



Winter 2024

# Fix the Fells

*Members of the Fix the Fells North Ranger teams at work in a peat bog at Angle Tarn.*



# Partnership Manager



After a wet summer, our rangers had some respite with drier weather in the autumn as they completed their path projects for the season. We have been delighted to have the support of Westmorland and Furness Shared Prosperity Fund for some excellent work completed on Glenridding Dodd by our Central and East ranger team, which you can read about inside.

Ranger teams, Matt and our volunteers have been working with British Mountaineering Council (BMC) 'Get Stuck In' volunteers on paths across the Lakes. In addition, the BMC contributed a generous sum which supported technical path work completed by our North ranger team.

Cotswold Outdoors continued their support for Fix the Fells, part of a 3-year commitment. We are so grateful to all who support Fix the Fells; whatever size your donation, we put it to good use, and you can read more about all the things we do, thanks to your funding, inside.

The latter half of the year saw goodbyes to Jack and Joe from the West team and a big welcome to Patrick on our North ranger team. We'll be welcoming two new rangers to our West team in January, who can't wait to get started. Meanwhile, our volunteers look to be on track for another record-breaking year, gifting well over 2,500 days to Fix the Fells by the end of October; their 6-days a week work keeping paths maintained is so important.

Photo above: Fix the Fells Partnership Manager, Isabel Berry, working with our West Ranger team.

While our rangers came off the fells for the winter at the end of October, plenty of work continues behind the scenes, to prepare for the 2025 season, with fundraising and operational planning in full focus over the winter. And if you need something to entertain you on a winter's evening, ranger Jonny and I were recorded for the Countryside podcast, and you can listen here:

<https://hefted.substack.com/p/countrystride-139-gowbarrow-fell>

Have a great winter and we'll see you on the fells in 2025!

# Central & Eastern Team



Photos: Before work started on Glenridding Dodd

After pitching, landscaping work and seeding was completed

The Central and Eastern team has been hard at work on several important path projects, including the completion of the Glenridding Dodd path, the continuation of work on Loughrigg Fell from 2022, and ongoing improvements to the aggregate path on Gowbarrow. All these projects have been funded by the Westmorland and Furness Shared Prosperity Fund.

In early September, we completed the final phase of work on Glenridding Dodd, which involved adding around 40 metres of stone pitching, installing three new stone drains, and carrying out extensive landscaping. Additionally, our volunteers completed the installation of 11 stone drains further up the path to address water erosion.

The improvements have already had a positive impact, helping to protect large areas of heather from being trampled. We've also spotted several lizards and a slow worm in the area, which suggests that the work will help both flora and fauna to thrive in the area.

The team then turned their attention to Loughrigg Fell, where our focus was pitching through large sections of bedrock. The main reason for the work was to help guide walkers back onto a single, well-defined path.

Previously, many visitors were avoiding the main path due to difficulty navigating the bedrock, which led to the creation of multiple desire lines.

Loughrigg is a popular route year-round, attracting walkers from Ambleside and Grasmere as well as beginners exploring the fells. As a result, we've had the opportunity to engage with many fell walkers and we've received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback about our efforts. It's heartening to hear how much our work is appreciated and how it's also making the paths more accessible for everyone.

Work on Loughrigg will continue next year as there are still sections to complete. The kind words and encouragement we've received from visitors make all the hard work worthwhile. It's a reminder that our efforts are making a real difference in improving the fells for both nature and the people who come to enjoy them.

# West Team



After completing a section of the Scafell Pike path through Hollow Stones in May, in the second half of the summer our priority shifted to the wild end of Ennerdale, joining the multi-agency project of upgrading Wainwright's unofficial Coast to Coast path into an official long-distance route.

Our section consists of the steep ascent from the valley floor beyond Black Sail YHA to the boundary fence running from Brandreth to Haystacks.

This path has seen two previous repair schemes over the past two decades or so, a reflection of the increasing popularity of the Coast-to-Coast Walk, particularly among overseas visitors.

The most sizeable task was to create a stone embankment to carry the path safely above the fast-flowing channel of Loft Beck at a location halfway up the gill where a 50m section of the path had disappeared, resulting in the path line effectively becoming part of the river.

