

## SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

# What is Natural Beauty?

1ST DECEMBER 2021, 1-5PM, ONLINE

#NatBeaut21

Join us to explore approaches to landscape care and management in the UK at a time of climate and biodiversity crises and new policies.

In the 50th anniversary year of the Wye Valley AONB and the 70th anniversary of the Lake District National Park, **this symposium asks:**

How has the perception of 'natural beauty' changed over the years?

How might 'natural beauty' be perceived in the future?

How do we relate to the natural world, and how can we work better together to care for it? What do we want to gain and what do we *not* want to lose?

### The event includes

- Expert presentations
- Visual art, film, music, poetry
- Cross-disciplinary conversations and diverse personal perspectives
- Interaction through polls, live Q&A, and small group discussions
- Participation from all delegates, feeding into a conference report

### Symposium themes

Natural Value | Renewable beauty | In the eye of the beholder | Artistic framing

Programme overleaf

Enquiries: [rob.fraser@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rob.fraser@cumbria.ac.uk)

Website: [theplacecollective.org/events](http://theplacecollective.org/events)

#NatBeaut21



# SYPOSIUM PROGRAMME

# What is natural beauty?

PART 1, 1pm-2.30pm

1pm **Welcome from the chairs:**

**Harriet Fraser**, Co-founder, the PLACE Collective  
**Andrew Blake**, Manager, Wye Valley AONB

1.10 **Symposium Opening: Kate Humble**

1.25 **Film: 'What is Natural Beauty'**

**Desparate Men:** Jon Beedell & Richard Headon

1.30 **Presentations and Panel Discussion**, with audience Q&A

**'Natural Value' - Crystal Moore**

Climate Resilience Deputy Director, Environment Agency

**'Renewable Beauty' - Steve Ratcliffe**

Director of Sustainable Development, Lake District National Park

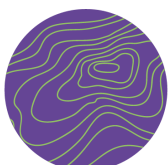
**'Artistic Framing' - Mike Collier**

Professor of Visual Arts, University of Sunderland

**'In the Eye of the Beholder' - Dr Anjana Khatwa**

Earth Scientist, board member National Association for AONBs

2.30 **Break - before Part 2 (see overleaf)**



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## SYPOSIUM PROGRAMME

# What is natural beauty?

PART 2, 2.40pm-5pm

2.40 **Sharing Perspectives, Panel discussion and Q&A with:**

**Sally Marsh**

Co-Director, High Weald AONB

**Dr Penny Bradshaw**

Associate Professor of English Literature, University of Cumbria

**Matt Larsen Daw**

Education Manager, WWF-UK

**Ruth Pitter**

Performer; Black Womens Theatre company co-director

**Neil Heseltine**

Farmer; and Chair of Yorkshire Dales National Park

3.45 **Small group discussions in break-out rooms, plus feedback**

4.35 **Reflections from Howard Davies**

former Chief Executive, National Association for AONBs

4.40 **Artist in residence: Kate Gilman Brundrett**

live-feed of work in progress

4.45 **Closing thoughts and notes for action from symposium chairs**

4.50 **Film: Sinking Sand** by Cellist and song writer, **Sarah Smout**

5.00 **Webinar closes**



# What is Natural Beauty?

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Kate Humble** was born in 1968 and grew up in rural Berkshire in a house next to a farm. She had what she describes as a 'proper childhood' - building camps, racing snails, climbing trees, interspersed with trips to A&E to patch up things when they broke. At the neighbouring farm she learnt to ride horses and developed a lifelong passion for mucking out. At 18 she left school and home, and worked odd jobs to fund a year travelling in Africa, which, she says, taught her far more than she would ever have learnt at university. On her return to the UK she got her first job in television as a runner and met Producer/Director Ludo Graham who she married in 1992. She travelled whenever she had the opportunity and in 1996 had her first travel article published by 'The Telegraph'. That same year she got her first job at the BBC as a researcher on 'Animal Hospital' and then 'The Holiday Programme'. It was on her second day in the Holiday office when she was asked by the programme's editor if she had ever presented before. 'No,' she said 'and nor do I want to.' Kate has been presenting programmes and writing articles and books for the last twenty years. In 2007 she and Ludo moved to a smallholding in the Wye Valley AONB in Wales and in 2011 set up Humble by Nature, a rural skills school on their working farm. They live with a variety of feathered and furry livestock and three dogs.

