

Arnside & Silverdale

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Annual Review 2014/15



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Chairman’s Foreword

2014/15 has been a busy, challenging and successful year. I hope you enjoy reading this impressive summary of achievements and activities.



Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an extraordinary place much loved for its amazing wildlife, unique geology and stunning scenery. I particularly enjoy early spring and summer when wildflowers are newly out and sun warms the limestone cliffs and pavements, but all year round there are truly beautiful sights to see here.

The area’s future depends on people working together to conserve and enhance it, and the new AONB Management Plan 2014/19, formally adopted this year, sets out how the AONB Partnership will do this to build on previous achievements. Thank you to everyone who took part in the review process. We now have an ambitious framework for action for the next five years.

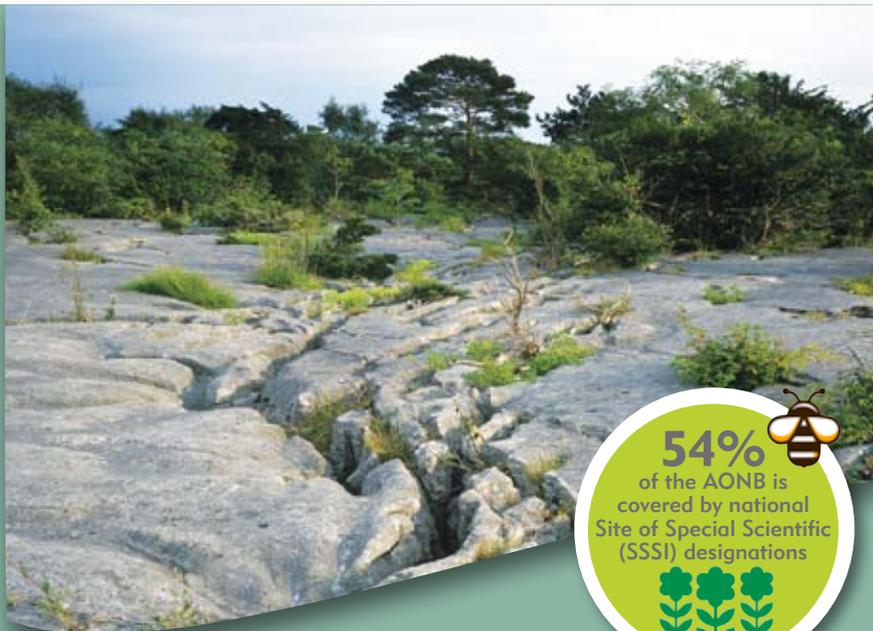
Partnership working is vital to our success. We are very grateful for the continued financial support of key partners South Lakeland District Council, Lancaster City Council, Cumbria County Council, Lancashire County Council, local parish councils and Defra, along with close and fruitful partnerships with numerous other organisations, landowners, farmers, businesses and community groups, both large and small.

I am regularly humbled by the significant contribution that volunteers make to the AONB Partnership’s work, in all sorts of ways, from turning out in all weathers to carry out practical conservation tasks and complete regular wildlife recording counts, to leading events and running the Landscape Trust, the charity which supports the AONB.

I’m sure that everyone who lives in, works in, visits or cares about the area will join me in warmly expressing our gratitude to all the staff and volunteers who work incredibly hard to care for this special place and are making a real difference for its future.

Cllr Brian Meakin

AONB Partnership Chairman



54%
of the AONB is covered by national Site of Special Scientific (SSSI) designations

Introduction

Arnside & Silverdale AONB is a unique landscape of national importance. It was designated in 1972 and covers an area of approximately 75 km².

