

Interim evaluation report



 *Revitalising*
REDESDALE
Landscape Partnership

Introduction

The river Rede catchment is the wild heart of Northumberland. Stretching from the river's source on the English-Scottish border to its confluence with the North Tyne at Redesmouth, this remote, picturesque landscape has been shaped by its often bloody and violent history. Once the lawless land of Border Reivers, Redesdale is now a rich wilderness characterised by peatlands, forestry and wooded valleys. As the Scheme's Interpretation Strategy (2016) describes, *"it is a land where history and geography collide - where people's lives can be seen written into the landscape."*

Biodiversity and nature thrive throughout the catchment yet it is still a fragile landscape, threatened by the pressures of land use/management and climate change. Over many years, the extensive and internationally significant upland blanket bogs have been depleted by moorland drainage, the river's form and flow has been altered in many ways and meadow flower diversity has been reduced. The survival of native species such as fresh water pearl mussels, red squirrels and raptors hangs in the balance, dependent on ongoing protection or intervention.

Large parts of the catchment are completely unexplored archaeologically and what is known about the history of Redesdale is limited. Despite this, the Historic Environment Record (HER) records more than 800 sites and buildings including sites which are or have the potential to become historic features in the landscape and destinations for both locals and visitors to explore. These include sites of prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, Post-Medieval and Twentieth Century significance.

"The jewel in Redesdale's crown is its history, for this is the valley which is richer in story and ballad than any other in England,"

B Charlton (2007)

Fewer than 2,000 people are resident in Redesdale and settlements within the landscape are small, historic sandstone villages with dispersed farmsteads. The isolated nature of the area has given rise to some of the most spectacular natural and cultural heritage in Northumberland and here, in rural communities, the rich heritage persists, with family surnames, churchyards and traditions all telling part of the Redesdale story.

In 2017, following an extensive period of development, a grant of £1.8 million was awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for a multi-disciplinary catchment-wide scheme which would

“Don’t give yourself the trouble to send my letters to this place, for tis almost impossible to receive’em without sending 16 miles to fetch ‘em...The principal farm houses are 5 or 6 miles apart. The whole country looks like a desert,”

Dr Dodgson, Rector of Elsdon (1760)

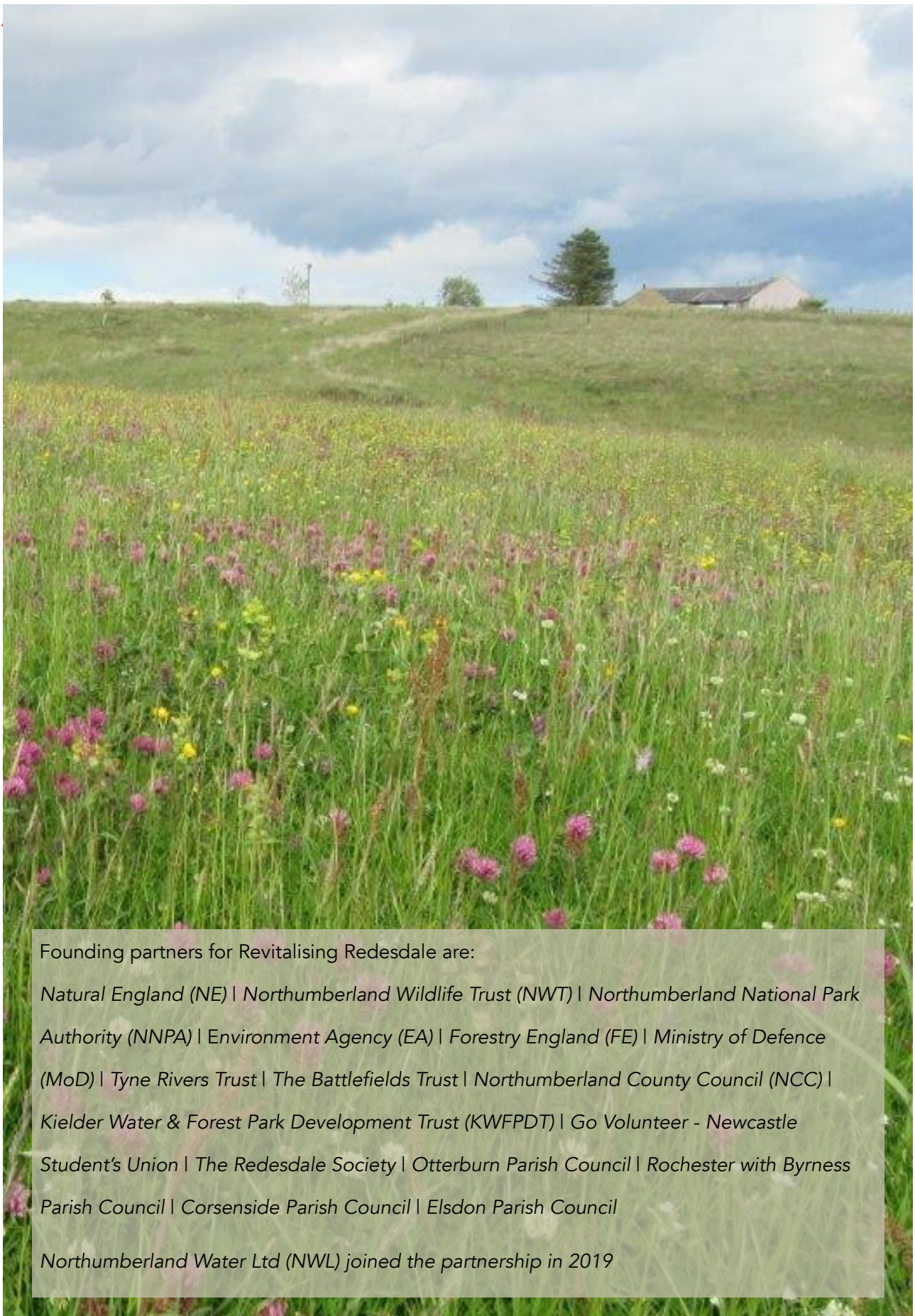
celebrate, protect, enhance and secure the future of Redesdale's spectacular natural and cultural landscape. Delivery of **Revitalising Redesdale** began in 2018, with twelve project themes, working towards shared goals:

- ◆ To empower local communities to better understand, conserve and enhance a landscape and natural environment forged by centuries of conflict
- ◆ To celebrate the unique character of the landscape, its biodiversity and its culture while seeking to build the future resilience of its heritage and identity
- ◆ To address the threats to Redesdale’s increasingly fragile natural, historic and cultural heritage, which have been heightened by a declining resident population and economic decline
- ◆ To ensure the local ownership and involvement of projects and schemes developed by the partnership

Revitalising Redesdale is led by a partnership of 17 organisations, bringing together community, voluntary sector and statutory agencies, with a small core staff team employed to co-ordinate project delivery.

