

Lake District National Park Partnership Management Plan Consultation

A response from the John Muir Trust

Have your say on Farming and forestry, nature recovery and climate change

Farming, forestry and nature working together - for their recovery and to tackle climate change.

Survey Questions

Q13. Do you agree this is a key challenge for the Lake District?

Strongly agree

Brief comments

Enabling nature recovery and adequately responding to the climate crisis require changes to the way land is being managed in the UK. Designated landscapes such as The Lake District National Park, with an abundance of wild places, which have suffered losses in terms of quality of habitat and species loss, ought to lead by example. In particular, leadership can come from farmers in the approaches they take to the land they manage. Farmers, land managers and owners in the LDNP have a responsibility to manage land and waterways in ways that allow once fragmented habitats to join up, rivers to take natural courses, peat soils to store carbon and rare species to thrive in a high quality environment. We believe, with joined up working, that this can be achieved whilst still respecting cultural heritage and profitability.

Q14. Do you agree with what we are trying achieve?

Neither agree nor disagree

Brief comments

Traditional farming practices have largely been replaced by a system reliant on non-traditional inputs to sustain higher stock numbers than the land can sustain. We see a tension between this practice and successfully meeting the changing as well as future needs of the environment, people living in the LDNP as well as those who visit. People need wild places, healthy ecosystems and a stable climate. Some farming methods (for example those that rely on unsustainably high livestock densities in sensitive upland landscapes) are reducing the opportunity for people to experience wild places, benefit from healthy ecosystems and are obstructing opportunities for the land to effectively store carbon (see the UK Committee on Climate Change's 2020 Report on the reforms needed to reduce emissions from land use 'Land use: Policies for a Net Zero UK').

Q15. Do you have any comments on the actions for this key challenge?

We have the following comments on the tasks outlined.

Task 4 - Identify the priorities for farming led nature recovery that can be delivered through land management choices. Farming led nature recovery can help the recovery of wild places through land management choices. Farmers will need to be supported with advice and expertise from conservation and agroecological perspectives, including examples locally of regenerative farming that is improving land, biodiversity and delivering profitability. The LDNPA can have an important role in connecting farmers with experts who can help farmers plan for nature recovery and broker relationships between farmers and conservation and wildlife land managers in the NP so experience

and expertise in delivering landscape and nature recovery can be transferred. Reports and evidence from the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission – for example, on agroecology and their ‘Land Unlocked’ series – could help to inform the priorities.

Task 6 - Develop and start to deliver a landscape scale nature recovery plan for LDNP informed and evidenced by the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the LDNP Nature Recovery Delivery Prospectus. We haven’t been able to find a copy of the LDNP Nature Recovery Prospectus but recommend that the recovery plan should also be informed and evidenced by the State of the Park 2018 Report. This report identified that the high fells are in poor condition. As a continuous upland area within the NP, connecting different habitat types, restoring the health of the high fells will aid the recovery of other areas of the NP. Actions to redress the condition of the high fells could include targeted and funded peat restoration, LDNPA (with support from all partners) measures to recover habitat lost from historic overgrazing and phased in incentives through ELM to reduce stock grazing to enable vegetation to recover. This recovery plan should also be informed by the findings of the UK Committee on Climate Change Report ‘Land Use: Policies for a Net Zero UK’ published in 2020.

Task 10 - The Partnership will champion and resource the recovery of priority habitats and species across the park as identified in the Nature Recovery Delivery Prospectus. Restored habitats will then require long-term protection and management to meet the targets and objectives in this plan. Habitats targeted for restoration must include the habitats on the high fells given the poor condition of this Special Area of Conservation (State of the Park Report 2018). Reintroduction programmes for montane scrub species and arctic alpine plants would help the recovery of the Lakeland fells and we recommend these should be included in the Nature Recovery Delivery Prospectus if not already. At Glenridding the John Muir Trust’s work propagating montane willows and rare alpine plants with help from local volunteers has demonstrated community support for these species to be returned and that species reintroduction programmes offer engagement, volunteering and educational opportunities for local people in the LDNP. For the long term protection of restored habitats the LDNP could consider applying conservation covenants (expected to come into law through the Environment Bill).

Task 11 - By 2025 we will actively be pursuing restoration and reintroduction of key species as identified in the Nature Recovery Delivery Prospectus. These could include Black Grouse, Pine Marten, Water Vole, Corncrake, Golden and White Tailed Eagle. This is great but we would have liked to see key habitat restoration as well as species restoration, particularly because species and habitats are inter-dependent and species will follow good habitat, so supporting the recovery of both is needed to reverse the decline of nature and loss of wild places. Specifically, we would have liked to see flora restoration (e.g. montane scrub, upland woodland and upland plants – key habitats for species mentioned) as part of the LDNP recovery plans.

Task 12 - Work with individual farms, farm clusters and community farming initiatives to increase understanding of options for nature and climate recovery, through the opportunities identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Lake District National Park Nature Recovery Delivery Prospectus. As part of this, the LDNPA can work with conservation land managers and nature restoration projects in the National Park too. The LDNPA is well positioned to facilitate learning between farmers, conservation and nature restoration projects.

