

# **ALLEN VALLEYS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME MID-TERM EVALUATION**

**February 2017**

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**We would like to thank everyone who gave time to contribute to this review.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 ALLEN VALLEYS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

The Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership Scheme is a four year partnership project running from 2014 to 2018, hosted by the North Pennines AONB Partnership. The Resources for Change team ([www.r4c.org.uk](http://www.r4c.org.uk)) was engaged as the evaluator for the lifetime of the Scheme. In autumn 2016, the R4C evaluation team undertook a Mid-Term Evaluation, the results of which are reported in this document.

### 1.2 EVALUATION PURPOSE

The staff and partners worked with Resources for Change to decide on the overall goals of the evaluation and what its information collection and analysis should focus on.

The Scheme's evaluation has the following main purposes:

- Highlight successes of the Scheme, along the way as well as at the end.
- Inform Scheme management, through helping understanding about what is and isn't working.
- Enable the Scheme to demonstrate accountability to the community and HLF, by showing that the money is being spent well and the Scheme is being delivered effectively.
- Help the staff and Partnership to work towards a strong legacy for the Scheme, including how work will be continued after the end of HLF funding.

This mid-term evaluation has focussed on:

- Assessing progress towards the Scheme's intended achievements, thinking about HLF's intended outcomes, resident's awareness and understanding, visitors and the visitor economy.
- Understanding what is and maybe is not working so well, in order to guide the management for the remaining time of the project.
- How well the Scheme is reaching out to people.
- Preparing for legacy.

## 1.3 MID-TERM EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 1.3.1 APPROACH

The key elements were as follows:

- Review of the intended approach with the project officer
- Semi-structured in-depth phone interviews with the Scheme staff, trainees and partners
- Structured conversations with volunteers at the volunteer celebration event (n=18)
- Short semi-structured phone interviews with community organisations, businesses and volunteers (n=12)
- Online survey for participants and volunteers (29 responses, from people involved with 7 local groups – Allen Valleys Promotion Ltd, Astronomy group, Local History group, AVEL, Allen Smelt Mill volunteers, Visit Allen Valleys Forum, Allen Valleys Wildlife group)
- Validation and recommendations workshop with the staff and partners.

The interviews used a semi-structured format. There were two different question sets, one for the staff and partners, another for the volunteers. (See Appendices for these question sets).

The evaluator facilitated a Validation and Recommendations workshop with staff and partnership members, with the aim of actively involving key players in discussing appropriate recommendations to be included in the evaluation report. Experience shows the value of this in increasing buy-in to the evaluation's outputs with those people who will take responsibility for their implementation, as well as providing the evaluator with valuable practical input and advice.

R4C is very grateful to everyone who gave their time and input so willingly and constructively.

