



National  
Trust

# Fix the Fells

About our upland path and  
conservation work in partnership

Spring 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, Nurture Lakeland 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. Some are retired and others work fulltime but they all have one thing in common, they love the fells!

There are 89 volunteers (both male and female) referred to as 'lengthsmen'. This term comes from medieval times when lengthsmen would be paid to walk the length of the parish and repair any roads and unblock ditches.

This dedicated group gifted over 2000 days on the fells in 2016. The upland paths simply wouldn't be the same without them. Our thanks to all!

## South Lakes—Joe Bagnall

'We're preparing to get back onto the fell after a busy winter doing various jobs about the property including a big walling and drain building job on the unclassified country road between Tilberthwaite and Little Langdale that was just high enough and involved enough rock rolling to feel suspiciously like a fell job!

It wasn't all bad though, the team was well looked after whilst renewing 180m of stock fencing between a tenant's field and Coniston Sports Club grounds. Big thanks to the Sports club for sorting us out with 'tea on the lawn'.



With the Lengthsmen we have continued some fell work throughout the winter with our work parties, the most recent involving tree planting on Threshthwaite Cove, a completion of last year's work, and on Glenamara which is one of the Team's projects this year. The tree planting aims to block off shortcuts and developing path lines as well as stabilising the soil around the path to make it more robust and improve the biodiversity of the fell sides.

The team are now starting to fill the 262 bags of stone for this year's funded projects on Greenup Edge/Far Easedale, Glenamara and Tongue Gill. The latter will be the site for the ten year celebration of Fix the Fells with a three day work party. All of our jobs this year are aimed at tackling the damage caused by the 2015 winter storms and all lie on the popular Coast to Coast route.'



## Basecamp—Rob Clarke

'Spring is gathering pace and the swallows are returning, along with those other denizens of the sky – the helicopters. In a few weeks' time they will be here to fly stone into position for this year's upland jobs. As you can imagine, we've been out and about recently loading the stone into the bags ready for this.

A traditionally tough job, this has been made easier for us by the ever welcome help of the Fix the Fells volunteers. Our bag filling days so far have seen a good gang of them out with us, meaning we have had the numbers to take our time over selecting good stone and spreading the load of this difficult work.

This year, our major focus is on the Basecamp hosted ten year anniversary of the Fix the Fells volunteers. Thanks to the input of the South Lakes upland team we now have a good worksite identified, and the volunteers have once more stepped forward to help organise marshalling, welcome gazebos, the evening's proceedings and many other details. With our Scottish path working friends also confirming they are coming everything is starting to come together for this important celebration of this very successful scheme.

Nowadays, nearly all routine maintenance patrols of our paths are carried out by the volunteers, thereby freeing up the National Trust teams to do more specialised work. But over time slight differences in approaches to these have crept in so we recently helped to run a revision day to agree on a set of standards for this crucial ongoing work.

A couple more weeks and all this planning and preparation will start paying off as we begin our working season on the fells. We're looking forward to getting back up there!'



## West Lakes—Iain Gray

'We haven't strayed too far from Scafell Pike this winter, spending much of our time on a path which shares a starting point with the Wasdale Head Green route to Brown Tongue. The riverside path allows people to walk from the National Trust Lakehead car park to the Green without plodding along tarmac. In places however, it was subject to flooding and squeezed its way between dilapidated walls and fences.

With help from Fix the Fells volunteers we have rebuilt walls and realigned fences; also upgrading much of the path to a drier and wider state. A length of raised boardwalk along a particularly low lying section will be completed in late March, again with volunteer help.

Our contribution to the Lake District tree planting day in early February also focussed on the same area, as we planted 100 trees on the lower slopes of Lingmell just uphill from the riverside path. As spring begins and we prepare for another instalment of the Brown Tongue saga we are also on the lookout for sustainable stone sites, focussing again on the boulder strewn flanks of Lingmell above the main Scafell Pike path.

A foray into Buttermere will give us a bit of variety this summer where we will be repairing a section of the Scarth Gap route damaged by Storm Desmond. This will probably be in late summer as we have to wait till after the nesting season on Haystacks before we can fly in stone.'



