



Volunteering – new records, accolades, awards and TV appearances too!

Last year was the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Fix the Fells volunteer lengthsmen scheme and a special celebratory year. In fact 2017 proved to be another really awesome record breaking time for us in more ways than one.

Our routine maintenance (drain run) schedule in 2017 was consistently maintained very well above the required 80% notional target level. A total of 705 FtF drain runs were undertaken of which **644** the volunteer lengthsmen were involved with or led themselves – **a new record achievement**.

We now have 330 paths included in our on-going routine maintenance and surveillance schedule. This means teams of volunteers will be out working on these paths somewhere in Lake District at least twice every week throughout the year and in all weathers too. This amazing and enthusiastic level of activity contributed to an overall total of **2237** upland volunteering days gifted to Fix the Fells in the year – **another new volunteer record achievement**.

In addition to the routine maintenance a further 101 Fix the Fells work parties were also undertaken in the year, of which 39 have been volunteer led and unsupervised approved repair works or minor projects. We've calculated unsupervised lengthsmen work party activity has more than doubled from a total of 115 days in 2016, to a new total of **241** days for 2017 – **yet another new record of volunteer achievement**. This really demonstrates how the practical path repair skills that have been acquired and developed by the volunteer lengthsmen over the first ten years of the scheme are now being utilised.



Left: One of our unsupervised work parties extending pitching on the top of the Browney Gill path in Langdale.

A total of 117 different volunteers contributed to all this activity in some way throughout the last year, with **3** outstandingly enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers (Caroline, David and Alan) getting special commendations from the Fix the Fells Partnership Board for having contributed more than **100 days** each – a pretty amazing level of commitment and dedication to what is, after all, hard physical outdoor volunteering in all weathers.

Right: Volunteer lengthsmen Caroline and Hilary on a recent work party on the Burnmoor bridleway at Wasdale.



Volunteer lengthsmen recruitment was relaunched in February and we have many new recruits undertaking initial taster days and starting their induction training. Each is ably assisted and supported throughout their introduction to the scheme by their individually designated experienced mentor lengthsmen. Hopefully by the end of 2018 our ranks will have successfully grown to over 150 qualified volunteer lengthsmen.

To further support the scheme, a new Fix the Fells Volunteer Development Ranger has just been recruited to work with us all. We are looking forward to working with Matt Tweed when he takes up his new role in the coming months.

During 2017 a number of volunteer lengthsmen have had the opportunity to feature in televised news pieces with BBC Northwest, ITV Granada and ITV Border. This has given us an unprecedented level of publicity in this our tenth anniversary year, which has also been our most successful Fix the Fells volunteering year to date.

On a much more personal note, I was most honoured, privileged and proud to be the recipient of the Bryan Stilling Volunteering Award from the Lake District National Park Authority in June, and was then totally surprised and absolutely amazed to discover in November that I had also been nominated for and awarded a Prime Minister's Points of Light Award too – again a most unexpected honour and privilege!

This very special year was brought to a fitting and final conclusion with the announcement that Fix the Fells had won the 'Campaign of the Year Award' in the Great Outdoors Magazine Awards for 2017 and that the volunteer lengthsmen had also won 'the Extra Mile Award' as well. An amazing and most well deserved double recognition for everybody involved with Fix the Fells. 2017 will take some beating!

The success of the Fix the Fells volunteer lengthsmen scheme is very much built and founded on a really friendly team ethic and great camaraderie with both staff and volunteers alike, working in unison to help protect and repair the upland paths and landscape in the Lakeland fells that we all love so much. Long may it continue!



Barry Capp
Volunteer
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