



Revitalising Redesdale

Project Evaluation
2018 - 2022



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EVALUATION CONSULTANT



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Foreword



Northumberland has often been described as the undiscovered county and Redesdale an overlooked hidden gem, tucked away to the north. Now, thanks to the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme, Redesdale's unique history, heritage and landscape is celebrated, enhanced and conserved for the benefit of local people and visitors alike.

This valley has always been an access route into Scotland, from Roman troops under Agricola over 1900 years ago, to the present-day hordes of holiday makers on their way to the Edinburgh Festival and elsewhere. But before Revitalising Redesdale began its work, few people stopped to appreciate what this wonderful area of the National Park has to offer.

The Landscape Partnership Scheme, funded by a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant with matched funding from 17 partners, has now finished its five-year run in Redesdale. Its administrative team and Board members deserve many congratulations for inspiring and successfully involving local volunteers and incomers in the conservation of Redesdale's rich heritage.

The Scheme will undoubtedly have a lasting impact: the fascinating interpretation boards from Whitelee to Ridsdale, taking in Romano-British settlements, star cairns, historic churches and a medieval battlefield along the way; the conservation of peatlands and habitats; the rewilding of grasslands and verges; the walking and cycle trails; the restoration and protection of biodiversity. Such excellent projects, together with the attraction of our dark skies, will encourage visitors to stop off, engage with and explore this wonderful area, rather than speeding through en route elsewhere.

I have been privileged to take part in the superb archaeological digs funded by the Scheme. We uncovered evidence of Bronze and Iron Age settlements at Rattenraw and Yatesfield, and excavated fortifications at the High Rochester Roman fort of Bremenium. Excitement peaked at finding over one hundred coloured beads in a roundhouse at Rattenraw and unearthing a hitherto undiscovered kiln outside Bremenium. Three carved stones found at Yatesfield's Bronze Age farm provoked much debate as they bear a striking resemblance to carved faces! Volunteers have now formed a new society, the Redesdale Archaeology Group (RAG), to continue this work and we hope to display some of the artefacts soon.

The great joy of the Rede Valley lies in its tranquillity and endless horizons. Revitalising Redesdale's many projects have inspired a pride of place in our rural community and will certainly enhance the experience of those who want to enjoy this very special part of Northumberland well into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Redesdale', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rupert, Lord Redesdale



Introduction

"It is a land where history and geography collide - where people's lives can be seen written into the landscape."

Revitalising Redesdale
Interpretation Strategy (2016)

The River Rede catchment is the wild heart of Northumberland. This remote and picturesque upland landscape which lies to just south of the English-Scottish border tells tales of an often bloody and violent history. Redesdale is a sparsely populated wilderness characterised by peatlands, forestry and wooded valleys. This rich landscape is a fragile ecosystem, threatened by the pressures of land use/management, climate change and a declining local resident population/economy. Settlements within the landscape are small, historic, sandstone villages with dispersed farmsteads and here, in rural communities, with a population of less than 2,000, a rich intangible heritage persists, with place names, family names, churchyards, local culture, legends and traditions all telling part of the Redesdale story.

Revitalising Redesdale is a lottery-funded Landscape Partnership Scheme which set out to celebrate, protect, enhance and secure the future of this unique landscape. Extending from the Scottish border at Carter Bar to the North Tyne confluence at Redesmouth, the landscape area is defined by the catchment of the River Rede and activities were designed to protect, celebrate and connect people to their natural, historic and cultural heritage within villages and destination hubs.

Revitalising Redesdale is a partnership of 17 organisations¹, bringing together community, voluntary sector and statutory agencies, with a small core staff team employed to co-ordinate project delivery.

¹ Natural England, Environment Agency, Northumberland National Park Authority, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Northumberland County Council, Ministry of Defence, Tyne Rivers Trust, Battlefields Trust, Redesdale Society, University of Newcastle Students' Union, Forestry England, Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust, Northumbrian Water, Elsdon, Otterburn, Corsenside and Rochester with Byrness Parish Councils



Natural England (NE) is the accountable body and fund holder for the Scheme and they have jointly managed programme delivery with Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) and Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT), governed through a Memorandum of Agreement under the auspices of the Programme Management Group (PMG).

A small project team was employed across the three lead partners comprising a Programme Manager (NE), Programme Officer (NE), Farming & Wildlife Officer (NWT) and Heritage & Engagement Officer (NNPA) and, introduced in Year 4 of the Scheme, Community & Engagement Officer (NWT) and Project Assistant (NWT). The project team has co-ordinated delivery of 12 project themes over a five year period (Jan 2018 - Dec 2022).

Working together the partnership has delivered a shared vision to:

- ◆ Empower local communities to better understand, conserve and enhance a landscape and natural environment forged by centuries of conflict
- ◆ Celebrate the unique character of the landscape, its biodiversity and its culture while seeking to build the future resilience of its heritage and identity
- ◆ 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
- ◆ Ensure the local ownership and involvement of projects/schemes developed by the partnership

The partnership was successful in securing a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £1.7 million to support a multi-disciplinary catchment-wide programme of activity (total value £2.8 million including volunteer and in-kind contributions). Match funding came from a variety of sources including partner organisations, Countryside Stewardship and Defra Shovel Ready Peat. The Scheme was launched in January 2018 and will complete in December 2022.

This report is a qualitative evaluation of the the project by external consultant, Katherine Williams.

Evaluation Methodology

Independent consultant Katherine Williams was commissioned to facilitate a qualitative evaluation for Revitalising Redesdale in October 2018, with support from associate consultant Nick Mason.

In March 2019, an Evaluation Framework was agreed which set out:

1. Long term partnership goals
2. The assumptions upon which the long term goals are based
3. Purpose of the evaluation
4. Evaluation approach
5. Theory of Change showing intended project impact
6. Success indicators which would evidence change across all twelve project themes
7. Agreed methodologies and timetable

Ultimately, the evaluation sought to establish the impact of Revitalising Redesdale on landscape heritage and ecological connectivity, local communities, local business and the wider public. Importantly, the evaluation attempted to steer clear of discussions into whether project outputs have been met, and this report focusses instead on project outcomes and impact: has Revitalising Redesdale made a lasting difference to its landscape, heritage and community?

The staff team was tasked with collecting monitoring information throughout the project delivery period. Both consultants have been available to support project evaluation activities and review quantitative and qualitative data collected by the team (Nick Mason supported the project until 2021



only). In addition, the evaluation has carried out feedback surveys, site visits, partnership workshops and interviews with stakeholders.

It must be acknowledged that the collection of data was significantly compromised by the Covid pandemic (2020-22) and some monitoring activities were cancelled or altered in response to lockdowns, revised timetables and other changes to the way the project was able to deliver activities and communicate with participants.

This final report has been produced by Katherine Williams, informed by:

- ◆ Quantitative data collected by project team
- ◆ Qualitative and anecdotal notes recorded by the project team and shared using the Evernote app
- ◆ Interviews with staff employed by the project (exit interviews)
- ◆ End of project staff workshop
- ◆ Discussion with Partnership Management Group
- ◆ Conversations with volunteers
- ◆ Stakeholder feedback via an end of project survey
- ◆ Site visits and project observations
- ◆ Individual feedback from partner representatives

This report presents the findings and observations of the Evaluation Consultant against outcomes expressed in the project application documents and success indicators agreed at the start of the evaluation period. In particular, it explores the assumptions made in developing the scheme and reflects on whether these were achieved and whether Revitalising Redesdale achieved what it set out to. Recommendations made in this report are based on the actual observations and professional experience of the Evaluation Consultant.

An Interim Evaluation Report was produced in 2020.

Excerpt from the Evaluation Framework (2019)

The long term partnership goal is to *revitalise* the natural and historic landscape of Redesdale (River Rede catchment). This means:

Managing the natural and historic landscape as an upper catchment ecosystem where natural habitats are connected, wildlife is thriving and sites of historic interest are recorded and conserved. As such, the landscape will deliver more benefits to local people, the wider community, visitors and businesses.

and

Changing the way local people, the wider community and visitors use the landscape so that **more people will know about, understand, value and care for the beautiful Rede Valley.**

These goals will not be fully achieved within five years but the catchment-wide management, restoration and engagement activities delivered by the Landscape Partnership Scheme will create a more resilient natural and historic landscape for the future.

Achieving these goals is based on three assumptions:

1. **A catchment-wide landscape project will give us opportunities to increase connectivity in the landscape and improve ecological networks.** Achieving this must be delivered in a way that can benefit local residents and the wider community and enhances the historic environment.
2. **We need to give people more reason to visit and engage with the landscape in order to hold people in the landscape for longer.** This includes attracting new visitors, increasing dwell time, stopping visitors who would otherwise be 'passing through' and encouraging local people into the landscape on their doorstep. This will change people's relationship with the landscape, improve understanding and benefit the local economy.
3. **A five year investment in the Landscape Partnership Scheme will create momentum to continue.** In particular, it will bring together partners, local residents, landowners and other stakeholders. It will create new opportunities and generate a new level of interest and enthusiasm that will sustain the project in the future.

The agreed success indicators for Revitalising Redesdale outcomes (as stated in the Evaluation Framework, March 2019) were:

Heritage is better managed and in better condition, contributing to increased ecological connectivity in the landscape and creating an upper catchment ecosystem

- 432 ha of peatland is better managed and better able to retain water in the catchment
- Improved floral diversity on 40ha of grassland sites with, in general, more positive indicators and fewer negative indicators and an overall increase in species
- Improved river water quality which better supports aquatic species with improved river fly populations/diversity and reduced turbidity and nitrates in water quality
- Three important historic sites (Percy's Cross, Ridsdale Iron Works, Bremenium Roman Fort) plus historic features on Otterburn Ranges are repaired/protected
- Management Plans and maintenance commitments for ecological and historic sites show that condition will be maintained for at least 10 years

Heritage is better recorded

- New records for at least five historic sites

- 5,000 new ecological records collected and submitted to ERICNE
- Heritage records are made accessible to the wider public
- Data informs management planning

More people, and a wider range of people, have engaged with heritage; People have developed skills; and People have volunteered time

- Increased engagement through the project (in comparison to baseline records). Activities and events attract new participants. More people (visitors, passers through and residents) are exploring local heritage
- Landowners are engaged and committed to maintaining sites/heritage in the longer term (at least 10 years). Community ownership of local sites is increased.
- Participants tell us they have learnt new skills. Project staff and trainers observe new skills applied in project activities
- Increased volunteer support through project.

Local businesses have been (indirectly) supported

- Revitalising Redesdale facilitates business growth/development or increased custom

A Theory of Change

ACTIVITIES (PROJECTS)

1. Conflict in the Landscape - Battle of Otterburn
2. Heritage at Risk
3. Lost Redesdale
4. Rediscovering Natural Redesdale
5. River Rede Improvement Plan
6. Restoration & Creation of Wildlife Habitats
7. Ecological Core Areas
8. Life on the Ranges
9. Sharing Redesdale's stories
10. Walk Cycle Redesdale
11. Redesdale Revitalises
12. Community Heritage Grant Fund

ASSUMPTIONS

1. A catchment-wide landscape project will give us opportunities to increase connectivity in the landscape and improve ecological networks.
2. We need to give people more reason to visit and engage with the landscape in order to hold people in the landscape for longer.
3. A five year investment in the Landscape Partnership Scheme will create momentum to continue.

