

Northumberland National Park News - January 2016

Dear Supporters and Friends

Welcome to the first issue of Northumberland National Park News of 2016, which highlights much of the good work taking place across the National Park.

Much of this good work is supported by volunteers, so this is also great recognition of all of the time and effort our Volunteers contribute to Northumberland National Park. I am particularly delighted about last week's article in the Hexham Courant that featured National Park Volunteers helping to repair the damage caused by the recent floods at Hareshaw Linn (see article below).

With just 18 months to go until the **Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre** is due to open, we also warmly welcome Sarah Glynn as the new Sill Manager. Sarah joins us from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums where she was Manager at The Great North Museum: Hancock. Sarah's support and expertise will enable us to build on the great work achieved so far in bringing *The Sill* to Northumberland.

Here's to a happy, healthy and productive 2016 - we all look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Tony Gates, Chief Executive

National Matters

National Parks England: The English National Park Authorities have been asked to support DEFRA in the development of a new **25 year plan for the environment**. National Park Chief Executives attended a workshop in January to discuss this with Minister Rory Stewart. DEFRA are keen to use a place-based approach to the delivery of the strategy - and National Parks are one place-based model they are keen to learn from.

National Parks in England, the body through which national parks in England work together, are in the process of signing an accord with **Public Health England**. This accord will set out how National Park Authorities and Public Health England can work together and provides an opportunity for National Park Authorities to develop our approach to delivering services in support of public health within National Parks. Tony Gates is meeting the Director of Public Health at Northumberland County Council in February and the Public Health England National Lead on Health and Well-Being will be visiting Northumberland National Park in June.

The House of Lords approved the amendment giving NPAs a **Functionally Specific Power of Competence** (FSPoC) in January. The *Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill* has now received Royal Assent. The amendment received cross party support.

National Parks UK: Arrangements are now in place to establish **National Parks Partnership Limited** (NPPL) as a Limited Liability Partnership, with final agreement expected in February 2016. NPPL will work to help attract corporate support for the 15 National parks in the UK. The new board of the Partnership is already active and has

produced a Business Plan and a number of target sectors on which to focus fundraising activities. Naomi Conway is joining as the NPP Development Director in March 2016.

Contact: Tony Gates, Chief Executive

Corporate Matters

DEFRA Grant in Aid: Our National Park grant has now been confirmed for the next four years at a level which sees our grant rise with inflation each year. In his letter, Minister Rory Stewart said: *“This settlement reflects the huge value the Secretary of State and I attach to the National Parks and how impressed we have been by the impact that the Authorities are having across a whole range of important issues”.*

Contact: Tony Gates, Chief Executive

Investing In People - Home Grown Accountant: Emily Dobson learnt in January of her success is passing her final accountancy exams. Emily joined the Authority from school and has made progressive and successful steps to become a fully qualified accountant over several years. Well done Emily!

Contact: Mary Wallace, HR Officer

Development Management

Performance: The latest quarterly performance statistics for the period 1st October 2015 to 31st December 2015 showed 100% performance of planning applications meeting the 8- and 13- week deadline. This included 4 major planning applications, which for a small team is extremely impressive.

Development Management Satisfaction Survey: The results of the Development Management Satisfaction Survey for 2015 have been assessed. I'm pleased to say the responses are overwhelmingly positive, with praise for both the pre-application enquiry and planning application stages. It is clear that the team is considered approachable, especially compared to other Authorities, and the team's helpfulness was particularly highlighted.

Enforcement: Progress is also continuing with the employment of our temporary Planning Enforcement Officer, Ashleigh Wilson. Since mid-November, Ashleigh has visited and investigated 14 sites across the Park. The monitoring and enforcement of planning control is necessary in order to engender confidence and trust in the planning system by the public and by developers.

Contact: Susannah Buylla, Head of Development Management

Shake off those winter blues and join us for some thrilling outdoor adventures! Just check out the *What's On* page on our website for further details of forthcoming events: www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/events

Fundraising

The Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust made a very generous donation of £25,000 to the Northumberland National Park Foundation for The Sill. Northumberland National Park Foundation has also received an extremely generous donation of £50,000 for an education space at The Sill from the **Community Foundation for Northumberland and Tyne and Wear**.

Contact: Katy Jackson, Head of Fundraising and Communications

Programmes and Conservation

Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Habitat Mapping Summary: On behalf of the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership, we have now mapped 8 priority habitats across the whole of the LNP (Calcareous Grassland; Hay Meadows; Calaminarian Grassland and other species-rich grassland; Mires / Fens / Bogs; Heathland / Mountain Heath; Limestone Pavement; Native Woodland; Standing Open Water). The map below shows the extent of all these habitat data.

