

CONTENTS

- 2 Adrian Leaman - **CHAIR'S FOREWORD**
- 3 Digger & Cuts - **MONK HOLME WOOD**
- 4 Ian Carstairs and Adrian Leaman - **NATURE RECOVERY: FROM THE BOTTOM UP**
- 6 Anne Press - **PLANT COMMUNITIES - ANCIENT HEDGEROWS**
- 7 Campaign for National Parks - **75 YEARS OF NATIONAL PARKS**
- 8 Martin Partridge - **WHAT DO MOTHS AND BUTTERFLIES DO IN WINTER?**
- 9 GLEAM - **OFF-ROADING: ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE AND PUBLIC NUISANCE**
- 10 Alan Staniforth - **THE MOORS AND MADEIRA**
- 12 Jean Richards - **TWO MOORLAND CHURCHES: A JOURNEY IN TIME**
- 14 Harry Pearson - **WHO KNOWS WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED?**
- 15 Jane Ellis - **HISTORIC HONEY PRODUCTION IN THE MOORS**
- 16 Edward March-Shawcross - **MOOR TO RESTORE: PEAT HABITATS IN THE MOORS**
- 17 Tim and Jane Dunn - **A WALK IN HUTTON LOWCROSS WOODS, GUISBOROUGH**
- 18 Crombie Wilkinson Solicitors - **LAY TRUSTEES AND FAMILY LAW**
- 19 Amanuensis - **CROSSWORD, WINTER QUIZ**
- 20 **NYMA NEWS**
- 20 **WALKS & EVENTS**

Cover: Brimstone Butterfly on frosted twig -
© Eberhard Pfeuffer

NYMA MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership:

- Individual £22
- Joint £28

Annual digital membership:

- Individual £15
- Joint £18

10 Year membership:

- Individual £180
- Joint £220

Organisation & Business membership (Annual)

- £40

For membership queries, please email Membership@nyma.org.uk.

Voice of the Moors Editor

Janet Cochrane

Please email articles/letters/photos to: editor@nyma.org.uk

Design

Basement Press - 01947 897945 - www.basementpress.com

Printed on paper made from sustainable and traceable raw material sources.

Articles appearing in Voice of the Moors convey the authors' personal views, beliefs and opinions and are not necessarily those of the North Yorkshire Moors Association.

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

'VE BEEN trying to get to grips with the Government's Local Nature Recovery strategy, which emerged from the 2021 Environment Act.

So, for the purposes of the strategy: "The main purpose of the strategies is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment". And some definitions: "Actions which support and draw on nature to provide wider environmental or societal benefits are called 'nature-based solutions'. Having both actions for nature recovery and nature-based solutions will help join up work to improve how land is managed for different environmental reasons and find activities that have multiple benefits."

Does that bother you? If you can get past the woolliness, is it really saying that we should use nature to solve social problems? It sounds that way. Let's look at it the other way round. 'Human-based problems' not 'nature-based solutions' may be a better starting point. Unintended side-effects of human activities have led to outcomes which are systematically destroying the natural systems on which human life depends - a vicious circle. Habits and expectations underpin these damaging behaviours. Changing these habits is more important in the long run but far more difficult to achieve in the short-term - a classic 'Catch-22' situation.

CHANGING FOR THE BETTER

Perhaps we could start to change habits by being less aggressive to nature. For instance, why are pesticides and herbicides still prominently displayed in shops, giving a tacit message that it is still acceptable to use them on your garden (if you are fortunate enough to have one)? Is it really necessary to rake up the leaves from your garden lawn, when by leaving them you encourage the worms to do the work of getting rid of them for you and improve the soil at the same time? Why do people still kick back against those who ask for roadside verges to be left uncut, or cut less often? Elsewhere in this issue of Voice, Anne Press writes about the importance of hedges for maintaining biodiversity, and she'll write about verges in the Spring issue. And why do people 'tidy' their gardens in late autumn, when dead vegetation can provide over-wintering shelter for insects and other animals? To my personal dismay I remember carelessly digging a rhubarb patch only to find that I had disturbed a nest of hedgehogs and their hoglets. We've never seen any hedgehogs in our garden since. All of these are instances of behaviours which are often needlessly aggressive towards nature, often unwittingly, and which occur in our everyday lives.

Any of the above could be dismissed as inconsequential in the greater scheme of things, but all contribute to a 'tyranny of small decisions', where collective effects add up to something very damaging indeed. Our behaviours are often unthinkingly cruel and oppressive towards nature. It is at this commonplace, everyday level that the greatest progress can be made with nature recovery. We should be looking for reparation by small actions, spread by the power of example and word-of-mouth amongst ordinary people in their local communities and everyday lives.

This is why NYMA has been supporting the 'Harleston model', covered on pages 4 and 5. In autumn 2023 NYMA hosted a presentation of the thinking behind it. The invited audience were asked whether the idea would work in the communities of the North York Moors.



