



Nidderdale  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

# Annual Review

April 2022-March 2023

[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, internationally important habitats and wildlife, and a rich diverse history.

Based in Pateley Bridge, the AONB team are supported by volunteers and work with landowners, farmers and the widest range of organisations to ensure the environment of the AONB is protected and the landscape continues to evolve in a sustainable way in the future.



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## Innovative Research and Expert Advice

The AONB team have gained a reputation for developing new and exciting evidence driven research, developing new and innovative projects at a landscape scale and providing high quality advice.

### Habitat opportunity mapping

Seed corn money from Natural England was used to develop a new data driven approach to habitat based opportunity mapping. This project has arisen directly from preparatory work undertaken to evidence and support a Nature Recovery Plan for Nidderdale AONB.

This work established baseline habitat maps for the AONB and developed habitat opportunity maps. We are working closely in partnership to feed the results of the mapping work into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for North Yorkshire.

### Land management advice

We provided advice and support to land managers and farmers across the AONB. We delivered one to one advice, workshops and events. See page 6 for more information.

### Planning

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 scrutinised 107 planning applications and pre-applications during the year, providing formal comments on 45 planning applications.

### Protecting our dark skies

Working to protect the dark skies of Nidderdale AONB continues to be a priority for the team. To address issues of light pollution we have developed a dark skies supplementary planning document in partnership with the local planning authority. This is currently out for consultation.

### Case Study:

### Curlew recovery projects: Darley Beck and Hartwith

Curlew numbers are declining drastically throughout the UK. In particular, the decline in grassland breeding sites has been catastrophic. Curlew are now almost entirely confined to the Pennine uplands.

FiPL funding of £20,000 has been awarded to two projects working with farmers and landowners to try and save curlew. This year the projects have focussed on research – monitoring curlew nests to establish causes of breeding failure. Using a new methodology, the lessons learned from both these projects are already being shared nationally and are starting to develop a much deeper understanding of the conservation status of curlew populations in Nidderdale AONB.



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# Volunteering in the AONB

The work of volunteers is at the heart of Nidderdale AONB. They freely donate their time, energy, and skills to a wide range of projects making a real difference on the ground.

Working across seven main groups, volunteers are focussed on a range of activities from practical conservation work, surveying important wildlife sites and species to repairing dry stone walls.

- 185 volunteers have been working in the AONB on conservation projects including woodland and hedgerow management, repairing footpaths, restoring dry stone walls and managing flower rich meadows.
- A total of 3,135 volunteer hours have been contributed across all projects. This is the equivalent of 522 work days.





## Case Study: Pond Surveyors are saving Nidderdale AONB's priority ponds

The Saving Nidderdale's Priority Ponds project was a partnership project that brought together national wildlife conservation charity Freshwater Habitats Trust and Nidderdale AONB with funding from Yorkshire Water.

The project increased the number of ponds in Nidderdale AONB that are classified as 'priority ponds' from 38 to 80. Priority ponds are waterbodies that are recognised nationally as priority habitats, and are given a level of protection, because of their high conservation value.

Volunteers have helped to show how important Nidderdale AONB is for freshwater wildlife by increasing records for 'priority ponds' by more than 50%.

Sixty-eight local people took part in water quality testing and amphibian surveys to identify high quality habitats and biodiversity hotspots. The volunteers also carried out amphibian surveys in more than 100 ponds, doubling the number of known sites for the 'at risk' Common Toad in Nidderdale AONB.

Kate Wright, Freshwater Habitats Trust and Nidderdale AONB Project Officer for Saving Nidderdale's Priority Ponds, said: "Thank you to everyone who has supported our Saving Nidderdale's Priority Ponds project. We had a phenomenal response from the local community, who have helped us to understand more than ever before about Nidderdale AONB's freshwater habitats. Ultimately, we've learned that the AONB is even more important to freshwater wildlife than we'd previously thought."



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# Land Management Support and Advice

Working in partnership with farmers and landowners is integral to delivering our business plan. Increasing economic pressures, changing regulations and modifications to support mechanisms continue to be challenges for land managers in the AONB.

The work of the AONB reflects these pressures and has focused around increasing the resilience, profitability and environmental sustainability of the AONB's farming industry.

During the last year we have:

- Worked with 23 Yorkshire Water farm tenants across the AONB through the Beyond Nature programme to provide one to one conservation and business advice.
- Provided over £400,000 of grants to farmers via the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- Given ongoing support to the farming community through the Nidderdale Catchment Sensitive Farming Partnership (with Natural England) which has now been expanded to cover the whole of the AONB area.
- Organised 27 events attended by 460 farmers and land managers, and provided support for farming-industry led initiatives (Washburn Facilitation Fund, Skell Valley Farming Group, Upper Nidderdale Farming Group and Northern Upland Chain Farmer Panel).
- Provided advice and support for farmers and landowners to access Higher Tier and Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship grants to a value of £713,000.

