



National Trust

Fix the Fells

About our upland footpath and conservation work in partnership

Spring 2013

What is Fix the Fells?

Fix the Fells (FTF) is a long-term partnership now lead by the National Trust, working with the Lake District National Park Authority, Friends of the Lake District, Natural England, Nurture Lakeland and Cumbria County Council.

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.

The National Trust specialist Upland Ranger Teams carry out much of the repair work, usually focussing on a handful of major projects each year that require working in one area for several weeks.

Our volunteers come from Cumbria and beyond. Some are retired and others work full-time but they all have one thing in common - they love the fells!

There are 81 volunteers (48 male and 33 female) and they are 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.

In 2012, volunteers gifted 1,060 days on mountain paths and a further 274 days on lower level work at our properties. We couldn't do all this without their enthusiasm and support.

Central and East Lakes Team Report - by Nic Fish

'After a week of weather that seemed like spring was just around the corner, the rest of the month has seen winter return.

Spring time (or should I say late winter) is always a busy time of year. One of major jobs is preparing bags of stone for summer projects, ready to be lifted by helicopter, weather permitting! This year we'll be putting in some much needed drains on the digger path that leads up to Red Tarn on the way to the summit of Helvellyn, which has been covered in snow for the majority of the month. We tried to have a look at the path a couple of weeks ago and had to turn back when we were up to our knees. Luckily we've been able to get on preparing for projects at lower heights, which will include continuing work on Helm Crag. In Ullswater we'll be reinstating a path that had been lost to a bog on Gowbarrow and redirecting a path in danger of falling out at Miresbeck. We've been able to fill stone bags here between the snow storms.

March has also seen our first Fix the Fells residential. This is a weekend work party where volunteers that may have to travel slightly further get the chance to come and do a full weekends work with the team, and the opportunity to use the facilities and stay over at High Wray Basecamp on Saturday night.

Although the forecast was for snow and a bitterly cold easterly wind, we had a good turn out on the Saturday. Our intrepid volunteers battled through the snow storms to continue the sub-soil path on Helm Crag that had been started last year with our Acorn Camp. Unfortunately the second day fell on Mothering Sunday so less attended, but we still managed to get a lot done. It



was a great weekend and thoroughly rewarding for the volunteers to see their progress throughout the two days.

During March the footpath team have also been working hard to finish the woodland path at Allan Bank, Grasmere in time for the first day of opening this year. It is a steep and winding path through the woodland. Already visitors are telling us they love it.

And finally we've also been reinstating a revetment at Cockshott Point in Bowness, Windermere. The sun even managed to show its face a few times!



High Wray Basecamp - by Rob Clarke, Community Ranger



'Up at the volunteer centre we've avoided the worst but have still been caught out by bad weather a couple of times this winter. A planned day finishing off the drystone wall we'd started last summer with the Fix the Fells lengthsman was snowed off. We still went walling though, but indoors at Wray Castle. We were building an example wall in a room there that demonstrates many aspects of the countryside. It made for a very different day and it's good to think that lots of visitors will be admiring the lengthsman's work.

We're hoping for better weather later in the year with the lengthsman when we have a summer mega bash planned. For three days they'll be staying at Basecamp and walking up to work with us and the Upland Ranger teams on the path at the top of Stake Pass. It's very boggy, resulting in lots of damage to the delicate upland environment as people hop around trying to avoid the worst of the bogs. We'll be extending the new sustainable path we started last year with some of our working holidays.

This year we'll also be working with a number of volunteer groups and the South Lakes path team on a path from the bottom of Wrynose Pass to Blea Tarn. It's a good, varied job with all sorts of different tasks from stone drains and pitching, to closing off shortcut routes and stabilising overhanging peat hags. We went to look at it with the path team and were glad they'd already written the spec, as it was the day after heavy snowfall and we had to use our imaginations and experience to picture the actual work! (Photo bottom left)

Mostly though, it's been fine, which has enabled us to get a good busy start to the year. We've been brushing up on our skills by finishing off the new path we started at Wray Bay in August 2011. A group of local young people staying at the nearby Brathay Centre worked on this with us as part of a Princes Trust project and had such good weather, they even arrived by canoe!