Settrington Plantation in winter

© Ray Clarke

This behaviour-targeted approach has three essentials:

- It galvanises individuals and small organisations to support the 'WeCan' badge, a declaration of their willingness to improve the environment by their own initiatives, however small-scale.
- These activities are then fed into the local neighbourhood plan via the local Parish or Town Council, which makes their commitment to nature recovery more formally as part of local democratic processes.
- Outcomes and intentions then become obvious locally (failures as well as successes), and should contribute to self-fulfilling betterment and restitution. The Harleston Town Council's website describes some of their efforts. <https://harleston-tc.gov.uk/nature-recovery-celebrating-success/>.

Other towns and villages in Norfolk and – closer to home – in the Lower Derwent Valley are taking up the idea. In the North York Moors and its vicinity, places such as the Esk Valley, Hinderwell and Loftus already have the willingness and enthusiasm to commit to such an approach, or something similar.

All this can be achieved without the pompousness of bureaucracy and straightjackets of project funding programmes. It should be about ordinariness, simplicity and good intentions contributing to the common good as part of our everyday lives. Nature recovery is not someone else's problem, it's everyone's problem.

ADRIAN LEAMAN

MONK HOLME WOOD

© Ray Clarke

OUR PRACTICAL work this time was to clear an overgrown public right-of-way just north-east of Helmsley, a path leading into Riccaldale. This was a project stretching approximately 300 metres. Initial reconnaissance established that – for the first time in our programme – a power brush-cutter would be needed as the entrance to the path was completely covered in brambles and other creeping vegetation, impenetrable to the usual shears and loppers.

Several hours later the way ahead was cleared and the rest of the task could be assessed. Then the question arose as to how much or little to cut back to facilitate easy movement for other bridleway users as well as walkers, in other words mountain-bikers and horse-riders: this isn't straightforward for a person unaccustomed to visualising the overall height of horse and rider! Nevertheless this part of the task was accomplished with judicious coppicing of the predominantly elder trees. The latter stage of the project involved severely cutting back a shrubbing beech tree that was extremely hazardous as it overhung the bridleway on a sharp corner.

Walking back along the route was a tidying up exercise, and at this point I observed that a cock pheasant was following me. Every time I stopped to add a finishing touch it stopped too. This continued for about fifty metres; a lovely 'feel good' experience to end a busy day.

DIGGER & CUTS



Monk Holme Wood 'before' and 'after'

'Voice' Editor Janet adds: 'as a rider, I can confirm that it's lovely when enthusiastic volunteers clear bridleways – but 'challenging' when they do so only to a height of 2 metres or so, not appreciating that a horse plus rider can be up to 3 and a half metres tall!'

NATURE RECOVERY FROM THE BOTTOM UP



YOU ARE probably aware that more and more initiatives are concerned with nature recovery, biodiversity and reversing the alarming deterioration of the natural world. NYMA's President, Ian Carstairs, and Chair, Adrian Leaman, have been working to promote and establish the Nature Recovery 'WeCan'

concept, and here explain some of the thought processes leading into the scheme and the actions which are starting to implement it.

Among the growing list of initiatives you will find:

- The UK Government's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which has an overarching requirement for local authorities in England to examine what they can do to enhance biodiversity.
- Schemes implemented by the North York Moors National Park Authority to support wilder and more natural spaces for wildlife to thrive, soon to be supplemented by a public consultation on their strategy.
- Charities such as Garden Organic and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust raising funds for new projects and consolidating or expanding their long-standing programmes.
- Many other organisations and pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth, the Countryside Management Association, and Campaign for National Parks, with different and sometimes conflicting agendas, but pulling in the same direction on major topics such as nature recovery.

Such organisations have many characteristics in common:

- a 'nature-based approach' (using nature to help solve wider social and environmental problems)
- an ability to draw on their own strengths and resources
- professional staff and a strong base of volunteers
- reliance on long-term funding continuity
- funding from membership subscriptions and donations
- philanthropy and cooperation of (some) landowners
- access to mapping and database systems
- monitoring and assessment frameworks for successes and failures over time
- defined project areas, designated on maps and/or physically fenced
- either 'strategic', in the sense of an enabling plan possibly with targets, and/or more hands-on conservation and restitution.

These moves towards nature recovery have produced a formidable body of knowledge, often from engaging case studies, many of them well-known. In the UK some of the best-known successes are the Boats of Garter Ospreys reintroduction, and the widespread repopulation by Red Kites. White-tailed eagles are doing well too.

The limitation of a nature-based approach however is evidenced by continuing species decline and habitat loss, as documented in the annual State of Nature report in 2023. The picture presented is detailed and thorough, with statistics based on reliable monitored evidence. A headline fact is that the UK Priority Species Indicator of relative abundance, based on 228 priority species (103 bird species, 88 moths, 24 butterflies, 13

mammals) has declined to 37 per cent of the 1970 baseline indicator (100). Similarly, vascular (veined) plant distributions had declined to 84 percent of the 1970 baseline by 2021, and bryophytes (ferns etc.) to 81 percent of the baseline. Only lichens have shown an increase (15 percent higher than the 1970 baseline). The full report can be found at <https://stateofnature.org.uk/>.

