

Winter 2026 : Issue 173

# Yorkshire **DALES** review



## A Fairer Future

.....  
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.....

Friends of the  
**DALES**  
YORKSHIRE DALES SOCIETY

**Front Cover:** 'Winter Afternoon, Fading Light', oil on canvas, by Frank Gordon.  
View across to Giggleswick School.  
www.frankgordon.co.uk

Views expressed in the *Yorkshire Dales Review* are not necessarily those of Friends of the Dales.

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Unsung Hero - Coral Fungus

12-13

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	 <b>Prerana Balu.</b> Prerana is an MSc Global Conservation student, aiming to work in intersectional environmental law post-PhD. Her fondest memory of the Dales is being part of the Campaign for National Parks New Perspectives 2025 cohort, with sunrise and twilight walks and storytelling by Janet's Foss	19	<b>Safe for Now</b>
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Miles with Smiles

14-15

## More Than Just a View: Why the Yorkshire Dales Belong to All of Us

**Sociologist Abby Day argues that if we really care about the future of the national park, we must help to tackle every issue that affects it – not just the ones that directly concern us.**

A few weeks ago, I met a woman from Leeds at the base of Malham Cove. She comes up every month, she told me, sometimes more. 'I need this place,' she said, gesturing at the great limestone amphitheatre towering above us. 'It's where I feel most myself.' Then she added something that stayed with me: 'It's where I belong.'

She is not alone. Across our valleys and fells, thousands of people feel this same pull, a sense of ownership that has nothing to do with deeds or boundaries, and everything to do with connection. But belonging to a place means more than loving its views. It means caring about its future in all its complexity, including the people who live there, the wildlife that depends on it, the systems that sustain it. And increasingly, it means recognising that you cannot truly protect one aspect of this landscape without addressing all the others.

Take housing, for instance. When young families cannot afford to live in the villages where they grew up, we lose more than residents. We lose the continuity of community, the voices in village halls, the children in local schools. Holiday lets and second homes are not just a housing issue: they are an access issue, a conservation issue, a community issue. A landscape emptied of permanent residents becomes a museum, not a living place. And a museum cannot sustain the very authenticity that visitors come seeking.

Or consider how we treat the land itself. When raptors disappear from our moorlands year after year, we are not just losing magnificent birds. We are witnessing an environmental injustice that tells us who has power over this landscape and who does not.

Burning peat moorland increases wildfire risk and degrades the very ecosystems that help regulate our climate. One practice, multiple harms: all interconnected.

Even our relationship as visitors reveals these connections. The parking chaos around popular villages and peaks, the litter left on fells, the gates left open are not just irritations. They are symptoms of a broken relationship with place, a failure of the belonging my friend at Malham spoke about. When visitors feel like tourists rather than temporary residents, they behave differently. They take, rather than give. And that behaviour, multiplied across thousands of visits, damages both the landscape and the goodwill of those who live here year-round, which in turn makes them less willing to welcome access, which reduces people's opportunity to form those deeper bonds. The cycle feeds itself.

Dales volunteers



Climate breakdown intensifies all of this. Hotter, drier summers mean increased wildfire risk on our moors, especially those that have been drained and degraded for intensive management. Extreme weather events damage paths and bridges, making access harder. Changing conditions stress farmers already operating on thin margins, while also threatening the rare species that make the Yorkshire Dales a biodiversity haven. You cannot address climate resilience here without addressing land management, access, conservation and rural economics all at once.

### Harnessing the Domino Effect

This is why an integrated approach is practical and necessary. Every issue touches every other issue. Affordable housing supports year-round communities, which steward the land. Good access creates advocates for conservation. Responsible visitor behaviour maintains the welcome that makes belonging possible. We need to see these as interdependent necessities, not competing priorities.

What does this mean for those of us who love the Yorkshire Dales? It means we can't pick and choose our concerns. We can't care deeply about access while ignoring housing justice. We can't celebrate biodiversity while ignoring wildlife crime. We can't demand action on climate while defending destructive land management practices. Real belonging means caring about the whole system, not just the parts that directly benefit us.

The good news is that systemic problems invite systemic solutions. Community land trusts that provide affordable housing. Rewilding initiatives that restore ecosystems while creating new livelihoods. Access agreements that include local voices. Transition to sustainable moorland management that supports both farmers and wildlife. None of these solutions exists in isolation; each one strengthens the others.

So, here is what I took from that conversation at Malham: belonging is an active state, not a passive feeling. If this place belongs to all of us, then all of us bear responsibility for its future, the whole messy, complicated, interconnected future, and not as tourists admiring scenery, but as community members invested in justice, sustainability and each other.

Because true belonging means fighting for the whole, not just for the view.

**Professor Abby Day**

# New Campaign off to Flying Start

Our new flagship campaign against raptor persecution is already attracting media attention and has struck a chord with members and the wider public. Executive Director Ann Shadrake explains why it is so important to crack down on this criminal activity, what we hope to achieve and how you can play a part.

We launched our Eyes on the Skies campaign last October, with a hard-hitting presentation by our guest speaker, RSPB UK Head of Site Conservation & Species Policy Kate Jennings, at an evening online event with nearly 150 registered to attend. If you missed that presentation, it is available to view for free on our YouTube channel, together with all the online talks on varied topics we have presented over the last four years.

Given the shocking nature of raptor persecution, and its appalling persecution black spot in the Yorkshire Dales, our Eyes on the Skies campaign has received significant press coverage and a surge in engagement on our social media platforms. People have also donated in response to the campaign, with hundreds of pounds received so far. Members too have kindly donated, and we have set up a special page on the website to make this easy (or you can contact us if you prefer another payment option).

Further online talks are planned for the winter programme and these will feature senior people working to counter the criminal killing of birds of prey. We are delighted that DI Mark Harrison, who wrote in the autumn *Review* about the work of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit, will deliver our event on Tuesday, 27 January 2026. Renowned national wildlife conservationist Dr Ruth Tingay, who has worked in the field of raptor research and conservation for more than 30 years, will talk about raptor persecution on Wednesday, 18 March 2026. More information and details of how to book for these free online presentations is on page 23.

Many people who live and work in the Dales, and most likely the vast majority of visitors, have no idea of the prevalence and scale of raptor persecution in or close to 'our' national park. Our Eyes on the Skies campaign aims to change this by highlighting just how bad the situation is despite years of legal protection.

Data analysis\* we commissioned from the RSPB reveals that over a recent 15-year period (2009-2023) there were 152 confirmed incidents of persecution or suspicious disappearances of birds of prey in the Yorkshire Dales area.

Of these incidents, 53 involved hen harriers (of which 41 were the suspicious disappearances of satellite-tagged birds), 31 involved red kites and 27 involved buzzards. Dogs were involved in four incidents by eating poisoned baits (affecting a total of six dogs). Tawny and short-eared owls, peregrine falcons, marsh harriers and kestrels were also persecuted.

We'll be using this evidence – plus the distressingly regular reports of newly discovered crimes against birds of prey in our area – to appeal to everyone who cares about wildlife and the Yorkshire Dales to support and promote our campaign.

To focus our efforts, we have distilled the issue into **five key aims for our Eyes on the Skies campaign:**

## 1. Highlighting the True Impact of Raptor Persecution

The relentless criminal killing of birds of prey, despite over 70 years of full legal protection, involves



horrific and shocking acts of violence against rare and beautiful raptors.

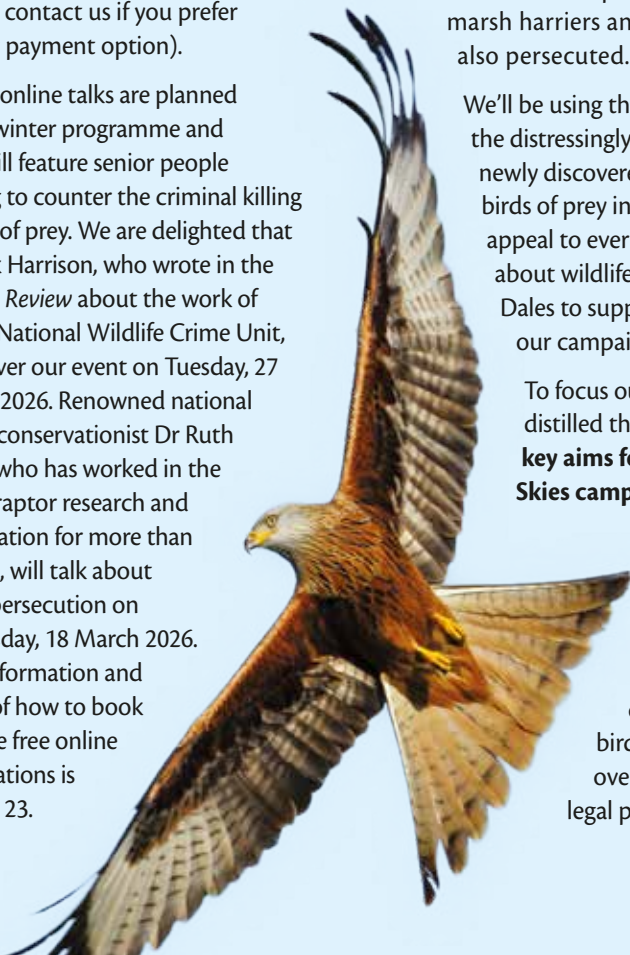
These crimes continue to have a devastating impact on biodiversity and communities nationally, but more so here in the Yorkshire Dales. That's why the new Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan has a specific objective to end the illegal killing and disturbance of birds of prey. We believe that a national park should be a wildlife-rich haven for birds of prey, not a persecution black spot.

