

ANNUAL REVIEW

2016/2017



Your AONB



Enjoy



Wildlife & Habitats



Get Involved



Living & Working



Heritage



View from Scot Gate Ash © Louise Brown

AONB Facts and Figures

- The AONB covers 603 km² of land in the foothills of the Pennines in North Yorkshire
- Nidderdale AONB shares its western boundary with the Yorkshire Dales National Park
- 95% of the AONB falls within Harrogate District with a smaller share in Richmondshire and Hambleton Districts. The AONB is wholly within the County of North Yorkshire
- The AONB is administered by Harrogate Borough Council. It is overseen by a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) that in 2016/17 had 26 members from 14 organisations representing local authorities, parishes, landowning bodies, community groups, business interests and government agencies
- There were 13 members of the AONB Team in 2016/17 (9 full time equivalents). The team is based in Pateley Bridge, the largest town in the AONB
- 24 195.91 hectares of the AONB's moorlands are of international importance, and designated as a Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation
- The Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site is situated in the AONB
- There are 14 Conservation Areas, 126 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 545 Listed Buildings in the AONB
- 7% of the AONB is woodland including 1 200 hectares of Ancient Woodland, 2 450ha is planted conifer woodland and 1 400ha is broadleaved
- The population of the AONB is 15 671. 68% is in employment, 12% is aged between 16 – 29 and 15% is retired
- There are 820 kms of public rights of way in the AONB
- An estimated 35% of the AONB is accessible to walkers in accordance with provisions contained in the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.



Highlights from 2016/17 - at a glance

During the period from April 2016 to March 2017 we:

- Established farmer training groups in Upper Nidderdale and the River Skell Catchment following successful applications to Natural England's Facilitation Fund programme
- Launched The Wild Watch project in January with a £300 000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund
- Restored 26 hectares of hay meadow
- Organised a Nidderdale Comes to Town event at Kirkstall Abbey in Leeds attended by 1800 people
- Were awarded a grant by the Yorkshire Dales Leader programme to help tourism businesses in Upper Nidderdale develop new activities for visitors
- Responded to 70 planning consultations and submitted comments on the draft Local Plan for Harrogate District
- Developed a pre-application planning advice service
- Carried out an ecological survey of Carlesmoor Plantation for Yorkshire Water
- Surveyed breeding birds, reptiles and plants at Humberstone Bank Farm and developed a management plan for the new tenant
- Organised an archaeological dig at Lodge Village on the edge of Scar House Reservoir



- Repaired a Scheduled Ancient Monument at Toft Gate near Greenhow
- Put on a programme of events to commemorate the involvement of the Leeds Pals, who were trained near Masham, in the Battle of the Somme
- Submitted a £3 million Landscape Partnership Scheme application for the Skell catchment to the Heritage Lottery Fund jointly with the National Trust
- Helped Friends of the AONB win a £50 000 grant from the Prince's Countryside Fund for combined farm business & environment plans
- Put up 15 new moorland information boards
- Organised a volunteer training programme

Foreword

Debate at the November 2016 meeting of the AONB's Joint Advisory Committee was dominated by a discussion about the allocation of land for housing and other forms of development contained in the draft Local Plan for Harrogate District. The Plan will provide a framework for decisions on individual planning applications for the next 17 years. The debate was finely balanced between those who want to see future development tightly constrained in order to protect the special qualities of the AONB's landscape, and those who spoke passionately in favour of new housing in particular as a way of making local communities and the local economy more sustainable. In the end, the response to the Council's consultation on the draft Local Plan was determined by Members of the Committee's Executive. The response highlighted support for new sustainable tourism enterprises and set out the Committee's case

for a stand-alone policy designed to protect the AONB's landscape. But the response argued strongly against the allocation of several relatively large sites for future housing development that would cause substantial and irreversible harm to the AONB because it would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework's guidance on the need to avoid harmful development in AONBs.

The Committee's response can be downloaded here:
<http://bit.ly/2u6JfXq>

Councillor Nigel Simms
Chairman,
Nidderdale AONB Joint Advisory Committee

Preface

The Joint Advisory Committee's goal is to ensure that:

- Stewardship of natural beauty is a priority for everyone
 - Tranquility and opportunities for quiet enjoyment of nature are protected
 - Biodiversity is valued for its own sake
 - The legacy of the historic environment is celebrated
 - Local distinctiveness is maintained
 - The livelihoods of local communities are protected
- The purpose of the Annual Review is to record progress made by the Joint Advisory Committee, the Committee's partners including farmers, community groups, local authorities, government agencies and AONB staff.

It contains a summary of work carried out in accordance with priorities set out in the AONB Management Plan that covered the period to March 2016. Detailed targets that underpinned this work were identified in the annual Delivery Plan approved by the JAC in March 2015. The Committee received a detailed report on progress towards meeting these targets in March 2016. The report is available to download from the AONB's website.



Part 1 - Setting the Scene

AONB Designation

The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty - its flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features.

Government's policy on AONB's states that 'In pursuing the primary purpose account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.'

Harrogate Borough Council is the accountable body for Nidderdale AONB. Defra provided 24% of funding for the AONB's work in 2016/17. Harrogate Borough and North Yorkshire County Councils provided 14% and the remainder came from a variety of sources including the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

AONB Special Qualities

Landscape character is a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. It gives rise to a 'sense of place' that defines people's understanding and appreciation of these elements in their surroundings. Protected landscapes like AONBs are designated because they possess special qualities that generations have come to value, and which therefore warrant exceptional safeguards.