The narrow muddy path



The drier wider path

## Central and East Lakes –Pete Entwistle

'We've spent a number of days finding sources of stone for our 2017 path repair work. This has been at Ullswater in the Grisedale Valley leading up to Helvellyn, and at Stone Arthur located next to Grasmere. We liaise with agencies such as Natural England and our own National Trust archaeologist to ensure that the proposed areas for stone collection will not damage any ecological, geological, or archaeological sites. We also have to be mindful of any nesting birds such as ravens and peregrines and avoid any disturbance to these sites during the helicopter lifts.

All our work for the foreseeable future is related to the storms of 2015 and our winter work at Low Hag Wood is to prevent this type of flooding happening again. The main river that runs through the woodland burst its banks causing large scale damage to footpaths and access routes, the water eventually found its way to the A592 Troutbeck to Ullswater road causing flooding to a number of residential properties.

Part of the solution has been for us to build a stone-pitched ford where the river crosses the main footpath. We try to use materials that we can find from our surroundings so all the stone for the job was collected in the woods by hand, loaded on to a tracked barrow and transported to the site: we needed about 10 tonnes of rock for the job so as you can imagine, this takes a bit of time to collect.

The river crosses under the path through a large metal pipe about 3 feet in circumference which has always been adequate. As far as I'm aware 2015 was the first time it was unable to cope. We built a stone ford to act as an overflow for the pipe and prevent any future water damage. This involved raising the existing level of the path by about two feet and providing a surface durable enough to take the force of water and provide a walking surface for the many visitors to the woods.

FTF funding to repair some of the damage caused by Storm Desmond has enabled us to recruit for a new member of staff increasing the team from 3 to 4. We received 75 applicants and interviewed 8. All the candidates were strong making the decision difficult, but we offered the job to Jonny (a NT Academy Ranger from North Yorkshire) and he's accepted so we look forward to welcoming him to the team.'



## North Lakes–Ted Everitt-Stewart

'No winter would be complete without planting a few trees, and this year the property has planted 3,500 trees on the southern slope of the Coledale valley. This is part of an ongoing project aiming to reduce the impact of flooding downstream and improve biodiversity in the valley. A particularly industrious day saw 1,600 trees, tubes and stakes carried to their planting positions by intrepid Fix the Fells volunteers – their help was greatly appreciated!



One of the jobs I have enjoyed the most this year so far was 350 meters of wall-top fencing that we did along the Thorneythwaite/ Seathwaite boundary with the estate team. The wall took a route directly up the slope, and whilst scrambling around on the steep scree it almost felt like being back on the fell – not long to go now!

We've also been paying more attention to the smaller things in life recently, having attended a really interesting course on lichen identification at Sizergh Castle. Inspired by the day, we have been able to identify some of the more common lichens, although they're not easy! Pitching will have a different dimension to it this year with us trying to identify the lichens as the rocks go in...

Over the next couple of weeks we will be starting to bag fill for our 2017 projects on Cat Bells, Castle Crag and the Rosthwaite to Watendlath path. We are also looking forward to welcoming two new members to the team, and working with the other Upland Teams during the fell season.'





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## Update from Joanne Backshall, Project Manager

Thanks to funding from the government for the Lake District National Park's 'Routes to Resilience' project, we are focusing our efforts this year and next on repairing paths and landscape damaged by Storm Desmond and severe weather in December 2015. This financial support is enormously helpful in the short term, but with erosion impact from increasing numbers of visitors and the continuing vagaries of the weather, we are continuing our fundraising efforts towards supporting the care and maintenance of the landscape long into the future.



We've received some extremely generous personal and corporate donations recently and on behalf of everyone involved in Fix the Fells, I'd like to express our heartfelt thanks to all our supporters for their contributions, both large and small. These will help us to grow the long term sustainability of our fell repair work and ensure the Lake District continues to delight and inspire us.

Enormous thanks are also due to our amazing army of volunteers who continue to increase their commitment and hard work for Fix the Fells. They had another record breaking year in 2016, gifting nearly 2000 volunteer days to maintaining fell paths. We are currently receiving many kind offers of volunteer help so we are looking to create more opportunities for people to take an active part in looking after the landscape with us.

We've had some excellent media coverage for Fix the Fells recently, particularly due to the involvement of various charities and organisations working with us. These are often engaged with outdoor activities themselves and it is inspiring to see they want to put something back into the upkeep of the countryside they utilise.

## Funding for Fix the Fells

The Trust is currently the major funder of Fix the Fells. As a registered charity with no government funding for our core work, 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 Nurture Lakeland.

## 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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