

# Estate News

The rural estate newsletter from  
Yorkshire Water

**Spring 2021**



YorkshireWater

# Welcome

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## Welcome to our Spring Newsletter

With opportunities to get out and about and catch up on news in person being so limited in the past year or so, we thought we'd share some updates with a newsletter.


Last April Yorkshire Water launched its new Land Strategy, setting out our ambition to work together on *'delivering exceptional land, for Yorkshire, forever.'*

The examples here give an insight to how we're putting this ambition into practice. From our work to step up the Beyond Nature™ Next Generation Farming Programme, to the One Million Trees initiative and work on improving the condition of thousands of hectares of precious habitat through our SSSI work, a huge amount is going on 'on the ground' around the Estate.

In the first quarter of this year we ran our first Beyond Nature™ 'Winter webinar' series, which was well attended – thanks to all those who gave it a go on 'Zoom'!

We're hoping to plan more of these sessions next Winter as well as (restrictions permitting) some farm walks in the Summer.

Lisa Harrowsmith



# Yorkshire Water's Land Strategy

## DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL LAND FOR YORKSHIRE, FOREVER.

Yorkshire Water's land strategy '*Better Land, Better Lives*' was launched in April 2020, setting out the organisation's ambition for '*delivering exceptional land, for Yorkshire, forever.*'

The Strategy aligns to our renewed Company purpose, We're proud to play Water's role in making Yorkshire a brilliant place to be now and always. The strategy brings a future focused approach to land management and how we can collectively give back and enhance our land to solve a new set of challenges, including the increasing threat of climate change and the significant changes to agricultural and environmental legislation. Whilst the challenges are vast and our success relies upon addressing these, there is also huge opportunity to deliver exceptional land for Yorkshire, Forever. Our ability to use our human ingenuity and creativity provides untapped and exciting opportunities to those that can rise to this challenge.

We know that we cannot address the challenges that we face as a society by ourselves. No one person, or organisation has all the answers. We recognise that our ambitions need to be bigger and have therefore created the Land Strategy to understand land's contribution to growing public value and how we respond to the challenges faced.

*"Our strategy will be a living and breathing entity that has the resilience and agility to respond to our changing environments. Now more than ever we need to recognise the strength of collaboration and partnerships and build even stronger relationships with our tenants, regulators and stakeholders to make a lasting change in the way we manage land for generations to come".*