This report is an interim presentation of the ongoing programme evaluation which is reviewing quantitative and qualitative evidence to measure success against agreed indicators. Ultimately, it is seeking to establish the impact of Revitalising Redesdale on landscape heritage and ecological connectivity, local communities, local business and the wider public. It will also explore the assumptions made in developing the scheme and make recommendations for scheme legacy and other future projects.

A glossary of acronyms is provided at the end of the report.



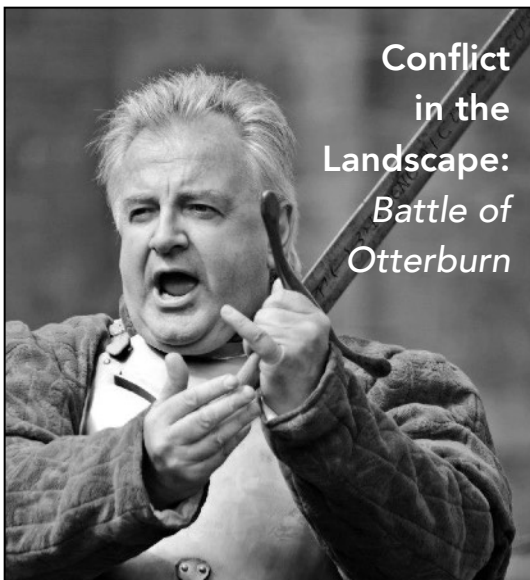
Founding partners for Revitalising Redesdale are:

Natural England (NE) | Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT) | Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) | Environment Agency (EA) | Forestry England (FE) | Ministry of Defence (MoD) | Tyne Rivers Trust | The Battlefields Trust | Northumberland County Council (NCC) | Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust (KWFPDT) | Go Volunteer - Newcastle Student's Union | The Redesdale Society | Otterburn Parish Council | Rochester with Byrness Parish Council | Corsenside Parish Council | Elsdon Parish Council

Northumberland Water Ltd (NWL) joined the partnership in 2019



The Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme is delivered through twelve project themes



Redesdale's Biodiversity Hot Spots:
*Whitelee NNR and Mill & Whiskershiel
Burn SSSI*



Otterburn Life on the Ranges:
Otterburn Military Training Area

Sharing Redesdale's Stories: *Bringing a
Deeper Understanding & Engagement Within
The Landscape*



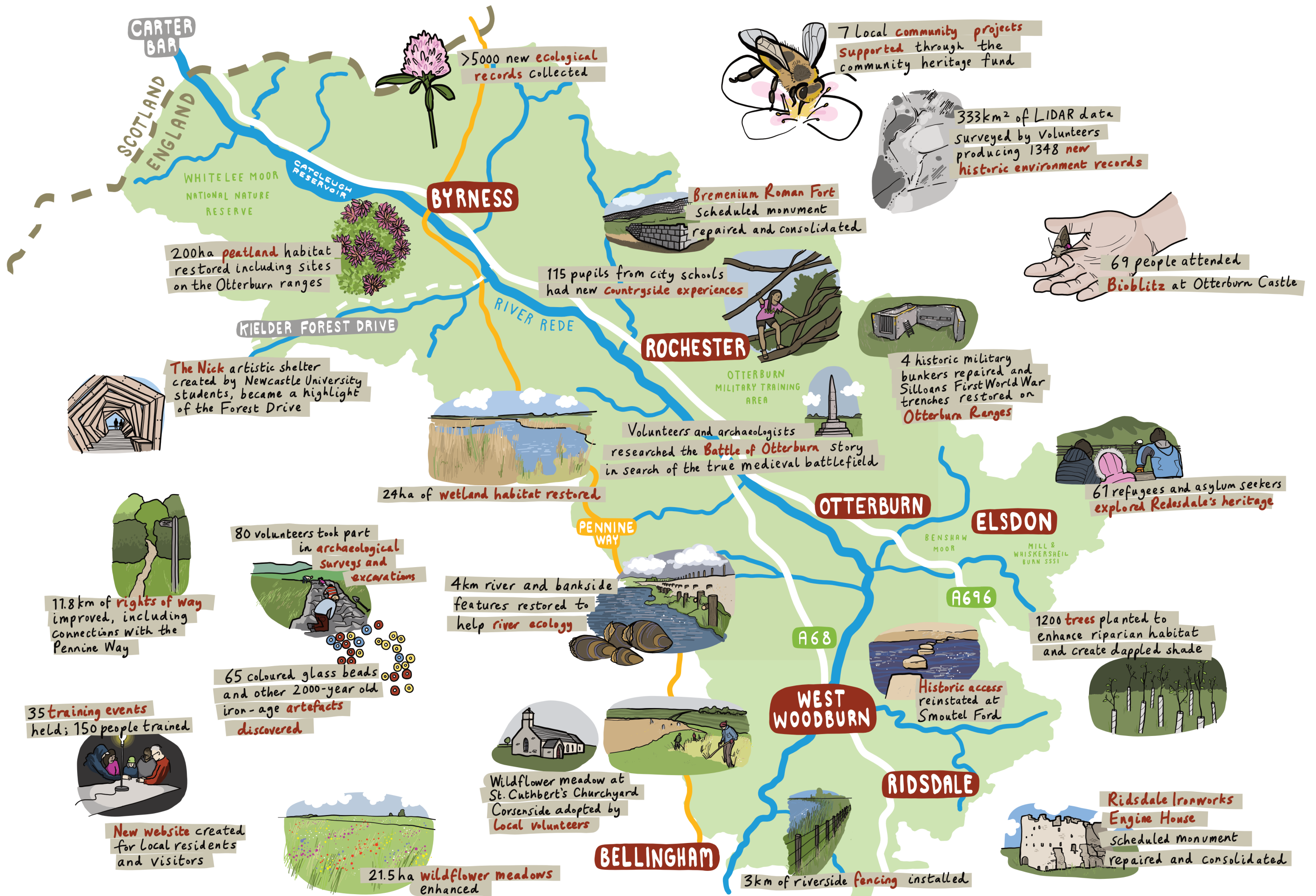
Walk & Cycle Redesdale:
*Helping People Explore &
Discover Redesdale*

Redesdale Revitalises: *Supporting
Young People's Wellbeing*



Community Heritage Fund:
Support for Local Projects

Programme Achievements At A Glance



Programme Impact

Success /sək'ses/¹

The accomplishment of an aim or purpose.

