

Walking North East

JANUARY 2014



Cover photo.

Leaving Roppa Plantation to start crossing the moor near Newgate Bank on the North York Moors. Back in the 1800's this spot was the scene of a particularly gruesome murder.

This walk will feature in a new book, 'Walking around Helmsley and Ryedale' which will be available later this year.



www.trailguides.co.uk

Apologies are due for a lack of a newsletter in December. Unfortunately circumstances beyond our control meant that one wasn't issued. This has also meant that going out for a walk has just not happened but with the way that the weather has been, that has not been a great loss as the chances of trench foot or developing webbed feet seems to have been a real possibility. The only consolation being is that at least we haven't had it as bad as some parts of the country, in particular Somerset, where any walking would need to involve the use of a wet suit and snorkel.

But on the plus side, the fact that there wasn't a newsletter in December means that there is twice as many items in this edition. Much more to read while you look out the window at yet more rain.

In particular, have a look at two items that concern developments and possible developments here at Trailguides. One is a little bit of unashamed market research, here your views are being sought on a possible direction that we may take regarding a new publication. The second item is to announce our latest guidebook, "Walking in Teesdale", which will be heading out to the bookshelves at the beginning of March.

Happy reading and walking. And after seeing the weather forecast for February, now is the time to invest in a decent pair of waterproof boots

Walking News :

Reports that the country was heading for one of the severest winters in years may be misleading. The Met Office have said that, although there was a chance of below-average temperatures over the next three months, it could also be warmer than normal and that it was not possible to forecast accurately up to five days ahead. The agency said recent press headlines were based on an outlook produced for contingency planners who have to deal with severe weather and the report is simply based on probabilities, very similar to gambling on a horse in a race.

The outlook assesses the level of risk connected to five different scenarios for both temperature and rain or snowfall. The current outlook for December-January-February is that the chance of the coldest scenario happening is between 20 and 25 per cent and the chances that the period will fall into the warmest scenario is between 10 and 15 per cent. So while uncertainty is quite large, below average temperatures are more likely than above average. In mid and late December, it is believed that temperatures are likely to remain near or slightly below average for the time of year, but otherwise fairly normal conditions for early winter are most likely.

Middleton-in-Teesdale Parish Council is aiming to raise thousands of pounds to renovate a landmark that celebrates the area's lead mining heritage. The Bainbridge Memorial Fountain was erected in the centre of Middleton-in-Teesdale in 1877, in honour of Robert Walton Bainbridge, the superintendent of the London Lead Mining Company. The company chose the village as its main administrative centre in the 19th century and such was the impact that by 1857, nine out of ten people in the area were connected with the lead mining industry. As Quakers, the company built houses for workers, plus several chapels, a school and reading room and even provided allotments for their workers. So much money was raised when Mr Bainbridge retired in 1877 that even after buying numerous presents, more than £200 was left, enough to pay for the fountain. The Council is now preparing to raise £3,500 to shot blast the ironwork and repaint the fountain, restoring it to its original glossy black finish.

The technical studies into the possibility of building the UK's longest single-span footbridge at a point across the River Tees near Barnard Castle have now been completed. A planning statement, which would be used as the main reference document should proposals for the 265-metre structure be submitted to Durham County Council, is now being prepared. However, members of the Teesdale Action Partnership board, the main driving force behind the project, were told there was still no money to pay for the £1.3m bridge. Board members had requested an update on progress with the project and the co-ordinator Craig Morgan said the county council was continuing to work with partners to identify potential sources of funding although they don't want to go to the planning stage before some funding has been identified even though they were continuing to work with landowners who would be affected by the bridge's construction in an effort to reach "acceptable solutions" should the project proceed.

A walker had to be rescued in December after slipping from a footpath and falling 15 feet down an embankment on the North York Moors. The man, in his mid-30's, landed on a ledge just above water level close to Nelly Ayre Foss waterfall near Goathland. Fire crews were sent from Goathland, Lyth and Robin Hood's Bay as well as specialist water rescue crews from Whitby and Malton, who managed to retrieve the man using water rescue equipment and bring him to safety using a basket stretcher. The man suffered minor injuries to his neck and back and was taken to hospital by a road ambulance.

In the meantime, Cleveland Mountain Rescue Team was called out to help search for a missing vulnerable 67-year old woman. The Rescue Team was called to search the open land to the south of James Cook Hospital, including Stewart's Park and Ormesby Hall. Twenty-one volunteers from the Cleveland team responded to the call-out, together with a search and rescue dog called in from the Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team. At about 1.15am in the morning the woman was found, and although she was cold and wet, was otherwise well. She was taken to James Cook Hospital.

**The remains of the chimney at the top of the flue at Grinton Smelt Mill.
As featured in the 'Grinton How Smelt Mill & the Grovebeck Mines' walk in our
Walks around Reeth & Upper Swaledale book.**



The Ramblers have issued a hard-hitting report entitled 'Paths in Crisis' in which it claims that there are more than 100,000 problems on England's paths and is calling on local authorities to stop cutting rights-of-way budgets in their attempts to balance their books. The problems walkers face include impenetrable overgrowth, dangerous barbed wire, flooded paths and missing signposts, stiles and bridges but despite these problems more than 30 per cent of councils in England have cut their path budgets this year, following on from three previous years of severe cuts. Our own region, the North-East, was named as the best region in the country with no councils cutting their budgets, but in North Yorkshire, despite more than 9,000 outstanding path problems, the rights-of-way budgets was cut by nearly £100,000 on top of previous cuts of £175,000.

Walkers heading to the popular areas of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale, the two most northerly of the Yorkshire Dales, during the early part of next year may find their plans thwarted as the main access road, the B6270 between Reeth and Richmond, will be closed for twelve weeks starting in February 2014. Alternative routes have been proposed by the highways authority but these take drivers across narrow, remote roads that cross the nearby moors and there are real fears that these may be closed during bad weather thus isolating the two dales. The road is being closed to repair damage caused by subsidence and landslips and was supposed to start in September or October.

An osprey that fledged from a nest in Kielder Forest in 2012 has been spotted flying in the skies of northern Senegal in Africa. It's the first time that a Kielder-born bird has ever been seen at a migration destination. Ospreys recolonised naturally in the North East in 2009 following more than 200 years of absence. The first successful breeding pairs were at Kielder Water and Forest Park, rearing young on the trout caught in the reservoir. Now the birds continue to return and successfully breed there every year, travelling over 5,000 miles to and from their wintering ground in sub-Saharan Africa. This year the park had four chicks successfully fledge, a record number since 2009.

Northumberland County Council is set to commission a tourism-impact survey to determine the effect wind-farms have on this vital sector. However, the results will not be known when the planning committee is due to consider the application to site nine turbines at Belford Burn. It was admitted by the Council at a public meeting to discuss the Belford Burn proposal, that concerns had been raised about the impact of windfarms on tourism in the county, so much so that a study to determine the effects is due to be commissioned. The study will look at the effect of existing and planned onshore wind turbines on tourism businesses and on potential visitors, with specific regard to visitor perception in both the medium and long term. It is hoped the study will be completed by next April, unfortunately too late to impact on the Belford Burn application, which is due to come before the planning committee early next year.