Would we have more success if we now added a more concerted behaviour-based approach? That is, paying more attention to the root of the problem, which is human behaviour? What might that look like?

- It would involve raising awareness so that individuals from all walks of life routinely consider the environmental consequences of their lifestyles, and change their everyday behaviours for the better.
- Their awareness and actions would depend on where they lived and their personal circumstances, especially their income and who they knew.
- Many people would encourage each other by word of mouth and shared examples.
- Some might declare their allegiances and commitment, others may prefer to keep things to themselves.
- The emphasis would be on individuals, their local community and their everyday lives.
- Importantly, most would be people who do not wish to be involved with anything too organised or bureaucratic. In other words, their actions would fall below a bureaucratic threshold. This also applies to smaller local organisations which do not have the financial resources, skills or personnel available to procure and manage funded projects or engage with complex processes.
- Added to this, there would be some light-touch acknowledgment at local levels of democracy - Town and Parish Councils in England, for instance - of their commitment to nature recovery and environmental improvement in their own localities.

A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

We are not dreaming. As we outlined in the Foreword to this issue, the 'bottom-up' approach has already been adopted in Harleston, Norfolk, and is becoming recognised as the

Gardening for Wildlife



© Ian Carstairs



Grass management by scything



Matthew Eluwande's Nature Recovery hat, modelled by Hai Anh

© Ian Carstairs

'Harleston model'. It galvanises local people to act in the best interests of environmental improvement and nature recovery, puts real action first (the behaviour change stimulated by individuals and local organisations), then recognises their best efforts in the local neighbourhood plans of Town and Parish Councils ('strategy'). This feeds a virtuous circle which becomes obvious over time as natural life returns and people can see the improvement for themselves. This is action first, strategy second, with minimum call on resources but with the potential for wide outreach and effect.

So, how has the idea progressed and what are the practical experiences in Harleston? What has been achieved already? This starts from the will of committed individuals and local organisations, their spontaneity and vision, and their recognition of local needs that should be met. Through their example, this reaches others locally, eventually penetrating into behaviour change by example and word-of-mouth. Much of this is simple, obvious and common sense. The outcomes become clear to all, failures as well as successes.

It is perhaps surprising that one of the hardest things to explain is that this is a very simple idea. Perhaps we are all too used to initiatives being driven by organisations, or we are just used to complication.

Having fronted the concept and been closely involved in nurturing its early life, it is pleasing to see that the Harleston Model has now been approved by South Norfolk Council to be promoted to all parishes throughout the District. There is even the possibility that this 'bottom-up approach' could be adopted into the formal framework of Norfolk and Suffolk's Coordinated Local Nature Recovery Strategy. And ways are now being investigated by the District Council by which funds can be trickled down to support delivery without the dead hand of bureaucracy. Already one group of volunteers who undertake habitat management has been grant-aided to buy a power scythe, an essential piece of equipment to ease the burden of cutting vegetation.

In Yorkshire, discussions have taken place with Doncaster City Council to apply the model as an umbrella embracing all relevant local projects. A presentation has been made to the East Riding Local Nature Partnership suggesting that this approach might be of interest; time will tell if they will follow suit. Following a separate event in Elvington, near York, several parishes have signed up to the idea and others are considering the proposals. A meeting in the North York Moors in October, hosted by NYMA, saw individuals and community organisations from the Esk Valley and beyond come together to network and discuss the model, with several examples of inspiration and collaboration resulting from the event.

On practical delivery, St Nick's Environment Centre (which manages a 24-acre Local Nature Reserve in the heart of York) is

taking the ideas forward to enhance biodiversity through a programme of 'green corridors' within the city, and on the Norfolk-Suffolk border a local trust is working to acquire The Ocean Lake, a flooded former gravel pit. Much loved for low-impact angling and sailing and with a wide range of wildlife, this County Wildlife Site must be protected as a core site from which nature can be built back across the landscape. Safeguarding the best places for wildlife in every parish is going to be critical for success in meeting the challenges ahead.

THE MESSAGE SPREADS

On a completely different tack, a chance meeting saw acclaimed London hat designer, Matthew Eluwande, using the Nature Recovery symbol as an inspiration to create a magnificent hat, modelled at a community nature recovery event. It's certainly the kind of creation which would get you noticed!

There is a long way to go with the Nature Recovery 'WeCan' principles, but now the approach has been endorsed at Parish and District level in East Anglia, with the support of Natural England, there is a solid pattern developing that can be replicated anywhere by anyone who wishes to follow suit.

Returning to the emphasis on individuals and their everyday lives, what they choose to do and why they should do it, we remember the response of a student from Harleston Sancroft Academy to a request directed at the whole school to complete two sentences: 'We should look after wildlife because

followed by 'The best way to help wildlife is

To the first sentence the student answered: '.... because it is good'; and to the second he wrote '...by doing good things'; perfect, uncomplicated guidance for everyone to follow.

IAN CARSTAIRS AND ADRIAN LEAMAN

Bullfinch at St Nick's Nature Reserve in York



© Lewis Outing