In addition, we have now defined these habitats into **core and stepping stones**; these are larger areas that are functional habitats and smaller areas that help species move through the landscape. Based on these data we have **created maps of networks**, showing links across the whole LNP. The networks have been ranked across the whole LNP, and can be used at any scale.

The uses for these data will be varied and will help meet priorities within the LNP and help deliver the Northumberland National Park vision. For example: **High Nature Vale (HNV) Farming** - by looking at where all the priority habitat networks overlap with current entry-level farms, we can see where effort needs to be focused on land that will otherwise fall into mid-tier (and possibly fall out of agri-environment schemes). The networks can be also be used to inform any new Higher tier schemes.



Meadows, Woodland and Peat: We now have maps and networks for these habitats which will help target creation and restoration schemes. Using 'Condatis' (another habitat network mapping tool) we can see if losing or restoring a habitat in a particular place affects movement across the landscape – useful for considering new **woodland schemes** or deciding where a **hay meadow** may help enhance a grassland network

Contact: Gill Thompson, Ecologist

Mapping changes in the National Park: The National Park has signed a collaboration agreement with **Ordnance Survey** to supply information relating to changes in the National Park. The aim is to improve the representation of physical routes - paths, tracks and private roads - in National Parks and to help identify significant changes affecting users of Explorer/Landranger mapping not associated with ordinary developments such as housing estates, industrial development or public roads. Examples of this his could include areas of new tree planting and associated fencing or changes to the use of our property.

Contact: Lorna Lazzari, Access and Recreation Officer / Ed Hudspeth, GIS Officer

Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership: In late October last year we received the welcome news that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had awarded initial support and development funding for the *Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme*. The scheme will deliver a range of activities designed to build a stronger, sustainable environment, celebrate the valley's important historic and cultural heritage, and build resilience into the local economy.

The next 18 months will see work taking place to develop plans and apply for a full grant of £1.8m for the project, which is anticipated to run for five years from 2018. Further discussion and consultation with local people to ensure that proposals meet the needs of the area will take place as part of this development phase. These consultations are still being planned and a Project Development Manager will be appointed to lead on this work - we anticipate a Project Development Manager will be in post by the spring.

The project will be overseen by a Project Board who will agree the final proposals. The Board contains a range of organisations including Natural England, Otterburn, Elsdon, and Rochester with Byrness Parish Councils, the Redesdale Society, Tyne Rivers Trust, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, MoD, the Battlefields Trust, and Northumberland National Park.

Contact: Andrew Miller, Head of Programmes and Conservation

Operations

December heralded the second anniversary of Northumberland National Park's **International Dark Sky Park** status. In the two years since the sky above the National Park and Kielder Water & Forest Park was awarded Gold tier status by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), local businesses and communities have been reaping the benefits. [Click here to read the full story](#)

Housesteads Car Park Extension: The main contractor (Trevor Atkinson & Co Ltd) was appointed in early January to enable a start on the ground in February. Hopefully this will enable the extended car park to be fully operational from Easter onwards.

Contact: Colin Wilson, Estates Officer

Share your images celebrating 60 years of Park life:

Northumberland National Park is calling for photographs and film footage of the landscape through the years to help mark its 60th anniversary. Images submitted will be featured in an online gallery hosted by the Northumberland National Park website and shared via social media outlets.

Please share your images and film by email to 60years@nnpa.org.uk or via Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag **#NNP60**.

All images featured by Northumberland National Park will be credited to the contributor.



Contact: Andrew Mitchell, Web and Social Media Officer



Northumberland National Park volunteers and rangers help clear a landslide at Hareshaw Linn, Bellingham.

Volunteers rally to clear beauty spot

Landslides pose danger at Hareshaw Linn

VOLUNTEERS and rangers from Northumberland National Park have rallied to clear a landslide at a North Tyne beauty spot.

Hareshaw Linn in Bellingham was one of many areas in the district ravaged by flooding last month.

The popular walking route became a danger to visitors coming to explore the wooded valley and waterfall.

The area suffered an initial landslide a year ago and the stormy weather conditions in December led to a further slip.

Rangers Mike Bolton and Margaret Anderson were at the site last Wednesday with a group of volunteers.

Margaret said: "With the weather over the years and the fact it's an industrial area it's not surprising that a landslide happened.

"The trees could have gone into the river and that's the last thing we would have wanted."

Local contractor Dave

By BRIDGET McCLEAN

bridget.mcclean@hexham-courant.co.uk

Allen felled the area and volunteers worked hard to burn debris to clear the site.

Once the site is cleared they plan to replant shrubs like willow and hawthorn which they hope will stabilise the bank.

Mike added: "It's important to get some roots in the ground which will strengthen it and hopefully make another landslide less likely."

