations including West Yorkshire Archives, Ripon Walled Garden, Harrogate and District Community Action and Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust on 15 new projects to a value of £195k.
- Delivering 22 events attended by 980 people.
- Recruiting 100 volunteers who collectively donated 3,255 hours.
- Delivering a range of conservation works including restoration of 3 ponds, 1km new riverside/ditch fencing, 1.6km hedgerow fencing, 11 new gates, planting of 375m hedgerow and 350m track improvements.



## Woodland Project Officer

With support from The Woodland Trust we appointed a Woodland Officer in October 2020. The officer provides one-to-one support to landowners, helping them to identify suitable planting areas, suggesting the best type of trees to plant, and helping source funding to create new woodlands. Over a three year period between 2020 and 2023 the officer will oversee the creation of 55 hectares of new woodland and ensure 15 planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS) access funding schemes for future management.

In the last year the Woodland Project Officer has:

- Undertaken 40 advisory visits including developing woodland plans and guidance on funding.
- Organised planting of 14,739 trees covering 8 hectares to a value of £61,685.





## Yorkshire Dales Bird of Prey Partnership

A new report was released in March 2022 with information on the status of bird of prey populations and confirmed persecution incidents in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Nidderdale AONB. It's the first report of its kind to be published by the Yorkshire Dales Bird of Prey Partnership.

The group, comprising the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Nidderdale AONB, The Moorland Association, Natural England, National Gamekeepers Organisation, Northern England Raptor Forum, and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), aims to produce this record of bird of prey species active in the Dales annually.

## Saving Nidderdale AONB's Priority Ponds

Working in partnership with the Freshwater Habitats Trust and funded through Yorkshire Water's Biodiversity Programme we are working to gain a more accurate map of ponds across the landscape, and identify those of high value to wildlife.

Over the last 12 months the Project Officer has:

- Worked with volunteers and citizen scientists to help gather data on ponds and their species.
- Recruited 60 survey volunteers and held two upskilling events in amphibian identification.
- Organised visits to 90 ponds over 42 sites to undertake toad surveys and clean water testing to identify ponds with low nutrient levels that are likely to be of most value to wildlife.
- Launched an annual spawn survey.
- Distributed a postcard to residents across the AONB to gather information about the location, pond type, and date of any species spotted, such as frogs, toads or newts.
- Run professional development courses outlining how to survey, create and maintain ponds for wildlife.





## Innovative research and expert advice

The AONB team are known nationally for developing new and innovative projects. The methodology created by Dr Kelly Harmar which underpins the AONB's Woodland Opportunity Plan has been rolled out in both the Yorkshire Dales National Park ([Woodland Opportunities Map - Yorkshire Dales National Park : Yorkshire Dales National Park](#)) and the Sussex and South Downs National Park ([Woodland Opportunity Mapping – Sussex Local Nature Partnership \(sussexlnp.org.uk\)](#)). In addition, consultation with Natural England has been undertaken to explore the transferability of the WOP methodology. Work is now being developed to expand the original mapping by applying the methodology to other habitats.

### Expert advice

Providing expert advice is one of the key roles for the AONB team:

- During 2022/23 we have been invited to attend a number of regional and national forums providing expert advice and support including the York & Humber Climate Commission Land Use Panel and the National Association of AONBs Collaborative Climate Change group.
- The planning authorities follow policies designed to protect the AONB's landscape. They consult the AONB Joint Advisory Committee on applications for planning permission that would be likely to have a significant impact on Nidderdale AONB's environment. The AONB's Joint Advisory Committee commented on planning applications where members felt they could add value to decisions being made about an application. In addition pre-application advice was provided.





# People

## Joint Advisory Committee

The work of the AONB team is managed through the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). This is a partnership organisation made up of elected representatives from local authorities and parish councils, and representatives from special interest groups.

The role of the JAC members, listed below, is to advise local authorities and other organisations about how to best achieve AONB objectives.