## 2. Promoting Operation Owl

Operation Owl is the national campaign promoted by the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit and is aimed at stopping the criminal killing of birds of prey. All of us, whether visiting or working in the countryside, can easily learn how to spot and report the signs of raptor persecution, like illegal traps and poisoned baits, whilst keeping ourselves safe and preserving vital evidence. This will enable local police and wildlife crime officers to act quickly to gather evidence and identify criminals, and support the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit to stop the persecution of birds of prey. Greater public awareness and participation in Operation Owl is a crucial step in reducing this crime.

## 3. Introduction of a New National Wildlife Crime Database

Wildlife crime is not currently a notifiable crime. This means it is treated as a less serious crime like dropping litter (antisocial behaviour). Recent analysis by Wildlife and Countryside Link also demonstrates a strong link between wildlife crime and other serious criminal behaviour eg supplying drugs, domestic violence and





money laundering. If wildlife crime became notifiable, the crimes would be logged on a national database, just like other serious crimes such as firearm offences and criminal damage. This would help police forces, landowners and local communities work together to report and track crime and target hotspots.

#### 4. Harsher Penalties for Convicted Criminals

It's all too easy for a determined criminal to kill a bird of prey by going into remote countryside to use illegal traps, poisoned baits or firearms. Bodies can be quickly destroyed or hidden, making it very hard to detect these crimes or collect forensic evidence. Because it is so hard to detect this crime, the true scale of raptor persecution will undoubtedly be significantly higher than the incidents that are actually spotted, reported and logged as crimes. Despite 70 years of full legal protection, criminals continue to regularly kill birds of prey. Substantial fines or custodial sentences would act as much stronger deterrents.

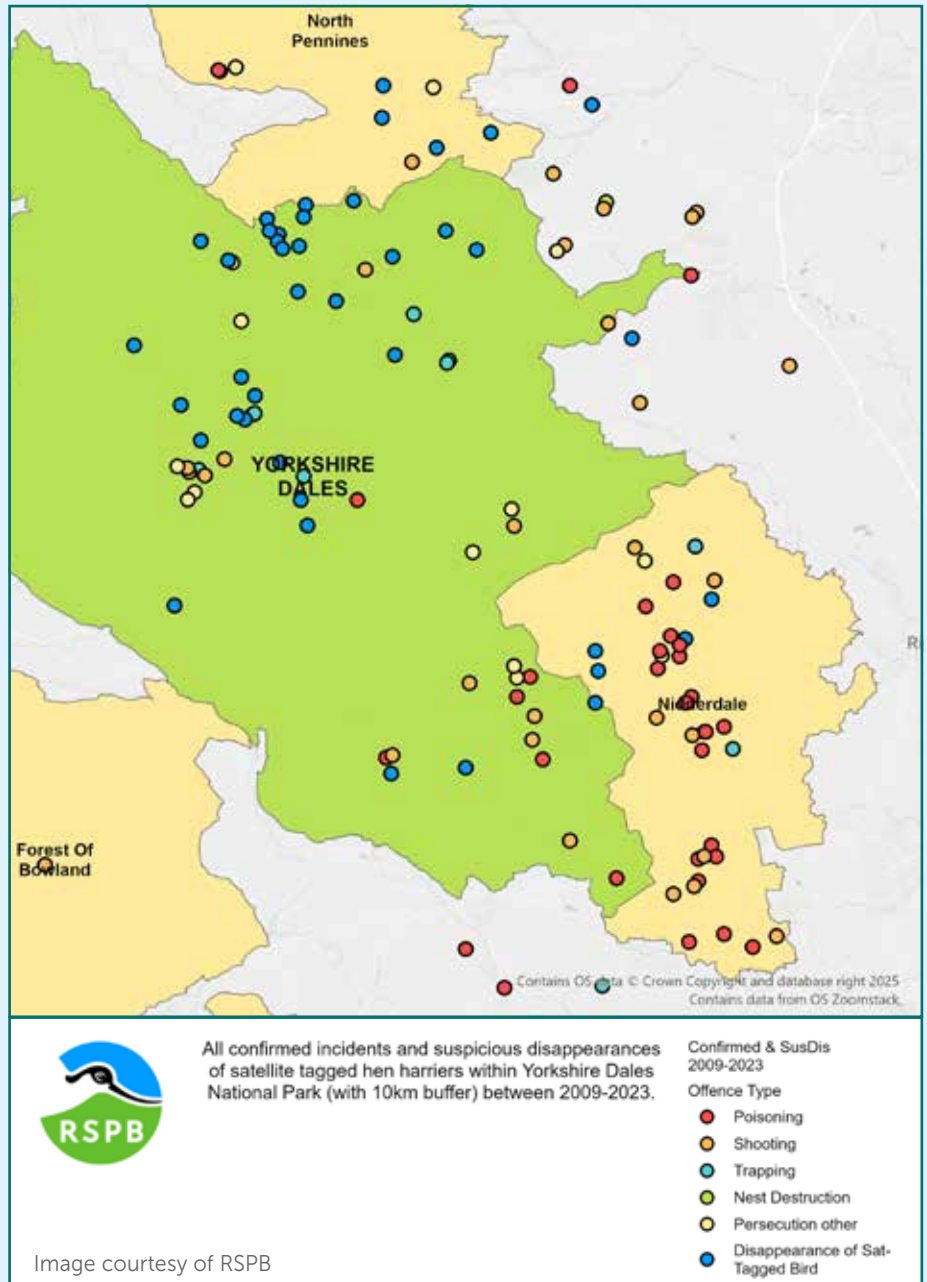
#### 5. Effective Regulation and Licensing for the Game Bird Shooting Industry

Analysis by the RSPB found that at least 54% of all confirmed incidents (2014-2023) were linked to land managed for game bird shooting. Some criminals may travel into these areas specifically to target birds of prey. The RSPB also looked at criminal court records and found that 75% of offences related to birds of prey persecution (2009-2023) were connected to the game bird shooting industry.

The game bird shooting industry is one of the predominant land uses in the Yorkshire Dales. More effective regulation and licensing of this industry could help these businesses prevent wildlife crime happening on their land.

*To keep in touch with our campaign, and all the other essential work our charity undertakes to further a sustainable future for the Yorkshire Dales, please sign up to our e-news, follow us on social media, email us with any questions or ideas and sign up to our events via the website.*

**Ann Shadrake, Executive Director**



#### Sources

- \* Analysis commissioned by Friends of the Dales of data in the public domain – RSPB (2024) *Birdcrime 2023: A 15-year review of the illegal killing of birds of prey in the UK (2009-2023)*. Additional data on suspicious disappearances of satellite-tagged hen harriers [www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-crime-and-investigation/birdcrime](http://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-crime-and-investigation/birdcrime)
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- Wildlife and Countryside Link (2025) *Wildlife Crime: the far reaching impacts of crimes against wildlife* [www.wcl.org.uk/wildlife-crime-report-2025.asp](http://www.wcl.org.uk/wildlife-crime-report-2025.asp)



# Buy-In From the Top

**Long-term volunteer Nancy Stedman is encouraged by the wide range of organisations that will be working together to stamp out birds of prey persecution in the Yorkshire Dales.**

How relevant is the latest Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan to our Eyes on the Skies campaign?

The new document, setting out the direction of travel from 2025 to 2030 and beyond, has now been published. I was keen to see what it said about addressing the depleted wildlife of the Yorkshire Dales, and particularly the continuing issue of raptor persecution.

So I was pleased to see that the top two priority long-term ambitions closely match our concerns. These are:

**Finest Wildlife:** *home to the finest variety of wildlife in England.*

**Climate Mitigation:** *resilient and responsive to the impacts of climate change, storing more carbon each year than it produces.*

More specifically, the first priority about wildlife includes target 1.6, which links directly to our Eyes on the Skies campaign:

*Support implementation of the national Wildlife Crime Strategy, so as to end the illegal killing and disturbance of birds of prey and other wildlife by 2028.*

Achieving this would be such a major step forward. When I worked for the national park authority, back in the late 1980s, I chaired a 'species protection group', which brought together a wide range of conservation and land management organisations. Amongst

other matters, it addressed the issues concerning the absence of birds of prey. But nearly four decades later no progress has been made on this; indeed, the authority has now withdrawn from the local Birds of Prey Partnership, with Chief Executive David Butterworth saying that 'Sadly all the initiatives to tackle birds of prey crimes have been unsuccessful.'

