



National  
Trust

# Fix the Fells

About our upland path and  
conservation work in partnership

Winter 2017

## What is Fix the Fells?

Fix the Fells (FTF) is a long-term partnership currently led by the National Trust, working with the Lake District National Park Authority, Friends of the Lake District, Natural England, Lake District Foundation and an army of volunteers.

The partners are committed to helping repair and prevent further damage to this unique upland landscape and promote understanding and support for its rich heritage. Most of the work is funded by donations, legacies and grants.

The National Trust specialist Upland Ranger Teams carry out much of the repair work, usually focussing on a handful of major projects each year.

FTF volunteers come from Cumbria and beyond and many different backgrounds. But they all have one thing in common, they love the fells!

The term lengthsman comes from medieval times when men would be paid to walk the length of the parish and repair any roads and unblock ditches.

So far this year, 100 volunteers have gifted 1936 days on the fells. The upland paths just wouldn't be the same without their care. Our thanks to all.

## South Lakes—Joe Bagnall

'In our last update we told how we had flown nearly 300 bags of stone for our projects. The vast bulk of that stone was for the Greenup Edge section of the Coast to Coast that takes walkers, Duke of Edinburgh groups and the odd fell runner from Stonethwaite to Grasmere and vice versa.

With the completion of our Tongue Gill works in August and with our work on Glenamara being saved until next spring, we devoted the end of the season to our Greenup site. Whilst the three mile walk in and out of site didn't get any shorter, the team has enjoyed getting stuck into the nearly 200m of pitching, drainage and landscaping that is needed on the site. Works have progressed well despite the challenges the very wet and peaty ground throws up, and a large section of the upper path is now pitched continuously. We will be returning in 2018 to complete our work up there.

Along with our stone we flew a new shed onto site and it has made a nice change having somewhere dry to eat our lunch and store grass seed and anything else we might need on the fell. We started work on the upper sections of the path first, the final climb up onto the ridgeline that looks over into the Borrowdale valley. This section of the Coast to Coast can be challenging at times, a fact the team has been reminded of on several occasions where they have had to act as an ad-hoc Mountain Rescue Team. Either acting as guides to walkers in appalling weather conditions or assisting with unfortunate fell walkers that have hurt themselves.

It's all things go, as the team return to property work on the South Lakes portfolio. The property has begun its Sustainable Land Management initiative that is rolling out across the Lakes over the next few years. We're going to be involved in a lot of hedge-laying and planting as well as fencing out watercourses to allow vegetation to recover along the banks. The vegetation will act as a buffer zone between the fields and the becks with the aim of improving water quality and reducing flood risk downstream.'



Tongue Gill before



Tongue Gill after



The new shed!

## Central and East Lakes—Pete Entwistle

'As I write we're finishing our work for this year on the Grisedale to Hole in the Wall path in Ullswater valley. We've completed 160m of stone pitching, 9 stone cross-drains and 300m<sup>2</sup> of landscaping. We've narrowed the path from over 3 metres in width down to less than 1.5 metres, thus reducing its impact on the landscape. It's been a long season on this job, beginning in March collecting stone for a helicopter lift and continuing uninterrupted through to November.

The path has been busy with visitors throughout, with the work being much appreciated by everyone. We've achieved a lot but it isn't finished yet. By the end we will have safe-guarded over 200m of the most vulnerable sections and that brings a sense of satisfaction. But we know there are other parts of this popular path that are eroding at a worrying rate and will need tackling in the near future. We'll monitor regularly and I'm sure we'll be back undertaking further repairs. Our well-attended volunteer work parties this year have concentrated on the lower sections of this route, focusing on creating a path that will stand up to future visitor numbers and water damage. The groups have built drains, pitched and aligned paths, giving new volunteers an introduction to these landscape techniques.