*Gaynor Craigie, Head of Land & Property*

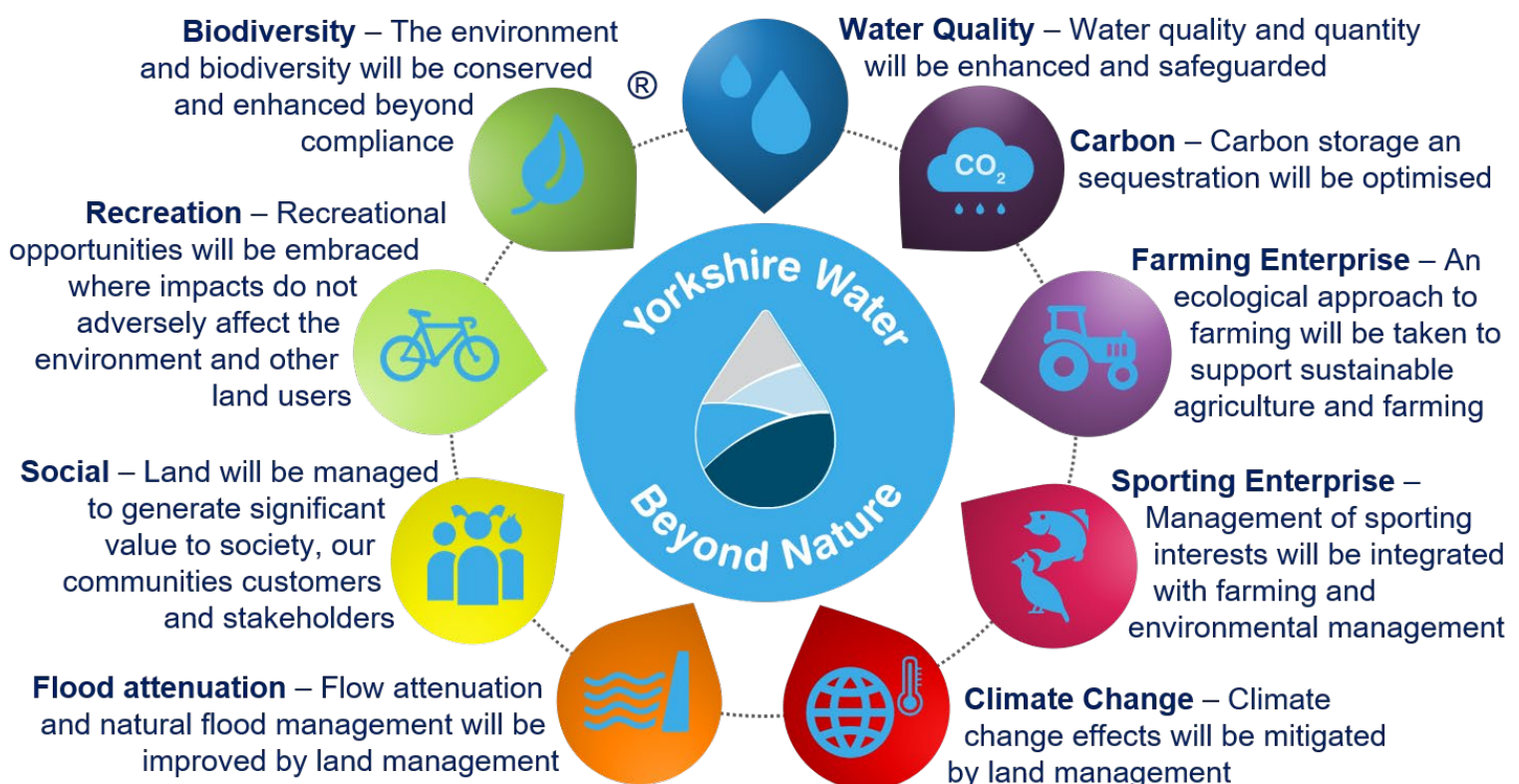
# Introduction to Beyond Nature™

## What is Beyond Nature™?

Yorkshire Water recognises that our land is not just important for capturing water; providing a home for nature, storing carbon, offering opportunities for recreation, farming livestock and delivering natural flood management – all these uses are important.

Our 'Beyond Nature™' initiative focuses on supporting our farm tenants to optimise the value of these different land uses. As one of the largest landowners in the region we are working together to conserve our agricultural land, support profitable farm businesses, and have a positive and lasting impact on the environment.

## Beyond Nature™ themes:



# Implementing Beyond Nature™

## A model for the future

We currently have ten of our farms signed up to Beyond Nature™, amounting to 5,303 hectares. Each of the farms has a plan to guide their farm management that focuses on a selection of nine different themes – depending on the individual farm.

## What next?

Over the next few years, we aim to bring all of our 20,000 hectares of farm land into Beyond Nature™ management, as well as some operational areas and recreation sites. This is part of our aim to protect the Yorkshire landscape for future generations, play a key role in tackling climate change and support sustainable farming.



The Upland Hub at Humberstone Bank



Wildlife & sediment pond



Soil sampling

... and more examples in the next articles

# Welcome to our Beyond Nature™ Farming Officer



Yorkshire Water and Nidderdale AONB have welcomed Neil Pickard to the Beyond Nature™ team, as the initiative's first ever farming officer.

In partnership with Nidderdale AONB, Neil will expand the delivery of Yorkshire Water's Beyond Nature™ approach across Yorkshire by providing one to one conservation and business advice and supporting farmers involved in the scheme to develop land management plans and apply for grants.

Neil has a broad agricultural background with a wealth of farm advisory experience and in-depth knowledge of upland farming systems. In recent years he has managed teams working on livestock, soils, crops (including energy crops), water and renewable energy projects.

He was an executive director and board member of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS) UK Ltd for five years and has also worked extensively across Yorkshire advising livestock farmers on technical and business issues

As well as supporting the current Beyond Nature™ farmers, Neil will also work to expand the initiative and establish a network for farms to share learning and experience.



# One Million Trees

*Beyond Nature™ trees at Angram*

## **Progress with One Million Trees**

Yorkshire Water has planted more than 200,000 trees in the first phase of its ambitious pledge to plant one million trees across its land by 2028.

