

Out of the Blue...

...into the Black



Executive Summaries of the Economic, Life-Long Learning, Visitor, & Social Impacts Evaluations of the Northern Kites Project, 2004-2009

Northern Kites Executive Summary Documents

Introduction

Northern Kites was a partnership Project between the lead Partners Natural England and the RSPB, Gateshead Council, Northumbrian Water, the National Trust and the Forestry Commission, with additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the SITA Trust. Set up in 2004, the Project aimed to reintroduce and ultimately, re-establish the red kite as a breeding bird in North East England, after an absence of 170 years.

Within the first three years of the Project, 94 kites in total were released in Gateshead's lower Derwent valley. The first birds bred successfully in 2006, and raised the first 'wild' kite to be born in the North East for more than 170 years. By 2009, around 30 pairs of red kites were breeding in North East England, many of these in the heart of the lower Derwent valley. Previously persecuted to the point of extinction in Britain, it is now clear that red kites will never return to their previous, extreme rarity status and in this respect it can be safely said that the Northern Kites Project has been an unmitigated success. As well as bringing the red kite back to the North East region, the Project set out to provide opportunities for people to see these spectacular birds. As a world first in re-introducing red kites into an urban-fringe environment, Northern Kites ultimately aimed to highlight the value and benefits brought to the region by all of the region's biodiversity. In essence, the Northern Kites Project comprised of four strands of work:

- Wildlife - the return of the red kite to its former range in North East England
- People - the opportunity to give people and communities access to the kite, so that they can enjoy and learn about wildlife and the wider environment through the Project
- Economics - the chance to show how such a project can be good not just for wildlife and people, but also for the local economy and communities
- Partnership - the illustration of how partners from the charitable, private and public sectors, working in an imaginative way together can better deliver rewards and social benefits, not just for wildlife but to improve people's quality of life.

This document brings together the executive summaries of the following four strategic documents that examine and assess how Northern Kites set about this work;

- **Dr Frederick S. Milton (with contributions by Tony Armstrong) *Taking Flight: An Evaluation of the Economic Benefits of Using Red Kites *Milvus milvus* for Environment-led Regeneration.***
- **Melanie Hills, *Learning to Fly... with Red Kites: A Strategic Approach to Environmental Lifelong Learning.***



- **Northern Kites & Ashton Lamb, *People and Red Kites: Red Kites and People: A Study into the Social Impacts of the Northern Kites Project, 2004-2009.***
- **Mark O’Keefe, *Set to Soar: A Survey of Visitors and their Opinions About Gateshead’s Derwent Valley, August-September 2008.***

These evaluations underline how Northern Kites has maintained a vibrant, dynamic Partnership throughout its lifetime, that found new ways to deliver by finding the expertise and knowledge embedded within the partner organisations that solved problems and delivered ‘value added’ results. Key achievements included:

- In five years, Northern Kite’s volunteers contributed over 15,000 hours to the Project, exceeding the voluntary contributions target for the five-year Project in less than three years
- Over the lifetime of the Project, 107 schools in the region (over 50 in Gateshead alone), adopted red kites as part of the Northern Kites ‘Adopt-a-Kite’ scheme and over 36,000 children were engaged in its lifelong learning programmes
- At over 260 events, the Project made face-to-face contact with more 58,000 people
- In 2007, Go North East’s fleet of nine ‘Red Kite’ buses was launched. This service carries over 3,000 passengers daily between Eldon Square and Consett and, it won the UK award, as best branded bus.
- In 2007, Wylam Brewery launched *Northern Kite*, the region’s first red kite-themed beer. This is now the brewery’s second best selling product, and earned them £43,000 in the first year after its launch
- Over its lifetime, the Northern Kites Project supported 12.5 Full Time Equivalent jobs in the local economy, and generated a minimum of £1.72 million in economic activity
- By 2008, it was estimated that 100,000 people per annum were seeing red kites in the lower Derwent valley, and it has been calculated that, from visitor spending activity alone, the kites have added over £160,000 per annum to the economy of the lower Derwent valley

The full texts of the evaluation documents are available as down-loadable PDF publications at: <http://www.northernkites.org.uk/socio.html>. Individual web addresses can be found at the rear of this summary document.

Northern Kites, which began work in 2004 to establish a population of red kites in northern England, became not only one of Britain’s most successful reintroduction projects of its kind in purely wildlife terms, but also, arguably, the highest profile and socio-economically speaking, most successful wildlife project in the North East, ever.