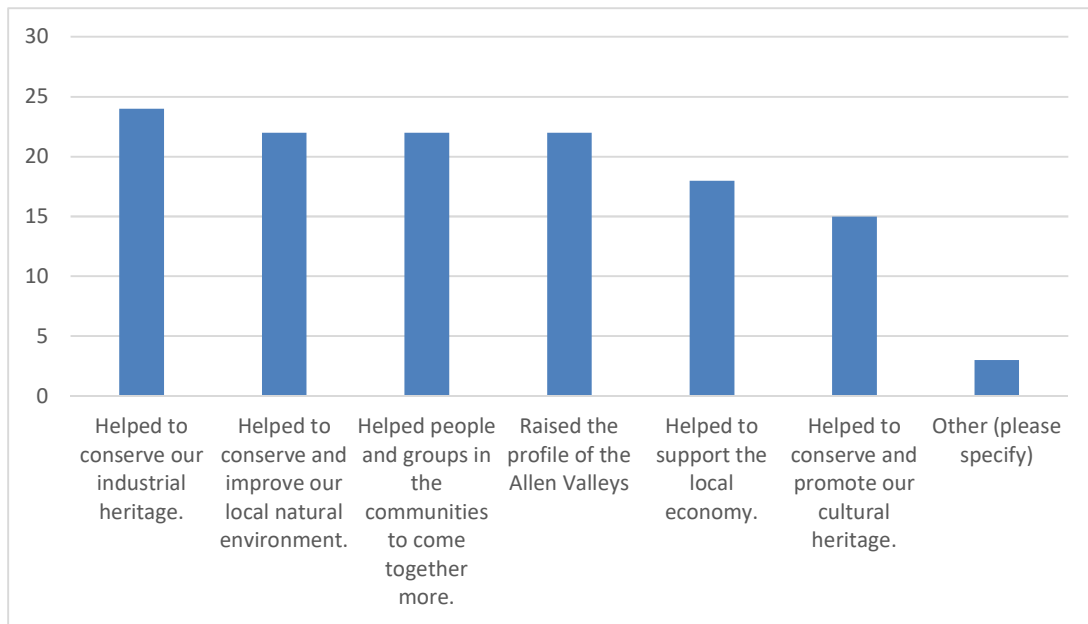
## 2 FINDINGS

This section summarises the responses gained from the interviews; there is no interpretation or analysis of these responses here. Please be aware that we did not gather responses on every key topic from each interviewee; in some cases, only certain questions were asked; in other cases, the interviewee chose not to give an answer to all the topics they were questioned about. The responses have been grouped to present an aggregation of the points based on the evaluation’s key topics, rather than each individual response.

### 2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

#### 2.1.1 OVERVIEW

The online survey aimed at members of local community groups asked respondents to give their views about the difference they thought the Scheme is making so far for the Allen Valleys environment, heritage and communities, across a range of different aspects. The data show that respondents see progress across the board.



Staff, partner and trainees were asked to give their summary views of the Scheme’s progress towards meeting HLF’s outcomes, in terms of whether the Scheme was doing really well so far, was on the way, or not doing so well. The responses show that respondents think that the greatest progress is for people and heritage. For people, this is in particular having volunteered time and had an enjoyable experience, but also that more people and a wider range of people have engaged with heritage. For heritage, this is particularly that the categories of better management, in better condition and better identified/recorded. There is a fairly even spread of views that the Scheme is on the way with most of the intended HLF outcomes. For five of these outcomes, one respondent each felt that the Scheme is not doing so well.

	Really well so far	On the way	Not doing so well
<b>For heritage:</b>			
Better managed	7	5	
Better condition	8	4	
Better interpreted and explained	3	7	1
Better identified / recorded	7	4	
<b>For people:</b>			
Developed skills	7	4	
Learnt about heritage	3	7	1
Changed their attitudes/ behaviour	3	3	
Had an enjoyable experience	10	1	
Volunteered time	10		
<b>For communities:</b>			
Environmental impacts reduced	1	7	1
More people and a wider range of people have engaged with heritage	7	4	
The local area/ community is a better place to live, work or visit	4	7	
Economy boosted	2	7	1
Your organisation is more resilient	2	3	1

### 2.1.2 PROGRESS TOWARDS HLF'S OUTCOMES FOR HERITAGE

HLF's intended outcomes for heritage are that heritage will be better managed, in better condition, better interpreted and explained, and identified and recorded.

Respondents referred to specific improvements for heritage:

- Scrub clearing around the smelt mill
- The hearse house restoration
- Riverside footpath repairs and improvements
- Deneholme Woods management plan and volunteer work
- River erosion prevention work
- Rush management for wading and ground nesting birds
- Hay meadow improvements
- Tree and hedgerow planting, and associated management plans
- LIDAR information
- Archiving, scanning lots of local photographs
- Peat restoration

*“Great improvements are being made and things saved for future generations...the Edwardian pleasure grounds are fantastic for local people and visitors”.*

*“...Done a lot to raise the profile of the trail”. [Isaac's tea trail]*

*“A key thing has been helping us to explore what assets we have; both the physical assets such as derelict buildings, but also historical assets, for example cataloguing through the archive work which otherwise would have languished unseen”.*

*[Hearse House] “Transformed out of all recognition”.*

*[Allen Mills] “Has been expanding our knowledge of what went on on the site; it's much easier to SEE the industrial heritage”.*

### 2.1.3 PROGRESS TOWARDS HLF'S OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE

HLF's intended outcomes for people are that they will have developed skills, learnt about heritage, changed their attitudes and/or behavior, had an enjoyable experience and volunteered time.

### **Skills development**

Respondents referred to their own skills development and for others across a range of topics:

- Lime mortar pointing
- Learning about dark skies and astronomy
- The musical traditions of the area
- Local history archiving
- Practical woodland management
- Festival planning and delivery
- Heritage interpretation
- Knowledge about red squirrel management, grey squirrel trapping
- Personal development.

In the online survey, seven respondents noted that they had learnt new skills, of whom four gave details: archive research, lime mortar pointing, general local history knowledge.

### **Learning about heritage**

The Scheme has provided targeted opportunities for learning about heritage, e.g. skills training days, LIDAR evening talk, presentations to interested groups, but also more informally through involvement in activities e.g. arts workshops, volunteering activities, the Folk Festival.

*“I know the area quite well, but it’s introduced me to new places”.*

*“It’s introduced me to new music”.*

Within the online survey, respondents were asked about the difference the Scheme had made to them. Of the top four ranking options, learning about heritage featured in three, i.e. getting to know more about the industrial heritage of the area (n=13), the natural history of the area (n=12), and the community history (n=11).