A North Yorkshire police officer has been handed a top award for his efforts in tackling wildlife crime. Richmondshire-based PC John Wilbor was presented with the World Wildlife Fund's Wildlife Enforcer of the Year Award, the award being presented by the WWF and the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW) at the 25th Annual UK National Wildlife Crime Conference. PC Wilbor is said to be the 'backbone' of the Border Watch scheme, a rural watch for wildlife crime in the Richmondshire area, and has worked with the local community and Hambleton and Richmondshire Community Safety Partnership to tackle wildlife crime while also providing guidance to forces setting up similar 'watches' in other areas.

One of the UK's most important grassland sites, which is home to many endangered grasses and rare orchids, will be preserved for years to come as a result of an £8,000 conservation project. Durham Wildlife Trust has just completed work to protect Bishop Middleham Quarry, a nationally recognised nature reserve on the outskirts of Bishop Middleham, near Sedgefield in County Durham. Over the last couple of months, 750m of fencing has been installed along with a new water supply which will allow Exmoor ponies to be introduced at the site of special scientific interest. The ponies will graze on the brambles and scrub that could, if left unchecked, overrun the magnesian limestone grassland. This will benefit the many rare plants and insects that have flour-

ished on the site since quarrying ceased in the mid 1930s, including the northern brown argus butterfly and the dark red helleborine orchid. By using this traditional method of plant control, trust volunteers will no longer have to devote hours of time to cutting back the weeds, leaving them free to carry out other important work. Quarry operator Lafarge Tarmac provided an £8,000 grant from its Landfill Communities Fund for the project, which also saw three kissing gates installed to improve access for walkers.

Swaledale Mountain Rescue Team has been able to buy a new vehicle thanks to a Ministry of Defence grant and various fundraising projects. Last year the team set out to find both a suitable vehicle to replace a 20-year-old Land Rover, and a contractor who could adapt it for carrying flood rescue and underground equipment, plus five team members. The vehicle chosen was a Nissan Navara costing £40,000, with half of the cost coming from the MoD Community Covenant Grant Scheme and a further £10,000 from donations from the local community. The remaining £10,000 was raised by a successful spoof video of Psy's Gangnam Style which went viral on YouTube and which was produced by Steve Robinson and colleagues in 21 Engineer Regiment who were in Afghanistan at the time.

An Adopt-a-Stone campaign has been launched by the Hadrian's Wall Trust as it tries to prevent a potential funding crisis. Both individual and corporate sponsors are being invited to attach their names to a stone, not on Hadrian's Wall itself but on a virtual realisation of it on the website adoptastone.co.uk. Volunteers are also being sought for a Wall Watch scheme aimed at keeping the World Heritage Site and adjoining Hadrian's Wall Path, one of the country's network of National Trails, in good condition. The move comes as the Trust, which was set up in 2006 to oversee the management of the historic site, is seeking funding after the World Heritage Site lost more than £1m a year when the regional development agencies, including One North East, were wound up and is set to lose 40% of its funding from Natural England for the popular path which costs £200,000 a year to maintain. While local authorities along the wall had responded to a call for extra funding, there are fears that as their budgets are squeezed further then this could also have an impact on the trust. As a result of the loss of funding, the trust's full-time staff had been reduced from 21 to 10, making it increasingly difficult to maintain the quality of the trail on whose popularity the wall and many small businesses depend. The trust now needs to raise a minimum of an additional £170,000 a year to continue to meet the standards which are essential for the protection of the World Heritage Site and to maintain and develop visitor management.

The North East has welcomed moves to reduce the financial incentives offered to energy firms putting up rural wind farms. Ministers have announced a 5% reduction in the subsidy paid to energy firms for onshore turbines, while at the same time increasing prices paid to support offshore turbines. Revealing the change as part of the Government's infrastructure announcements, Treasury Chief Secretary Danny Alexander said the overall level of green subsidies had not been changed, but the Government was focused on achieving value for money and supporting offshore wind. Berwick MP Sir Alan Beith praised the changes. "With Northumberland facing more and more applications for wind farms in sensitive landscape sites, I welcome the cut in subsidies to onshore wind farms within our continuing commitment to renewable energy," he said. The changes were also cautiously welcomed by the Newcastle and Northumberland Society, which has been putting together an evidence base to use against wind turbine plans.

Masts which could pave the way for a massive wind farm of up to 100 giant turbines in Northumberland's Kielder Forest look set to be given approval. The investigations could lead to a proposal to site one of the UK's biggest wind farms of between 50 and 100 turbines, including machines up to 170 metres tall. RWE Npower Renewables' proposals to site four masts in the area look set to be approved, despite objections from Northumberland National Park Authority, two parish councils and 84 residents. The 90m-high meteorological test masts seek to assess wind conditions in the commercial Redesdale and Comb areas of Kielder and will be sited for up to three years, in an arc running from the Catcleugh Reservoir to Comb. However, the park authority's planning department has objected to two of the proposed masts, on the grounds that they would have a "significant detrimental visual impact upon views looking into an area of the national park." Rochester with Byrness parish council has objected to all four having sent out a questionnaire to residents which showed 84 people had objections to the masts, 53 people did not and 14 were undecided. Tarsset and Greystead parish council have also

A little bit of unashamed market research.

Over the last year, there has been one or two suggestions as to whether we could expand this newsletter into something more like a magazine. Something such as Trail, Country Walking or TGO but purely based on the north eastern counties of Durham, Northumberland and North Yorkshire, an area that we all know is often neglected by these other magazines.

The downside of this is that something of this nature would take a great deal of time and preparation to get off the ground and so would not come free like our current newsletter. However, we would still like to keep prices down to a minimum and so rather than having a hard copy, if the magazine did go ahead then it would be issued as a PDF download from our website.

And this is where the market research comes in.

What would be the interest from you, the walking public, to a magazine like this. Would you be prepared to spend a pound for a downloadable magazine devoted to walking just purely in the North East ??

We would really like your opinion to see whether this project is worth having a go at, so if you would be interested then please take the time to let us know.

Email your opinion to trailguides@uwclub.net

It would be a shame not to say anything now and then wish that the magazine had taken off.



objected to three of the proposals citing “a visual impact and extra light in a unique dark skies reserve.” Five years ago, the Regional Spatial Strategy, which set the North East a target of producing 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, highlighted wind development at Kielder Forest as a key component.

A former quarry in the centre of Hadrian’s Wall country could be transformed into a countryside park with a view to increasing visitors and boosting local businesses. The setting of Walltown, near Greenhead, is already included on two national trails, the Pennine Way and the Hadrian’s Wall Path, and is popular with walkers and sightseers alike. Now Northumberland National Park, which manages the site, has revealed plans to invest in the existing café facilities, and also for educational activities and other events to be hosted at Walltown. The quarry at Walltown closed in the 1970s, and has since played host to school visits and Roman re-enactment events.

