

# LIVING WILD AT KIELDER

*Celebrating our achievements*





# INTRODUCTION

‘Living Wild at Kielder’ was created to celebrate Kielder Water & Forest Park’s amazing wildlife, giving visitors and local stakeholders opportunities to enjoy, learn, share and immerse themselves in nature.

The project’s aims were to:

Enable more people of all ages to enjoy and learn about the special wildlife and natural environment of Kielder Water & Forest Park.

Utilise the special environment to attract more visitors who will stay longer.

Ensure the protection of special wildlife and habitats.

This £1½ million project was made possible by National Lottery players and a £336,300 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund). It is a partnership project delivered by Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Northumbrian Water, Forestry England and the Environment Agency, with support from Newcastle University, Northumberland National Park Authority and The Bartlett School of Architecture.

# HEADLINE RESULTS

- Over 19,000 people have learnt about Kielder’s natural heritage through face to face engagement
- At least 28,000 visitors have developed a greater understanding about Kielder’s natural heritage through active engagement with nature
- More than 110,000 visitors have developed a greater awareness about Kielder’s wildlife through digital or physical interpretation or face-to-face engagement
- 125 volunteers have been involved in the project



# ENHANCING THE WILDLIFE OFFER

The project has created new and enhanced attractions, trails and facilities for visitors:

## Tower Knowe exhibition

A new wildlife themed exhibition was created at Tower Knowe exhibition incorporating interactive elements, films and attractive interpretation panels.



## Bakethin Nature Reserve

A new hide and visitor welcome point were created at Bakethin Nature Reserve, designed and built by Newcastle University architecture students. Bakethin Hide comprises two spacious, timber-built, hexagonal pods, which are fully accessible and feature information on the birds and animals that are likely to be seen throughout the year.



The students gained great value from being involved in the project: “I set my heart on doing this module. It’s getting out of the studio, seeing the whole process from drawing to building it yourself. Architects don’t often get to do this.” (Student)

The Welcome Point provides seating and shelter, along with orientation panels and information on Kielder’s wildlife.



# ENHANCING THE WILDLIFE OFFER

A number of interesting features have been created along the new Bakethin ‘wild walk’. At Bakethin Dipping Pond, there is a now a series of brass rubbing plaques on the pond rail featuring some of the creatures visitors may see here throughout the year. A wildlife themed bench has been carved by chainsaw sculptor Tommy Craggs and the peaceful ‘wild it up’ clearing provides multi-sensory interaction, combining sight, sound and touch in the forest, just off the main footpath.



New tourism road signs have been installed to help visitors find the nature reserve more easily.

## Nature trails

New and enhanced nature trails have been created starting from Tower Knowe, Hawkhope and Kielder Castle. These include new interpretation panels, way marking and, where required, path improvements.



We also worked with local communities in Falstone, Greenhaugh and Stonehaugh to create new and enhanced nature trails, delivering path improvements and new interpretation boards.

## Plashetts Rising

A sculptural bird perch was commissioned in conjunction with Kielder Art & Architecture programme. Created by FleaFolly Architects, Plashetts Rising was designed and developed with an ornithologist and used the nearby and now-flooded Plashetts Quarry as its inspiration.



## Kielder Salmon Centre

During the course of the project, the Environment Agency refurbished the Kielder Salmon Centre, providing a more interactive experience for visitors and allowing them to get up close with the salmon and other species the centre aims to protect.

## Visitor Information

A saleable “Wild Walks” pack has been produced. Each leaflet includes a clear route map, route description and facts on the wildlife and other features you might see on the walk.

Four family activity sheets have also been produced to encourage families with younger children to enjoy and learn about the wildlife in the Park.





# ENHANCING THE DIGITAL OFFER

## Virtual Tour Guide

All of the new wild walks have been added to the popular ViewRanger app. Visitors can install the free app and download the walks in advance. The app provides directions, a route map, photos and fascinating wildlife information including audio clips.

## Go Wild Treasure Hunting

Six “Wild at Kielder” geocaches have been hidden around the Park to allow families to enjoy fabulous scenery, learn more about wildlife and discover hidden treasure. Visitors can sign up at [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) and download on to a smart phone or GPS system for free.

*“What a lovely walk to this cache. So peaceful. Had walked close to here but never in this spot.”*  
(Geocache log comment).

The wildlife content on the Visit Kielder website has been significantly enhanced and includes the addition of a downloadable ‘introduction to wildlife’ sheet, along with the four children’s activity sheets and the series of wild walks leaflets.



# MARKETING AND PR

Social media wildlife activity increased over the course of the project with a range of organic wildlife themed content and images, along with a number of successful competitions and audience engagement work.

The “One word” competition was a successful example of the social media work. This included a short video featuring people saying one word that best described Kielder. Facebook followers were then encouraged to add their choice of word. Overall the competition reached over 33,000 people, with over 26,000 video views. The randomly selected winning word was ‘escape’.



Public Relations activity also increased during the project. Over £265,000 national and regional media coverage was achieved including features on Bakethin Hide, Wild at Kielder Festival, ospreys, geocaching, and Plashetts Rising.







## EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

### Wild at Kielder

A new Wild at Kielder Festival was held in both 2017 and 2018. The two events were full of activities for all ages. Activities were organised by Trust partners and commercial operators, and there were around 2000 engagements with visitors at each festival.



The number of wildlife activities provided by commercial organisations increased greatly as a result of Living Wild at Kielder, and many of these will continue in the future. There were around 50 activities provided in each year of the project, compared to only eight in 2016, the year before Living Wild at Kielder started.

*"I enjoyed learning what nature can provide, different methods of making shelters, very useful to learn about knots & making a fire."* (Family bushcraft participant).

### Osprey Watch

The Osprey Watch season was extended running from mid-April to mid-August. The experience was enhanced with an Osprey Watch Assistant, new interpretation and more powerful telescopes. There were 60 viewing days in 2017 and 45 in 2018, with a total of 13,627 people taking part over the two years.

Calvert Kielder ran Osprey and Wildlife cruises in both years, which attracted 285 participants.





# BUILDING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Activity staff from partner organisations attended training sessions to enable them to run more wildlife themed activities for visitors. The training included how to lead sessions on mini beasts, pond dipping and bat watching. A range of wildlife equipment was also provided to support the delivery of the activities.



Local businesses, front-line staff and members of the local community attended wildlife briefing sessions to enable them to promote Kielder Water & Forest Park’s wildlife offer and signpost visitors to new experiences.



# EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

The education section of the Visit Kielder website has been enhanced to make it easier for teachers and educational groups to understand the nature-based resources and facilities available from different partners.

A twilight session was held for teachers in November 2018 with eight Kielder education providers showcasing the educational offer available to schools.

*“Brilliant event, thank you! I will try out some of the new activities and tell Heads of Departments about opportunities.” (Teacher)*

Albion Outdoors organised two Young Ecologist events in 2018. A total of 16 young people were attracted by the themes of ‘biodiversity challenges’ and ‘aliens and reintroductions’.



# EVALUATION

The project had thorough ongoing evaluation. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from visitors, activity participants, activity providers and partners. There is a comprehensive final report, and 2 excellent case studies on Bakethin Hide and Osprey Watch.





**Photography credits: Neil Denham,  
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**HERITAGE  
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