The planting aims to reduce flood risk, offset carbon emissions and support the creation of a Northern Forest, as well as delivering excellent land for the people of Yorkshire to enjoy.

A total of 213,556 have been planted, with major schemes taking place across the region, including: 116,665 at Gorphey Reservoir, 33,075 at Ovenden, near Halifax, 18,275 at Underbank Reservoir and 14,654 at Thornton Moor

Hazel Earnshaw, countryside and woodland advisor explained: "We're committed to ensuring our land protects the management of water, but also benefits the environment by delivering exceptional land for the people of Yorkshire. This includes planting one million trees on our land by 2028.

"Planting trees in the right place can reduce flood risk, mitigate carbon emissions and boost wildlife. Putting nature-based solutions in the ground now means long term benefits to our customers and society, and tree planting forms part of our aim of becoming carbon net zero by 2030.

"Crucially we also want new woodlands to provide opportunities for people to get out and enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits that spending time in the natural environment can provide."

# Farm Carbon Project



## Climate Friendly Farm Carbon Project

In February, a project looking at farm carbon management on 10 farms in Nidderdale AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park got underway.

The project aim is to get a better understanding of farm carbon management and other green-house gases and support farms to reduce their emissions. Yorkshire Water is providing support to the project through the Beyond Nature™ programme in Nidderdale AONB.

Each farm will complete a carbon audit with the help of Becky Willson from an organisation called the [Farm Carbon Toolkit](#). Farms will then be supported to adopt measures that reduce carbon and Green House Gases while benefitting the farm business.

We are committed to retaining and supporting farming with livestock but also recognise the need to support the move towards low carbon farming.

### Carbon audits

The audit method used by Farm Carbon Toolkit includes calculations of soil carbon. For an upland environment with carbon rich soils, this is important to help get the most accurate assessment of carbon storage and carbon use on the farm. It will enable farmers to focus (if need be) on improving soil health and soil carbon levels.

### Long term commitments

In the longer term, the intention is to expand this pilot, enabling more farms to become net zero or carbon negative. This will contribute to the UK's climate change commitments and the farming industry's commitment to net zero by 2040.



## Farm Carbon Toolkit



# Looking after our SSSI's

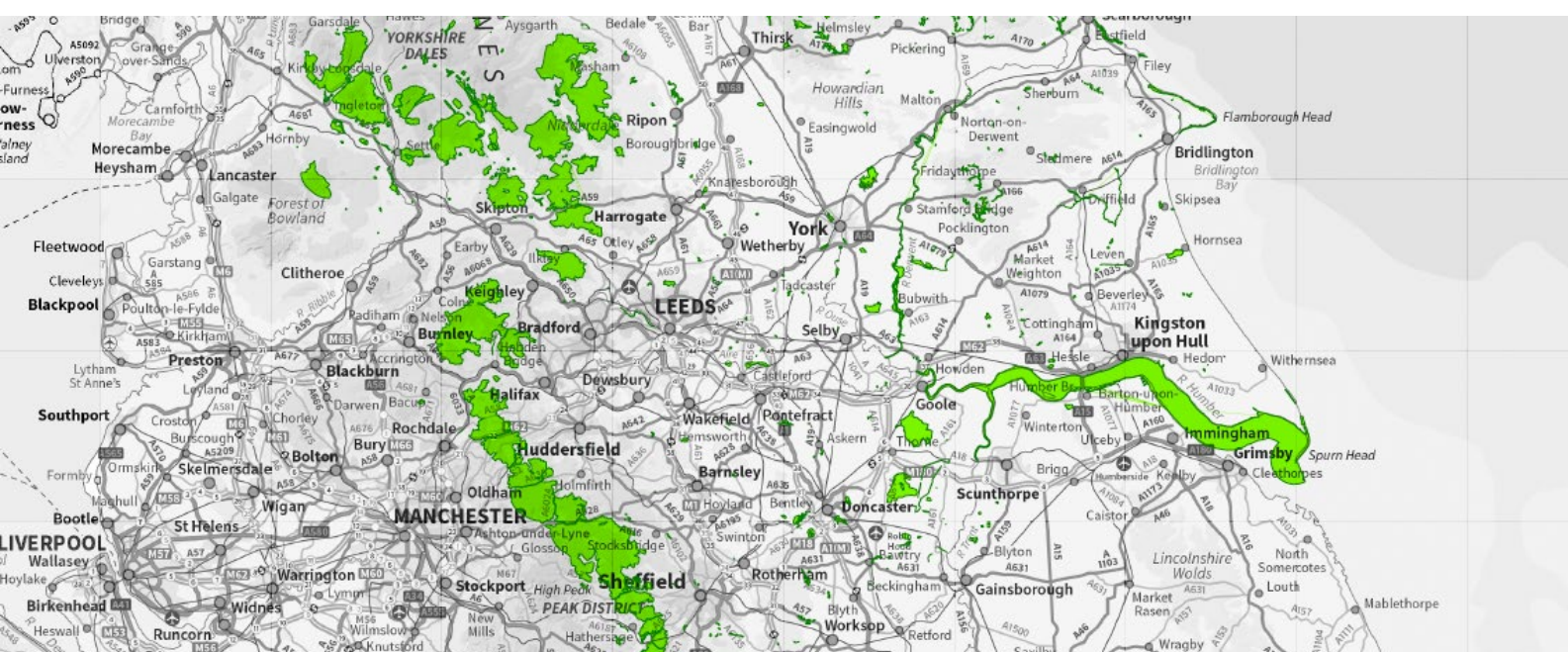
11,339 ha of land under Yorkshire Water ownership is classed as a 'Site for Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI). This is land that has been designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act for its exceptional value to nature, representing some of the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in England.

