

# A sort of national property...

Managing the Lake District National Park: the first 60 years

Jeremy Rowan Robinson



# Contents

1951  
to  
1974

<b>Preface</b>	2
<b>The Lake District Planning Board</b>	
In the beginning	3
Electricity supply	6
Water supply	8
Road improvements	10
The closure of the railways	10
The wardens' service	11
Car parks and information service	13
Hassness	14
National Park Centre	14
Royal visit	15
Foot and mouth	15
Regulating motor boats	15
Upland management	16
21st birthday	16

1974  
to  
1997

<b>The Lake District Special Planning Board</b>	
The first year	17
Plan preparation	19
Housing for locals	20
Regulating the use of the lakes	22
Windermere	23
Ennerdale and Wastwater	24
National Park Officer	24
Property acquisition	25
Development control	28
The wardens' service	29
The information service	30
Access	31
Upland management	34
Brockhole	34
Youth and schools liaison	35
Sponsorship	35
The National Park Review Panel	36

1997  
to  
date

<b>The Lake District National Park Authority</b>	
The first year	37
1997 to 2004	38
2005 to 2011	41
<b>Conclusion</b>	49
<b>Chairmen</b>	51
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	52

# Preface

William Wordsworth in his *Guide to the Lake District* referred to the Lake District as “a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy”. The area was officially recognised as having some of the aspects of ‘a national property’ when it was formally designated as a national park in 1951. At the same time, a Board, the Lake District Planning Board, was established to fulfil the national park purposes. It was to be in part a guardian and in part a steward of the ‘national property’.

This is a brief account of the work of the Board and its successors over the first 60 years of their existence. It shows how these bodies have tackled the twin statutory purposes of national parks. The wording of the purposes has been enlarged over the years; the current wording refers to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area and promoting opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the area by the public. This account also shows how, in discharging these purposes, they have attempted to foster the economic and social well-being of the communities in the National Park. In doing so, it provides an insight into the sort of issues with which the Board and its successors have had to contend and a feel for the range of work which they have undertaken.

The 60th anniversary of the designation of the Lake District National Park may not seem an obvious milestone at which to produce such an account. The 50th anniversary would have been more appropriate but that celebration was a muted affair because of the advent of a foot and mouth epidemic.

This account does not set out to be a comprehensive record. Nor does it necessarily relate all the most important events. Indeed, people would probably not agree about what was important over this period. The choice has been subjective, but in making it, reference has been made to the Annual Reports, to the minutes and to *Putting Something Back*, Sheila Richardson’s celebration of 50 years of volunteering. I have also been able to speak to a number of those people who were closely concerned and I am pleased to be able to acknowledge their help. Their names are listed at the end.

A history of a national park authority may not immediately seem like a page-turner. However, this account is not intended for airport bookstalls. It is addressed to those who have been associated with the Board and its successors in some way, whether as staff, members, volunteers or partners. For the casual reader, there may be an element of the humdrum about this cast of players and about the matters in which they have been engaged. But for those who have been associated with the Board and its successors, there may be something of curiosity, of interest, of amusement and, possibly, of satisfaction in these pages because as Shakespeare observes “there is history in all men’s lives”.

Jeremy Rowan Robinson

1951  
to  
1974

# The Lake District Planning Board

## **In the beginning...**

The Lake District Planning Board was constituted by Order of the Minister on 13th August 1951.

1951 was the second year of the Korean War; rationing was still in force for many items of food; in the general election that year the Conservatives under Winston Churchill defeated Clement Attlee's post war Labour government; the Festival of Britain was opened by King George VI; Newcastle United won the FA Cup for the fourth year running; the comic strip Dennis the Menace appeared for the first time in the Beano; the first episode of 'The Archers' was broadcast; the Westmorland Gazette reported that, at the annual meeting of the Blencathra Hunt, members were pleased to hear that the demand for the John Peel strain of hounds was as strong as ever and that Lofty and Danger had been sold to Australia for 15 guineas and were hunting kangaroos most satisfactorily; and the Stone of Scone, stolen by Scottish Nationalists, was recovered from Arbroath Abbey.

The Lake District was the second national park to be designated in the United Kingdom, the Peak District National Park having been designated earlier in the year. Covering 2,292 square kilometres, the Lake District is England's largest national park. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 provided that where a national park lay within the area of more than one local planning authority, a joint planning board should be set up to discharge the national park purposes. At the time of designation, the Lake District National Park lay within the area of three planning authorities: the county councils of Cumberland, Lancashire and Westmorland. Accordingly, the Lake District Planning Board was created to discharge the national park purposes. It took over from a Joint Planning Committee which had been set up voluntarily by the constituent county councils in 1946 in anticipation of the designation, a step which was regarded in some quarters as an attempt to retain local control of the Park and in others as an attempt to demonstrate that no special administrative regime was required for the Park.

The Lake District Planning Board Order 1951 provided for a board of 18 members, four appointed by each of the county councils and six nominated by the Minister and appointed by the county councils jointly. At its first meeting, Charles Roberts, Chairman of Cumberland County Council, was elected Chairman of the Board. The Order also provided that the Clerk of Westmorland County Council, Kenneth Himsforth, should act as Clerk to the Board until such time as the Board should make other arrangements. In fact, the Board continued this arrangement right up until its demise in 1974 and the County Treasurer of Westmorland was appointed Treasurer to the Board. Initially, these officers received salaries of £250 and £50 respectively for their duties. Subsequently, these sums were commuted to a lump sum payable annually to Westmorland County Council for all administrative, legal and financial services.

1951  
to  
1974

Arrangements for the appointment of planning officers proved more contentious. The three county councils expressed the view that the Board might rely upon the free use of the planning staff of the three counties. The National Parks Commission, on the other hand, considered that the Board should appoint its own planning staff. Eventually, the Board decided to rely on the services, free of charge, of the three county councils and this was the position until the demise of the Board in 1974. Planning services were provided for the northern area of the Park by Cumberland County Council planners based in Carlisle, for the central and eastern part of the Park by Westmorland County Council planners based in Kendal, and for the south western part of the Park by the Lancashire County Council planners based in Lancaster.

Kendal, about a mile outside the southern boundary of the National Park, was adopted as the regular meeting place of the Board and its committees and it was from Westmorland County Hall in Kendal that the administration of the Park was carried on. Kendal was considered to be the location in a difficult geographical area which caused the least inconvenience in travelling for the majority of members and officers. Although the offices have changed, the town has remained the location of the main office for the administration of the National Park to the present time.

The 1951 Order provided that the Planning Board should precept on the constituent county councils for its money. In other words, national park expenditure was, to some extent, to be rate borne. In 1954-55 the Board observed that:

“there is no doubt that the burden placed on the local county rate by the precept system of grants for National Parks...has been the cause to some degree of the antipathy which has been expressed in some parts of the country towards the establishment of National Parks”.

To limit the burden on the local rate, a ceiling of £7,500 in total, or £2,500 per council, was prescribed for the precept in any one year, unless the councils between them agreed to a higher figure. The precept upon each council for the first full year of the Board's operation was £1,995. This ceiling was adequate for the first ten years, but for the financial year 1961-62 the Board, with the agreement of the councils, had to exceed the ceiling and levy a precept of £3,780 on each council. This had risen to £19,000 per council by the financial year 1972-73.

The First 'Annual' Report of the Board covering the period from 13 August 1951 to 31 March 1953 gives some idea of the issues with which it had to contend. The Board exercised all planning powers for the area of the National Park and an early focus of attention was the preparation of a development plan, a requirement introduced for the first time by the Planning Act in 1947. This was eventually approved by the Minister after a public inquiry in 1956. It was reviewed in 1965. From the start, members were engaged in determining planning applications but a system of delegation to district councils operated for applications which did not raise issues of concern to the National Park. Basically, this meant that district councils could make a decision provided it was in line with the recommendation of the planning officer. As an indicator of work load, in 1953-54 some 343 applications were received of which 243 were determined by district councils. There were seven planning appeals. Over the next twenty years, the trend showed a steady increase in the number of applications and, interestingly, a steady increase in the number determined by the Board's Development Control Committee. By 1972-73, for

# 1951 to 1974

example, the Board was receiving some 1,700 applications a year, and of these only about 500 were determined by the districts. The proportion of refusals stood at 26 per cent. In the same year 42 appeals were outstanding at the beginning of the year and a further 61 were lodged, most of which were dealt with by public inquiry.

One application in 1953-54 which the Board felt bound to refuse involved an extension to Black Sail Youth Hostel at an elevation of 925 feet at the head of the Ennerdale valley.

The proposal was to construct it with concrete blocks and roughcast and with a reinforced concrete roof! Members felt this would not harmonise with the main building, an old shepherd's bothy built of local stone. The Youth Hostel is back on the agenda of the Planning Committee at the time of writing this account (*see page 48*).