[www.humblebynature.com](http://www.humblebynature.com)



*Kate will introduce the symposium with her own reflections, and provocations, about special landscapes. She'll consider the impact of the Wye Valley in inspiring the picturesque movement, but notes that we should be wary of trying to preserve or turn landscapes into a 'constructed Instagram' idea of beauty - one that is little more than a facade. Beauty comes from landscapes that work, that support life and livelihoods: biodiversity is vital, as is supporting rural skills and crafts, all of which contribute to the beauty of landscapes around us.*





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**Dr Crystal Moore** is Deputy Director at the Environment Agency. She is the executive resilience and strategic lead for incident management policy, working closely with UK government. Her current focus includes leading the Environment Agency national response to Covid-19 and helping to develop options to deliver actions with enduring legacy from COP26. Crystal is a Fellow of IEMA and is a Director of a renewable energy social CIC.

"I'm a scientist with a curious nature. I believe we are all climbing the same hill for climate resilience and that the exciting breakthroughs will happen at intersections. I describe myself as a climate resilience activist so I am particularly interested in innovation that makes people and systems more resilient whilst also decarbonising all that we do. I recently worked 3 days a week for the Government Office for Science on their Covid-19 activities, focussing on the impactful communication of science on behalf of Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, and how we can learn from the current crisis for other shocks to come."



*What is natural value? The best things in life are not things – so why do we accept the force-fitting of economic value systems which shape the world around us but don't match our human-kind values system? At the mid-point of my career in environmental forecasting I feel both scared and optimistic. If this is not too much of a tension to hold I'll explain both perspectives and extend an invite to redefine and reimagine what an AONB should be in our climate of great change, illustrating how, through the choices and actions we must take today, we can become good ancestors.*



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**Mike Collier** is Professor of Visual Art at the University of Sunderland and is a writer, curator and artist. He is currently working on a long-term interdisciplinary project called 'The Dawn Chorus: A More-Than-Human Culture' with composer and musician Dr Bennett Hogg, printmaker Alex Charrington, natural history sound recordist Geoff Sample, glass artist Dr Ayako Tani and computational designer Dr Andrew Richardson.



*Mike will be joining the first panel, provoking us to think about artistic framing and as part of this he will share insights from his own practice.*

*"Humanity's study of birdsong, whether in the science laboratory or in the field, has sometimes been what writer Rachel Mundy (1) calls 'exclusionary', undertaken within a white, privileged, colonial and patriarchal culture; a neoliberal ideology, which undermines the sense of community and collaboration that should extend not just to human societies but, ecologically, to our empathetic relationship with more-than-human cultures. It is important not just that we need to listen to animals, but that we hear and understand the context within which we listen."*

1: R Mundy, *Animal Musicalities: Birds, Beasts and Evolutionary Listening*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 2018





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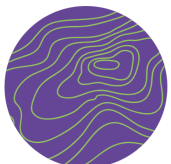
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**Steve Ratcliffe** is Director of Sustainable Development at the Lake District National Park Authority. Steve leads the planning profession for the Authority and advises on strategy and policies, facilitating the delivery of the Vision for the Lake District National Park. Steve is committed to working with partners, having established the Lake District National Park Partnership in 2006. His directorate is formed of two services: Development Management; and the Strategy and Ranger Services. Steve chairs the English Lake District World Heritage Site Steering Group and is a trustee of World Heritage:UK. In his spare time he enjoys gardening, walking his dog, community life in Witherslack and being a family man.



*Steve will join the 1st panel of the afternoon, and under the general title of 'Renewable Beauty'. The Lake District National Park is a cherished place. It is also rightly heavily designated, but it is constantly evolving. Most of our decisions impact on that evolution in some way. Sustaining and enhancing its beauty is pivotal but so too is providing for society's needs - this requires compromise, and hard decisions. Importantly we need to judge what our future generations will thank us for.*



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**Dr Anjana Khatwa** is an acclaimed Earth Scientist, engagement specialist and TV presenter bringing stories about the origins and formation of natural landscapes to life for a wide range of audiences. She is on the board of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. For over 20 years, Anjana has worked in the natural heritage sector including 15 years at the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site where she developed an award-winning education programme.



Anjana is now the Engagement Lead at Wessex Museums where she is developing strategic programming to engage underserved audiences with museum spaces. She is deeply passionate to see more diversity in Britain's landscape, whether it is out on the footpaths or within the organisations that care for nature. Anjana is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and was awarded the RH Worth Medal in 2021 from the Geological Society of London for services to outreach and education in the geosciences.

