



Local Plan timetable and notice to commence

Summary

- 1 A timetable has been prepared for the new Lake District Local Plan. The Authority is required to prepare the plan in 30 months under the new plan-making system. Before the 30-month period begins several tasks are required to get ready, including publishing a notice of intention to commence and holding a scoping consultation.

Recommendations:

- a **Members support the publication of the local plan timetable (Annex 1) in accordance with regulatory requirements and agree that any subsequent changes are delegated to the Director of Sustainable Development.**
- b **Members support the publication of the Notice of Intention to Commence Plan Making (Annex 2) in accordance with regulatory requirements, formally beginning the plan-making process at the 'get ready' stage.**

Background

- 2 As a local planning authority (LPA), the Lake District National Park Authority has a statutory duty to prepare and adopt a local plan. A local plan establishes how land will be used, setting out priorities for housing, employment, infrastructure, design and environmental standards. It must provide a clear, deliverable and legally compliant spatial strategy and policy framework to guide development over a 15-year period. Once adopted, the local plan is the

principal basis for making planning decisions, shaping future growth, development and sustainability.

- 3 The current Lake District Local Plan (“Living Lakes, Your Local Plan”) was adopted by the Authority in May 2021. As it is now five years old the Authority is required to review the plan.
- 4 In November 2025 the government announced reforms to England’s plan-making system. The announcement acknowledged that a plan-led approach must remain the foundation of the planning system and reiterated the commitment to achieving universal coverage of up-to-date local plans across the country. The new system introduces:
 - a) A 30-month process providing an end-to-end framework for creating and adopting local plans;
 - b) A three-gateway system with checkpoints at Gateway 1 (scope and strategic priorities), Gateway 2 (draft plan), and Gateway 3 (readiness for examination);
 - c) Digital-first requirements with standardised data formats and user-friendly digital tools; and
 - d) Dedicated guidance and tools to support plan-makers.
- 5 In April 2026, following an Expression of Interest application, the government awarded the Authority £108,474 of New System Plan Funding. This funding has been provided to support authorities that are committed to bringing a local plan forward early in the new plan-making system. It is contingent on publishing a notice of intention to commence local plan preparation by 30 June and publishing a Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026.

Policy context

Local plan requirements

- 6 The new local plan will cover the whole of the Lake District National Park. It needs to be for a period of at least 15-years from the date of adoption (expected 2029), and so is anticipated to extend up until 2044.
- 7 The local plan will build on the vision established by the Lake District National Park Partnership Plan and will develop a spatial strategy for the sustainable development of the Lake District. The spatial strategy will identify areas for growth and protection, it will provide a clear approach to housing and employment distribution, including affordable housing.
- 8 The plan will allocate land for housing, employment and mixed-use development. The allocations will need to be suitable, available and achievable within the plan period, taking account of viability.
- 9 Development management policies will be included that focus on local issues including affordable housing, housing mix, density, tourism accommodation and employment. Development management policies will avoid duplication with those in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 10 As the local plan is prepared it will be supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 11 The current local plan is supported by a range of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), such as the Design Code, Biodiversity SPD, Housing SPD, Windermere Gateway Transport Infrastructure Delivery SPD, and Landscape Character Assessment. In the evolving UK planning framework, SPDs are being transitioned into Supplementary Plans (SPs). Under the new statutory plan-making system, these plans are designed to be part of the development plan itself, subject to a streamlined, lighter-touch independent examination rather than the traditional tests of soundness. This means that the Authority will need to identify which current SPDs are to be renewed, or covered in the local plan, or no longer required.

Governance

- 12 Preparing the local plan will require close collaboration between members, officers, partner organisations, residents, communities, landowners, businesses and local groups. To effectively prepare the plan it will be subject to a project management and operational structure for:
- a) **Decision making:** Authority Committee is responsible for decisions at key milestones in the plan-making process and may delegate final decision making when dependent on the outcomes of actions associated with other decisions to the Director of Sustainable Development.
 - b) **Advisory board:** Strategy meetings operate in a similar way to a working group, attended by members but do not make decisions. Local Plan issues and updates will be shared with the Strategy meeting prior to Authority decision, when required.
 - c) **Lead officers:** The Head of Strategy and Partnerships is the senior responsible officer for the local plan, reporting to the Director of Sustainable Development. The Team Leader Strategy and Policy has day to day responsibility for the local plan as part of the Planning Policy Team. Lead officers will project manage the local plan in line with the Authority's programme management framework, reporting to the Strategy meeting.

Links to Vision and Management Plan

- 13 The local plan is intrinsically linked to the Partnership Plan and achieving the vision for the Lake District – both the current 2030 vision and the new 2051 vision. The local plan complements the Partnership Plan, supporting the delivery of objectives on key topics, such as housing.
- 14 Several local plan policies will be relevant to the protection of both the Lake District's Special Qualities and the World Heritage Site attributes of Outstanding Universal Value. Relevant policy areas currently include the national and international significance of the Lake District (Policy 01), protecting the spectacular landscape (Policy 05), historic environment (Policy

07), major development (Policy 26), and mineral extraction (Policy 27). The new local plan will need to consider these same topics.

Links to Business Plan

- 15 The Business Plan includes a specific action for the local plan, (Action 26 – Local Plan Review), to commence a review of the plan, gather evidence, and develop options and suggest policy approaches. This is under the communities and economy priority. In addition, the local plan will be relevant to all other priorities in the Business Plan and several specific actions.