## Beyond Nature

*“Turn on the tap and the water that comes out is likely to have first fallen as rainwater on some of the highest, most remote and beautiful land in Yorkshire.*

*Beyond Nature is a Yorkshire Water land strategy initiative focused on supporting farmers who look after this land and helping them get the most out of it.”*

This year, the AONB Beyond Nature team have:

- Supported 16 Beyond Nature farms and encourage eight new farms to join the scheme.
- Delivered conservation work across nine Beyond Nature farms including tree planting and peat restoration works.
- Delivered emissions reduction and climate change adaptation planning advice to eight Beyond Nature farm holdings - deep soil sampling on four farms and carbon footprints for four farms.

## Case Study: Washburn Facilitation Fund

Following a grant from Defra, the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund in the Washburn Valley has now completed after three years.

Facilitation fund programmes help groups of farmers, foresters and land managers come together and improve the natural environment. By joining the group, members make environmental improvements across a range of habitats and landscapes, more so than could be done on an individual basis.

Through a series of talks, workshops, demonstrations and site visits, group members have built and shared

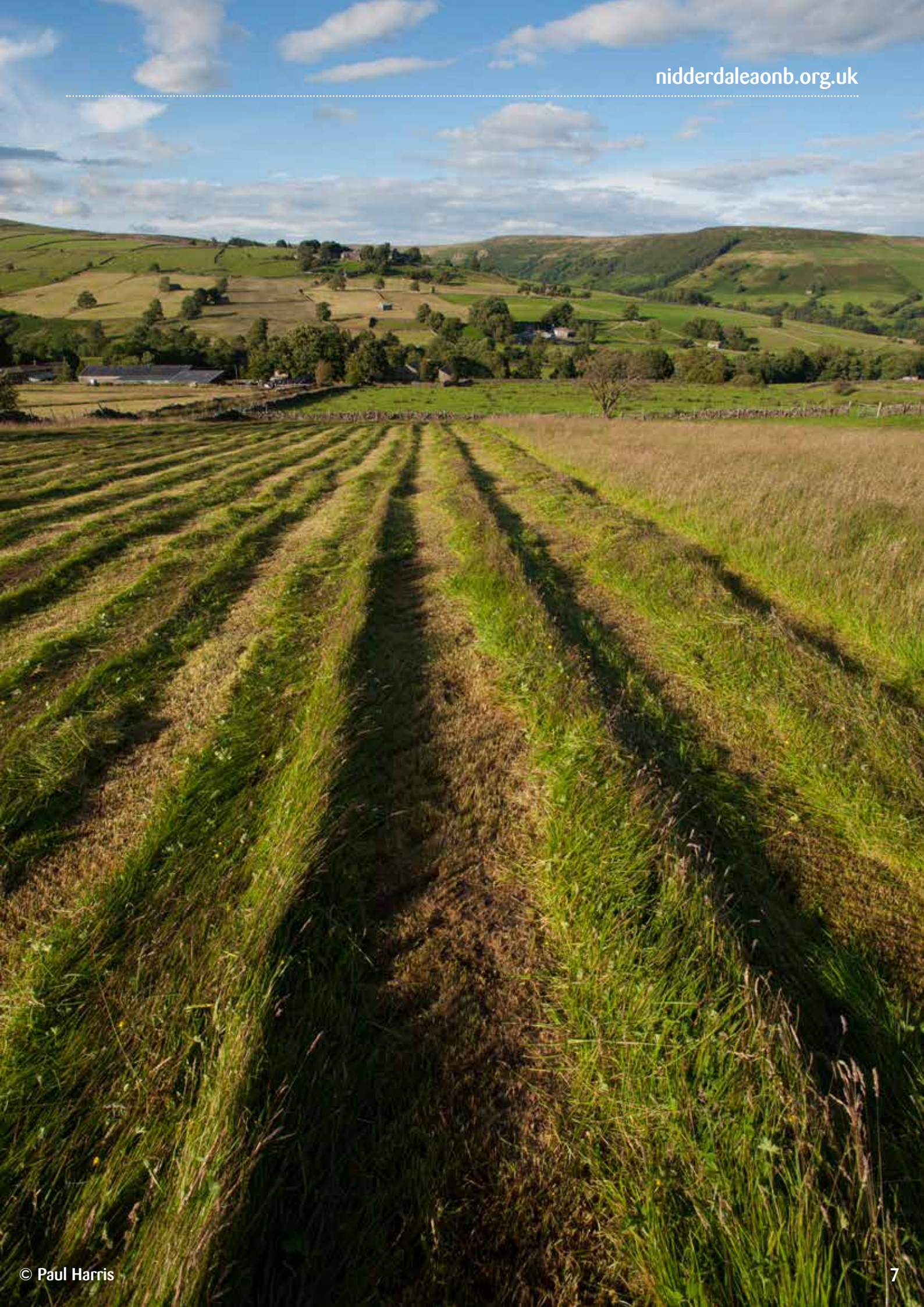
their knowledge and experience, and gained exposure to fresh ideas and different perspectives. During this last year six training events were held and attended by a total of 86 farmers focussing on wide range of topics, from water quality and habitat improvement to natural flood management and farm business planning.