The Special Qualities of the Nidderdale AONB include:

- Contrasting scenery with dramatic views across remote moorlands to distant horizons together with sheltered valleys and rolling farmland
- Sandstone tors like those at Brimham together with steep crags that mark the edge of many river valleys in the AONB
- Internationally important wildlife habitats characterized by birds such as red grouse, golden plover and merlin
- A rich and diverse historic environment including a World Heritage Site at Fountains Abbey, over a hundred sites contained in the Historic Environment Record and more than five hundred listed buildings
- Extensive woodland including commercial plantations and ancient broadleaved woods with a network of species-rich hedgerows on the eastern edge of the designated area
- Wetlands ranging from the eleven reservoirs with their associated dams, weirs and sluices to the three river catchments plus numerous lakes and water features associated with the numerous AONBs designed landscapes
- An extensive network of public rights of way incorporating access for people of all abilities and regional walking trails such as the Nidderdale Way and the 'Ripon Rowel'
- Over 125 square miles of open access land where walkers can explore the AONB on foot

Ecosystem Services

Conservation of the AONB's landscape is a priority in its own right, but protected landscapes like AONBs and National Parks have a variety of wider purposes. The idea of ecosystem services originated in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment that was launched by the United Nations in 2001 to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. It identified four categories of ecosystem services:

- Provisioning services
(e.g. water, food, fuel and genetic resources)
- Regulating services
(e.g. flood alleviation and carbon sequestration)
- Cultural services
(e.g. heritage and recreation)
- Supporting services
(e.g. soil formation and nutrient cycling)

The AONB's landscape is a major provider of ecosystem services to the communities that surround the designated area and more widely across the region. The supply of drinking water from the AONB's reservoirs high quality food produced by farmers are two obvious examples, but it is easier to overlook the strategically important role of the AONB's moorlands that both hold back flood water and act as a huge carbon storage mechanism. The AONB also has a wealth of cultural features, and opportunities for active outdoor recreation that provide inspiration and contribute to the Government's objectives for improving health and well-being.

The AONB Joint Advisory Committee

The Committee met three times during the year:

21 July 2016 – Study Tour

Based at Scaife Hall Farm near Blubberhouses, the meeting began with presentations from Lisa Harrowsmith of Yorkshire Water on plans for ‘Going Beyond Nature’ at Humberstone Bank Farm, and from Joanne Baxter about the company’s river restoration work in the Washburn Valley. After lunch, Members were taken on a guided tour of the river restoration site before a site visit to Humberstone.

Annual General Meeting, 10 November 2016

Harrogate Borough Councillor Nigel Simms was elected as Chair and Chris Hawkesworth, one of two Parish Council representatives on the Committee, was elected as Vice Chair. Tom Wheelwright of the Moorland Association, and County Councillor John Fort were elected to join Councillors Simms and Hawkesworth on the Committee’s Executive. After the AGM, Linda Marfitt’s presentation on the Draft Local Plan for Harrogate District was followed a debate on the Committee’s response.

23 March 2017

The Committee was asked to approve reports on progress achieved towards 2016/17 Delivery Plan targets, and a new set of Delivery Plan targets for 2017/18. Members received presentations on North Yorkshire’s plans to re-align the A59 at Kex Gill, on the AONB’s Wild Watch project and on work by AONB staff on a plan for ‘The Natural Nidd’ being developed by the Dales & Vales Rivers Network.

The AONB Team

In 2016/2017, the Team comprised:

Louise Brown	Landscape Partnership Scheme Heritage Officer (5 days per week until start of maternity leave in January)
Paul Burgess	AONB Manager (5 days per week)
Tara Challoner	Landscape Partnership Scheme Farming & Wildlife Project Officer (5 days per week)
Leanne Fox	Information Officer (4 days per week until start of maternity leave in September)
Kelly Harmar	Biodiversity Officer (3 days per week)
Mary Jones	Administrator (3 days per week)
Sarah Kettlewell	Development Team Leader (3 days per week)
Peter Lambert	Landscape Partnership Scheme Access Officer (2 days per week)
Robert Light	Landscape Partnership Scheme Heritage Officer (5 days per week from February)
Iain Mann	Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager (5 days per week)
Liz Milner	Landscape Partnership Scheme Discovery and Learning Project Officer (2 days per week)
James Searle	Volunteer Coordinator (2 days per week)
Joanna Swiers	Information Officer (part-time maternity cover from October)
Marian Wilby	Land Management Team Leader (5 days per week)



Part 2 - Performance: People, Policy & Partnerships

Planning

AONB staff work closely with staff at Harrogate and Richmondshire District Councils, and with staff at North Yorkshire County Council, to ensure that development requiring planning permission does not cause harm to the AONB's special qualities. The JAC's Executive approves all responses to planning consultations made on behalf of the Committee. 69 responses to planning consultations were made during 2016/17 covering a mixture of small and relatively large-scale proposals, including development of a new hotel at Grantley Hall and an application to create an off-road driver training course near Masham. The responses are available for public scrutiny on the relevant planning authority's planning portals, and on the AONB's website.

Harrogate Borough Council published a draft Local Plan covering the period to 2035 in October. The AONB's Joint Advisory Committee submitted comments in December (see Foreword)

The Heritage Lottery Fund

Nidderdale has been awarded grants worth over £2 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund since 2012 and the AONB is represented on a group of conservation bodies convened by HLF whose purpose is to create a pipeline of natural heritage applications. In 2017, the AONB joined forces with the National Trust at Fountains and Brimham to apply for another Landscape Partnership Scheme grant that will cover the Skell catchment.

Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership

Nidderdale is a founding member of the quintet of protected landscapes at the core of the Local Nature Partnership alongside the Yorkshire Dales and Northumberland National Park Authorities and the Forest of Bowland and North Pennines AONBs. The LNP's work in 2016/17 was focussed on High Nature Value Farming and the development of a payment-by-results agri environment scheme pilot.

National Association for AONBs

Nidderdale AONB was represented at the May and November 2016 meetings of the Northern AONB



network in the Forest of Bowland and the Solway Coast AONB's respectively. AONB staff also attended the July national AONB conference in Shropshire where speakers from a variety of organisations including the NHS urged AONBs to become involved in running Health & Well-Being campaigns.

Dales and Vales Rivers Network

The Partnership was convened by the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust in response to Defra's Catchment Based Approach launched in 2013. Its purpose is to coordinate and improve the effectiveness of actions designed to improve the quality of the river environment by a wide range of organisations including community groups and statutory bodies like the Environment Agency, Natural England and Yorkshire Water. The AONB, which is represented on the Partnership's Board, coordinated consultation on an action plan for the Nidd from its source to the confluence with the Ouse west of York to be published by the Network in 2017.

Friends of Nidderdale AONB

Friends is a registered charity that works alongside staff in the AONB. In 2016/17 trustees made a successful application to the Princes Countryside Fund to cover the cost of preparing combined business and environment plans for 35 farms in the AONB. Friends also made a substantial financial contribution to the Wild Watch Project.

Newsletters

Three e-newsletters for AONB residents were circulated in 2016/17. The Upper Nidderdale Landscape Partnership Scheme distributed an e-newsletter in May and a JAC Members e-bulletin was circulated in June.

25,000 copies of the 'Visit Nidderdale AONB' visitor guide, were circulated to a wide range of shops, cafes, visitor attractions and tourist information points.



Performance: Conserving Natural Beauty

Conservation advice for AONB farmers and landowners

AONB staff continued to provide conservation advice for farmers during 2016/17 and supported submission of agri environment grant applications despite limited availability. A successful application for a Higher Level Stewardship grant was made together with eight applications for Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship grants.

River Nidd Catchment Partnership

The AONB administers the River Nidd Catchment Partnership and employs the Catchment Partnership's Farm Adviser on contract to work alongside the AONB's Land Management Team Leader. The objective of the partnership, which comprises Natural England, Nidderdale Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust and Yorkshire Water as well as the AONB, is to reduce Diffuse Water Pollution from Agriculture. The focus of the work in 2016/17 was on the Crimple (outside the AONB boundary). AONB Farm Advisers carried out 17 advisory visits. An event looking at soil biology & organic matter (organised jointly with RASE) was held on a farm near Knaresborough.

Upper Nidderdale Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Scheme is led by Nidderdale AONB and brings together over 20 partners who share the joint aims of conserving and enhancing Upper Nidderdale's wildlife habitats and historic environment; and enabling people to find out about, enjoy and get involved in looking after this important heritage landscape. Highlights of progress achieved in 2016/17 include completion of consolidation work at Prosperous Smelt Mill and completion of the work to conserve and interpret the ice house in Fishponds Wood. The Our Farm Heritage project got underway and the Moorland People, Place and Stories project was launched. Combined business and environmental plans were produced for 10 farming families and six farmers attended a computer skills training course organised by the partnership. Full details are available from the partnership's website <http://uppernidderdale.org.uk/>

Nidderdale Conservation Volunteers

The Nidderdale Conservation Volunteers (NCVs) meet on Tuesdays throughout the year. The numbers attending tasks varied from 6 to 25 during 2016/2017, and included up to 3 Heritage Skills Students as part of the UNLPS youth training programme. Overall, 3719 task hours were completed in the year. A varied task programme at key conservation sites throughout the AONB involved heritage management at Fishpond Wood, Hackfall Wood, Bryan's Wood, Old Spring Wood, and Ellington Banks, including control of bracken and Himalayan balsam. At Toft Gate, Greenhow the group spent several weeks fencing and upgrading permissive paths. At Longside Farm, Ramsgill they laid 100m of field hedge and will continue work next winter. Meanwhile, an exciting programme of training continued, including courses on botany, digital modelling, scything, stone carving and charcoal burning. A particular highlight was the group winning the Wildlife Volunteer of the Year Award at the Harrogate & District Volunteering Oscars.

Nidderdale Dry Stone Walling Group

The Dry Stone Walling group meet on Wednesdays throughout the year. The numbers attending task days varied between 2 and 8. From the end of April the group undertook projects at Thrope Plantation, Lofthouse and Spring Wood Top, Wath. In June they again ran a successful Heritage Skills walling event at Heathfield Caravan site for the public. During the summer they imaginatively re-built a wall edging the car park at Fewston Church to create an entrance to the Washburn Heritage Centre, while in the autumn they repaired crumbling sections to the boundary wall of St Cuthbert's Primary School playing field in Pateley Bridge. From January to the end of March the group moved to the lowland site of Markenfield Hall near Ripon, to continue a long term project restoring the Park Pale. Another volunteering highlight was the group winning the Environment Volunteer of the Year Award at the Harrogate & District Volunteering Oscars.

Built Environment Initiative

The Built Environment Initiative is funded by Harrogate Borough Council and is aimed at the conservation and repair of historic buildings and structures in the AONB. The scheme made a substantial contribution to the AONB's Landscape Partnership Scheme's programme of Flagship Heritage Site improvements at Fish Ponds Wood and Wath Mill.