### **Having an enjoyable experience**

When asked, respondents were overwhelmingly positive about having enjoyed their experiences with the Scheme. 28 out of 29 respondents to the online survey said that they had really enjoyed or quite enjoyed themselves, and interviewees felt similarly positive.



*“Everyone’s friendly and inclusive. They’re keen and helpful. I’ve felt involved in developing the activity”.*

*“It’s been really good fun, I’ve loved it”.*

*“I’ve loved the physical activity and being outside, having done quite a deskbound job”.*

*“I’ve enjoyed it very much. The Scheme’s been a sounding board for new ideas.....helped me to take it forward”.*

### **Volunteered time**

On the whole, volunteers were very positive about their experiences, covering a wide variety of roles and activities. It was noted that the community tended to have an attitude of self-reliance, with people already making many things happen through voluntary input. However, respondents commented that the Scheme had provided new opportunities, as well as support for individuals and groups.

#### **2.1.4 PROGRESS TOWARDS HLF’S OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES**

HLF’s intended outcomes for communities are that environmental impacts will be reduced, more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage, the local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit, the local economy will be boosted and organisations will be more resilient.

### **Engagement with heritage**

Respondents were positive about how the Scheme has enabled more people to engage with heritage, through the variety of activities and opportunities provided. Comments about the Folk Festival in particular described engagement from a variety of people, e.g.

*“Brought in a diverse audience, from all ages and backgrounds”.*

However, Scheme staff noted that their intended target audiences were local residents and visitors, and therefore their work had deliberately not focussed on wider audiences such as the urban populations of the northeast. Within their target audiences, they felt they made efforts to attract interest from families in particular, and from farmers, although more work remained with both audiences. The visitor-focussed work is described in Section 2.2.6.

### **A better place to live, work or visit**

Whilst some of this has already been covered, there is additional information about the Scheme's contribution to making the Allen Valleys a better place to live. A number of comments referred to how the Scheme had contributed to community life, the sense of community and community activity generally.

*“Amazing to see all members of the community coming to enjoy together”.*

*“It got us integrated into the community, got to know people”.*

Data from the online survey shows that the highest ranking response to the question asking what difference the Scheme had made to them was for the option 'Met new people' (n=17), with another 9 responses in relation to the option 'Made new friends' (n=9). This suggests that the Scheme has had beneficial inter-personal and social effects for people who have got involved.

### **Organisational resilience**

One of the aspects of the Scheme's work has been to build and strengthen community organisations, creating new organisations where necessary. The organisational development work includes Allen Valleys Enterprise Ltd. (AVEL), the Allen Valleys Wildlife group, the local history society and helping to create a new astronomy group.

Comments describe how the Scheme is trying to ensure local groups can be self-sustaining by the end of the funded period, and can be in a position to sustain activities begun through the Scheme.

*“The local history group has been revitalised and gaining legs of their own”.*

*“There had been a local history group .... Lit a fuse of local enthusiasm”.*

*“Breathing life into existing and new local organisations...professional co-ordination has helped enormously”.*

#### **2.1.5 PROGRESS IN RELATION TO RESIDENTS’ AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING**

Local residents have been identified as a key target audience for the Scheme. There was broad agreement from respondents that the Scheme has succeeded in building residents’ awareness and understanding of the local heritage, primarily through making the heritage more visible and providing opportunities to get directly involved with and to find out about the heritage.

*“It’s making history more accessible to people....if people can see a range of things, they can see how things relate to each other”.*

*“Very much so, it’s brought to life the musical traditions of the area”.*

[See also Section 2.2.3 which gives detail on learning about heritage]

Various respondents talked about how the Scheme has tried to raise awareness through a variety of methods of communication with local residents, e.g. posters, emails, newsletter; whilst providing opportunities for people to become aware of the Scheme’s activities and achievements, there were doubts about the level of success.

Several respondents noted that the delay in putting up interpretation at key sites would have affected local people's (and visitors') levels of awareness about the heritage.

#### 2.1.6 PROGRESS IN RELATION TO VISITORS AND THE VISITOR ECONOMY

In relation to this aspect of the evaluation, respondents referred first and foremost to the role of the Folk Festival in supporting and growing the visitor economy. The key points raised were:

- Bringing a lot more people into the area, often for the first time
- Financial benefit to local businesses, especially local pubs, shops and accommodation providers
- Raising visitors' awareness about the Allen Valleys and what else is there
- Press coverage.