I needed to remind myself that the Yorkshire Dales Management Plan is the top-level plan that establishes a framework for the policies not only for the authority but for all other organisations involved in some way in delivering change in the area. So I looked for the organisations that have committed to achieving objective 1.6:

**Lead:** National Wildlife Crime Unit

**Support:** Cumbria Police, Lancashire Police and North Yorkshire Police; Natural England; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority; Moorland Association; Northern England Raptor Forum; British Association for Shooting and Conservation; National Gamekeepers Organisation; RSPB

It's good to see this grouping of relevant organisations. I now know who to hold to account, and I will be watching with interest the publication of the annual progress report that tells us how well each target is being met.

**Nancy Stedman, volunteer**

# Grey Areas

**All too often vulnerable communities are most affected by environmental degradation and climate change but have the least say in how we tackle them. Postgraduate student Prerana Balu argues that we cannot protect the planet unless we acknowledge that each one of us is part of nature.**

Wildfires in Los Angeles, then in Scotland. Earthquakes in Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam. Flooding in Central Texas, then in India and Pakistan. Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica, typhoons in the Philippines. Extreme weather - and natural disasters - with extreme impacts.

Natural disasters don't discriminate but responses, resources and outcomes do. These headlines swept the globe in 2025 alone, but behind the statistics that we see are vulnerable people and already marginalised communities. They are not just coping with the destructive side of nature; they are also fighting against a world that often leaves them exposed and unheard.

It is all well and good trying to save the planet when climate change rears its head so visibly. But what good is a protected planet without protecting its people?

As human beings, we should not be considered 'outside observers' of an 'environment' we are trying to save when we are also species, *Homo sapiens* if you will, within an ecosystem. We are not bystanders to natural disasters or disease outbreaks: our housing, health, food security and wellbeing are intertwined with the ecology around us. Any environmental action that does not consider risks to human vulnerability may conserve landscapes but not community, creating empty sanctuaries and erasing stories of survival and struggle.

A healthy planet is hollow if its people are not surviving, or rather thriving, alongside it. Conservation works only when it upholds both biodiversity and the rights, safety and dignity of all communities, rural or urban. We should consider the influence on vulnerable people of every climate

Hen harrier. Image courtesy of Iulian Ursache (Pixabay)



# and Green Spaces

mediation technique, buffer planted or emission cut, amplifying underrepresented voices where possible to quantify impacts.

Environmental and social justice are deeply interlinked and far from just theory. Marginalised populations often face harsher pollution from outsourced production and waste exports, increased health risks from disease and extreme weather and slower aid responses. Many communities live near toxic sites, lack access to clean water, face food insecurity and other resource exploitations and risk displacement and land appropriation – yet have the least say in environmental recovery plans.

With the wealthiest 10% responsible for almost half of total global carbon emissions, climate impacts disproportionately affect people such as those in the Global South, despite them having contributed the least to cumulative greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, practising intersectional justice includes confronting how racism, classism and exclusion exacerbate social and environmental harm.

## A Seat at the Table

We often hear how the climate emergency is deepening; however, the planetary crisis extends beyond this, with a rise in, for instance, racism, scapegoating and

division. As a young woman of colour in the UK, the cost of watching this in real time is exhausting. Witnessing intolerance first-hand, being sidelined on debates around access and inclusivity and seeing decisions made without empathy for those less privileged entails a sense of exclusion that lingers.

I remember looking forward to a day out with my family in our favourite local nature reserve not too long ago. What I didn't expect, however, was to be met with a comment from a passerby about my 'kind' being 'everywhere and inescapable', 'even' in the countryside. I see it in comment sections of social media movements aiming to widen access to green spaces such as Muslim Hikers, where some write about not being able to have 'one thing for themselves'. I see it in my academic fields – the preference for 'Western' science informing nature preservation and ignoring traditional indigenous knowledge – or even professionally, feeling out of place in one of the least racially diverse sectors. And lastly, I see it so intertwined with other environmental factors, such as poor air quality, with vulnerable communities disproportionately impacted.

This exhaustion is not just emotional: it shapes our health, our hope and our motivation to organise for lasting change.

Our current power to protest for justice is also being tightened: with restrictions on timings, increased criminalisation of repeated demonstrations and treating peaceful marches as 'coercive' threats. This jeopardises the right to challenge decisions that affect the vulnerable, where legal grey areas silence voices for change.

There is hope, of course. I saw it first-hand in the Campaign for National Parks New Perspectives Future Leaders Course\*, with young, diverse people advocating for a better world, better for us all. I saw it in the solutions we proposed, in the way we empowered and listened to one another and stayed connected, uniting for greater systemic change.

This is not just about the viability of climate-led justice, it is about the need for a total transformation, protecting both the planet and people by default. Ecological priorities should be balanced with advocating for every voice – saving nature and reclaiming spaces, rights and respect for people as part of nature's story. A fairer future means allowing us all to be part of defending the world we live in; our planet is our people.

**Prerana Balu, postgraduate student**

\* Supported by Friends of the Dales and held at Malham in spring 2025



Future Leaders course participants, Malham, spring 2025. Photo courtesy of Harriet Gardiner

# Ticking the Boxes

**High house prices, second home ownership and lack of services all threaten the vitality and diversity of Yorkshire Dales communities. Vice president Malcolm Petyt looks at a new development that is helping to buck the trend by providing properties that are affordable, suitable for people of all ages and abilities, environmentally sustainable and within easy reach of facilities.**

At Friends of the Dales we check the weekly lists of planning applications around the national park and send our comments when we think appropriate. A few years ago we noted a significant proposal: for an estate of about 50 houses in what was then a large meadow on the edge of Sedbergh. For some time the land had been listed by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority as suitable for housing, especially affordable housing – what would a detailed proposal be?

A commercially oriented builder might have sought to maximise profit by squeezing in as many 'desirable' properties as possible. Fortunately this developer was a not-for-profit housing association, and it worked over quite a long period with the planning department of the national park authority to agree the details of a scheme that would tick as many boxes as possible in terms of features that would meet with approval. So what is the result?

The national park authority has been very aware of the great need for houses that are for local people and also for 'affordable

homes'. Any proposed development must contain properties that meet these criteria. So all those seeking to acquire one of the 49 properties at 'Rawthey Meadows' would need to meet the requirement of having a local connection. While some of the houses were to be available on a private purchase basis by those who could afford to buy them, others could be rented, and others could be acquired through a shared ownership arrangement. This is a government-approved scheme designed to give people the opportunity to get onto the housing ladder. They buy a share of, say, 25% (either from their savings or with a mortgage) and pay rent to the housing association on the remainder – with the option to increase their share of the ownership when they can afford to do so.



Main image: Rawthey Meadows, looking west Above: Bat boxes



Swift boxes

## Covering all Bases

Besides the inclusion of affordable homes, a requirement for a local connection, and a mixture of tenancy type, what other boxes are ticked by the completed scheme?

- **Mixture of Type of Houses**

Rather than rows of houses of similar design, there is a mix of detached, semi-detached, terraced and bungalow properties. These types are interspersed: for instance, a small terrace of several-sized houses next to a detached house and then a pair of bungalows.

- **Mixture of Size**

Some of the houses have four bedrooms, some three and some just two – meeting the need of local people to downsize when they are elderly.

- **A Feeling of Space**

Many of the houses are spread around a central open area, and almost every one can enjoy views towards the Howgill Fells or the hills towards Kendal. All the properties have at least two off-road parking spaces, minimising the need for cars to clutter the road.

- **Accessibility**

The estate is within walking distance of much of the town. It is only a few hundred metres to a small supermarket, the health centre and the Queen's Gardens recreational area (which had long been underused because it was at the edge of the town). The centre of Sedbergh is only half a mile away, and children can walk to the primary and secondary schools. Although bus provision to and from Sedbergh is not as good as many would wish for, the route to Kendal passes the estate. Most residents do have cars, but it is certainly possible to live there without one.

- **Internal Accessibility**

The houses are designed to be accessible for those of varying and changing mobility: external and internal doors are wide enough for a wheelchair to get around; all the houses have a ground-floor toilet; and the staircases could accommodate a stairlift if required.

- **Energy Sustainability**

All the properties have been built with good insulation and double-glazed windows. They are all heated by air source heat pumps.

- **Increasing Biodiversity**

Each house is responsible for maintaining the plots to its front and rear, and the housing association maintains central and surrounding grassed areas. Trees have been planted within and around the estate, and many houses have been built with integrated bat or swift boxes.

Friends of the Dales welcomes this imaginative and well-planned housing provision by Broadacres Housing.