Greenhow Landscape & Biodiversity Enhancement Fund

Hanson was awarded planning consent by North Yorkshire County Council in 2005 to extend the earth mound that screens the quarry workings from surrounding views. As a condition of the consent,

Hanson was obliged to set up an environment fund to mitigate the impact of the extension on the surrounding landscape, which is part of the AONB. The Fund is administered by the AONB on behalf of Trustees drawn from the Nidderdale AONB Joint Advisory Committee, North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council, and Hanson together with representatives of Thornthwaite, Thruscross and Beverley Parish Councils.

During 2016/17, grants were awarded to dry stone wall repair projects in Greenhow village and at Thornthwaite, a hay meadow restoration project on a farm near Beverley, ecological survey work at Humberstone Bank Farm, an interpretation project at Prosperous Smelt Mill and access improvement and repair work at Toft Gate Lime Kiln.



Financial Summary 2016-2017

Expenditure	£	Income	£
Salaries (incl NI, Super, o.t, travel & training)	295,724.54	Brought Forward Balance (Heritage Lottery Fund WW1 project)	9,464.44
Accommodation & Office Costs	47,587.68	Brought Forward Balance (Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership project)	21,236.51
Partnership budget for promotion(PR) & Events	13,121.56	DEFRA	169,236.00
Partnership Running Costs	4,749.87	Harrogate Borough Council	91,970.01
Farm Conservation Advice	26.55	North Yorkshire County Council	18,580.00
Sustainable Development Fund	2,000.00	Environment Agency	6,000.00
Bewerley Barn	4,174.00	SITA	1,976.88
AONB Data Project	30.00	Natural England	9,875.00
Boundary signs	780.00	Heritage Lottery Fund	251,398.00
AONB Enhancement Grant Scheme	41,500.00	Yorkshire Water Services	3,650.00
Heritage Volunteering Project		Yorkshire Dales River Trust	160.20
Catchment Sensitive Farming Project	25,446.50	National Centre for the Uplands	12,453.00
Lowland Meadow Restoration	1,906.18	Hanson's	2,000.00
Wildlife Watch	70.45	Hackfall Trust	3,000.00
Landscape Partnership	150,665.84	Friends Of Nidderdale AONB	6,306.00
Landscape Management		Misc. Income/Events Income	9,876.58
River Laver	-52.81	Reserves Funding	51,806.98
World War 1 Project	8,431.83	AONB Enhancement funding	41,500.00
Reconnecting Nature & People	4,823.00	Balance carried forward re World War 1	-27,378.96
Services provided by Harrogate Borough Council	20,860.00	Balance carried forward Landscape Partnership	-58,588.45
		Balance carried forward Reconnecting People	-2,677.00
TOTAL	621,845.19	TOTAL	621,845.19

Appendix: Framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes

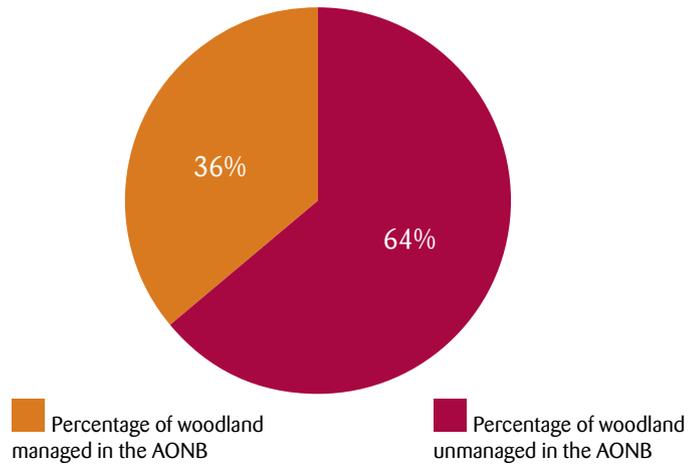
Data showing indicators that have changed since March 2016 only.

Area of woodland under management

The statistics are suggested as a proxy measure in relation to:

- The Framework’s natural beauty indicator of ‘landscape elements in good condition’:
- The statistics represent management undertaken in accordance with the obligations of various grant schemes. It brings greater confidence that active management is in place and therefore hopefully contributing to the good condition of woodland.
- The Framework’s ecosystem services benefit of ‘providing wood’ (e.g. timber, wood fuel and other wood products)