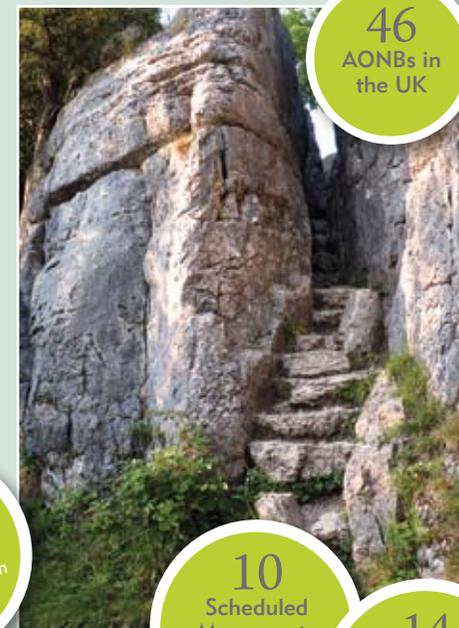
Recognised as one of England's finest landscapes, the AONB is especially celebrated for its wealth of plants, birds and butterflies. The area boasts an extraordinary range of diverse habitats, and the mosaic of stunning limestone pavements, low limestone hills, ancient woodlands, mosses, orchards and meadows, along with an impressive coastal setting affording magnificent views over Morecambe Bay, makes this a truly special place.

The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The Arnside & Silverdale AONB Management Plan 2014/19 is a statutory document which sets out a shared vision for the next 20 years. It describes the broad range of issues we face in this area and how we will manage them to conserve and enhance the area for future generations. A five year programme of actions to help guide the work of the AONB partner organisations is set out in the Delivery Plan.



34 species of butterfly
including the nationally rare High Brown Fritillary



46
AONBs in the UK

10
Scheduled Monuments

14
Listed Buildings



33%
of the AONB is under woodland cover



OVER 110km
of Public Rights of Way



Annual Review 2014/15

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the work of the AONB Team and to record their achievements in the 12 month period up to March 2015.

The AONB Team plays an essential role in delivering the AONB Management Plan: providing management and leadership; making things happen on the ground, translating vision and national policy into local action; stimulating collaboration and delivering results; and providing value for money by accessing funding and resources.

The Team is made up of four FTE members of staff

- AONB Manager: Lucy Barron
- AONB Officer: Sue Hunter
- AONB Countryside Officer: Tony Riden
- AONB Communications & Funding Officer: Barbara Henneberry (0.6FTE) and Ruth Ainsworth (0.4FTE)



Left to right: Sue Hunter, Barbara Henneberry, Lucy Barron, Ruth Ainsworth and Tony Riden



Making a real difference

Throughout our work we are aiming for four key outcomes:

- An outstanding landscape rich in wildlife and cultural heritage
- A thriving sustainable economy and vibrant communities
- A strong connection between people and the landscape
- A dynamic and successful AONB Partnership





An outstanding landscape rich in wildlife and cultural heritage

Our priorities are to deliver projects to conserve and enhance the area's landscape, wildlife, geology and historic features; provide high quality advice and support to landowners and managers; and influence development management and other policies to enable positive outcomes for landscape quality.



In 2014 /15 our achievements included:

- publishing the new Management Plan 2014/19 which has been formally adopted by the four Local Authorities. It is available to download from the AONB website or as a hard copy upon request from the AONB office.
- carrying out further research on the Historic Designed Landscapes of the AONB, focusing on in-depth studies of three sites which were assessed as being of national importance.
- successfully completing the £800,000 Morecambe Bay Limestones & Wetlands Nature Improvement Area project restoring over 2300 ha of priority habitat and working closely with partners to develop a successor.
- achieving habitat enhancement through various partnerships eg conservation management work with Butterfly Conservation for some of Britain's rarest butterflies including the Northern Brown Argus and Small pearl-bordered fritillaries. At least 20 landowners benefited from our high quality advice and practical support service.
- continuing to run a very successful volunteer programme offering over 50 opportunities to carry out practical conservation work throughout the AONB but in particular at the two Local Nature Reserves - Warton Crag and Trowbarrow. Both sites are managed for their special limestone habitats, plants and wildlife. These tasks alone represented an incredible 2500 hours of volunteer effort.
- working closely with South Lakeland District Council and Lancaster City Council on a Joint Development Plan Document for the AONB - a first of its kind in the country. The plan will be extremely important as it will identify sites for new housing and employment development to meet local needs and also set out planning policies to ensure that any development is in keeping with the AONB designation.
- assessing 166 planning applications relevant to the AONB according to the planning protocol and submitting 35 formal responses.
- working with Electricity North West on the Undergrounding for Visual Amenity programme which saw 430 metres of overhead line at Pye Hall, Silverdale removed and the cable laid underground, resulting in the restoration of uninterrupted views across Silverdale.
- participating in the extensive consultation and submitting formal responses on the options put forward by National Grid for the North West Coast Connections project which will see a number of new energy projects in Cumbria and Lancashire connected to the national electricity network.

