



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**17<sup>th</sup> November**

### **Traditional skills taught on the Farm**

Sixteen conservation volunteers with the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership have just spent the weekend in Barley learning the traditional skill of hedge laying. Thanks to support from the Environment Agency the volunteers received free expert tuition from Joe Craig and David Whitaker of the National Hegelaying Society.

The course was held at Overhouses Farm where a hedgerow planted 20 years ago was in need of some restoration. As a hedge grows upwards the individual trees get gappy at the base and sheep and lambs can push through the boundary to the next field: where the grass is always greener!. The skill of laying a hedge is to cut into the base of the hedge stem just enough so that you can bend it over sideways. If you cut too far the hedge will die; not far enough and the stem (or pleacher) will split or snap.

Volunteers on the course were taught how to safely use traditional billhooks and axes, as well as more modern saws and loppers. Once the pleachers were laid into line the volunteers banged in wooden stakes to stabilise them and to make a thick hedge. Over the next few years the hedge will begin to grow from the base of the stem again, and create a living boundary that is an important feature of our farming landscape.

Hedgerows are very important to wildlife: providing shelter to birds, insects and small mammals as well as to farm animals. The berries growing on thorn bushes and holly are vital winter food for birds who will also nest in what are effectively linear woodlands. Hedges are important as a carbon store; and they can also help in the fight against flooding and in improving water quality.

Tutor Joe Craig said 'Restoring hedgerows like these helps preserve the past and protect the future. We need more people to learn and enjoy this craft in order to keep the skills alive and the hedgerows in a healthy state.'

Environment Agency Catchment Coordinator Helen Dix said "Hedgerows are one of the important ways we can help slow the flow of water from the land during heavy rain. This natural approach can reduce flood risk to communities and helps keep valuable nutrients in the soil. The recent COP26 climate talks in Glasgow represent a major opportunity to drive action around the globe and projects such as this are a great example of how bringing people together can achieve multiple benefits for the environment."

**EDITORS NOTES** The Pendle Hill landscape partnership is led by the Forest of Bowland AONB.

- The partnership aims to:
  - I. restore, enhance and conserve the heritage and landscape of Pendle Hill
  - II. reconnect people with their past and their landscape
  - III. bring the two sides of the hill together
  - IV. create a sustainable future for the environment, heritage and for visitors' experience of Pendle Hill
- The scheme was awarded a National Lottery grant of £1.8million by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in January 2018. These funds will be delivered from 2018-2022 and will be matched with a further £1m raised locally.
- The scheme is made up of a dozen projects which safeguard the area's wildlife and heritage and improve people's access to this popular countryside area. We will do this by providing opportunities for training and volunteering; by supporting research and devising creative and digital interpretation to inspire a new generation about our heritage; by restoring important landscape features, and by working with communities to re-tell the stories of radical Pendle people. The scheme will increase pride in this special place and raise aspirations amongst communities, and it will bring in new investment to support the environment and the economy.
- The Pendle Hill landscape partnership is supported by National Lottery players through the Heritage Fund and by the Forest of Bowland AONB. Partners include representatives of parish councils, the landowning and farming community, Pendle and Ribble Valley Borough Councils, Lancashire County Council, statutory bodies, tourism businesses and volunteers.
- Projects will be delivered by the AONB team, plus local delivery partners including In-Situ Arts, the Dry Stone Walling Association, Mid Pennine Arts and Ribble Rivers Trust.

- The Pendle Hill LP covers 120 square kilometres, stretching from Gisburn down to Whalley, and from Clitheroe across to Nelson and Padiham.
- The Hill is well known as a beauty spot and is heavily visited by residents of the local towns: it is a perfect place for walking and cycling. The area's heritage is dominated by the story of the Pendle Witches, but there are lots more stories to tell including the founding of the Quaker movement, non-conformists and radicals, Roman and Bronze Age settlers, medieval farming systems and early industrial developments. The network of dry stone walls and hedgerows give the area a distinctive feel, and the landscape is also important for its wild moorland, rare birds and woodlands.
- For further information contact the LP Scheme Manager [cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk) on 07891 537835 / 01200 420420
- Visit the project website at [www.pendlehillproject.com](http://www.pendlehillproject.com) or visit our Facebook page 'Pendle Hill Project' for up to date news and views.

### **About the Environment Agency;**

The Environment Agency stands for: Protecting the environment – putting people and nature first – promoting sustainability.

We protect and improve the environment. We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion. We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.



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