The original path had been battered out of existence over several years by frequent storms, the main water courses scouring being supplemented by a side channel which occasionally helped remove substantial amounts of hillside.

To prevent a repeat of this we decided to seriously increase the size of the boulders used, which in turn necessitated a hand operated winch with a much greater capacity than the traditional Tirfor 1.6-ton model.

We basically doubled up on things, giving us a harder task carrying a heavier machine to the site. A power barrow helped considerably in this regard, providing a nice photo opportunity also.

Hauling large rocks into position one by one in a sort of giant dry stone walling fashion has been a time-consuming task, again one which will continue next year.

We hope it will be ready in time for the official launch of the National Trail, although many will prefer to stick with the unofficial Wainwright route.

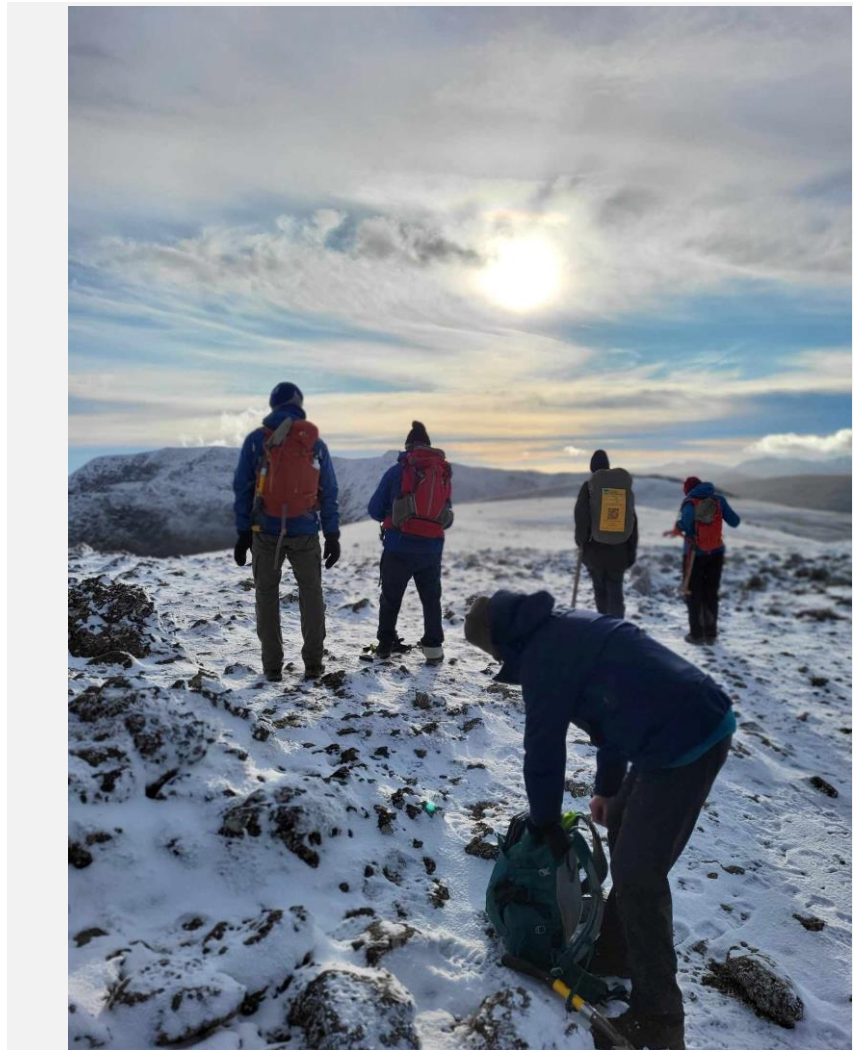
Photos above: The West Ranger team moving a Tirfor winch across the drumlins at Ennerdale by power barrow. Before & After at Loft Beck.

# Volunteers

Volunteers contribute to Fix the Fells in all sorts of ways, both out on the fells and behind the scenes, but their primary responsibility is to maintain and monitor paths. This continues all year round, come rain or shine, with only the occasional “day off” because of high wind, snow or frozen ground.