Little Dale Hall, one of the rehabilitation centres that regularly visits us came for the day and laid the last turf. Both of these groups had plenty of their number who'd never done anything like this before and told us they were planning to come back with friends and family to show them 'their bit' of path. With the new season starting we're looking forward to giving many more people this chance over the year.'



Update from the Programme Manager - Tanya Oliver

'It has been a busy few months for Fix the Fells. I am delighted to say we have launched a new website at www.fixthefells.co.uk which contains more up-to-date information from Rangers and volunteers and details on what we are working on currently. We've also completed our ten year strategy for the programme, which includes 120 individual paths identified as needing work over this period. To meet this ambitious target together the Fix the Fells partners need to raise £500,000 each year. This is why the National Trust continues to need lots of help with donations, sponsorship and legacies.



Which is why we'd like to say a special thank you to the Houghton Dunn Charitable Trust, whose Trustees have continued their generous support for this area of work for some years now, making a huge difference to what we've been able to achieve. This year we've also been given a grant from the Linley Shaw Foundation, which is helping to equip the volunteers with new clothing and tools.

Finally, our grateful thanks to Peter Burgess, creator of the now famous Tubular Fells map. This April Peter joined Upland Rangers and volunteers on a Fix the Fells work day on Stake Pass, it was a great day out with beautiful weather. As well as getting stuck into the work, Peter handed over a cheque for £4,250. Impressed after a chance meeting with Rangers, Peter decided to donate a little from the sale of each map to Fix the Fells. A total of £10,000 has now been raised for Fix the Fells, which is fantastic news. If you haven't already got yours, visit www.tubularfells.com. They make great presents!

West Lakes - by Iain Gray

'The first task of the new year has been to rebuild a section of wall on Boot Bank, near the historic peat huts. Luckily the weather was kind to us, allowing steady progress through January and February. The first volunteer work party of the year took place shortly after, which involved improving drainage on the track from the village up to the huts.

After the interminable rain of 2012 the normally dry and grassy surface had been churned into a sea of mud. To solve this problem we had to create an extra length of side drain in the traditional style of the track - thus providing the perfect opportunity for an eager and enthusiastic contingent of Fix The Fellers to hack and hew a discreet, yet robust side channel and a stone wath (ford) where another path joins the track. Soon the warm spring sunshine will help the surface to return to its former state (with a little bit of grass seed as well).



We have ventured into sunny Ennerdale recently for a couple of day-long tasks. The first was a maintenance run on the award winning Gamlin End path at the eastern end of the High Stile ridge. The most important part of the day was to unearth the top of the pitched surface from the tons of creeping scree under which it had become buried. At times we felt like archaeologists excavating a recently discovered find believed to have been built by primitive man long, long ago.

The second day was spent on Ennerdale lakeshore repairing a section of the coast-to-coast route as it wriggles around Angler's Crag. We obliterated an unstable alternative path which was undermining the preferred route, which traverses a more sustainable way along bedrock, and enhanced the approach to the correct route with a bit of landscaping. It was important to get this done before the influx of coast-to-coasters appearing from Easter onwards.'



South Lakes - by Sarah Anderson

'For us Upland Rangers the end of March normally signals the start of spring and a return to fell work, only as we looked out onto the fells and our work sites for the year, we were lucky to even make out where the paths were and we had a similar predicament with our stone sites. On the plus side, the Lakeland fells looked stunning!