Malcolm Petyt, vice president

*We believe that the highest priority for housing in the Yorkshire Dales National Park is that it should be affordable to the rural population. We also work to help ensure that new homes give residents easy access to services and facilities, including use of public transport options. Find out more about how we support sustainable, diverse communities at [www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/housing](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/housing)*

## Building a Better Future

**A Wensleydale-based charity has created three affordable homes together with a busy shop, which is run co-operatively by artists and craftspeople.**

The Askrigg Foundation was founded in the 1970s with the aim of supporting the community by providing employment opportunities and bursaries. But, over time, the building that it bought to serve as a store, craft factory and office deteriorated. At the same time, residents were being forced out of the area by soaring house prices.

**By supplementing its savings with grants and a £130,000 Charity Bank loan, the Askrigg Foundation was able to convert the property into the shop, two flats and a cottage, which are available at below market rent to people who have lived in the village for at least three years or work nearby and have a housing need such as being at risk of homelessness.**

**As well as helping local artisans to sell their products, the small craft market has become a popular meeting place for villagers and holidaymakers.**

# Navigating the Numbers

New figures released by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority give an insight into the difficulties facing planners trying to balance the needs of residents, businesses, visitors and wildlife in much-loved but vulnerable landscapes – and all at a time of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss.

Here are some of the key statistics for 2025, along with ways that we at Friends of the Dales are helping to meet these conflicting demands.



Into the woods, Bradford Pennine Gateway



FotD volunteers collecting plastic tree guards. Photo courtesy of Mark Corner



Creative Campaigners at Malham. Photo courtesy of Harriet Gardiner

## Population

The Yorkshire Dales is the second largest national park in England, covering 841 square miles. The population reached a peak of about 24,000 in 2008 but, like most rural areas in upland northern England, it has declined slightly since.

There were just 22,800 residents according to the 2021 census, which means that it is the most sparsely populated after Northumberland.

There is a severe and increasing imbalance between the proportion of residents over 65 (31%) and those under 18 (17%).

Over 96% of the land is privately owned.

## Our Response

We raise funds to procure and manage the weekend DalesBus network of buses into and around the national park through our subsidiary Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company.

We campaign for a more comprehensive public transport service, especially at key times and regular intervals, serving residents and visitors to the national park.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/living-access](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/living-access)

We have brought together and support a network of young people aged 20-30 (the Creative Campaigners). This enables us to better understand the viewpoints of young people and bring more diverse voices to our work.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/creative-campaigners](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/creative-campaigners)

## Access

In 2022, 23% of visitors to the Yorkshire Dales National Park were under 45 years old.

Just 3% of the UK visitors were people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

There are over 1,615 miles of rights of way (only the Lake District and South Downs have more). 92% are 'easy to use'.

The length of rights of way available for people with limited mobility or for wheelchair use has increased significantly but is still relatively limited – 165 miles (10% of all routes).

60% of the Yorkshire Dales is designated as 'open access' land – an area bigger than Greater Manchester.

## Our Response

We encourage people of all backgrounds to access and enjoy the countryside in a responsible way.

We have worked with partner organisations to provide special events for people who would otherwise find it difficult to access the Yorkshire Dales, for example because of mobility issues, ethnicity and caring responsibilities.



Rawthey Meadows, Winder Fell view. Photo courtesy of Malcolm Petyt

## Housing

The average house price is estimated to be £353,000 (2024), equivalent to eight times average earnings.

Since 2019 new housing completions have averaged 59 per year (target is 67).

In 2021 second homes and holiday lets accounted for 22% of housing stock, compared to a national average of 6%.

### Our Response

We have a small team of volunteers who scrutinise planning applications within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. They encourage and support proposals that will increase housing that is affordable and has a local occupancy condition and easy access to local services.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/housing](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/housing)

*Read about a new development in Sedbergh that is helping to create affordable homes suitable for people with a wide range of ages, abilities and needs on page 8*

## Business and Industry

There are around 2,700 businesses, employing over 14,000 people and with a gross turnover of £625 million (2022).

Over 90% employ fewer than 10 people.

Tourism is worth around £485 million each year and supports some 5,370 jobs.

There are around 1,000 farms, with farming and land management providing over 20% of employment (national average is less than 1%).

### Our Response

We support sustainable tourism that puts the needs of the residents of the Yorkshire Dales before those of the visitors, enhancing their quality of life and reinvesting income into the local communities.

We work to increase the use of public transport and less harmful ways of accessing the national park like walking and cycling.

We support regenerative farming and opportunities for people from urban backgrounds and rural communities to gain a greater understanding of each other.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/tourism](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/tourism)

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/farming](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/policies/farming)



Eyes on the Bog volunteers

## Environment

There are 17 nationally important habitats, covering 85,000 hectares and 57,000 hectares of Sites of Special Scientific Interest – the most of any English national park.

Only 40% of SSSI features are in 'favourable' condition.

Dominant habitats are blanket bog (48,000 hectares; 20% of the England total) and upland heath (20,000 hectares), most of which is managed as grouse moor.

There are over 620 miles of river, of which 51% is in 'good ecological status', compared to an average of 14% for England.

Woodland covers just over 4% (compared to a national average of 10%). Only 1% is classed as Ancient Woodland.

Over 1,700 hectares of native broad-leaved woodland has been planted since 2018.

The national park contains 38% of England's upland hay meadows.

### Our Response

Eleven out of 12 national park societies have now joined our Living Woods campaign, which calls for a reduction in single-use plastic tree guards, which are manufactured using fossil fuels, are unsightly, and break down into microplastics that pollute land and watercourses and eventually reach the oceans.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/plastic-2](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/plastic-2)

We support conservation organisations to rewet, restore and improve the biodiversity of peatlands, which helps prevent flooding and improves water quality downstream. We have eight teams of Eyes on the Bog volunteer monitors, trained and coordinated by Yorkshire Peat Partnership, who assess the condition of peatlands in the national park.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/peatlands](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/peatlands)

Our Living Verges campaign promotes nature-friendly methods of roadside management, which protects valuable remnants of vanished meadows. We also encourage and support people to improve the biodiversity of other grassland areas such as village greens and churchyards.

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/verges](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/campaigns/verges)

# Unsung Heroes

Sometimes the shyest species can be among the most spectacular. Skipton-based author Katie Daynes tracked down the colourful fungi hiding in an unpromising Yorkshire Dales field.

In October I attended a Wonderful Waxcap Workshop at the foot of Whernside. Always a sucker for alliteration and an excuse for the great outdoors, I thought it wouldn't hurt to find out what a waxcap is and, by extension, what makes it wonderful.

No sooner had I booked on the course than waxcaps were in the news, with North Yorkshire emerging as a 'hotspot' for rare fungi according to Plantlife's annual survey. The rarer findings included ballerina waxcaps and violet corals. With names like those, who could resist a fungi field trip?

The workshop was led by the Wild Ingleborough team at the beautifully situated Broadrake Bunkbarn, with views of Ribbleshead Viaduct's arches on one side and the imposing humpback of Whernside on the other. A dozen of us gathered around a table to learn some key facts and identification skills before we ventured out to put them to the test.

Waxcaps are fungi found in grassland areas rich in moss and often grazed by cattle or sheep but largely 'unimproved' by ploughing or fertiliser. They're indicators of an ancient, undisturbed landscape that's becoming increasingly rare. With their waxy or slimy caps, thick gills and smooth



Earthtongue

stems, waxcaps come in an array of bright colours – red, pink, white, orange, yellow, violet and green. The greater the range of colours, the more significant and species-rich the habitat.

If a location is suitable for waxcaps, it's also likely to be home to other significant grassland fungi – corals, pink gills and (a definite Name of the Year contender) earthtongues. These fungi are collectively referred to as 'waxcaps and their allies' and together they, rather charmingly, make up a grassland community.



Parrot waxcap

## Hidden Gems

As we put our boots and coats on to begin our search, our expectations were gently lowered. 'You should have been here last week when the colours were at their best.' 'We've called off BBC Yorkshire since there's not so much to see.' And my own expectations were further lowered when, instead of hiking up the side of Whernside, we simply entered the small field behind the barn, full of shaggy clumps of grass and not much else.



Ballerina waxcap



Violet coral



Meadow waxcap

Until you looked closer...

Shriek from the left, coo from the right, 'Is this something?' from straight ahead. Much to everyone's delight, the 'something' turned out to be...the rare violet coral, never seen on this patch before. The shrieks and coos heralded a variety of exciting waxcap discoveries that we painstakingly identified as crimson, scarlet, slimy, snowy, meadow, golden, blackening and – my personal favourite – a parrot waxcap.



Then the landowner showed us the small group of ballerina waxcaps. Admittedly, their pink hue was now faded and some of their tutus were ruffled and torn, but they still filled me with joy. As did the bright orange earthtongues sticking out of the grass. Who knew that a shaggy field could hold such a hoard of treasure?