Typical comments amongst the many responses on this topic were:

*"Local pubs were full, huge amount of revenue for B&Bs."*

*"Undoubtedly it's putting Allen Valleys on the map, people are coming to the festival and Allendale for the first time".*

*"It's showing potential and making early gains. The chief impact will be if the activities can be sustainable in the long term".*

There is some optimism that there is some sort of knock-on, on-going effect for the area's businesses, including suggestions that some businesses are thinking more positively and are becoming more outward-looking.

There were other ways in which respondents described progress in relation to visitors and the visitor economy.

Participants in the tourism business group brought together by the Scheme spoke positively about how it has helped them to know more about what other businesses locally offer, and to get to know one another better. Talks organised by the Scheme about the area have helped

hospitality businesses to learn more about the area, so they can then pass this information on to their clients.

Respondents see benefits for visitors in that there are new things to see and do, that make the area more attractive to visitors, such as Deneholme Woods, footpath improvements along the river.

*“It’s really nice to see something tangible that will attract tourists”.*

*“Work [which is] making the area a nice place to visit”.*

*“Improvements to Deneholme have been very positive. What was a fairly inaccessible area is now much better connected to the village and very attractive to go for a wander”.*

Several respondents noted the strengthening relationship with Northumberland Tourism, which was seen as a very positive development because of the potential to raise awareness and profile of the Allen Valleys within marketing initiatives, as well as to enable Allen Valleys tourism businesses to link into the wider regional offer.

However, there were some less positive points. It was noted that the electric bike scheme had not taken off, and that although the trial was continuing, it was outside the Scheme’s area. Scheme staff commented that the learning from this will need to be fully reviewed; at this point, these include how to make it attractive and feasible for the host business, the availability of suitable cycling routes and associated recharging points, as well as security.

Some respondents noted that they did not have hard data about benefits to the visitor economy e.g. exactly what the increase in spend in local businesses has been during the Folk Festival weekend.

Also, there were a number of comments that it is probably too soon to see what difference the Scheme’s work for businesses has made overall, although expectations were broadly positive.

*“Starting the groundwork, things haven’t had time to take effect yet. It takes time to trickle through. Definitely on the way”.*

*“Too soon to tell but putting in place the foundations. Another year or two, as the interpretation isn’t in place yet”.*

## **2.2 LEGACY – WHAT NEXT?**

### **2.2.1 AIMS FOR LEGACY**

Respondents to the evaluation described their aspirations for legacy for the Scheme in terms of maintaining the heritage features that have formed part of this project, continued activity in and by the community, improvements in the local area, and infrastructure to support on-going activity:

- The community taking on leadership of activities e.g. the Folk Festival, red squirrel project.
- People continuing to volunteer, including children and young people as the future of the community.
- Having self-reliant community groups, with on-going volunteering and income generation e.g. local tourism group, Festival with a break-even budget, AVEL’s potential hydro scheme.
- Close co-operation between active community groups, e.g. AVEL and Fawside, and with relevant local organisations e.g. the AONB Partnership.
- Income streams to support further activities.
- Heritage assets left in an improved condition, with long-term management plans and people capable and willing to take these forwards.
- The area being known as a visitor destination, with increasing numbers of visitors.
- A stronger local economy, particularly through visitors and tourism.
- A sense of pride in the area.
- Having a website in place and being maintained, as a repository of relevant heritage information, information about activities etc.
- A paid part-time role to support on-going activities and further development.
- An office in the community centre in Allendale.

### 2.2.2 WORKING TOWARDS THIS LEGACY

At this mid-point in the project's lifetime, respondents recognised that now is the time to work actively towards achieving their aspirations for legacy. Steps that respondents suggested include:

- A project by project review of legacy preparation needs.
- Targeted capacity-building work with community groups, e.g. local history group, AVEL, new astronomy group.
- Building new relationships and strengthening existing ones to support on-going activities, e.g. with other Dark Skies initiatives in the north east and in Scotland, with Northumberland Tourism.
- Completing management plans for land where trees have been planted.
- Ensuring that the individuals and groups taking on responsibilities for activities, maintenance and management have the information and guidance they need.
- Ensuring a volunteers group for Deneholme is in place, with the skills they need for the work outlined in the management plan.
- Setting up a monitoring programme and someone/a group who will take responsibility for review, to ensure that current plans for on-going management and maintenance are kept to.
- Plans for an annual volunteers' gathering, to encourage peer support, networking and co-ordination, and to celebrate what is being achieved.

27 out of 29 respondents to the online survey said that they see themselves continuing to support the work started by the Scheme. When asked what support they would need to remain involved, the responses included:

- Being kept informed
- Admin support e.g. arranging meetings, mailings.
- Some form of central co-ordination
- Having enough volunteers so the burden doesn't fall on just a few people
- Being welcomed into a group.