Links to other strategic plans

- 16 At a regional level, the local plan must be aligned with any Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). At present there is no SDS in place that covers the Lake District area but a Mayoral Combined Authority covering Cumbria has been established and will be preparing an SDS in due course.
- 17 At a local level the Local Plan has a relationship to several relevant plans, including both the Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness local plans (and legacy local plans pre-dating local government reform in Cumbria), Cumbria Minerals and Waste Local Plan, and a range of plans linked to infrastructure, travel, accessibility and wellbeing. Relevant Cumbria-wide strategies include the Destination Management Plan, Economic Strategy, and Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Options

- 18 Members are presented with the following options:
- a) You support the timetable and commencement notice for publication on the Authority's website by 30 June 2026 in accordance with regulatory and funding requirements, as well as delegations to make changes ahead of Gateway 1 assessment by 31 October 2026; or
 - b) You propose an alternative approach.

Proposals

- 19 It is recommended that option a) is chosen as this will be in accordance with the regulatory requirements and conditions of the local plan implementation funding award. It will signal commitment to bringing a local plan forward early in the new plan-making system.
- 20 Option b is likely to mean that the Authority is not undertaking plan-making in accordance with the conditions of the local plan implementation funding award. The £108,474 would be reclaimed by the government and so could not be used to support tasks to aid plan-making in the Lake District.
- 21 In February 2026, the Park Strategy and Vision Committee (Away Hour) was informally presented with a draft local plan timetable according to planning reform announcements at that time. The committee was supportive of progressing at the pace proposed, which is consistent with these recommendations.

Stakeholder consultation

- 22 Formal consultation on the new local plan has yet to take place. However, much informal engagement has occurred over the past year or more that will be relevant to the scoping of the local plan, including identifying key issues that the plan's policies will need to cover. This includes events held with ACT (ACTion with Communities in Cumbria) through 2025-26, exploring with communities what the local plan is and why it's important; as well as the Partnership Plan consultation earlier this year, where several comments were made that relate to topics relevant to local plan policies. Outputs from this engagement will help form the scope of the local plan as part of the 'get ready' stage, before we formally begin the 30 month plan making process.
- 23 Engagement will involve communities, stakeholders, members and statutory bodies throughout plan preparation. The aim will be to complete meaningful and proportionate engagement, making it clear which areas people can influence at each stage of plan making. The objective of stakeholder engagement is to ensure target audiences are aware of the local plan

consultation, its purpose and how they can get involved to achieve high quality participation.

24 Engagement will take place at each plan making stage as set out below. In line with government recommendations, engagement will utilise digital tools but will not be fully digital.

a) **Get ready – scoping and early participation:** To understand the scope of the plan, approach to engagement and views on key issues and opportunities. The scoping consultation will take place in September/October 2026 before a self-assessment of readiness is completed, starting the formal 30-month local plan timetable.

b) **Prepare the plan – proposed content and evidence:** To consult on the proposed spatial strategy, aims, objectives, evidence and draft policies. Consultation is expected in early 2027 before progressing to Gateway 2 later that year.

c) **Prepare the plan – proposed plan:** To consult on the local plan, proposed policies, site allocations and designations. Consultation is expected in early 2028 before progressing to Gateway 3 later that year and the public examination of the plan.

25 Members will be involved in shaping the content and arrangements for public consultation.

Finance considerations

26 Preparation of the new local plan has been budgeted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy as a Business Plan action. In addition, the Authority has received £108,474 of local plan implementation funding.

Risk

- 27 Preparation of a new local plan is a Business Plan action and reflected in the Service Plan. Subsequently, a service level risk is listed on the Authority’s risk register relating to the consequences of not having an up to date plan, as follows:

Risk title: Local Plan preparation	
Risk Ref: SP93	Risk owner: Phil Drane
Risk description: There is a risk to delivering the Local Plan against the new regulations and timetable.	
Control mechanisms:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a detailed timetable. • Local Plan working group set up to oversee progress. 	

Mitigation actions			
Action details	Due date	Action status	Monthly update (May 2026)
Use of new MHCLG templates	31/10/2029	In progress / on track	MHCLG publishing new local plan guidance through 2026. We are attending Planning Advisory Service events and engaging with colleagues also preparing new plans.
Add resource (consultants / contractors) where required using inquiry reserve	31/10/2029	In progress / on track	Additional £108,000 received from Defra to assist with resource and expertise. Progressing Pathways to Planning scheme to recruit a graduate planner.

Legal considerations

- 28 Local plans in England are governed primarily by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This enacted significant changes to plan-making with

accompanying secondary legislation in force from 25 March 2026, imposing detailed procedural requirements referred to as the 'Current Plan-Making System'.

- 29 The recommendations enable the Authority to commence plan-making consistent with regulatory requirements. Through the plan-making process specialist legal advice may be required.

Human resources

- 30 The current establishment of staff within the Strategy and Policy team, as well as relevant specialist expertise across the Authority, is considered sufficient to deliver a new local plan. However, the range of complex topics to be covered and requirement to prepare a plan in 30 months will add pressure to staff. As set out in financial implications and risk mitigations, additional resource will be required at certain points to provide specialist advice. This could include additional staff resource for fixed-term periods.

Diversity implications

- 31 As part of stakeholder consultation and wider public engagement, identified key audiences include families and young people hoping to live and work in the Lake District, entrepreneurs and developers, current residents, farmers, community groups and parish councils, landowners, businesses and investors. An appropriate reflection of diversity will be needed to complete meaningful and proportionate engagement.

Sustainability

- 32 A key theme of the local plan will be the sustainability of environmental, economic and social effects from policy. This will be considered as the plan develops and informed by key evidence, such as the Sustainability Appraisal.

Annexes

- Annex 1: Local Plan timetable
- Annex 2: Notice of intention to commence local plan preparation

Background papers	N/A
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Date written	10 June 2026

Annex 1: Local Plan timetable

Annex 2: Notice of intention to commence Local Plan preparation