There was something wonderful about sharing these gems with a group of complete strangers, all with their own reasons for venturing into the wild for this workshop day. As we collaborated to find and record our discoveries, watching our step and breathing in the same earthy smells, it felt like we had briefly joined the grassland community. We had definitely become its allies.

In the afternoon we were given our own sketchbooks and invited to draw some carefully collected samples. I'm no artist but having time to look closely at a life form I'd never met before was both a novelty and a privilege.

Before we journeyed back to our respective homes, we learned about Plantlife's Waxcap Watch campaign. It enlists the help of the public to report waxcap findings in order to pinpoint the location of surviving



Golden waxcap

fragments of ancient grasslands so they can be protected. And it's not just preservation for preservation's sake. Grasslands with a healthy community of fungi are also likely to be home to hundreds of wildflowers, and they're crucial in the fight against climate change. Species-rich grassland can store up to a third more carbon than areas with just a few species.

You don't need to attend a workshop to become a waxcap ally. Plantlife gives you all the information you need on its website, including how to use its simple app to log your findings. And if you live in North Yorkshire, you don't even need to venture very far. Grazed pastures, lawns, cemeteries and even sports fields can hide their own treasures. You might need to wait until next October to see them, but what better way to grow the fungi community than through a citizen science programme?

**Katie Daynes**



A collection of the group's drawings

*The charity Plantlife works to protect and restore a wide variety of wild plants and fungi in the countryside, towns and cities. Our Living Verges campaign follows its advice to promote nature-friendly management practices that create sanctuaries for wildflowers along roadsides and on public green spaces. More information at [www.friendsofthedailes.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.friendsofthedailes.org.uk/campaigns)*

# Miles with Smiles



Debbie North (left) with others at New Launds Farm near Clitheroe on a Guided Public Day

**Access campaigner Debbie North looks back at a year that has seen her charity open up opportunities to enjoy the countryside to more than 500 people – including many first-time visitors to the Yorkshire Dales.**

Access the Dales was founded in 2022 as a legacy to my late husband, Andy North. When we first started the charity, we imagined it as a small initiative, with a few hubs scattered across the Yorkshire Dales and supported by a handful of dedicated volunteers. Never did we expect that, within just a few short years, our work would grow so rapidly or touch so many lives.

By September 2025, Access the Dales had expanded beyond our original vision. We now operate 14 hubs across Lancashire and North Yorkshire, including popular locations like Aysgarth Falls and at the Lister Arms in Malham. Each hub is situated in equally stunning locations, chosen to ensure that people with limited mobility can experience the beauty of the countryside.

Different hubs provide wheelchairs and mobility aids tailored to varying needs, allowing more people to explore the outdoors than ever before. But our proudest achievements

are our planned events, where we bring groups of people with disabilities into the countryside, making experiences that were once inaccessible truly possible.

Thanks to grants from projects like Wild Ingleborough, Sports for All and the National Lottery, we have been able to target hard-to-reach groups from surrounding inner cities. We've had the privilege of holding their hands, guiding them and showing that the outdoors is for everyone, regardless of the obstacles they face.

One particularly successful project has been our partnership with Ribbleshead Station. Together, we've used the Settle-Carlisle Railway to demonstrate that train travel into the Dales is achievable and enjoyable. Groups we've welcomed include Deaf Experience from Leeds, the Parkinson's Support Group from Skipton and the Feel Good Factor group from Chapeltown, Leeds. It was the very first visit to the Dales for many of these participants. Mobility scooters provided at each location allowed everyone to explore comfortably, while volunteers from Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line shared fascinating stories about the railway's history, adding depth and context to the experience.



The group outside the YHA in Malham

## In Everyone's Reach

July was a particularly special month, when we hosted 20 women from the Sheffield and District African-Caribbean Community Association for a weekend stay at the YHA in Malham. Many of these women had never been to the Yorkshire Dales or stayed in a youth hostel before. The weekend was filled with laughter, exploration and new experiences. One participant shared:

'I wanted to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the wonderful experience we had in Malham.... Everyone in our group, including those with mobility challenges, was able to enjoy the breathtaking scenery comfortably. Your thoughtfulness ensured that we could explore and appreciate the beauty of the countryside without limitations.'

September brought another milestone with our first-ever festival for children, held in partnership with the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. The event welcomed 350 attendees for a day dedicated to inclusion and support for families with disabled children. Activities ranged from bushcraft and day camping to peg weaving and accessible rambles. The feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive:

'We, as a family with an autistic child, have never stayed at an event for five hours, but there was so much to do.'

The festival was a heart-warming reminder of why we do what we do – ensuring that no family feels excluded from enjoying the outdoors.

Throughout the year, we've continued to host inclusive rambles, such as those with Friends of the Dales at Aysgarth Falls. By providing mobility scooters for those who need a little extra support, we can ensure that no one is left behind.

From our humble beginnings, Access the Dales has grown into a vibrant and inclusive network, united by a simple belief: no one should ever be left behind in experiencing the beauty of the countryside. While we know we are still far from eliminating all barriers, our efforts in 2025 have already impacted over 500 people, and the feedback we receive continues to inspire us to strive forward.

Our volunteers and trustees are the backbone of everything we do. As our reach expands, we are always in need of more hands and hearts to join our mission. Whether you can spare a few hours or contribute your expertise, your involvement can help us bring the countryside within reach of even more people. If you would like to help Access the Dales, please contact me at [accessthedales@gmail.com](mailto:accessthedales@gmail.com).

Looking back at the year, I am struck by how far we've come and by the incredible journeys we've witnessed – people experiencing the Dales for the first time, families enjoying activities together and communities connecting in ways that were previously unimaginable. Each visit, each ramble and each smile reminds me that Access the Dales is not just about accessibility – it's about creating memories, breaking down barriers and giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy the natural world.

As we look to the future our focus remains clear: to expand our hubs, welcome new volunteers and ensure that the beauty and tranquillity of the Yorkshire Dales – and now the Forest of Bowland and Nidderdale – are open to all. It's a mission of inclusivity, compassion and adventure, and I am endlessly grateful to everyone who has joined us on this journey.

Here's to another year of adventure, laughter and breaking down barriers – one accessible ramble at a time.

**Debbie North, founder, Access the Dales**

*For more details, visit [www.access-the-dales.com](http://www.access-the-dales.com)*



Enjoying the outing at Ribbleshead

# The Bradford Pennine Gateway:

## Connecting Nature, People and Place

**Trustee Mohammed Dhalech walks through a historic landscape and finds it still has the power to heal and unite people of all backgrounds.**

Last autumn, under clear skies and warm sunshine, I had the privilege of leading a guided walk through part of the recently designated Bradford Pennine Gateway National Nature Reserve (NNR). It was one of those perfect days for walking — bright, calm and full of conversation.

Standing on Baildon Moor trig point, with Bradford stretching out below, the sense of connection was powerful. This landscape

tells a story of change — of mills and migration, of people and place, of nature and belonging. Today, as an officially recognised NNR, it also tells a new story: one of change, inclusion and hope.

Designated in 2025, this is West Yorkshire's first National Nature Reserve, bringing together eight linked sites, including Shipley Glen, Baildon Moor, Harden Moor and Ilkley Moor, into one connected landscape. Its location is important. This isn't a remote wilderness, but it's where urban life meets open moor, where residents of one of Britain's most diverse cities can step directly into nature. It sends a clear message that

nature recovery and social inclusion must progress hand in hand.

National Nature Reserves are often seen as remote or rural, but the Bradford Pennine Gateway challenges that idea. It's part of a new wave of protected areas supported by Natural England, designed to bring nature closer to communities — conserving biodiversity while also creating spaces for wellbeing, education and shared ownership. This initiative complements wider efforts in Bradford to make green spaces more accessible to residents and aligns with the aims of Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture.





Our September walk into the Bradford Pennine Gateway National Nature Reserve

Here, heather moorland and peat bogs meet with woodland and river valleys. The sound of birds fills the air over the same ground where mill workers once came to breathe fresh air after long days in the factories. These landscapes have always provided care and respite, and today they do so again — for a new generation of workers from nearby offices, students and residents seeking connection and calm.

## At Home in the Countryside

Our route started at Saltaire Railway Station, winding through Shipley Glen and climbing to the open moor of Baildon Moor. It's a journey through time — from Saltaire's industrial heritage to the wilderness of the moor, where ancient trackways and modern footpaths cross.

Along the way, we passed students, families and residents enjoying the glen and moor in their own ways — walking, running, talking, simply being in the green space. That mixture of people, backgrounds and cultures felt wonderfully Bradford: lively, proud and connected. This is what a living landscape looks like.

Our group reflected the heart of the city: people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities from across the region walking together, sharing stories and supporting one another. The route was planned to be accessible and inclusive, with regular pauses and plenty of time to take in the surroundings. For some,

it was their first time on Baildon Moor; for others, it was familiar ground seen through different eyes.