The evaluation is measuring success against a series of indicators which have been agreed to evidence the outcomes and test the assumptions set out during programme development. Ultimately, the evaluation will consider whether Revitalising Redesdale has achieved (or will achieve in legacy) an upper catchment landscape where **natural habitats are connected, wildlife is thriving and cultural heritage is secured** and which delivers **benefits to local people, the wider community, visitors and businesses**. This is presented in a Theory of Change (page 9).

After two years, there is strong evidence that Revitalising Redesdale is working well towards delivering the planned project outcomes and, in a recent survey, 100% of respondents, all representing partner



organisations, agreed that Revitalising Redesdale is making a significant impact on the natural and/or

¹ Oxford English Dictionary

A Theory of Change



historic heritage in Redesdale.

The **Restoration of Habitats** project has begun to restore peatland at Whitelee Moor NNR and five farm sites. This will not only support important species and habitats but it will also ensure water is held at the top of the catchment and reduce the amount of sediment washed out into lower reaches of the river, thus benefiting land in the lower catchment. More than 21ha of species rich grassland have been enhanced across six meadows at three different farms and in the churchyard at St Cuthbert's Church, Corsenside.

Plans are in progress for access improvements and new interpretation at Whitelee Moor NNR, and habitat and access improvements to Mill and Whiskershiel Burns Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) noted for its calcareous grassland and flushes.

River Rede Improvement works which will re-establish natural river processes are well underway. River flow has been reinvigorated at Smoutel Ford to restore wildlife habitat and slowed at Rattenraw Burn and Lisles Burn to reduce sedimentation. Bank stabilisation and reprofiling of the river has helped the river reconnect with its floodplain and has created a small area of wetland habitat. New tree planting will create natural dappled shade over the river in places and new fencing and drinking troughs installed by local farmers will reduce the impact of grazing stock on the river. Across the catchment, river restoration will benefit invertebrates, fish, birds and mammals and will, hopefully, create suitable breeding grounds for the endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

“We enjoyed all the people coming out to look at the history on [our farm]. We met different people that are not all involved with farming, very interesting few days,”

Local farmers (2018)

It is too early to conclude whether these multiple ecological interventions across the Rede catchment will contribute to a more connected natural landscape. Feedback from staff and partners suggests that Scheme progress so far, working on 18 farm land holdings plus designated sites and other areas, and in combination with wider-scale countryside stewardship capital work and land management, has achieved the first steps towards conservation on a landscape-scale. To evidence this for evaluation, mapping of habitat improvements is needed to demonstrate connectivity in the landscape and better understand the potential catchment-scale impact.

The Redesdale landscape is rich in cultural heritage but, for many years, historic sites have been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair and little is known about much of the built heritage in the area. The complete review of 333 sq km of Lidar data and verification of 1348 new site records, through the **Lost Redesdale** project, is a significant achievement for the project and this will significantly improve understanding of the historic landscape. With restoration works completed to **Ridsdale Ironworks and Bremenium Roman Fort** and both structures now protected for the future, cultural heritage projects can now turn to visitor engagement and new access and interpretation will be installed at historic sites.

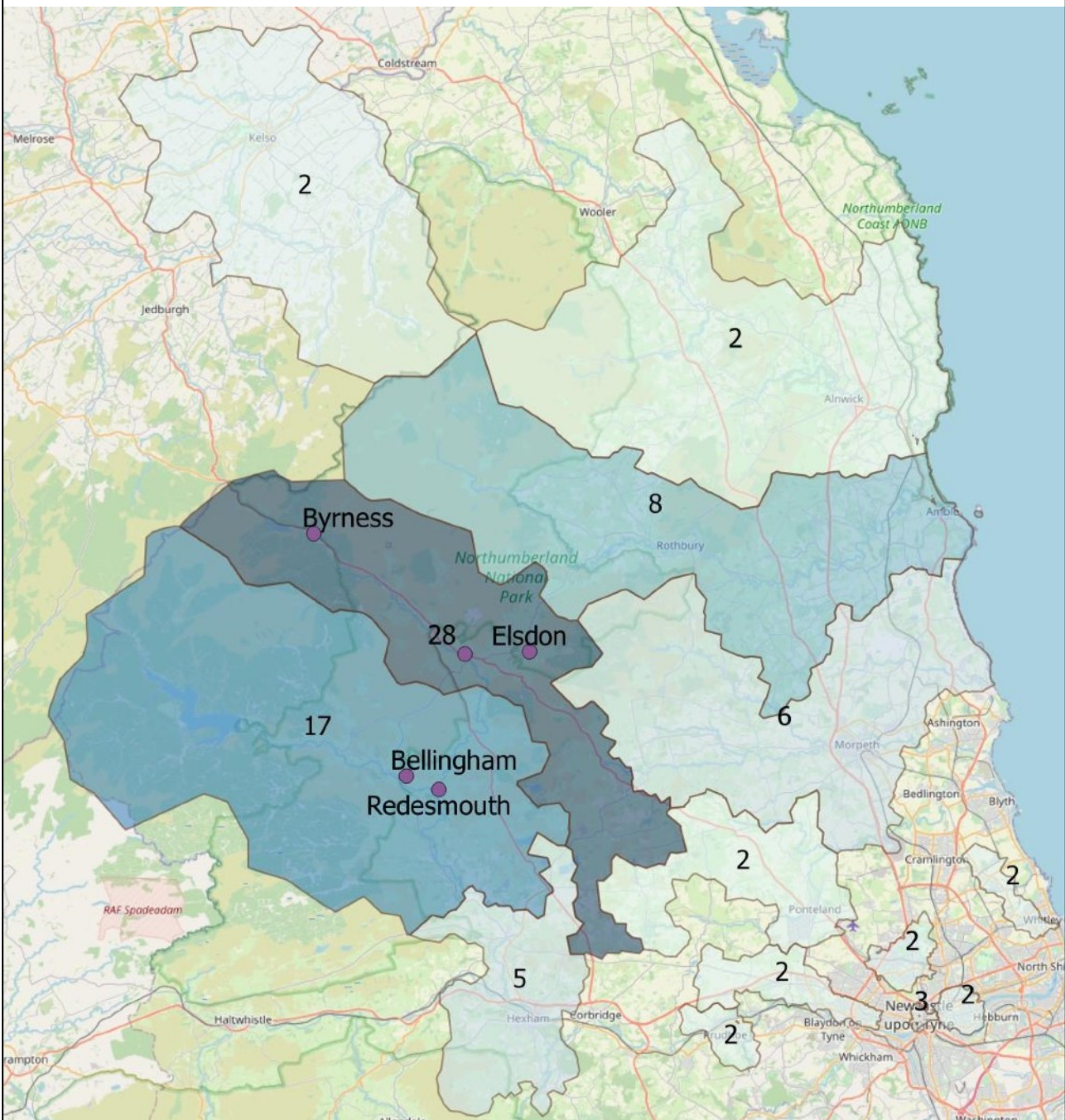
The primary source documents relating to the **Battle of Otterburn** have been reviewed by volunteers and the secondary source review has begun. A Landscape Archaeology draft report is complete and will help to further inform the battlefield archaeology research.

