



National
Trust

Fix the Fells

About our upland path and
conservation work in partnership

Spring 2018

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.

Last year, 100 volunteers gifted 2,237 days on the fells. The upland paths just wouldn't be the same without their care. Our thanks to all.

West Lakes – Lewis Robertson

'Following on from our last update we've now begun work on the Scarth gap project. The 101 bags of stone flown at the tail end of last year are now making their way into the ground. Despite the weathers best efforts we're gradually working our way up the path with the much appreciated help of Fix the Fells volunteers. This is easing us back into fell life quite nicely after the legs have had a bit of a rest over winter.

We've also been assisting the West Lakes valley ranger team with various tasks including a few larger fencing jobs. On Lingmell we replaced a lengthy section of old fence which contours the hill just below the Lingmell breast route. We were gifted with some amazing views of a snow covered Wasdale which really are hard to beat.

We've also been continuing with hedge-laying. Finishing up at Field Head in Eskdale, we changed valleys to support a working holiday that had begun laying a hedge near our Wasdale ranger base. With little time left before we go back onto the fell it's all go to get our winter work finished.

We're looking forward to getting back on the fell and tackling some of the large projects planned, in particular camping out with volunteers to rebuild the summit cairn on Scafell Pike, which holds the plaque marking England's highest war memorial. This is part of the Trust's activity to commemorate the centenary of the Great War and we're all very honoured to be a part of it. Find out more at www.thenationaltrust.org.uk/thelakes



Scarth Gap



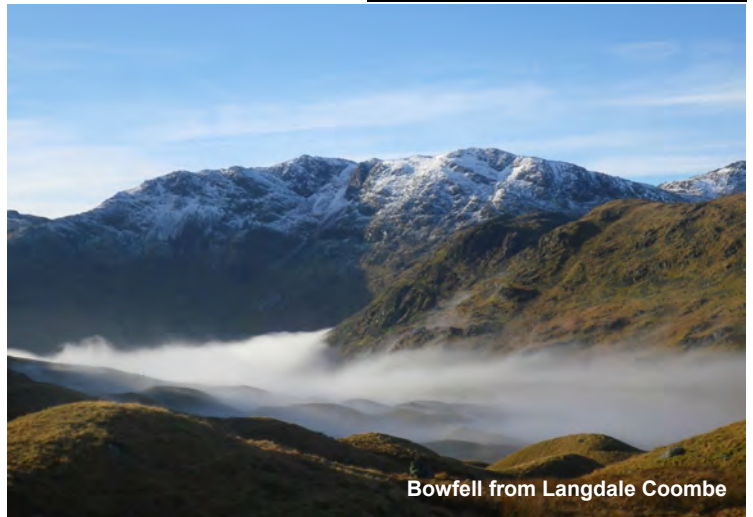
Wasdale valley

Basecamp – Rob Clarke

'The transition into spring has seen us deep in planning for the fell season ahead. Along with the South Lakes path team we had a site visit to Martcrag Moor in January to write a specification for the job for the annual upland 'blitz'. This year, as well as the now regular visitors from Scotland, we will also be welcoming the upland rangers from Snowdonia. As we plan on building a path on sheep fleece again for the first time in a few years, everyone is very keen to get some hands on experience of this rarely used technique. It helped that the day of the site visit was glorious weather too...

We've also been recruiting. Matt Tweed recently started in the new role of Fix the Fells Volunteer Development Ranger. Based at High Wray, the role is Lake District wide and will focus on working with the volunteer lengthsmen to tackle the many smaller path repair jobs, along with offering training to existing and new volunteers to ensure work is carried out to a consistent and high level of quality. It's a very exciting proposition and a role we're sure will help take Fix the Fells volunteering to the next level.

Meanwhile, we're working with our usual variety of volunteers at Basecamp. We're repairing a low level path in the Greenburn valley, near Coniston which is just a short walk in. It's a great chance to get the sort of volunteers involved with this kind of work who wouldn't be able to get up onto the higher fells. Hopefully the weather will be a bit kinder than when we visited earlier in the year, when the extremely heavy rain demonstrated very well why the drainage needed repairing.'



Bowfell from Langdale Coombe



Rainy Greenburn

South Lakes – Joe Bagnall

'2018 is a year of big projects for us. We finished off winter work over January and February, focussing on hedge-laying projects in the Hawkshead area. We've laid several hundred metres of hedge over a number of sites, quite a daunting task when you only have one chainsaw user amongst us all and lots of big trees!

Hedging is traditional countryside conservation work, great for wildlife and good for people too. Hedges look lovely in the landscape and also form wildlife corridors between woodlands providing safe places for many species to live. In the past, the large amounts of cut wood generated would have been stuck back into the hedge to form a more effective stock barrier, and larger pieces may have been used for tool handles or sharpened and used as stakes. Today most hedges are wire fenced on both sides, but we still use a lot of the wood as stakes to keep the hedge tight and solid. We produced over five tons of firewood which will be used by Basecamp volunteers and in our NT holiday cottages.