*Black Sail Youth Hostel.*

Problems over design were also encountered in dealings with government departments. Development by government departments was exempt from planning control but a consultation procedure operated. Following a run in with the Air Ministry over the design of Royal Observer Corps posts and the Post Office over the design of Rural Automatic Telephone exchanges the Board vented its frustration in its Annual Report for 1951-53 by recommending, somewhat optimistically, to the Minister:

“that an early opportunity should be taken to secure consideration at Cabinet level of the obligations of government departments undertaking developments in National Parks, to be followed by an uncompromising statement in Parliament that Departments have been instructed that they must pay more than lip service to the National Park movement”.

During the first year, the Rusland Beeches, a well known stand of 108 trees, all over a hundred years old, lining the road between Rusland and Newby Bridge were the subject of the first Tree Preservation Order initiated by the Board. The Order was to occupy the Board and its successors from time to time over the next 60 years. The object of the Order was to provide a vehicle for consultation with the owner for the replacement of the older trees, some of which were about 135 years old. An application under the Order in 1957 to fell all 108 trees was refused and eventually management of the trees was passed to the Friends of Lake District. In subsequent years, 21 of the trees which had become dangerous were felled. Eventually, in 1974, the National Park took over responsibility for management and, for a while, it looked as if it would simply preside over the inevitable. By 1997 the original avenue of 108 trees was down to 54 and others were in a dangerous condition. The National Park applied to the Minister for permission under the Order to fell the remainder. However, after consideration, the Minister refused to allow this and instead, a further four were felled and tree surgery and bracing was put in hand for a further 35. Some of the timber was used to create playground furniture for Lindale Village School. The good news is that 60 replacement beech trees were planted in the gaps to restore the avenue.

1951  
to  
1974

Camping and caravanning, particularly the latter, were growing in popularity in the 1950s as a means of providing a holiday for those on moderate incomes and the first Annual Report shows that the Board saw it as its duty in those early years to encourage the provision of organised sites. Not only did the Board exercise its planning powers in a positive way to secure this objective, but it made its own contribution towards the provision of sites. In 1952 a decision was made to acquire, upgrade and substantially extend a small existing site at Silecroft on the west coast. Then in 1962 Neaum Crag in Langdale was acquired and laid out by the Board as a camping and caravan site for 80 caravans and 75 tents; and in 1972 the old tuberculosis sanatorium at Meathop was acquired and leased to the Caravan Club to provide 200 units. Ironically, by the late sixties and early seventies, the situation had changed and the Board found itself struggling to contain the growth of caravan sites in the Park, the sheer number and size of which were threatening the spectacular landscape which people came to enjoy.

Pressure for afforestation was another issue which the Board had to face in its first years. Afforestation did not require planning permission, yet the commercial planting of large blocks of evergreen conifers with sharp edges on open fellsides could change the whole character of a valley. So far as new Forestry Commission planting was concerned, arrangements were in place for consultation. These arrangements had been introduced long before the designation of the National Park and followed from a decision by the Commission in 1935 to buy and plant conifers on 7,000 acres of fell land in Dunnerdale and Eskdale, notwithstanding a considerable public outcry. As a result of the outcry, an agreement had been entered into between the Forestry Commission and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (acting through the Friends of the Lake District) in 1936, in which the Commission undertook to refrain from acquiring any new land for planting within an area of a little under 300 square miles of the central Lake District. By and large the consultation process worked well; but the Board was surprised by the substance of some of the proposals with which it was faced. Notwithstanding the agreement, the Board, in its first year, found itself dealing with a proposal for afforestation by the Commission at Baysbrown in Langdale and proposals at Claife Heights above Windermere and at Bowness Point in Ennerdale. Subsequently, an amendment to the agreement in 1954 allowed the Commission to acquire woodland within the central area which had been under 'timber trees' in 1936 and where the objective was the maintenance of, or the restocking of, such areas with hardwood species.

In subsequent years, the inadequacy of the consultation arrangements for private afforestation of bare land surfaced as an issue. Zoning was rejected as a solution but, after negotiation, agreement was eventually reached with the Country Landowners Association and the Timber Growers' Organisation on a consultation procedure and this proved to be satisfactory in practice.

## **Electricity supply**

It is impossible in a record such as this to deal with all the matters to which the Board turned its attention over the next 21 years but two matters stand out. In the first 10 years of its existence, the single most troublesome issue was the bringing of electricity to the valleys. The Annual Report for 1953-54 stated that:

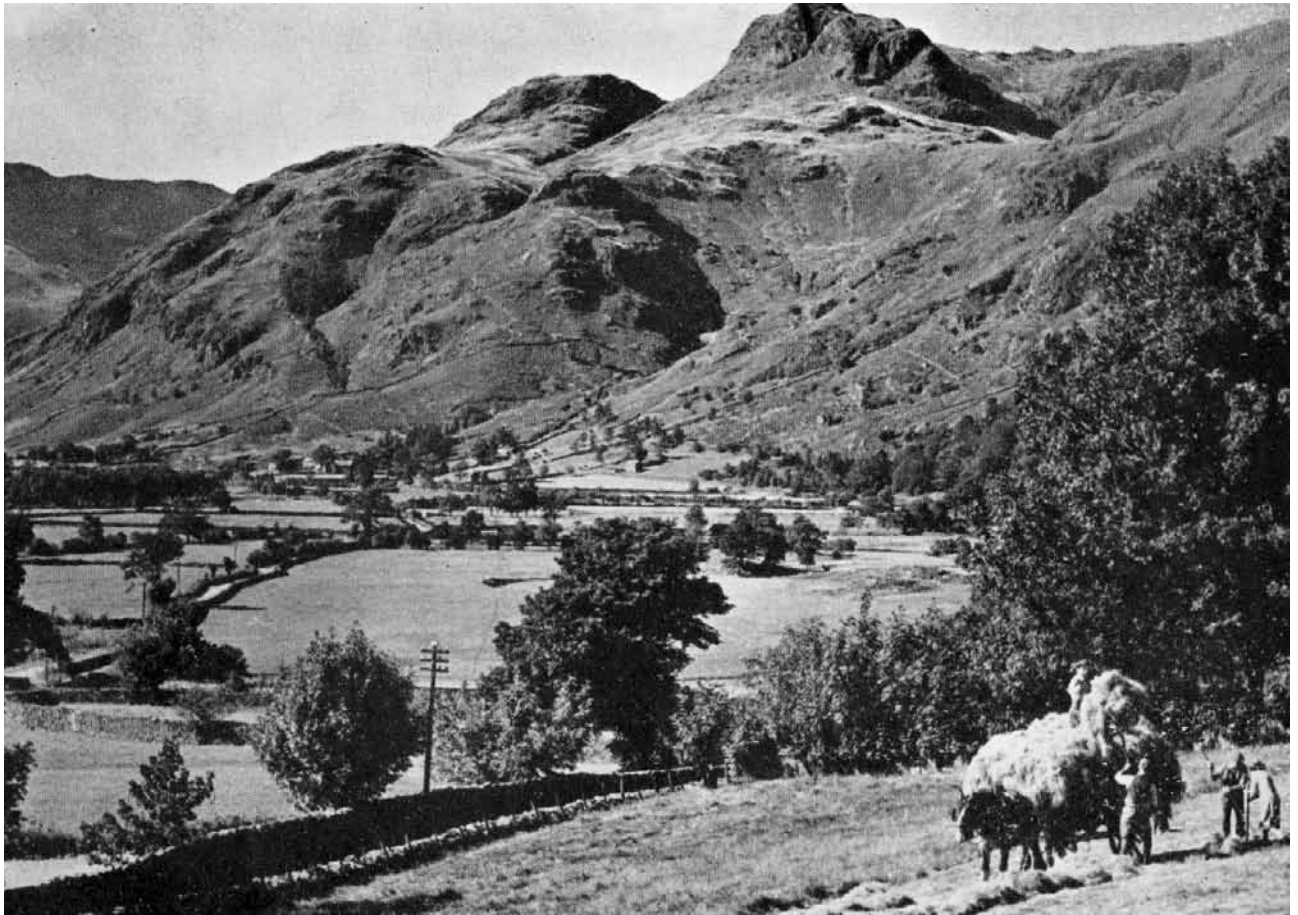
"in no field perhaps is a statement of National Policy more urgently needed than in that of electricity distribution".

# 1951 to 1974

Just under a quarter of the Annual Report for the year 1954-55 was devoted to the issue. The difficulty for the Board was that, on the one hand it had no wish to delay the supply of electricity to people in the valleys. On the other hand, they shared the view of the Hobhouse Committee (1947) that:

“large poles and pylons carrying overhead electricity wires are out of keeping with the delicate quality of the Lake District landscape”.