So how does it work? Each path is identified by number and a decision made on how often it should be visited, based upon usage and condition. This varies from every two months for busy routes such as the Old Man of Coniston to every two years for more remote and less used paths. Several volunteers have the task of checking which routes are due and scheduling them on the volunteer calendar, where any of our volunteers can sign up.

At the appointed time volunteers set out, armed with shovels and brushes, to walk the path, clear out the drains and remove debris from stonework has been put into the path. They also note any deterioration of the path, taking photographs and reporting back to rangers after the event. And yes, we manage to keep up with the schedule about 95% of the time despite the vagaries of the Lake District weather.



When not maintaining paths, volunteers also undertake minor path repairs, assist rangers with some of their practical projects and work with other groups. Highlights for summer of 2024 have included support work on the Coast-to-Coast National Trail upgrade, working alongside volunteers from the BMC Mend our Mountains campaign, and supporting Great North Bog project/Cumbria Wildlife Trust/Cumbria Peat Partnership on St Raven's Edge, plus a host of more routine jobs that free up the rangers to work on larger projects.

All in all, 2024 has been a busy year and likely to break records. We finish the year with some 155 volunteers, and they are on track to contribute 2,900 days for the full year. Both are record numbers for Fix the Fells. Here's to 2025!

Photo: Fix the Fells volunteers on a path maintenance day from Greenside Mines to Raise via Sticks Pass.

# South Team



It was a brutal start to my first season as a Fix the Fells Ranger. Some truly horrendous weather above Levers Water, a tough walk in, and some back breaking turf harvesting. But once I got into the swing of it, it became more manageable. We started the season with a 'stitch in time' job landscaping out a new line up a steep slope above Levers Water.

We made the path more obvious at both ends, putting in some cairns to follow, and some pitching to guide people through as well. We then left the final touches to our amazing volunteers as a volunteer led project, to allow us to meet our workplan requirements.

The rest of the season has been dominated by Coast-to-Coast work and stepping stones.

It started with a large section of pitching and stepping stones through a wet flush and a very muddy slope along Tongue Gill.

We had a real juxtaposition of either being in the slop or breaking through bedrock, both of which are challenging. The finished work looks amazing, and the grass seed we put down has really taken.

We placed huge stones across a deep beck crossing up Tongue Gill, which were then severely tested one extremely wet day. This was followed by stepping stones across the outflow of Grisedale Tarn, and at a site in Far Easedale.

We had some very cold windy days up at Grisedale Tarn splashing around in the frigid waters, but the finished result has been called 'exquisite' by some.

Finally, we finished the year off with a drain further up the path towards Grisedale Tarn, this was to stop any further erosion before we come back to the spot next year to do some more extensive work; and a bench path further down the path, where there was the risk of the path slipping away off a steep slope.

Photo above: "Splashing about" at Grisedale Tarn.

# Volunteer Development Ranger



The shortening days and falling mercury normally signifies a drop in pace for fell work, but this year there's been plenty to keep the Volunteer Development Ranger and Fix the Fells volunteers occupied with over the autumn months.

In September, a little later than usual due to staff changes, we had our annual 'all hands-on deck' event, where we tackle a specific section of path that benefits from a lot of people working on it all at once, usually involving plenty of digging! This year we worked up on the popular 'Band' route up to Bowfell in Langdale and were supported by an incredible 81 volunteers and staff over the three days, achieving an amazing amount of work. Thanks to all for their amazing contributions.



October saw the completion of two of the main path work projects that volunteers have been working on in 2024. The first of these, on the Far Easedale path outside of Grasmere, was part of a larger Lakes wide project to enhance and upgrade the parts of the Coast-to-Coast walking route that pass through the Lake District, in preparation for next year's National Trail status.

It was particularly rewarding to work with both Fix the Fells and visiting groups of volunteers, and to meet visitors from all corners of the globe on this iconic route.

We also signed off on work to protect the route across peat on St Ravens Edge to Stony Cove Pike, above the Kirkstone Inn. As part of a wider initiative to restore degraded peatland across the north of England, it was fantastic to work with partner organisations to develop landscape restoration techniques to complement our traditional expertise in path work, and to see how the work of Fix the Fells ties in to combined efforts to look after our uplands.