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Historic Designed Landscapes research project

The AONB Partnership commissioned Ed Bennis, a landscape architect and researcher, and Ruth Thurnhill, to undertake research into the historic designed landscapes of the area. The study - a first for any of England's AONBs - covered a great amount of ground and identified a broad range of important gardens, notably those designed by Lancastrian Thomas Mawson and Ralph Hancock, perhaps best known for designing the roof gardens at the Rockefeller Center in New York.

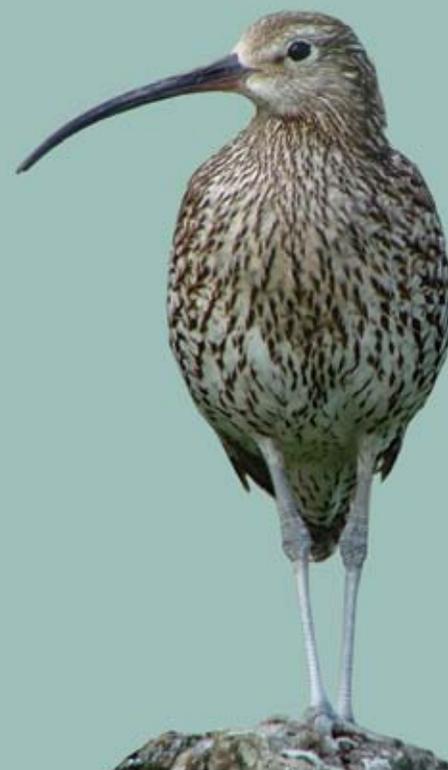
The final report, which will inform the conservation, restoration, enhancement and management of these features, is available for use by partners, stakeholders and communities and can be downloaded from our website.



Morecambe Bay Limestones & Wetlands Nature Improvement Area

The Morecambe Bay area - internationally important for its wildlife - became one of only 12 Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) in England in 2012, attracting £800,000 of funding from Natural England to improve and connect up the area's special wetland, limestone grassland and woodland habitats, as well as inspiring community action and supporting sustainable farming, woodfuel and wildlife tourism. The project has been successfully delivered by the Morecambe Bay Local Nature Partnership, with Arnside & Silverdale AONB acting as the lead organisation.

During the three year project, over 2300 hectares of priority habitat were restored to benefit species such as Lapwing, Curlew, High Brown Fritillary butterflies, woodland birds, orchids and wildflowers. Four new jobs were created, along with one apprenticeship and one internship as a direct result of the programme and a new nature tourism business network involving over 50 businesses was established.



A Development Plan Document for Arnside & Silverdale AONB

The AONB Team has been working closely with South Lakeland District Council and Lancaster City Council on the preparation of a dedicated Development Plan Document (DPD) for the whole of the Arnside & Silverdale AONB.

The DPD will form part of both authorities' Local Plans. It will identify sites for new housing and employment to meet local needs and will set out planning policies to ensure that development reflects the AONB designation. As part of the plan preparation process, Cumbria Rural Housing Trust was commissioned in May 2014 to carry out a Housing Needs Survey in each of the parishes within the AONB. The evidence in the survey reports will be used to help the Councils understand the particular housing needs in the AONB.

The Councils then invited members of the public to put forward proposals for any sites in the AONB they believed to be suitable for housing, affordable housing, employment, community use or other development, or for locally important open space. Altogether 117 site suggestions were put forward and the process of assessing these sites has now begun.



A thriving sustainable economy and vibrant communities

Our priorities are to manage the area as a sustainable tourism destination where visitors can have a high quality experience of nature, culture and quiet recreation; support sustainable rural growth and livelihoods by working with local services and businesses, and by providing rural skills training; and foster community vibrancy linked to the AONB's strong sense of place.



In 2014 /15 our achievements included:

- being able to promote the Morecambe Bay area as a great place to visit to see wildlife to a huge audience via the BBC Autumnwatch programme which returned to broadcast from RSPB Leighton Moss in Silverdale. Many local businesses benefited from the publicity.
- supporting the establishment of the Silverdale and District Woodbank – a community group that is carrying out woodland management, producing woodfuel and helping people in fuel poverty.
- continuing to work closely with the Forestry Commission and local coppice workers to develop a sustainable woodland management initiative and a Wood Directory listing local contractors and suppliers was published.
- supporting the traditional rural skills of hedgelaying and drystone walling by organising and hosting training events and a grand prix competition.
- working closely with our partners in the tourism industry to help develop a Morecambe Bay Brand, including a brand logo, font, copy and images which offer a new look and feel to share this special place with others. The Brand has been adopted for all AONB publications.

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Find out more page 8



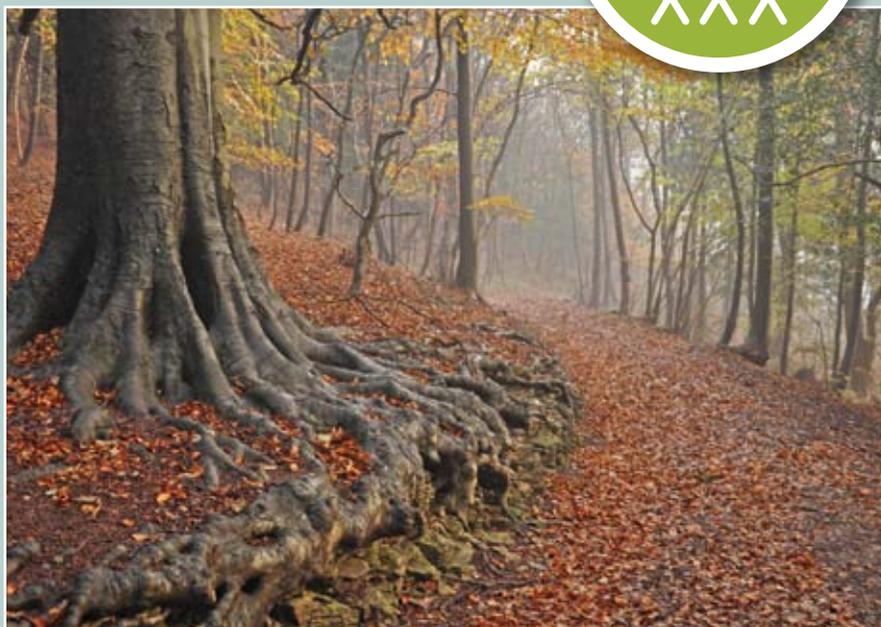
The Silverdale and District Wood Bank

With almost a third of the AONB under woodland cover, the AONB Partnership is working hard to see more woodlands becoming 'actively' managed; more community groups confidently engaged in woodland activities; and stronger wood fuel supply chains to drive more domestic heat derived from renewable sources.

We were therefore pleased to be able to support an exciting new project - The Silverdale and District Wood Bank - a community group that is carrying out woodland management, producing woodfuel and helping people in fuel poverty, while at the same time improving the habitat for some of our amazing wildlife and rare butterflies. This project received national recognition through hosting a National Social Forestry project field trip for woodland owners and representatives of community groups from all over the country.



13
people trained
in rural skills



Supporting rural skills

The AONB Partnership is committed to offering an annual programme of training and events to support and promote traditional rural skills, to ensure traditional field boundaries are maintained and remain part of our landscape far into the future.

In November we organised and hosted the AONB Hedgelaying Competition, the first of the Lancashire & Westmorland Hedgelaying Association Grand Prix events for 2014/15. A well-laid hedge will make the field stock-proof for the farmer and regenerate the hedge with new growth providing a wonderful haven for wildlife and a valuable wildlife corridor. 17 competitors took part, laying between six and eight metres each in the traditional Westmorland style, with Andrew Kirkwood winning the Championship Class; Jack Carradice, the Open Class; and Karl Bell, the Novice Class. Best hedge of the day was awarded to Jack Carradice.

