

PBANews



Welcome to our autumn 2025 newsletter. We approach the end of a very busy year with an ever-growing sense of achievement, appreciation and excitement for the future.

Fifteen years after opening our first office in Settle, PBA has now grown to become the UK's leading independent specialist ecology practice. We are extremely grateful to everyone who has contributed towards this success: our brilliant people, our valued clients, associated professionals & suppliers, and our wonderful Yorkshire Dales community – which keeps us forever grounded!

PBA's recent transition to an employee ownership trust now helps to ensure that our values, our people-focus, our passion for the natural world and our determination to deliver outstanding ecology services ever more sustainably, will remain undiminished for many years to come.

Transition to Employee Ownership Trust

2025 has been momentous one for PBA, with the introduction of a newly established Employee Ownership Trust (EOT). The transition was completed by Easter, securing the long-term future and independence of the business and maintaining PBA's unique values.

Essentially nothing changes here at PBA, it's business as usual providing high quality services to our clients, but the future is now more secure for the next 125 years. As founder of the business, Paul remains just as fully involved as before; the trustees are the three existing PBA Directors, three employee representatives and Stephen Newman of Ramsdens Solicitors LLP, who expertly guided us through the process.



Now the dust has settled on this transition, it is becoming very clear that this choice is not only popular with PBA colleagues, but also with many of our valued clients who have sent us their warm wishes and support for the future. We are proud to be different, remaining firmly independent at a time when many smaller businesses in our sector have been acquired by large organisations. The business is thriving and we have had an extremely busy year so far, expanding our range of projects and clients, and increasing our workforce so that our high performance standards are maintained.

Following the transition to an EOT, we are forging ahead and focusing on delivering the best possible sustainable outcomes for our clients, the natural world and our community.

Our Growing Career Pathway



Many employers say that people are our most important asset, which is certainly the case here at PBA. Over the years we have

grown a unique workforce and community, that collectively provides our clients with the UK's leading specialist ecology services. Our people are dedicated, caring professionals who work brilliantly as a team supporting early career colleagues and career pathway students into the profession.

During 2025, we were pleased to have been invited to career events at three local schools. We then hosted five one-week work experience



placements over the summer. Two outstanding local students have secured gap year employment with PBA. William joined for fulltime gap year employment in January, and is now a first year student at Newcastle University. Teddy has now joined PBA for 12 months employment and will be going on to Leeds University in September 2026.

PBA's career pathway programme also supports local students during their time at university. We are very pleased to have welcomed back Cumbria University undergrad Sam again for his 5th summer with us!

Like Sam, local student Tabitha first wrote to us some years ago, when she was just 14, and has been working with us on bat surveys. Now an undergrad at Durham University, we are delighted to welcome Tabitha for three months' employment, as part of the university's year in industry requirement.



For more vocationally-orientated students, we are proud to host apprenticeships. Huge congratulations to both Oscar and Helen who successfully completed apprenticeships with us this year! Our current apprentice, Harry, is also now approaching end point assessment.

When we advertise for new positions here at PBA, we invariably receive a very large number of outstanding applications from throughout the UK and overseas. As a Dales-based Practice, we're very pleased when we are able to help locally-based students develop successful careers with us.

PBA Habitats Unit



As the core ecology practice has grown and the needs of our clients have broadened, PBA now has a well-established Habitats Unit – delivering a wide range of practical conservation work. This

allows us to provide a comprehensive service to our clients, which goes beyond surveys, reports and advice. PBA's Habitats Unit is often deployed to the most highly protected and sensitive wildlife sites in the country.

Practical wildlife mitigation tasks are very wide-ranging; including installing nestboxes, licensed bat exclusion works, fish rescues and pollution control works. A recent reptile mitigation project required the Habitats Unit to fabricate, transport and deploy several thousand specially designed refuges weighing in total over 10 tonnes – surely the UK's largest project of its kind!

Habitat conservation and enhancement works include wetland, pond and river restoration, woodland and grassland management, priority habitats, and invasive



species control. Many development projects now have mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements, and PBA is able to deploy knowledgeable and capable teams to help clients meet these important new expectations of planning authorities, taking a project from baseline survey through to implementing habitat plans.

The PBA Habitats Unit comprises a growing team of well-trained, equipped and experienced countryside management professionals, safely delivering a variety of practical conservation tasks. In-house resources include 4x4s,



trailers, boats, pumps, chain-saws, brush-cutters etc. Our staff are trained to operate a wide range of small plant machinery, in-

cluding diggers, dumpers, chippers and cherry pickers. On larger projects, we work collaboratively with specialist land contractors, moorland restoration experts, universities etc.

We would like to thank the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust which has supported two of our apprenticeships through the 'Green Futures' programme. Based within a strong rural community, we are also able to draw upon experienced practitioners around farming, land management, forestry and rivers.

Sustainable Development, Barrow-in-Furness



In recent years, PBA has been tasked with assisting sustainable development of large former industrial sites at Barrow-in-Furness. The Marina Village plan presents an opportunity to breathe new life into this key area, creating a vibrant community and providing new housing in the heart of the town near to centres of education, major employers, local shops and businesses, and changing perceptions of Barrow as a place to live. Once the complex remediation work is complete, over 500 high quality mixed homes will sit side by side with wildlife habitats – all closely located to BAE Systems Ltd and the new University of Cumbria Campus. The development will strengthen work of the Team Barrow partnership with government and BAE Systems to ensure that interventions needed to support employment opportunities at BAE are transformational,

inclusive and long lasting. Councillor Judith Derbyshire, Cabinet member for Housing and Community Safety, said: *"These are massively exciting times for Barrow, with huge opportunities to improve the town for everybody who lives and works there, but also people who will be attracted in. This will also have benefits for the whole of Westmorland and Furness and beyond."*



PBA's role in this large infrastructure development project included a wide range of baseline ecological surveys, assessments and mitigation plans, including biodiversity net gain provision. About 1600 reptiles (common lizard and slow-worm) were safely translocated from this geographically isolated post-industrial site, bounded by urban development, main roads and redundant docks. With Natural England's

consent, the reptiles were moved to part of an extensive moorland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A management plan agreed with the landowner will ensure a long-term future for these species, and will also help to return part of this SSSI to favourable conservation status.



25 Years of CIEEM training

Paul Bradley, one of the longest-standing members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management, delivers what is now CIEEM's longest-running training course. Paul began delivering national crayfish training back in 2001, in response to the rapid decline of the UK's only indigenous freshwater crayfish species and the spread of non-native crayfish species and 'crayfish plague'. Over 25 years, Paul has delivered hands-on field-based training to over 600 delegates. A one-day training course in 2001 soon evolved to become CIEEM's first two-day residential training course. Initially based at FSC Malham Tarn Field Centre, the courses are now based at Knight Stainforth, close to PBA's offices.

In 2025, these training courses are still as popular as ever and are very often fully booked. During that time PBA has been credited with providing national leadership in this area; hosting multiple related MSc and PhD students, providing guidance and training to government agencies, convening the most recent national crayfish conference and maintaining the UK's longest running captive breeding facility for white-clawed crayfish.



Training and public awareness are vital parts of tackling the loss of our native crayfish and the spread of non-native crayfish. Over the years, Paul has presented crayfish features on all five mainstream terrestrial TV channels, including twice on BBC1 Countryfile (with John Craven & Julia Bradbury), BBC2 Winterwatch (with Chris Packham), ITV1 Wild Britain (with Ray Mears), and C4 Britain's Wildest Adventures (with Bear Grylls). Whilst white-clawed crayfish have sadly now been mostly lost from much of the country, north-west England still supports the strongest surviving populations of white-clawed crayfish in Europe.

Supporting Local Community

During the year, PBA has again supported a broad range of local sports and social activities in the local community. These include ground sponsor at Settle Association Football Club, player sponsorship at North Ribblesdale Rugby Union Football Club and match sponsor at Settle Cricket Club.

PBA staff have helped to raise vital funds for WaterAid through their sporting pursuits.

Our football team PBA Utd again competed in the 'Crowder cup' five-a-side tournament in Leeds, organised by Yorkshire Water for their supply chain companies.



Cantores Salicium are a local a capella chamber choir that we are pleased to support with free printing of music throughout the year.



In July, Rhys and Oscar took part in The Water Cycle Challenge, choosing the 40-mile Reservoir Rush route. Unfortunately Rhys had to retire early with mechanical issues but, undeterred by extremely challenging weather conditions, Oscar battled bravely on and completed the course. Well done Oscar and Rhys!



Rainwater Biosecurity System

To prevent any risk of transferring wildlife diseases, livestock diseases and invasive non-native species, PBA has very well-established biosecurity protocols and facilities. Daily washing and disinfecting are part of the routine here at PBA. To help ensure that we are always able to jetwash our vehicles, boats and field gear, we have installed a new 3000-litre rainwater harvesting system at PBA HQ, which provides a naturally gravity-pressured supply via a sophisticated filtration system.



Even though 2025 was the hottest summer on record, and a hosepipe ban was introduced across Yorkshire, we were able to maintain vital daily biosecurity measures without using mains water. In reducing our use of mains water supply, this new installation is also helping us work towards our 50% carbon emission reduction target by 2030.



New Caribbean Collaboration



As the World becomes ever more connected and integrated, there is huge potential to develop new training and knowledge sharing initiatives with overseas partners.

Following a link first established by a Leeds City Council project two years ago, PBA has begun to develop a mutual training collaboration with Anguilla's Comprehensive Learning Centre (CLC). Anguilla is a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean with a population of around 16,000. CLC's vision is to *provide a stimulating learning environment where education in Anguilla is affordable and where students of all abilities and background are well equipped to adapt to the challenges of education, work and life.*

This new collaboration will initially involve PBA remotely providing pro bono mentoring for student/s at the Comprehensive Learning Centre. In return, CLC have kindly agreed to remotely provide 'lunch & learn' CPD training for PBA staff; initially focused on business communication & teamwork. It will be interesting to see how this innovative new remote collaboration develops over the next few years.

Contact us

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