Regular newsletter readers may remember that we've spent 3 of the last 4 years undertaking work on Gowbarrow, repairing in the region of 500m of path using 250 tonnes of aggregate and 20 tonnes of stone. The repair technique involved digging a tray which was then filled with aggregate to create a sustainable, easy to walk surface. Thanks to the help of volunteers this labour intensive project was a success. However last week we revisited the site and found that sections of the path we hadn't worked on, about 600m, had eroded significantly and are now in need of the same treatment. Gowbarrow is an increasingly popular fell, particularly since the 'Ullswater Way' was created in 2016 and this has damaged sections of the path that previously were able to withstand the visitor pressure. There's no doubt in my mind that future work will be needed, sooner rather than later.



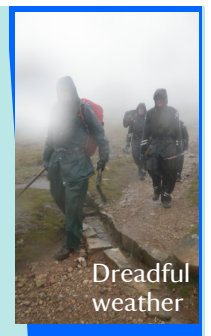
In preparation for 2018, we've already flown 65 bags of stone onto the Stone Arthur path by Grasmere village, where we'll be fixing flood damage caused by Storm Desmond. Our biggest project in 2018 will also be flood damage repairs on Boredale Hause route onto Place Fell, Ullswater needing 400 tonnes of rock to be flown in!

## Basecamp—Rob Clarke

'Towards the end of the summer we ran our second upland footpath working holiday, returning to the path on St Raven's edge. It's fascinating to see how a mix of seemingly disparate ages, backgrounds and nationalities can all come together so successfully to focus on repairing and improving a stretch of path despite mixed weather! With the National Trust's working holidays celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year it is brilliant our upland ones remain a popular choice, a fantastic way for Fix the Fells to spread the understanding of our work beyond those who just happen to stumble upon us when out for a walk. This year we've adjusted the format of our working holidays to reflect the increasing involvement and help from the Fix the Fells lengthsman. The last day of each of this year's holidays were spent on a path maintenance 'drain run' with them, a chance for holiday participants to find out about this now essential part of FTF and recognise their voluntary contributions.

We were certainly grateful for the lengthsman's help to install some drains on the path built by Basecamp volunteers up to Crinkle Crag. This path was starting to suffer from water damage, so we're glad to have protected it before the water undid all the hard work. And with some truly awful weather on this day we were reminded of how wet it can get up there...

Through the season we've also worked with supporting organisations and recently provided the accommodation, boots and waterproofs for one to come to the Lakes and spend a day with the Fix the Fells volunteers. Acting as an 'enabler' is something that we're ideally placed to do and it's a role that we expect to see become increasingly important as the scheme continues to grow.'



## West Lakes – Iain Gray

‘After finishing off our year’s work on Scafell Pike we returned to unfinished business on Scarth Gap in late autumn, moving 101 bags of stone to various points along the path.

Flying helibags in November was quite a novel experience. Having to cope with shorter days gave us and the helicopter crew the impetus to get a move on, at times relying on the rotor blades of the Squirrel machine to blow away the mist which hung annoyingly around Haystacks.

Despite the cloud we succeeded in flying all the stone safely. It will now have to wait beside the path till next spring before it will be installed, with the help of several Fix the Fells work parties.

Ironically as soon as we descended to the lowlands the following week we enjoyed a few days of splendid sunshine. Our main winter occupation this year will be hedge-laying in both Eskdale and Wasdale, and here at Field Head near Eskdale Green we positively basked in bright autumnal radiance.

The year as a whole has been one of serial collaborations on the Celtic fringes of Britain. After working with the Snowdonia footpath team (who is Tim Llwybrau? We were expecting to meet him!) both here and in Snowdonia, we also hosted a duo of trainees from Na Beanntan agus na Daoine - ‘The Mountains and the People’ in English – a project led by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.

Despite ostensibly being an English speaking area we frequently encounter many people struggling to understand the broad Cumbrian dialect (despite the fact that none of us speak it ourselves). It occurs to me that to join in with this linguistic diversity we could use the title “Fettle T’ Fells”?’



The Squirrel in the mist



Sunshine in Eskdale

## North Lakes – Ted Everitt-Stewart

‘So here we are at the end of another fell season, which has been an interesting one for sure! We all really enjoyed the project on the path from Rosthwaite to Castle Crag, which required ramped pitching and shallow drains due to the bridleway being a popular route for bikers as part of the Borrowdale Bash. Here Mark built a ramp up to a bedrock section and landscaped out the developing side path.