## Protection of SSSI's

This designation brings with it responsibilities. In SSSIs, certain activities are prohibited and there are legal duties concerning how the areas should be managed and protected.

For example, it's an offence to *"intentionally or recklessly damage, disturb or destroy land known to be an SSSI or intentionally or recklessly disturb the wildlife in an SSSI"*.

Offences related to SSSI carry various penalties, including a fine of up to £20,000 in the Magistrates court or an unlimited fine in the Crown Court for carrying out work without permission, or for causing damage to an SSSI.



# Current Work on SSSI's

Work is currently underway to assess our SSSI condition – into one of four categories:

- favourable
- unfavourable (recovering condition)
- unfavourable (no change) or unfavourable (declining condition)
- part destroyed or destroyed

Specifications will then be developed to improve condition, for example through peat restoration activities, grip blocking etc. We're working with the Yorkshire Peat Partnership and Moors for the Future with the aim of improving the condition of SSSI.



Reprofile & block grips with peat dams



Timber dams



Stock Management

# Next Generation Farming



## **Beyond Nature™ Next Generation Farming**

Yorkshire Water's Next Generation Farming programme gives new and young farmers the opportunity to take on a farm and be guided by the Beyond Nature™ initiative.

### **What does the programme involve?**

The programme was established early in 2021, with the letting of one of our farms in the Washburn Valley, Scow Hall Farm near Harrogate – an 84 hectare Yorkshire Water owned holding.

### **Our First Next Generation tenant**

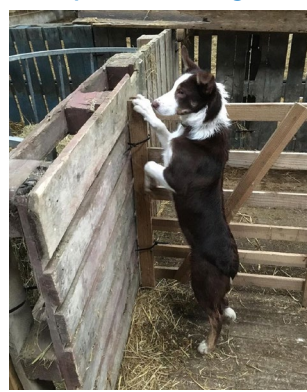
Robert McAneney took on the tenancy of Scow Hall in February 2021, following an open application process with nearly 50 applicants. Robert grew up on his family 20 acre small holding and previously worked on an arable and Christmas tree farm in Darlington.

The opportunity at Scow Hall will allow him to take on a farm of his own as a new entrant into the industry. He plans to keep a flock of Oxford Downs and Cheviot mules alongside other livestock at Scow Hall Farm and develop direct meat sales.

We are providing Robert with a mentor, training and business advice along with a short-term five-year tenancy.

We will then look for a new farmer to take on Scow Hall Farm for a 5-year tenancy, creating a cycle of opportunity for the next generation of farmers.

<https://instagram.com/scowhallfarm>





Winter Webinar Series

# Beyond Nature™



## Webinar series voted 'spot on' by attendees

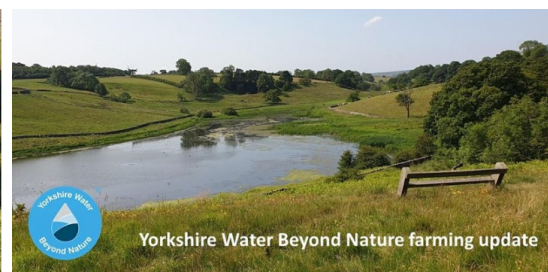
In the first three months of 2021 the Beyond Nature™ farming team hosted three online webinars for tenant farmers. After a year with very limited opportunities to get together and share information we decided to give this a go via 'Zoom'.

