

NORTHUMBERLAND COAST



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

2009-10 ANNUAL REPORT

The Northumberland Coast AONB

The Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in 1958 and is one of 47 AONBs across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The primary purpose of this designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The area covers 39 miles of coast between Berwick and Amble. Within this stretch of coastline is some of the most dramatic coastal scenery in the country. A host of conservation sites, including two National Nature Reserves, testify to the great variety of wildlife and habitats.

Amidst this striking landscape is the evidence of 7000 years of human activity.

Approximately 10,000 people live in the AONB, mainly based within small, traditional fishing and farming villages, although this number grows significantly in summer months.

In pursuing the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the AONB, public bodies are required to take account of the needs of agriculture, rural industry and the socio-economic development needs of local communities. AONBs also promote sustainable forms of recreation that are consistent with the primary purpose.



Chair's Foreword

The importance of working in partnership, in the sustainable management of the special features of the coast, was never more apparent than in 2009-10. The highlight was the launch of the AONB and European Marine Site Management Plan. This integrated Management Plan is a milestone for both designations and their governing bodies. We have always worked closely with our colleagues in the marine area and across the Scottish Border.

The ground-breaking Plan will deliver our shared goals and ambitions to conserve and enhance this most beautiful and spectacular coastline of Northumberland and Berwickshire with its great variety of colourful marine life and stunning coastal scenery. Our fun educational, Our Coast Our Sea website was also launched at the same event. We also ventured into Europe again, supporting two Young Rangers to participate in Europarc's Junior Rangers international camp.

Interesting research was commissioned to catalogue lime kilns and 20th century military defences. This will facilitate more effective management of these sometimes overlooked, but nonetheless significant, contributions to the AONB's varied historical heritage. An "accessibility audit" was also commissioned which will improve access to our wonderful beaches for all regardless of mobility.

The release of the Geodiversity Audit and Action Plan complements the work done to look after our important biodiversity. It may herald an increased focus in future on this less understood element of the AONB's natural beauty. Coordination of planning and management on Holy Island has been facilitated by a new Partnership supported by the AONB Partnership. It is linked to the development of a bid for Lottery funding for a Landscape Partnership Scheme, which will occupy the AONB staff for at least the next two years.

A long term commitment was made in our important work with partners on the Seahouses Townscape project and in the quest to secure Europarc Sustainable Tourism Charter.

Thanks to all partners and local communities for your contributions to making 2009-10 another successful year for the Northumberland Coast AONB.

Pat Scott

Councillor Pat Scott
Chair, Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership

MANAGING THE AONB

The AONB and EMS Management Plan

The Northumberland Coast AONB and Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site (EMS) Management Plan (2009-2014) is the key document guiding the work of the AONB Partnership and staff. It is the means by which the Partnership seeks to directly, and in partnership, conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB for the benefit of the environment, people and future generations.

On 22 October 2009 the AONB Partnership and EMS Management Group launched the approved 2009-14 integrated Management Plan at a function in Berwick-upon-Tweed. It is considered to be the first such integrated Management Plan in the UK. Over 60 representatives of various government, private, community and voluntary sector groups, each a key stakeholder in the management of the AONB and EMS, gathered in raise their glasses to toast the Plan and begin the task of implementing it through until 2014.

Another first was the appearance on the same podium of the Chief Executives of Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. Dr Helen Philips, Natural England, said that “the Northumberland and Berwickshire coast was a nationally important environmental treasure and was delighted with the pioneering Management Plan”.

Dr Ian Jardine, the Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage, noted “the management plan combined a breadth of vision with focused activities to conserve and enhance the internationally important coastline”.

Mel Nicholls, AONB Officer added “that such a special place required a special Plan. There were two of everything to contend with: nations, designations, legislation, realms of land and sea and sets of stakeholders. The Plan’s development had been a labour of love, with a lot of sweat and some pain, but it was great to have everyone along to celebrate the birth!”

The Plan is available in printed form, as a CD and can also be downloaded from www.northumberlandcoastaonb.org.

The opportunity was also taken to demonstrate the great educational resource that is the Our Coast Our Sea website: www.ourcoastoursea.org.uk



The Partnership and Staff

The AONB Partnership consists of 18 individuals and organisations with responsibility for, or interests in, the AONB (see back cover). The role of the Partnership is to pursue and champion the purpose of the AONB designation, provide advice to others on the care of the AONB, and assist in the delivery of partners’ duties and aspirations in respect of the AONB.