Total area of woodland in Nidderdale AONB: 4,895 ha

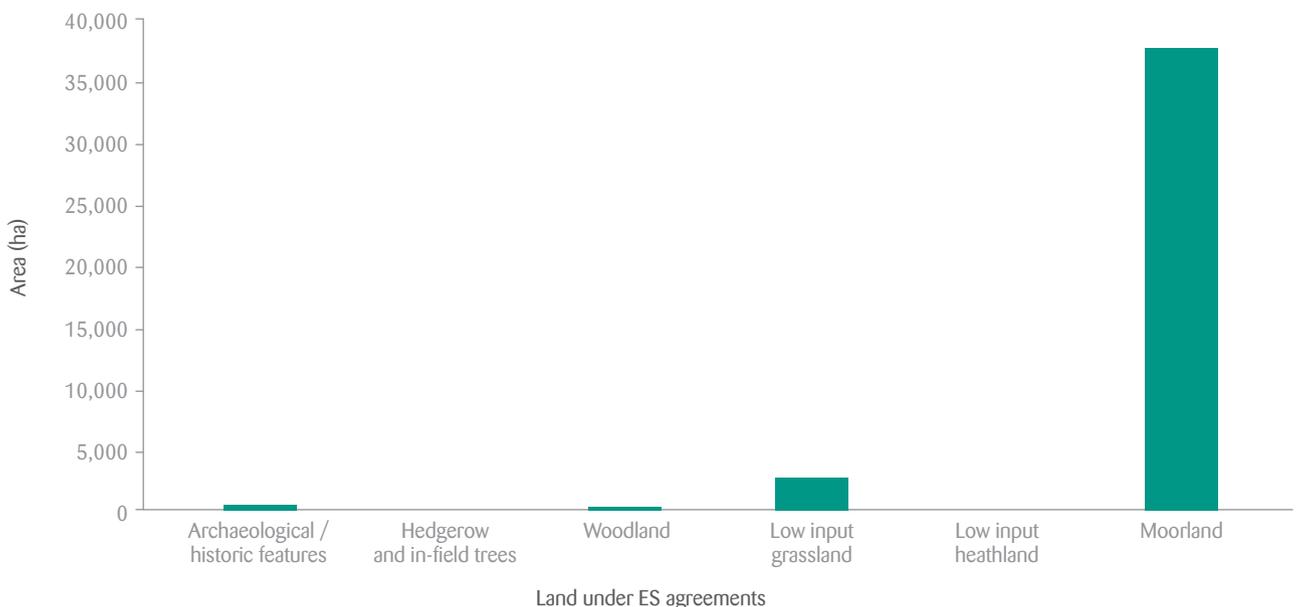


Area under stewardship

ES data is the best nationally available information relating to the management of the wide range of landscape features and elements. Bringing these under

management can, in theory, contribute to their good condition and to an area’s landscape character, which are both indicators of natural beauty.

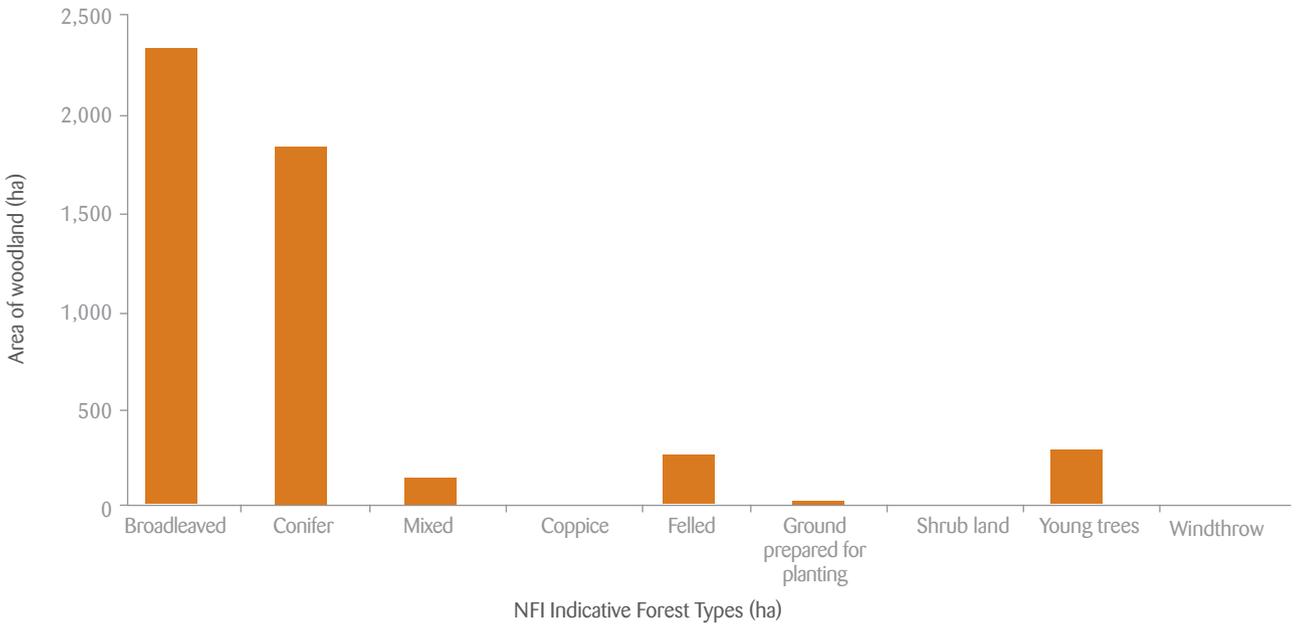
Area under stewardship (habitat)



NFI indicative Forest Types

The statistics are suggested as a proxy measure in relation to climate regulation. They may also provide useful contextual information for State of the Park/AONB reports

