

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

Impact Report

2023



YORKSHIRE DALES
MILLENNIUM TRUST



Welcome to our **2023** Impact Report

2023 has been an outstanding year for Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust. Thanks to our fantastic supporters and partners, we have inspired more people than ever before to care for and enhance the precious environment and communities of the Yorkshire Dales.

Last year our projects developed into new areas to tackle the challenges we face. I'm especially proud of the breadth of our woodland work, and a new woodland management initiative that will help lead the way to more resilient woodlands in the Dales that support nature recovery.

Our hay meadow work continues to grow too, with field scale restoration as well as support for community initiatives to improve their local environment for pollinators. It is amazing to see what's possible when people and communities take a leading role in supporting nature.

Demand for our outreach work has been higher than ever. In response, we are creating a new strategy that will refine and focus our work where it's needed most - providing greater access to nature for people from minoritised groups and empowering people to come to the Dales independently.

A big success for us in 2023 was the re-launch of our YDMT Grants programme, enabling communities to make a difference in the areas they know best. We gave £245,000 to 31 projects throughout the year, ranging from befriending services and wellness walks to curlew conservation and community sheds.

This all puts YDMT in a really positive position for the future. A key challenge now is how to continue to increase our impact as a 'smaller' charity. We believe this is possible by increasing the number of collaborative projects we are engaged with, and growing our capacity to fund, train and enable others to support our charitable aims.

"Of course, YDMT's work is only possible because of the many people who support us. Whether you have dedicated a tree, played People's Postcode Lottery, decided to leave a legacy to us in your Will, or supported us through a corporate partnership – I cannot thank you enough for your generosity over the last year."

Michael Devlin, YDMT Acting Chief Executive

"I cannot thank you enough for your generosity over the last year."



What we want to achieve

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust's purpose is to enable people to care for, enhance and appreciate the unique qualities of the Yorkshire Dales - its communities, habitats, wildlife and heritage.

Our priorities

People

Support people to visit, live sustainably and care for the Yorkshire Dales.

Make the Yorkshire Dales an inclusive and welcoming place that is accessible to everyone, giving people the knowledge, skills and passion to create long-lasting connections between each other and this special area.

Remove barriers to visiting the Dales and accessing nature for underrepresented communities.

Landscape

Conserve and celebrate the landscape heritage of the Dales.

Enhance the qualities that make our landscapes special and more resilient to climate change. Provide funding, advice and support to help maintain, restore and improve our outstanding natural and rural heritage.

Increase the scale and pace of nature conservation in the Yorkshire Dales to combat the harmful effects of a changing climate.

Wildlife

Protect and enhance habitats and wildlife in the Dales.

Support people to understand, restore and manage the nationally and internationally important habitats we have here in the Yorkshire Dales, with a focus on connecting small areas of priority habitat, like native woodlands, meadows and wetlands.

Supporting the many land managers and owners wanting to enhance their land for wildlife.

How we work

Delivering projects



We deliver exemplar projects for people and nature and use our skills to enable other organisations to increase their impact.

Enabling others



We raise and distribute funds, providing flexible grants that allow us to fund areas where there is a need.

Innovative partnerships



We are firmly rooted in our communities and work collaboratively to achieve more with our strategic partners.

Our values guide everything we do



Enabling



Creative



Caring



Honest

Our challenges and reasons for optimism

The Yorkshire Dales landscape is influenced by the ever-changing relationship between people, place and nature. Over the next decade we will need to work harder than ever before to tackle the overlapping crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and inequality.

The climate emergency

requires an unprecedented step-change in land use to help meet net zero carbon targets.

In the Yorkshire Dales we have the potential to increase the scale and pace of nature conservation to combat the harmful effects of a changing climate.

The lowest tree cover of any National Park, over a quarter of England's flower-rich upland hay meadows and pastures, and four major rivers all starting in the Dales uplands present immense opportunities to restore the landscape and slow the flow of our rivers to reduce flooding.