The Partnership achieves its objectives primarily through overseeing the activities of the Northumberland Coast AONB staff (see back cover). The staff are hosted by Northumberland County Council. An Officers Steering Group provides a link between the staff and the core funding bodies on the AONB Partnership.

Work Programme

The implementation of the Management Plan is guided by a detailed annual work programme. Progress is reported at quarterly Partnership meetings and through the AONB newsletter “Coastal Views”. This Annual Report provides a summary of the work in 2009 – 2010.

20th Century Military Defences

The warring past of the Northumberland coast is not just demonstrated by the ancient castles. It is also revealed by the more modern 20th century defences much of which is still very visible, but uncatalogued. During the winter a project was carried out, by Archaeological Research Services, to identify and record all of the 20th century military remains. A copy of the report is available to download from the AONB Website.



Climate Change and Biodiversity

It is widely recognised that climate change will have a major impact on wildlife and no more so than here on the Northumberland Coast. Opinion on the nature and degree of impact is diverse, but there will certainly be winners and losers. To further understand the consequences members of the AONB Partnership staff, and environmental network colleagues in the region, have been working with climate

change experts to deliver a report on what the likely outcomes will be for the wildlife and habitats of the North East.

There are a number of scenarios, depending on predicted temperature rise, which are identified at the website <http://www.ukcip2009.org.uk> Whichever temperature is investigated they all lead to the same result of sea level rise, predicted to be .30m over the next 20 years combined with increased storminess out at sea, resulting in erosive pressures on fragile dune habitats.



Coquet Island Monastic Cell

The Monastic Cell on Coquet Island is high on the register of “Heritage at Risk” in North East England. The Island is owned by Northumberland Estates and managed by RSPB as an important nature reserve for breeding seabirds. Urgent work was required to safeguard its heritage value and reduce the hazard to the wardens. In partnership with Northumberland Estates, RSPB, English Heritage and Northumberland County Council, assistance was sort from the North of England Civic Trust’s project “Trowels to the rescue” to

develop a specification for its repair and consolidation.



Farmland Birds Initiative

The Farmland Birds Initiative (FBI) is a partnership project with RSPB, Natural England, Northumberland National Park and North Pennines AONB. It entered its second year and has made significant inroads in improving the lot for farmland birds. During the year FBI targeted areas along the Northumberland coast that were known to be important for key farmland bird species. In these areas the Officer, hosted by the RSPB, has worked with

many farmers and advised them on the best ways to help the birds on their farm. This is mainly through fine tuning prescriptions within the Higher Level Stewardship Schemes (HLS).

The Embleton to Seahouses area is recognised as holding good populations of farmland birds and the new measures put in place here, through HLS schemes, include wider floristically enhanced field margins, a spread of wildbird seed crops and un-harvested cereal crops, an increase in overwintered stubbles, hedgerow improvements and fallow plots for ground nesting birds.



Geodiversity Audit and Action Plan

A Geodiversity Audit and Action Plan (GAAP) was completed on behalf of the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership and European Marine Site Management Group by Brian Young and Chris Woodley-Stewart, and joint funded by Natural England. Now, for the first time, we have an understanding of the complex nature of how the Northumberland Coast landscape was shaped.

Combined with this comprehensive audit there is an action plan, not just a plan for the AONB Partnership, but a plan for all those in the area with an interest in conserving and celebrating geodiversity on the coast.

The plan covers four main issues: understanding, conserving, interpreting and finally making the most of our geodiversity for education and lifelong learning. CD versions of the GAAP are available from the AONB Partnership and to download at www.northumberlandcoastaonb.org.

Highways Design Guide

Working with Northumberland County Council's Highways Division, work was completed on a Design Guide for the Maintenance and Management of Rural Roads in the AONB. The document provides guidance for the Highways Authority, statutory undertakers, Parish Councils and anyone else who is working within the highways environment on how to undertake works in a manner that respects their setting within a designated AONB.

We will now work with NCC Highways to ensure this guidance is adopted as Council Policy within the Transport Asset Management Plan.