## 2.3 DELIVERY PROCESS

This section presents findings about the delivery of the Scheme.

### 2.3.1 WORKING WELL

Respondents described a wide selection of things that they felt have been working well with the Scheme. These can be categorised as follows (but in no particular order):

- Volunteering and community groups

This includes the number of people who have volunteered time and their commitment and interest, the activity of existing and new community groups to take forward activities within the Scheme, linking groups and activities.

- Delivery of activities.

This includes the diversity of projects included within the scheme, the success of the Folk Festival (making a long-held aspiration happen, getting a high level of community engagement, bringing on local young musicians, moving it towards financial sustainability, overcoming internal disagreements, attracting lots of people to the area, supporting local businesses), the involvement of local landowners, the enthusiasm and drive coming from local residents, the Smelt Mill project (the level of volunteer input, support from the landowner and local authority, the quality of the contractor), natural heritage projects (hitting targets, good communication and support from landowners).

- The LPS team

This includes the level of support provided, the type of support, the commitment and enthusiasm they have shown, their willingness to help, listening to people, siting themselves at the heart of the Scheme area and being available to people, the work done and the quality of the Scheme trainees.

- Communications work

This includes the emailed newsletter, one to one pro-active communication by staff, meetings, website, staff responding to requests for information.

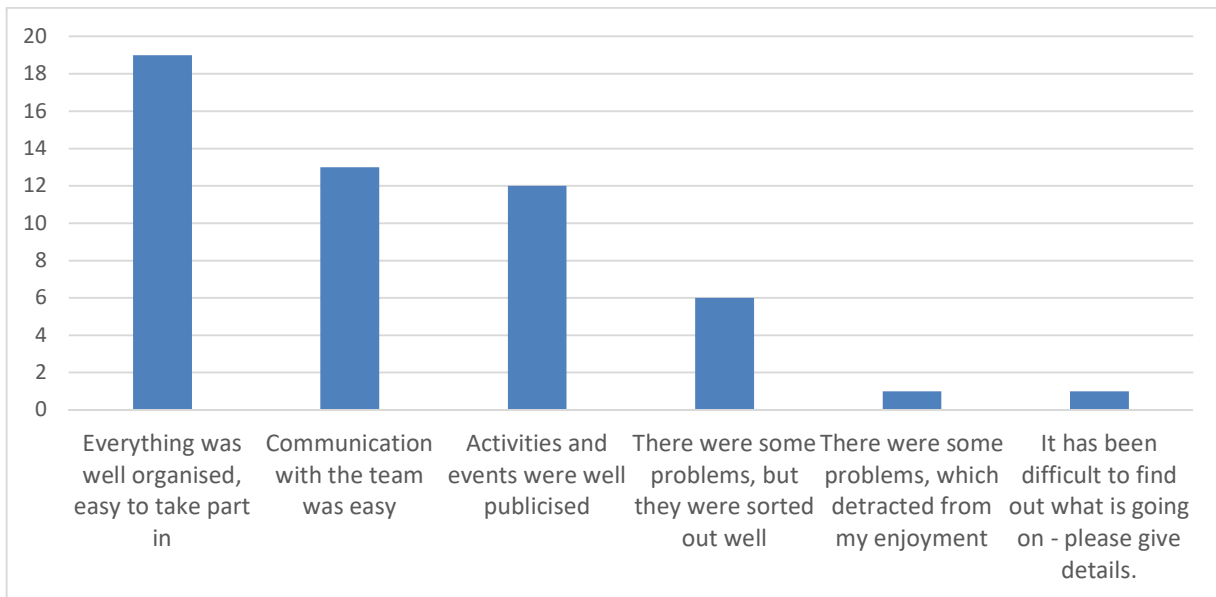
- Flexibility and problem-solving.

This includes being able to move the location or timing of activities, and adapt plans for the red squirrel and electric bike projects.



### Volunteer/participant experiences

When asked about their experience of involvement with the Scheme, respondents to the online survey were positive in relation to how things had been organised, communication, publicity about activities and events. Just one person said that they had experienced problems which had detracted from their enjoyment, and one person had found it difficult to find out what was going on.



This sense of positivity was backed up by comments made by volunteers at the celebration event.

*“Very smooth, getting better every year, people have learned”.*

*“Support from the team is incredible – general back-up, basic admin, getting ads in the paper – never seen anything like it. You ask and it happens. They’re reliable. A great team”.*

*“Management are willing to listen and easy to talk to”.*

### 2.3.2 NOT WORKING SO WELL

Respondents were also asked about things that had not worked so well.