Borough and County Councillors:

- Cllr Nigel Simms
- Cllr Tom Watson
- Cllr Margaret Atkinson
- Cllr Stan Lumley
- Cllr Victoria Oldham
- Cllr Michael Harrison

Representatives

- Justin Scully, The National Trust
- Tracey Rathmell, Harrogate Borough Council
- Tom Wheelwright, Moorland Association
- Lisa Harrowsmith, Yorkshire Water PLC
- Stephen Ramsden, Country Land & Business Association
- Tim Ledbetter, Nidderdale Chamber of Trade
- Andrew Smith, National Farmers' Union
- Katie Atkinson, Council for the Protection of Rural England
- Liz Small, North Yorkshire County Council
- Keith Wadd, Ramblers' Association
- Heather Garnett, Friends of Nidderdale AONB
- Richard Dimon, Natural England
- Sue Welch, Parish Councils Representative
- Joy Stanton, Parish Councils Representative
- Paula Newson-Smith, Nidderdale Plus
- Caroline Bradley, British Horse Society
- Graham Spooner, AONB Volunteers

## Nidderdale AONB team

A dedicated AONB team works to protect and enhance this beautiful countryside and the qualities that make it so unique:

- Iain Mann, AONB Manager (5 days/week)

### Development Team

- Sarah Kettlewell, Development Team Leader (3 days/week)
- Liz Milner, Volunteer Coordinator (3 days/week)
- Alice Crosby, Woodland Project Officer (3 days/week)
- Kelly Harmar, Biodiversity Project Officer (3 days/week)
- Elizabeth Bishop, Information Officer (3 days/week)

### Land Management Team

- Marian Wilby, Land Management Team Leader (5 days/week)
- Jackie Smith, Water Environment Grant Project Officer (2 days/week contract post)
- Christy Irish, Land Management Administrative Support (1 day/week)
- Neil Pickard, Beyond Nature Project Officer (2 day/week)
- Emma Coombs, Beyond Nature Project Officer (3 day/week)

### Farming in Protected Landscapes Team

- Matthew Trevelyan, FiPL Project Officer (5 days/week)
- Christy Irish FiPL Project Assistant (3 days/week)
- Alison Metcalfe, FiPL Project Assistant (3 days/week)

### Consultants and Partnerships

- Paul Burgess, AONB Planning Adviser (1 day/week)
- Kate Wright, Saving Nidderdale's Priority Ponds Project Officer (Fresh Water Habitats Trust)
- Nabil Abbas, Josie Campbell (National Trust)





# Financial Report

Income	Amount £	Expenditure	Amount £
Defra	579,598.18	Salaries and Staff Costs	214,989.73
Harrogate Borough Council	87,894.32	Accommodation and Office Costs	47,179.03
North Yorkshire County Council	14,800.00	Services provided by Harrogate Borough Council	22,500.00
Environment Agency	53,612.63	Promotion and Events	18,986.88
Natural England	31,013.60	Volunteer Groups	13,942.60
Woodland Trust	16,100.00	Partnership Running Costs	18,736.45
Yorkshire Water Services	122,511.29	AONB Enhancement Grant Scheme	10,000.00
National Association for AONBs	1,042.36	Catchment Sensitive Farming Project	13,087.00
Wharfedale Naturalists	500.00	Dark Skies	2,250.00
Misc. Income/ Events Income	4,501.60	Water Environment Grant	53,612.63
Debtor C/Fwd (National Trust)	68,459.95	Washburn Valley	733.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>980,033.93</b>	Test and Trials Project	7,689.39
		<b>Upper Nidderdale LPS Legacy</b>	<b>4,712.50</b>
		Beyond Nature Delivery	55,001.70
		Ponds Project	12,074.16
		Farming in Protected Landscapes	339,860.61
		Skell Valley	68,459.95
		C/fwd FIPL	18,022.87
		C/fwd Ponds Project	20,191.84
		C/fwd Beyond Nature Delivery	38,003.59
		<b>Total</b>	<b>980,033.93</b>



# Thank you

Thank you to our funders, partners, volunteers and all those who support our work and help us protect and conserve this incredibly special place.







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One of the  
AONB Family