The **Life on the Ranges** project led by *Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry of Defence)* has undertaken both ecological and archaeological work. This has included grip blocking on peatland, meadow restoration and riverside fencing to reduce sediment from cattle entering the watercourse, all contributing to the wider goals of a connected and resilient ecological catchment. The Silloans First World War Trenches have been restored and four historic military bunkers at Ridlees, Davyshiel and Watty Bell have been repaired. Military exercises and more stringent site work rules have led to delays on some further peat restoration works, which are now planned to be carried out during the next lambing break, April-May 2021.

The Scheme is well regarded locally and project staff have recorded positive feedback from members of the public with regard to onsite interpretation, conservation works and future plans. The small, rural communities, characteristic of the landscape area, are well represented in the project with members of every Parish Council sitting on the steering group. The *Community Heritage Fund* panel is well established and active locally, making decisions about projects that will add value to communities and deliver programme outcomes. Seven small grants have been awarded so far.

The reinstatement of the historic Smoutel Ford crossing over the River Rede and associated footpath improvements towards Otterburn have reconnected walkers and riders along the St Cuthbert's Three-Church Trail and are a significant achievement in terms of partnership working and co-operation. 11.8km of rights of way have been improved, including connections with the Pennine Way, and with

Figure 1: Distribution of postcodes for attendees at events and training workshops (postcodes with >1 response shown)



the addition of waymarkers, signage and access works. This, together with further interpretation planned in the coming years, will enable more people to ***Walk and Cycle Redesdale***.

New audiences are supported through the ***Redesdale Revitalises*** project which has brought 115 pupils from inner city schools and 61 refugees and asylum seekers (children and adults) to Redesdale to take part in new heritage experiences. For the vast majority of these individuals, this was their first

visit to Redesdale and a handful of volunteers who came with them in a supporting/supervisory role also report that they had not visited Redesdale before being involved in this programme.

Feedback forms from events and training workshops suggest that the vast majority of project participants live in the north east and Scottish borders region (171 out of 172 responses) with 26% of respondents living in the Redesdale locality (NE19 and NE48 postcodes). Figure 1 shows the distribution of postcode regions with more than 1 response. At the same events, 62% of respondents said this was their first engagement with the Revitalising Redesdale project. It is important to continue engaging new participants as the project progresses but it will also be interesting to track how many first attendees return to future events so we would expect to see this figure reduce in the coming years.

The Scheme has recorded active participation by adults, young people, older people, local residents, residents of urban areas, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups however, no breakdown of participation for different groups has been provided and further evidence is required to demonstrate whether the Revitalising Redesdale is meeting the programme outcome to engage a wider range of people in heritage. Progress towards this, impact on individuals' wellbeing and the challenges of engaging harder to reach groups in such a remote location as Redesdale will be discussed in the final evaluation.

“Yes, this was my first time in Redesdale. I am surprised by this fact as I have explored much of Northumberland throughout my life,”

Student volunteer (2019)


A significant installation at Blakehope Nick was designed and built by Newcastle University Art & Architecture students and this has become part of the new Forest Drive interpretative experience, and a flagship output for the **Sharing Redesdale's Stories** project. The visitor experience is supported by interpretation within the structure and self-guided *Travelling Tales* - information sheets which can be picked up at either end of the drive. Further interpretation is planned during the second half of the project as the goal to increase visitors to Redesdale and to hold visitors in the landscape for longer is realised.

Visitor surveys to build on the visitor baseline study conducted during the Development Phase and establish baselines for engagement at additional cultural sites was due to start in 2020 but these have

TripAdvisor feedback relating to Blakehope Nick




Lots to see and do

Review of Kielder Water & Forest Park

★★★★★ Reviewed 16 July 2019  via mobile

The setting is spectacular and we were blessed with lovely weather on the day we headed out to explore. There are lots of places where you can go on trails around the lake or up into the surrounding countryside. We found a 12 mile toll road (£3) called Forest Drive just outside Kielder Castle that takes you further into the forest park and up to Blakehope Nick. Designed by students at Newcastle University and only completed in 2019 this is a great piece of architecture, cleverly designed to frame the various views of the beautiful landscape. An unexpected find on a great day out.

Date of experience: July 2019



been unavoidably delayed due to the national lockdown in response to Covid-19. This work must be revisited in future and it will be important to find ways to record visitor feedback and analyse the visitor experience. In the same way, the visitor book which was water damaged and rendered unreadable at Blakehope Nick should be reinstated. Social media may also provide an effective route for visitors to share their experiences. A brief search on TripAdvisor revealed very few entries for 'Things to Do' in the Redesdale area, although there was one entry on the Kielder Water & Forest Park page relating to the new structure at Blakehope Nick (above). Similarly, other destination sites could be promoted via social media to engage visitors and encourage them to share experiences. Without an understanding of visitor demographics and feedback, it will not be possible to express the impact of the new visitor experiences.

"Thank you for a good weekend, I really enjoyed it and learned so much,"