OUTPUTS*

25+ heritage management plans ~ 3 historic sites repaired and consolidated ~ 6 archaeological excavations ~ >5ha or new riparian woodland established ~ >10ha of wetland restored/established ~ 45ha of hay meadow restored ~ 432ha peatland restored & 44km drains ~ XX trees planted ~ 2.9ha species rich grassland restored ~ XX volunteers ~ 2 designated ecological sites in favourable condition (Mill & Whiskersfield Burn SSI and Whiteleemoor NNR)
6 community history research projects ~ 58 habitat/ecological recording events/days ~ XX training days ~ Ecological records provided to ERIC ~ 2 work placements ~ XX people engaged ~ XX new visitors to heritage sites ~ XX schools supported ~ XX university/college students ~ 16 partner organisations

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Heritage is
better managed

Heritage is in
better condition

Heritage is better
recorded

More people have
engaged with heritage

People have
developed skills

People have
volunteered time

Local businesses
(indirectly) supported

IMPACT

Redesdale is revitalised: Natural habitats are connected, wildlife is thriving and cultural heritage is secured in an upper catchment landscape which is delivering benefits to local people, the wider community, visitors and businesses

* targets were not provided for some outputs, these are shown as XX

Project Achievements



Revitalising Redesdale has delivered a five year programme of activity including capital works, conservation activities and engagement events which has protected, enhanced and shared the unique natural and cultural heritage of the River Rede catchment and its communities. The Landscape Partnership Scheme was delivered via twelve distinct but interlinked project themes (below). The evaluation has collated the evidence provided by the project team to determine the impact of these activities against the agreed success measures.

The impact of the Covid pandemic during the delivery period must not be ignored and this affected every aspect of project delivery from timetabling of activity to communications (internal and external) to staff recruitment and visitor behaviour. This is further discussed below.

The River Rede

- ♦ Twenty-two separate interventions on the River Rede and its tributaries have improved water quality, restored natural processes and established riparian habitat by reducing sedimentation, reprofiling the river channel, managing grazing and creating new wildlife refuges. This will, in particular, improve habitat conditions to support the freshwater pearl mussel (FWPM) and other species.
- ♦ The historic river crossing has been restored with the flow reinvigorated (undoing the impact of large scale gravel extraction in the last century) and new riffles and pools creating 500m of restored river flow at Smoutel Ford;

- ◆ Restoring the river bed at Smoutel Ford has created new habitat for the freshwater pearl mussel which is a species facing extinction in England (see Case Study pages 41-42);
- ◆ Natural river flow and habitat has been restored at Dunn's Houses;
- ◆ The flow of upland runoff at Woodburn Hill Farm has been reduced using brash bundles, log deflectors and ponds to slow flashy flows and reduce loss of soil from the hillside;
- ◆ Six drinking troughs have been installed with new stock proof fencing to keep livestock out of watercourses;
- ◆ 3,200 trees have been planted across nine land holdings to create 6.3ha of new riparian habitat;
- ◆ 12.9ha of floodplain wetland has been created or restored;
- ◆ 22.3ha of upland wet heath has been restored in the upper catchment, 19.5ha of this is upstream of Rattenraw Burn tributaries (increasing wetness by an estimated 30% and creating new habitat for breeding waders) and a further 2.8ha is at Blakehope;
- ◆ See also peatland restoration work (below) which has reduced sediment flow into the river;
- ◆ The impact of these interventions is a healthier river ecosystem with natural processes restored which has laid the foundation for nature recovery in future.

The Battle of Otterburn

- ◆ The Battlefields Trust, working with volunteers has explored what is known about the Battle of Otterburn;
- ◆ Literature research together with archaeological investigation has identified new information about the site and date of the battle;
- ◆ New audiences (i.e. people who haven't previously engaged with the Battlefields Trust) have been engaged in learning about the Battle of Otterburn through volunteering and events;
- ◆ This has informed our understanding of this significant event in Redesdale's history and laid the foundations for further research (see Case Study pages 39-40).

"The scale and the multitude of projects delivered through Revitalising Redesdale has allowed catchment wide restoration to the reach, from grip blocking in the upper catchment and direct river improvements in the lower sections.

*When looking back on the project's initial objectives, the majority of these were delivered, often exceeding expectations, primarily through work on the ground with landowners and taking advantage of their willingness to work with the project. Some objectives were not possible, the project had ambitions for more floodplain wetland but sites that would have proven key to deliver this could not be agreed with landowners, and although other landowners helped deliver this objective elsewhere, it was not at the scale originally described. Smoutel Ford was a complex and key delivery goal. It had a multitude of challenges but the final outcome was very successful, restoring at least 500m of degraded river, restarting natural river processes and creating freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) habitat through new gravels.*

I am confident that we can say, as a result of Revitalising Redesdale, we have more habitat for freshwater pearl mussel and the different species and life stages of fish (including salmon, which are under threat), better fish passage, a reduction in fine sediments entering the river, a more complex river in terms of natural processes, more and less degraded priority habitat that contributes to a natural river catchment, greater number of landowners who are aware of the issues the catchment faces and more people better connected to the river."

Scott Mackenzie MCIEEM, Biodiversity Advisor, Flood Risk Operations, North East Area, Environment Agency



Lost Redesdale

- ◆ An area totalling 333 sq km, which is the majority of the River Rede catchment, has been mapped using LiDAR analysis. This has created 1,350 new Historic Environment Records;
- ◆ Archaeological surveys and excavations at 10 sites have revealed much about the historic landscape including significant finds from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods;
- ◆ 24 historic environment training events have been provided to improve the skills and understanding of local people and volunteers (one experienced volunteer, who has participated in several archaeology projects in northern England and the Scottish Borders, commented that this is the first project she has joined which offered training in addition to involving volunteers in excavations and research);
- ◆ Volunteers have produced *Landscapes Through Time* (available on the Revitalising Redesdale website) which collate archaeological evidence and historic records for five communities within Redesdale;
- ◆ A new Redesdale Community Archaeology Group has been established to continue research in the Redesdale area (Terms of Reference adopted and committee elected, June 2022);
- ◆ This has provided a new dataset and improved learning about the landscape. It has revealed how much more there is to discover and the potential for further research in the future.

Discovering Natural Redesdale

- ◆ 42 ecological training sessions were delivered, including monitoring and survey skills for bird song, water voles, pine martens, plants, lichens, sphagnum, amphibians, bees, spiders, moths, reptiles and nocturnal wildlife. At least 183 individuals attended training events;

- ◆ Thirteen recording events including five bioblitzes were delivered to engage special interest groups, volunteers and the wider public (these are in addition to ecological surveys/recording dates by staff and trained volunteers);
- ◆ More than 7,000 new species records have been provided to ERIC NE (the vast majority of these are submitted by volunteers or members of local groups who have been trained/supported by Revitalising Redesdale). This significantly exceeds the target of 5,000 new records;
- ◆ This has vastly improved the ecological data available and understanding of the Rede catchment.

Walk and Cycle Redesdale

- ◆ The project has delivered improvements to paths and rights of way including resurfacing, drainage and installation of new waymarkers, signage, gates, stiles and footbridges;
- ◆ Two major sections of the Pennine Way have been repaired: a new section of path at Gibshiel has been restored, involving a long section of soil reversal, to revert the Pennine Way back to its original route and the route from Byrness to Byrness Hill has also been repaired to enable circular walks to the Border Ridge. This has involved significant capital works to make the long distance trail more accessible and provide outstanding views across Redesdale. Chew Green Roman Camp is visible from the second route;
- ◆ A significant section of the St Cuthbert's Way has been waymarked;
- ◆ The restoration of Smoutel Ford (described above) involved significant capital works to renaturalise/slow the flow of the river and install stepping stones. This has reconnected the bridleway across the River Rede;

Right: Before and after restoration of the Three Churches Trail on the Craqq Estate





4 © Karen Collins



5 © Richard Carlton

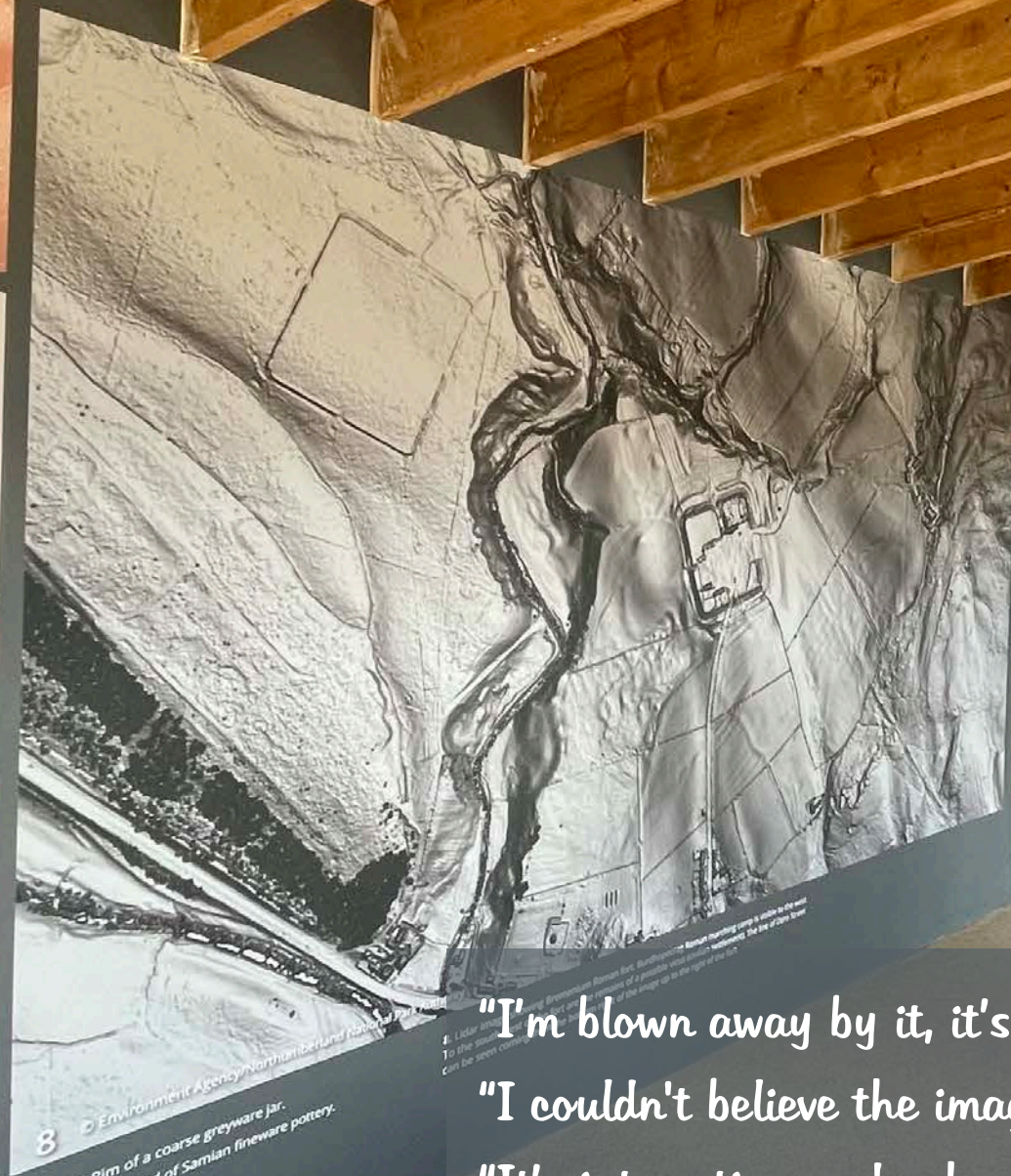


6 © Karen Collins



7 © Karen Collins

perforated pottery sherd, possibly used as personal
or as the lid of a small vessel.
possibly of Gallienus 253 - 268 AD.