This year we're helping the Central Lakes Team on their huge Boredale Hause Coast to Coast project in Ullswater, which requires 380 bags of pitching stone to repair the path and bridleway. As nearby stone sources are home to protected species like Woolly Hair Moss, we've had to fill stone bags at locations much farther from the work site than normal. Thankfully having two teams meant that we could spread the effort and we filled all 380 bags in four weeks with helicopter lifts planned in April. Later in the year we'll work on the bridleway near to Walna Scar with our working holiday groups, and help Basecamp prepare for the annual Fix The Fells Blitz.'



Hedge-laying



Bag filling

Central and East Lakes—Pete Entwistle

'Every year we have work to do at Aira Force, which is such a popular year round destination the paths need constant maintenance and repair. This past winter we've concentrated on a steep 25m section near to High Force, putting in pitching and drains. All the rock is sourced from the surrounding woodland and 'power-barrowed' to the site. The weather has been interesting, with a lot of snow making progress slow-going and some days impossible.

We spent a week at the start of February helping our Woodland Ranger Liam plant six hectares of scrub habitat on the lower slopes of Helm Crag, Grasmere. With other volunteers and NT staff we planted 1,800 trees including protecting each tree with a tree guard. The poor winter weather meant that everything had to be hand carried up onto site, that meant 1800 trees, tree guards and posts and then planted in a mixture of rain, sleet and snow – the only constant was the cold!! The mix of tree species will provide long-term benefits. Flowering tree species are great for bees and other insect pollinators, which in turn provide food for invertebrates, birds and mammals. The tree roots will help to hold the steep soils together and soak up water, reducing the amount of erosion that can silt up streams and becks downstream, where native brown trout spawn.

During the winter months peat restoration work has been taking place on NT land in partnership with Cumbria Wildlife Trust. The work has included raising water levels to help prevent the remaining peat from drying out and being lost to the harsh weather. We spent a day with Cumbria Wildlife helping to protect the exposed peat by planting heather to help prevent it drying out.

After the quite challenging winter and early spring weather, we're now looking forward to getting out on the fells in summer sunshine.'



Aira Force



Tree planting Helm Crag



Peat planting Matteredale Common

North Lakes—Ted Everitt-Stewart

'A few of you may be surprised to learn we have been working on Cat Bells again. This terrace path from Hawes End to Manesty really is an incredible busy path. Due to its easy gradient and accessibility by boat or bus, many people who cannot venture into the high fells walk this path and admire the views. We spend days here every year repairing erosion from wear and weather. This year we put in 10 stone drains that should need almost no maintenance in the future. They were a great challenge to build with the available stones, each one needing careful placement. Our thanks to South Lakes team who lent a hand with these.

The Langstrath valley has long suffered from over-grazing and the land is now in poor condition. To begin to increase biodiversity and aid the health of the land we've already fenced our 80 hectares from grazing and last year planted 50 trees in cages. This year we have added to this with a further 100 trees. This has been a great job as the site was up near Stake Pass; on a particularly sunny day at the end of January we were left debating if there was a better work site in the whole country? With help from the North Lakes Estate Team and Fix the Fells volunteers this job really has been a whole team effort.

We've also been getting stuck into hedge laying. With 500 meters to do on the North Lakes property, it's been all hands on deck. We've really enjoyed a decent amount of time with the chainsaw; our winter work adds variety to the job and it's important to keep these traditional skills alive. The hedges have also been in some great locations; with 300 meters to do at the head of Ennerdale I think we all had a few of those moments when you really appreciate your surroundings and the lifestyle you have. Now we'll soon be bag-filling, a highlight of the year for me as we head for the fells. Haweswater and Manesty here we come!'



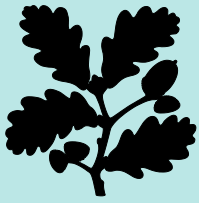
Cat Bells drain



Langstrath Valley



Ennerdale



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Update from Joanne Backshall, Project Manager

'Fix the Fells had an exceptional year in 2017, due to 20 Rangers and over 100 volunteers constantly demonstrating remarkable skill, passion and commitment to repairing and maintaining the upland paths and landscape of the Lake District.



Following Storm Desmond, we received a welcome boost to funding from the government's flood recovery fund. This enabled us to increase our staff and volunteer numbers, expand our work programme, attract publicity and awards and achieve a great deal to protect the fells we love. We now repair, maintain and monitor 330 paths across the National Park and you can find out more on our newly refreshed website.

The largest task this summer will see our Rangers repairing the bridleway and footpath to Boredale Hause near Patterdale, Ullswater. Other projects include the path to Stone Arthur and on Greenup Edge near Grasmere, the paths at Castle Crag and Manesty in Borrowdale and Scarth Gap near Buttermere.

With welcome funding from the Wainwright Society, the path on Long Stile above Haweswater will be repaired and we will continue our annual work on Tongue Gill, Scafell Pike to address the ever increasing erosion there.

Every year the Fix the Fells volunteers assist the Upland Rangers with their larger projects while also having a full list of their own path repair projects across the Lakes. This year they include areas such as Wansfell near Ambleside and Windy Gap to Great Gable. If you come across the volunteers and Rangers out on the fells in all weathers, please do stop and show them your appreciation.

Finally a big thank you to the many individuals, groups and local companies who continue to support Fix the Fells with donations great and small. We simply couldn't do all this without your help.'

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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www.nationaltrust.org.uk/thelakes
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