Biodiversity loss

is one of the greatest threats our National Park has ever faced. Many of our habitats are fragmented and risk eventual ecological collapse.

Very little natural regeneration is occurring and the loss of a few small pockets of ancient semi-natural woodland or established meadows that exist across the area would result in a whole array of associated flora and fauna being lost for generations.

The National Park is an invaluable natural asset in terms of biodiversity, supporting internationally important populations of birds like curlew, lapwing, and black grouse. A range of rare limestone habitats and extensive areas of moorland cover vast areas and contain a variety of nationally important plant species and mammals.

Inequalities in access

to the National Park mean that in 2022 77% of visitors were over 45 years old; 70% were in A, B, C1 social grades and 97% were from a white background.

The importance of being in nature for health, wellbeing and skills development is well-documented. Unfortunately, many people are unable to access wild places close to where they live.

Together with our partners we aim to tackle inequalities in access to the Yorkshire Dales, with a focus on our most underrepresented communities. We will create opportunities for young people to benefit from the Yorkshire Dales and get employment in the environment sector.



Highlights



7,024 connections
made with people who benefit
from our diverse projects

£245,219
distributed to 31
community projects
through the YDMT
Grants scheme



Over £1.77m
raised!
thanks to our
supporters and
partners

422 sessions
= 2,440 hours
of activity delivered,
mostly practical
conservation work
enabling people
to take action
for nature

55
hectares
of wildflower
meadow restored
at 23 sites

7,925 trees
planted by
volunteers



67,820 native broadleaf
woodland and hedgerow trees planted

People

Our priority: Support people to visit, live sustainably and care for the Yorkshire Dales



Impact: People

At YDMT we work to make the Yorkshire Dales an inclusive and welcoming place that is accessible to everyone. We give people the knowledge, skills and passion to create long-lasting connections between each other and this special area. In this way we hope to inspire them to value and help look after it in future.

In late 2023 we expanded our Green Futures youth work to reach more young people aged 16-17 from underrepresented and underserved communities surrounding the Dales. The aim is to provide outdoor experiences over a 12-month period that encourage teamwork, improve health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for social mixing. 49 young people who might otherwise face barriers to accessing green spaces started their journey in autumn.

This year our busy People and the DALES team welcomed 930 people from our most underrepresented communities to visit and benefit from the special landscapes here in the Dales and helped them to feel

confident to access the natural environment on their own. Many of the events and activities we delivered helped to build lasting connections between local Dales communities and visiting groups.

Six new young people joined our Rural Apprenticeship Scheme in autumn 2023, and we're hopeful that at least four of our existing cohort will remain working for the employers they were placed with when they complete their apprenticeship.

We also welcomed another Woodland Trainee, to help address the skills shortage in the forestry sector. The trainees play a key role in helping to transform native broadleaf cover in the Dales.

Our Grants programme also got a revamp – supporting our vision for a vibrant rural economy and stronger communities. The scheme now provides larger grants of up to £7,500 for a wide range of projects, including natural, built and cultural heritage, access improvements, educational and training initiatives, and activities that support community development.

Highlights

£108k

granted to community organisations over Christmas thanks to a bonus award of £100k from players of People's Postcode Lottery

930 people

from underrepresented communities benefitted from visits to the Dales and were supported to access the natural environment on their own

1,094

connections made with young people - many attended multiple sessions with longer-term support



Youth Forum

members planned and ran our annual Youth Environment Summit weekend - with a packed programme of events

Building connections across communities

In September 2023 YDMT trainee Shelby supported one of our People and DALES weekend residentials with mums and children from the Maternity Stream of Leeds City of Sanctuary.

Shelby's passion for working with people and nature was inspired by a similar YDMT event she was part of as a primary school student. Some thirteen years later and now a YDMT trainee, she was helping to deliver activities like those that had inspired her all those years ago.

Most of the women from the Maternity Stream are vulnerable women, mothers and children, who have fled their home country and have lived in the UK as asylum seekers before gaining refugee status. All have experienced hardship. Some have had to fight to navigate the asylum process, and many have waited years to get their papers and be allowed to work.

For our group, it was an opportunity to have time away from difficult lives and find a place of belonging where



families could spend time together, enjoy each other's company, and meet people going through similar experiences.

As this was our eighth annual residential with the group, many of the families were returning for a second or third time. They had the chance to reunite with families who had hosted them in previous years, building on the unique relationships across communities.



“This means freedom to me. It means hope. I feel like something has been lifted off my shoulders. I feel like myself again after a very long time. I feel rejuvenated and ready to tackle my future again. It will carry me until next year.”

Shirley, Botswana.

Apprenticeship comes full circle - Zach's story

Rumbling across the Cumbrian moors on an ATV with his team, towards their remote moorland worksite, Zach Thompson is in his element.

On the peaty heights above Haweswater, they will spend a long day reprofiling decades-old grips, installing horseshoe bunds, and planting thousands of sphagnum moss plugs.

Zach graduated from YDMT's Rural Apprenticeship scheme a decade ago and has since, with friend Tom Holgate, established a successful environmental contracting firm, Field and Fell, undertaking large-scale projects in Yorkshire, Cumbria and beyond.

And things have now come full circle: riding the ATV with Zach, is one of Field and Fell's newest recruits, 17-year-old James Bull, himself a YDMT Rural Apprentice.

"Tom's wife Sophie called one day, after a lad had driven into their farmyard on a tractor, looking for work," said Zach. "I rang him, we chatted, and Tom and I decided to take him on. We asked YDMT whether they still offered apprenticeships like the one I'd been on, and they were delighted: it's the first time a former apprentice has employed a YDMT apprentice of their own."

The apprenticeship scheme is managed by YDMT's Jo Boulter. "We were thrilled – partly because Zach had been one of my first apprentices – but primarily because it embodies the reasons why the scheme was established in YDMT's early days," she said. "It's there to help young people find employment, to enable them to stay in the area where they grew up while gaining the skills to enhance, conserve and protect that area.

"It's not easy for start-ups like Zach and Tom's to secure funds to employ people, which they must do to grow, so it helps local employers as well."

The apprenticeship scheme offers school leavers a first step towards a conservation-related career. YDMT identifies potential employers and offers them financial incentives to take on apprentices. "Employing an apprentice costs money: firms have to devote time and resources to training them, and they need time out to attend courses," said Jo.

It was while apprenticed to environmental contractor Dinsdale Moorland Specialists, based in Wigglesworth, that Zach met his now-business partner Tom.

"I'd written to Dinsdale's looking for a job and they took me on as a YDMT apprentice," said Zach. "I gained plenty of hands-on experience. That's where I learned to drive diggers, tractors and dumpers while working towards further qualifications. Going to college one day every fortnight provided a break from work. I enjoyed the banter with the others on the course, and the apprenticeship offered the right mix of theory in college and practical experience at Dinsdale's."

Soon after completing his apprenticeship, Zach left Dinsdale's to become a self-employed contractor. Tom left around the same time and the pair eventually pooled their talents to form Field and Fell.

Field and Fell's success is such that Zach and Tom now employ four staff, including apprentice James.

Zach said: "Without YDMT's Rural Apprenticeship funding, taking James on would have been a gamble. He's been with us since August on an 18-month placement and has already learned a lot."



Landscape

**Our priority: Conserve and celebrate the
landscape and heritage of the Dales**



Impact: Landscape

The Yorkshire Dales has a distinctive character, landscape features and built heritage that inspires millions of people. It is also a landscape that is evolving and ever changing, with a vital role to play in tackling the climate emergency.

Together with partners we work to enhance the qualities that make our landscapes special and more resilient to climate change. We champion their potential by providing funding, advice and support that helps to maintain, restore and improve our outstanding natural and rural heritage.