8 © Environment Agency Northumbria and South East
6. Rim of a coarse greyware jar.
7. Rimsherd of Samian fineware pottery.

"I'm blown away by it, it's amazing"

"I couldn't believe the images, I'm stunned by them"

"It's interesting and cohesive"

Feedback from local residents



- ◆ A section of the Three Churches Trail on the Cragg Estate which had become obscured by felling and replanting has been restored. The original path had become extremely muddy and difficult to use since the loss of tree cover. A new section of regraded path was created and landscaped, with new drainage added to remove future risk of waterlogging.
- ◆ 220 metres of board walk has been installed at Whitelee Moor Nature Reserve to provide dry access to a route which was previously water logged and to encourage more people who stop at Carter Bar to venture a little further to enjoy the views to Catcleugh Reservoir and beyond;
- ◆ A series of six walks leaflets describing 18 different walking routes have been developed (total length 66.85 miles). These are to be made available as published leaflets and on the Revitalising Redesdale website before the project is completed;
- ◆ The 13-mile St Cuthbert's Trail has been waymarked and upgraded with a new booklet describing the route and its history produced by the community (supported by a Community Heritage Grant);
- ◆ Training has been undertaken with National Park volunteer guided walk leaders;
- ◆ As a result, there are more routes and more accessible routes for walkers, riders and cyclists to explore Redesdale.

Sharing Redesdale's Stories

- ◆ A significant interpretation contract, let towards the end of the project, is installing 20 new interpretative installations at key interest points, project sites and village hubs across the valley. This includes new information signs and lecterns, a wrap around installation at the Rochester Roundhouse and interpretation of visitor destination sites;
- ◆ The Battle of Otterburn picnic site has been redesigned to create a more accessible visitor destination with high quality interpretation about the site and access to the Ridsdale Iron Works

Left: New wraparound interpretative installation at the Rochester Roundhouse creates an impact and showcases Redesdale's archaeology

"For my small business the Community Heritage Fund was indispensable. It allowed me to see how much potential there was to work close to home and serve the needs of this rural region rather than automatically looking elsewhere. It has given me breathing room to try products and services out and see what was popular and useful to people and gauge feedback which has helped build the foundation of my whole business. I am very grateful to have had this opportunity,"

Chris Woodcock,
White Oak Studios

has also been improved with information signs telling people that this is a Victorian Engine House (not a ruined castle as many visitors assume);

- ◆ New artworks have been installed at two viewpoints: the impressive installation by architecture students at Blakehope Nick and the stone cairn at Carter Pike provide space for people to take in the landscape;
- ◆ Five star cairns, additional interpretation at Bremenium Roman Fort and the installation of a goat sculpture, which will overlook the valley from the watershed at Carter Bar, are planned to be installed before project completion;
- ◆ The *Heads and Tales* project, supported by the Community Heritage Fund, has enabled St Cuthbert's Church, Elsdon, to display and tell the story of two historic horse skulls which were found in their tower;
- ◆ *Travelling Tales* was a self guided tour for the Kielder Forest Drive which was installed in 2019 (but the leaflets have not continued to be made available to the end of the project);
- ◆ *Amid the Hills of Redesdale*, a radio play, brought together local residents and volunteers to tell the stories of Redesdale's past including life during the construction of Catcleugh reservoir;
- ◆ The Revitalising Redesdale website also shares some of the stories and research from the project. Although some pages were not kept up to date during the project (showing Development Phase aspirations rather than stories of project achievements) it is intended that website content will all be reviewed and updated to provide a legacy resource before project completion;
- ◆ Through a range of interpretative activities, Revitalising Redesdale has brought stories to life and created more places where visitors and local residents can learn about the landscape and its unique stories.



Community Heritage Fund

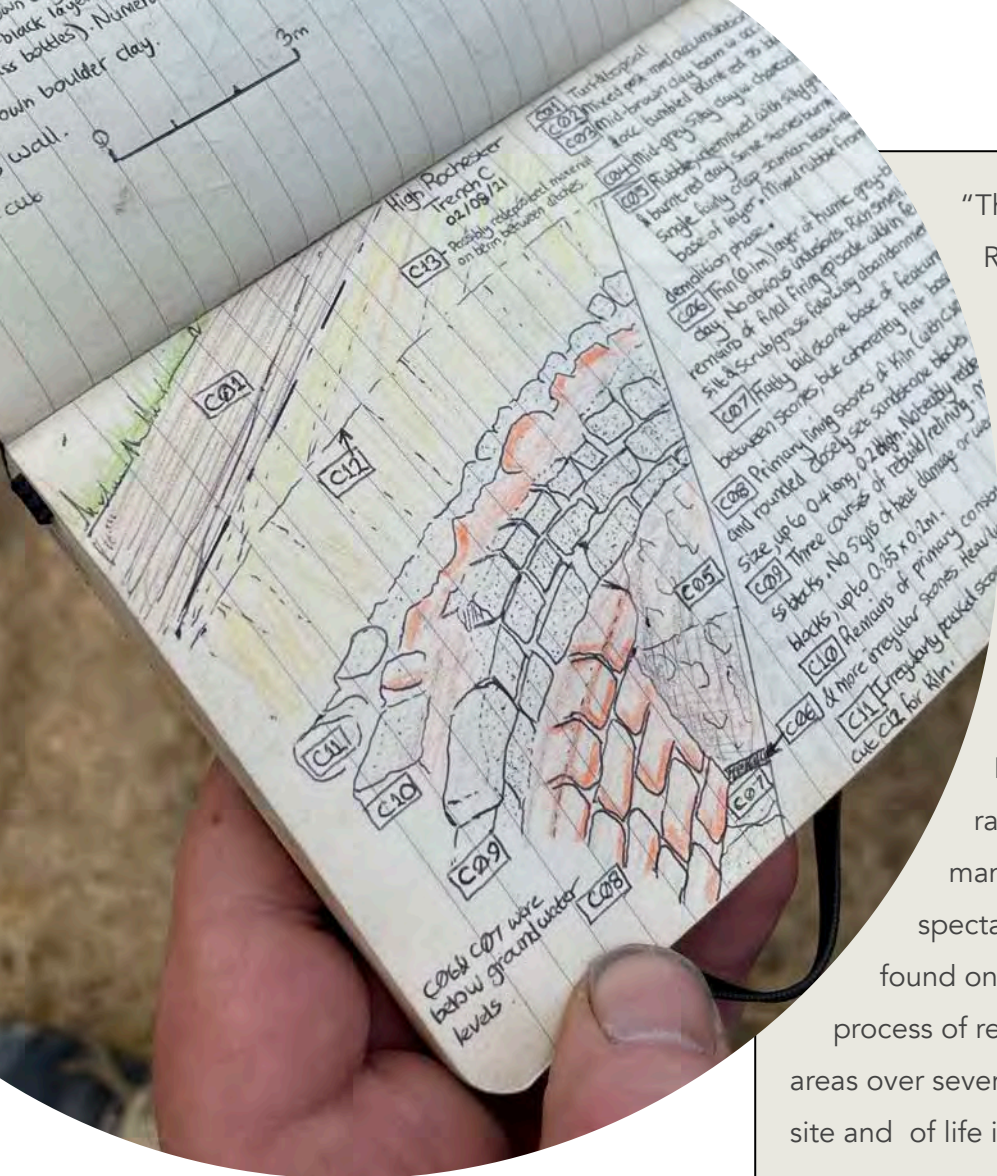
- ◆ 34 Community Heritage Fund (CHF) grants have been awarded to support a range of projects including beekeeping, conservation activities, repairs to a local church, research projects, young people's activities, new interpretation and wildlife recording;
- ◆ The Community Heritage Fund was managed by a grants panel made up of local community members, with support from project staff;
- ◆ Through this programme, local businesses, communities and individuals have been supported to explore, preserve or celebrate Redesdale and its heritage. Many of the projects supported through the CHF would not have been possible otherwise.

Heritage at Risk

- ◆ The 19th century engine house for the former Ridsdale Ironworks has been consolidated and removed from the Heritage At Risk register with new visitor access and interpretation installed (as described above);
- ◆ Bremenium Roman Fort (High Rochester) has also been repaired and consolidated;
- ◆ Archaeological excavation at Bremenium has revealed structures which were not previously known about within the civilian settlement associated with the fort. This research has changed previous understanding about this historic site. Most importantly it has demonstrated how much there is still to learn about "the fort on the roaring stream";
- ◆ Revitalising Redesdale has protected heritage at risk so that it is now protected from further damage/degradation and is made safe for visitors. This is a lasting change that would not have been possible without lottery funding.

"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)



"The Archaeological Practice has carried out three excavations with Revitalising Redesdale and local volunteers. Each project, all of which took place over two main seasons, have provided important insights into the history of the valley.

Excavations at the Roman fort of Bremenium have confirmed the existence of at least two 'annexes' on the west side of the fort, the larger one shown to have been defended with a large, turf-built rampart and two large external ditches; the smaller one defended with a wall of dressed stone, backed by a turf rampart. Inside the annexes are remains of structures and industrial activities in several phases, with remains of buildings surviving up to at least eight courses of masonry.

Finds from these areas include rich assemblages of pottery and glass, including a rare glazed pottery fragment, as well as glass waste suggesting on-site manufacture, and coal and coal waste indicating use of local resources. Most spectacular was the discovery of a well-preserved Roman lime kiln - the first to be found on or near Hadrian's Wall for over a century - which provides insight into the process of rebuilding the fort in stone in the second century AD. Further excavation of these areas over several more seasons would add greatly to our knowledge of the development of the site and of life in the frontier zone more widely.

The excavation of an Iron Age enclosure at Rattenraw provided results no less interesting than those from High Rochester. Here, amongst the well-preserved floors of roundhouses and stockyards, were found pottery fragments, quernstones and environmental evidence indicative of

Left: Field notes showing the Roman lime kiln from the excavation at High Rochester/Bremenium

cereal cultivation and processing, but most enigmatic was the discovery of over 100 glass beads and two bangle fragments, suggesting connections with the Roman world. These connections were subsequently proven by radiocarbon dating which shows that the site was in use during the period of Roman occupation to the valley, suggesting that it probably served as a provider of supplies to the Roman army. This supports long-held but previously unproven theories surrounding the large number of native settlements, the remains of which survive predominantly on the south side of Redesdale. Further work on these, involving selective sampling to acquire more material for dating, has the potential to revolutionise our understanding of Roman:Native relations in the frontier zone.

Finally, an excavation on Fawdon Hill, near Otterburn, revealed traces of a Bronze Age landscape, including a cairn containing numerous worked stones which probably had ritual meaning. Below the cairn were features and artefacts, including pottery and flint, suggesting an earlier, domestic phase of occupation, possibly associated with a nearby clearance cairn, which was also excavated as part of the Revitalising Redesdale project.