A Kielder attraction has won gold at the North East Tourism Awards 2013 with the Leaplsh Waterside Park being named as the best holiday park/village of the year. The shoreline of the lake, the largest man-made lake in northern Europe, is the spectacular setting for 32 luxury Scandinavian lodges and 99 touring pitches, with a panoramic view over the lake and forest. The park also scooped gold earlier this year in the tourism experience of the year category at the Visit England Awards for Excellence.

Teesdale has some of the best stargazing sites in the UK, according to Dark Sky Discovery. Six of the 71 listed Dark Sky Discovery sites are in the dale and seven are located in the North Pennines with Cow Green Reservoir being among 18 new sites to be recently listed. It joins Selset Reservoir, Balderhead Reservoir and Tan Hill where discovery site events are held. Grassholme and Hury reservoirs are considered associate sites by Dark Sky Discovery. The sites were nominated by a local group or organisation and approved by the Dark Sky Discovery programme as safe and accessible with reduced light pollution. Dark Sky Discovery is a network of astronomy and open space organisations that aim to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to stargaze. It offers the public the opportunity to meet astronomers and find out about the latest research in the field. In England the network has been supported through a Big Lottery Fund grant awarded through Natural England’s Access to Nature programme. For more details about Dark Sky Discovery Sites go to darkskydiscovery.org.uk

The country’s first official Dark Sky Park has been announced and has achieved the official Gold Tier Dark Sky Park status by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA). Northumberland Dark Sky Park is made up of the combined areas of Kielder Forest, Northumberland National Park and Kielder Water & Forest Park and covers nearly 1,500 square kilometres between Hadrian’s Wall and the Scottish border. The award means that the area has been deemed to be England’s darkest and best location for stargazing and will provide opportunities to boost wildlife and develop sustainable stargazing tourism, whilst protecting the area for the future. Over 300 light meter readings have been taken over a two year period by National Park volunteers, amateur astronomers and Forestry Commission rangers, and these confirm that Northumberland retains England’s largest extent of starry skies due to low levels of light pollution. The award winning Kielder Observatory (www.kielderobservatory.org), which is located within the forest, runs over 100 events per year to help beginners and serious stargazers study the skies.

The Forestry Commission has submitted a planning application to Durham County Council to develop new facilities at Hamsterley Forest. The application proposes to build a new multi-user bridge across Bedburn Beck, with a linking forest trail. During peak visiting times and Bank Holidays, the current forest trail from the car park to Bedburn Beck, Poo Stick Bridge and the play area can get congested with cyclists, walkers and visitors with pushchairs or wheelchairs. These additional facilities will allow for a quicker exit from the car park into the forest for cyclists, instead of them currently using the Forest Drive or cycling through the main trail where children access the play area and a new short circular route will be created using the new bridge and the existing Poo Stick Bridge. The proposals are part of a master plan to develop Hamsterley Forest, which attracts up to 200,000 visitors a year, into a leading countryside attraction, supported by Visit County Durham.

**Above Rookland Sike in the Cheviot Hills.
As featured in 'The Whitelands of Biddlestone' walk in our The Cheviot Hills book.**



A number of permissive paths around Corbridge that run across land owned by the Beaumont family will remain open to the public after talks between the owners, Corbridge Parish Council and Northumberland County Council. The paths will be maintained in a joint effort by all three parties. The parish council is now liaising with the Beaumonts about a circular walk from Corbridge to Dilston, joining Ladycutter Lane.

North York Moors National Park Authority has completed restoration work on the main footpath going down into the Hole of Horcum. The path has suffered years of erosion, and drainage work at the site will also help alleviate flooding in nearby towns, the authority hopes. Thousands of people visit the vast natural amphitheatre every year that legend tells was created by the giant Wade, scooping up a handful of earth to throw at his wife Bell. As a result a very visible scar has been created on the landscape which was further compounded by rain-water causing damage to the footpath. The work was started in September, with a contractor restoring the original line of the route by re-landscaping the bank either side of the footpath. The path was subsequently partly stone pitched to provide a smoother, hard wearing surface and a gate has replaced a ladder stile at the top of the bank to provide easier access. Work carried out to tackle the drainage problems will not only benefit walkers, but will also contribute to the 'Slowing the Flow' project by increasing the ground's ability to absorb ground-water and, therefore, slow the passage of water into Levisham Beck and any impact on the towns and villages further downstream.

Durham County Council has announced an additional 2.3 miles of public rights of way to the county's network of 2,200 miles of public paths. The additional paths have been added for the use of walkers, cyclists and horse riders and are on council owned land at Bowburn, Brandon Village, Esh Winning, Pelton Fell, Newfield and Sherburn/Pittington. The paths have already been used by the public but this move means that they are now registered and protected under highways law for the future use of the public.

The devastation caused by the recent huge tidal surge along the east coast of England has uncovered a previously hidden historic site at Bamburgh. The WWII pillbox structure had been hidden under the sand dunes and is in excellent condition and it is possible that other sites may have been revealed in this way along the coast. The sand dunes are a remarkable dynamic environment and huge weather events such as the recent storm, have the potential to both cover and uncover sites quickly as has happened at Bamburgh. The shipwreck, dating from around 1768, exposed in the spring has now been completely covered again under a sand bank and this WWII pillbox structure has been exposed due to the high tide undercutting the dune system. The newly exposed pillbox on Bamburgh beach formed part of a long chain of defensive sites of other pillboxes, gun emplacements, anti-tank blocks and a radar station. The pillboxes along the coast take a variety of shapes and forms from square, rectangular, hexagonal and beehive and usually made from concrete shuttering reflecting the ad-hoc manner in which these buildings were hastily constructed. The pillbox at Bamburgh, like two others at Dunstan Steads and Dunstanburgh, is constructed of concrete sandbags with the hessian imprint still visible on the individual bags. The Northumberland Coast AONB team would be very interested to hear about any other new sites exposed by the tidal surge and are keen to set up a group of volunteers to monitor known archaeological sites along the coast and are asking anybody interested in volunteering to contact them.

A new walking guide has been produced to mark the official reopening this year of the Centenary Way, which was originally opened in 1989 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the creation of the former North Riding

Reader's letters and emails.

We are always willing to print reader's comments and reply to questions. Both the email and postal address are on the Trailguides website.

Contributions from readers will always be considered for inclusion within this magazine. Please feel free to send any articles, news or other pieces that you feel would be of interest to our readers to trailguides@uwclub.net.

County Council. The route runs from York Minster to Filey Brigg, passing through the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Castle Howard and the historic market town of Malton. The guidebook, which is on sale for £4 in certain libraries in North Yorkshire and online through Amazon, was written by John Sparshatt, chair of the Long Distance Walkers Association and a countryside volunteer for the county council.

A footbridge across Old Durham Beck, a tributary of the River Wear in Durham City, has been removed following concerns about public safety. The bridge, between Pelaw Wood and the playing fields, has been closed for more than a year after erosion to the riverbanks following flooding. Durham County Council had hoped that remedial work could be carried out to enable the bridge to reopen, however, a recent inspection revealed that further erosion had occurred and, with people still attempting to use the bridge despite it being closed, it was decided that it was necessary to remove it in order to ensure public safety. Walkers wishing to cross Old Durham Beck are advised to use the Kingfisher Bridge, on the banks of the Wear, as an alternative. Notices are already in the area advising of footpath closures following a landslip at Pelaw Wood and these are being updated to include information about the removal of the bridge. The council is looking at possible alternative sites to reinstate the bridge and is in discussions with local landowners.