In 2023 our work continued to support a thriving landscape that is resilient to the impacts of climate change. Our woodland grant programme supported the planting of 40,875 new native trees and 4,867 metres of hedgerow, with priority given to projects that strengthen habitat networks, increase carbon storage and help to reduce flooding.

As founding member of the [Forest Plastics Working Group](#) we believe that more tree planting should not result in more plastics in the environment. Over 350,000 shelters were removed in 2023 and we were instrumental in expanding the recycling scheme beyond the Dales, with 22 new hubs established across the country.

Our Seed to Sapling project continued to grow – enabling local people to create community tree growing schemes where native saplings will be grown from local provenance seed. This strengthens our efforts to develop a landscape with tree cover of varying types and densities planted using locally grown stock.

Working with land managers at 23 sites across the National Park and Forest of Bowland we started the restoration of over 55 hectares of grassland through appropriate management or the addition of locally sourced, native wildflower seed and plug plants. With the right management, this work will set these sites on the path to becoming species rich meadows.

Highlights

7,925

of these trees were
planted by volunteers

67,820

native broadleaf trees
planted in and around
the Yorkshire Dales
= 32 hectares of new
woodland!



55 hectares

of farm grassland
now being managed
to become species-rich
hay meadow

An estimated

350,000

redundant plastic tree shelters
recycled from 22 sites nationwide



Wild Share with Mearbeck Wood

Our new supporter woodland represents everything that YDMT does best – community action, teamwork and tree planting!

YDMT joined forces with forest management specialists Tillhill in 2023 to deliver a large woodland creation scheme near Settle. The scheme would see more than 100,000 trees planted – a blend of commercial and broadleaves – to transform the landscape.

The scheme connects new woodlands to old and once established, the trees will slow the flow of water to help reduce flood risk in the area and improve water quality. Native trees planted in riparian zones to stabilise the riverbanks will also create shade for the existing population of otters known to be on the site.

Fifteen percent of the site has remained as open ground and is aimed at increasing biodiversity, providing habitat benefits for reptiles, insects and birds. Woodland connectivity will also increase habitat area for red squirrels.

The woodland comprises of a selection of native broadleaf trees including oak, birch, cherry, hawthorn, hazel, rowan and aspen. This mix of species will provide habitat for wildlife and attract a variety of insects, birds and mammals.



1,220 trees were planted with community groups - a true community effort to create another beautiful woodland

1,220 trees were planted with community groups including Malham Environmental Group, Settle College students, volunteers from Leeds Building Society and Tarmac, and Getting Clean, an organisation supporting people who suffer from addiction. It was a true community effort to create another beautiful woodland.

YDMT was involved in every stage of the development, from installing signage, a bridge, and way-markers to planting the new trees. A new woodland trail gives recreational access to the public – allowing people to enjoy the long vistas towards Pendle Hill and the surrounding Yorkshire Dales.

Wildlife

Our priority: Protect and enhance the environment and wildlife of the Dales



Dales residents at a tree-growing workshop

Impact: Wildlife

As a trusted local charity our priority is to support people to understand, restore and manage the nationally and internationally important habitats we have here in the Yorkshire Dales and surrounding areas.

Our focus is on connecting small areas of priority habitat, like native woodlands, meadows and wetlands, creating 'stepping stones' for wildlife and helping habitats to adapt to climate change. We support people and communities to take a leading role in creating and managing these nature-rich habitats for the future.

The Yorkshire Dales is home to nationally important populations of UK 'red-listed' birds, including curlew, lapwing, black grouse and ring ouzel. In 2023 YDMT Grants were awarded to two conservation projects that are helping to address the severe decline in curlew populations.

We also continued our programme of work across the Dales and Forest of Bowland to conserve flower-rich hay meadows, and protect countless species of invertebrates including bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies, and spiders.

It is amazing to see what's possible when people and communities take a leading role in supporting nature recovery.

A total of 4,640 plug plants were planted across six sites in the Forest of Bowland this year, with the help of school groups, volunteers and community groups.

Over 550 people also took part in a variety of practical conservation and educational activities - including bee identification, earthworm sampling and botanical surveying. Volunteers have gone on to carry out meadow surveys across the Dales, recording lichen, wildflowers, grasses and carrying out bumblebee transects. The data they collect will be used to measure the quality of meadows in the Dales and to inform our future work.

Highlights

26,865
hedgerow trees planted
= 4,867 metres
of new hedgerow
habitat

4,640 plug plants
planted with volunteers across
six sites in the Forest of Bowland
to enhance the biodiversity
of existing meadows



557 people
learnt about hay meadow
plants and wildlife through
events, training and
volunteering sessions

Grants were awarded
to two conservation projects
that are helping to address
the severe decline in
curlew populations



Hermitage Field community meadow

A neglected plot of land in the Crook O’Lune that was once full of weeds has been transformed into a wildflower meadow home to hundreds of species of wildlife thanks to a community of local volunteers.

Hermitage Field is in the parish of Halton-with-Aughton, which overlooks the Crook O’Lune, a beauty spot on the River Lune close to Lancaster. The Hermitage Field Community Meadow charity was set up by local residents to transform a neglected 5-acre field into a haven for wildlife, enhancing this well-loved spot for the whole community.

In 2023 we were delighted to support the Hermitage Field Community Meadow bioblitz- where wildlife watchers recorded an amazing 398 species of plants, animals and fungi. A variety of butterflies, bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies, grasses and wildflowers were observed, including a sighting of the rare Purple Hairstreak butterfly. Not bad for a site where only seven species of plant were recorded in a botany survey three years ago!

Work to bring about the transformation of Hermitage Field started in spring 2020. YDMT Hay Time Officer Carol Edmondson has been on hand to provide specialist meadow advice and guidance, alongside support from YDMT and Forest of Bowland National Landscape to fund seed introduction, monitoring surveys, guided walks and National Meadows Day events in 2023.

Lancaster City Council, who own the land, has also allowed volunteers to grow plug plants from seed of local provenance in redundant glasshouse and polytunnel space.

But the driving force behind the project has always been the local community members who first recognised the potential of the site and worked tirelessly to transform it into a haven for wildlife and a valuable resource for the community.

Erica Sarney, who spearheaded the initiative and is trustee of the charity, said,

“By restoring Hermitage Field to a flower-rich meadow we are helping to create habitat for flowers, pollinators and birds, enriching the landscape and providing a wildlife-rich space for people to enjoy.”

To ensure that Hermitage Field continues to thrive it must be managed in a traditional way- which means, grazing in the spring and delaying cutting until later in the year, usually July or August, allowing for native species to flower and set seed. This is followed by a period of ‘aftermath’ grazing in autumn. Management of weeds such as docks and thistles are also needed throughout the year.

Championing our Curlews

The distinctive burbling call of the curlew, heralding the arrival of spring, is a Dales delight. However, these beloved birds are on the brink of extinction. Placed on the red endangered list, curlew numbers have plummeted drastically in recent years, but the Dales remains one of their last strongholds in the UK and across Europe.

The Clapham Curlew Cluster project was born out of this urgent need for conservation. In response to dwindling curlew populations, Clapham Sustainability Group held public meetings with the RSPB, farmers, landowners and with Mary Colwell, a leading campaigner on curlew conservation in the UK. From these meetings 12 farms and 18 volunteers came together to do wader surveys in partnership with the RSPB to start to understand the situation.

The result is a collaborative effort that aims to encourage stewardship of our natural heritage.

Building on this successful start and with the support of a YDMT Grant, the project aims to increase public awareness through a dedicated arts and education project and further improve the monitoring and protection of wader nests within our community by supplying essential equipment.