These three excavations have considerably advanced knowledge of the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods not only for the valley, but for the wider region, showing how much potential exists there for further advances in knowledge. In that regard it is suggested that further excavation of the areas previously targeted at High Rochester would be hugely productive and beneficial for Roman studies, while more targeted sampling of a wide range of 'native' settlements would advance our understanding of local, indigenous lifeways and of Roman:Native interactions in the frontier zone, about which there is much to discover."

Richard Carlton, The Archaeological Practice

Restoration of Habitats

- ◆ More than 1,200 trees have been planted to create new areas of woodland along watercourses;
- ◆ New areas of wetland have been created or restored including ponds and standing water areas to reduce the flow of water into the River Rede and its tributaries;
- ◆ More than 627 ha of peatland have been restored by the full or partial blocking of artificial drainage ditches (grips), reprofiling of drains and gullies and removal of sitka saplings (this surpasses the project target which was 432 ha);
 - ◆ 47 ha of species rich grassland have been improved through plug planting and wildflower seeding, including the community-led wildflower meadow at St Cuthbert's Church in Corsenside. The proposal to restore grassland habitat on road verges has not been successful (not able to agree new mowing regimes with Northumberland County Council) but, nevertheless, the project target of 40 ha has been surpassed);
 - ◆ A large programme of work on Otterburn Training Area has included grip blocking, conifer removal, woodland planting and improved grassland management to improve peatland habitat and restore natural habitat and catchment processes;
 - ◆ Engagement with farming communities has enabled new models of working to be trialled/established and facilitated sharing of good practice, with farmers hosting demonstration events and workshops;
 - ◆ Two new nature reserves have been created and, whilst not direct outputs of the project, Revitalising Redesdale has played a role in enabling this to happen, providing a focus and a catalyst for additional activity in the area.



Left: Peatland restoration is holding water in the upper catchment

- ◆ Revitalising Redesdale has started the process of restoring habitats and natural processes across an upland catchment. This is just the start of a wider ambition for nature recovery in this vast area (Redesdale and beyond) and the changes delivered through Revitalising Redesdale will allow nature to recover in a rural, farmed landscape.

“Revitalising Redesdale provided an opportunity for us to increase our activity in this rural and remote area of the county. This, in turn, gave us an incentive to look more closely at Benshaw Moor. Once we understood its value for wildlife we were able to prioritise efforts to raise funds for its purchase. Without the focus of Revitalising Redesdale we may well have passed this site by.

The donation of the Haining (our newest nature reserve) was partially due to an event linked to Benshaw Moor and Revitalising Redesdale held in Elsdon. Our increased activity and presence in the area certainly contributed to this amazing donation to Northumberland Wildlife Trust. The two sites together, along with Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve, create a lasting legacy for NWT in the valley and will ensure we are continuing to play a part in restoring nature to the area for the foreseeable future.”

Duncan Hutt, Director of Conservation, Northumberland Wildlife Trust

Redesdale Revitalises

- ◆ Revitalising Redesdale has delivered a programme of events and activities for new audiences including young people, families and refugees, many of whom have never visited Redesdale before;
- ◆ Newcastle University Students’ Union N.E.S.T (North East Solidarity & Training) project has brought 870 individuals to take part in heritage experiences in Redesdale including volunteering

"I love working with N.E.S.T and I really appreciate initiatives like Revitalising Redesdale enabling us to grow and learn more. Redesdale is a beautiful place and I would love to come back,"

"[I learnt the most from] starting the fire - it was difficult but we did it and I was very proud,"

"I loved the camp and the surrounding area, the views are incredible,"

Feedback from volunteers on the
N.E.S.T leadership camp, 2022

activities, practical conservation, nature discovery events and overnight camps. This includes 126 people who are refugees or asylum seekers. These activities have been supported by 324 student volunteers from Newcastle University Students Union (plus 48 staff volunteers). The project has strengthened partnership links with the Student's Union who are aiming to continue to deliver activities from Rupert's Wood as well as supporting the local community on the St Cuthbert's scything project at Corsenside;

- ◆ Feedback has been provided from six volunteers who attended a leadership camp in 2022. Only one of these attendees had ever been to Redesdale before and they all said they would like to come back. All of the six attendees said that their self confidence and motivation to volunteer had increased during the camp.
- ◆ Across the whole project, volunteers have been engaged in activities including tree/wildflower planting, surveying, peatland restoration, scything, footpath works, research, radio play, archaeology, events, education, developing website/social media content, photography and project co-ordination (steering group). The total number of unique volunteers across the project has not been recorded but, together, individuals have contributed more than 3,000 hours. It is likely that the true figure is more than this as some hours have not been reported;
- ◆ One 18-month traineeship has been provided, which provided skills and experience for the postholder to secure a full-time job at NWT;
- ◆ As mentioned above, Revitalising Redesdale has provided training in archaeological/historical and ecological skills, as well as a special interest talks and support to volunteers;
- ◆ Army veterans have been engaged in archaeological excavations, working with the MoD-funded Operation Nightingale;
- ◆ The range of activities has provided opportunity for more people to get involved in the project and to discover the secrets of Redesdale.



Biodiversity Hotspots

- ◆ Two significant “biodiversity hotspots” were identified in the project application to be a focus for habitat restoration and other ecological activities;
- ◆ Major restoration work has been undertaken at Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve to restore peatland (including coir dams/grip blocking and sphagnum translocation), alongside woodland planting and access improvements;
- ◆ Conservation management has been undertaken at Mill Burn Nature Reserve;
- ◆ In addition, a new NWT nature reserve has been created at Benshaw Moor. This was not a direct output for Revitalising Redesdale and nor was it anticipated at the start of the project, however, it is likely that increased partnership activity brought about by Revitalising Redesdale created the momentum needed for this to happen. Benshaw Moor was purchased with funds raised from a public appeal, as well as donations from Charitable Trusts and a bequest from the late George Swan, Emeritus Professor of Organic Chemistry at Newcastle University;
- ◆ Nature reserves are protected spaces where nature thrives. Revitalising Redesdale has enhanced these jewels in Redesdale’s ecological crown.

Life on the Ranges

- ◆ Historic sites on the MoD’s Otterburn Training Ranges have been consolidated including the Silloans First World War trenches, historic military bunkers and key archaeological sites;
- ◆ Natural habitat has been restored including 16.6ha of meadow, 88.2ha of peatland (including >9,000m of grips blocked) and 62.4ha of heath/bog as well as scrub clearance at Cottonshope SSSI and wetland habitat improvement at Durtrees Burn. More than 1,000m of fencing has enclosed 3.8ha of habitat at Potts Durtrees and Yatesfield to exclude livestock;
- ◆ Including the Otterburn Ranges within the wider project has recognised the significance of these sites within the wider natural and historic landscape.

Table 1: Revitalising Redesdale Project Success

Agreed success indicator	Baseline	Actual outputs delivered	Commentary
Heritage Outcome: <i>Heritage is better managed and in better condition</i>			
432 ha of peatland is better managed and better able to retain water in the upper catchment.	Redesdale catchment contains around 7,034 ha of peatland. <i>Revitalising Redesdale Peat Sites Survey</i> (NNPA, 2017) provides baseline condition summaries. All of the sites identified were at risk of erosion and degradation.	627+ ha hectares of peatland restored as part of the Peatland Project.	Peatland restoration has been via the removal of sitka spruce saplings (^) and the blocking or partial blocking of grips (+) via leaky stone sediment traps, coir logs and ditch reprofiling. Sites improved are Hartside Bog^, Benshaw Moor^, East Todholes/Steng Moss^+, Dunn's Houses+, Birdhope^, Evistones^+, Elishaw Moss^, Whitelee Moor NNR^+. Forestry England has also carried out restoration work at Aid Moss. Planned activity on the Ray Estate (including Harewalls and Tod Crag Bog) did not go ahead. <i>NB. Other than forestry work at Aid Moss, the outputs (ha) recorded are for the "Peatland Project" only and do not include works carried out on MOD or other partner sites.</i> NWT have created a new nature reserve at Benshaw Moor, bringing this site into management for nature recovery.
Improved floral diversity on 40 ha of grassland sites with more positive indicators, fewer negative indicators and an overall increase in number of species.	Surveys completed on each site to determine presence/absence and abundance of floral species.	47 ha of species rich grassland planted or seeded including 16 meadows on 6 farms and community sites Road lay-bys and verges not achieved.	Baseline and follow up surveys have recorded number of species on each site. Overall, the number of species recorded has increased at Rochester Roundhouse, Shittleheugh, Ratten Raw, Ravenscleugh, Bagraw, Halls Hill & Yearhaugh and Town Foot. Intended management changes to road lay-bys and verges proved not to be possible due to NCC maintenance regimes.
River water quality is improved to better support aquatic species with improved river fly populations/diversity and reduced turbidity/nitrates (water quality monitoring).	None of the recommendations from the River Rede Improvement Plan (AECOM, 2017) had been implemented. River fly counts well above river health "thresholds" score.	Recommendations from the AECOM report are now implemented through interventions at 22 sites.	Interventions including livestock exclusion, channel/bank reprofiling, grip blocking, tree planting and creation of ponds/scrapes have slowed river flow, reduced sedimentation and restored natural processes. Testimonies from partners and landowners provide evidence that this has improved water quality with reduced fine sediments entering the river, natural river processes restored and improved river bed and riparian habitat. A new funded project has been developed by Environment Agency and Tyne Rivers Trust to continue work on the Rede and to introduce juvenile FWPM to some tributaries.

Agreed success indicator	Baseline	Actual outputs delivered	Commentary
Three important historic sites plus historic features on Otterburn Ranges are repaired/protected.	Two sites on Heritage At Risk Register (Ridsdale Ironworks and Romano British farmstead - Troughend, Otterburn).	One site removed from Heritage At Risk Register Consolidation works to three sites plus historic sites on Otterburn Ranges	Ridsdale Ironworks has been removed from the Register. Rochester Roman Fort (Bremenium) and Percy's Cross have been repaired and consolidated. WWI trenches, historic military bunkers and key archaeological sites on the MOD's Otterburn Ranges have been consolidated.
Management plans and maintenance commitments for ecological and historic sites show that condition will be maintained for at least 10 years.	No management plans in place for Revitalising Redesdale sites beyond 2022.	Maintenance agreements have been agreed for natural and historic sites as needed	Maintenance agreements to maintain works for 10 years after the funded period have been agreed with landowners for river interventions. NNPA will ensure maintenance of High Rochester including a follow up survey after five years. There is also a requirement to survey Ridsdale Iron Works after the same period (this will be the responsibility of the landowner). Cash or in-kind support to implement maintenance agreements will be provided by Revitalising Redesdale partners, including via a <i>Management & Maintenance Fund</i> to be managed by NWT. Further funding to continue work on the River Rede, and to reintroduce the FWPM to areas where habitat has been restored, has been secured by EA and TRT.
Heritage Outcome: <i>Heritage is better recorded</i>			
New records and research for at least five historic sites.	Photographs only for most sites 1,021 Historic Environment Records held by NCC in 2017-18 (by parish: Corsenside 132, Elsdon 199, Otterburn 265, Rochester & Barnes's 425).	333 sq km of LiDAR data surveyed generating 1,350 new Historic Environment Records. Survey reports completed for ten historic sites.	Rattenraw Phase 1 report; L3 survey of second site at Rattenraw; L1 survey for Chattlehope Farm & Catcleugh; Bellshiel Excavation report 2019; Fawdon Hill excavation report 2019; Todlaw excavation report 2020; Percy Cross archaeological watching brief 2021; Battle of Otterburn fieldwork report 2021; Ridsdale Ironworks conservation works report; Bremenium conservation works report - all submitted to the Historic Environment Record and have informed understanding of the historic landscape. Perhaps the greatest learning is how much more there is to discover - many sites remain unrecorded.
5,000 new ecological records collected and submitted to ERIC NE.	34,580 records held for Redesdale at the end of 2017.	>7,000 new species records submitted by volunteers, staff and others.	Volunteers have been trained to record and submit species records. This has greatly increased capacity for ecological recording in Redesdale. The number of new records provides a much improved dataset which can be used as a baseline for future monitoring.

