



Leeds - Morecambe Community Rail Partnership

PRESS RELEASE 16.5

A greener gateway for Forest of Bowland

In bright sunshine on Tuesday 23 May new information boards were launched at Giggleswick, Clapham, Bentham and Wennington railway stations. These signpost the opportunity to explore the Forest of Bowland which has been an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for over 50 years. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated landscapes which provide a range of benefits for people and wildlife.

Gerald Townson, chair of the Bentham Line Community Rail Partnership (CRP) speaking at a ceremony at Clapham Station attended by community groups, tourism, rail and local authority representatives commented: "The Bentham Line, which links Leeds in the east to Lancaster and Morecambe in the west skirts the northern edge of the marvellous Forest of Bowland. The train makes it easy for people to visit and help keep their journey environmentally friendly. These areas of unspoiled natural beauty need to be maintained that way for future generations, and using the train helps to achieve that. They offer a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy them and help look after them. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are dynamic, living landscapes that underpin the economy and the health and wellbeing of society."

Lancashire County Councillor Albert Atkinson and Karen Booth, Community and Sustainability Director for Northern Rail jointly unveiled one of the large information signs at Clapham. As well as a map and photographs these show suggested walks, cycling opportunities and local businesses which provide places to visit, eat or stay.

Hetty Byrne, Forest of Bowland AONB Sustainable Tourism Officer based in Dunsop Bridge said "we need to champion the Forest of Bowland and help keep it a beautiful place. This is one of the most beautiful and cherished landscapes in Britain. It needs to be cared for, now and in the future."

"Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are vibrant landscapes. They offer a wealth of opportunities for everyone to enjoy them and help look after them. We want to promote environmentally friendly tourism with information about walking and cycling routes into the AONB so that it remains unspoilt with the train providing the perfect gateway into the area."

Gerald Townson added "this is the start of a positive and good partnership with our friends in the Forest of Bowland AONB. It is hoped that this will also act as a catalyst to develop new friends groups at stations along the line such as we have at Bentham."

There is much to interest individuals as 13% of the Forest of Bowland is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its extensive habitats of wet and dry heathland, particularly heather moor and blanket bog. Also a major part of the AONB's fells are designated as a Special Protection Area under the European Birds Directive.

The train service from Morecambe and Lancaster in the west and from Leeds and the Aire Valley in the east provide a scenic ride en route to this area giving a great day out.