(Images: John Bridges, Neil Wasp, Ray Wilby & Kaleel Zibe; Title: © Neil Young)



Taking Flight: An Evaluation of the Economic Benefits of Using Red Kites *Milvus milvus* for Environment-led Regeneration

Dr Frederick S. Milton Ph.D. B.A. (Newcastle University); with contributions by Tony Armstrong Dip.T.P. M.Sc. M.R.T.PI. (Environmental & Regeneration Consultant)

Taking Flight estimates the scale of the economic impacts of the Northern Kites Project 2004-2008. Nature conservation provides significant benefits to local economies, particularly in rural areas. This report presents data on employment, income, and expenditure by the Northern Kites Project [the 'Project'] as well as statistics related to these topics provided by businesses and agencies specifically associated with the Project, and also information from those companies located within the Project's 'core area' of the lower Derwent valley, in the west of Gateshead. In addition to this, it summarises the results of a small number of visitor expenditure surveys.

The return of red kites to the North East of England brought about by the Project, more specifically, to the area of the lower Derwent valley, has provided support to local economies in a variety of ways:

- They have provided direct employment for staff involved in managing the work of the Project and a range of associated countryside projects. This amounted to 3.84 Full Time Equivalents [FTE] over the period 2004-2008
- This led to spending by employees and volunteers associated with the work of the Project supporting local economic activity. It is estimated that this spending supported a further FTE job
- Direct expenditure by the Northern Kites Project of budgets with local providers of goods and services (Case Study Four). This provided income and employment for local firms, calculated to be the equivalent of one FTE
- Business opportunities have developed around the return of the red kites to the region. These range from the use of the kites' image (Case Study Five) for marketing to the adoption of the kite in an award-winning major branding exercise (Case Study Two)
- They have provided repeated opportunities for positive, and often national multi-media complementary advertising for a range of companies (Case Study Eight). The value of this, for just one company, was estimated to be £30-40,000 (Case Study Two)
- It is estimated that these initiatives have provided a minimum additional income of £254,000 and supported the employment of a range of individuals in a raft of local



businesses. These used the image of kites to produce specific products and services, and built upon this success (Case Study Three, Six, Seven and Nine)

- Enhancement of the regional tourism offer, to create new and popular visitor destinations with the resultant economic, and also health benefits (Case Study One)
- Worked with schools and businesses, to create valuable and popular participatory amenities for pupils, and to encourage children to learn more about kites (Case Study Ten)
- Supported the development of tourism activities that encourage visitors to visit the North East, in order to enjoy the red kites, thereby encouraging spend in the local economy (Case Study Eight). Visitor spending of £757,000 in the lower Derwent valley was attributed to the presence of the red kites and there was strong support for branding this area as 'Kite Country' to further promote tourism
- Building participatory and productive relationships has also benefited the profiling of the Northern Kites Project and, more importantly, public recognition of red kites and their needs. One branding exercise resulted in taking 'red kite' messages to 4 million people a year.

Conclusion

In total, it is estimated that over its lifetime, the Northern Kites Project supported 12.5 FTE jobs in the local economy, and has generated a minimum of £1.73 million in economic activity, the majority of which has filtered through to local companies and businesspeople. In light of this boost to productivity, it is hoped that this report will encourage best practice initiatives to be adopted by similar conservation schemes.



Learning to Fly... with Red Kites: A Strategic Approach to Environmental Lifelong Learning

Melanie Hills (Access & Education Officer, Northern Kites)

Learning to Fly... with Red Kites highlights the strategic approach taken by Northern Kites, in developing its environmental lifelong learning programme. It summarises the concepts and processes applied and the schemes and initiatives created that successfully engaged over 164,000 people with red kites and the environment between 2004 and 2008. It highlights how other organisations can use the kites as a 'hook' to deliver their own objectives.

The lifelong learning programme strategically used seven components: formal and informal education, red kite events, interpretation, community presentations, CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) and volunteering to develop opportunities for people to see and learn about red kites and encourage community involvement in the Project. It cost £267,477 to deliver, including £203,410 costs for staff and volunteers, over the five years of the Project.

Ultimately, the programme encouraged an estimated 221,000 people to go and see red kites in Gateshead's Derwent valley and helped the Project achieve its objectives and targets by successfully:

- Engaging 170 schools from across the region in the Adopt-a-Kite Scheme, Kids4Kites and the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle with Sprite the Kite Initiative.
- Inspiring 275 community groups through a programme of red kite community presentations, Red Kites and Health Benefits Initiative and community outreach work.
- Organising and attending 260 red kite events across the region, engaging nearly 60,000 people and over 3,600 families.
- Educating 137 landowners and managers with Farmers Red Kite Information Packs and at red kite events.
- Recruiting 88 facilities and businesses to host red kite interpretation resources, engaging over 26,500 people in five selected communities through Community Kite Clusters (a community outreach scheme).
- Creating a broad range of red kite interpretation and information resources to help deliver the lifelong learning programme.
- Enlisting over 140 volunteers to help deliver all aspects of the lifelong learning programme and Project.