In August, eight volunteers spent a day with professional waller Steve Harrison to learn how to build a drystone wall and in February, five trainees spent a day learning how to lay a hedge in the traditional Westmorland style, guided by champion hedgelayer Andrew Kirkwood. Over 50 metres of hedge were completed.



17
competitors in the
AONB Hedgelaying
Competition





2,500
hours a year
put in by our volunteers

A strong connection between people and the landscape

Our priorities are to produce high quality information and communications; provide opportunities for people to enjoy, learn about and take action to conserve the AONB's special qualities; and improve and promote safe and responsible access and recreation for a diverse range of people.



14
educational
visits hosted

In 2014 /15 our achievements included :

- working hard on implementing our Communications Strategy, delivering our key messages whenever possible. We are continually aiming to reach new audiences and with this in mind, now post regular updates on Facebook and Twitter (1200 followers). Our e-newsletters are proving to be very popular, with the number of subscribers now standing at over 800.
- undertaking a comprehensive review of content and functionality of the AONB website, our principal communications tool, and launching a new-look site in December.
- introducing over 700 people to some spectacular wildlife and helping them gain a greater understanding of the landscape during the AONB Wet & Wild Festival.
- working closely with the Arnside/Silverdale AONB Landscape Trust, a charity with over 1000 members, which supports the work of the AONB Partnership and runs a very popular annual events programme including lectures, guided walks and study days.
- receiving excellent media coverage for AONB events and news with several articles appearing in the local papers and interviews given on local BBC radio stations. BBC Autumnwatch was a great opportunity to showcase the amazing landscape and wildlife of the area.
- continuing to run a very successful volunteer programme, providing numerous opportunities to engage in practical conservation management tasks, monitoring, administration and event support.
- hosting 14 educational visits at Warton Crag Local Nature Reserve, working with local college students and giving five talks to local groups about the area and our work.

OVER 700 PEOPLE
introduced to some
spectacular wildlife
at our "Wet & Wild"
Festival

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The AONB Wet & Wild Festival

The AONB Partnership is keen to share with others what makes this place so special and each year runs a festival of events celebrating a particular aspect of the landscape.

This year the focus was on the wetland habitats, the wildlife that feed and make their homes there, the area's maritime history and the opportunities for quiet recreation such as bird watching and sailing. Over 700 people were introduced to some spectacular wildlife, gained an insight into our fascinating history and through the various events gained a greater understanding of the area and the work that we do.



BBC Autumnwatch

We were delighted that BBC Autumnwatch returned to RSPB Leighton Moss to broadcast live from 28th – 31st October. Having Autumnwatch based in the AONB was a wonderful opportunity to show just how important this area is for wildlife and a chance for everyone to enjoy some of our iconic wildlife spectacles. Highlights included spectacular starling murmurations, rutting red deer, getting close up to a family of otters and the simple beauty of the autumn colours.

The RSPB reserve recorded double the number of visitors they would normally expect, meaning more people connecting with nature and more people helping to support our work.



Brightening up your journey

As you travel along the Furness line, look out for the new art panels which are brightening up the stations.

Several local businesses, the rail companies and the Furness Community Rail Partnership (CRP) have come together to sponsor the panels, 16 in total, which will be seen by tens of thousands of passengers. The stunning artwork has been produced by students from Lancaster & Morecambe and Furness colleges.

The Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership was delighted to be able to be part of this project and to work with Scott Reynolds on his panel depicting the famous Arnside bore. It has been installed at Ark Station and we hope it will inspire visitors to the Lake District and other parts of the Bay to take the train to Arnside or Silverdale and discover this special place.





A dynamic and successful AONB Partnership

Our priorities are to develop strong and resilient partnerships that enable effective delivery and monitoring of the Management Plan; and achieve excellence in the governance and management of the AONB Partnership, the AONB Team and their resources.