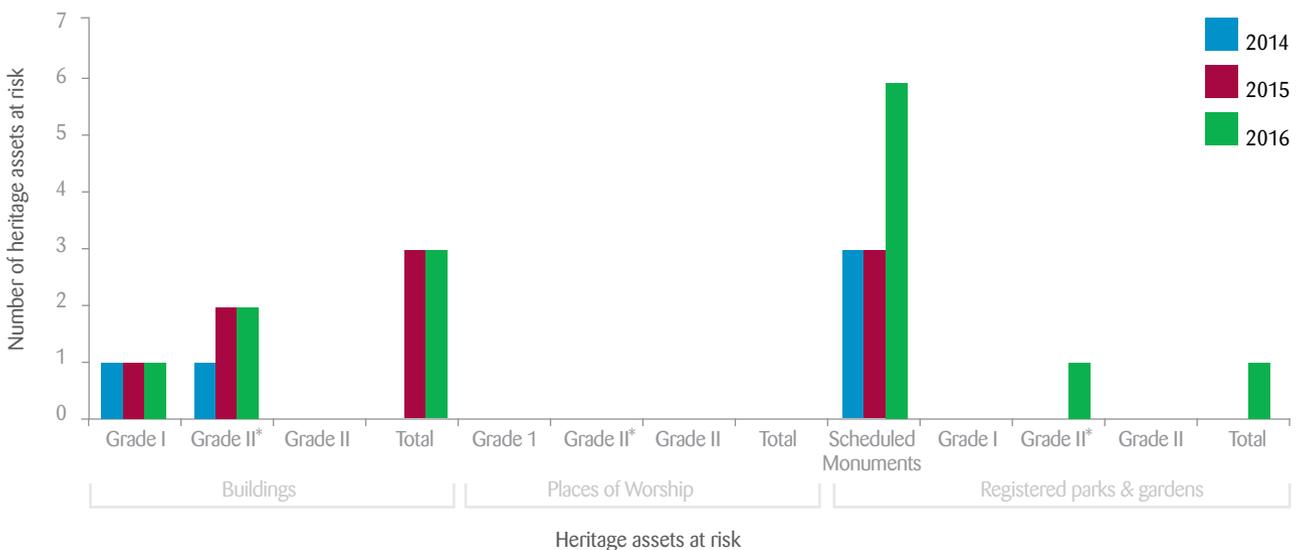
Area under stewardship (habitat)



Number of Heritage Assets

Number of heritage assets in Nidderdale AONB that are 'at risk' of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

Number of heritage assets at risk

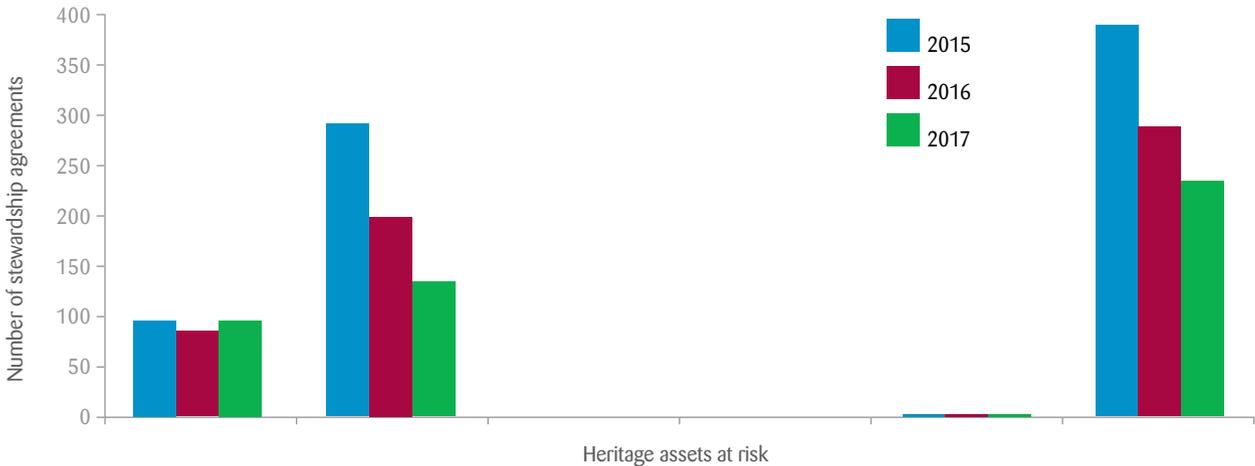


Number of Stewardship Agreements

ES data is the best nationally available information relating to the management of the wide range of landscape features and elements. Bringing these under

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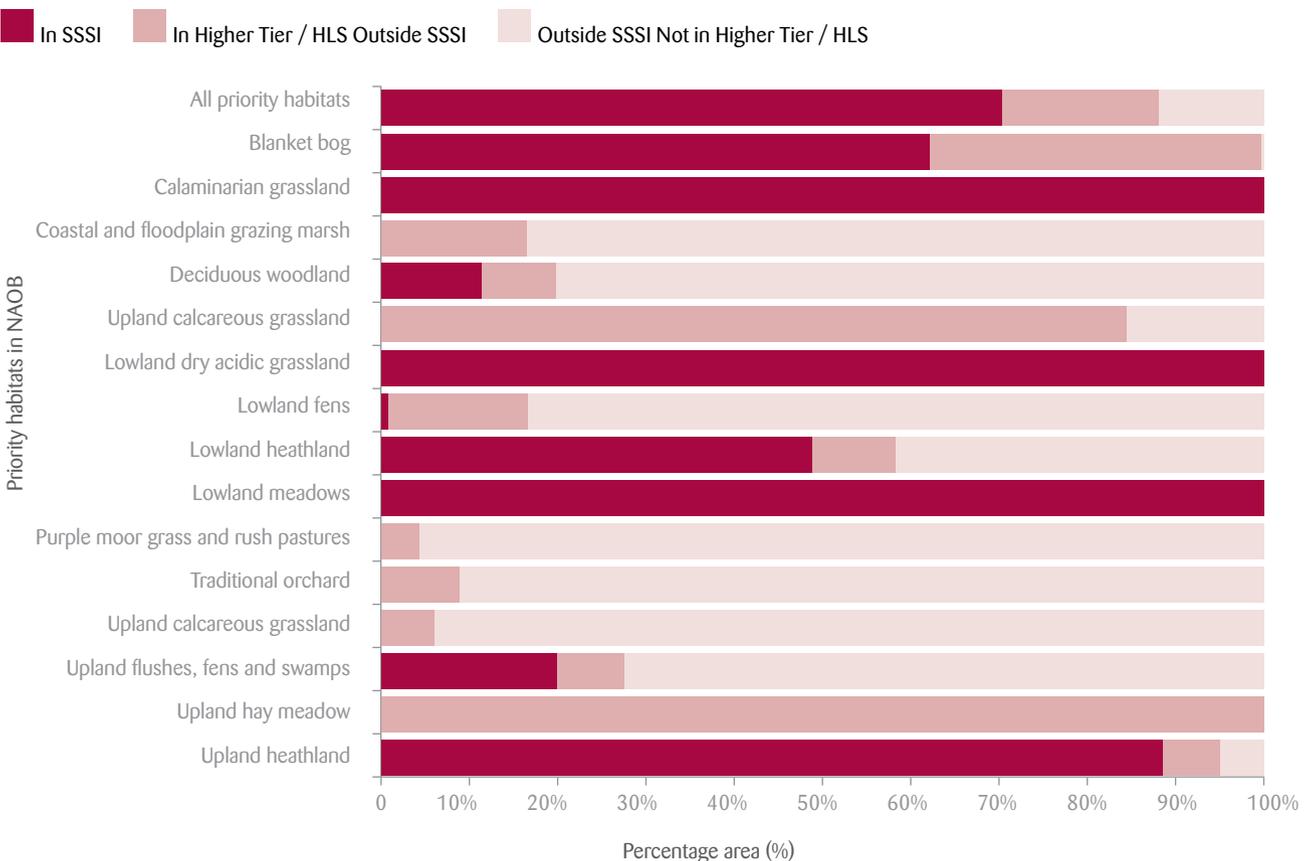
Area under stewardship (habitat)