Agreed success indicator	Baseline	Actual outputs delivered	Commentary
Heritage records are made accessible to the wider public.	Data only available via statutory records centres.	Volunteers trained to access records via ERIC NE and Historic Environment Record. 20 separate Historic Environment reports available on Revitalising Redesdale website. Interpretation shares learning from heritage research.	Total number of volunteers trained has not been recorded. Information from surveys and research has also been shared via project social media, e-news and blog posts New interpretation at 16 locations (village hubs and destination sites) shares learning and stories from heritage research, with a further four sites to be completed before the end of the project.
Data informs management planning.	Management plans for 2022 onwards not yet in place.	Not formally recorded	Although this has not been formally recorded, partners report that NWT will produce a new Management Plan for Whitelee Moor NWT which will reflect the work and knowledge that was achieved by Revitalising Redesdale; NNPA will continue to have oversight of the historic landscape and will ensure that continued research and archaeology builds on learning from Revitalising Redesdale.

Agreed success indicator	Baseline	Actual outputs delivered	Commentary
Heritage Outcomes: <i>More people, and a wider range of people, have been engaged with heritage; People have developed skills; People have volunteered time</i>			
Increased engagement through the project. Activities and events attract new participants. More people (visitors, passers through and residents) are exploring local heritage	Estimated 200,000 annual visitors with only a handful visiting project sites (no baseline collected for individual sites). 8 events delivered by partners within Redesdale during 2017-18. 206 Facebook followers and no Twitter/Instagram engagement (January 2018).	Visitor numbers and behaviour distorted by pandemic. No visitor data collected. 126 refugees/asylum seekers supported 161 events are listed on the What's On section of the website (this does not include invitation-only events). Social media followers December 2022 = Facebook 891, Twitter 413, Instagram 258.	The pandemic brought a significant reduction in visitors to countryside/rural sites during lockdowns as well as huge influxes at certain times. When visitor numbers peaked during summer 2020, new audiences and behaviour changes were observed across the UK and in the Northumberland National Park (no data specifically for Redesdale). The project has not measured whether visitors and passers through are stopping to explore heritage. An evaluation methodology to collect visitor data at key sites was discussed in 2019/20 but this could not go ahead due to Covid restrictions and the team was unable to implement this when restrictions eased. Visitor dwell time has also not been recorded. The Love Local project, supported by a Community Heritage Grant, enabled North Tyne Youth to deliver a summer holiday programme that immersed local young people in the Redesdale landscape. Redesdale Revitalises brought 870 individuals to participate in activities in Redesdale including 126 refugees and asylum seekers and 372 volunteers. The project has not recorded the total number of participants and equality monitoring information for volunteers or project participants has also not been recorded.
Landowners are engaged and committed to maintaining sites/heritage in the longer term. Community ownership of local sites is increased.	Not recorded.	54 farms/landowners supported/engaged across the project. 2 new community groups established. Community Heritage Grants have increased local capacity for heritage management.	Capital and survey projects (including peatland restoration, grassland management, river interventions, archaeology research and other historic environment projects) have engaged more than 30 private farms and other landowners. This has provided new opportunities to raise awareness about the importance of landscape heritage and engage landowners/managers in protecting/conserving the natural and historic environment. A new Friends of Corsenside group has been established to manage the newly created wildflower meadow at St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Corsenside. A new Redesdale Archaeology Group has been established to continue to investigate Redesdale's rich archaeology and to explore, celebrate and protect its cultural heritage. 34 grants have been awarded. Of these, 10 have supported landowners, heritage organisations and community groups to manage heritage in the Redesdale area.

Agreed success indicator	Baseline	Actual outputs delivered	Commentary
Participants tell us they have learnt new skills. Project staff and trainers observe new skills applied in project activities.	No training was available prior to the Revitalising Redesdale project	42 ecological training events and 24 historical training workshops were held.	Training has been provided in ecological survey techniques, archaeology, historic documents research, traditional scything techniques and practical conservation. Any additional training events delivered by partners have not been reported. 1 trainee and 1 work experience placement have been supported through the project (trainee placement progressed to paid employment within the sector). The <i>Hidden Redesdale</i> project (supported by a Community Heritage Fund Grant) trained local residents how to use camera traps and bat detectors, how to survey for moths, and established a camera loan scheme for residents to use in their gardens.
People have volunteered time	NWT recorded 681 volunteer hours in 2017/18 (Whitelee Moor and Mill Burn Nature Reserves) 5 NNPA volunteers active in Redesdale (10 volunteer days recorded)	Total number of unique volunteers has not been recorded. A total of 3,085 volunteer hours has been reported.	Total 3,085 volunteer hours have been reported as follows: Jan-Mar 18 = 317 hours; Apr 18-Mar 19 = 704 hours; Apr 19-Mar 20 = 696 hours; Apr 20-Mar 21 = 429 hours; Apr 21-Mar 22 = 671 hours; Apr 22-Sep 23 = 267 hours Volunteering during 2020 and 2021 was significantly restricted by the pandemic (despite efforts to continue supporting volunteers, the hours show that fewer tasks were completed). It is also noted that the baseline figure for provided for NWT volunteering in 2017/18 includes volunteering supported by the project (Jan-Mar 18). Other evidence provided suggests that volunteer contributions have increased significantly. Different systems have been adopted by different project activities and partners to record volunteering so it is not possible to provide a total number of unique volunteers.
Heritage Outcome: <i>Local businesses have been (indirectly) supported</i>			
Revitalising Redesdale facilitates business growth/development or increased custom		4 small businesses have been supported through the Community Heritage Grants	It was expected that increasing visitor numbers and dwell time, and promoting Redesdale as a destination, would provide new opportunities for local businesses and that new partnerships might arise through Revitalising Redesdale to deliver collaborative heritage experiences. To some extent, this has been compromised by the pandemic. The Community Heritage Grants have supported Wild Intrigue (small business), White Oak Studios (small businesses), Rede Tyne & Coquet Centre (RTC - community sports and wellbeing centre) and The Gun Inn (community-owned pub).

REVITALISING REDESDALE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

JANUARY 2018 - DECEMBER 2022



Case study: Farming for nature's recovery

Dennis and Susan Salt bought Rattenraw Farm 15 years ago. Since then, they have bought much of it into environmental stewardship and Revitalising Redesdale gave them an opportunity to build on this.

Rattenraw is a working farm so everything the Salts have delivered, with the help of Revitalising Redesdale, has had to work hand in hand with the management of cattle and sheep. Restoring natural habitat has done just this: previously, Dennis and Susan explain, the fell was very difficult to manage. Deep ditches created vast areas that could not easily be crossed on the quad bike and sheep seeking shelter could end up getting buried in heavy snowfall. Revitalising Redesdale has employed contractors to fill in ditches and reprofile the land, creating a more navigable and safer landscape for the farm. Natural springs have been dug out to create new scrapes and ditches have been dammed, creating wetter areas which have held water over the summer drought. This has not only created wetland habitat for birds, it has also provided a natural water source for the Rattenraw cattle.

Dennis describes fence lines where the fence posts hang in the air: a result of the ground being washed away beneath them - taking vast quantities of sediment into the river. It was this that led Dennis to first get in touch with Revitalising Redesdale. They were already talking to the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) to draw up a stewardship plan and this led them to meet the Revitalising Redesdale team.

Since then, Rattenraw has become one of the flagship farm sites for the project - it is an exemplar site where restoring natural processes has improved conditions for wildlife, livestock and farm management. Formerly eroded gullies are now revegetated and can be crossed by quad bike. Water is held in the fell and the amount of sediment moving through the farm and being deposited on the ford near to the farm house is much reduced.

The farm has also made a change to native cattle instead of commercial breeds. This was necessary for conservation grazing but, the Salts explain, it also made sense financially. The Highland Cattle were used initially to get rid of the grass which was choking the natural vegetation. Now that has been reduced, other species are returning and the cattle are rotated to manage the fell.

"We've changed! Ten years ago the last thing I wanted to see was sphagnum moss but now it's the best thing we've got!" Dennis Salt

They have also learnt a lot: they have worked with Revitalising Redesdale to devise an effective design for leaky dams, replacing earlier brash dams (which were bound together with loops of wire) with log dams or bigger brash pieces. Initial work at the top of the fell was evaluated before moving to other areas, replicating and building on what worked well.

Rattenraw has also hosted archaeological excavations. This began when the Salts contacted the NNPA for advice about some tree planting they were proposing near to the route of the Roman Dere Street. NNPA officers came for a site visit and to check that the planting would not compromise the Roman route. This led to another connection with the Revitalising Redesdale project. Since then, evidence of three Iron Age roundhouses have been revealed and finds suggest an Iron Age occupation spanning about 400 years up to, and during, the Roman occupation. Amongst the objects discovered were 100 glass beads and several beehive querns, used for grinding grain.

"I've enjoyed having the archaeology group here - farming can feel quite isolated and this has been a social event," Susan Salt

It would not have been possible for the farm to achieve this extent of work without support from the Revitalising Redesdale partnership, project staff and contractors.