Training participant, 2018

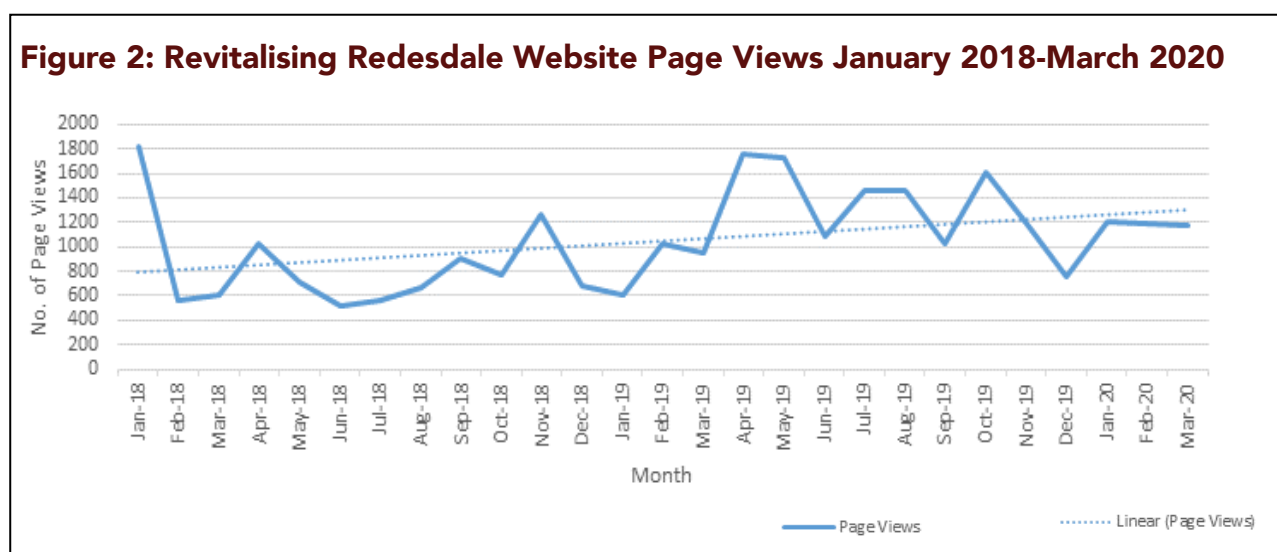
A small number of school, college and university groups have been supported through the project, taking part in activities ranging from practical peatland restoration work to ecological surveys. A number of public events and training workshops have been provided as part of the **Rediscovering Natural Redesdale**, **Lost Redesdale** and **River Rede Improvements** projects. These have engaged local residents from Redesdale communities and visitors living outside the area, enabling them to take part in essential heritage recording, take a closer look at the natural and cultural heritage in their

environment and develop new skills. The most popular of these was a Bioblitz which was attended by 69 individuals.

“A big thank you for organising this morning’s visit. It was very interesting and enjoyable and I know from the general conversation on the bus back the students found it very informative and they also enjoyed it (if not the cold),”

Northumberland College Work Placement Officer, 2019

A new website was established in 2018 which provides information about project progress, sites, the wider landscape, visitor destinations and forthcoming events/activities/opportunities. Website engagement has increased since 2018 with 2,448 unique users recorded since the start of the project. The total number of hits is 2,932 which suggests that most visitors do not come back to the website. Website content has increased during the current period of lockdown (Covid-19) but this does not seem to have triggered any significant increase in engagement. Figure 2, below, has been provided by the project team to show website page views since the start of the project. As shown, the trend is a steady increase. Spikes in January 2018 and March 2019 are during periods of website development and it is likely that page views are largely by the web development team, project staff and partners.



A total of 117 individual volunteers have been recorded so far but volunteer data for 2019/20 is missing from some partners. At least 80 of the recorded volunteers have taken part in archaeology activity. Updated figures will be available once furloughed staff in partner agencies are back in post.

The Scheme aims to, indirectly, support local businesses by providing more things for people to do, building relationships between business and communities and, most importantly, holding more people

in the landscape for longer so that potential customers will increase. So far there is no evidence provided that this has been achieved but it is expected that this will develop as visitor destination sites become established. There are, however, a couple of examples of local businesses which have been directly supported and these include Wild Intrigue (received a **Community Heritage Fund** grant), local farms (supported to access Countryside Stewardship) and contractors based within the area.

A summary of evidence which demonstrates progress towards the agreed success indicators is presented in Table 1.

The evaluation has also set out to explore the questions below as the assumptions that formed the foundation of Revitalising Redesdale are tested and reflected upon. A brief discussion of these is presented here based on Scheme progress to date. Comments include feedback received from partners through a recent questionnaire which was completed by thirteen individuals across the partnership.

1. Has Revitalising Redesdale achieved (or started to achieve) a catchment-wide ecological network?

69% of individuals who responded to the partner questionnaire agree that the Scheme is working towards this. However, it is worth noting that 31% of respondents were not sure with one individual commenting that they do not understand what this means. As mentioned above, although significant habitat restoration works have been implemented, there is currently no mapping data which would allow an analysis of whether this will achieve a connected and catchment-wide ecological network. This will be addressed in the coming months. The impact of such a network will not be seen within the funded-period of this programme therefore, the evaluation will be looking for ecological indicators which are based on best practice demonstrated by partners or other projects and further expert feedback from specialist partners NE, NWT, NNPA and EA.

2. Has a catchment-scale approach achieved more than a site-by-site approach (with an emphasis on designated sites)?

85% of individuals who responded to the partnership survey agree that this is the case however, one individual is unsure and one disagrees. Further partnership discussion will be needed to explore this, particularly with respect to whether there remains a need to retain the partnership to deliver a joined up approach across the landscape during legacy.

3. Has Revitalising Redesdale achieved its goal of holding people in the landscape for longer (more reasons to stay) and has this been significant in achieving agreed lottery outcomes (in particular, engaging more people in heritage) and securing a legacy for the project?

85% of survey respondents agree that the Scheme has made a start towards this but one individual has seen little progress and one is not sure. Comments recognise that this will be developed as the project progresses, further interpretation is installed and more people become aware of the visitor offer. Some people have referred to outputs which have made progress towards this including the website and engagement with the historic environment projects. One comment questions whether the number of events is sustainable.

There is currently very limited visitor data for the project. Visitor surveys were planned in 2020 to establish baseline data at some sites but these have been unavoidably cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic response. If possible, these must be reinstated but it is recognised that it may now not be possible to carry these out before interpretation and access works are completed and, therefore, comparative baseline data may be missing. If this is the case, reasonable assumptions will be made based on anecdotal evidence from local residents, project staff and partners. Visitor surveys later in the project will be used to establish where visitors come from, whether they have visited Redesdale before, why they visited, whether they have visited any other sites, whether they have contributed to the local economy etc.

Further stakeholder discussion will be needed to explore this. This should include partners, community representatives and volunteers.

4. Has the partnership started something that will continue? Has the initial investment facilitated new funding, new support, 'spin-off' projects, added value etc?

Everyone who responded to the survey feels that the Scheme is attracting strategic support from partners and other agencies and some examples have been provided. The true test of this will be in the legacy planning and the final evaluation report will explore whether partners or other agencies are invested to a level where they can continue to support the Scheme or an element of the Scheme. Likely indicators of this will be the number of farms/sites in Countryside Stewardship or similar arrangements, number of new projects supported, organisations still working in partnership, change in approach within local business/communities, maintenance agreements adopted by landowners etc.

5. Has the number of high-level or strategic partners/supporters increased?

The programme has attracted one new strategic partner: NWL, a significant landowner in the area, joined the partnership in 2019 and are active within the partnership. This question will be further discussed in the final evaluation report.