Higher Level Stewardship

As agriculture is the principal land use of the Northumberland Coast, Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agri-environment scheme is a vital tool in managing this special landscape and the features within it. The AONB Partnership play an active role assisting Natural England colleagues in identifying suitable farms and refining the management prescriptions for each HLS application on the coast. This is both in terms of the natural and historic factors and also for recreational opportunities.

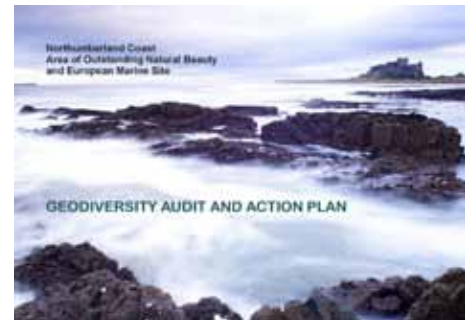
A landscape-scale approach is taken whenever possible. This is achieved by linking existing farms through targeting gaps in the network and by looking at large estates with multiple tenant farmers. Habitats such as wet grassland and salt marsh have been created as well as restoring field boundaries and providing better opportunities for farmland birds.

Lime Kilns on the Northumberland Coast

Lime kilns and their associated remains are prominent landscape features of the Northumberland Coast AONB. A number are very well known: the kilns on Beadnell Harbour and on Castle Point at Lindisfarne, for instance, appear within many iconic images of the coast. Others, though less well known, may have equally scenic backdrops and are just as impressive structurally. All of the kilns have now been long abandoned, but still have the potential tell a story of the human development of the coast and of the utilisation of its resources.

Concerns were raised about the condition and future of many of these "lime sites". As a result the AONB Partnership commissioned a survey to provide a database of locations, to look at the structural survival and perceived threats of each kiln to enable a targeted approach to conservation.

The report was produced by Richard Carlton, The Archaeological Practice Ltd, Paul Frodsham Oracle Heritage Services and Alan Williams Archaeology.





Wildplay!

Working with numerous partners we delivered a week of Wildplay! on the Northumberland coast between the 3rd and 7th August 2009 coinciding with National Play Day on 5th August. Druridge Bay, Low Newton and Spittal hosted Wildplay! days. It has been widely recognised that children, young people and their parents are losing their connections with the natural environment and this was our small effort to help redress this trend.



Young Rangers

The Young Rangers on the Coast Group continued to go from strength to strength guided by the Seahouses Youth Project and AONB Partnership Staff.

The highlight of the year for two of the group was the opportunity to go to the Aiguamolls de L'empordà Natural Park in Catalunya, Spain for the Europarc Junior Rangers International Camp in July. Kathryn Henderson and Andrew Tipple worked on an access project in the park, learning about the habitats and wildlife of the park as well as experiencing the cultures of the Spanish Rangers and the other participants from across Europe.

Back in the UK, the group continues to help our partners conserve and enhance the Northumberland coast, projects included task days on both Coquet Island and the Farne Islands and gorse burning and hedge planting at Duns-tanburgh. The Young Rangers continued to work towards their John Muir Awards.





Sustainable Development Fund

The fifth year of the Sustainable Development Fund has continued the success of the previous years. Its purpose is to promote and enhance the environmental, economic and community well-being of the Northumberland Coast AONB and to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

The SDF was set up with two main purposes. Firstly, it provides the AONB with another means to contribute to delivery of its statutory purposes, taking into account local needs and priorities. Secondly, the SDF has responded to the heightened national role given to protected landscapes that they should be used as “test beds” of a new focus on sustainable development. The SDF is deliberately seen as an experiment, enabling the AONB Partnership to pilot new approaches to public intervention with local stakeholders, that, if successful, can be taken up by local authorities and national agencies outside the protected landscape.

The Fund is wholly financed by Natural England. In 2009-10, the SDF provided 15 grants totalling £50,130 towards a total project expenditure of £4,636,806.