Right: vegetation recovering in an area which was previously extremely eroded



Case Study: So much more to learn

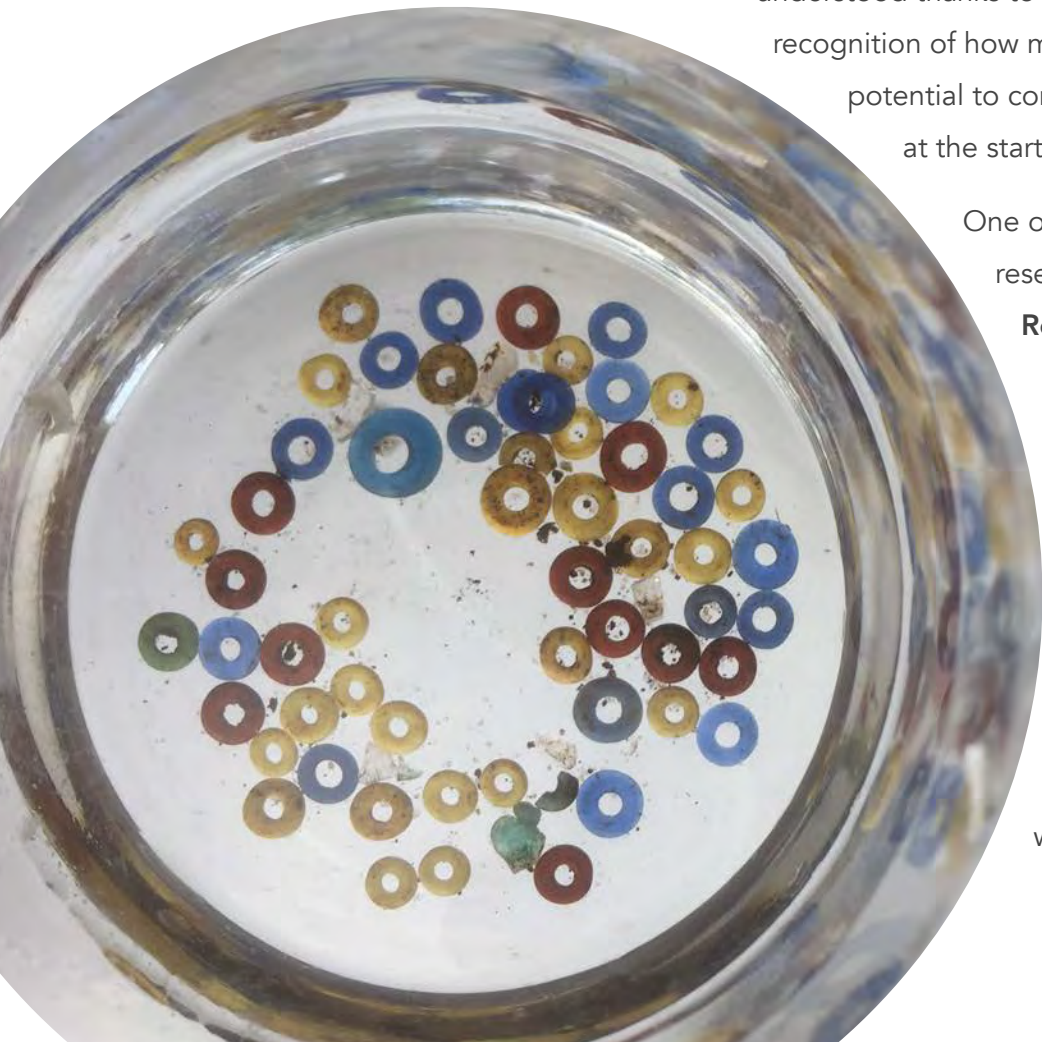
There is a saying, you don't know what you don't know. This has been the case with Redesdale, which was very much an unrecorded landscape, prior to Revitalising Redesdale.

The combined efforts of volunteers, supported by project staff and professional historians and archaeologists, have revealed a rich heritage dating back thousands of years. Iron Age and Roman settlements have been researched and significant events in Redesdale's history are now better understood thanks to research by the project but, perhaps more importantly, there is now a greater recognition of how much more there is to learn, how much of Redesdale is yet to be discovered. The potential to continue to explore this landscape is significant, perhaps more so than was realised at the start of the project.

One of the achievements of the project is to establish some capacity to continue research, in the form of a constituted group of volunteers now known as **The Redesdale Community Archaeology Group**. Members of this group are local residents and also volunteers from neighbouring areas, some with previous experience of running other Archaeology Groups (most notably, the Tynedale Archaeology Group). All have participated in archaeology activities within the Revitalising Redesdale project (although the group intends to continue to engage new members).

"I didn't think I was interested in Roman stuff but I am now"

Volunteers have provided excellent feedback about their experiences on the project and this has created the momentum for them to establish a new group which will, at least initially, be supported by the NNPA. Volunteers also report



that many of the landowners/farmers who hosted excavations on their sites have committed to keep looking for historical items when they are working on their land.

According to volunteers, the strengths/benefits of their experience with Revitalising Redesdale have been teamwork and camaraderie, skills development, meeting new people, being outdoors, getting to do all three aspects of archaeology (digs, surveys and research), learning, inclusivity (welcoming to all ages), opportunity to find new things and the excellent organisation by project staff.

"I've never been on a project that did skills workshops."

The group held their inaugural meeting in June 2022 where they adopted a Terms of Reference and appointed a Chair, Treasurer and other committee members.

"It's been an absolute pleasure to work with everyone and to learn so much from so many people. We've done a lot of volunteering with other groups and projects - this is far and away the best for the range of stuff we've been able to do."

Whilst the volunteer-led Redesdale Community Archaeology Group can continue some research and excavations with minimal resources, it is also hoped that the NNPA and other partners will continue to pursue opportunities at more prominent sites such as Bremenium Roman Fort at High Rochester.

Left: Iron Age beads found at Rattenraw Farm; Right: the youngest archaeology volunteer gained her Brownie Archaeology badge as a result of participating in Revitalising Redesdale (this included finding Samien ware, Roman glass and modern pottery at Bremenium).

Quotes are all from archaeology volunteers



Case study: engaging volunteers through lockdown

During 2020-22, the lockdowns and other restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic brought about changes to volunteering and engagement activity which was unprecedented. Group activities were highly restricted and all onsite volunteering ceased during the height of restrictions in 2020. Even as restrictions eased, travel in shared vehicles was not possible and this created a barrier to many.

Amid the Hills of Redesdale, a radio play, is an innovative example of how volunteers were engaged and supported throughout periods of lockdown.

Working from their own homes, volunteers learnt lines and rehearsed the script which had been written by Northumberland writer Rachel Cochrane. Virtual rehearsals brought together the cast of twelve volunteers. Three young people also recorded monologues reading from the school log books, reciting the words of children who had been





at school more than 100 years ago. The final recording took place in Elsdon Village Hall with Covid safety measures in place.

This virtual volunteering kept people safe and gave people something positive to contribute to, at a time when there was much uncertainty, isolation and loneliness.

Inspired by artefacts and photographs left behind by the Catcleugh community, the radio play tells the story of a diverse community, brought to Redesdale for a unique building project, the like of which had never been seen in this landscape before or since. The play also explores other periods in Redesdale's history. It is dedicated to Beryl Charlton, local author, historian, archaeologist and volunteer who played the part of Dorothy Temple and who sadly passed away in 2021, shortly after recording.

Other volunteering activities which continued through lockdown included LiDAR research (examining and researching the LiDAR images/data to produce 1350 new historic records) by the archaeology volunteers as well as outdoor and socially distanced conservation volunteering (peatland restoration and tree planting).

Left: the "Navvies Window" at the Church of St Francis of Assisi at Byrness commemorates the 64 workers who lost their lives during the construction of the Catcleugh Reservoir. It was paid for in 1903 by their fellow workers and it is still unique as a church stained glass window that is dedicated to navvies (rather than showing a biblical scene). It is also reputed to be the only such window to include a narrow gauge railway. The window was restored by Revitalising Redesdale via a CHF grant.



Case Study: Battle of Otterburn

The Battlefields Trust led the project to research the Battle of Otterburn (1388) and develop new interpretation for the Otterburn Battlefield (one of only 47 Registered Battlefields in England).

The Battlefields Trust brought together and trained a small team of dedicated volunteers to research primary and secondary accounts of the Battle, with a focus on key aspects which have been areas of disagreement for previous researchers. Volunteers first took to familiarising themselves with medieval accounts and were then tasked with examining the secondary sources.

Specialist battlefield archaeologist, Dr Glenn Foard, was appointed as supervising archaeologist to the project, working with landscape archaeologist, Dr Tracey Partida. The field archaeology was led by Wessex Archaeology and engaged project volunteers, providing an opportunity for them to get involved in specialist battlefield techniques including geophysical and metal detecting fieldwork.

By researching the historical topography of the area and reconstructing the landscape as it was at the time of the battle, the landscape archaeology study provided valuable insights into the possible routes of troop movement in the landscape at the time of the battle. The geophysical and metal detecting investigated a possible site of the battle but found no significant evidence to definitively locate the battle site and, whilst this sounds disappointing, it was not altogether surprising given the limited time and budget to properly research the area, the disturbance to soil over the last 700+ years and the likelihood that very few artefacts were left behind after the battle (items of value tended not to get left behind).



Careful scrutiny of historical texts drew together the different accounts of the likely site of the battle, the site of the Scottish camp, the likely route of troops and nature of the attack(s) and the time and date of the battle, piecing together the different and sometimes conflicting reports. The most significant of these, in terms of the impact of Revitalising Redesdale, is the question of when the battle took place. Historical accounts suggest two different dates: 5th and 19th August but the research carried out by Revitalising Redesdale concludes that the 5th August is the more likely date. This then leads our researchers to conclude that medieval chronicler, Jean Froissart, embellished his original description of a battle fought by moonlight as, although it was most certainly an evening battle, there was no moon on that date.

Detailed reports describing all of the research are available on The Battlefields Trust website (battlefieldstrust.com).

Learning from this project has informed the new interpretation which has been installed at the site of the Percy Cross, along with improved visitor access which has greatly enhanced this as a destination site within Redesdale.

This research has not reached its conclusion but it has laid the foundation for further research with a comprehensive review of primary and secondary sources and a detailed landscape scoping study. There is further opportunity to build on this and both The Battlefields Trust and the new Redesdale Community Archaeology group (volunteers trained through the project) are keen to continue to explore key questions and look for answers in the landscape with further battlefield metal detecting. There is also scope to investigate a 19th century account of medieval human remains buried at St Cuthbert's Church in Elsdon, this is potentially a discovery of national and international importance but was considered too extensive and costly to include within Revitalising Redesdale.

"Following the completion of the Revitalising Redesdale project the Battlefields Trust will continue its involvement with the battle of Otterburn as part of its normal activities. This will include talks to local groups and occasional battlefield walks open to our members and the general public. In due course we would like to return to the battlefield and undertake a more comprehensive archaeological investigation. We would also like to investigate the burials at Elsdon church which were uncovered in the 19th century and which may be associated with the battle. Both of these projects would be subject to funding and appropriate permissions,"

Geoffrey Carter, Battlefields Trust

Case study: Changing the future for Freshwater Pearl Mussels

The ecological interventions, carried out across the River Rede catchment, to restore peatland, improve river habitat and renaturalise river channels are changing the landscape for the critically endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*). This species may not be as well known as red squirrels but it is also a species which is now restricted to only a few areas of England.

These mussels have a fascinating life cycle, uniquely symbiotic with the salmon and trout of our upland rivers. They can live for 100 years, improving water quality for other species by filtering water through their gills. Sadly, there are too few breeding mussels left in the River Rede to sustain a viable population; changes to the river flow, more intense farming/forestry practices and dredging/removal of gravel all brought more soil and sediment to the river. As a result, the freshwater pearl mussel's habitat has changed and the species is less able to feed, smothered by the now silty river bed.

"The most important action to save fresh water pearl mussels, and support associated river life, is a catchment-wide change to land management to address the amount of nutrient and fine sediment entering the rivers. Revitalising Redesdale is working with land managers and farmers on projects to re-establish natural river processes, slow flows and capture sediment, build rapid and riffle features, create new wetland areas, plant trees along the riverbanks and manage grazing,"

Maria Hardy, Revitalising Redesdale Project Manager (2018-20)





In the 1950s and 60s gravel was removed from the River Rede at Smoutel and the river was straightened. The natural ford was lost along with much of the healthy river bed. For 60 years there was no river crossing and the long-lived pearl mussels became unable to breed.

Revitalising Redesdale has reintroduced stone to the river bed to recreate the historic Smoutel Ford and associated rocky riffles. Flow has been reinvigorated in the deeper section of the river to improve habitat for pearl mussels as well as fish and river flies. In other areas, the river has been slowed, recreating natural river features and enhancing river biodiversity.

At Otterburn, sedimentation has been reduced by stabilising the bank and creating slow backwater habitat, helping the river to connect with its floodplain and creating more areas which can hold water in periods of heavy flow. In other areas, new tree planting has created areas of dappled shade which create more varied habitat, and new fencing and drinking troughs have reduced access by grazing stock (trampling/grazing exposes and dislodges soil from stream banks).