The solution was to lay lines underground but this was more expensive for the Electricity Board. Disputes occurred between the two Boards over how much, or if any, line should be laid underground in Martindale, Longsleddale, Troutbeck, Langdale, Deepdale, Hartsop, Buttermere and Borrowdale.



*In Langdale, an overhead electricity line was installed taking advantage of the tree screen on the right. From there to the head of the valley, the line was placed underground.*

The Electricity Board eventually adopted a zoning scheme which reflected the physical problems of installation and accepted that, in particular zones, it would not refuse to lay an unremunerative line or require an increased capital contribution from consumers because a line was to be laid underground instead of overhead. Extremely remote areas involving abnormally high expenditure were excluded from the zoning programme and deferred until a later date. The National Park Board considered this to be a reasonably satisfactory policy.

One such remote area where the bringing of electricity would involve abnormally high expenditure was Wasdale Head. In 1972 local residents raised the question of an electricity supply. The Planning Board's position was that the whole line should be laid underground. The valley is one of the most unspoiled and isolated in the National Park and is almost completely without tree cover. The Electricity Board's response was that it was “a matter of hard fact that the only criterion which will determine whether or not Wasdale Head receives a public electricity supply is the adequacy of the commercial

# 1951 to 1974

return”, which meant that the residents would have to contribute a substantial amount towards the cost and that would be difficult if the line was to be laid underground. After lengthy negotiations, an acceptable solution was reached which involved an overhead line where screening existed, an underground line in exposed areas and (a masterstroke of compromise) an underwater line for the length of Wastwater!

## **Water supply**

While electricity supply was the main issue in the first 10 years, water supply was the most difficult issue of the subsequent 10 years. As anyone who lives here will testify, a lot of rain falls in the Lake District. The 120 square miles of the central fells have an annual rain fall of more than 100 inches. Manchester Corporation had already damned Thirlmere in 1890 and had acquired powers to dam Haweswater in 1929. Probably the most dramatic episode of the Planning Board’s existence was the battle in 1961-62, both in and out of Parliament, over proposals by Manchester Corporation to develop further large sources of water supply in the Lake District by turning Ullswater and Bannisdale into reservoirs. The proposals came out of the blue. The Board and the County Councils only became aware of what the Corporation had in mind in September 1961 after the final decision had been taken to promote a Bill in the 1961-62 Parliamentary Session. The Bill was deposited in its final form in November. The campaign to save Ullswater and Bannisdale was notable for the vehemence and the magnitude of the support it commanded.



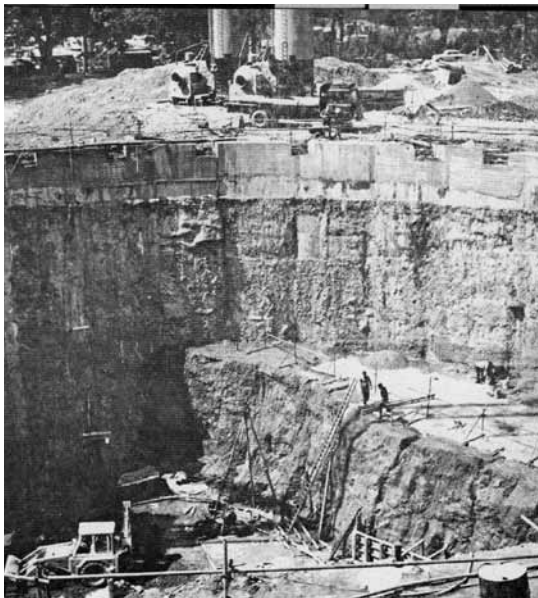
*Dryhowe Bridge, Bannisdale, where the dam was to be constructed.*

The Board lodged a petition in opposition and retained counsel and the water clauses in the Bill were eventually defeated by the eloquence of Lord Birkett in a debate in the House of Lords in February 1962 two days before he died.

After the rejection of those proposals, a meeting of all parties was convened to consider the way forward. The Corporation meantime engaged consultants who, in February 1964, recommended abstracting 20 million gallons daily (mgd) from Ullswater and pumping it into Haweswater, abstracting 20 mgd

1951  
to  
1974

from Windermere and pumping it to the Thirlmere aqueduct and constructing a huge new reservoir in the Winster valley. The Reservoir would have been about twice the size of Haweswater and would have inundated the village of Bowland Bridge. The Board objected strongly to the proposed reservoir in the Winster valley. It indicated it was willing to discuss the proposed abstraction from Windermere but it objected to the Ullswater proposal, stating that it would be willing to consider abstraction from the River Eamont as an alternative. The Corporation did not proceed with the Winster reservoir but responded by publishing a draft Water Order in 1965 providing for abstraction from both Windermere and Ullswater. A new element in the Order was the proposal to drive a second tunnel from Haweswater to emerge at the head of the Longsleddale valley. The Board lodged objections to the Order because of the adverse effects of draw down of the lakes and the damage which the new aqueduct would cause to an unspoiled valley. A public inquiry was held in June of 1965. The Minister's decision in May 1966 approved the proposals for abstraction from both Windermere and Ullswater, subject to tight controls over the infrastructure and a limit on draw down was imposed for the latter.



*The Ullswater  
pumping station  
during construction  
– and after.*



The proposed aqueduct to Longsleddale was refused. Subsequently, in 1971 the Corporation came back with a proposal for a second aqueduct, this time to be routed via Shap. As the Minister had refused a second aqueduct in 1966, the Board felt that it was for the Corporation to justify the need for the additional capacity. In any event, it considered the proposed capacity of the new aqueduct (55 mgd) to be excessive. The Board voiced its reservations to a public inquiry in December 1973. The Ministers decision in 1974 acknowledged that the proposed aqueduct would have spare capacity but considered that this was prudent in view of the age of the Corporation's other supply lines. The new aqueduct was constructed.

Over the same period, the Board was also dealing with proposals by the West Cumberland Water Board to increase the level of abstraction from Crummock Water, by the South Cumberland Water Board to raise the level of Ennerdale, by the Cumberland River Authority to raise the level of Bassenthwaite and by the Furness Water Board to increase their rate of abstraction from the River Duddon. In the light of all this, it is perhaps not surprising that someone should have suggested that the Lake District National Park might more appropriately be re-named the 'Reservoir District National Park'!

## Road improvements

Responding to major road schemes also occupied quite a lot of the Board's time over this period. Foremost among these was the proposal by the Department of the Environment in 1971 to upgrade the A66 from Penrith, through Keswick to Cockermouth to provide good road communication to West Cumberland. The Board supported the need for good road communication but unanimously opposed the establishment of a route for industrial traffic through the National Park. Instead, it advocated a slightly longer route to the north of Skiddaw using the A595 and the B5305, a route which the inspector at the subsequent six week public inquiry acknowledged to be a viable alternative. The Minister approved the Department's proposal in December 1972. A subsequent motion in the House of Lords calling attention to the Minister's decision and the urgent need for the formulation of a road policy for the Park was agreed to after much criticism of the decision. On a lighter note, cross-examination of the Department's traffic evidence at the public inquiry revealed that more buses came into the National Park every day than left it!

Following the A66 decision, fears were expressed about the implications for the A591. A meeting was held with officers of Cumberland and Westmorland County Councils and with the Regional Controller for Roads to discuss the scale of future improvements and broad agreement was reached which, in view of the improvements to the A66, amongst other things involved a ban on heavy goods vehicles over Dunmail Raise. Subsequently, the Board supported a proposal for a relief road for Ambleside to the west of the town following a route under Loughrigg. It was subsequently rejected by the Minister following a public inquiry. It also supported the line for a by-pass round Staveley but objected to the proposed dual carriageway. The objection was vindicated following a public inquiry.

Elsewhere, the Board supported a proposal by Lancashire County Council for a relief road to the west of Hawkshead and relief roads at Lindale and Backbarrow.

## The closure of railways

At the same time as the Board was dealing with proposals to upgrade the road network in the National Park, it was also having to deal with proposals to downgrade the rail network. In 1957 the Board appeared at the public inquiry into the proposed closure of the Coniston to Foxfield railway line, arguing that the line was important for both local people and tourists. In the event, the line was closed to passenger traffic but on the understanding that a bus service would be available. Following the closure of the line, the Board was given the opportunity to buy the Coniston to Foxfield track for conversion to a path. However, the Board did not want responsibility for maintaining the line-side fencing and decided not to go ahead, a decision which its successor came to regret when negotiations over the creation of a cycle track along the route fell through many years later in the face of opposition from landowners along the way.

In 1963 similar objection was made by the Board to the closure of the Penrith to Keswick section of the Penrith to Cockermouth railway line. This time the objection was upheld and the line remained open for the time being as far as Keswick, although it was eventually closed in 1972. In 1964, objection was lodged unsuccessfully to the proposed closure of the Ulverston to Lakeside line.