Project	Grant Amount	Total cost of project	% of total costs
Dewar's Lane Granary Restoration and Reuse	£5,000	£4,500,000	0.11
Living The Tradition	£2,850	£5,775	49
The Country Trust	£9,225	£12,300	75
Fruit and Nuts for Alnwick District	£3,472	£9,150	38
Seahouses Festival	£2,500	£6,369	39
Berwick Anaerobic Digester	£3,000	£10,000	30
Farmland Birds Initiative	£6,750	£49,482	14
Craster Local History Project	£1,200	£1,537	78
WATBus	£300	£400	75
FWAG	£1,680	£1,680	100
A Whole Day of Heritage	£1,700	£2,552	67
Low Carbon Berwick	£7,500	£9,757	77
NSSDT Solar Panels	£2,553	£23,709	11
NSSDT Laundry	£1,275	£2,595	49
Cawledge Viaduct	£1,125	£1,500	75
TOTAL	£50,130	£4,636,806	

A Whole Day of Heritage

The project promoted the heritage and history of the AONB through a series of play events and sleepovers. The play events were held in the AONB and the sleepovers at the Bailiffgate Museum. The project encouraged local community groups to interact with the AONB area in a fun way and learn what it is like today. The groups then headed to Bailiffgate to learn about the history of the area, spending a fun-filled night in the museum. A rousing success and one that is likely to be repeated!

Seahouses Laundry

The North Sunderland and Seahouses Development Trust were approached by local tourism businesses to investigate whether they could set up a laundry service in Seahouses. By converting garages to the rear of the Trust-owned resource centre, the laundry now services accommodation businesses, thus reducing the carbon footprint of the laundry. The business is operated as a social enterprise, returning any profits earned to the Trust. The laundry employs three part-time staff, whilst customer and financial management is undertaken through the Trust's existing resource centre, thereby helping to sustain the building and its services.





Advocacy and Partnership Working

One of the central roles of the AONB Partnership staff is to provide advice to others, nationally, regionally and locally, on any plans or practical work that may impact (positively or negatively) on: the landscape and special features of the AONB, farming, people's enjoyment of the area, or the needs of local communities. During 2009-10 the AONB Partnership provided formal comments on 45 planning applications. In addition formal comments were made on Government policy, partners' plans, strategies and policies, and more informal advice and support on project development and implementation.

Holy Island Partnership

The Holy Island of Lindisfarne is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Northumberland. Even though the Island is only accessible at low tide there is never a day goes by when there are no visitors. There are a number of attractions, managed by organisations such as the National Trust with the Castle, English Heritage with the Priory and Natural England with the National Nature Reserve. There is a strong community of Islanders led by the Parish Council and a Development Trust. Not only is the normal life of the islanders affected by the numbers of visitors, but the historic and natural environment is also under increasing pressure.

To improve the planning and management undertaken on the Island the Holy Island Parish Council invited the AONB Partnership staff to assist in the development of a coordinated approach. This led to the formation of the Holy Island Partnership (HIP), with representatives from the community and organisations, meeting on a regular basis to discuss management issues and joint working. Public consultation was undertaken to support development of a first stage bid for a Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme to be submitted in 2011.

Marine and Coastal Access Act

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) received Royal Assent on 12th November 2009. The Act will help protect and manage our marine and coastal habitats by creating Marine Conservation Zones, initiating a new marine planning system, setting up a Marine Management Organisation and modernising sea fisheries legislation. It will provide a much clearer focus on managing inshore fishing activities to protect important marine habitats and biodiversity.

The introduction of new access rights over coastal land will be undertaken in a way that ensures appropriate protection of habitats, wildlife and landscape.

The AONB Partnership provided advice to Defra and Natural England during the Bill's Accession and will continue to do so during the implementation of Coastal Access.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/legislation/index.htm>

National Association

The AONB Partnership was an active member of the National Association for AONBs during the year. The Association was formed in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Scotland does not have the AONB designation).





The Association held its 11th Annual Conference, hosted by the eight AONBs in Northern Ireland. Entitled “Valuing our Environment”, the theme looked at the way AONBs are valued and valuable. The conference reflected our fundamental responsibility to conserve and enhance our wonderful, but vulnerable, landscapes by involving and influencing people – be they local residents, visitors, professionals or politicians. In particular it allowed delegates from the English and Welsh AONBs to explore, and show solidarity with, those in Northern Ireland.

Seahouses Townscape Project

The AONB Partnership Staff provided advice to Seahouses Development Trust, Inspire Northumberland and other partners in the Seahouses Townscape Project. The project aims to improve the village’s overall physical look with long-term proposals to incorporate designs for new seating, lighting, signage and a visual colour scheme. Artist Stuart Mugridge was employed to engage with the local community. As a result of this work, a design guide for Seahouses has been produced which will put forward ideas and designs about potential creative planning routes which the fishing village could consider in the near future.