Conclusion

In summary, the lifelong learning programme contributed to the successful reintroduction of red kites, providing a safe and secure environment for the birds to re-establish a breeding population in northeast England, creating a wildlife icon for the region. The programme emphasises the importance of connecting people with wildlife, through engagement activities and education, for the benefit of wildlife, the environment and the community.



People and Red Kites: Red Kites and People: A Study into the Social Impacts of the Northern Kites Project, 2004-2009

Northern Kites & Ashton Lamb BA Hons (Newcastle University)

People and Red kites: Red Kites and People evaluates how the red kites and the work of the Northern Kites Project has had an effect on the people and communities of the North East of England. The Northern Kites Project was the partnership Project that successfully returned red kites to North East England after an absence of 170 years. The success of this particular reintroduction Project was built upon raising people's awareness of the Project; red kites, and the wider natural environment.

For the purpose of this report, social impacts are defined as:

- Personal Growth
- Social Cohesion
- Environmental Renewal
- Health Promotion
- Social Change
- Community Development
- Strengthened Cultural Life

The Northern Kites Project was extremely successful at designing mechanisms and delivering a people engagement activities through which, people learned about red kites and wider biodiversity. Without awareness, there can be no social impact. Eight themed case studies document evidence of these social impacts; a summary of the outputs of these is offered below.

Case Study 1: 'Red Kites – An Evaluation of their Social Impacts'

Over the period June to December 2008, a study, which utilised a number of survey techniques to measure the social impact of the Project, was conducted.

- When asked 'Do you think that bringing red kites back to the North East, was a bad, poor, okay, good or great idea', 97.5% of respondents from the core Project area's answers fell into one of the two upper categories
- An analysis of respondents, resident in the lower Derwent valley, to a social impact survey revealed that 93.4% of these were aware of Northern Kites. The mean percentage awareness amongst a broader based sample in west Gateshead showed that 89.6% were aware of the Project
- When asked, 'How does seeing a red kite make you feel', 95% of survey respondents replied that the kites made them feel, 'good' or 'great'



- Over 81% of people questioned agreed, or strongly agreed, that the return of the kites to North East England had helped local people to become more interactive with one another
- When people in the lower Derwent valley were asked if they believed that red kites had 'added value' to their local area, 92.4% felt the kites had done so.

Case Study 2 - 'Learning to Fly... with Red Kites'

Northern Kites delivered an integrated Lifelong Learning Programme (2004-2009) for people of all ages and backgrounds giving people the opportunity to learn about, and experience, red kites and the environment. This included:

- The hugely successful and innovative Northern Kites 'Adopt-a-Kite' Scheme for schools. Through this, over 36,000 children in 107 schools in the North East were delivered positive red kite and environmental messages. All 107 Adopt-a-Kite schools across the region reported that their pupils' awareness of red kites had increased
- KIDS4KITES, an on-line resource
- The 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle with Sprite the Kite' initiative, which used red kite ecology to educate over 60,000 children about sustainability issues
- Red kite themed adult education courses, which were delivered to over 180 professionals in organisations across the region
- Thousands of people, including over 150 landowners and managers, being provided with education materials through the distribution of bespoke Red Kite Information Packs
- The completion of ten red kite research projects by local university students, stimulated by the production of the Northern Kites Red Kite Research Menu.

Case Study 3: 'Northern Kites in the Spotlight'

To ensure that the 'people aspects' of Northern Kites' work were fully realised, it was key that the Project maintained a high visibility throughout its life.

- By April 2009, the Project and kites had featured in, 49 television transmissions and 36 radio broadcasts, both regional and national. These included, a national BBC Radio 4 documentary, and Northern Kites, a prime-time Tyne Tees documentary
- Printed media carried over 360 articles (an average of over 60 per annum or 1.29 per week) about Northern Kites. This included provincial and national publications, as well overseas press in Dubai, Pakistan, and South Africa
- In July 2004, the *Journal* newspaper's feature '100 Reasons why it's Great Up North', listed at No.40, 'Seeing red kites soar over suburban Gateshead'.



Case Study 4: 'Red Kites – by the People, for the People'

Volunteers have been involved in every aspect of the Northern Kites Project, and were the 'people engine' of the Project's work.