The most frequently mentioned issue was the delay in implementing the planned interpretation work, with concerns about the knock-on effects this has on aspirations for raising people’s awareness about heritage and making the most of the practical work that has been done, in particular for the benefit of local tourism. The cause of the delay – problems with match-funding – was widely recognised.

There were also several mentions about communication difficulties, with concerns that there are residents who say they don’t know about Scheme activities, and staff member concerns about the amount of time needed for effective communications work. Related to this, one respondent felt that the Scheme had not been able to do enough to reach out to some elements of their target audiences, namely isolated families and older young people (aged 16 – 25).

Problems with some of the projects were raised. In relation to the red squirrel project and the electric bike project, explanations were given of the measures that have put in place to tackle them. There was some mention of disappointment with the peat restoration project, in terms of it happening on a smaller scale than envisaged originally due to landowners dropping out, and also with the visitor giving scheme which is not as far advanced as the team would have liked. Delays to the hydro scheme were also mentioned.

### 2.3.3 HELPING AND HINDERING FACTORS

Respondents were asked about what things they thought had helped and hindered the project’s delivery. A variety of responses were given, linking to the elements of the project that they thought had and had not gone so well. These are listed here, in no particular order.

HELPED	HINDERED
LPS team office in the community centre, in the Scheme area, with the team accessible for contact.	Match-funding problems. Weather. Capacity and time.

HELPED	HINDERED
<p>The quality, work and approach of the staff team, including trainees.</p> <p>Community capacity, volunteering, energy, commitment and ‘community mindedness’.</p> <p>AONB drive, support and experience.</p> <p>Communications out to local audiences.</p>	<p>Lack of awareness of the Scheme ‘big picture’, connections between projects.</p> <p>Weak communications.</p> <p>Bureaucracy, for some projects (observatory, community garden, hydro).</p> <p>Insufficient capacity within the staff team.</p> <p>A large number of projects.</p> <p>Procurement processes, in relation to using local contractors.</p>

#### 2.3.4 REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE

The Scheme has dedicated part-time comms resource through an AONB Partnership staff member; additionally, Scheme staff do a lot of communications work, using a variety of methods: social media; direct emails; posters; electronic newsletter; face to face conversations and meetings. There were comments both praising what had been achieved and expressing concern that not enough had been done. Several respondents talked about the difficulties of reaching across their target audiences.

#### 2.3.5 ENABLING COLLABORATIVE WORKING

The Scheme has a particular aspiration to enable and support collaborative working. Examples of success with this were provided, including:

- Partner organisations for the Scheme, such as Historic England and Northumberland Tourism, becoming more active in the area and developing stronger relationships.
- Community groups and organisations working well with the LPS team to deliver activities under the Scheme ‘banner’.
- The Scheme creating opportunities for local organisations, groups and businesses to meet one another, e.g. the tourism business group.

### 3 ANALYSIS

This section presents the evaluation team's subjective analysis of the evaluation findings.

**A lot has been delivered, broadly in line with targets.**

At this mid-point in the Scheme, it is positive that work is progressing across most projects, broadly in line with the Scheme's plans. It is to be expected that things might not have gone exactly according to plan, but the mark of a successful Scheme is what is done in this situation.

**Non-performance has been recognised and dealt with flexibly and constructively.**

The Allen Valleys staff team and partnership have monitored delivery carefully and have been aware of where problems have been arising. In these cases, the Scheme Manager has worked with his team to consider what the options are, and then with Partnership approval, put mitigation plans in place. There is no evidence of negativity or conflict, but rather of flexibility and a constructive approach to achieving the Scheme's intended outcomes but maybe in a different way to original intentions. There is some disappointment, for example with the electric bike hire, but this was a trial, and it is a valid – and useful – finding that it has not worked well for the Allen Valleys. It is a good thing that something innovative was tried, and that an alternative use for the bikes was found so that the financial investment was not wasted.

**Clear foundations have been laid and plans are in place to complete delivery.**

The team and partners are comfortable that the Scheme is on track to complete its delivery within the funding period, and that the necessary plans are in place for this. However, they all recognise that this will be challenging. The staff team's capacity is stretched already, and they are aware of the importance of ensuring work is done to assure legacy as well as complete delivery of funded activities.

**Match funding issues have caused problems, especially for interpretation.**

The Scheme experienced a significant setback when they found out that State Aid regulations prevented their plans for match-funding the interpretation work. In this period of austerity, match-funding is harder than ever to source, and the team are depending on HLF's decision to re-profile funding to enable this work to go ahead. The interpretation is a key element in the Scheme, building on the practical work done to enable people to understand the value of that

particular heritage feature. Whilst the practical work is valuable in itself, the Scheme's aims to help more people to understand more about heritage will be seriously affected if the interpretation work can't be completed.