The group also supported farmers to improve their farm resilience and establish a social network through joint learning initiatives, capacity building and mutual support.



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## Farming in Protected Landscapes

*“Funding projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide better access or engagement with the landscape or increase the resilience of farms”*

In its second year, the FiPL team have worked with applicants across the AONB to:

- Approve 52 projects between April 2022 and March 2023 with a total investment of £432,000.
- Engage 152 farmers, created one new farm cluster and supported two new farm clusters.
- Manage 44 hectares through regenerative farming.
- Create and manage six hectares of woodland, and plant and manage 500 metres of hedgerow.
- Manage over 1000ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

- Create and manage over 500 hectares of new habitat and connections for biodiversity.
- Create and restore four ponds.
- Restore over 500 metres of drystone wall.
- Engage 94 volunteers on FiPL funded projects.
- Deliver a total of 184 educational visit, events or open days.

Recent news from Defra that the programme will be extended into a fourth year has been welcomed by the AONB team.







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## Case Study: Asylum Seekers Return to Countryside Conservation

A partnership project involving the AONB, the charity Leeds City of Sanctuary, landowners and volunteer groups has received FiPL funding of £9,700 to enable groups of asylum seekers to visit the AONB for the first time.

From coppicing to dry stone walling, the groups have taken part in seven visits for over 100 people undertaking a range of traditional conservation activities and working with a number of landowners and organisations.

All those taking part are fleeing violence, war and oppression in their home countries and may be in the process of applying for refugee status.



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Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

  
Nidderdale  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**Farming in Protected  
Landscapes programme**



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# Climate Change

We have a commitment to reducing carbon emissions, seeking opportunities for increased carbon storage and adopting climate change adaptation measures.

In the last year we have:

- Worked on two Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship applications to support the work of moorland land managers and the Yorkshire Peat Partnership to increase storage capacity of Nidderdale's moorlands.
- Increased woodland cover working with partners and land managers.
- Provided emissions reduction and climate change adaptation planning advice to eight Beyond Nature farm holdings and a number of farmers through the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme.
- Supported four projects specifically to reduce carbon emissions and other forms of pollution using Farming in Protected Landscapes funding.
- Continued to support work to reduce the impact of Invasive Non Native Species working along 34km of riparian habitat within the three headwater catchments of the River Nidd and along the lower stretch of the River Nidd with partner organisations.
- Implemented Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures on the AONB's river catchments: including water management options in 20 Countryside Stewardship applications, NFM measures on 14 farm holdings in the Skell Valley and a monitoring programme to record effectiveness of NFM measures as they are implemented.
- Contributed to the development and delivery of the York Flood Resilience Project to deliver natural flood management across headwaters of the River Ouse within the AONB.

## Case Study: Skell Valley Project

'The Skell Valley Project' (a partnership project working with the National Trust and funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund) is working to address the issues created by climate change.

Extreme flooding events have caused irreparable damage to Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal. The high level of silt deposited in the river is threatening its ecology. Silt is also affecting the water features at Grantley Hall, Eavestone Lake and Ripon Canal.

In the last year natural flood and sediment management measures on 14 farm holdings have been undertaken:

- 15.1 ha woodland improved
- 1.7ha woodland planting
- 1km new woodland fencing
- 4.4km riverside fencing
- 1.5km hedgerow planting/restoration
- 7 new ponds installed
- 1.4km tracks improved
- 20 leaky dams installed



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# 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
- Liz Small, North Yorkshire County Council
- Tim Ledbetter, Nidderdale Chamber of Trade
- Andrew Smith, National Farmers' Union
- Katie Atkinson, Council for the Protection of Rural England
- 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 Volunteer

## 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)
- Leanne Fox, 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 days/week)
- Emma Coombs, Beyond Nature Project Officer (3 days/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, Karen Collins, Gabby Crisp, Josie Campbell (National Trust), Skell Valley Project team.









# 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