In 2014 /15 our achievements included:

- continuing to manage strong internal partnerships such as the AONB Executive Committee and Technical Officers Group along with smaller working groups which look at Planning matters, SDF grant allocation and future funding.
- working as a key partner in the Morecambe Bay Local Nature Partnership (LNP), aiming to create a bright future for the area by significantly improving the quality of the natural environment and connecting up nature, businesses and communities. The LNP is an influential group of key organisations working together in a collaborative way and has been successful in attracting significant external funding for major initiatives including the Nature Improvement Area and Source to Sea projects. For more information, visit www.morecambebaynature.org.uk
- being joint hosts for the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) Annual Conference in 2014. As one of the AONB family of 46 AONBs in UK, we value the work and support of the NAAONB and the associated opportunities for networking, sharing best practice, learning and inspiring.
- working closely with the Arnside/Silverdale AONB Landscape Trust, a charitable body which supports the purposes of the AONB.
- continuing to receive the support of our four local authorities - South Lakeland District Council, Lancaster City Council, Cumbria County Council and Lancashire County Council - as key members of the AONB Partnership, including financial contributions which lever additional monies from Defra, enabling our work to take place.
- organising and hosting a very successful conference attended by over 70 delegates, entitled "Getting involved", welcoming speakers from the Drystone Walling Association and the Morecambe Bay Partnership Headlands to Headspace project.
- being re-awarded the Green Tourism Business Scheme Gold Award following an accreditation grading visit. *"The whole organisation is run with sustainability at its core with many best practice measures in place"*.

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Getting involved

The more people and organisations that get involved, the more we can achieve together – conservation organisations and landowners collaborating to improve priority habitats; joint events to celebrate this extraordinary landscape and its amazing wildlife; volunteer programmes to carry out practical management tasks and monitoring; or a simple pledge of support by joining or donating to the Landscape Trust. It's all about getting involved and working together to conserve and enhance the Arnside & Silverdale AONB.

Each year at our conference we present the Bittern Award to a group, organisation or individual who has made an 'outstanding contribution' to the Arnside & Silverdale AONB. The AONB Partnership was delighted to announce that this year's award would go to Barry Ayre. Barry was a committed supporter of the AONB from the very start, one of the original members of the Landscape Trust and very much someone who "got involved". Many people would remember him as editor of *Keer to Kent*, the Landscape Trust journal, but he helped out in all sorts of ways, from leading guided walks to sharing his amazing archive of material revealing Silverdale's interesting history.





The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

The Sustainable Development Fund is 100% funded by Defra and aims to provide small grants to organisations, businesses, community groups or individuals to carry out projects which bring environmental, social and economic benefits to the AONB. The AONB Executive Committee approved a Fund of £7,400 for 2014/15 at their meeting on 12 March 2014 and four schemes, with a total value of £24,549, benefited from grants awarded by the SDF Panel. SDF has made a very significant contribution to delivery of the AONB Management Plans since it was launched in 2005/6 and has enabled organisations, groups, businesses and individuals to contribute directly to conserving and enhancing the area, bringing significant added value to the work of the AONB Team.



Bread of Heron £1000

This project is the next stage in the development of Heron Corn Mill – an 18th century Grade II* listed water mill and important local heritage site and visitor attraction within the AONB. The mill has been fully restored and the grant was awarded to support the development of a comprehensive education and training programme including the setting up of a group to gain a better understanding of natural and traditional methods of local food production.

Firewood processor £2000

The availability of small-scale woodland management machinery and local contractors to operate it is essential for ensuring that sensitive woodland sites are managed in the right way for biodiversity, community benefit and woodfuel. A number of England Woodland Grant Schemes have recently been set up in the area, together with a community woodfuel initiative, all requiring suitable machinery and local contractors to help deliver them. The grant was awarded to a local contractor towards the purchase of a Japa firewood processor, subject to the recipient carrying out two free demonstration events on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

Electric UTV for the Morecambe Bay Conservation Grazing Company £2255

The Morecambe Bay Conservation Grazing Company plays an essential role in managing some of the key conservation sites within the AONB. This electric-powered, four wheel drive utility vehicle is capable of travelling off-road, carrying up to two people and a small load of tools, materials or livestock feed and will provide an environmentally friendly means of transport with which to inspect and manage the cattle. The recipient has agreed to assist other local conservation organisations such as the Landscape Trust by making the vehicle available to them from time to time on an ongoing basis.

