

August 2020 - AONB Team update

Great news: a small number of AONB staff are now back in the office, having been working from home since early March.

With such a small office, it is not possible to have the whole team in and maintain social distancing, so we are operating a rota with some staff continuing to work from home each day, and some working in the office. Appropriate Covid-19 measures and precautions have been put in place and everyone is working hard to maintain a safe environment.

The Information Centre has re-opened too but with restricted hours of 10am -12pm Monday -Thursday. To help keep us all safe, we are asking visitors to wear a facemask, always sanitise their hands when entering the building and maintain social distancing. *Please note however, that there may be occasions due to staff work commitments when the Information Centre has to remain closed during these hours. This will be the case on Wednesday 19th & Thursday 20th August.*

Looking ahead, September will bring a restart to our volunteer conservation and litter picking tasks, again with appropriate precautions in place and restricted numbers. Information is being sent out to our current volunteers and we will be opening our invitation to new volunteers in due course.

All these arrangements are being kept under review and will depend on how the local situation develops but, for now, it is wonderful to be moving forward with reopening, albeit slowly and cautiously.

I'm sure you will join me in thanking the AONB staff for how they have dealt with this difficult time and the many challenges it has brought. Most have had to juggle challenging personal circumstances yet all the staff have worked throughout the lockdown with flexibility, good humour and resilience. Some members of the team also assisted the Council's efforts to support vulnerable people. I'm extremely grateful to them all.

Sending all our friends and supporters our very best wishes

Lucy

Lucy Barron AONB Manager



Volunteer update

We're missing all our volunteers and can't wait to get them back working, but in the meantime, let's just take a moment to look back at some of the work they have done over the last few years and to celebrate the outcomes !

During lockdown many local residents fed back to us just how important to their health and wellbeing they found the area's landscape and beauty, wildlife, and network of footpaths. And many of you who live further afield are now taking immense joy from visiting and rediscovering the area again.

Many people are unaware of the conservation work which goes into keeping our special limestone habitats in good condition. Without grazing and cutting, most of the important species-rich grassland would quickly become overgrown with scrub and woodland, causing the loss of many of our wildflowers.

But each winter, the AONB volunteers, local landowners and contractors undertake various tasks, including scrub-clearance, bracken management and coppicing, to help our wildlife thrive.

And as a result, Warton Crag Local Nature Reserve, just one of the sites where they work, is home to a huge diversity of wildflowers, invertebrates and birds and has been looking amazing, with a stunning display of, amongst others, Harebell, Wild thyme, Knapweed and Hawkbit.



Build a Bird Nest Box

The Landscape Trust is currently looking for volunteers to help build bird boxes to replace old ones on their reserves.

There are currently 37 boxes in Trust woodland at Teddy Heights and Coldwell Parrock. Boxes are monitored every year and they have been well used by Blue, Marsh and Great Tits and Nuthatch. These birds need boxes because most of the trees on the reserves are relatively young and have few natural holes to nest in. The boxes however need replacing every so often, and this next season the Trust will need at least five new ones and would be grateful for any offers of help to make them.

Full instructions on how to make a nest box can be found on the [RSPB](https://www.rspb.org.uk) website. For the Trust sites, the preferred hole size is 28mm diameter so Nuthatch can use them. If you can help, please contact johnwilson@btinternet.com Thank you

Annual review 2019/20

The [Arnside & Silverdale AONB Annual Review 2019/20](#) is now available to download from [our website](#).

We apologise that it is not in its usual professionally-designed format, but due to the current Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions on our operations, we have made the decision to publish in a more simplified form this year.

We hope, however, that it still conveys how much has been achieved, despite the challenges! If you have any questions or would like further information on any aspects of our work, please do not hesitate to get in touch.



Species of the season - The Dung Beetle

As a result of cattle grazing on Warton Crag LNR, a number of dung beetles have recently been found on the site.

Dung beetles evolved at least 65 million years ago and there are about 6000 species worldwide.

Only small but they play a big role in agriculture. By burying and consuming dung, they improve nutrient recycling and soil structure and are vital to many ecosystems. They are also important for the dispersal of seeds present in animals' dung and can protect livestock, such as cattle, by removing the dung which, if left, could provide habitat for pests such as flies. Dung beetles eat it, roll it and lay eggs in it and amazingly can bury 250 times their own body weight of dung in one night!

Dung beetle behaviour has fascinated humans for thousands of years – including the ancient Egyptians who observed that the beetles' ball rolling was influenced by the sun - argued to be the first recorded accounts of animal behaviour in the natural world.



Calling all budding poets!

The National Association for AONBs is proud to be supporting the Ginkgo Prize for Eco-poetry this year with £500 going to the 'Best poem of Landscape'.

Chief Executive, Howard Davies, says 'The relationship between poetry and landscape goes back to the origins of language, and to interpret natural beauty artistically goes to the very root of what it means to be human. We all know how it feels to be stopped in our tracks by the wonder of nature – whether that be in a quiet woodland, before a roiling sea or in the stillness before a storm in a city park. Most of the UK population is within 30 minutes of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and each AONB has its own distinctive landscape for everyone to seek their own inspiration.'

Entries close 31st October so don't delay! The poems will be judged by poet and critic Jade Cuttle and Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage who, many of you will remember, visited the stunning landscape of Arnside & Silverdale AONB last year to read his poem *Fugitives* on Arnside Knott.

For further information visit www.ginkgoprize.com



Visiting the AONB - enjoy summer safely

Now that lockdown is easing, it's time to get back to some of the places you love and not only enjoy the breathtaking views and the amazing wildlife but also support the wide range of wonderful cafes, shops and pubs which the AONB has to offer.

Our local businesses have had a particularly hard time, but many have now re-opened and are looking forward to seeing you again.

Please support them wherever you can, remembering to help us all stay safe by following the latest Government Covid-19 guidelines.

Please respect local communities and each other by social distancing, parking responsibly and following the Countryside Code: Respect, Protect, Enjoy.

Enjoy summer safely!