A high court judge dismissed a last ditch bid to halt the erection of a wind turbine close to ancient monuments and historical sites in Northumberland. Plans were approved in January for the installation of an 18m turbine on land just 750m from the site of the Battle of Homildon Hill, which was recounted in Shakespeare's Henry IV. However, an objector challenged the legality of the decision in the high court but now, the judge has dismissed the challenge, meaning the turbine can go up. The site is only 800m from Northumberland National Park, 1.5km from the iron-age Humbleton Hill fort and 350m from the medieval Green Castle, both of which are protected monuments.

The RSPB has described some areas of the Yorkshire and Durham Dales and the North York Moors as "no fly zones" for birds of prey. Despite 2013 being the 60th year of legal protection for wild birds, latest figures have shown little improvement in the level of illegal persecution of birds of prey and that some areas in the North's uplands had none of the birds. The RSPB's Birdcrime report revealed 208 instances of the shooting and destruction of birds of prey, including the confirmed shooting of 15 buzzards, five sparrowhawks and four peregrine falcons nationally, which included more than 70 poisoning incidents. The report names North Yorkshire as one of the worst counties for bird of prey persecution, while County Durham was also among the top ten hotspots. Several studies have reached the conclusion that persecution on intensively managed upland grouse moors is the key issue affecting some bird of prey populations. The RSPB report has detailed numerous incidents including a buzzard being found in a crow cage trap with a freshly plucked pigeon, close to active pheasant rearing pen on the Blansby Park estate, near Pickering and a hen harrier being killed in Colsterdale, south of Leyburn, in the Yorkshire Dales. It also states that there are certain areas, such as some of the upland areas of Yorkshire and Durham, where there is enough habitat to support many pairs of breeding birds, but there are none. The RSPB believes that a combination of more effective and enforceable laws, in which suspected wildlife criminals can be brought before a crown court and a change in attitude from some within the grouse shooting industry will be essential to restore bird of prey populations.

Volunteers from Just The Job, a social enterprise for adults with special work needs, has started work with English Heritage to clear overgrown scrub and protect the best preserved section of an Iron Age monument from further decay. The work is intended to reveal Scots Dyke, a 2,500-year-old 6m-high dyke and 6m-deep ditch, for people to appreciate from the nearby public footpath. The dyke, near Richmond in North Yorkshire, is thought to have been constructed by the Brigantes tribe and runs north for 12 miles across private land from the River Swale near Richmond to the River Tees, near Stanwick. While it is possible that the dyke may have been built as a tribal boundary, it is also possible that it was constructed as a defensive wall as Stanwick stands at its northernmost point and was a stronghold of the Brigantes tribe during the early stages of the Roman occupation of Britain. It was identified as being at risk in 2008 because it had become overgrown, with vegetation obscuring the monument, causing erosion and providing cover for burrowing animals which can cause further damage, so it is essential to remove the damaging scrub. It is also hoped that when the work is completed, an infor-

mation board will be installed.

Volunteers have helped clear vegetation from along a popular dale walkway. The Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership organised volunteers to clear out vegetation around the 'old bandstand' in Flatts Wood with the aim being to give a clearer view of the river and make the area more attractive. The work has been done ahead of major reclamation work planned for the area later in the winter. Among the plants removed by the volunteers were ragwort and Himalayan balsam, both of which are considered to be invasive species. Himalayan balsam was brought over for Victorian gardens because it has a pretty flower and is frequently found along riverbanks where it grows rapidly and spreads quickly to smother other plants.

Scientists from Forest Research, the Forestry Commission's research agency, and volunteers have been scrambling over challenging terrain in nineteen sites across Great Britain including Teesdale, the site of England's largest juniper wood, to collect berries from juniper bushes in a bid to protect them from further decline. The collection is part of the UK National Tree Seed Project that is overseen by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The berries are sent to the Millennium Seed Bank at Kew for conservation and further research. The UK National Tree Seed Project and Millennium Seed Bank have been made possible by £100,000 in support from the People's Postcode Lottery.

Although there is a lot of juniper in the northern hemisphere, it is declining in Great Britain. Rabbits like to eat the seedlings and at some sites the bushes are smothered by brambles and bracken plus when moors are burned for grouse shooting it also makes it harder for juniper to survive. The berries often contain large numbers of empty seeds, which may be due an imbalance between male and female bushes in local populations. Typically only 6 or so juniper seedlings out of 10,000 seeds survive the first year. Juniper is rather a scraggly, unprepossessing bush but is one of only three native conifers and plays host to about forty fungi and insects, which are dependent on it for part or all of their life-cycles. In northern England and Scotland, some juniper populations, including those in Teesdale, are under threat from a fungus-like pathogen, *Phytophthora austrocedrae*.

The man charged with promoting access to the countryside in England stands accused of unblocking a right of way on his farm only after being grilled by MPs about footpaths on his land. Andrew Sells, the Tory Party donor and treasurer of the right-wing, free-market think-tank Policy Exchange, was being questioned before he was appointed chair of Natural England. Access campaigners said there is a history of blocked footpaths on Mr Sells's Wiltshire land, and even now rights of way across his estate are not clear. The Open Spaces Society, Britain's oldest national conservation charity, said that when he was questioned last week by the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, he gave a categorical assurance footpaths on his land were clear, open and available. The Society stated that this was not true and it was only two days after the committee meeting that he had three fences removed which were blocking Luckington footpath 21 on his land at Sandy Farm, Sopworth. The fences were removed to make the footpath walkable as the law requires. Another footpath, Luckington footpath 20, passes the side of his farm and goes across a tennis court, this was unmarked and off-putting to walkers. Since the hearing it has been waymarked, although inadequately. One of Natural England's statutory purposes is 'promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation', and Mr Sells agreed with Mrs Lewell-Buck, one of the MPs on the select committee, that 'it would be a very great concern' if he had paths on his land which were blocked when he was appointed to the post of chairman of Natural England. However, the state of his paths had been the subject of complaint by the local Ramblers' Association as long ago as 2008.

This wouldn't be another case of a politician only doing what he has to do in order to get a well paid job ?

2013 proved to be the busiest year in the entire 48 year history of Cleveland Mountain Rescue Team with a record number of call-outs. From an average of 45 over the previous four years, call-outs rose to an unprecedented 61, a 36% rise. The increase is difficult to explain as the nature of the incidents attended remain the same as in previous years. Although searching for missing persons accounted for just over 46% of the incidents, other call-outs included a number of cases of accidents to mountain bikers and at the beginning of the

year the team did respond to a number of sledging related accidents. The year did, however, provide a bonus as after years of fundraising, they were finally able to invest in a new Land Rover, replacing a vehicle which had been in service for almost 16 years. The team has also experimented with new mobile technology, which it is hoped will reduce the time taken in locating casualties and missing persons.