However, recent weather has prevented the team from working at the site.

Margaret said: "It's hard work but we are making good progress.

"We have had to delay work many times because of the weather conditions.

"Thankfully we have been able to keep most of the path open because the site is so well used."

National park rangers were forced to build a fence

around the damaged area.

"We felt the fence was necessary because if there's a sign people don't always look," Margaret added.

"It was very dangerous as more and more was coming away from the path each time we looked. Someone could have easily slipped while they were walking along."

The work clearing one section of the bank is expected to take up to a week.

In order to clear the rest of the bank the team will have to apply for a felling licence, which could take up to six months.

Mike and Margaret could

"Our volunteers are very important and there's no way we could do it without them.

Mike Bolton

not have done the work without the help of volunteers.

Mike said: "Our volunteers are very important and there's no way we could do it without them. It would be great to see some younger volunteers taking part."

Northumberland National Park has around 100 volunteers who help out with various projects.

● There's still time to apply for Northumberland National Park's spring young volunteer placement scheme, which gives people aged 16 to 25 the chance to live life as a ranger and explore a career path in environment and natural sciences.

The placements are for 10 days over a three-month period based at national park offices at Rothbury or Walltown along Hadrian's Wall.

For more information contact Jane Riddell on 07796834936 or email jane.riddell@nnpa.org.uk. The closing date for applications is Monday, February 1.

The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre



We are delighted to welcome **Sarah Glynn** as Manager of The Sill. Sarah joins Northumberland National Park Authority from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums where she was Manager at The Great North Museum: Hancock. Sarah was brought up in Hexham and now lives in Prudhoe, Northumberland. She studied geological sciences at Leeds University and gained a Ph.D. in marine geochemistry from Southampton University.

Construction update: Despite battling three months of unprecedented rainfall and zero temperatures good progress has been made with the building contract since work started in September. Site developers Sir Robert McAlpine are ahead of schedule and currently in week 18 of an 82 week construction period with completion set for Easter 2017. The building is on course to open to the public in June 2017.

Works completed to date include site welfare and parking facilities, site security camera installation, bulk earthworks and stone fill to the building footprint and car park areas. The Northern Power Grid overhead cabling diversion work and road widening works to the Military Road junction are also finished. Tree felling to the North East corner of the site was carried out by National Park Rangers and construction of the electrical substation has begun. Planned works in the next three months include completion of the underground cabling and substation, building RC foundations and car park and building drainage. Installation of the structural steelwork will commence in early spring.

Late last autumn, we worked with pupils at **Bellingham Middle School** to help them achieve two national awards after successfully completing an arts and environmental programme as part of a range of new educational activities connected to The Sill. The group of 28 nine and ten-year-olds worked towards the 'John Muir Award' and the 'Explore Arts Award' by taking part in a variety of arts and conservation activities linked to the landscape and ecology of Northumberland National Park. [Click here to read the full story](#)



Just before Christmas, pupils at **Henshaw C of E Primary School** in Bardon Mill got creative working with The Sill Project Team and main contractor, Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd, to take part in a calendar design competition. The children worked individually and in groups to create artwork inspired by the natural landscape and nature around them.

Sir Robert McAlpine judged the winning entries and provided funding to print the calendars professionally. Sales of the calendars at the school's Christmas Fair helped to raise money for new iPads. [Click here to read the full story](#)



This month, twenty-first century **superfast broadband** arrived at The Sill, which is located on one of the highest and most remote sections of Hadrian's Wall along the Military Road at Once Brewed. Sixteen households and businesses in the area will soon be able to access fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) superfast speeds of up to 300Mbps¹, thanks to the iNorthumberland broadband programme.

Installing fibre broadband in remote locations like The Sill site at Once Brewed is not easy. Rural geographies present engineers with many difficulties not faced in more urban areas. Temporary traffic lights can be needed for stretches of narrow winding roads and new underground ducting and specialist equipment is needed to clear or replace blocked ducts. The works should be complete this April, one year ahead of plan.

The latest issue of the **Sill Quarterly Newsletter** is now available. Please follow this link to view the latest Sill newsletter online: <http://eepurl.com/bOQI7D>

Contact: Sarah Glynn, Sill Manager

Recruitment: Our Head of Fundraising and Communications is leaving Northumberland National Park at the end of March. Recruitment for a new post holder is now under way and the closing date for applications is 22nd February. Details of this and other jobs at the National Park are available on the vacancies page on our website:

www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/about/jobs-training/jobs/

**Northumberland National Park Authority,
Eastburn, South Park, Hexham NE46 1BS
Telephone: 01434 605555**

E-mail: info@nnpa.org.uk

Website: www.nnpa.org.uk