

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Report of the meeting held on Thursday 29 February 2024 in Brampton Community Centre Café. The meeting took place after a lunch of soup, sandwiches and fruit salad in the community café. There were 21 members for lunch and 23 at the meeting.

Ann Oswin welcomed members and the guest speaker, Fiona Knox, manager of the [Fellfoot Forward Landscape Partnership Scheme](#), a four-year project which concludes at the end of March this year.

This scheme is led by the team from North Pennines National Landscape - National Landscapes were formerly called Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) - and covers part of the Lower Eden Area with Brampton in the North, Melmerby in the South and bounded by the River Eden in the west and the Tindale / Geltsdale Fells in the east. The scheme has been funded mainly by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Fiona's talk, which she began with a short video, described some of the main activities. These included nature recovery: planting new and restoring hedgerows, providing corridors for wildlife; installing swift boxes some of which included 'swift callers' to attract the birds to the new nesting sites; surveying sites such as Farlam churchyard and Hallbankgate Farm, where the surveys helped show changes in wildlife that occurred as farming practices were changed. There was also a Festival of Nature, mainly involving schoolchildren, at Talkin Tarn.

Fiona described the range of changes carried out with the RSPB at the Geltsdale Bird Reserve. These included land management to favour the black grouse and moving overhead power cables underground to reduce the hazard to wildfowl. A new system of cattle management involves fitting a collar to the cattle. These allow both the remote location of individual animals and the ability to emit a warning sound and administer a mild electric shock to them. In this way virtual electric fences can be created keeping the cattle away from nesting curlews without the need to erect and maintain actual fences. Similar trials are also being carried out with sheep. Also, some vegetation, especially rushes, has been cut back to encourage curlew nesting. Bends have been reintroduced into Howgill Beck; it now meanders into Talkin Tarn creating more wetland suitable for waders.

Another of the scheme's aims has been 'Working with communities':

With Brampton Walkers Are Welcome some 'slow trails' have been developed. As well as increasing accessibility for electric trampers - these can be booked at Talkin Tarn - these trails encourage walkers to spend more time looking at their surroundings. Other trails are at Castle Carrock and Ainstable. The trails are not signed but illustrated leaflets will be available from April.

Other community projects have been: the 'Nest', a star-gazing area at Talkin Tarn; consolidation of the tower at Kirkoswald Castle; a new car park, archaeological and geological surveys at Long Meg with [Friends of Long Meg](#); an archaeological survey at Carlatton; recording of oral histories.

[Fellfoot Radio](#), broadcast 24/7, features sounds and voices recorded in the Fellfoot Forward landscape in Cumbria.

One of the Forum members, also a member of the [Brampton Poets Club](#) explained that some of the profits from their book sales had been donated to one of the community projects.

Ann thanked Fiona for her talk and members responded in the usual way.

The next 50+ Forum meeting will be on Tuesday 9th April 2024.