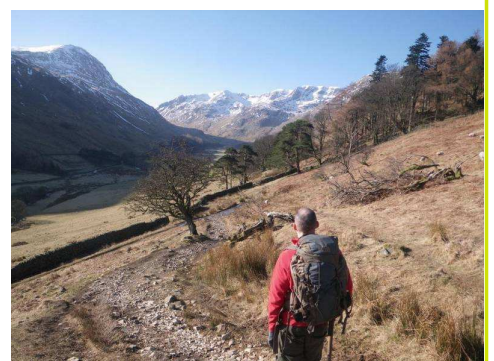
In the lead up to the start of the fell season there is lots to be done. With the weather generally improving we aim to get our heli bags filled with stone for the upcoming summer projects, carry out any maintenance and finish our winter projects. Alongside this we also help our built properties get ready for opening. We've been spending a lot of our time recently at Claife Viewing Station steps, which are now all finished. They're looking much better and are definitely easier to walk on.

From Claife there is a nice walk to Wray Castle where we had another, more unusual job. With visitor opening day getting ever closer, there was a lot to do at the castle and the Ranger team were pulled in. For us this meant helping to get a new 'Outdoors, indoors' themed room prepared. Although very different from our normal day-to-day work, it was great fun and we even managed to make sure there's a shed in there! Here Iain is cutting artificial grass, carefully avoiding the beautiful tiles.



With the castle all ready for opening we left to return to the upland work and in particular a revetment wall in much need of some attention. On Raise Beck a two metre section of path was falling away and the old revetment collapsing. To begin the new section of wall we had to dig a rather large hole to tie in with a much older section that you can just make out hiding under the turf next to me pictured left. As you would expect from a good upland team we chose some real whopping stones to create the foundations, using a winch, bars and some good old fashioned stubbornness.

So it's been a pretty busy month and even with all the snow we've had it's been really productive. Now into April, we've plenty of bags to fill with stone ready for our annual helicopter lifts and the start of the upland project work for the year. For now I'll leave you with a picture from one of our drain runs we did last month over in Ullswater. It was a stunning day, even if it was a bit chilly! Our team is also now on Twitter. You can follow us @NTLakesFells to see what we get up to day-to-day.'





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Why do we need to fundraise?

The National Trust is currently leading the Fix the Fells partnership. With much of the footpath work carried out by our teams, every pound we receive through donations and legacies is vital and will directly support this work, now and into the future.

We are a registered charity with no government funding for our core work. Membership income covers only a third of our costs. The National Trust will always be here in the Lake District. We are committed to maintaining this unique landscape and heritage for ever, for everyone.

The support of people like you, our members and our volunteers, enables vital conservation work to continue in this place, free for all to visit and enjoy. Talk to any of our passionate and committed Ranger teams and volunteers in the Lakes and they'll tell you, all gifts make a real difference and enable us to do so much more.

How to donate

Simply post a cheque or CAF cheque payable to the National Trust to Liz, details below. (Or pop into the office if you are here). All donors are personally thanked.

Please tell us if there is a particular footpath or area that is special to you, and we'll direct your gift to our work there. If you are interested in supporting a wider range of conservation work in the Lakes including at our built properties, we can allocate your gift to The Lakes Appeal fund too.

And you can make your donation worth 25% more. To qualify for Gift Aid what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must be at least equal to the amount we will claim in the tax year. Just mention it when you send your gift.



Get in touch

To find out more about Fix the Fells, how to become a volunteer or how you can leave a legacy to the National Trust to support this area of work, please feel free to contact us. All enquiries will be treated confidentially.



Liz Guest, Fundraising Coordinator, National Trust, The Hollens, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QZ
Direct tel: 015394 63806 Email: liz.guest@nationaltrust.org.uk

More info online at: www.fixthefells.org.uk
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lakedistrictappeal
<http://fellrangers.blogspot.com>
<http://countryside-catchup.blogspot.co.uk>
www.facebook.com/NTHighWrayBasecamp

Extra bits

We have an outstanding range of places in our care in the wider North West region, from Paul McCartney's council house to stately homes, beaches to mountain tops, valleys and now a pub in the Lakes too. To find out more talk to Liz or visit the website www.nationaltrust.org.uk. Look out for us on Twitter and Facebook too.

To minimise costs this newsletter is produced and printed here at the Grasmere office. We can also email it to you.

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