The restoration of peatland means that more water is stored in the upper reaches of the catchment. Again, this has reduced the amount of sediment entering water courses which benefits the fresh water pearl mussel and other species. Landowners have already reported less sediment being dropped on their land in periods of heavy flow/rainfall.

Overall, a series of river and peatland interventions has changed habitat conditions in the River Rede and its tributaries. Time will tell but current indications are that Redesdale is a healthier catchment for Freshwater Pearl Mussels. This achieves the recommendation from the AECOM River Rede Improvement Plan (2017) to prepare habitat for the return of captive bred mussels. Mussels are already being reared at the Kielder Salmon Centre ready for reintroduction in due course.

Redesdale is...

Beautiful ✧ Special ✧ Rare ✧ Enchanting ✧ Epic ✧ Historic ✧
Rugged ✧ Home ✧ Heartland ✧ Stunning ✧ Wild ✧
Astronomical ✧ Unique ✧ Peaceful ✧ Important
✧ Fabulous ✧ Adventure ✧ Very dark ✧
Remote ✧ Wonderful ✧ Vast ✧ Connected
✧ Super people ✧ Isolated ✧ Awesome ✧
Connecting ✧ Deep-rooted ✧ Amazing ✧
Breathtaking ✧ Windswept

"I live near Catcleugh Reservoir. I am so lucky because I get to see beautiful scenery and wildlife every day. When I'm outside I can see lots of birds like oystercatchers, osprey, buzzards and swallows. On walks around our house we can see wild goats, deer and even lamprey in the burn. We can see lots of stars where we live. There are lots of good trees and crags for climbing. In the future I hope it still looks like it does now,"

Young person
speaking on the radio play

Evaluation Observations



Reflecting on project assumptions expressed in the Evaluation Framework

1. **A catchment-wide landscape project will give us opportunities to increase connectivity in the landscape and improve ecological networks.**
 - 1.1. The Interim Evaluation found that whilst 100% of partner representatives who responded to the partnership questionnaire agreed that Revitalising Redesdale was making significant impact on the natural and/or historic environment, almost one third of them (31%) were not sure whether the Scheme was delivering a catchment-wide ecological network and one respondent commented that they didn't know what this meant.
 - 1.2. This unfamiliarity with the "catchment" vocabulary was echoed in a legacy meeting facilitated by the Evaluation Consultant in November 2021 where members of the local community, in particular, were not clear about what this meant or the relevance of local activities to a wider landscape. There was also little understanding of how interventions in the upper reaches of Redesdale would benefit the lower Rede and even the Tyne.
 - 1.3. Whilst, ecologically, conservation activities have had impact at this level, it would appear that the significance of this has not been understood locally. This would suggest that some opportunity has been missed to share this underlying concept.
 - 1.4. It is also observed that projects have tended to be delivered independently of each other, rather than as a co-ordinated and joined up catchment scheme. Whilst it is recognised that

there has been much collaboration between project staff (e.g. sharing workloads, discussing logistics, supporting each other), the overall impression is that Revitalising Redesdale has delivered several distinct projects rather than a joined up catchment programme of activity. There are almost no joined up recording systems across the project and this has led to gaps in data and evidence (e.g. no record of total number of volunteer engaged because different and incompatible data is collected for each activity). Outputs achieved by partners outside the core partnership have tended not to be included in the figures provided (e.g. >672ha peatland does not include any peatland restoration completed by MoD).

1.5. Nevertheless, the evaluation recognises that significant steps have been taken towards a healthier catchment ecosystem. River interventions and peatland restoration have, in particular, improved ecological networks and are, largely sustainable. Although ongoing monitoring and continued sitka removal will be necessary, extensive grip blocking and river interventions are, more or less, permanent changes in the landscape. There is evidence that, following peatland restoration, there is less visible sediment being carried off the upland areas which is, in turn, creating healthier water courses and more suitable riparian habitat for the FWPM and other species. This is a lasting impact which can be built on in the future.

2. We need to give people more reason to visit and engage with the landscape in order to hold people in the landscape for longer.

2.1. This was an underlying principle of the project expressed during the Development Phase. The A68 winds its way through Redesdale and many of Revitalising Redesdale's projects are close to this major route across the English-Scottish border. The Development Phase recognised the opportunity for Revitalising Redesdale to encourage more people to break their journey, explore the area and make use of local businesses and facilities.



- 2.2. Unfortunately, the pandemic had a significant impact on visitor numbers, demographics and behaviours with lower visitors overall during 2020-21 but influxes of peak visitor numbers and new (and sometimes challenging) audiences at certain times (data based on visitor data for the whole of Northumberland National Park²). This made it difficult (perhaps impossible) to deliver visitor engagement activities during much of 2020-21.
- 2.3. Nevertheless, the ambition to raise the profile of Redesdale and to engage both new visitors and “passers through” appears to have had little attention until the final year. The installation of interpretation was delayed until 2022 and this meant that the project could not work with local businesses to make the most of local destinations or village interpretation hubs. Similarly, as destinations have not been clearly signposted until project completion, there has been no opportunity to encourage visitors to stop and explore on their way through the valley. Those new audiences who ventured into Redesdale during the pandemic did not benefit from the interpretation and visitor information and, as many sites are invisible (or even unsightly) from the road, they will have missed out on many of Redesdale’s hidden gems.
- 2.4. The website information is not up to date for all sites and, as such, does not support the first stage of the visitor journey. At the time of writing, some of the pages on the Revitalising Redesdale website are unchanged since the Development Phase, still presenting aspirations and talking about what *will* happen rather than sharing achievements and celebrating completed projects. There is only limited information about destinations on the “Discover” section of the website and almost none of these pages include access information (e.g. parking, distance from parking to destination, terrain). The NWT website includes a very

² Northumberland National Park (2021) *State of the National Park* report

"Thank you for everything you have done for the village and area in general. It was and is very much appreciated and hopefully (especially at the cross) we can keep your legacy going for future generations to come ... hopefully we will be able to work together on future projects that benefit the valley in some capacity,"

Cllr George Peto on behalf of
Otterburn Parish Council

good description of access to Whitelee Moor Nature Reserve but it has not been updated since the installation of the boardwalk.

- 2.5. Without any visitor monitoring it is difficult to assess whether it was correct to assume that bringing and holding more visitors in the landscape would change people's relationship with the landscape, improve understanding and benefit the local economy. Perhaps that will become clearer during the project legacy.
3. **A five year investment in the Landscape Partnership Scheme will create momentum to continue.**
 - 3.1. There is little appetite amongst partners to continue a partnership or sustain a project team which is called "Revitalising Redesdale".
 - 3.2. However, the project has established stronger partner relations and, as such, many initiatives will continue throughout and beyond the Rede catchment after Revitalising Redesdale funding ends.
 - 3.3. The following initiatives are described in the Legacy Plan:
 - ◆ A new farm cluster will be established, supported by NWT, to enable farmers to work collectively on actions which will deliver benefits for water quality, soils and nature at a landscape scale;
 - ◆ The North Tyne & Rede Rivers Project, led by Tyne Rivers Trust and funded by the Environment Agency's Water Improvement Fund, will support farmers and landowners to identify how they can continue to support improvements to water quality;



- ♦ A new Northumberland Peatland Partnership has been established, engaging all lead partners, and additional sites for peat restoration will be delivered through this (funded by DEFRA Shovel Ready Peat Fund).

- 3.4. At a meeting with the Partnership Management Group, managers shared how Revitalising Redesdale had increased their presence in Redesdale and helped their organisations to place greater focus on this area and realise new ambitions. For example, while not a direct output of Revitalising Redesdale, NWT's acquisition of two new nature reserves in the project area are likely to be, in part, a result of increased activity in the area.
- 3.5. The archaeological research has revealed some new and profound discoveries which have changed understanding of the history of the area. This is a legacy in itself but has also created an appetite for further research. The new Redesdale Community Archaeology Group, established by the project, will continue to engage volunteers and local residents, with support from the NNPA. The Battlefields Trust have said they intend to remain involved in the area and other professional archaeologists are also keen to continue research.



Reflecting on Project Delivery

4. It is appropriate to acknowledge the impact of the Covid pandemic. This created significant disruption for at least half of the project period. Project staff were not furloughed but, in line with government guidance, were required to work from home during periods of lockdown and restrictions; this continued in the final year of the project. Many project activities had to be cancelled or adapted to work in a virtual space. NNPA have reported an overall reduction in visitor numbers as a result of the pandemic (State of the National Park report 2021) but we also know

that when visitor numbers peaked in summer 2020, our countryside saw new audiences and a change in visitor behaviours, creating challenges for land management and local communities.

5. Revitalising Redesdale has delivered a programme of capital interventions that will have lasting impact on the landscape. Nature is in recovery on significant areas of peatland, grassland and river habitat, historic buildings/structures have been repaired and are no longer at risk of permanent deterioration, footpaths and bridleways have been improved and new interpretation will aid visitor orientation and understanding. None of this would have happened without the funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund or the increased capacity to co-ordinate such activity.
6. As mentioned above, it is unfortunate that project co-ordination and project communications did not maximise the opportunity to link activities together and promote the impact of interventions on a catchment-wide or landscape scale. The greatest strength of Revitalising Redesdale is the potential to achieve change across an upland catchment and, yet, projects have been managed as discrete activities. This was highlighted in the Interim Evaluation Report.
7. The end of project questionnaire has received feedback from a minority of local residents who have not fully understood the breadth of activity delivered by Revitalising Redesdale. For example, *"I feel there has been an emphasis on finding ancient relics. In Rochester the centre that was built near the cafe remained empty for a long time. It's only recently they have put up signs etc. limited info on routes from Rochester until very recently,"* (end of project questionnaire).
8. However, the majority of feedback received both via the end of project questionnaire, at the final project celebration event and throughout the project, has been positive. For example, *"Revitalising Redesdale have raised awareness on many issues, including our wildlife and plants, archeology etc. Their projects have been of benefit both to local communities and visitors alike,"* *"It raised the profile of the valley outside the area and encouraged local people to think of the*



wonderful landscape in which they are living and what they have to offer to the wider world. It inspired many people both young and old and put them in touch with others with similar interests and pursuits,” and “I was sceptical when the project began but now think that it was a hugely successful project which developed a rural area and brought the locals together.” Several comments also asked what would happen next, indicating that there is some demand locally for partnership activity to continue in some form. The final project celebration event at Elsdon further demonstrated the value that local people and other participants place on this project.

9. Project brand presence within the landscape has been largely absent. Until the final year, there has been nothing on key sites to tell visitors what is happening (e.g. for sites where capital works were underway) or to encourage them to stop and explore. The absence of a project office within the area has not helped (this was explored but, in such a rural area, there was no property suitable to host an office). That said, project staff and managers report that local people are aware of Revitalising Redesdale and the end of project feedback questionnaire has received 32 responses from local people (more than 1% of local population).
10. It is a shame that the main interpretation contract was not let until the final year of the project. This would have helped to create a landscape-scale brand presence and could have highlighted the role of different sites within the wider landscape. It is understood that some interpretation needed to be informed by learning and research (and therefore could not be delivered until research activities had been completed) but many of the installations that could have gone ahead immediately (as described in the Interpretation Plan).
11. Project communications have also tended to focus on individual projects and events rather than the overall scheme. Whilst the digital audience has grown (increased Facebook followers and new Revitalising Redesdale profiles established on Instagram and Twitter), capacity to maintain these

has been limited and posts generally promote Revitalising Redesdale projects and events. Greater impact could, possibly, have been achieved if digital communications had engaged more with local community pages and other organisations within the heritage sector (e.g. sharing information on community pages, contributing to current debate, sharing stories which link to Awareness Days or wider issues). Likewise, website information could also have been kept up to date so that local residents and visitors could access information about ongoing project achievements. That said, the evaluation acknowledges that, until the final year, capacity to deliver this was limited and a wider range of activity has been achieved since the appointment of a Community & Engagement Officer.