- Volunteers benefited from a personal perspective as they enjoyed improved social contacts, sharing experiences with like-minded people, and believed they had made a positive contribution to the Project's success, with consequent boosts to self-confidence and feelings of self-worth
- Over 140 people made voluntary contributions
- More than 100 individuals joined as Project volunteers, contributing 15,000 hours of work, estimated as being worth over £40,000 per annum
- The Northern Kites volunteers exceeded the Project's HLF-derived five-year target for voluntary contributions in less than three years
- In July 2008, Northern Kites volunteers won the regional Heritage Heroes Award in the Nationwide Building Society's Heritage and Community Awards
- Northern Kites Volunteers formed FORK (Friends of Red Kites in the North East), an organisation established to continue some aspects of the Northern Kites Project's work.

Case Study 5: 'The Business of People'

The return of red kites to the North East of England provided commercial support to the local economy and offered the opportunity for the development of imaginative, collaborative business ventures.

- Over its lifetime, the Northern Kites Project helped support 12.5 Full Time Equivalent jobs in the local economy and generated at least £1.72 million economic activity
- One of the principal public transport providers in the North East region, Go North East, branded nine of its fleet as 'Red Kite' buses. The company has since seen a 10% rise in passenger numbers on this route, increasing annual turnover by £50,000 and received upwards of £90,000 additional net revenue. The buses deliver red kite messages to millions of people each year
- Red Kite Construction was so-named because of the return of the red kites. The company uses a red kite as its logo, and built the aptly named 'Red Kite House' in Dipton in 2008
- Wylam Brewery, in November 2007, launched the North East of England's first red kite beer, *Northern Kite*. With a Project message on every bottle sold, Northern Kite has become the brewery's second best selling product and generated over £43,000 in income, taking wildlife messages into places where these don't normally go
- 'Red Kites in the Red Mall', a 3m by 3m banner and red kite interpretation boards, was unveiled in June 2007 at MetroCentre, offering red kite messages to the centre's 25 million visitors each year



- Property companies and estate agents have used the kites to promote housing developments and sales in the area of the lower Derwent valley.

Case Study 6: 'Red Kites are Good for You!'

The presence of the red kites has created positive health benefits.

- Thirty-three Health Walks were organised between September and April 2009. Sixty-three people registered for these walks, with an average attendance of six on each walk. Walk participants have since reported better health
- Two regular walkers were so inspired by the red kites, and their fitness so much improved, that they chose to become Health Walk Leaders
- A survey of local residents found that 22% of respondents attributed an improvement in their physical state to the presence of the kites
- The volunteer health survey indicated that 20% of respondents volunteered to improve their health and wellbeing and that many experienced improvements in such as a result of volunteering.

Case Study 7: 'Kites in the Community'

Northern Kites as part of its community outreach set up a number of red kite information networks, termed 'Community Kite Clusters' (CKCs), to deliver aspects of its community outreach work:

- In these CKCs, between 2007-2008, Northern Kites delivered 141 events, engaging with over 26,000 people
- The east Gateshead Cluster, centred on Leam Lane, an area of high social deprivation, was the Project's priority area. Here, red kite activities attracted 1,200 people and 166 people attended 'Red Kite Safaris'. Over 560 pupils from Adopt-a-Kite schools in this Cluster visited Gateshead Council's 'Kitewatch' events during 2007 and 2008 to see red kites.
- Such events encouraged social interaction, reduced isolation, helped people make friends, linked existing community networks and increased sociability.

Case Study 8: People and Events Monitoring Case Study

The high level of public awareness of Northern Kites resulted, in part, from the Project's programme of people engagement activities.

- Between 2004 and 2008, 260 Northern Kites events were organised, at these over 58,000 people, including 6,500 families, were engaged in face-to-face contacts
- Between 2004 and 2008, 26,564 people attended red kite viewing events
- The Project generated an absolute minimum of 80 memberships for the RSPB and the National Trust.



Northern Kites was the North East region's highest profile wildlife project and connected more people to the environment than probably any previous similar work in the region. From a social perspective the Project and the red kites:

- Inspired local people, not only to become more aware of wildlife and the environment, but to take part in physical activity and become more involved in their own community helping forge the local identity
- Provided access to the kites and Gateshead's green environment for people of all abilities and backgrounds, using 'avenues' not previously available. Media coverage and local amenities have assisted this spread of information
- Helped enrich people's quality of life experience, by stimulating community cohesion and increasing cultural participation through the kites. Local people have gone out of their way to interact with other people in their community, because of the red kites. A powerful example of how wildlife can act as 'social glue'
- Empowered communities to take action and become involved in local projects, whilst allowing personal growth for peoples of all ages by changing and challenging attitudes
- Inspired the creation of local business opportunities, where the red kite has been used as a product to stimulate economic activity
- Contributed to improving local health outcomes via regular red kites health walks and through more people using the countryside to see kites, with all of the consequent health and wellbeing benefits.