Dr Khatwa will be on the first panel of the afternoon and will be considering 'Natural Beauty' is In the Eye of the Beholder.

"Green hills, golden beaches, blue lakes – nature is extraordinary in providing us with a palette of colours that inspires us. But just like the rich diversity of natural landscapes, the lens through which nature is viewed and consumed is also equally multi-faceted. To understand the complexity of how nature is experienced and viewed by those different to ourselves requires a transference of mind and emotion. By recognising that barriers to nature are not necessarily physical but within our invisible frameworks and systems, we can begin to understand why Black and Brown faces are absent in our green and blue spaces."





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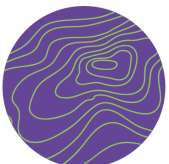
## CONTRIBUTORS

**Sally Marsh** is Director of the High Weald AONB Unit and a Fellow of the Landscape Institute. As a landscape ecologist she fuses an understanding of landscape, history and ecology into a holistic interpretation of natural beauty. In 2016, Sally submitted a PhD proposal to the University of Kent seeking to recruit a student to study the meaning and measurement of natural beauty in public policy but decided to self-fund and undertake the research herself.



*Sally will join the 2nd panel. She asks whether the definition of natural beauty has historically been too narrow.*

*"Imagine if, instead of the landscape profession, the Countryside Commission and its successors had sought help from philosophers or ecological system thinkers to articulate and assess natural beauty? What would our concept of natural beauty look like today? Within the protected landscape sector our projects and programmes embrace a broad definition of natural beauty but in planning and policy, natural beauty is flattened to an interpretation of landscape which is predominantly visual. What are we missing from this interpretation and can other perspectives and voices help us reclaim the sense of broad societal good embodied in the 1949 Act?"*



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**Ruth Pitter** is a co-director and performer with theatre companies for women of colour *Breathing Fire* and *Black Women Let Loose*; and a founder member of *Bristol Steppin Sistas* - a walking group established in Bristol for women of colour. She is an Associate of Women Leaders South West with Activate Outdoors Performing Arts; and was a contributing artist to the Wye Valley River Festival 2020. She is an equity, diversity and inclusion consultant and an avid walker who seeks adventure around the corner of every path.



*Ruth will be joining the 2nd panel and will bring the idea of 'tarnished landscapes' into the conversation. Who predominately occupies breathtaking landscapes? Who's missing out on the benefits they offer, and why? If we are not encouraging and supporting a diverse range of people and communities to access natural environments and if these environments do not fully embrace inclusion, then we should consider 'natural beauty' as tarnished.*

*Ruth will discuss the gradual turn of the dial enabling women of colour to realise their right to embrace, and be visible in, a range of landscapes. She will also speak about the value of urban landscapes, and share her experiences to discuss the power of performance art and community activities to drive change.*





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**Dr Penny Bradshaw** is an Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Cumbria. She is thematic lead for Cultural Landscapes within the University's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA), as well as Programme Leader for the MA in Literature, Romanticism and the English Lake District. Penny is the author of several books and essays relating to place-writing, with a particular focus on Romantic-era regional literary contexts. Her most recent book, *A Literary Walking Tour of Ambleside*, was published this year.



*Penny will be joining the 2nd panel. She'll talk about the way the work of William Wordsworth has played and continues to play a key role in influencing perceptions of 'natural beauty' in both the Lake District National Park and the Wye AONB.*

*Penny will look again at the Wordsworth family engagement with the Wye valley, to explore how the meanings they attached to this place were influenced by contemporary aesthetic philosophies of beauty but then negotiated through personal experience. Their response to the Wye draws attention to the importance of particular kinds of 'associational value' (Readman) in response to 'natural beauty' - including personal history, shared familial experience, and acts of creative remembering.*



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**Matt Larsen-Daw** is Education Manager for WWF-UK. He is responsible for WWF-UK's schools strategy and live learning programme, and previously designed and delivered the global education programme around the 'Our Planet' nature series and the feature film 'David Attenborough: A Life On Our Planet'.

Matt's previous experience includes leading the development and launch of the UK Charter for Trees, Woods and People, and in enabling the involvement of issue-affected communities around the world in advocacy and decision-making through participatory photography. Matt is also Chair of the socio-educational charity HVP Nepal-UK.