*The Keswick to Threlkeld footpath and cycleway.*

The cloud caused by the eventual closure of the Penrith to Keswick railway line in 1972 had a silver lining. In 1983 the Board acquired a four mile stretch of the line from Keswick to Threlkeld with a view to opening it as a footpath and cycleway. A management plan was prepared and extensive work was undertaken by the wardens with support from the voluntary wardens and others in engineering a safe path. The 1999-2000 Annual Report recorded use of the path by more than 11,000 cyclists during the year, most of them family groups. The path is also fit for use by those with limited mobility thereby making the superb views in the Greta Gorge accessible to wheelchair users.

In 1999 the Authority acquired 36 hectares of woodland, meadow and river from the Storms Estate, funded by central government grant and generous financial support from four of the voluntary wardens. Most of the land adjoins the Keswick to Threlkeld path and provides better access for educational groups and the opportunity for circular rail and riverside walks. It also allowed the Authority to restore habitats, enhance the herb rich meadows and regenerate the woodland.

### **The wardens' service**

So far in this record, the focus has been mainly on situations in which the Board felt constrained to respond in the interests of the National Park to a proposed course of action being taken by another public body. However, the Board was also able to take a proactive approach to the discharge of national park purposes and in the years from 1951 to 1974 a number of important steps were taken in this regard.

At an early stage in its existence, the Board addressed the question of the need for a wardens' service (later renamed the rangers' service). However, the legislation at the time only allowed the appointment of a warden for land either owned by the National Park or covered by an access agreement or order. The Peak District, with large areas of the National Park covered by access agreements, employed a full time warden. In the Lake District, the Board held little land of its own, and because of the traditional freedom of access to the fells by courtesy of owners and occupiers very few access agreements were necessary. That being so, the Board found itself unable to appoint a full time warden. Instead, as Sheila Richardson records in *Putting Something Back*, in 1954 Leslie Hewkin, a Board member, proposed that the Board recruit a group of voluntary wardens to deal primarily with litter, a particular problem at the time. The Board supported the idea and Leslie found himself having to put his own idea into practice. On August Bank Holiday, the group met at White Moss Common to 'scavenge' for litter. It was to be the first of many such 'scavenges'; the problem of litter has persisted throughout the 60 years of the National Park Authority's existence and there is no evidence that it is abating.



In 1984, for example, a litter sweep produced over a 1,000 sacks of rubbish. And the problem has not been confined to the valleys but has extended also to the fell tops. As an experiment the Board in 1955 asked the voluntary wardens to place notices on the summits of Scafell Pike, Great Gable and Helvellyn saying "We are sorry to put this notice here but in 1955 the top was disfigured by litter. Volunteers have cleaned it up. Please keep it clean in 1956 and this notice will go". It is unclear whether the notices were removed in 1956.

# 1951 to 1974

The Annual Report for 1955 was able to refer to the building up of an efficient and flourishing wardens' service, 32 strong, on a voluntary basis. In addition to litter collection, the wardens were soon providing help and advice on a range of topics to visitors, promoting the Country Code and keeping a watch on indiscriminate camping, which was another particular problem at that time.

John Wyatt, in his booklet celebrating 50 years of the Voluntary Warden Service, records how, at Easter 1960, he was confronted by crowds of people illegally camping on Elterwater Common. "There was hardly room between tents, most of them family size – and when I thought there was no more room – along came the army!" From there the voluntary wardens branched out into leading guided walks and a 'heavy gang', under the leadership of a volunteer who had been involved in tank removal during the war, was set up to remove abandoned vehicles.



*Removing an abandoned vehicle.*

It involved, amongst other things, carrying 20 tons of sand and cement, made up into 30 pound bags, up to the summit.

The voluntary wardens' service grew rapidly and by the end of 1956 wardens had been divided into eight areas, a wardens' committee had been set up, an annual wardens' conference was held, two of the voluntary wardens were co-opted onto the Board's Access and Accommodation Committee and consideration was being given to enrolling junior wardens. By 1966, the number of voluntary wardens exceeded 400. Leslie Hewkin chaired the voluntary wardens' committee for 24 years and continued as an active volunteer until he retired in 1983.

In 1960 the Board, at the request of the voluntary wardens' committee, revived the question of appointing a fulltime warden. By this time, the Board's landholdings had increased and it was thought that an imaginative interpretation of the legislation would allow a warden to undertake other duties relating to the provision of information, education and publicity to prevent damage and to promote appropriate behaviour. The first post was

Something like 250 vehicles were eventually removed. As Richardson comments: "this was litter picking of mega proportions".

From there it was a short step to repairing paths and path furniture. One of the biggest work party tasks at the time was the demolition and rebuilding of the ruined shelter on Helvellyn which had become a litter dump and an eyesore. John Wyatt, the Board's Head Warden, recalls how 56 voluntary wardens, assisted by a group of army cadets and some ponies, tackled the task over several weekends.



*Rebuilding the Helvellyn shelter.*



*John Wyatt, the National Park's first full-time warden.*

advertised in the spring of 1966 and more than 400 applications were received. John Wyatt took up his duties as the Board's first full-time warden in September of that year.

His report for the year ending 31 March 1961 showed a busy period involving litter clearances, the management of board properties, the promotion of mountain safety, assistance in the organisation of exhibitions, the provision of information and, generally, the giving of help and advice. The value of a fulltime wardens' service was quickly recognised and in 1962 the decision was taken to appoint a second. By 1974 the number had risen to nine.

### **Car parks and information centres**

"Car parks", said the Annual Report for 1963-64, "are not an exciting subject but they are a very necessary service". The ever increasing volume of traffic coming into the Lake District imposed considerable strain on limited parking facilities and the Board, often in association with others, devoted considerable effort to providing relief, in one case resorting to compulsory purchase powers.

Between 1953 and 1974 car parks and viewing lay-bys were constructed in more than 35 locations. Following representations about the need for public conveniences, the Board also embarked on a programme of provision in association with the car parks. 'Wannop's wee houses', named after Jim Wannop, the Board's surveyor responsible for the project, were soon a feature of some of the busiest car parks. A dispute with the District Council over the location of a toilet in Borrowdale attracted some publicity under the headline

*Traffic on the Blea Tarn road, Langdale.*

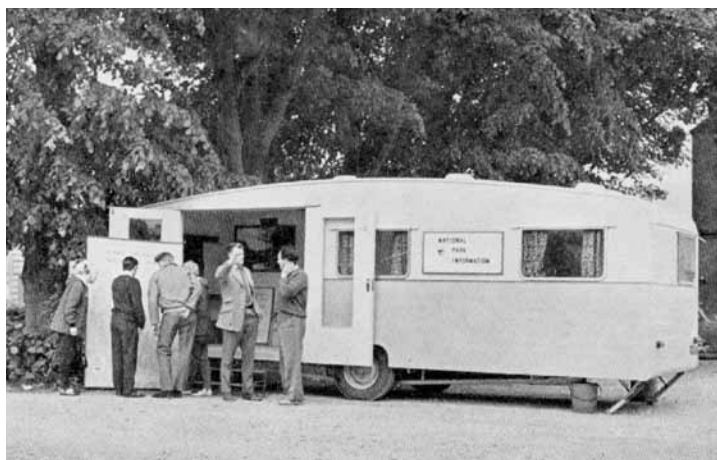


# 1951 to 1974

“Clochemerle-in-Borrowdale” (‘Clochemerle’ being the title of a TV series at the time involving a French village riven by disagreement over the siting of a proposed public convenience). After a public inquiry, the inspector said he thought the Board’s site in Borrowdale was better than the District Council’s but that a third site altogether provided the best option.

In 1969 car parking charges were introduced for the first time at the Board’s car park at Waterhead. By 1974 charging had also been introduced at Hawkshead, Coniston, Grasmere, Glenridding and Buttermere.

The Board’s first information centre was established on an ‘experimental’ basis in the Windermere Urban District Council offices in Windermere in 1956. It was unmanned. The experiment was a success and other centres, soon followed, initially on a somewhat ad hoc basis and manned by voluntary wardens. In 1964, for example, over 20,000 visitors attended a mobile information centre staffed by voluntary wardens.



*One of the Board’s mobile information centres.*

By 1974 the Board had six manned information centres operating at the Bank House, Windermere, the Moot Hall, Keswick, the Old Court House, Ambleside and mobile units at The Glebe in Bowness, at Hawkshead and a third at Waterhead car park, Ambleside. A purpose built information centre at the Glebe, Bowness, was nearing completion, including a 56 seat theatre; and a barn at Seatoller had also been acquired but had yet to be fitted out. In 1965 Barry Tullet was appointed as the Board’s first fulltime Information Officer.