Protection of Priority Habitat

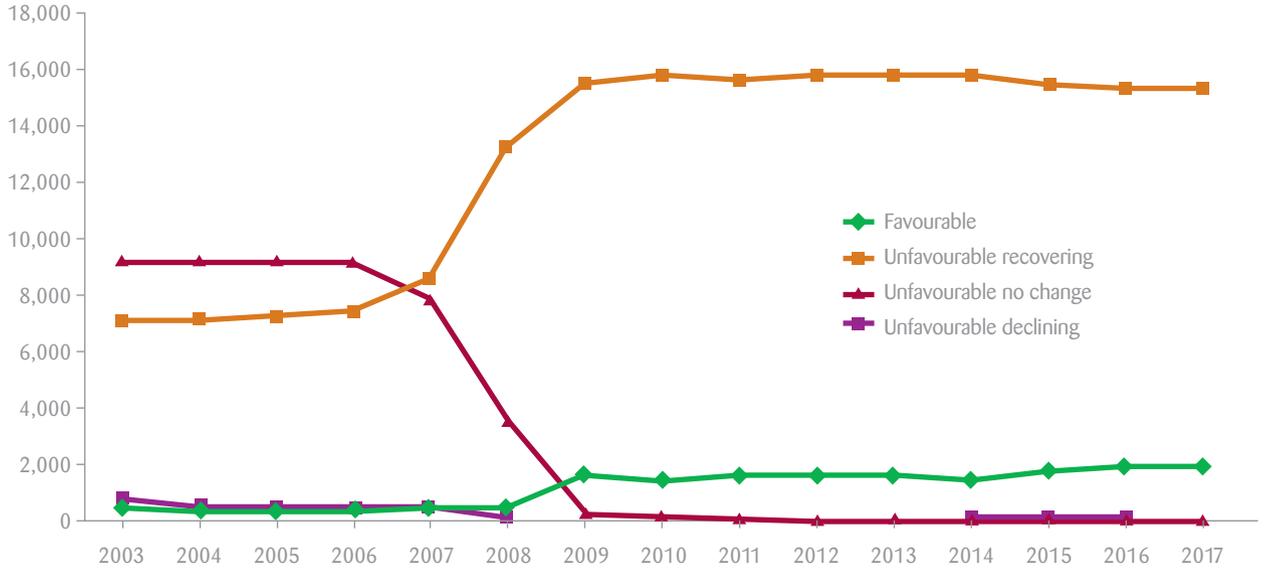
Priority habitats are defined in the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006.

Area under stewardship (habitat)