Task 15 - Work in partnership with communities through our Area Planning approach to encourage and enable a network of community led land management initiatives that individually address the local qualities of each valley, and collectively enhance the Special Qualities of the Lake District and deliver nature recovery and climate resilience. This is a good aspiration but how is this envisaged to be led, funded and coordinated by communities?

Comments on research priorities - The State of The Park 2018 Report identified research needed into regenerative management of land for healthy soils. This is an important topic given the role soils have in storing carbon and we suggest this could be incorporated into one of the research priorities outlined.

General comments

- The plan needs to consider how will farmers be invited and encouraged to engage with these actions?
- Monitoring – can farmers and other land managers be trained in monitoring to help inform the evaluation of the plan? Monitoring implementation of the LDNP Partnership Plan could include checking that agreed actions within an ELM agreement are being delivered, for example, where agreed actions relate to the LDNP's landscape recovery plan?

Q16. Can you help with the delivery of actions for this key challenge? Please tell us how.

We are happy to share our knowledge to support farmer-led nature recovery.

Have your say on A Lake District for everyone

A Lake District for Everyone – *from the perspective of protecting wild places.*

Survey Questions

Q17. Do you agree this is a key challenge for the Lake District?

Agree.

Comment – We agree that helping the whole range of people to connect with wild places in the Lake District can benefit both people and nature. However, the challenge portrayed in the information film is focussed only on visitors and so does not portray the balance needed for both visitors and residents, as well as nature, to thrive.

Your example of a person who has grown up in the countryside being daunted by visiting a city is good, and invites the observation that those cities easiest and most pleasant to visit are those that can be accessed by bike lane, bus or train service with restricted car use and infrastructure which caters for both visitor and resident alike. This is what this plan should strive for in the Lake District.

Q18. Do you agree with what we are trying to achieve?

Neither agree or disagree.

In this challenge you recognise *that travelling to the Lake District may be unaffordable or unattainable for some people.* However the infrastructure bias in the Lake District is almost entirely

towards use of private transport by both visitors and residents and inhibits those who cannot afford a car from either living in or visiting in the Lake District. For example (1) for a couple staying in Keswick to visit the head of Borrowdale it is approximately double the cost for those without a car compared to those with (cost of car fuel and day parking approximately £8 versus cost of 2 adult return bus fares £15). Furthermore bias towards car use has led to recent cancellations of bus services due to pressure of traffic and parking. In addition the lack of bus services serving residents forces car use for essential needs such as weekly or daily shopping adding to the impact of cars on the Lake District. Addressing this bias has the potential to include some of those for whom a visit is at present unaffordable or unattainable.

You also recognise that *Connecting people with nature is not just important for people, it is also important for nature*, yet the infrastructure bias towards private transport decreases the amount of, and the opportunity to experience, wild places. For example informal car parking along the shores of West Water or Buttermere transforms the sense of place from a wild place to a car park. It fundamentally changes the character of the place. Addressing bias towards car use has the potential to increase the sense of wildness in the Lake District for both visitors and residents.

Notwithstanding the barrier raised to those without private transport, and the diminishment of nature, wild places and the Lake District by private transport as commented on above we support the Recommendations of the Lake District for Everyone research commission. However, we are concerned that consideration does not seem to have been given to assessing the carrying capacity of the Lake District with respect to a sense of wildness, wild places, the state of nature and infrastructure capacity. In some parts of the LDNP there is a concern that we have reached saturation and have now gone into a damaging unsustainable situation in some locations.

Q19. Do you have any comments on the actions for this key challenge?

We very much welcome the proposal identified in Task 1 and its ambition to create a dedicated Engagement and Outreach Team, to engage people with nature at home as well as in the Lake District, to utilise and coordinate work already happening across numerous organisations, and to improve partnerships with outdoor centres and the outdoor activity sector.

For Task 3, engagement pathways could be informal as well as formal. Learning pathways to connect visitors with real communities, in particular farmers and land managers in the National Park who are managing the land for nature recovery could be realised through farmer and community-led initiatives with support from the LDNP.

We also note that Task 7 to develop and promote a wider range of volunteering opportunities to both residents and visitors has the potential to enhance the work of the John Muir Award in supporting the Lake District National Park.

Q20. Can you help with the delivery of actions for this key challenge? (Please refer to the action reference in the plan itself)

We will seek ways to support all Tasks set out under the Lake District for Everyone theme.

Task 1: In particular within our John Muir Award partnership with the LDNP we can work to integrate the Award with reference to Task 1. We can work with the Engagement and Outreach Team to

connect them with, and grow, the John Muir Award provider network thus increasing opportunities for people to enjoy, understand and care for the Lake District. This can include helping organisations develop programmes and ladders of experience, and with partnerships that develop activities that link the Lake District with home settings.

Task 3: We can offer short (e.g. one day) local volunteer opportunities for people interested in learning about conservation and land management.

Tasks 4 and 5: We can adopt 'Warm Welcome' principles where John Muir Trust staff engage with visitors on land we manage at Glenridding Common.

Task 6: We can directly address this task in relation to the land we manage at Glenridding Common.

Vibrant Communities section

Survey Questions

Q8. Can you help with the delivery of actions for this key challenge? (Please refer to the action reference in the plan itself)

For Task 12, we can 'Continue to support the multi-agency response to the Covid-19 pandemic' by working with the LNBP Partnership and through our permanent and seasonal team on Glenridding Common addressing visitor impact issues.