6. What change has Revitalising Redesdale achieved that would not have happened otherwise?

The large scale capital works which have restored habitats, re-profiled stretches of the river and repaired historic structures would not have been possible without Revitalising Redesdale. Likewise, the planned interpretation and access works to increase visitor engagement are only possible with significant financial investment. As discussed above, it is too early to draw conclusions about the lasting change and impact these works will achieve. However, responses from partners indicate that the Scheme is working towards the intended outcomes and, if progress continues, it is likely that it will, at least in part, achieve a connected ecological network, engage new audiences, provide new experiences, increase learning and understanding, support wellbeing and benefit local communities and the local economy.

This will be further discussed in the final evaluation report when there is data available to support these claims.

7. Has a joined-up, partnership approach achieved more than would have been delivered by individual organisations acting in isolation?

100% of survey responses agreed that Revitalising Redesdale is achieving more in partnership than would be possible otherwise. This will be further discussed in the final evaluation report.

It is appropriate for the evaluation to comment on the unprecedented circumstances which have been created as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic response. Whilst this has caused delays to project progress which could not have been anticipated, and unavoidable gaps in data/information, it has also provided a valuable opportunity for all projects to pause, reflect on progress and catch up on data processing and other administrative tasks. It has also provided new opportunities to explore virtual engagement approaches and ways to support audiences who may have limited access to the Redesdale landscape. The Scheme has established a series of “My Redesdale” blog posts on the website which have shared unique perspectives on the landscape. To date there is no evidence that

website traffic has increased whilst people cannot visit the Revitalising Redesdale landscape area but this will continue to be reviewed and an analysis will be presented in the final evaluation.

Table 1: Evidence of project success		
Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
Outcome 1: Heritage is better managed and in better condition		
432ha of peatland better managed and better able to retain water in the upper catchment	Management has taken place on 8 peatland sites including 200+ha of peatland condition improved, 27km of ditches blocked/partially blocked to reduce erosion, 131ha of Sitka regeneration removed.	<p>Three further sites to be restored including a further 233ha peatland improvements and 17km blocked ditches to meet programme targets (Sitka removal already exceeds target).</p> <p>Most sites require recorded follow-up visits to assess impact of restoration.</p> <p>Whitelee Moor NNR restoration progress to date needs to be detailed and data provided.</p> <p>All data would benefit from mapping to evidence change and demonstrate how this is contributing to a connected catchment landscape.</p>
Improved floral diversity on 40ha of grassland sites	<p>21.5ha of species-rich grassland planted or seeded on farmland and community sites</p> <p>New cutting regime for 9 layby/verge sites was agreed for autumn 2019 but only one was implemented.</p>	<p>18.5ha of grassland still to be planted to meet programme target.</p> <p>Project to request formal change to lay-by and very targets with NLHF.</p> <p>Again, this data would benefit from mapping on a GIS system.</p>
Water quality (rivers) is improved to better support aquatic species	<p>7 river Rede improvement projects completed across catchment and restoration of historic Smoutel Ford (including associated geomorphological features and access improvements).</p> <p>Total catchment improvement works: 3,355m in-channel features, 3,970m bankside features, 2,900m fencing, 0.39ha buffer strip, 24.2ha newly created/restored BAP habitat, 0.18ha rural SUDS and 1200 trees planted (2.6ha).</p>	<p>9 capital river improvement projects still to complete.</p> <p>Water quality monitoring data is yet to be provided.</p> <p>River restoration and water quality information needs to be presented on GIS to evidence the impact and connectivity across the catchment.</p> <p><i>This success indicator will be reviewed in the next year to discuss whether water quality only is the best measure of success.</i></p>

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
Water quality (continued)...	Advice has been provided to 15 farms.	
Three important historic sites (Percy's Cross, Ridsdale Ironworks and Bremenium Roman Fort) plus historic features on Otterburn Ranges are repaired/protected	<p>HE has confirmed Ridsdale Ironworks engine house will be removed from Heritage at Risk register as a result of works carried out by Revitalising Redesdale.</p> <p>Structural issues to Bremenium Roman fort have been repaired.</p> <p>The Battle of Otterburn landscape archaeology review is nearly complete and draft report received. Fieldwork planning is underway.</p> <p>Post excavation works are being undertaken following the excavations at Bellshiel (on the Otterburn Ranges) and Fawdon Hill.</p>	<p>Battle of Otterburn site fieldwork planned for late summer 2020.</p> <p>Detailed historical and archaeological research for the Percy's Cross site and the registered battlefield is in progress and will be completed by 2021.</p>
Management plans and maintenance commitments for ecological and historic sites show condition will be maintained for at least 10 years	No evidence as yet - would expect to see this during second half of programme.	Legacy planning will involve management plans and handover of maintenance responsibilities.

Outcome 2: Heritage is better recorded		
New records and research for at least 5 historic sites	<p>333 sq km of Lidar data has been surveyed by volunteers and this has generated 1,348 new records (submitted to the HER).</p> <p>Also completed and submitted to the HER: Level 3 survey of second site at Rattenraw and Level 1 survey for sites at Chattlehope Farm, Catcleugh.</p> <p>Otterburn Battlefield report (HE) has been received in draft form.</p>	<p>With much fieldwork and recording completed, the focus now will be on interpretation of sites and public access.</p> <p>HE report on Otterburn Battlefield will be completed once fieldwork can recommence.</p>

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
5,000 new ecological records collected and submitted to ERIC NE	5,215 new species records collected.	Number of records submitted to ERIC NE will be provided for final evaluation report. Once submitted, records will be verified through the regional record centre enabling them to be made publicly available when appropriate.
Heritage records are made accessible to the wider public	Records held by ERIC NE and HER are available to the public on request.	New heritage information will be incorporated into landscape/ project interpretation. A new Wildlife Atlas for Redesdale will be created. Partnership to consider how public access to information could be further improved.
Data informs management planning	Little evidence so far.	Legacy planning will require partners to evidence how the learning from Revitalising Redesdale has informed management planning and future strategy.