## **Hassness**

Mention was made earlier of the steps taken by the Board to enhance the provision of accommodation through caravan and camping sites in the National Park. In 1964 it acquired the Hassness Estate in Buttermere with a view to providing guest house accommodation at a modest charge in a valley which deserved to be better known and where accommodation of this nature was lacking. The main house was leased to the Ramblers’ Association to run as a guest house and this arrangement still exists today. The annex, known as Dalegarth, was let privately as a guest house.

## **National Park Centre**

In 1966 the Board acquired the house and grounds known as Brockhole on the eastern shore of Windermere. The intention was to establish a National Park Centre, the first in Britain, on the lines recommended by the Hobhouse Committee. Earlier attempts to acquire a property by Ullswater for this purpose had failed. The Hobhouse Committee had envisaged a centre as providing:

“books, maps, models and museum exhibits for inquiry by visiting public into the topography, history, natural history, rural economy and general culture of the Park and its neighbourhood, together with facilities for reading, field study and similar pursuits, for periodical talks and exhibitions and cinema films and for the sale or distribution of National Park literature and maps.”

1951  
to  
1974

John Nettleton was appointed Director of the centre and it opened to the public in June 1969. It housed a modern exhibition of lakeland life and history and provided a series of lectures and films on topics such as leisure in the countryside, natural history and local history and geography. Over 60,000 people visited the centre between June and the end of November when it closed for the season. At peak times, over 1,000 people per week attended the lectures. By 1974 a new cafeteria and information area had been added and the new post of Youth and Schools Liaison Officer had been filled. The post, which was based at Brockhole, developed naturally from the educational activities of the centre.

### **Royal visit**

On 22 July 1966, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh paid a visit to the National Park, the first formal visit by a member of the Royal Family to a national park. The Board arranged matters so that His Royal Highness could see as much as possible of the varied activities of a national park in a single day. Indeed, so many activities were on the itinerary that it must be doubtful whether the Royal wellies touched the ground all day!

### **Foot and mouth**



*Keeping foot and mouth out of the National Park.*

In October 1967 foot and mouth disease devastated farms in Lancashire, Cheshire and the Midlands. The Board liaised with the National Farmers' Union (NFU) on ways of keeping the disease out of the National Park.

Publicity was mounted asking walkers and climbers to keep away, and for weekend after weekend voluntary wardens manned the normal accesses to fields and fells to persuade people to cooperate. The precautions paid off. The National Park remained free of foot and mouth. It was, said John Wyatt, the wardens' finest effort to that time.

### **Regulating motor boats**

In 1968 the Countryside Act for the first time conferred power on national park authorities to make byelaws for the purpose of restricting or regulating the use of boats on lakes. The Board had for some time been concerned over problems arising from the rapidly increasing number of boats of all types on some of the lakes. It felt that recreational boating should be encouraged on a substantial scale only on the larger and more accessible lakes and that fast motor boating and water-skiing should be permitted only on one or more of such lakes as might be especially suited to that purpose. With these objectives in mind, the Board went out to consultation on a proposal to ban motorised craft from the smaller lakes and tarns and discussion commenced over a proposal to impose a speed limit on Derwentwater, Ullswater and Coniston and to introduce a registration scheme for motorised boats on Windermere. These discussions had not been completed by the time the Joint Planning Board came to an end in 1974. However, byelaws banning motorised craft from 20 of the small lakes and tarns were authorised in 1970 and were subsequently confirmed by the Secretary of State in 1974. John Wyatt in his book *The Lake District National Park* (1987) recalls an incident sometime after the confirmation of the byelaws in which the owner of a fast power boat was

1951  
to  
1974

asked to leave Esthwaite Water. He replied: "What a pity. I was enjoying myself here. It's such a quiet lake".

### **Upland management**

In 1969 the Lake District National Park was selected by the Countryside Commission as one of two upland areas to pioneer the Upland Management Experiment. The objective was to find a better method of upland recreation management and a means of reconciling the interests of farmers and visitors. It envisaged paying farmers for tasks such as the erection of public footpath signs to discourage trespass, the construction of small shelters for use in bad weather, the provision of picnic seats and car parks, the cutting of undergrowth or the planting of trees at sites visited by the public, the clearance of rubbish and the repair of stone walls. The Martindale and

Patterdale areas were selected for a trial period of three years and a project officer, John Bailey, was appointed.



*Path repair at Rossett Ghyll.*

The experiment was regarded as such a success that it was extended in 1973 for a further three years and Matterdale, Borrowdale and Langdale were added to the scheme along with the vales of Grasmere and Ambleside and a second project officer, John Bulman, was appointed.

### **21st birthday**

On 13 August 1972 the Board celebrated its 21st birthday with an evening reception at the National Park Centre at Brockhole. The Chairman and Director of the Countryside Commission attended along with representatives of county and local councils and local societies in addition to Board members and staff. The Chairman of the Commission congratulated the Board on its achievements over the 21 years and looked ahead to the establishment of the new Board following local government reorganisation in 1974.

1974  
to  
1997

# The Lake District Special Planning Board

## The first year

As a result of the reorganisation of local government, the Lake District Planning Board was reconstituted as the Lake District Special Planning Board with effect from 1 April 1974. The term 'Special' denoted that the National Park was no longer managed by a joint board but by a board contained wholly within the area of the newly created Cumbria County Council. Perhaps not surprisingly, there had been considerable and at times heated debate over whether, in the circumstances, the Park should be managed by an independent board or, as with most other national parks, by a county council committee.

1974 was the year Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States over the Watergate scandal. West Germany beat the Netherlands to win the World Cup and Mohammed Ali knocked out George Foreman at the 'Rumble in the Jungle' to regain the World Heavyweight title. Edward Heath put Britain on to a three day week to conserve electricity during the miners' strike. Harold Wilson became Prime Minister following the General Election in February but with a hung Parliament; he gained a narrow overall majority at the second General Election in October. Inflation soared to 17.2 per cent. Manchester United was relegated from what was then the First Division. As a gesture of goodwill, China gave the UK two giant pandas. And in Great Langdale, an RAF helicopter was involved for the first time in mountain rescue in the Lake District. The helicopter had landed at Ambleside to discuss the possibility of assisting the Langdale-Ambleside Mountain Rescue Team on rescues and was promptly called out for 'on-the-job training' with the team to rescue a climber who had fallen 80 feet on Gimmer Crag.

The Lake District Special Planning Board Order 1973 provided for a board of 27 members, an increase of nine over its predecessor. Of these, 18 were appointed by Cumbria County Council, including four on the nomination of the constituent District Councils. Nine members were appointed by the Minister. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 subsequently provided that district councils should be able to appoint members as of right and the size of the Board was increased in 1982 to 30 with 16 appointed by the County Council and four by the District Councils. The number of Secretary of State appointees was increased to 10, thereby preserving their one third representation.

The new Board in 1974 immediately turned its attention to recruitment. Staff appointed directly by the former Board: the wardens, information centre, caravan site and Brockhole staff, were carried forward to the new Board; however, the former Board employed no administrative or planning staff, relying entirely on the services of the former county councils. Kenneth Himsworth, a solicitor and the Clerk to the former Westmorland County Council and to the former Planning Board, was appointed the first National Park Officer. Rex Baynes, the senior Cumberland County Council

# 1974 to 1997

planner handling national park work, was appointed Chief Planning Officer. Administrative, secretarial and planning staff followed. The County Council's Director of Finance took on the job of Treasurer to the Board and it was decided that the County Council should provide legal, architectural and personnel services. Subsequently, in 1978, because of the increasing workload, the Board decided to establish its own small legal section.

With local government reorganisation in 1974 came a reorganisation of the financial arrangements for national park revenue expenditure. Under the new arrangements, the Board was required, in July each year, to submit estimates of expenditure to the Department of the Environment for the three years ahead. In December the Department of the Environment would decide on the amount of the National Park Supplementary Grant to be made available over that period. This grant was intended to represent 75 per cent of the Board's net expenditure (other than the contribution by the Countryside Commission towards information and interpretative services) and the Board would precept on the County Council for the remaining 25 per cent. In fact it didn't quite work out that way in 1974-75 because of difficulties arising from reorganisation. The Department of the Environment grant amounted to £230,000 and the Board precept on the County Council was for a further £118,000. The Countryside Commission grant aid amounted to £93,000. In addition, the Board had budgeted for £109,742 from its own sources of income such as caravan and camp sites, car parks, holiday accommodation, Brockhole and information centres. The 75-25 per cent split was observed in subsequent years.