We were joined by Kabeer Bostan, senior manager at Natural England, who spoke about the importance of protecting nature in urban areas and making sure that access is available to all. His words sparked thoughtful discussion about what 'access' really means — not just the ability to reach a place, but the feeling of being welcome and represented within it.

For many, the experience was more than just walking. It was about connection — to the landscape, to one another and to a shared vision of inclusion. Watching people of different generations and abilities stand together at the trig point, smiling into the sun, was a moment of quiet strength. It reminded us that the future guardians of our protected landscapes will protect only what they understand and cherish.

The walk was an opportunity for the Friends of the Dales, and we were joined by our Chair, Jonathan Riley, to have some meaningful conversations with the group and explore how we engage with those new voices and communities.

The word 'gateway' couldn't be more fitting. This reserve acts as a literal gateway to the countryside and a symbolic gateway to belonging, understanding and environmental justice. It encourages and inspires every community in Bradford to connect with nature and make it their own.

For me, the Bradford Pennine Gateway represents what environmental and social justice look like in practice: a place where biodiversity and communities flourish together, where every step outdoors also promotes inclusion and belonging.

This is more than just a new designation. It's a reminder that the journey to a greener, fairer countryside begins right here — where city streets meet open skies, and where everyone, regardless of background or ability, can find a place in nature.

This marks the beginning of the journey for the Bradford Pennine Gateway — and an opportunity for us, as Friends of the Dales, to create a pathway into the Dales for communities in Bradford.

**Mohammed Dhalech, trustee**



Mohammed and Jonathan Riley with one of the walk participants

# Still Hidden?

## Black History in the Yorkshire Dales

**Dales Countryside Museum manager Fiona Rosher and researcher Audrey Dewjee have shone a light on an often overlooked aspect of our heritage by uncovering the fascinating stories of the people who profited from, and those who paid the price for, British colonial rule in the Caribbean.**

2007 marked the bicentenary of the British abolition of the trade in enslaved Africans and projects and exhibitions were organised across the country to mark the occasion. Working with researcher Audrey Dewjee, the Dales Countryside Museum applied for funding to take part in the commemoration and embarked on a project to discover more about local connections to this history.

Many different sources were explored: archives, churches, parish records, maps and databases. Dalesmen were found who worked on plantations in a wide range of occupations. Matthew Terry of Askrigg had several jobs in the West Indies. He spent four years in Dominica as a bookkeeper and overseer, one year in Tobago as a land surveyor and seven in Grenada as a colony surveyor. He returned home in 1781 and built Grenada Hall in Askrigg before mortgaging it and moving on to Settle.

Numerous plantation owners were either born in the Yorkshire Dales or retired here after their time in the West Indies. For example, two sons of the Wilkinson family of Sedbergh owned several coffee plantations in Jamaica, while George Kearton of Oxnop Hall left Swaledale to set up a sugar and arrowroot plantation on St Vincent. The Drax family, owners of plantations in Barbados where 30,000 Africans died in slavery, used part of their massive fortune to buy land at Ellerton Abbey in Swaledale, which they still own today.

Other local men became millwrights, doctors and lawyers in the West Indies or were employed on slave ships. Christopher Bowes from Richmond in Swaledale was a slave ship surgeon on board the *Lord Stanley* in 1792. Ecroyde Claxton from Kendal was another, as were two of his brothers. Claxton settled for a while in Burton-in-Lonsdale, where he married and raised a family.



Thomas Parke (by Joseph Wright of Derby)  
Credit: Walker Art Gallery

Thomas Parke, co-owner of over 60 slaving voyages, came from Low Row in Swaledale. The partnership of Heywood and Parke was amongst the ten most important firms trafficking Africans between 1783 and 1793.

Interest in Yorkshire Dales connections hasn't waned over the years. Earlier this year, Audrey gave a talk at the museum highlighting some of the discoveries made since 2007.

In *Pigot's Directory* of 1829, there is a reference to the Yorkshire Dales supplying clothes for the enslaved. Charles Blythe of Hawes is listed as selling 'Negro caps, jackets, etc'.

### Crossing Continents

One of the most exciting parts of the research was discovering the stories of people of African descent who came to the Dales. The first to mention is Thomas Anson, who ran away from High Rigg End, a remote farm high on the slopes of Whernside above the village of Dent. This was owned by the Sill family, plantation owners in Jamaica. Thomas's escape was reported in the *Liverpool Advertiser* in 1758. As a result of the sharing of information between researchers, it has come to light that two years after his escape, Thomas joined the army and served for eight years as a trumpeter, retiring with a pension.

In 1762, Harry Forbes, 'reputed mulatto son' of Jamaican plantation owner William Forbes, was staying with the Sill family in Dent at the same time as his father was making his will in London. In the will, John Sill was appointed as one of Harry's two guardians. Stories like this show that people kept in touch with their relatives and friends overseas despite the difficult travel conditions of the time.

Two more visitors to the area were the daughters of Henry Foster. Born at Beckermonds in Langstrothdale, Henry went to Jamaica in the 1830s. Family tradition says that he married a lady of colour, and that their daughters paid a visit to their relatives at Beckermonds.

Recently, a few more baptism and burial records have surfaced, including Robert Wadeson, 'a black' baptised at Sedbergh in 1753 (found by Diane Elphick) and the burial of 18-year-old Egbo, who died from smallpox in 1871. Born in 'Old Calabar' in Nigeria, Egbo worked for Thomas Sayer, a medical practitioner in Kirkby Stephen.

Local connections go back even earlier. In 2022 Leeds University displayed

## Safe for Now

**Campaigners in Swaledale have fought off proposals to build 171 holiday homes and 155 apartments at a popular nature reserve on the Coast to Coast Path National Trail near Catterick.**



Scorton Lakes lie just outside the Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary and the 126-hectare site was formed from gravel extraction during the 20th century. When quarrying stopped, it was subject to a Section 106 agreement, which required it to be restored to wetland, woodland and grassland. Although not an official nature reserve, it is now home to a wide range of rare plants and animals including 157 species of birds, 32 of which are on the red list.

Its future was threatened by the proposals from owner Tancred Gravel, which could also have included a farm shop, gym, spa, bar/café, play area, trim track and tennis courts. But a surprise visit by North Yorkshire Council officers on a midweek morning last October showed that the network of footpaths and bridleways, most of which were suitable for wheelchairs, pushchairs and mobility scooters in good conditions, were well used by hikers, dog walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse riders.

Scorton Lakes was deemed to attract a 'community' of birdwatchers and naturalists and provide a range of health and wellbeing benefits for people from surrounding villages. It was listed as an Asset of Community Value in November.

*Find out more about Assets of Community Value on page 20*



Photo courtesy of Save Scorton Lakes



Memorial to Captain Thomas Pratt and his brother John, of Askrigg

a memorial tablet found during excavations carried out in the 1960s at the site of the Roman fort at Bainbridge. It commemorates the building of the fort

during the reign of emperor Septimus Severus, who was born in North Africa. Septimus Severus came to Britain in the year 208, along with his wife and two sons, residing in York (then known as Eboracum), from where he governed the empire until his death in 211.

The Yorkshire Dales have been connected with the wider world for centuries and there is probably a good deal more history still hidden and many more stories waiting to be discovered in archives and churches, parish records and old books. So please keep a lookout for them and share your findings by emailing [dcm@yorkshiredales.org.uk](mailto:dcm@yorkshiredales.org.uk)

**Audrey Dewjee, on behalf of the Dales Countryside Museum**

*For more on the story of Thomas Anson and further insights into the links between the Yorkshire Dales and slavery, see the article Airbrushed out of History in the spring 2022 issue of Yorkshire Dales Review available on the Capturing the Past website [www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk](http://www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk)*



Bainbridge Roman Fort Imperial dedication to Septimus Severus

# United in a Common Interest



Working party at Knaresborough Forest Park

## Could new legislation help Yorkshire Dales communities bring green spaces around their towns and villages back into public ownership? We look at the benefits and pitfalls of embracing new ways of land management that put people and nature first.

Where the air might have been filled with diesel fumes, butterflies and dragonflies danced in the summer breeze. And where HGVs and commuter traffic could have thundered past, silence reigned over the sun-bleached meadows. I was back in my old haunts above the Nidd Valley Gorge at Knaresborough and exploring a maze of new footpaths through an oasis of calm that seemed a world away from the crowds of day trippers thronging nearby Waterside.

It all began back in 2016, when campaigners came together to oppose plans for a relief road that would cut through a swathe of much-loved agricultural land between the town and nearby Harrogate. Over 90 acres of Long Lands Common has since been acquired with funding from more than 4,500 community shareholders and it is being managed for nature and people, rather than profit. Plans include creation of a woodland with open areas, like the landscape of the former medieval hunting forest that occupied the site, an arboretum, 'tree cathedral', marshy areas and pond, open grassland with long-distance views, children's wood, facilities for craftspeople and educational areas.