*Matt will be joining the 2nd panel. He will expand the conversation out from designated and protected areas in the UK to global perspectives on valuing 'natural beauty' with a strong emphasis on enhancing biodiversity, and ensuring young people are involved in conversations and actions.*

*Matt's passion for nature and community inclusion is powered by wonder and joy as well as concern, and he'll share views on why these remain fundamental to our relationships with place. He'll also have insights to share from his time at COP26.*





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**Neil Heseltine** is Chair of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and a 4th generation farmer at Hill Top Farm in Malham, where he now farms with his partner Leigh. Since 2003, when he introduced 19 Belted Galloway cattle as part of the Limestone Country Project, and primarily to help regenerate delicate and important natural habitats, Neil has been focusing on more sustainable and environmentally friendly production methods. He now has a herd of around 150 Belted Galloways, as well as a flock of Swaledale sheep.

As a member of the National Parks England [NPE] Future of Farming post-Brexit task & finish group in 2016/17, Neil helped prepare the document 'Farming in the English National Parks'. In 2019, he was awarded the National Trust's 'Farming with Nature' award.



*Neil will join the 2nd panel of the afternoon to share his perspective as a farmer, and to discuss the opportunities and challenges ahead for protected landscapes and for farmers.*

*It's a complex picture: how can knowledge be shared between farmers and others who play a central role in landscape management and decisions? How can we ensure a range of perspectives are considered? When we talk about caring for nature, is this the right approach - or should we be thinking about our actions, and how we can best support nature to care for itself?*



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**Howard Davies** was CEO of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty for eleven years (until 2021), a Board Member of Natural Resources Wales and, before this, Director of Wildlife Trusts Wales. He worked for an AONB Partnership for eleven years, the Countryside Council for Wales', and is now Chair and Honorary Vice President of the North Wales Wildlife Trust. He is a member of the IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas and a Fellow of both the RGS and RSA. Howard will be sharing his reflections towards the close the symposium, drawing on his own experiences and in response to what has been shared during the afternoon.



*"For two thousand years philosophers have wrestled with the concept of beauty, and for at least the last two hundred there has been much thought and discussion around what is a fundamental relationship between nature and beauty. With this depth of history everything that the AONB designation stands for is not to be taken lightly. AONBs are built on ground-breaking legislation to conserve and enhance beauty, something arguably more important today than it was in 1949. As we consider the existential threats to climate and nature we overlook the value of natural beauty at our peril."*



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### Jon Beedell & Richard Headon : Desperate Men

With a 41-year track record of creating original, challenging, and accessible street theatre, Desperate Men are one of the UK's most versatile and inventive outdoor arts companies.

Their mischievous, warm hearted work invites audiences to ask serious questions about the world, using outdoor shows and indoor theatre, educational and health initiatives, intercultural explorations, neighbourhood events and science projects. Risk-taking and innovative, they combine contemporary themes and topical content with a passionate yet convivial style.



*For this symposium, Desperate Men have created a film that looks playfully and provocatively at the way protected areas are defined. They will look back to the establishment of the Wye Valley as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and how the boundaries of the designated area were drawn (so the story goes, by two middle-aged white men), and how it might be done differently today.*



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**Kate Gillman Brundrett** is an artist and project manager and director of The Studio Morland. Her artwork is multi-layered where humour often provides access to deeper reflections on socio-economic discourses. She works across mediums, illustrating in super-quick spontaneous gestures, creating large scale installation works and providing graphics for mapping and natural world commissions. Her work is characterised by her investigative enquiring approach and best known for revealing of what she terms her 'Small Wonderments' and simple provocations.



*Throughout the afternoon, as Artist-in-Residence, Kate will be capturing the the themes and emotion behind the discourse on a 3-metre wide whiteboard.*

*Expect spontaneity and quirkiness of line, random content, serious provocations and a fun visual exploration on the key subjects and related discussion.*





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**Sarah Smout** is a cellist and singer whose creative career is founded on years of collaboration and a deep passion for the environment. Her performances are imbued with visceral story-telling, bristling with atmosphere created with looped cello and haunting melodies; and she has appeared on dozens of critically acclaimed albums in the folk and roots scene. Her latest single, Atlas, was released in collaboration with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to raise awareness of Yorkshire's peat bogs and their importance for combatting the effects of climate change. The music video received outstanding praise from BBC Look North, BBC Radio 2 ("deeply lovely" / Mark Radcliffe), and the IUCN, and was shown at COP26 in Glasgow.