Opposition has been raised against plans to site wind turbines close to the North East's answer to Stonehenge. Proposals have been lodged for two engines near the 4,000-year-old Duddo stone circle, a scheduled ancient monument near Berwick in Northumberland but a band of residents and Duddo Parish Council have objected to the plans. However, Northumberland County Council is nevertheless recommending the application be approved. The circle, also known as The Women or the Singing Stones, stands on a small knoll overlooking the Tweed basin, next to the hamlet of Duddo and is made up of five large blocks of stone, created in the Neolithic period. A 19th Century dig revealed the base of two additional stones, which it is believed, were removed in the mid 1800s. Seven residents and the parish council claim the proposal will have a significant adverse visual impact on the stones and that the turbines have not been sited so as to minimise any impact on the ancient monument. Despite the County Council recommending approval of this scheme, it has previously refused other applications because of the visual impact they would have on the Stones.

In September, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority launched an app for iPhones containing information to help visitors plan a visit to the iconic Three Peaks. Now the Authority has released an Android version to encourage more people to visit Pen-y-ghent, Ingleborough and Wharfedale. The app costs £1.99 and all the money from sales will be spent on maintaining the rights of way network, which copes with around 100,000 visitors every year, as part of the Three Peaks Project. As well as containing 1:50,000 OS maps of the Three Peaks Challenge, summiting all three in 12 hours, and alternative routes for each peak, the app has maps and links to route descriptions for mountain bike rides. It also has information on geolocated places of interest ranging from geological and archaeological sites through to nature reserves, and some stunning 360° panoramas from the summits and an augmented reality 'toposcope' showing the names of the hills surrounding each of the three peaks. The iPhone and Android versions of the Three Peaks Yorkshire app can be downloaded through www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/y3peaksapp and from iTunes and Google Play respectively.

Campaigners fighting to block the spread of wind farms across east Cleveland have welcomed a report from the North York Moors National Park Authority that strongly opposes one application. The members of Fight in Guisborough to Halt Turbines group (FIGHT) are determined to persuade Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's planning committee to reject the application by Banks Renewable to erect five wind turbines on the outskirts of the town. The planning committee of the North York Moors National Park Authority has recommended that the council reject the firm's most recent application due to the unacceptable obtrusive impact upon the landscape. The report highlights concerns that due to the height of the turbines and the elevation of the proposed site, the turbines will have a harmful and dominating impact on the prominence and visual integrity of Roseberry Topping and the other escarpment features along the edge of the National Park.

November was the quietest month for the military's search and rescue helicopters for eight years. Figures released as part of a regular MoD statistical release, show that the helicopters of both the RAF and the Royal Navy were called out 96 times, a significant downward trend from the 200 call-outs in both July and August, the two summer months being the busiest of the year. The military search and rescue helicopters are due to be privatised in a scheme beginning in 2015 and by 2017, all the country's rescue helicopters will be operated by the American-owned Bristow company, flying in the colours of HM Coastguard.

A planning application has been made with Durham County Council for a single wind turbine just 1 km from the popular Waskerley Way, part of the C2C coast to coast route used by walkers and cyclists. The turbine would be erected in the village of Rowley, near Castleside and stand 15 metres tall to its hub. However, the applicants say that the turbine wouldn't be seen from the Walkway because of the natural contours of the land.

A scientist has walked in to England's most tranquil spot, a peat bog in Northumberland two miles from the Scottish border on the moorland that edges Kielder Forest. Trevor Cox, a professor of acoustic engineering, did not need any scientific instruments to tell him that his quest to find the spot was over, just the sound of his own panting and the squelch of his feet. The spot had been identified by researchers from Newcastle and Northumbria universities working for the Campaign to Protect Rural England by measuring factors including light pollution and the distance from the nearest road and flight path. The Salford University academic, is the first person knowingly to have visited the location after he persuaded the CPRE to reveal the secret location. Prof Cox said that although there was no sound of human activity, nor even of wildlife, he didn't find the experience relaxing as he suffered from wet feet, biting insects and a nagging worry that he was trespassing on military land, so spent only 20 minutes on the moorland at the edge of Kielder.

New volunteers are being recruited to the local access forums across North Yorkshire. The forums are statutory bodies which advise organisations such as Natural England, local authorities and national park authorities on the development of recreation and access strategies and improve public rights of way. They are made up of interested parties, including users and landowners, and meet four times a year. New members are needed for the next two years and applications from people with an interest in land are particularly welcome. Forum members are unpaid, but expenses are payable. Contact aidan.rayner@northyorks.gov.uk.

Plans to erect wind turbines close to Northumberland's answer to Stonehenge have been deferred, amid anger over the county council 'losing' an objection. Proposals to site two engines near Duddo stone circle were due to have been determined by Northumberland County Council last week but they were instead deferred with a row over the planning authority's failure to report an objection from Duddo Parish Council. The parish council has branded the omission "farcical" while the county blamed an "oversight." The proposed site of the turbines is 1.8km from the 4,000-year-old scheduled ancient monument, also known as The Women or the Singing Stones, next to the hamlet of Duddo. The site is made up of five large blocks of stone, created in the Neolithic period.

Seven residents and the parish council objected claiming the proposal would have a significant adverse visual impact on the stones and that the turbines have not been sited so as to minimise any impact on the ancient monument. However, despite parish councillor Don Brownlow lodging his authority's objection in October, his claim that a planning officer verbally acknowledged receipt and several emails, the county council said in its report to members that no response had been received and the report recommended that the planning and environment committee approve the application. Coun Brownlow raised the omission with the county council of last week's meeting, resulting in the application being deferred.

After a busy twelve months, the Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team is gearing up for more call outs to help the stranded and lost in County Durham. The team were called out to 45 incidents last year, a 25 per cent increase on 2012 and are now preparing for another busy year which could see them called to a variety of emergencies, from searching for people missing from home to rescuing motorists stranded in extreme weather spots. Their most unusual call out in 2013 was last January when they were asked to search for a kite skier who had become separated from his party by heavy mist and had gone missing in upper Teesdale. The team also helped in the search for missing Durham University student Sope Peters as well as having another fifteen callouts to assist the police in searching for vulnerable adults and children across the county. They also helped district nurses get to outlying patients in the heavy snow and rescued motorists trapped in their cars.

The team currently has forty members from all walks of life, ranging from teachers and plumbers to emergency service personnel and retirees. As a team, they need to raise around £28,000 a year to upgrade essential equipment and pay for insurance and fuel, the vast majority of this coming from public donations, with Christmas collections in Darlington and Durham raising £900 and £1,700 respectively. As with all mountain rescue teams, they rely heavily on donations from the public to meet their running costs. For more information, visit twsmrt.org.uk.

**The view from the Carey Burn bridge.
As featured in the 'Cold Law Considered' walk in our Walks from Wooler book.**



Plans for a £50m leisure project in Northumberland are set to be lodged in the near future. Active Leisure Resorts is in the final stages of drawing up a planning application for the Blue Sky Forest holiday village and adventure park that could bring 700 jobs to the former Steadsburn opencast site near Widdrington. The company is holding a consultation event later in January to discuss its plans, which include creating the UK's first artificial adventure slope for climbing, caving and gorge walking, an artificial ski slope with luge track and jumps, 50-acre lake, off-road driving courses and the biggest tree house adventure playground in the country. There is also planned to be a leisure hub with swimming pool, equestrian facilities, a retail centre, 400 eco holiday homes and 100 camping pods. A detailed planning application could be submitted by the end of February.