In June 2023, the group began working with local primary schools, in an immersive educational experience at Hill Top Farm in Malham. The children created poems, paintings, and a felting project, *Our Curlew Landscape*, based on their newfound understanding of these magnificent waders.

The children's creative work will be used in a touring exhibition at venues across the region to raise awareness of the plight of the curlew and inspire action in the wider community. A specially commissioned film will also be shown, featuring two generations of farmers talking about their experiences of living and working alongside curlews and the drastic changes they have seen in their lifetime.

As well as raising awareness, the project seeks to enhance wader survey work in the community, identify breeding birds and provide nest protection, and includes payments for farmers to help protect nests.

The grant will also fund specialised equipment such as

field cameras, to help monitor and protect nesting sites as well as understand predator behavior. These will be used in conjunction with RSPB equipment of infra-red cameras and electric fencing to locate and protect nests.

Sarah Smith of the Clapham Curlew Cluster said: "The survival of curlews is not just a matter of ecological importance; it is deeply intertwined with our cultural identity. Their presence in our landscape is a testament to the rich tapestry of life that thrives in the Dales.

"Curlew is an umbrella species and therefore a good indicator of the health of the environment of the farms and our community. By helping to preserve the curlew, we are ensuring they will be here for generations to come.

"The grant we received from YDMT helped a small local organisation to continue working with farmers and volunteers, bringing greater understanding in the community. It has increased awareness on an important and challenging issue, giving children the opportunity to learn and share their response with a wider audience."



Curlew at Helwith Bridge by Mik Cardus

Organisation

**Our priority: working together to achieve
the maximum charitable benefits**



Impact: Organisation

We recognise that the key to achieving our ambitious aims at YDMT is a well governed, well managed organisation that is respected, understood and where staff feel valued.

Our climate commitments

Work continues across the organisation to implement our goal of net zero by 2030. Key steps we've taken this year include signing the [Funder Commitment on Climate Change](#) and committing to their [six pillars](#). Carbon Literacy training and certification has also been undertaken by the majority of the staff team.

Investors in People

We are accredited by Investors in People and are committed to the development and wellbeing of our team to ensure we can deliver the best outcomes for the Dales.

What's next?

The Dales faces many challenges and as a charity we need to prioritise our limited resources in a way that has the best impact. We are developing a new three-year strategy to launch in 2024, which will help us to do this.

This special area inspires us to be ambitious and we have always prided ourselves on being a "doing" organisation that makes a practical difference and can be flexible, innovative and help to tackle challenges that others cannot.

As an organisation we need to explore how to increase our impact, while retaining our flexibility and agility as a small charity.

We believe this is possible by ensuring that quality evaluation and monitoring is at the core of all our work, which will enable us to truly deliver exemplar projects and grants that meet the needs of our beneficiaries and the area.

We will continue to increase the amount collaborative projects we are engaged with, as well as providing funding, training and advice that enables our partners and communities support our charitable aims.

Young people

As a signatory of the [#iwill Power of Youth Charter](#) we are committed to putting young people at the heart of what we do.

Fundraising

Even in difficult times, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our dedicated supporters. This year we raised an incredible £1.7 million thanks to donations, tree dedications, corporate partnerships, trusts, legacies and from the support of players of People's Postcode Lottery.

76 pence from every pound donated to us goes directly to charitable activity and 24 pence is invested in infrastructure, governance and awareness raising, helping to build our capacity and capabilities as a charity.

Thank you

**Over £1.7m
raised in 2023!**



**Every £1 donated =
invested directly
in our charitable activity**

**helped to build
our capabilities
and capacity**

Get in touch

YDMT is a “doing” organisation that makes a practical difference, and we’re proud to look back on an extraordinary year of impact in the Yorkshire Dales and beyond in 2023.

This special area inspires us to be ambitious and over the next decade we will need to work harder than ever before to tackle the overlapping crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and inequality.

We can only do that with your continued support. Thank you.

www.ydmt.org

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