Accommodation was a problem on reorganisation. For a while, the Board had to rely on the generosity of the County Council who made space available at different premises in Kendal. However, as the Board's establishment grew, so the problem became more acute and staff had to be out-posted to Brockhole and the information centre at Windermere. For the longer term, the new Board decided that it was time that the offices were located inside the area for which it was planning authority and officers were instructed to report on possible sites, preferably in Windermere or Ambleside. Nothing came of the search and, the following year, the County Council was able to offer the Board the rental of a whole building in Busher Walk, Kendal. This enabled all planning and administrative staff to be brought together in one place. In the meantime, because of financial constraints, the prospects for an early move to

*The greenfield site at Murley Moss.*



a property within the National Park had receded and, in the end, the premises at Busher Walk remained the Board's principal office until in 1989 the County Council indicated that it wished to take possession of the premises to house its own staff.

A number of options were considered and schemes were drawn up for a site in Kendal on the Burton Road and for Brockhole. Members favoured Brockhole on the ground that it offered a centralised headquarters for staff within the National Park. Plans were put in hand for an extension to Brockhole to house an additional 62 staff and a

1974  
to  
1997

planning application was submitted. The Board recommended approval of its own application but the proposal was called-in for a decision by the Minister and eventually refused following a four day public inquiry on the ground that it would have been contrary to the Board's own policy on development between the road and the lakeshore. Following that set back, attention focused on a greenfield site at the new business park being established at Murley Moss on the south side of Kendal.

With the assistance of a generous grant from the Government, new offices were constructed and staff eventually moved into the offices in March 1994.

In all the changes resulting from local government reorganisation, Gerald Grice, the Chairman from 1964 to 1977, was a tower of strength. He was a calming influence during the sometimes fraught debates and the high regard in which he was held both by county councillors on the Board and by the Secretary of State appointed members enabled him to mediate conflicting and strongly held views. His contribution to the Lake District National Park was immense.

### **Plan preparation**

One of the first tasks of the newly appointed planning team was the preparation, jointly with the County Council, of the first structure plan for Cumbria, including the National Park. The structure plan was a key component of the 'new style' development plan, provision for which was made in 1968. Because of the extensive survey requirements and the onerous consultation procedures involved in this new style development plan, the draft plan was not published for comment until March 1978. Following receipt of some fairly robust comments, further work was undertaken reassessing and revising the plan. It was eventually submitted to the Secretary of State for approval and an examination in public was held in September 1980. The Minister published his proposed modifications to the Plan in mid 1981. Amongst these was a proposal to delete the Board's local housing policy (below) and the Board asked for this modification to be reconsidered. The Plan was eventually approved with modifications in December 1983. By that time, it had all taken so long that the first review of the plan was due and work on that started immediately. It was to be a further 15 years before the second part of the new style development plan, a comprehensive local plan for the National Park, was adopted.

At the same time as the Structure Plan was being prepared, the planning team was also working on the first National Park Plan. The requirement to prepare such a plan had been introduced by the Local Government Act 1972 and reflected concern that more emphasis needed to be placed on the function of 'management' in national parks, a term which referred to the organisation and provision of facilities and the use of land for the purposes of conserving the landscape and providing for recreation. Given that the delivery of much of this depended on other bodies, the Plan needed to provide guidance to, and coordinate the efforts of, such other bodies. The Structure Plan and the Management Plan complemented each other but, while the former was concerned with strategic, social and economic issues, the latter was more concerned with policies for the management of the National Park, the promotion of recreational use and detailed local issues. After extensive consultation, the Plan was approved by the Board in April 1978. It was subsequently singled out by the Countryside Commission as a well-balanced and imaginative document.

1974  
to  
1997

A feature of the National Park Plan was the strong focus of attention on the needs of local people, including the need for local affordable housing (see below). The Plan also marked the reversal of the former Board's policy of the dispersal of recreational activity. Instead of trying to spread the load equally, the Plan identified a number of 'quiet areas' which should remain as reservoirs of calm within the wider National Park. And there was a change of policy towards conservation areas. The former Board had considered it "invidious and unwise to single out small parts of the National Park for special treatment" and had refused to exercise the power to designate such areas. However, after further discussion of the matter, the new Board was convinced of the advantages of increased protection of village character and, with considerable support from local communities, a programme of designation followed over the next few years.

The notable exception was Hartsop where a public meeting in 1981 was vociferously opposed to designation: "Lakes hamlet declares UDI from planners" was the Daily Telegraph headline. The local view was that if the village was worthy of designation, it was the local people who had made it so, therefore designation was superfluous. It was not until 1985 that the idea was eventually given a warmer welcome by the village.

Two issues which attracted a high profile and occupied the attention of the new Board for the whole of its existence were how best to secure housing for local people and how to deal with the problems created by fast motor-boating on the larger lakes. These are considered in turn.

### **Housing for locals**

Housing for locals was a problem about which the former Board had expressed concern. An increasing number of houses in the National Park were changing over to second and holiday homes and retirement homes. The strong demand for such homes was inflating house prices to the point where local people, many of whom were on low incomes, were having difficulty competing in the market. The growth in the number of second and holiday homes meant that the social life of villages declined because the houses were empty for much of the time, services reduced because of the diminished demand for shops, bus services, schools and so on. Also there was an exodus of young people from the villages which was having consequences for the local economy. Between 1952 and 1976, for example, 25 schools had closed in the national park, while the loss of food shops and their replacement with cafes and gift shops had been a cause of widespread concern. This was not a problem which could be addressed simply by increasing the land supply for housing because that would damage the spectacular landscape for which the national park was designated; nor could the change from main residence to second home be controlled through the planning system. Local councils were trying to tackle the issue up to a point through the supply of rented accommodation (until the advent of government policy on the sale of council houses) but the unit costs of small housing schemes was high and supply was limited.

In 1970 the former Board had made a start in tackling the problem. It granted planning permission for four terraces of houses in the former quarry workings at Chapel Stile. There was no restriction on occupancy but cheap materials were permitted in order to keep down the price and bring them within the range of local people. The intention was that the houses should resemble the terraces of quarry workers cottages prevalent in the area. The houses were built but the experiment was not a success.



*Housing for locals,  
Chapel Stile.*

Fifteen years later only three of the 28 houses were permanently occupied, the remainder had gone for second or holiday homes; and the terraces somehow looked suburban.

The new Board was not a housing authority but officers were instructed to consider what could be done under planning powers to alleviate the situation. In the light of the outcome of the Chapel Stile experiment, members were aware that simply providing (relatively) cheap housing was unlikely to bring it within the range of local people. It was therefore suggested that imposing a restriction on the occupancy of new houses

to a locally employed person might help. However, discussions about such a strategy with the Department of the Environment were not encouraging. The Board sought counsel's opinion which was more optimistic. Meantime, a research report prepared by Lancaster University in 1976 showed that it was commonplace for 20 to 30 per cent of houses in villages in the National Park to be in second home ownership and that, in some of the central villages, the figure exceeded 30 per cent. This reinforced the Board's view of the seriousness of the situation and a policy on the use of occupancy restrictions, secured by means of a planning agreement rather than a planning condition, was inserted into both the draft structure plan and the draft national park plan. Paragraph 10.24 of the draft National Park Plan, for example, stated:

"It will be the Board's policy to pursue every possibility to ensure that in the future any new houses anywhere in the National Park will be for local use".

In the meantime, the Board's Development Control Committee in 1977 began acting on the policy by tying all new housing to people employed, or to be employed, locally or retired from local employment.

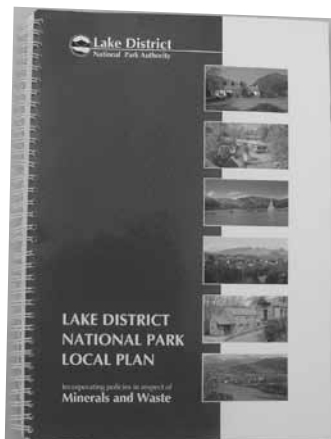
The policy excited a great deal of interest nationally as well as locally, not all of it favourable. The Annual Report for 1977-78 observed that:

"it is a moot point as to which is the less uncomfortable position: being criticised for doing nothing, or being criticised for doing something, but doing it wrongly".

At the examination in public of the joint structure plan in September 1980, the main issue raised with regard to the National Park was the local housing policy. The panel, which conducted the examination, concluded that "because the problem is so extreme and is so intractable" the Board's policy should be tried. The Secretary of State disagreed with the panel and proposed to delete the policy on the ground that "it would be an unreasonable use of planning powers to attempt to ensure that houses should only be occupied by persons who are already living in the locality". This seemed to misunderstand the policy and the Board requested the Minister to reconsider his position. In his final decision, the Minister amended, rather than rejected, the policy. The relevant part now read that housing would only be permitted where:

"the proposed development will fulfill requirements arising from local reductions in average household size, or natural growth of the existing population, or the creation of new job opportunities in or adjacent to the

1974  
to  
1997



*Lake District National Park Local Plan, 1997.*

National Park for which the provision of housing in the settlement concerned is appropriate”.