Photos: Top & right: "The Blitz"

# North Team



It has been a season of change for the North path team. Caroline left the team to become a ranger supervisor for the South team, leaving big shoes to fill. In her place comes Patrick, who has settled in well with the team. This comes after joining the team mid-way through the season myself and immediately getting stuck into project work on the Coast to Coast path. This has taken us far away from our usual neck of the woods, both at the foot of Kidsty Pike and by Angle Tarn near Ullswater.

Shortly after the last update, we completed the work at the foot of Kidsty Pike. This involved applying the finishing touches to the hard work done this summer, including a side drain, some additional pitching at the top of the path and reinforcing the bench path with more sustainable path material.

Photos: Left: Esk Hause Right: Montage from a video taken at Angle Tarn of the North Team working in full waterproofs in August!

There was no rest as our next project took us to the foot of Angle Tarn in the beautiful area surrounding Ullswater. We completed work on two sections of path. Firstly, we widened a section of path that was previously flowing with water; to then make this a sustainable line we created a side drain and topped the path with good path material, whilst also landscaping to prevent people from using the side paths created from erosion on the path.

Our second piece of work by Angle Tarn included a tricky section of pitching to allow for access through a peat bog. The previous pitching had sunken into the bog, leaving us with the task of creating a new line whilst also maintaining the hydrology of the peat bog. We also created around 20 metres of sustainable path material whilst blocking access to side paths through landscaping.

The constant battle with Catbells continued this year, with lots of little jobs completed with the help of our wonderful volunteers. This involved removing old pitching and using the stone to block side paths that have caused erosion. Due to the lack of stone on Catbells and flying it in being impossible, the team have had to find innovative ways to tackle erosion, mostly involving landscaping. Although this battle continues, we can see that the work done on Catbells is effective and having a positive impact.

Earlier on in the season, we finally managed to complete the work on a section of path by Ashness. This comes after many hours of work put in by our volunteers, spanning back to the Blitz that took place last year. This year we managed to complete this work, involving lots of landscaping, leaving a finished product we can all be proud of.



# LDNPA Ranger



## By Annie Duckworth, Lake District National Park Authority Fix the Fells Ranger

The latter half of the year has been as busy as the first half of the year for me as we look ahead to 2025.

In June I had a visit to Striding Edge with the South Ranger team to learn about the work that has been undertaken there in the past and consider what may be required in the future.

Much of July and August was spent planning the 2025 work programme with our Fix the Fells Team Supervisors.

The annual mass volunteer event, aka the Blitz, took place in September and I joined our amazing volunteers for a day on the Band in Langdale in somewhat mixed weather conditions!

October began with me going to the Cairngorms with one of our North Team Rangers, Martin Mikkelsen-Barron, to attend the Upland Path Advisory Group annual site visit/workshop.

It was a busy month with site visits to all 2024 worksites to undertake final walk throughs, identify any snags and complete and sign off jobsheets.

The Fix the Fells Board visited one of our 2024 work sites at Glenridding Dodd to see the exceptional work carried out by our Central & Eastern Team which you can read more about above.

Our Volunteer Mentor thank you event took place at the beginning of November with our Mentors meeting up to share their experiences.

Our staff end of season gathering also took place in November with a visit to Honister Slate Mine. The entire Fix the Fells staff team spent the day together catching up on what each team had been doing during another busy season.

December is always a busy month and even Storm Darrugh couldn't stop our Volunteers' Christmas Bash Weekend taking place in Borrowdale with the annual Christmas meal and quiz at Newlands Activity Centre.

So, another busy year for me at Fix the Fells! I am looking forward to the challenges and triumphs that 2025 will bring.

Photos: Left: On a site visit with the North Ranger Team. Right: End of season at Honister Slate Mine.

### Leave a Gift in Your Will

Your support is vital to the conservation of our Lakeland fells and is making a huge difference, but our conservation needs are ongoing. Leaving a gift to Fix the Fells in your will could help protect this iconic landscape for generations to come.

Thank you

More information: [Gifts in wills | National Trust](#)

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Fix the Fells is a partnership between:

