

PBANews



Welcome to our Spring 2024 Newsletter.

We start this new year with a real spring in our step. We are now twice the size we were before the pandemic and just as busy in the winter, as we have always been in the summer.

So much has changed over these last few years. But we are proud to say that our values, our people-focus, our passion for the natural world and our determination to deliver outstanding ecology services, ever more sustainably, remains undiminished.

We hope to welcome many more clients, colleagues and friends to our Giggleswick HQ in the months ahead. Please get in touch if you'd like to arrange an informal 'catch-up'.

BNG Becomes Mandatory

The twin global threats of climate change and biodiversity loss are now high on the agenda wherever we turn. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Many local plans have well-established planning policies requiring developers to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss and to deliver positive effects from development.

From Spring 2024, BNG will become mandatory for almost all developments requiring planning permission in England. Demonstrating BNG requires an approach to measuring biodiversity. The Biodiversity Metric is a habitat-based approach designed to provide ecologists, developers, planners and other Interested parties with a means of assessing changes in biodiversity value (losses or gains) brought about by development or changes in land management. Mandatory BNG will require use of the latest version of the Biodiversity Metric.

The biodiversity gain plan is a document which sets out how a development will deliver biodiversity net gain and allows the planning authority to check whether the proposals meet the biodiversity gain objective. The Environment Act sets out that development subject to mandatory BNG will be required to submit a biodiversity gain plan for planning authority approval and the planning authority required to approve it prior to commencement.

Many of our clients have been preparing for mandatory BNG for some time. We are very pleased to have helped a wide range of clients already. Whether you are part of a team progressing a development project or a landowner looking to offer off-site biodiversity units for sale on the open market, please get in touch. We would be pleased to offer you a free first meeting to discuss your likely BNG requirements.

Welcome to new colleagues

We have welcomed many new faces to the team over the last year, including ecologists Seb, Rhys, Ben, Rachel and Sarah - who is on a placement year as part of her degree at Leeds University. We are also very pleased to have started our first two apprenticeships this year: business administration apprentice Helen, and trainee ecological technician Oscar.

In the summer we are looking forward to welcoming back our three career pathway students: Sam will be going off to university in the autumn; Jess is currently a Manchester undergrad and Matt will join us after graduating from the University of Oxford.

We also welcome up to four students on one week work experience placements from local schools in the summer, as well as those who have started at university. We are always happy to hear from young people with a passion for the natural world.



Providing Ecological Solutions

Driving our business forward!



You may have noticed the newest vehicle to the PBA fleet and its greener branding. In July 2023, we introduced our first electric van, a Toyota Proace City Electric. With our electricity sourced from a 100% renewable supplier, we are delighted to be providing a carbon-free travel option for our clients – many of whom have set their own ambitious carbon reduction targets.

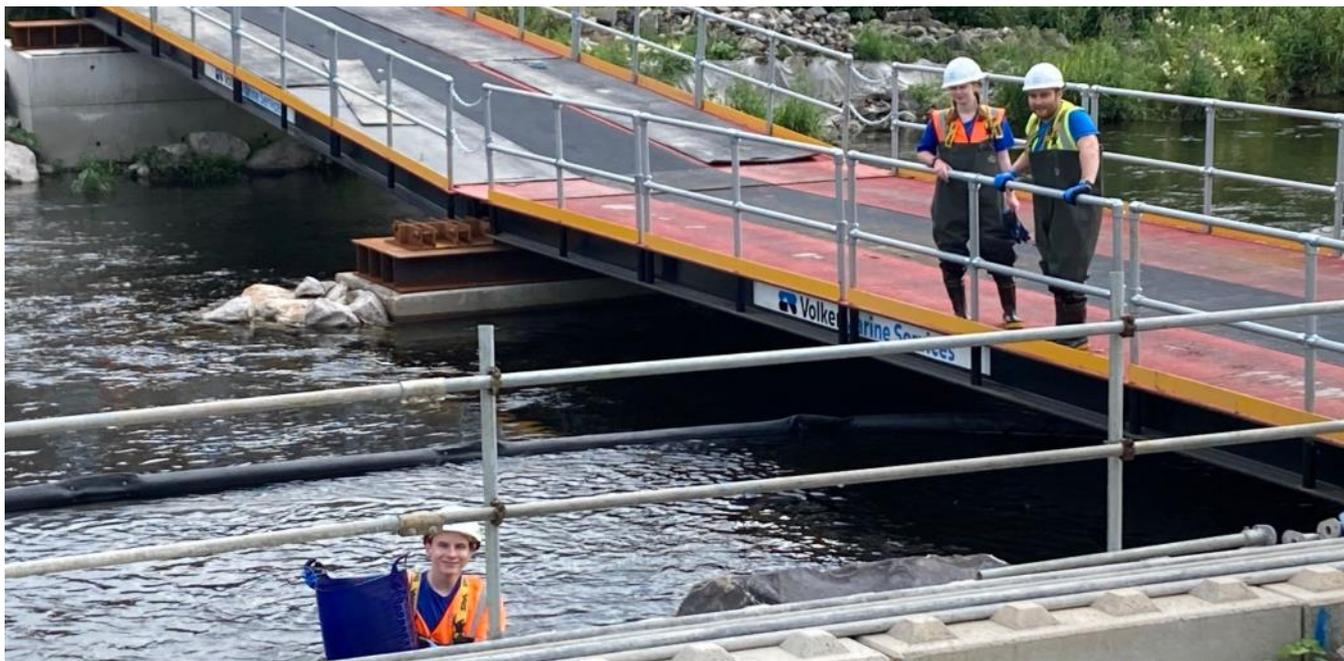
This is just one of a series of initiatives we're taking to help drive sustainability through all parts of the business. We have set an ambitious target to half PBA's carbon footprint pro rata by 2030. All office lighting has been converted to LED. Using our fully equipped AV Room helps our team to minimise the need to travel to meetings. To encourage sustainable travel choices, we offer colleagues a popular cycle-to-work scheme and we have built a spacious cycle shelter at our Giggleswick offices.