Campaigners have also acquired the adjoining 60-acre Knaresborough Forest Park, which has over 4,000 community

shareholders, with the aim of increasing biodiversity and protecting the land for future generations.

Could something similar happen in the Yorkshire Dales? What if residents here could also come together to safeguard their treasured green spaces against unwelcome development? The odds may seem stacked against them but the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, now passing through Parliament, might make it easier to bring land back into public ownership.

Back in 2010, the incoming coalition government was keen to encourage people to take more responsibility for building community spirit and delivering services in their neighbourhoods. This was hardly a new idea in parts of the Yorkshire Dales like Hawes, where residents still run everything from the library to the bus service and the petrol station, and many of the new initiatives never really came to anything – with a few notable exceptions.

These included the introduction of legislation giving groups of people such as parish councils, charities and certain non-profit-making organisations the right to nominate buildings and land to be

listed as Assets of Community Value if they were, or had recently been, used to benefit the wellbeing or social interests of local residents, perhaps by providing cultural, recreational or sporting facilities. These ACVs could include pubs, village shops, libraries, allotments...and even public toilets. Once on the list, any sale would have to be delayed for up to six months so that the community could raise money and bid for it themselves.

There have been some successes in the Yorkshire Dales. Current Assets of Community Value include Long Preston Methodist Chapel, which was nominated by the parish council due to its regular use for a range of activities including a playgroup, lunch and craft clubs, exercise classes and music events.

Craven Wildlife Rescue, featured in the autumn 2025 issue of the *Review*, has also put in successful applications for its current base at the former Horton-in-Ribblesdale Primary School and for the surrounding playing fields. Other ACVs in the Yorkshire Dales National Park include the Fountaine Inn at Linton-in-Craven, the Bolton Arms at Redmire, The George Hotel at Orton and the Pheasant Inn at Casterton. Friends of the Dales objected to a proposal to convert the latter into three dwellings because it would lead to the loss of this important community asset.

## Fair Enough?

But there are no ACVs for wide, open spaces – woodlands, moors or agricultural land – and the Community Right to Bid doesn't cover environmental (or economic) assets.

And there are other problems. Currently only 2% of ACVs go on to become

*To view the public register of Assets of Community Value in North Yorkshire, see [www.northyorks.gov.uk/community-and-volunteering/community-rights/register-assets-community-value](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/community-and-volunteering/community-rights/register-assets-community-value) Click on each asset to see if the application was unsuccessful or, if successful, when it was registered and when it expires on reaching its five-year term (requiring a new application).*

*Guidance on the process and a list of Assets of Community Value for Westmorland & Furness Council, which covers some of the north-western area of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, can be seen at [www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/your-environment/your-community/assets-community-value-and-community-right-bid](http://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/your-environment/your-community/assets-community-value-and-community-right-bid)*

community-owned<sup>1</sup>. It's difficult to complete all the necessary paperwork and raise the cash in just six months and, even then, the owner can choose to sell to someone else. Inclusion on the register of Assets of Community Value automatically expires after five years, giving local communities the added burden of ensuring they are ready and able to re-apply for continued listing.

So the new legislation aims to create a Community Right to Buy that allows eligible organisations a year for fundraising, stipulates that they are given first refusal and gives them right of appeal if an ACV is not listed. If a price can't be agreed, an independent valuer will set it.

Even so, it won't be a level playing field. Places like Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ilkley – where current ACVs include Middleton Woods as well as White Wells Spa Cottage, the King's Hall and Winter Garden, library and lido – may find it easier to pull together a team of people with the right mix of professional expertise and it's easier to raise funds in more affluent communities. And, ironically, austerity measures introduced since 2010 mean that much of the free support once available to non-profit-making organisations no longer exists, including Skipton Council for Voluntary Service, which served parts of the Yorkshire Dales.

But there is still some help out there. We Have the Power<sup>2</sup> has provided philanthropic interest-free loans that facilitated the purchase of more than 30 nature restoration initiatives including Knaresborough Forest Park. This enables residents to put in a bid to acquire land quickly, giving time to apply for grants, approach donors and run fundraising appeals. Plunkett UK<sup>3</sup> helps people in rural areas bring businesses into community ownership. And investors like Charity Bank give loans to initiatives tackling social and environmental issues.

The question is – is it enough?

Lynn Leadbeatter, volunteer

# Going, Going...Saved?

**Pubs are the focal point of many Yorkshire Dales villages but all too often their continued existence is at the mercy of market forces. Chair Jonathan Riley looks at how residents can fight back by taking ownership and running them as successful businesses that also meet a wider social agenda.**

Talk of Yorkshire Dales pubs conjures up evocative images of roaring fires, local food and, 'of course', quality Yorkshire ales. All important elements of the Yorkshire Dales brand and one that many visitors cite as a reason for their love of the Yorkshire Dales. The most famous citation is of course J B Priestley's about his love of the village of Hubberholme in upper Wharfedale and the George Inn.

Nostalgia aside, the focus here is the role that pubs can play in ensuring a range of community facilities and services are available to help villages continue to thrive and support people in living, working and visiting. Pubs continue to close at an alarming rate, and many of those lost were once popular and valued community facilities. Legislative changes over the last 40 years have largely resulted in pubs being owned by companies that view their estates as property assets, not community facilities.

Change is happening though, not least with the growth of a new generation of pubs but an increase in community ownership of pubs. In 2025, 217 pubs in the UK are community-owned<sup>1</sup>. Here in the Yorkshire Dales, there are four, but others are campaigning for community ownership as well as a number in neighbouring villages. The first was the George & Dragon in the village of Hudswell near Richmond, which was covered in more detail in the autumn 2023 issue of the *Review* and has been widely showcased because of its success. Notably it offers some of the services that are on everyone's wish list of those they'd love to see thriving in our villages – or brought back if absent - such as the village shop, post office, library, space for events and, in the case of the George & Dragon, allotments.

The question of the role of the pub in Yorkshire Dales villages is a subset of the bigger question as to how to achieve the best balance between attracting visitors to the national park and ensuring it's a thriving and sustainable place for people to live, work and enjoy the landscape.

## Mixing Business with Pleasure

Across the Yorkshire Dales there's a range of pub offerings with some focussing on the higher quality end of dining, some adapting to accommodate large volumes of visitors and some seeking to also be a community service. Whichever of these is the focus, ongoing success will continue to depend on supporting the socio-economic needs of the community as part of sustaining a thriving year-round business.

I have experienced rural pubs in other parts of the UK where there is emphasis on providing services that support community cohesion and combat social isolation, which is essential for rural areas like the Yorkshire Dales.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is very clear in its Local Plan policies that loss of existing services through change of use should be resisted and there is a clear aim to protect and promote development of community facilities through planning control. Recent planning decisions have focussed on whether the business case has been adequately undertaken in support of proposals to close pubs, and where this is not the case, applications have been refused. The support of the authority is welcome and key to more pubs being community-owned.

Although the designation of a pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) is helpful as it gives a community first refusal to buy, the government's closure of the Community Ownership Fund in April 2025 was a huge disappointment as it had been crucial for most of the community buy-outs to date. However, in October 2025 the government did announce a fund of £440,000 to help pubs broaden their services through the Pub is the Hub<sup>2</sup>. This is welcome but will not provide the level of funding that would often be the difference between community ownership or loss of a pub.

Jonathan Riley, Chair

<sup>1</sup> Camra [www.camra.org.uk/community-pubs](http://www.camra.org.uk/community-pubs)

<sup>2</sup> Not-for-profit organisation advising publicans on diversifying into providing rural services [www.pubisthehub.org.uk](http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk)



## Campaigners Call it a Day

Closure of the government's Community Ownership Fund has put paid to hopes of saving The Black Horse at Hellifield.

Although the building had been closed for some time, a public appeal secured pledges of £215,000 towards its purchase in just three weeks. There were plans for a community benefit society to run the 17th-century building, not just as a place to drink but as a venue for a wide range of activities, events and gatherings.

But last November campaigners announced that all attempts to identify grant funding to bridge the gap between the funds raised and the market price had been unsuccessful whilst additional investment would have been needed for essential refurbishment. The owners had not been willing to negotiate on price or consider deferred payment, and subsidising the purchase by using part of the site for community housing was unfeasible.

### In tribute to Alan Pease

Friends of the Dales was sad to learn of the death of Alan Pease, who was for over 20 years a trustee and company secretary of the Yorkshire Dales Society. He was awarded honorary membership in recognition of this long service to the charity. Our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

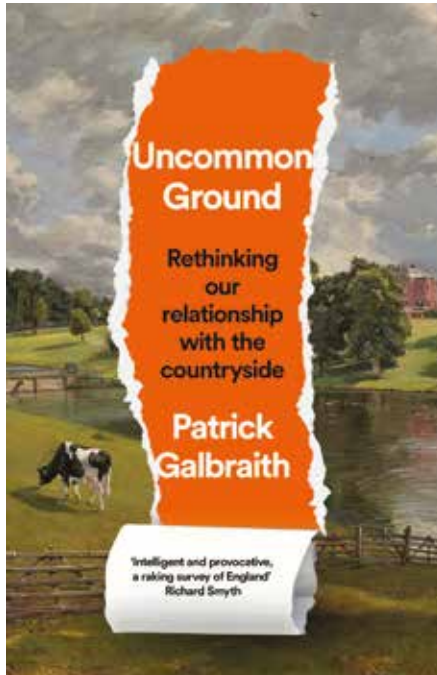
# Uncommon Ground

**Author:** Patrick Galbraith

**Publisher:** William Collins

**ISBN:** 978-0008644406

**Price:** £22



*Uncommon Ground* is a persuasive, passionate and readable book. With his sights firmly set on the thorny issue of access, Patrick Galbraith's skilfully marshalled central premise is that there is a fundamental disconnection with nature in the UK. This has led to divisiveness as well as an ignorance about the countryside. 'The enemy is a lack of understanding, a lack of experience, and a lack of opportunities to engage.' Thus, he concludes, 'There is no access crisis in Britain but there is an engagement crisis.' One can, of course, agree with the latter without endorsing the former.

The book is also beguiling, cleverly and unfortunately framing the issue of access around personality, education and experience. The systems that have taken us over the brink of an ecological precipice are absent. The book is filled with good landowners, wildfowlers, gamekeepers, wardens, farmers and fox hunters as well as some naturists, admirable poachers and Romani people (Roma). Team countryside is ranged against bad activists, principally

the Right to Roam campaigners, who, when not comical, are casually if not callously sowing discord, division and disinformation.

We are therefore invited into what Patrick sees as an unnecessary 'cultural war' often driven by, he implies, class envy. The 'battle for access' has its legitimate and illegitimate targets: it is fought by heroes like working-class wildfowlers (who are innately conservationist) and by villains like middle-class R2R activists. The former are invariably likeable, reasonable and down-to-earth. The latter, who, according to Patrick, 'shout the loudest', are at best idealistic, at worst ill-informed, belligerent and deluded.

Patrick knows how to tell a good story. However, the terrain through which he guides us is a bit slippery (though the slide is often enjoyable). For instance, there is a section on black grouse, which used to be 'in every county' but is now in precipitous decline. The next paragraph is about lockdown and the influx of unruly people into the countryside. The juxtaposition, a tactic used elsewhere, appears to blame greater access in 2020/21 for the black grouse's demise whereas the most significant decline occurred in late 1990s, due to habitat loss and intensive farming.

I suspect most of us would essentially agree with Patrick that access to nature does not automatically produce 'enlightened nature-lovers'. Look at all the landowners who have presided over huge swathes of the countryside while our natural world, over the last 70 years, has collapsed leaving little other than a pretty picture postcard landscape. Patrick does indict some landowners on this score. But it's the public that poses the real threat. And, of course, 'we' do often have a negative impact on wildlife, as Patrick details: dogs off-leash disturbing ground-nesting birds, noisy and damaging leisure pursuits, selfies with seals, sunscreen, dog flea treatment (containing the deadly Imidacloprid) in rivers and so on. However, even with Patrick disputing that the public is restricted to only eight per cent of England and Wales, 'we' don't have access to the majority of the

.....

landscape and therefore someone else had a negative impact on the wildlife that used to be there.

At Arundel we meet another affable and knowledgeable gamekeeper, who is tasked with restoring wildlife to ‘a nature-depleted landscape’. It’s not clear how it became so depleted. A strange disconnect for an author intent on connections.

Rather than more access Patrick has sensible suggestions for greater engagement with the countryside. He champions more education and understanding. However, what are we to better understand about the state of the countryside? How it became this way, not least via laws that protected gross inequalities and promoted intensive agriculture and extraction? Or as a means by which we accept and engage with rural practices and pursuits presided over by a traditional socio-economic and political system?

If, as Patrick warns, ‘we are at a precipitous moment when so much of our wildlife is hurtling towards extinction,’ we need radical change and fast. How is this to be achieved?



Patrick Galbraith

Historically landowners have resisted change. They have ruthlessly exploited their land for profit and the pleasure pursuits of the day unless paid not to. The vast majority opposed the creation of national parks. The changes that have come about over the last 50 years or so – in attitudes and approaches to nature (eg nature-friendly farming, conservation schemes, wilding) – have been driven not by landowners but by the very grassroots activism and idealism that Patrick instinctively dismisses.

**Bruce McLeod, vice president**

*Right to Roam has responded to Patrick at [www.righttoroam.org.uk/patrick-galbraith-uncommon-ground](http://www.righttoroam.org.uk/patrick-galbraith-uncommon-ground)*

## Online Talk: Protecting Birds of Prey – Inside the Work of UK Wildlife Crime Policing

Tuesday, 27 January

5:30pm – 7:00pm

Join Detective Inspector Mark Harrison of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit for insight into the challenges of protecting vulnerable and endangered birds of prey in North Yorkshire. In this exclusive talk, Mark will share **true stories from the frontline of wildlife crime policing**, revealing the realities, challenges and successes faced by officers working to safeguard some of our most at-risk species.

He will also address common misconceptions on the role of policing in tackling birds of prey persecution. Expect an honest and informative discussion about:

- the key challenges of investigating bird of prey crimes
- what’s working well and where improvements are needed
- plans, strategies and innovative policing tactics
- and a look at a few fascinating real-life cases

Don’t miss this chance to hear directly from one of the UK’s leading experts on wildlife crime enforcement.



Members of UKNWCU with North Yorkshire Rural Crime team. Photo courtesy of UKNWCU

## Online Talk: Saving Our Precious Sky Dancers

Wednesday, 18 February

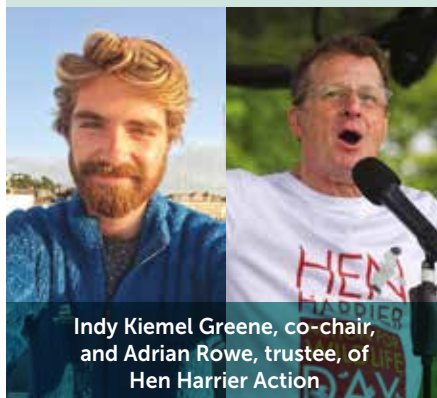
5:30pm – 7:00pm

Join Indy Kiemel Greene and Adrian Rowe from Hen Harrier Action, the UK charity dedicated to protecting hen harriers and other birds of prey.

Indy – familiar from Springwatch, *8 Out of 10 Bats* and the annual HHA Skydancer Day – will introduce the iconic, **red-listed hen harrier**: how to recognise it, its key behaviours and why it’s a vital indicator of upland ecosystem health.

Adrian will then reveal how satellite tagging helps monitor raptors and exposes illegal persecution, and how the charity is funding both tags and specialised wildlife-crime detection dogs to strengthen protection efforts.

This is a unique opportunity to discover how Hen Harrier Action is raising awareness, empowering young people and driving real change for our uplands. Join us and learn how you can help.



Indy Kiemel Greene, co-chair, and Adrian Rowe, trustee, of Hen Harrier Action

## Online Talk: Talking Raptor Persecution

Wednesday, 18 March

5:30pm – 7:00pm

This is a unique opportunity to hear from wildlife conservationist Dr Ruth Tingay, who has worked in the field of raptor research and conservation for more than 30 years. A former President of the international Raptor Research Foundation, Ruth now focuses on campaigning against the illegal killing of birds of prey in the UK through the blog *Raptor Persecution UK*. She is also a co-director of the wildlife conservation organisation Wild Justice with colleague Chris Packham.



Dr Ruth Tingay with a dead buzzard. This species is frequently the victim of illegal persecution, either shot, poisoned or trapped

All events are free – although donations to our charitable work, including the Eyes on the Skies campaign, are welcome.

You will find booking links for all the online talks at [www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/events](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/events)

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## Support us, Support the Dales

Friends of the Dales is the leading voice campaigning for a sustainable future for the Dales.

Our charity needs your support to help us protect this amazing, inspiring but fragile place - for years to come.

### ➔ JOIN US

- More members means more clout when we campaign. Members receive this quarterly magazine and first news of our events programme.

### ➔ DONATE

- Our charity's running costs are funded entirely by your voluntary subscriptions, donations and legacy gifts.

### ➔ VOLUNTEER

- Help with our walks and other events
- Shape our charity's future: become a trustee
- Put out our leaflets on your home patch

### ➔ LEGACY

- Please consider making a gift in your will to Friends of the Dales.

### ➔ BE 'DALES-FRIENDLY'

- Try out our sociable walks and events (most are free)
- Support Dales businesses and communities
- Look for sustainable ways to visit, like DalesBus

[www.friendsofthedales.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthedales.org.uk)



Please visit our website and follow us on social media. Full contact details and membership rates are on page 2

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