We were really pleased with the take up – over 30 families attended each event, which focused on Beyond Nature™, soil testing and the farm carbon project, with plenty of discussion and questions.

Thanks to everyone who gave it a go and tried out the technology. A big thank you too to Neil Pickard and our three Beyond Nature™ farm presenters: Jonathan Grayshon from Humberstone Bank Farm near Pateley Bridge, Rachel Hallos from Beeston Hall Farm at Ripponden and James Ryder from Trees House Farm near Harrogate.

At the end of each webinar we asked people to complete a poll and tell us what they thought and were pleased that most people told us it had been 'spot on.'

We're hoping to be able to host at least one farm walk in the Summer and will keep you posted – then look out for more webinars in the Winter months of 2021/22.



# Managing Public Access

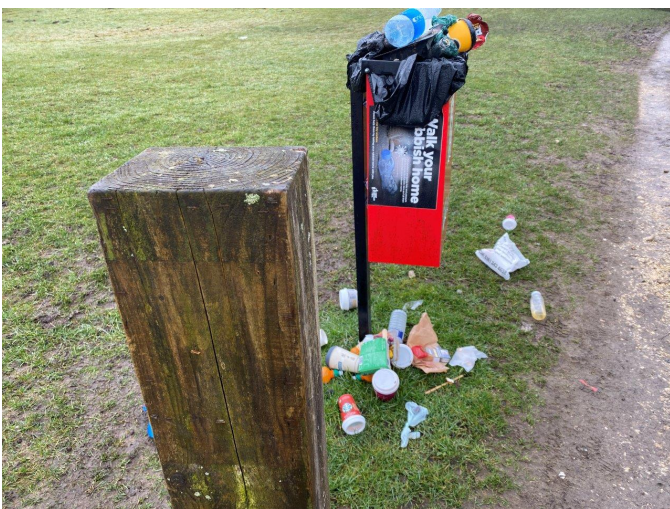
## The Global Pandemic Effect

The Covid-19 global pandemic has brought challenges and forced changes to all of our lives, and this has had some knock-on effects. One of the biggest has been the dependence of people on the countryside.

In many ways it's fantastic that people turned to the great outdoors for some respite, relaxation and the opportunity to forget about the trials of living in a global pandemic. However, for those people that also call the countryside their home and place of work, this brought many issues and problems to deal with. Here at Yorkshire Water we've been working hard to manage this across our estate.

The main impact has been the sheer volume of people visiting our sites which has led to on-site problems such as not enough, or reduced, parking capacity and cars overspilling from car parks. The impacts of this on local communities around some of our sites has led to issues such as restricted access, blocked roads and access difficulties for emergency vehicles.

Litter and fly-tipping has been another huge problem for our sites to contend with, as well as other forms of anti-social behaviour.



*Litter at Langsett*



*Fly-tipping at Scammonden*

# Managing Public Access



During the lovely summer weather we experienced last year, the high fire risk was a major concern and wasn't helped by the increase in wild camping, BBQ's and fires.

Almost a year on and unfortunately we find ourselves in a very similar position and are preparing for the countryside and our sites to be visited again by a lot of people desperate to return to some form of normality.

However, we have the experiences from last year to draw upon and we're working hard on getting messaging out there to our visitors, encouraging them to be both responsible and sympathetic to our sites and the countryside; the Countryside Code being a good starting point. The messaging is basic, and common sense to most of us, but it's these basic principles that have the biggest impact if not followed.

We're also funding additional staff out on some of our sites this year in the form of a new Countryside Ranger team. Working in partnership with the National Trust, we are trialling three rangers who will be covering our sites from North Yorkshire through to West Yorkshire. They will be invaluable in keeping a close eye on our sites, keeping litter under control as much as possible as well as being a point of contact for our visitors. We'll continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders as well such as Parish Councils, the Police, Local Authorities, National Parks and the Fire and Rescue Services to ensure our approaches are joined up and coordinated.