Silverdale & District Wood Bank £2145

The Silverdale and District Wood Bank is a group of volunteers who gather wood produced following woodland management work within the AONB. The wood is stored in the wood bank and members take a share of this wood, primarily as wood fuel to heat their homes. The grant was awarded to assist with the purchase of tools and equipment, the setting up of a website and a woodland management training day.



Thank you

Recently I was walking near Arnside with friends, our collective children getting muddier by the minute, their grins turning to shrieks of laughter.

"Look at that heron, it caught a fish!" exclaimed one, *"wow, look at this crab"*, called another. *"Let's go and explore that wood";* *"this is awesome!"*

"You're so lucky to work in such a beautiful place!" a friend smiled. I couldn't help but agree.

I am lucky, not only to work in such an extraordinary part of the world, but also to work with so many committed people to play a part in looking after it.

It is rarely easy; there are many pressures affecting this beautiful landscape and there are considerable challenges ahead. Our work is as important and relevant as ever.

But I'm often struck by the true passion people have for this area. What better position to be in than having the support of so many, from staff, volunteers and Landscape Trust members to partner organisations, residents, landowners and businesses. Because we work together in partnership we can achieve a great deal with the modest financial resources available to us.

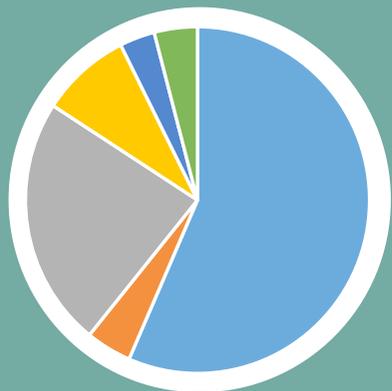
Thank you to everyone who has been a part of our success this year!

Lucy Barron
AONB Manager



Financial Summary

Arnside & Silverdale AONB Expenditure 2014/15



- Staff costs
- Core accommodation costs
- Management Plan delivery
- Core Partnership running costs
- Sustainable Development Fund
- Carried forward to 2015/16

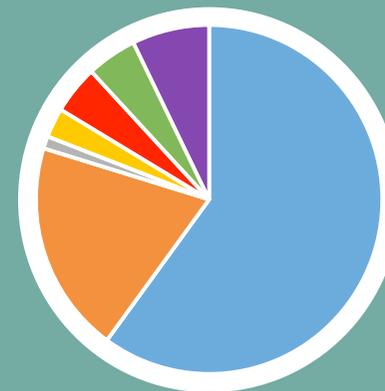
Staff costs	£125,408
Core accommodation costs	£9,534
Management Plan Delivery	£51,814
Core partnership running costs	£18,802
Sustainable Development Fund	£7,343
Carried forward to 2015/16	£8,999

Total **£221,900**

Public spending
on AONBs is only
13p per person
per year

13p

Arnside & Silverdale AONB Income 2014/15



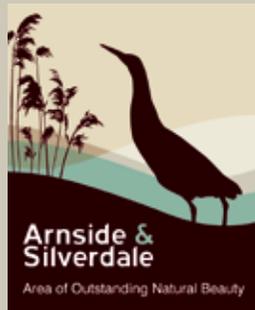
- Defra
- Local Authorities
- Parish Councils
- Contracting income & donations
- External grants
- Brought forward from 2013/14
- Transfer out of reserve

Defra	£133,260
Local Authorities	£43,680
Parish Councils	£2,545
Contracting income and donations	£6,060
External grants	£9,950
Brought forward from 2013/14	£10,405
Transfer out of Reserve	£16,000

Total **£221,900**

£24549

of community
projects supported
through SDF



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Design: Capra Design.

Arnside & Silverdale AONB

AONB Boundary



1:64,000

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Ordnance Survey 100025403.