Outcome 3: More people and a wider range of people have engaged with heritage

Outcome 4: People have developed skills

Outcome 5: People have volunteered time

Increased volunteer engagement through the project	<p>117 individual volunteers engaged. >1400 volunteer days contributed.</p> <p><i>NB: data does not include end of year figures from NWT which were unavailable at the time of writing</i></p> <p>14% of volunteers responding to the feedback survey live in the project area and 12% lived elsewhere but hadn't visited Redesdale before. 60% felt they were more active as a result of project engagement.</p>	NWT volunteer data must be added to the totals as soon as it is available.
--	--	--

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
Increased volunteer engagement (continued)...	80 volunteers have been engaged in archaeology projects (formerly not many archaeology volunteering opportunities within the project area).	
Increased engagement through the project	<p>Social media audience has grown to 554 Facebook, 257 Twitter and Instagram 133. 2,932 hits (2,448 unique users) have been recorded on the new website. 575 individuals subscribe to the project mailing list.</p> <p>Total number of events held, total attendances, number of schools supported, number of university/college students engaged and number of work placements have not been provided.</p> <p>Pupils/students from Queen Elizabeth High School and Northumberland College (Kirkley Hall) supported the Steng Moss project by helping to remove self-seeded Sitka spruce trees.</p> <p>Newcastle University students also helped with this and learnt basic Sphagnum identification and peat depth measurement techniques.</p> <p>A group of Art & Architecture students from Newcastle University designed and built the new structure at Blakehope Nick.</p> <p>3 staff and 15 students from Northumberland College took part in a visit and workshop at Ridsdale Ironworks.</p> <p>2 school groups have helped to conserve species rich grassland around village hubs and existing meadows. A Bug Hunting Discovery Day was held with Otterburn First School in 2019.</p>	<p>Interpretation installations will continue. This will be a particular focus at historic sites where restoration works are complete and visitor engagement is now the priority. Visitor interpretation at all sites will be informed by historical and archaeological research.</p> <p>Visitor surveys to gather baseline data for destination sites and an independent review of the Forest Drive experience (including Blakehope Nick) were planned for spring 2020 and have been cancelled. These will be organised later in the summer or in 2021 depending on circumstances.</p> <p>Feedback forms should continue to be used at events and training sessions to capture whether attendees are new audiences. New approaches to collecting feedback from harder to reach groups should also be explored.</p> <p>Improved data is needed to record public engagement. In particular, data which evidences a wider range of people engaged is lacking. This will be a challenge for this project and the partnership needs to discuss this further. All projects should explore new opportunities to engage new audiences and increase diversity. This is discussed further in the 'Next Steps & Recommendations' section.</p>

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
Increased engagement (continued)...	<p>Berwick Young Archaeologists Club has taken part in activities through Lost Rededale.</p> <p>New opportunities for the public to engage have been provided through interpretation installed at Blakehope Nick and a series of walking trails published as one of the Community Heritage Funded projects.</p> <p>The most popular public event was the 2019 Bioblitz at Otterburn Castle which recorded 69 attendees. 50 members of the public have taken part in Battle of Otterburn themed events.</p> <p>Newcastle University Students Union <i>Go Volunteer!</i> Project held 6 overnight camps at Rupert's Wood with disadvantaged groups from inner city Newcastle.</p> <p>In summer 2018, 85 children from disadvantaged areas engaged with the natural environment of Redesdale through day trips and overnight camps at Rupert's Wood. 65 of these children had the unique experience of waking up in a wild woodland. The children worked together to cook food, construct shelters, as well as learning practical conservation skills at two camps.</p>	
Community ownership of local sites is increased	<p>One site has been adopted by the local community: this is the churchyard at St Cuthbert's Church, Corsenside where local volunteers have taken on ongoing management of the site.</p>	<p>Legacy planning must focus on the future management of sites and this must include local community ownership. It is expected that more groups/bodies will follow the lead of Corsenside churchyard volunteers but ongoing support from partners may be needed to sustain this.</p>

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
Community ownership (continued) ...	<p>Seven community-led projects have been supported through the Community Heritage Fund.</p> <p>The Community Heritage Fund Panel is established with local community representatives working together to make decisions.</p> <p>Tynedale Archaeology Group is now very active in the project area and is supporting Lost Redesdale projects.</p>	<p>The Community Heritage Fund remains active with more grants to award in the coming years. This will continue to enable local groups, businesses and individuals to protect, restore and celebrate heritage in their community.</p>
Participants have learnt new skills	<p>35 different training events have been held and >150 people have been trained across the programme. This has included training in Lidar interpretation (36 people), archaeological survey (21), archaeological excavation techniques (57), geophysical survey (5), human osteoarchaeology (6) and desk-based archaeological research (9).</p> <p>27 of the trained volunteers have used their skills to survey 333 sq km of Lidar data and this exceeds project expectations.</p> <p>Out of 21 individuals who took part in peatland restoration training, 7 have used new skills to help with restoration/survey work.</p> <p>Through the Redesdale Revitalises project, student volunteers from Newcastle University have completed training and developed skills in First Aid (10 lead volunteers), campfire and cooking skills (11 volunteers), Outdoor First Aid (18 volunteers).</p>	<p>The Dark Skies and Creatures of the Night, Red Squirrel Survey Training and Small Mammal Surveying training events cancelled during spring 2020 will be rescheduled as allowed</p> <p>Further training is planned for 2021 and 2022 but details of this have not been provided.</p> <p>Feedback forms used at training events could be reviewed to place more emphasis on recording learning and skills development (currently no question relating to this). It would also be helpful to record, at the start of an event, what participant's learning goals are and review this against actual learning. Reviewing how training has been used would further strengthen the evaluation and this could be done through a volunteer workshop or online questionnaires.</p>

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
New skills (continued) ...	<p>98% of volunteers who responded to the recent survey said they had learned something new whilst volunteering for Revitalising Redesdale.</p> <p>The total number of volunteers who have benefited from training and/or developed skills has not been provided.</p> <p>The Revitalising Redesdale staff team (four members of staff) have developed skills through on the job experience/training, formal training, work shadowing and mentoring. New skills include archaeological survey and excavation skills, ecological skills, GIS mapping and management skills. One team member has completed an accredited course Archaeology in Practice, Oxford University.</p>	
Landowners are engaged and committed to maintaining sites/ heritage in the longer term	<p>NWL have joined the partnership and are active in supporting activity.</p> <p>£84,800 of Countryside Stewardship income has been recorded from farms which are implementing ecological improvements</p> <p>Redesdale Farm Advisers Group is effective and supportive in co-ordinating advice to farmers and prioritising outcomes linked to the project</p> <p>A total of 26 farms have been engaged but the total number of landowners supported has not been provided.</p>	<p>NWL will donate and install new sculptures within the project area (planned for early 2020 but postponed due to Covid-19).</p> <p>The project is building relationships with the local farming community with a view to securing in excess of the remaining £114,900 Countryside Stewardship match funding target. Some farms have committed in kind contributions (e.g. hosting site visits) and a small amount of cash match funding is also promised.</p> <p>At the most recent Steering Group meeting, partners were discussing how to engage farmers and other landowners. This conversation needs to be continued to enable engagement across the catchment.</p>

Success indicator	Progress to date	Progress still to achieve
Outcome 6: Local businesses have been (indirectly) supported		
Project facilitates business growth/development or increased custom	<p>Only anecdotal evidence of the effect that Revitalising Redesdale may be having on local business has been suggested</p> <p><i>Wild Intrigue, a local eco-tourism project, have been directly supported through the Community Heritage Fund programme</i></p>	This outcome should be discussed by the project partnership and other stakeholders. It could link to work to engage landowners but other businesses must also be considered. Any anecdotal evidence/conversations must be properly recorded.