The project has been supported by the Rural Development Programme for England (which is jointly funded by Defra and the European Union, and managed by One North East), Northumberland Tourism, Northumberland County Council and Arts Council England.

Northumberland Coast Shoreline Management Plan 2

The work, reported in the 2008-09 Annual Report, to comprehensively review the Northumberland Coast Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) through taking into consideration issues of climate change, opportunities for habitat creation in the protection of important assets, was concluded. The AONB Partnership staff played a key role in the development of SMP2 which was adopted by the Northumberland County Council during the year and will guide Council’s policy on coastal management for the next five years.

The plan is available to download at www.northumberland-smp2.org.uk

Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is important to the AONB and the people who live and work here. It also has the potential to have a significant negative impact on the natural beauty of the AONB if its growth is not managed in a sustainable way.

To help develop the Northumberland coast as a tourism destination in a sustainable way, we have embarked on a journey towards attaining the European Charter in Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The AONB is now a “candidate park” in this scheme and we will work over the next few years to attain Charter status.

Most people visit the AONB by car which impacts on the natural beauty of the AONB and the lives of people who live and work here. In partnership with Arriva Buses we are encouraging more visitors to use public transport to visit the Coast. In November the re-branded Coast and Castles Connection Service came runner-up in the “Bus in the Countryside” category at the 2010 UK Bus Awards.

A further example of partnership working in action is the exciting initiative to deliver our message onboard the DFDS ferries between Amsterdam and Newcastle.

<http://www.european-charter.org/home/>





Birdwatching Northumberland at the British Bird Fair

The AONB Partnership staff again co-ordinated the participation of “Birdwatching Northumberland” at the British Bird Fair to promote Northumberland as a premier wildlife holiday destination. “Birdwatching Northumberland” is a consortium, made up of North Pennines and Northumberland Coast AONB Partnerships, Northumberland National Park, Northumberland Tourism and Northern Experience Wildlife Tours. The Fair continues to be a great success and there is huge interest in Northumberland’s wildlife. Several press trips, from specialist bird magazines, were also assisted.



Coast and Country – Know your protected landscapes

Working with Northumberland National Park colleagues the Coast and Country programme entered into its third year and continued apace during the winter despite some very bad weather. Through a combination of funding from the National Park Sustainable Development Fund and the AONB Partnership a wide-ranging programme of events and seminars targeted at tourism providers was organised.



The programme included topics such as Berwick Town Walls, the hidden history of Rothbury, biodiversity, opportunities for nature-based activities and management of large estates, across both the AONB and the National Park. The key aim of the programme is to provide information and resources to enable people working in the tourism sector to act as “ambassadors” for the protected landscapes and enhance visitors’ experiences.

Events programme

Following the success of previous years the AONB Partnership staff organised a series of guided walks to show case the special features of the coast. New for the 2009 season was a short series of geology walks which combined well with the traditional history and seashore walks. The programme also featured the Coast Path in a series of six one-day walks.



Radio 4 Ramblings

During August, TV and radio presenter Claire Balding was out on the Northumberland coast recording episodes of the popular Radio 4 Ramblings programme from St. Oswald’s Way. Claire walked virtually

the entire trail from Holy Island to Heavenfield Church on Hadrian’s Wall.

For the second stage of her walk, Claire was accompanied by AONB Partnership Staff, Tom Cadwallender and Iain Robson and the programme was broadcast later that autumn, with an estimated audience of 1.5 million listeners. Iain shared his favourite view with Claire whilst Tom divulged his passion for cheese, beetroot and strawberry jam sandwiches.

Talking to the public

Spreading the word about the AONB is an underlying and pleasurable task for the Staff. Talks both indoor and outdoor were given by the team to wide ranging audiences from WIs to Wildlife Groups to University students. The AONB Partnership staff also attended Tourism Fairs, the County Show and Wildlife Events during the year.