12. The Interim Evaluation report highlighted a need to prioritise the intended outcome to engage a wider range of people and the partnership has responded to this by appointing a Community & Engagement Officer. This has provided additional capacity to engage audiences across all project activities and has established new relationships which will continue to enable people to access heritage after Revitalising Redesdale funding ends.
13. It is worth noting the significance of Redesdale's location: the border uplands which have been home to such diverse and, at times, violent communities of the past, is now one of the most sparsely populated areas of England. We must learn lessons and develop best practice for supporting rural communities and responding to their unique challenges. In particular, these small communities tend to have less capacity for volunteering (with many local people either working long hours locally, e.g. farmers, or commuting to work/ferrying children to school for an hour or more, leaving little time for volunteering activities) and those that do have spare time are probably already committed to other projects. But, they are also custodians of a rural culture and heritage which does not exist anywhere else and, whilst they might not recognise it, this is uniquely important.



14. The challenges of the rural location are offset by the realistic opportunity to reach and engage a whole community (it is realistic to reach a few hundred households through door drops, events and community meetings) - this opportunity does not present itself in urban areas. Despite this, some people remain unaware of the breadth of activity delivered by Revitalising Redesdale. For example, *"I have spoken to a number of people ... they have poor knowledge what the group does. I only know a bit more as on their Facebook page ... No idea what they have spent their funding on,"* (end of project questionnaire)
15. Revitalising Redesdale has developed best practice in working with farming communities. Collaborations between conservation and farming are not easy and conflict or tension is fuelled by media reports. Revitalising Redesdale seems to have found a balance and this is important. It is to the credit of project staff who have established positive relationships to achieved this and to lay the foundations for a new Farmer Cluster. NWT has also created a new Wilder Northumberland Development Officer role with a farming focus and this will also be significant as we move into the project legacy phase.
16. Learning lessons, understanding how to meet local challenges and reflecting on practice for engaging rural communities is important as is recognising project success in this area.
17. Above all, Revitalising Redesdale has demonstrated the value of this rural and remote location that can feel like the middle of nowhere. It has brought to life its rich heritage, increased understanding of the ecological and cultural heritage and inspired a volunteer community to want to learn and do more. Revitalising Redesdale has proved that Redesdale has a long history as the middle of somewhere, and that this still persists today in its communities, stories, hills, rivers, farms, dark skies, wooded valleys, place names and more.

"Thank you for an excellent talk. It really did bring the whole of Redesdale together. I hadn't realised how many archaeological riches there were. A roman fort at Rochester! Marching camps!"

Feedback from a talk to the
Wansbeck Natural History Society

"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)

Project management and partnership

18. The partnership was established during the Development Phase and consolidated during delivery, bringing together three core organisations, together with a further fourteen statutory, community and voluntary organisations, which had previously worked alongside each other but never previously co-delivered a scheme of this scale. Revitalising Redesdale was a new partnership venture and it has established relationships which will last into the legacy phase, creating new opportunities for ongoing activity. Principally, new opportunities to work together for nature's recovery (including Northumberland Peat Partnership) and the potential for further archaeological activity.
19. The evaluation recognises the significant contributions of all partners but, particularly, the three core partners Natural England, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and Northumberland National Park Authority. Whilst all three organisations have faced challenges during the project period (not least dealing with unprecedented national events including the Covid pandemic, Storm Arwen and the cost of living crisis, all of which significantly impacted rural communities), they have all continued their commitment to Revitalising Redesdale. The project would not have been possible, nor would the project legacy be established, without these partnership contributions.
20. Staff have openly shared the challenges of working with a partnership comprising different organisations. In particular, the difficulties presented by a lack of accessible shared filing (particularly exacerbated by changes to organisational filing and having to adapt to new systems mid-way through the project) has made it difficult to compile and share project achievements. Working from home during lockdown, together with the appointment of new staff (who didn't meet their colleagues face to face for several months) and no return to the team office, created additional challenges for the team.



21. Staff have also found line management arrangements (reporting to both a Programme Manager hosted by Natural England and a line manager hosted by their own organisation) challenging at times. This has been compounded by a change in personnel within the project team which has impacted on the continuity of relationships.
22. Project record keeping has not been co-ordinated. Different methodologies have been adopted by project staff making it impossible to bring together final data for the whole project. There is almost no consistent data collection across the whole project leaving significant questions which now cannot be answered. The success measures defined in the Evaluation Framework (and agreed with the project team) have not been monitored by the project. Staff turnover and change in IT system may have contributed to the lack of continuity in recording with some data appearing to get lost in handover periods.
23. In particular, there seems to be little data relating to volunteers despite both NWT and NNPA employing sophisticated volunteer data management systems (Better Impact). The number of unique volunteers has not been recorded and there is no equality data for volunteers. Volunteer data for different projects/activities has not used a consistent approach and cannot, therefore, be compiled into a single record for the whole project. Even taking into account the impact of the pandemic and the fact that many volunteer activities were cancelled or restricted during 2020 and 2021, the volunteer time recorded seems very low compared to the baseline figure. This suggests there have been some gaps in monitoring.
24. In 2020, the Interim Evaluation Report made several recommendations for the final phase of the project. As mentioned above, the partnership responded to the recommendation to engage a wider range of people by appointing a new Community & Engagement Officer. However, other recommendations have not been addressed. These were principally to carry out visitor surveys and

collect visitor feedback at key destinations (including via social media and setting up new TripAdvisor pages), and to improve data collection to present collated data for the whole project.

25. Whether or not a wider range of people has been engaged is difficult to assess without reliable data for visitors and project participants. There were also missed opportunities to use project activity to celebrate diversity and create a more welcoming environment for new audiences. For example, the diversity of the community that built the Catcleugh reservoir could be celebrated on social media, perhaps by sharing excerpts from the play on Awareness Days.
26. Finally, the Revitalising Redesdale Legacy Plan sets out a commitment from partners beyond the project funded period. This provides a Management and Maintenance Fund to support ongoing ecological monitoring, volunteer training, maintenance of interpretation and walking routes and continuation of the project website. Any remaining funds which are not required during the ten-year period after the end of Revitalising Redesdale's' delivery phrase, will be used to continue to enhance Whitelee Moor National Nature Reserve and Benshaw Moor Nature Reserve. This will support a robust legacy and ongoing monitoring will identify any lasting change achieved by the project.

Learning & Recommendations



The evaluation makes the following recommendations and learning points for future activities:

1. Future projects would benefit from making data collection and monitoring more of a priority. Larger schemes should, perhaps, consider appointing a Data Officer to collate quantifiable data (or at least building this into one job role). Data recording/monitoring mechanisms need to be embedded early in any project, with all staff working to common systems. This needs partnership discussion where different organisations use different approaches. Establishing common systems would also assist in ensuring project continuity if there are staff changes.
2. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data must also be routinely collected and standardised across our participant recording forms. Improved EDI monitoring would help us to understand current audiences and to ensure that barriers to access for others are removed. It would enable organisations to better respond to the inequalities that exist in access to nature and heritage and it would inform marketing/communications to ensure these are targeted at both engaged audiences and those who are not yet involved. It would provide a baseline so that changes in diversity could be properly observed.
3. Project communications need to be properly supported. This could be by employing a dedicated Communications Officer, procuring PR support or with improved engagement from Communications teams within partner organisations to enable projects to properly understand the value of different platforms and how to use different approaches to engage different audiences and build a stronger network. Public communications need to provide a platform for sharing learning and celebrating diversity.

4. Communications (in particular social media) should be considered as a two way mechanism - with the value of engaging with other projects, learning about best practice and engaging in new developments/debates just as important as promoting project events and activities. Project staff should be encouraged to engage with social media as part of their learning and professional development as well as to promote or share project success. The use of social media to engage communities also needs to be better understood - it is not enough just to share publicity on a project page, this must also be shared in local community groups and pages (just as a single poster would never be placed only on an office noticeboard, a number of posters would be put in shop windows, community centres and village notice boards to reach more people).
5. Future projects need to plan for interpretation to happen earlier in the timetable and sufficient capacity needs to be allowed for this to happen. The value of a brand presence on site and in the landscape must be recognised. Temporary interpretation could also be considered which would raise awareness and share consistent project messages during the delivery period but would be replaced by final and lasting installations, informed by project learning and research, at the end of the project period.
6. The needs of rural communities and the challenges they experience are different to those of more densely populated areas. Rural communities are often overlooked and projects such as Revitalising Redesdale are in a unique position to develop best practice. This would include positively engaging farming communities as well as acknowledging the challenges of working in rural spaces where there is no public transport, limited office facilities, no single community hub, poor mobile phone/data connectivity and a limited pool of volunteers. We must reflect on, learn from and share these experiences.
7. Although Revitalising Redesdale will cease to exist when lottery funding ends, its legacy will continue through the volunteers, communities, landowners and partners who are committed to



continuing to protect, enhance and celebrate heritage in this unique landscape. In many ways, this project has only just started to address the need in this vast upland catchment. There are no quick fixes and the continued commitment of partners is needed to restore nature across the landscape, building on the peatland, river and grassland interventions already delivered and continuing to work positively with farmers and landowners.

8. Likewise, the archaeological landscape has only just begun to reveal its secrets. There is both opportunity and appetite to continue to research the Battle of Otterburn, Bremenium and other sites. Further funding could be sought to enable continued excavations and field archaeology for both projects to further investigate sites of national and international significance, provide further volunteer opportunities and, potentially, develop new visitor experiences. Appropriate permissions would need to be sought and, if necessary, financial compensation put in place for landowners to allow for longer term investigations.

"The Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership has enabled Natural England to develop a place based approach to this special area which has delivered nature based recovery at a landscape scale, whilst integrating a deeper appreciation and understanding of the way communities have, and continue to, shape and experience that landscape. Partnership has been key to securing that holistic view of place and enabling us, as an organisation, to work with different organisations and groups that we haven't traditionally worked with. This Partnership has enriched the projects and aspirations of Revitalising Redesdale, and this way of working will continue to inform Natural England's future approach to other areas."

Lydia Speakman, Northumbria Area Team Manager (Acting), Natural England



Glossary

CHF	Community Heritage Fund
EA	Environment Agency
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion
ERICNE	Environmental Records Information Centre North East
FWPM	Freshwater Pearl Mussel
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging (remote sensing technology)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCC	Northumberland County Council
NE	Natural England
N.E.S.T.	North East Solidarity & Training (NUSU project)
NNPA	Northumberland National Park Authority
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NUSU	Newcastle University Students Union
NWT	Northumberland Wildlife Trust
PMG	Partnership Management Group
TRT	Tyne Rivers Trust

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This report is an independent evaluation by Katherine Williams, Consultant, on behalf of the Revitalising Redesdale partnership.

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