The Board had difficulty understanding what that meant and took the advice of counsel. In the light of that advice, it modified its policy in 1984 so that it imposed a main residency requirement on all new housing.

Attention then turned to the appeal process and the Minister was asked to substitute a main residency restriction in place of the local occupancy restriction in a number of outstanding planning appeals. This he declined to do and all the appeals were allowed without any restriction, leaving the Board’s policy in disarray.

In the light of this, the Board was compelled to look afresh at the problem of local housing. It began by commissioning further research. This was undertaken by Margaret Capstick, a former Board member and Research Fellow at Lancaster University, and was published in 1987 and confirmed that the situation had become more serious in the intervening years.

After further consideration the Board concluded that pressure should be brought to bear on the Government to enable planning authorities to ensure that suitable building land could be used to fulfill a local need. The Board remained convinced that a local occupancy restriction was the only effective means of securing this. Eventually, in 1989, the Secretary of State issued a statement accepting that in certain cases, where it could be justified, planning authorities could use planning agreements to ensure that building land was made available for locals. Armed with that statement, the Board embarked on the lengthy process of preparing a park-wide local plan, one of the key objectives of which was to provide a framework which would ensure that land was made available for low cost housing for local people. In the meantime, further research showed that the proportion of second homes in some of the central parishes had crept up to 40 per cent. The draft local plan was the subject of a 23 day public inquiry in 1995-96. In March 1997, just before the Special Planning Board ceased to exist, the inspector issued his decision upholding the housing policy.

The new policy provided that virtually all new housing in the National Park should be restricted to local needs. The policy would be delivered through the use of planning agreements which would ensure that new houses were both affordable and available only to local people. It had taken the Board the 23 years of its existence to bring the Department of the Environment round to its way of thinking.

## **Regulating the use of the lakes**

The second issue which occupied so much of the Board’s attention was the control of the use of lake surfaces. The former Board had made byelaws for the prohibition of power driven vessels on the smaller lakes and tarns and these had been confirmed by the Home Secretary in March 1974. It had also proposed making byelaws imposing a 10 mph speed limit on Coniston, Derwentwater and Ullswater, but with a transitional period of five years involving a zoning system for part of Ullswater. This proposal was adopted by the new Board and towards the end of 1974, byelaws were submitted to the Home Office for confirmation. A protracted public inquiry into the proposed byelaws was held in the summer of 1976. The Annual Report for that year commented that the list of those submitting views read rather like

1974  
to  
1997

an encyclopedia of environmental bodies. The arguments focused mainly on Ullswater where power boating was well-established. It was not until January 1978 that the Minister eventually issued his decision. He confirmed the byelaws for Coniston and Derwentwater and they came into operation in the spring of that year. He adopted the inspector's conclusion that a zoning system for Ullswater would be impractical in view of the universal right to navigate on the lake and refused to confirm the byelaws as they stood. Instead, he indicated that he would be prepared to confirm byelaws which introduced a speed limit on Ullswater in five years time but with no interim zoning system. The Board accordingly made byelaws for Ullswater in the revised form and these were eventually confirmed by the Minister and took effect in 1983.

## **Windermere**

In the meantime, the Board authorised consultation over the future use of Windermere where rapidly increasing pressure on the lake was causing concern. In 1975 the Board agreed to promote byelaws for the compulsory registration of power driven vessels as a useful first step. It would make the identification of craft easier and would help in the enforcement of the long-standing Collision Rules on the lake. The byelaws were confirmed without an inquiry and came into effect in December 1978. It was estimated that some 4,500 power driven boats used the lake every year and would need to register.

The consultation process culminated in 1980 in the publication by a Steering Committee representing public authorities with a close interest in the future of the lake of 'A Management Plan for the Lake'. This identified greater influence over access to the water as the key to reducing many of the conflicts of use which were now apparent. It also recommended a review of the Collision Rules. A range of amendments to the Rules were discussed over the next 10 years but it proved difficult to achieve any consensus about the way forward and progress was slow.

During this time the level of activity on the lake continued to increase with a consequent increase in conflicts between the different types of user, a heightened level of noise and growing concern about the effects of wash. An indication of the increasing pressure on the lake was reflected in the number of power craft registering each year. By 1989 the number had risen to 16,000, more than three times the figure when the registration scheme had been introduced 10 years earlier. Initially, the Board considered introducing additional regulation through the medium of a Private Bill. However, in view of anticipated difficulties, members decided in July 1991 to promote byelaws imposing a 10 mph speed limit over the whole of the lake. In reaching this decision, the Board was mindful of the recommendation of the National Park Review Panel, which had been set up by the Countryside Commission to review national park policies, that national parks should be for 'quiet enjoyment'. It also had in mind the beneficial effects of the introduction of a speed limit on the other lakes.

Strong objection to the byelaws was voiced by those representing fast motor-boating and water-skiing interests who advocated increased management and compromise solutions as the way forward. A 13 week public inquiry was held between September 1994 and January 1995 to consider the merits of the byelaws. The inspector concluded that there was a fundamental problem of incompatibility when fast power boating took place on the same, relatively confined, stretch of water as other water based recreation, an incompatibility

1974  
to  
1997

which was reflected in problems of public safety and diminished enjoyment. In his view a management plan would not deal satisfactorily with the problem. He recommended that the byelaws should be confirmed. The Minister disagreed. He refused to confirm the byelaws and asked the parties to explore ways in which management arrangements might enable the different users to co-exist. The Board believed that, as management arrangements had been examined at the inquiry and rejected by the inspector, the Minister's decision was unlawful. It was challenged successfully by way of appeal to the High Court and the matter was referred back to the Minister for re-determination. He invited further representations from the parties as to whether there had been any significant change of circumstance since the inquiry. Eventually, in February 2000 the speed limit on Windermere was confirmed but with a transitional period of five years to allow businesses and recreational interests to adjust.

To bring the story up-to-date, in 2008 the Authority proposed a number of amendments to both the registration and the navigation byelaws on Windermere. Amongst other things, the Authority proposed standardising the speed limits on the lake by reference to nautical miles per hour. The six mph speed limit on crowded parts of the lake like Bowness Bay is expressed in nautical miles per hour while the 10 mph speed limit over the remainder of the lake is impliedly expressed in statute miles per hour. The amendments to the registration byelaws were confirmed by the Minister in 2011 but standardisation of the speed limits in the navigation byelaws was rejected on the ground that, despite earlier byelaws defining a mile as a nautical mile, the 10 mph speed limit had been expressed in statute miles per hour during the consideration of evidence at a lengthy public inquiry. At the time of writing the Authority is consulting on options to resolve the matter.

### **Ennerdale and Wastwater**

A further high profile issue which exercised the Board for a while was the proposal in 1977 by the North West Water Authority to raise the level of Ennerdale by four feet to augment water supplies to British Nuclear Fuels Ltd and to domestic users in West Cumbria. To complicate matters, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd at the same time put forward its own scheme to augment its supplies by increasing the rate of abstraction from Wastwater from four mgd to 11 mgd. While accepting the need to maintain good supplies for both BNFL and for consumers generally in West Cumbria, the Board, after taking expert advice, decided to oppose both schemes on environmental grounds and to promote the regulation of the River Derwent as the best long term solution. A public inquiry into both proposals lasting 57 days was held in 1980 and, as it unfolded, so further alternatives were advanced by all parties, including four different proposals for Ennerdale and five for Wastwater. The Board's own position changed to recommend that Ennerdale (unaltered) should supply BNFL and that the River Derwent should meet domestic requirements. In December 1981 the Secretary of State, in a decision which rested heavily on environmental considerations, rejected the proposals of the Water Authority and BFNL.

### **National Park Officer**

Kenneth Himsforth retired as National Park Officer in 1977. His contribution to National Parks and to local government had been recognised by the award of a CBE. The Director of the Countryside Commission, in an appreciation in the Commission's newsletter, said:

1974  
to  
1997

“Only those who have been concerned with national parks for a long time can begin to appreciate the contribution he had made...but it must be as the champion of the Lake District National Park, which commanded his devotion and his loyalty over such a long period of time, that we can be grateful to him”.

His place was taken by Michael Taylor, a Chartered Surveyor and the former County Land Agent for Suffolk County Council. His extensive knowledge of the countryside and of agriculture was to be a strong influence on Board policies.