SSSI condition status

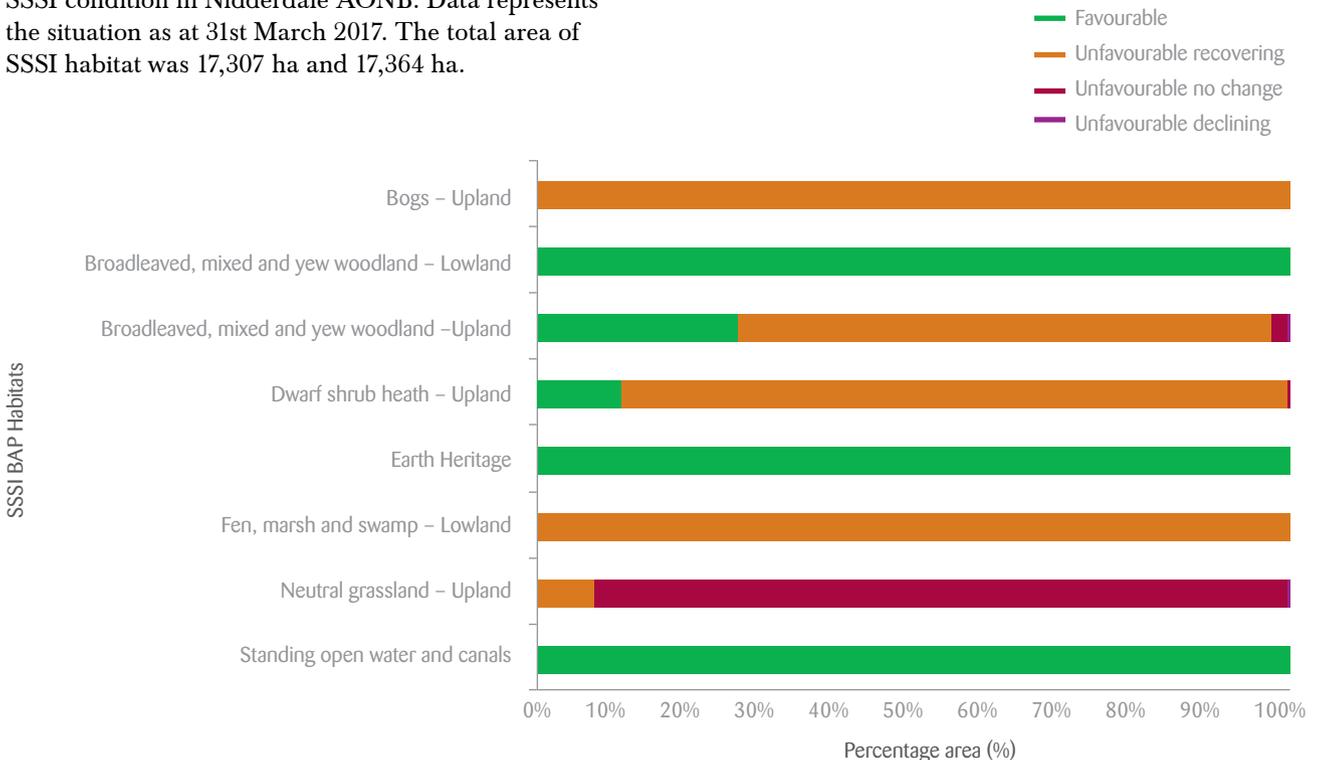
SSSI condition in Nidderdale AONB. Data represents the situation as at 31st March 2017. The total area of SSSI habitat was 17,307 ha and 17,364 ha.



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SSSI habitat condition

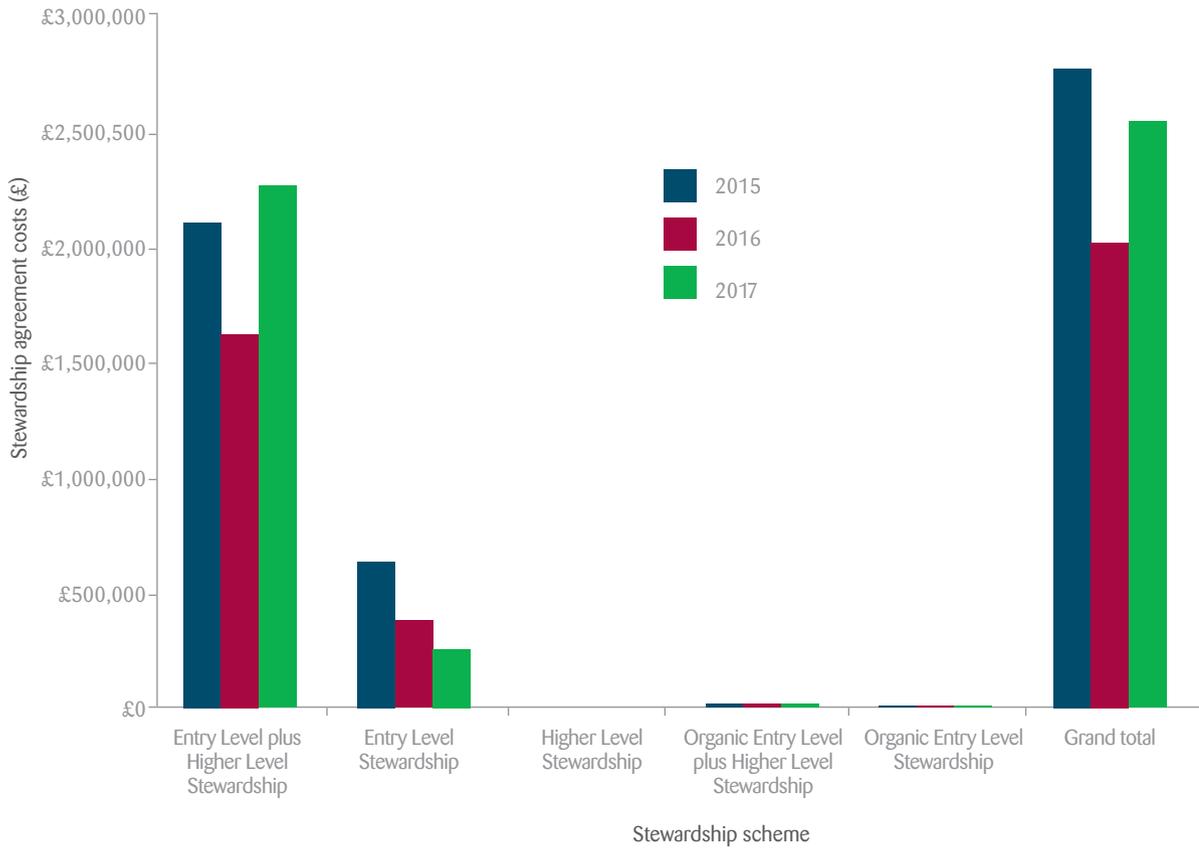
SSSI condition in Nidderdale AONB. Data represents the situation as at 31st March 2017. The total area of SSSI habitat was 17,307 ha and 17,364 ha.



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Stewardship agreement cost

Data for 2017





Nidderdale
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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