**Some projects are higher profile than others.**

It was clear from what respondents talked about during the course of this evaluation that some elements of the Scheme's work are much better known than others. For example, we heard a lot about the Folk Festival, but relatively very little about the green engineering work on the river. Overall, the natural heritage work seemed to be much lower profile.

**Communication isn't reaching everyone, but that's normal.**

Communication was picked out as a noticeable issue when discussing what was not working so well within the Scheme. It is notoriously difficult to make people aware of a Landscape Partnership Scheme and its activities across all residents, community groups and businesses in the Scheme areas. In some ways, the Allen Valleys LPS area potentially lends itself well to communications coverage because it is a geographically compact area with a relatively small population, however the reality is that however much work the team do, some people will not notice or pay attention, or have an interest. Having said that, there is room to review how effective the Scheme's work is, and tweak or define the approach. In this case, it seems that the AONB Partnership comms resource could be better used if the postholder is able to work more closely and directly with Scheme team members. Also, a review of the most important target audiences for the remainder of the Scheme period would help with decisions about which forms of communications are likely to be most effective for those people.

**Sustainability post-funding is front-of-mind; supporting volunteers and a Do It Ourselves approach is paramount.**

This Scheme demonstrates a strong awareness and commitment to long-term sustainability, with constant reference (by staff, partners and community group members) to the need to have groups, volunteers and resources in place with the ability to take on on-going activities and commitments by the time the HLF funding ceases. This sits within the very specific local context of a strong sense of 'doing it ourselves', evidenced by the high level of volunteering energy, commitment and time in the area. This is a great point to be at, but it will entail specific work by the staff, partners and community groups themselves to make this happen.

**The area's 'offer' for visitors is strengthening, with more improvements planned.**

A key aim for the Scheme has been to strengthen the visitor economy. There has been a mix of ways to achieve this, incorporating directly focused tourism/visitor work, as well as work which has other direct aims but will have benefits for tourism/visitors.

Work with tourism businesses to provide them with more information about heritage has progressed well and been well received, and has had added networking benefits.

The Folk Festival has brought in many visitors to the area, and many of these are said to be first-time visitors. We have no way of knowing whether any of these people have intentions to return to the area, or whether their interest might broaden beyond the music. Respondents are confident that the Folk Festival has done a lot to bring money into the area during the event, and the hope is to be able to make more of this with spin-off events at other times of year. Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence of the level of additional spend as a result of the Folk Festival, although it is reasonable to assume that it has been considerable for the weekend of the event.

The interpretation to be introduced will build on the physical improvements to heritage features in the area; without these, visitors will struggle to understand the value of what they can see. This is a significant concern for the Scheme team, partners and others locally which they hope will be resolved shortly.

**The North Pennines AONB Partnership's profile and reputation has benefited.**

The Scheme area is within the AONB boundary; this Scheme has provided the AONB Partnership with an opportunity to become more actively involved than previously. There have been advantages for them, in terms of becoming more visible and better known, and the successes of the Scheme reflect well on the organisation.

It would be easy to assume that the AONB Partnership provides a potential host or support body for the continuation of activities after the end of the HLF funding, and this may be possible – and desirable - for the short to medium term. However, the ultimate goal is for locally based organisations to drive forward further work and new opportunities, albeit ideally with some funded support.

**The staff team’s attitudes, hard work and work done are highly appreciated.**

Respondents to the evaluation paid many compliments to the Scheme staff, linking them as a directly contributing factor to the success of the Scheme. Team members have undoubtedly done more work than they are paid for, and all demonstrate how much they believe in the purpose of the Scheme and the value of the approach they are working on. There are two sides to this coin; it contributes to and drives what they achieve for the Scheme, but on the flipside, it puts pressure on them to deliver above and beyond what they are ‘rewarded’ for.

**The Scheme is working in a ‘warm’ context, i.e. a culture of volunteering and a strong community spirit.**

It is clear that the Allen Valleys have a history and habit of volunteering to make things happen in their communities. The Scheme has been able to benefit from this, as well as offer support. This support has been welcomed, but also raises questions about what will happen once the Scheme ends.

As with many other areas, many of the most active volunteers are the middle-aged and early retired people, but not exclusively so, and certainly the Folk Festival has attracted a large number and wide variety of volunteers.