Next Steps & Recommendations

Revitalising Redesdale is making good progress towards the overall Scheme outcomes. Projects are well managed and structured and, as this continues, the Scheme will get closer to realising its full potential. In particular, it is expected that the audience engagement outcomes will develop further as new capital works, installations and interpretation are completed so that there is more for visitors to do in the area. There are, however, areas where further data is needed to support claims that the intended impact will be achieved and this must not be neglected in the coming months/years. In particular, ecological mapping data, partnership volunteer data and visitor information is required to be able to confidently evaluate the success of the Scheme. Project staff are aware of this and steps are being taken to gather this data as soon as is reasonably possible. High quality photographic records should also be collated with before and after photographs where possible.

It is important that Scheme impact is considered across the whole landscape. There has been a tendency to focus on individual projects and much of the evaluation data has been provided in this format. The partnership has started to consider landscape wide impact and ongoing needs across the catchment as part of early legacy planning and it is recommended that the partnership continues to think on this scale: without this the intended impact will not be achieved. The final evaluation will need to see collated data for the whole catchment.

The evaluation recognises that the true impact of the Scheme will not be realised for many years (this is particularly true for ecological change). It will be important, therefore, that project data is supported by sites visits and 'expert' testimonies from partners and other relevant stakeholders who can comment on the quality and likely longevity of project work.

The partnership needs to consider now how they will collect visitor feedback once new sites and destinations are opened. This could include both onsite and internet-based solutions. The lessons highlighted by Jo Scott, Heritage Planning & Interpretation Consultant, in the *Evaluation of the New Interpretation At Blakehope Nick* report should be discussed with regard to all visitor destination sites. In particular, appropriate siting of visitor books to be as weather-proof as possible, regular checking of visitor book to record comments (could be a volunteer role just to photograph pages) and improved uptake by partners to make use of digital/online resources and disseminate any questionnaires/

feedback requests. Online, TripAdvisor is an excellent source of visitor feedback and can also be used to promote destinations. The project partnership could consider setting up new TripAdvisor pages for, for example, Otterburn Battlefield, Whitelee Moor NNR, and The Forest Drive, which could all be promoted as places to visit in Redesdale.

The partnership also needs to discuss the shared outcome to engage a wider range of people in heritage through the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme. Whilst the evaluation recognises that there will be challenges to achieving this in Redesdale, the partnership needs to ensure they seek opportunities to engage new audiences and provide new opportunities to those who would not normally be able to engage with nature, heritage or cultural activities in a rural and remote setting. Whilst the Redesdale Revitalises project has been established to provide these opportunities to vulnerable and under-represented audiences from urban Newcastle, it is recommended that all projects and partners look at opportunities to address diversity. This must start with an open discussion about achievements to date and challenges/barriers to engagement as well as exploring potential new activity. It is suggested that this could be a focus for a future partnership meeting.

The unprecedented events of 2020 have undoubtedly impacted project delivery and they have also provided new opportunities to reflect on achievements, explore new approaches for engagement and support alternative working arrangements/communications. At the time of writing it is not possible to express the full impact of lockdown or to understand how social distancing requirements will be in place. The final evaluation must reflect on this and identify any learning from these unique circumstances which inform the legacy of Revitalising Redesdale or the development/implementation of other projects in the future.

The final evaluation will be presented to the partnership during 2022. This will include case studies, to be prepared over the next two-three years, that will illustrate the best of the Scheme and provide snapshot examples of success. These will be on a very small scale but will be indicative of catchment-wide success. Two recipients of Community Heritage Fund grants have already contributed case studies and this will be further developed to produce a suite of best practice examples for the Scheme with additional stories added from other projects.

“The volunteering experiences I have done with yourselves at the NNPA have helped me gain new skills, contribute to your amazing work and improved my employability hugely,”

Student volunteer (2019)



Acknowledgements

Revitalising Redesdale is a partnership scheme supported by 17 partners: Natural England, Northumberland National Park Authority, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry of Defence), Tyne Rivers Trust, the Battlefields Trust, Northumberland County Council, Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust, Go Volunteer - Newcastle Students' Union, Northumbrian Water Limited, the Redesdale Society, Otterburn Parish Council, Rochester with Byrness Parish Council, Corsenside Parish Council and Elsdon Parish Council.

Revitalising Redesdale is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

This interim evaluation would not have been possible without the co-operation and support of the project staff team, partner representatives and volunteers. In particular, during the exceptional circumstances that we find ourselves in during 2020, thanks must go to the project team who have co-ordinated feedback and comments and provided data, images and other information to enable this report to come together.

Photo and image credits

Front cover: Hindhope Falls (Nick Lightfoot, NE); page 3: Restored Meadow at Ravenscleugh Farm (NE); page 4, clockwise from top left: River Rede (Maria Hardy, NE); Heritage at Risk (Maria Hardy, NE); Rediscovering Natural Redesdale (Jennifer Care, NWT); Restoration of Habitats (Jennifer Care, NWT); Lost Redesdale (Karen Collins, NNPA); Conflict in the Landscape: Battle of Otterburn (John Sadler); page 5, clockwise from top left: Biodiversity Hotspots (Lydia Speakman, NE); Life on the Ranges (MoD/Crown); Walk and Cycle Redesdale (Karen Collins, NNPA); Community Heritage Fund, (Cain Scrimgeour, Wild Intrigue); Redesdale Revitalises (Go Volunteer!/Newcastle University Students' Union); Sharing Redesdale's Stories (Neil Denham); page 8: Meadow (Jennifer Care, NWT); page 30: Volunteers planting wildflowers (Jennifer Care, NWT)

Glossary

BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
EA	Environment Agency
ERIC NE	Environmental Records Information Centre North East
FE	Forestry England
HER	Historic Environment Record
KWFPDT	Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust
Lidar	Light Detection and Ranging
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NE	Natural England
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
NNPA	Northumberland National Park Authority
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NWL	Northumbrian Water Ltd
NWT	Northumberland Wildlife Trust
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme

Katherine Williams

DEVELOPMENT • FUNDRAISING • STRATEGY • EVALUATION

Katherine Williams & Nick Mason

June 2020

www.katherinewilliamsfundraiser.com

   @kwilliams154