Sarah's piece 'Sinking Sand', which will show at the close of the symposium, was written for the 2021 Entangled Festival (through Ensemble programme at Lancaster University), and filmed by Rob Fraser.



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## CHAIRS & EVENT ORGANISERS



**Andrew Blake,**  
**Manager, Wye Valley AONB**

Andrew has 35 years' experience working in outstanding landscapes in the UK and abroad. For 23 years he has been managing the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which straddles the English-Welsh border. This has given him a unique perspective, galvanising activity and securing joined up working (and thinking) across boundaries, reaching levels of achievement nationally recognised as good examples of AONB management.

Combined with his farming background, an MSc in Environmental and Protected Area Management, and through Chartered Membership of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), he has a deep appreciation and understanding of what makes a landscape vibrant as well as beautiful. He loves helping conserve and enhance both.

The lower **Wye Valley** became the UK's 28th AONB in 1971. The area was included in initial Government proposals for 'National Parks and other similar areas in England & Wales in 1931. It remains unique: the only cross-border Protected Landscape among the 13 National Parks and 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Wye Valley AONB is regarded as one of the finest lowland landscapes in Britain, with dramatic views over limestone gorges and one of the largest remaining areas of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the country; and it has a greater combination of ancient and natural features than virtually all the UK's other AONBs and National Parks. However, many of these features are under threat in the climate and ecological crisis, from excess phosphates and algal blooms in the river to tree diseases, on top of tourism and development pressures. What does this mean for the special qualities and natural beauty of the area?





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**Harriet Fraser & Rob Fraser**  
co-Founders, the PLACE Collective

Harriet and Rob Fraser collaborate as *somewhere-nowhere*, an environmental art and research practice. Their work focuses on sensitive environments and cultures, and often involves long walks, as well as collaborations with scientists, farmers and public organisations concerned with environmental work, landscape care and rural policies.

The Frasers established the PLACE Collective at the UK Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas at the beginning of 2021. The collective is a community of artists engaged with issues of nature, environment and rural landscapes through their artwork and research. The PLACE Collective is committed to continually challenge assumptions in a way that enriches discussions, shifts the dynamics of relationships, and offers gateways for changing behaviours.





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## ABOUT THE HOST



**CENTRE FOR NATIONAL  
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**CNPPA - The UK's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas**, at the University of Cumbria is an interdisciplinary team of academics, professors of practice, and visiting and honorary fellows. Its driving force is a wish to make a difference to national parks and protected area management and through collaborations with professionals in these areas to seek to manage these special places for the benefit of all.

CNPPA operates a transdisciplinary approach, which focuses on world-class academic excellence with a global reach, the purpose of which is to inform and influence policy making, develop best practice, governance and innovation of resource use and promote knowledge transfer through high quality translational skills. It aims to attract internationally and nationally renowned academics in relevant discipline areas through conferences, fellowships, research and enterprise projects, whilst at the same time encouraging dialogue with policymakers and professional practitioners.

By hosting events and symposia such as this, CNPPA can provide safe spaces for people to come together to explore complex ideas to gain consensus so that we can manage our special landscapes more effectively for future generations. Finding common ground and being able to speak with one voice empowers protected and conserved areas to address the challenges of the 21st Century. CNPPA is a founding signatory of the Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss declared at COP 26 in Glasgow.



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# What is Natural Beauty?

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

### Historical Papers on 'Natural Beauty':

<https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/publications/historical-papers>

### Landscapes Review

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

### CNPPA: The Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas

<https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/research/centres/centre-for-national-parks-and-protected-areas/>

### Landscapes for Life: the National Association for AONBs

<https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/>

**National Parks England:** <https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/>

### National Parks, Scotland

<https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/discover-our-national-parks>

**National Parks, Wales:** <https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/>

### Wildlife Reserves and Designated landscapes, Northern Ireland

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/wildlife-reserves-and-designated-landscapes>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/areas-outstanding-natural-beauty>

### Nature and Us: A History through Art with James Fox, 3 episodes

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010jn8>

### Ruth Pitter's film made for Wye Valley River Festival: Intrepid-ation

<https://vimeo.com/459877780>

### Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss declared at COP 26 in Glasgow:

<https://www.iucn.org/news/world-commission-protected-areas/202111/protected-and-conserved-areas-around-world-sign-first-ever-joint-statement-climate-change-and-biodiversity>