A huge 3000 litre rainwater collection tank is being installed - this will greatly reduce our use of mains water for biosecurity cleaning of field gear and will also be used for washing the company vehicles.

As well as reducing our own emissions, PBA is also increasingly engaged in a wide range of landscape rehabilitation projects, which are part of the UK's drive towards 'net zero'. We are especially pleased to be working on a number of large new native woodland schemes throughout the region. This autumn we plan to establish a small local provenance tree nursery here in Giggleswick.

Helping Protect Kendal from Flooding



Cumbria is highly vulnerable to flooding, with many 'rapid response' catchments and settlements located within valley bottom locations. Kendal, in the River Kent catchment, has a long history of flooding, Storm Desmond saw record breaking rainfall on already very saturated catchments across Cumbria. Many properties in Kendal suffered significant impacts from flooding, and/or from impacts resulting from main infrastructure damage and closure.

The Environment Agency is delivering a Flood Risk Management Scheme to better protect homes and businesses from flooding in the Kent catchment, and improve the local environment and community amenities. Kendal is the first area to be delivered, followed by Burneside, Staveley, and Ings. Upstream measures include flood storage. Natural Flood Management measures are being integrated into the plans

which aim to slow the flow of water and provide wider environmental benefits across the catchment. We are proud to be part of the team that is helping to protect Kendal from future flooding. PBA has worked with clients in Cumbria to deliver hundreds of infrastructure repair projects since Storm Desmond.

We are pleased to also now be working on a growing number of climate resilience and landscape rehabilitation projects. As trusted and accredited project partners, we are often asked to help with these important projects; providing help with planning, licensing, baseline surveys, and also a range of practical ecological and environmental services. It seems that every year we witness the consequences of ever greater weather extremes - driven by our rapidly changing climate.

New guidelines for bat surveys

All bats species are protected by law in the UK. Where a project or development is considered likely to affect bats or their roosts, a survey will be required to establish the species and number of bats likely to be affected together with an assessment of the likely impacts. Planning authorities and licensing bodies expect surveys to comply with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) 'Good Practice Guidelines' for bat surveys.

In September 2023, BCT released updated guidelines with new sections on biosecurity, tree surveys and bat sound analysis auto-identification. In most situations, bat surveyors are also required to use night vision aids – our kit list for bat surveys seems to grow longer every year! The minimum period that must elapse between successive bat



activity surveys has been extended to 3 weeks and it is made clear that appropriately licenced surveyors must be engaged for each bat survey.

Although initial bat scoping assessments can be undertaken at any time of year, the season for bat emergence and activity surveys is between May and August. In certain situations the survey season might extend into the autumn, but the results from late-season bat surveys are more likely to be limited or qualified when reported. **If you think that you might need a bat survey for your project this summer, please don't delay contacting PBA.**

Helping pied flycatchers in national decline

The pied flycatcher is a migratory bird, travelling up from western Africa every summer to breed within UK woodlands. Unfortunately, UK breeding numbers of this striking bird have more than halved in the last 25 years. Pied flycatchers have never been known to nest in Giggleswick, but we thought there was a chance we could change that.



Lord's Wood and Kelcow Wood are ancient woodlands within sight of the PBA offices. In 2019, our friends at the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and Giggleswick School helped us to purchase and install over 100 high-quality long-life nestboxes in these woods, with the aim of diversifying nesting opportunities for woodland birds, and in the hope of one day attracting pied flycatchers to nest locally.



Together with a brilliantly dedicated group of local volunteers, PBA has maintained and monitored these nestboxes pro bono for the last three years. Incredibly, the first pair of pied flycatcher arrived in the very first breeding season. Since then, the number of pairs found nesting has increased each year.

In June 2023 our precious pied flycatcher chicks were ringed by members of the East Yorkshire Bird Ringers' Group. These rings could potentially allow scientists to study their epic journeys to Africa and hopefully their eventual return, to nest in our local wood.



Izzy back on track

In August it was with enormous relief and much delight that we welcomed Project Ecologist Izzy Clements back to work after nearly nine months recovering from a near fatal non-work related road traffic accident, in which she suffered a traumatic brain injury. We worked with Izzy from mid-summer making adjustments to the office and her job to ensure that her return could be as supportive and safe as possible.

Izzy tells us that "PBA have been extremely helpful and understanding with my return to work and have made sure I am not taking on more than I can manage, but equally they have ensured I always have something to do. I have become a carbon reduction champion for our workplace and am a supervisor for one of our apprentices and our current placement student. These roles have helped me regain purpose at work and to make positive contributions to the wider team and business".



Izzy continues to fulfil her role as a Project Ecologist specialising in ecological assessments, bat work and encouraging young people to develop an interest in ecology. We are so pleased to have Izzy back with the team.

In February, Izzy received a 'Highly Commended' recognition in the Role Model category of Yorkshire Water's 'Women in Engineering Awards'. Congratulations Izzy!

Contact us

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