Most men's dreams of being snowed into a pub may have ended. The country's highest pub, the Tan Hill Inn at the top end of Arkengarthdale, the most northerly of the Yorkshire Dales, has now bought itself a snow plough named Big Bertha. For the past two years the inn has been snowbound for stretches as long as 11 days and four years ago the area was permanently covered in snow from December 17 to April 17. Unlucky (or is that lucky) customers have been known to be snowed in for days at a stretch.

One of our forthcoming books, 'Walking in Arkengarthdale', will feature a couple of walks starting from this hostelry. and yes, the delights of the bar were sampled after the test walking

Plans for a £1.3m footbridge across the River Tees at Barnard Castle are now more than a year behind schedule with no funding yet secured and a legal wrangle still unresolved. It was hoped that plans would be submitted to Durham County Council last September, but a planning statement has still not been completed. Technical studies for the project had now been completed but funding for the bridge had still not been found. On top of this, legal issues are holding up the project. These are understood to centre around land ownership. It is claimed an application for a compulsory purchase order may be considered by the council to buy the land in question unless these issues are resolved. If it goes ahead, the planned 265 metre rope bridge will be the UK's longest single-span footbridge and is estimated would bring 64,000 visitors a year to the area.

A runner in the Montane Spine Race had to be rescued from the summit of Windy Gyle in the Cheviots early on Saturday morning. The Spine Race is an ultra-distance event that involves the full 431 km (268-mile) length of the Pennine Way from Edale to Kirk Yetholm, the route being traversed in winter conditions. At about half-past midnight on Saturday morning one of the tail-enders in the race activated the SOS function on the GPS tracker that all of the participants carry. This automatically pinpointed his location at Windy Gyle, high on the border ridge at the head of the Bowmont Valley. A helicopter was dispatched from RAF Boulmer but was prevented from landing on the high summit by low cloud and poor visibility. Members of the Border Search And Rescue Unit were then deployed to find and evacuate the exhausted 49-year-old with a hasty party of two members leaving from Cocklawfoot at around 4.30am. This advance group made good time up Windy Rig to Windy Gyle by the light of a bright moon in a clear sky and found the runner without any difficulty, lying in a slight dip about 150 m south of the summit. An experienced ultrarunner and a veteran of several severe endurance tests, the casualty had done everything he could have to stave off the chill, lying on a foam mattress inside a waterproof bivvy bag, a sleeping bag and all his clothing but was still cold, completely exhausted and a little disorientated. The runner was warmed with hot tea, a bivvy shelter and shared body heat, while the rest of the rescue party made their way to Windy Gyle, equipped with further medical supplies and a stretcher in case the runner needed carrying off the hills. Rewarmed, reassured and fortified by food, the casualty was able to walk, supported by the 10 BSARU volunteers who had deployed onto the hill, down to the safety of a team Land Rover that had been taken as far on to the hill as possible by one of the team's highly trained off-road drivers.

A new map, prepared using readily available Government data, has revealed potential gas fracking sites across the north of England with the majority of land in the North East being shown to be under consideration for the controversial gas extraction method. While there are only three existing drilling licences in the North of England, in the area between Middlesbrough and Redcar, the area below Castleton in the North Yorkshire Moors and above Carlisle in Cumbria, most of the North East and west coast of Cumbria is classed as being 'area under consideration'. In particular, Newcastle, Sunderland, South Tyneside, North Tyneside, Teesside and Northumberland including Rothbury and Amble are all areas being considered by energy companies for future explo-

ration. Future licenses that are being considered as of December 2013 include vast areas around York and near Pickering. The only areas of the country where fracking is not being considered due to the unlikelihood of extracting shale gas, is the Lake District National Park, Northumberland National Park, most of Devon and Cornwall, Wales, Suffolk and Essex.

A campaign is underway to create a major cycling route in North Yorkshire. The Ryedale Trail is the idea of national cycling charity Sustrans, Helmsley Arts Centre, parish councillors and residents with the aim being to link the communities in Ryedale with a route for walkers, cyclists, horseriders and nature lovers. A steering group is now being set up and Pickering Town Council is among those which have given support to the venture. An action plan is also being drawn up, which will include public exhibitions about the potential trail, putting forward a vision document and ultimately outlining a preferred route.

The National Trust has thrown its weight behind objectors fighting the erection of a wind farm in the shadow of Roseberry Topping. The Trust has written to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council to register its objections to the scheme to erect the five turbines at Bank Field near to Guisborough and is the second organisation, after the North York Moors National Park Authority last week, to voice its concerns. The proposed turbines would have a hub height of 80 metres and an overall blade-tip height of 132 metres, while the blades would be 52 metres long, this would make them the largest within the area. The letter from the Trust raises concerns that the turbines would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and being within 5 km of Roseberry Topping, of which the Trust is custodian, would become a dominant and intrusive feature in the views from this iconic viewpoint.

The mining company, Minco, says that tests across the County Durham and Northumberland border, between Allenheads, near Stanhope, and Nenthead, in Cumbria, have been very encouraging. The firm is now undertaking further work in Northumberland, which it believes harbours deeper zinc deposits. The company began testing last year, and said the project, known as the North Pennine Orefield Development, could hold some of the largest amounts of zinc in Europe and could, potentially, create up to 500 new jobs, with workers mining a million tonnes of zinc every year. The North Pennine lead field was the UK's most important lead producer between 1750 and 1850, employing thousands of men across Teesdale, Weardale, South Tynedale and the Derwent valley. Minco will continue carrying out test drilling for up to two years to gain further results, but said it was buoyed by its early findings which could help return mining back to a region renowned for the industry.

A new website which will help promote the Cleveland Way and the Pennine Way, among others, was officially launched on Monday, January 13. The National Trails site covers 15 trails across the country including those that run through the region such as the Pennine Way, the Pennine Bridleway, the Cleveland Way, the Hadrian's Wall Way and the Yorkshire Wolds Way. The new website includes high-quality Ordnance Survey mapping, as well as nearby attractions and facilities to visit which includes castles, churches, parks and museums. New interactive features also mean that local businesses can upload details of the services they provide to people visiting the area including where to stay, what to see and where to eat, and to help find facilities such as bike hire shops, horse riding stables and outdoor equipment shops. Recommended itineraries for both walking and cycling the routes are downloadable, and there are ideas for tailored outings such as geocaching trails. Walkers and local residents can also upload content including photographs, recommendations and reviews plus details of events. The new website can be visited on www.nationaltrail.co.uk

Members of the public are being asked to report any signs of disease in garden species such as birds and frogs, all as part of a project to assess the health of UK wildlife. The national Garden Wildlife Health project will then use this information to analyse where and when wildlife diseases are occurring and whether they are hitting animal populations, ultimately to help protect species against future declines in numbers. People are being asked to report any signs of disease they spot in common species including amphibians, reptiles, garden birds and hedgehogs online at gardenwildlifehealth.org. This citizen science scheme is a collaboration between the

Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and amphibian conservation charity Froglife. Tim Hopkins, Garden Wildlife Health project co-ordinator at ZSL, said: "We all share our gardens with wildlife but often fail to notice how these animals are faring. We're already seeing a steep decline in a number of iconic British animals, including the hedgehog, and we need to know whether disease is playing a role. We know that common frog and greenfinch populations have declined as a result of disease and keeping an eye on our British garden species is crucial if we are to understand the threats to their health, which not only affects individual animals, but can impact entire populations."