Expenditure

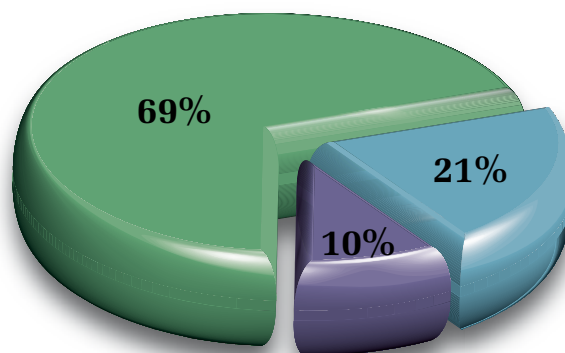
Core staff and office costs	£	%
Travelling & Subsistence	12,808	9.45
Training and Equipment	2,854	2.11
Insurance	189	0.14
Storage	2,740	2.02
Phone	169	0.12
TOTAL	135,499	100.00
Core functions	£	%
Newsletter	3,710	10.77
Website	840	2.44
Partnership Meetings	193	0.56
Printing, Publicity & Promotions	20,963	60.87
Management Plan	4,847	14.07
Events Programme	1,493	4.33
Miscellaneous	2,395	6.95
TOTAL	34,441	100.00
Project costs	£	%
Coast & Country	8,171	6.69
Our Coast Our Sea	13,219	10.83
Geodiversity	2,588	2.12
Young Rangers	243	0.20
20th Century Military Defences	3,400	2.78
Lime Kiln Survey	2,300	1.88
Accessibility Audit	9,310	7.63
SDF	50,130	41.06
Holy Island Project	17,344	14.20
Coquet I Monastic Cell	3,120	2.56
Various	12,273	10.05
TOTAL	122,096	100.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £292,038.00

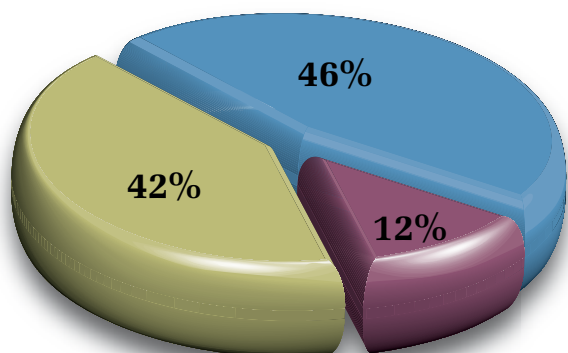
Income

Natural England	£	%
Core Grant	183,679	90.63
Projects	19,000	9.37
TOTAL	202,679	100.00
Local Authorities	£	%
Northumberland County	60,755	100.00
TOTAL	34,441	100.00
Other Income Sources	£	%
Coast & Country	220	0.77
NNPA	5,706	19.95
Northumberland Tourism	500	1.75
N Pennines AONB	500	1.75
EMS	3,000	10.49
Various	650	2.27
Sale of Publications	18,028	63.03
TOTAL	28,604	100.00

TOTAL INCOME £292,038.00



■ Natural England
■ Local Authorities
■ Other Income Sources



■ Core Staff and office costs
■ Core functions
■ Project costs

AONB Partnership Staff

Mel Nicholls,
AONB Officer

Tel: 01665 511207

Email: mel.nicholls@northumberland.gov.uk

Tom Cadwallender,
Natural and Cultural Heritage Officer

Tel: 01665 511203

Email: tom.cadwallender@northumberland.gov.uk

Iain Robson,
Access and Recreation Officer

Tel: 01665 511206

Email: iain.robson@northumberland.gov.uk

Catherine Gray,
Grant Schemes Administrator

Tel: 01665 511213

Email: catherine.gray@northumberland.gov.uk

Partnership Office address

Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership,
c/o County Hall,
Morpeth,
Northumberland,
NE61 2EF

AONB Partnership Members

Northumberland County Council (x3)
Natural England
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Federation of Community Development Trusts
Parish Councils
National Farmers Union
Country Land and Business Association
Northumberland Tourism
Joint Local Access Forum



Photo credits

Gavin Duthie, Andrew Hayward/
Countryside Agency, Iain Robson,
Tom Cadwallender, Graeme Peacock,
Kate Hunter, Gary Woodburn, James
Etherington, Margaret Watchorn,
Colin Hall.

Designed and produced by:

Coastal Colour

Tel: 01665 714 100

email: design@coastalcolour.co.uk



www.northumberlandcoastaonb.org

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

NATURAL
ENGLAND