We were then back to Cat Bells hoping for a quieter path and bad weather to get the project completed. We were blessed with both of these and now we’re done, the team is pleased with the job and knows that it will be appreciated by the thousands of people that use the path. It would be interesting to know if Cat Bells receives the highest number of pairs of boots of any fell in the Lakes?

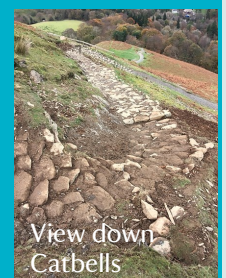
Ironically, we are now starting our winter work programme and have jobs higher up the fell than during our Fix the Fells programme! We’re building three enclosures up on Thorneythwaite fell to demonstrate the effect of removing grazing on vegetation height and structure. This is a really exciting job as hopefully these enclosures will influence the grazing regime on the fell; who knows, because of this job we might see lower intensity grazing and therefore more vegetation and wildlife on the fell in years to come!

When asked to think about the funniest moments of the year it is hard to pick one out as they seem to be daily. There is one moment however that jumps into my mind. If a picture speaks louder than a thousand words then I need to say no more.’

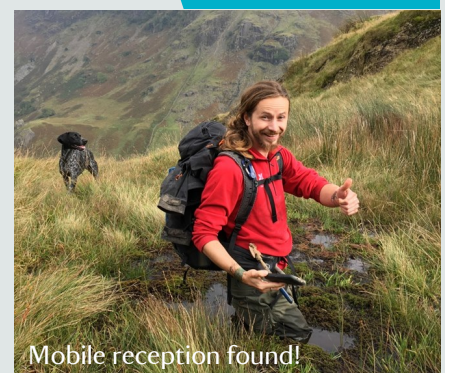


Before

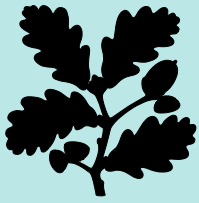
After



View down Catbells



Mobile reception found!



**National  
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## Update from Joanne Backshall, Project Manager

'We are absolutely delighted that volunteer lengthsman Barry Capp has received the Prime Minister's 'Points of Light' Award for his outstanding contribution to Fix the Fells. Barry has been instrumental in developing the Lengthsmen scheme into the great success it is today and the award is a fitting end to this year's 10 year anniversary celebrations. You can read more about Barry's award on the Governments website [www.pointsoflight.gov.uk/fix-the-fells](http://www.pointsoflight.gov.uk/fix-the-fells).



We attracted another award this year. Fix the Fells Ranger Richard Fox received the 'Golden Eagle' Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding services to the outdoors from the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild. Richard has been organising the repair of fell paths for the last 18 years, even before the name Fix the Fells was adopted, and the Lakeland scenery would be significantly more eroded and scarred without his efforts.

The Ranger teams have worked extremely hard this year, repairing long stretches of path damaged by Storm Desmond in 2015, aided by flood-recovery funding from the Government. This will continue next year with work in the Ullswater, Borrowdale and Buttermere Valleys. The Rangers' dedication to this highly skilled and physical work in all weathers in the high fells is truly humbling.

The volunteers have had another record breaking year of activity, with more people spending more days than ever looking after the fell paths. They continue to grow and develop the volunteer scheme, always thinking of new ways to improve what we do and spread the word of our labours. Fix the Fells truly is a team effort and with thanks to supporters and donations, large and small, we will continue to make the Lake District fells resilient to the wear and tear from the feet of those out enjoying the countryside.'

## Funding for Fix the Fells

The National Trust is the main long-term funder of Fix the Fells. As a registered charity, we rely on people to support this vital work with donations and legacies. Fix the Fells is supported in many ways by all the partners. Additional fundraising activity and a visitor payback scheme for local business is led by Lake District Foundation.

## Get in touch

To find out more about Fix the Fells, how to become a volunteer or how you can support this project with a donation or legacy to the National Trust, please do contact us directly. All enquiries will be treated confidentially.



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