Plans to erect a wind turbine close to the 4,000-year-old Duddo stone circle, a scheduled ancient monument near Berwick in Northumberland, have been given the go ahead. Despite the development having been rejected by county council planners after objections from 90 residents, three parish councils and the county's own archaeologist, a Government planning inspector has given the go-ahead to the bid to erect a 74-metre turbine less than two miles from the site. The monument, also known as The Women or the Singing Stones, lies next to the hamlet of Duddo. It is made up of five large blocks of stone, created during the Neolithic period. Members of the planning and environment committee were advised to refuse the application by officers and unanimously did so in October 2012. The company planning to erect the turbine, 3R Energy, said after the original hearing that it would be contesting the decision. The resulting appeal was conducted by an inspector who performed a site visit in December. He has now decided to allow the appeal, meaning the turbine can be erected. In his findings, the inspector concluded that the turbines would "cause some harm to the setting" of the stones but that it would be "less than substantial harm." The decision has prompted an angry response from a number of parties.

A giant eagle has gone missing in the Yorkshire Dales. The Steller's Sea Eagle, which has a wing span of about eight foot and is called Nikita, went missing over the weekend from the base of Pen-y-Ghent while she was being flown by falconer Chris O'Donnell who trains birds of prey for use in falconry sessions. It is thought that she may have gone over the top of Pen-y-Ghent being carried along by high winds and leaving her unable to see her way home. Mr O'Donnell said the bird is tame and not a danger to pets, but advises people do not attempt to pick up Nikita if they find her, due to her immense size.

Repairs are to be carried out to six bridges in a wooded area in Teesdale that is popular with walkers. The Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership is carrying out the work as part of its Flatts' Wood and Tees Bank restoration programme. The bridges cross the Percy Beck and the aim of the work is to improve a number of walks through the woods leading from Scar Top at Barnard Castle. Some of the funding for the work has been provided via the Rural Development Programme for England through the Paths for Communities scheme. Work begins on Monday, February 3 and, weather permitting, is expected to take 13 weeks. All of the paths will remain open during the improvements and only one bridge at a time will be closed but walkers are asked to follow any warning signs erected.

Conker trees are now under threat because of a foreign invader that is winning an insect war in England. During the past ten years, the horse chestnut leaf-mining moth has spread from London into almost the whole of England and Wales. The moth, which arrived from the continent in 2002, burrows through the leaves of the horse chestnut, causing them to turn brown, shrivel and fall early. Experts had hoped that tiny parasitic wasps that lay their eggs in the moth caterpillars would act as natural pest controllers. However, latest research published in the online journal Public Library of Science ONE shows that the wasps are being outnumbered, and there are too few of them to keep the moths at bay. The evidence comes from records of leaf damage collected by thousands of citizen scientists in 2010.

The horse chestnut leaf-miner, *Cameraria ohridella*, was first observed in Macedonia, northern Greece, during the late 1970s and was subsequently described as a new species in 1986. Since the 1980s it has spread throughout the whole of Europe, from southern Sweden to Spain and Turkey, and first appeared in the UK in the London Borough of Wimbledon in July 2002.

In May last year, the Victorian suspension bridge at the National Trust's property at Allen Banks, near Bardon Mill, was severely damaged by flooding. Now the trust has launched a fund raising appeal to raise £100,000 to rebuild the bridge and surrounding footpaths which were also badly damaged by the floods. Over £35,000 has already been pledged through public and private donations and the trust is hoping to raise a further £10,000 towards the £100,000 rebuild costs target through a public Crowdfunder appeal. Crowdfunder is the UK's largest reward based crowd funding platform but targets must be reached in a short space of time. The Crowdfunder appeal has until March 6 to reach its target of £10,000. If this fails, then the trust cannot accept any of the money pledged and will have to start the fundraising appeal from scratch.

The bridge, fondly known to the site's 50,000 annual visitors as the wobbly or bouncy bridge, and surrounding footpaths were laid out by Susan Davidson, wife of the owner of the adjacent Ridley Hall, as part of a wilderness garden created over a period of 35 years from around 1850. She created 65 flower beds in the hall's formal gardens and organised a network of paths, rustic bridges and a summer house in the river area beyond. The trust's Allen Banks and Staward Gorge property, which is a site of special scientific interest, is one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in Northumberland and lies in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The extensive area of gorge and river scenery has several miles of waymarked walks through ornamental and ancient woods.

Ambitious plans have been announced to attract tens of thousands more tourists to enjoy the North-East's natural beauty spots, the move heralding a multi-million pound boost for the region's rural economy. The Northern Lands project has secured nearly £750,000 in funding and by promising better stargazing, cycling, walking and food experiences, is expected to bring an extra 30,000 visitors to the area's "protected landscapes". An electric bike hire network will be created, new cycle routes and mountain bike trails set up, new stargazing facilities opened and existing destinations upgraded and new locally produced food "trails" established. County Durham's Hamsterley Forest is earmarked for a Go Ape-style high wire attraction, the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Northumberland National Park will both tap into "dark skies tourism" after Kielder was made England's first Dark Sky Park and the Durham Heritage Coast will be central to the electric bike venture. Further north in Northumberland, a new 100-mile cycle route, known as The Sandstone Way, will link Berwick-upon-Tweed and Hexham while Kielder will get new cycle route investment. In addition to this, there are plans to provide training for people working in tourism in order to help visitors enjoy their stay under the A Sense of Place initiative and small-scale food producers will also get more support. The project has secured £463,000 from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and £286,000 in cash and in-kind support from Durham and Northumberland county councils. Further contributions are expected from rural businesses who are invited to get involved.

The Ramblers, Britain's largest walkers' charity, says that new legislation may help save historic rights of way from extinction. Currently the recording of those paths which are not official rights of way onto the definitive map of England has fallen way behind schedule and many risk being lost forever if the 2026 deadline is not met. The Ramblers estimate it will take more than 13 years at the current rate in order to record the more than 4,000 paths which are currently on a waiting list to be determined officially. Even though the routes may be well trodden, if they are not officially deemed a right of way, then the public will lose the legal right to use them under provisions set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act passed by the previous government.