Conclusion

The Northern Kites Project delivered abundant social impact. It provided engagement and learning opportunities for volunteers and local people. It inspired local people with the quality of their own green environment and inspired artists to create red kite themed art. As red kites were increasingly viewed as wildlife icons, local people felt empowered by them to such a degree that they formed a new community organisation, Friends of Red Kites (FoRK), which will deliver future red kite work 'for the people, by the people'. Furthermore, the Project benefited a wide array of social groupings, from local people through to regional agencies; local residents; schools and colleges; businesses; local heritage, wildlife and environmental groups. At a strategic level, the Project's high media profile contributed to the positive image of the North East. Nature-based tourism work, around the development of the Red Kite Trail, showed how the Project, which ostensibly commenced in order to bring red kites back to the region, had not only supported the local community but also catalysed significant economic benefits.



Set to Soar: A Survey of Visitors and their Opinions About Gateshead's Derwent Valley, August-September 2008

Mark O'Keefe (Information Officer, Northern Kites)

Set to Soar summarises the results of a survey of visitors undertaken in Gateshead's Derwent valley during August and September 2008. The principal purpose of this survey was to provide good quality data and novel information derived from visitors that use the Derwent valley's green recreational facilities. More specifically, the survey set out to find out more about the opinions of visitors to the valley; their patterns of usage; levels of spending; to measure their levels of awareness about various aspects of the valley; and, how they relate to specific features such as the red kites. The visitor survey was conducted over a six-week period from mid-August to the end of September 2008. Survey locations were situated at the principal access points to the key countryside facilities within the survey area. In total, 282 visitor surveys were completed over the six-week survey period. The mean number of surveys conducted per survey day was 11.8. A total of nine survey locations were used during the survey period. The survey responses were summarised and analysed, and from this were derived a set of comparative approval and awareness ratings for various aspects of the valley's recreational facilities.

- The overall impression of Gateshead's Derwent valley was very high, the approval rating of 1.589 averaged across all survey responses can be regarded as giving a general rating of between 'Good' and 'Fantastic'.
- Survey results indicate that wildlife and birds of the Derwent valley are firm favourites with visitors. Survey results indicate a high awareness 91% and high approval ratings 1.68 for red kites visitor's high regard for the valley's red kites. Sixty-six per cent of visitors surveyed stated a 'very good' opinion of kites. In total, over one third of visitors were seeking to see red kites as part of their visit. Walking in the valley also has a very high approval rating (1.665) and it constituted the main activity undertaken by visitors in the valley.
- Responses showed that the majority of visitors were on repeat visits to the area. Only 5% of visitors were on their first trip into the valley. Most people surveyed were frequent visitors, 59% visiting, on average, on a monthly basis or more often.
- Only a small proportion of the 'out-of-valley' visitors surveyed were staying locally. Consequently, the sample size for this examination was just 8% of the total number of visitors surveyed. The low number of staying-over visitors is believed to be in part due to the current lack of visitor accommodation currently available in Gateshead's Derwent valley.



- Using the survey data and the low/middle/high categories of the day-spending information, a realistic estimate of the annual spend by visitors, using a 'multiplier' based on 250,000 visitors per annum, was calculated at £168,222.
- The overall response of visitors to the proposition of a red kite based 'brand' identity for the lower Derwent valley e.g. Red Kite Country, was very positive, though considerable caveats were expressed about any use of the word 'Gateshead' in such a branding exercise.

Conclusion

This visitor survey did not set out to provide recommendations on changes to current strategy, but to produce outputs that, if carefully and appropriately applied, might be used to inform future strategy and to stimulate or prompt debate. The principal purpose of this survey was to provide good quality data and novel information derived from visitors that use the lower Derwent valley's green recreational facilities. The data presented here relates to red kites in the lower Derwent valley, and demonstrates the role they might play in developing and promoting the future use of the Derwent valley's green environmental resource.



The full PDF web links for all of these policy documents are:

Taking Flight (Economic Evaluation):

<http://www.northernkites.org.uk/pdf/TakingFlight.pdf>

Learning to Fly With Red Kites (Lifelong Learning Report)

(<http://www.northernkites.org.uk/pdf/LearningToFly.pdf>)

People & Red Kites, Red Kites & People (Social Impacts Report):

<http://www.northernkites.org.uk/pdf/PeopleRedKites.pdf>

Set to Soar (Visitor Survey):

<http://www.northernkites.org.uk/pdf/Visitor%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