**Social aspects are really important for participants.**

Survey and interview responses showed that the Scheme has reaped clear personal benefits for people in terms of meeting other people, making friends, being part of their community and having fun together. One of HLF’s intended outcomes is that people gain enjoyment from their engagement with heritage; this has definitely been the case here, and is important to remember when thinking about how things will get done in future.

**A sense of the ‘whole Scheme’ – are participating groups as aware as they could be?**

As with all LPSs, this Scheme is an amalgamation of a number of separate projects, for which there is always a challenge of creating a synergy which benefits the landscape as a whole. This Scheme is creating a landscape scale effect through working in locations right across the Scheme area, as well as adopting a mindset across staff and partners of working at a landscape scale. However, there is still work to be done so that there is a sense of being a ‘whole Scheme’

within which each project is playing a contributory part; at present, community groups and volunteers aren't all aware of what else is being done and where their work fits in to the whole.

**HLF funding timescales set a pressure, yet the Scheme is a catalyst for long-term local action and outcomes.**

The ethos underlying this Scheme is that it is the start of much more to come in the area, rather than being a specific and time-limited piece of work. The relatively short-term nature of the HLF funding does not sit very comfortably with this long-term perspective, but it is helpful that key players seem to be aware of and understand the tension. This outlook is important in framing the plans for legacy, so that the emphasis is one of thinking about 'where has the HLF funding taken us to in relation to where we want to be in the future and how can we build on what we've done?', rather than 'we've done the job now, how do we make sure we don't lose the benefit?'.



## 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

### SCHEME DELIVERY

#### 1. Make more noise about the natural heritage improvements

Within your planned communications activities, ensure that natural heritage activities and outputs are brought to the fore. Consider what additional communications can be done to further promote the Scheme's natural heritage focussed work.

#### 2. Sharpen up your communications

With stretched capacity for delivering effective communications, integrate the AONB Partnership-based communications resource more into your delivery through bringing your communications officer physically into the LPS staff team, basing them at the Allendale LPS office during those hours dedicated to the Scheme.

Make sure that you feed back to the Allen Valleys communities about what you are achieving with the Scheme and its projects, so that you can build up a better awareness of the Scheme and the benefits that it is bringing to the area.

Consider if there are any other possible realistic methods of communication to try out, to ensure that all possible avenues to reach your target audiences have been exploited within the resources available.

Investigate what key partner organisations might be able to offer, in terms of supporting external communications beyond the immediate Allen Valleys area.

#### 3. Try to gather robust evidence of the Scheme's activities' economic impact

The Folk Festival should be a prime focus for this, as a flagship of the Scheme's work to support local heritage-based economic development. With 11 months till the next Festival, there is time to investigate the opportunity to offer an economic impact study as a research project to a university, e.g. for a Masters degree thesis. This would be based on a brief drawn up by the Scheme and Festival committee, to be carried out on a non-fee basis.

## TOWARDS LEGACY

### **4. Using a participatory approach, work together to map out a long-term trajectory for continuing the heritage-based development work begun by the Scheme.**

The Scheme has been a catalyst for activity; it has benefited from and strengthened locally-driven activity. The Scheme's legacy is also the community's legacy and its future, so planning and decisions about legacy need to be inclusive and collaborative. A formative series of workshops may offer a suitable framework for developing this long-term vision and pathway towards achieving it. Key elements to consider are:

- The stakeholders that need to be involved in the process and the trajectory;
- Current and future target audiences for ongoing work;
- The organisational structure or framework for working in partnership once the LPS partnership finishes;
- How long-term commitment from stakeholders will be sought and secured.

### **5. Work with current partner organisations key to the Scheme's legacy activities and outcomes to understand their intentions for longer term involvement.**

There is an opportunity for a win-win situation, if the Scheme's legacy trajectory can help these organisations to achieve their own objectives, but this is dependent on constructive and open dialogue at this stage to begin to understand these organisations' forward priorities, and to seek their active involvement in legacy planning.

### **6. Review your early audience development research and your achievements through the Scheme's delivery to consider future target audiences.**

The Scheme has been focussed on two main target audiences i.e. residents and visitors. Other audiences have intentionally not been the focus of the Scheme's work, but the situation going forwards may be different, so it is important to consider what audience development opportunities there are for the post-HLF funded activities and to update the target audiences accordingly.

### **7. Assess the needs and opportunities for local contractors.**

There is considerable support for engaging local contractors wherever appropriate, but this is not an entirely straightforward proposition, e.g. what 'local' actually means – is this just the Allen Valleys, or is a wider north Pennines definition acceptable? As part of

the legacy planning, it would be helpful to assess potential demand and supply, i.e. what activities might be suitable for using local contractors, and whether there are any/enough local contractors with the relevant skills/equipment/insurance.