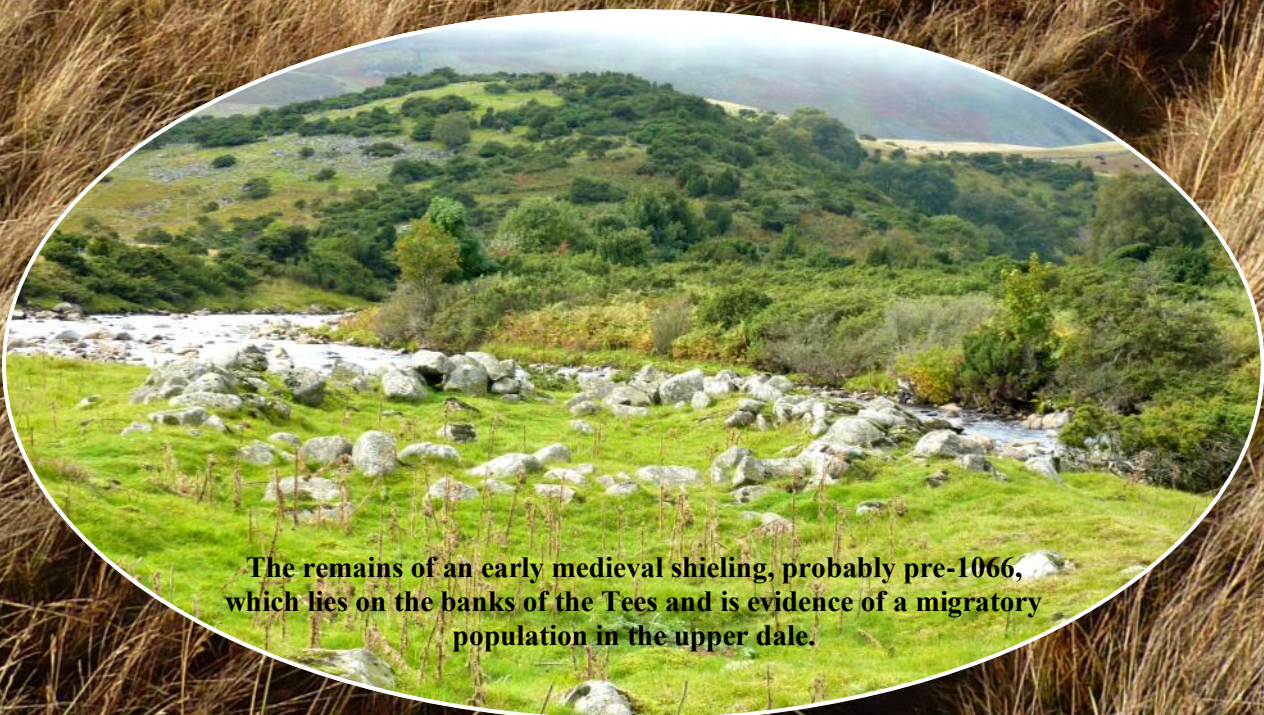
The Ramblers have been working with landowners, land managers and local authorities to find ways to make the process for recording paths more efficient, consistent across the country, and less contentious, helping to claim as many historic paths as possible before the 2026 cut-off date. The group then put forward recommendations to the Government and these have now been included in the draft Deregulation Bill, the second reading of which is due to take place on 3 February. These proposed changes to rights of way legislation are part of a package of measures which, if taken as a whole, will benefit walkers and landowners alike, the aim being to simplify rights of way legislation, meaning the process for claiming paths will be easier and they can then be added to the definitive map more quickly, helping to clear the substantial backlog.

The head of a national park has said that Government proposals to permit barns to be made into houses without planning permission could be disastrous for the park. Peter Charlesworth, chair of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority said the area's unique landscape will be at risk if the plans go ahead. The authority said the coalition Government is proposing to allow agricultural buildings such as barns to be turned into homes without the need for planning permission and this would apply to any barn anywhere in the national park. A move that would cause irreversible harm to the beautiful scenery of the National Park, according to Mr Charlesworth.

He said: "This national park contains more barns than any other, an estimated 6,000. The Government proposals to relax the restrictions will have potentially disastrous consequences here, probably more than in any other area of England. About 4,000 of the barns in the national park are located away from farmsteads, out among fields in the open countryside. Valleys full of fields dotted with these stone field barns could be transformed into a semi-urban environment with roads and overhead power and phone lines. You would have gardens, cars, washing lines, greenhouses and everything else that goes with a home springing up in some of the most stunning and nationally protected countryside in England. In addition, there would be major disruption of the landscape to install the basic infrastructure like sewer and water pipes and the authority would be powerless to control it or to prevent it from happening. We understand the Government's aims to regenerate our rural communities by making the best use of redundant and under-used agricultural buildings. But in the Dales, the proposals would have the opposite effect. The Government's proposal would totally undermine local efforts to provide more affordable housing for local people. They would open up a flood of unconstrained, open-market housing. All the evidence of the last 10 years suggests that this will just lead to more of the same: more second homes and more dream homes for retired people. Housing developed in this way would contribute little to meeting our local community needs. Nor would it provide the support we desperately need to hold on to our local services, such as primary schools. On the contrary, it will simply increase the pressure on services already struggling to cope with a disproportionately elderly population. Barn conversions tend to be very expensive and are more likely to deliver 'second homes in the fields' than an affordable 'home on the farm'. The proposals are bad for the landscape and bad for local communities and, quite frankly, they make a mockery of the Government's claim to be supporters of localism. We believe these proposals will cause irreversible harm to the special qualities of this National Park; and will completely undermine attempts to provide affordable housing for the local people in it."

The YDNPA has drawn up a written submission to the Government's proposals that also says the removal of the need for planning permission would conflict with its own national planning policy framework, as well as the authority's own adopted housing development plan policies. The authority said it expects the Government's response to a consultation soon.

The latest addition to our list of publications is due to be released at the beginning of March. Titled "Walking in Teesdale", the guide focusses on this popular walking area of the Durham Dales. With nine walks that cover not only the main valley of the River Tees but also the tributary valleys of the rivers Balder and Greta, this book helps reveal some of Teesdale's histories and mysteries and shows some of the secrets hidden within it's varied landscape.



The remains of an early medieval shieling, probably pre-1066, which lies on the banks of the Tees and is evidence of a migratory population in the upper dale.

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Below is a full list of all of our current Walking North East publications.

Durham

Ancient Stones.
Hamsterley Forest.
The Barningham Trail.
The High Hills of Teesdale.
Mid-Teesdale Walks.
Walks from Stanhope.
Walking in Weardale.

Northumberland

The Cheviot Hills.
The Hills of Upper Coquetdale.
Walks from Kirknewton.
Walks Around Rothbury & Coquetdale.
Walks from Wooler.
Walks on the Wild Side: The Cheviot Hills.
Walks in Hadrian's Wall Country.

North Yorkshire

Walks from Gunnerside.
Walks around Reeth and Upper Swaledale.
Walking the Hills of Upper Swaledale.
Walking around Osmotherley and the Cleveland Hills. **New publication.**

Long Distance Walks

The North West Way. **New publication.**

New publications on the way

Walking in Teesdale. **To be released in March 2014.**
Walking in Arkengarthdale.
Walking around Darlington and the Tees Valley.
Walking around Helmsley and Ryedale.

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