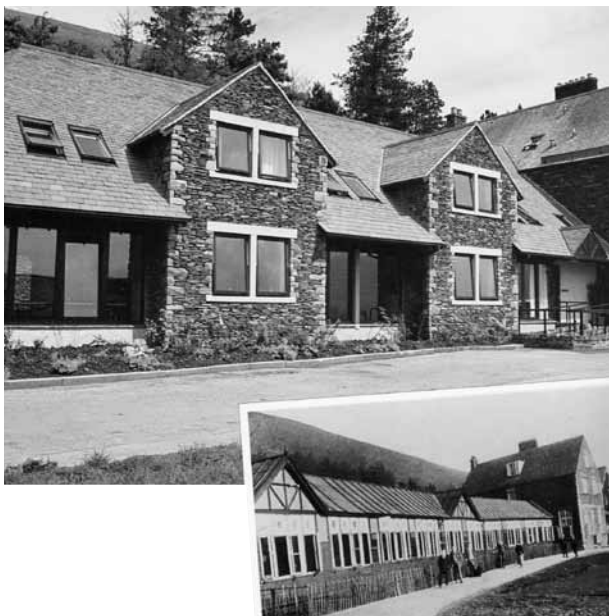
## Property acquisition

Mention has already been made of the use by the former Board of its powers to acquire land and buildings to meet particular access and accommodation needs. As will be seen (below), these powers continued to be used quite widely by the new Board over the 23 years of its existence but under Michael Taylor's guidance the Board greatly increased its ownership of land for conservation purposes. Over the next decade, acquisitions included the woodlands at High Dam, Finsthwaite, a large tract of woodland in the Rusland Valley, a 17th century farm at Beckside, Ullswater, six islands on Windermere, Glenridding Common and unenclosed common land at Caldbeck and Uldale and Bassenthwaite Lake.

In 1967 the former Board had acquired the disused Coniston Station with the intention of providing self-catering holiday accommodation. However, local opposition and a lack of funding delayed progress and, after discussion with the Parish Council, the new Board decided in 1976 to construct four workshops to help maintain local industry and some local housing on the site. By 1980 all four workshops had been completed and let. Because of difficulties with the site, the provision of local housing has still not been secured.

In 1976 the Board took the opportunity to acquire 2,700 acres of Glenridding Common on the east side of Helvellyn for access purposes, including Striding Edge, Swirral Edge and Red Tarn. Included in the acquisition was the former Greenside Lead Mine which had ceased operations in 1959 and several of the former mine buildings. Work was put in hand to reduce the impact of the mining operations and a management plan was prepared for the Common and implementation began in 1979. Ten years later the Board had completed the refurbishment of some of the old mine buildings and Striding Edge Hostel at Greenside, capable of accommodating 18 people, was opened for use by groups, and Swirral Bothy, next door, provided more basic camping barn facilities. However, in 1999 tests revealed some problems with the tips and a major programme of work, funded largely by the Environment Agency and the North West Water Authority, was undertaken over three years to secure their stability.

*The Blencathra Centre, then and now.*



1976 was a busy year for property acquisition by the Board because in the same year it also purchased the former tuberculosis sanatorium on the slopes of Blencathra near Threlkeld along with several cottages on the site from the Northern Regional Health Authority. The site was in a prominent and

# 1974 to 1997

sensitive location and the Board was keen to manage its future development. The intention was to convert the buildings to provide five self catering hostels for schools and youth groups visiting the Lake District, a type of accommodation for which there was considerable demand. The cottages, along with other converted properties on site, would provide eight family self-catering units. The former recreational building was converted to provide resource and lecture facilities and office accommodation was provided for a youth and schools liaison officer and for the northern warden service. The versatility of the accommodation and the magnificent setting of the Blencathra Centre made it very popular. In 1989 a review of the operation of the centre concluded that considerable expenditure was required on the buildings and that a change of direction was desirable to achieve a stronger focus on environmental education. The decision was made to convert four of the five hostels to a study centre to be operated in partnership with the Field Studies Council. An appeal was launched to help fund the necessary refurbishment conversion works and by the early 1990s the study centre was up and running, capable of accommodating up to 48 people and offering a variety of courses for junior, secondary and tertiary schools and colleges and in-service teacher training.



*Coniston Boating Centre was acquired by the Board in 1978.*

The acquisition of the freehold of the Coniston Boating Centre in 1978, following protracted negotiations, provided the opportunity to establish a public launching site and access area in close proximity to the village of Coniston. The acquisition included a small parking area, a cafe, boat storage and a number of rowing boats and small motor boats for hire. A launching ramp was installed to facilitate easier launching by those bringing their own boat to the centre and the cafe was let. In an early example of the Board's green credentials, the fleet of old petrol driven motor boats was replaced in 1996 by electrically powered launches. These proved to be less noisy, more environmentally friendly and cheaper to run.

In 1979 the Board was the recipient of a gift of land bought for the nation from Egremont Estate through the National Land Fund in lieu of estate duty, the first national park to benefit in this way. The land in question comprised 11,256 acres of unenclosed common at Caldbeck and Uldale to the north of Skiddaw, 220 acres on Barf to the west of Bassenthwaite Lake and the lake itself. The common land comprised by far the largest unit of land under the management of the Board. The Board had no plans for radical change; most of the area was grazing land used for quiet recreation. The management of commons throughout England at that time was proving something of a challenge and during the 1980s the Government attempted to secure a more coherent approach through the setting up of a Common Land Forum. It was not a success, but the Board sought to retrieve the most promising embers from the ashes by setting up commons executive committees for each of its large commons - not just Caldbeck and Uldale but also Blawith and Torver Low and Torver High and Back. A young Bob Cartwright arrived around this time to fill the post of Head of Park Management Services. He recalls

# 1974 to 1997

attending his first commons executive committee meeting. The exchange was largely adversarial, there was an air of general mistrust and the meeting was characterised by an 'us' and 'them' attitude. This was aggravated by the layout of the hall with the National Park representatives installed behind the 'top table' and the dour commoners sitting, arms folded, in rows of seats facing the table. He says he often feels his single greatest achievement was to rearrange the room for subsequent meetings so that the parties sat round the same table to sort out shared problems.

While the Board owned a number of small tarns, Bassenthwaite Lake was the first lake of any size to be acquired by the Board. It is of national importance for nature conservation and was already subject to byelaws prohibiting use by power boats; otherwise fishing and boating were permitted subject to a charge. The Board entered into discussion with interested parties about a strategy for the future of the lake with priority being given to nature conservation. The Bassenthwaite Forum was established to ensure a two-way flow of information and opinion. The fishing interests, in particular, proved crucial in developing the strategy, in securing the improvement of the Keswick Sewage Works, in establishing a dedicated volunteer service and in making the case for National Nature Reserve status. The lake was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1993.

Notwithstanding the implementation of the management strategy, the anglers subsequently drew attention to deterioration in the water quality of the lake. This appeared to be caused by problems with the way in which the land surrounding the lake was being managed. A partnership of eight organisations, each with a responsibility for, or an interest in, the lake and the surrounding area, was established under the chairmanship of the Environment Agency to tackle the problem. A grant of £1.8 million was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a three year (2007-10) catchment-wide programme of work under the title 'Bassenthwaite Reflections'. This involved some 30 separate environmental projects each with the theme of water, woodland, cultural heritage, access or education. Such was the success of the programme that a similar catchment-wide approach has now been adopted to tackle problems of water quality and related issues in Windermere lake and funding has been attracted from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



*Keswick Railway Station*

In 1979 the Board also acquired the former Keswick Railway Station. It was the last developable area of any size in the town and the Board wished to ensure that its development would be for the benefit of the town. Initial discussion with the County, District and Town Councils identified a need for a site for the Century Theatre and for a swimming pool but funding proved problematic. To make progress the Board approached two housing associations with a view to promoting part of the site for local housing.

Subsequently, proposals emerged for the redevelopment of the site to provide a swimming pool, local housing, and a theatre and conference facility, the development being funded by a timeshare scheme on the nearby Archery Field. The theatre and conference facility was subsequently dropped from the scheme and replaced by shops and a restaurant. In 1986 the land was sold to Allerdale District Council to take forward the development.

1974  
to  
1997

In 1981 one of the most complete 18th Century iron furnaces in England tucked away in woodland in the Duddon valley was leased to the Board. Over the next 12 years a programme of work was undertaken to this scheduled Ancient Monument with the help of English Heritage. Blast furnaces revolutionised the smelting process in the 18th Century. The Duddon Iron Furnace was established by the Cunsey Company in 1736 and operated until 1866. The restored remains are one of the most impressive charcoal-fired blast furnaces in Britain. The conservation work was recognised in the presentation of a Civic Trust Award in 1992.

This is one example of the conservation of our archaeological heritage, an area of growing interest and importance for the National Park. Another was the restoration by the Board in association with others of the Howk Bobbin Mill at Caldbeck. The Mill is located in the Howk limestone gorge. It operated from 1857 until 1924 producing bobbins for the cotton industry in Lancashire. The Mill used wood from coppiced woodlands in the surrounding area and was powered by a huge 42 foot diameter water wheel, the largest in the country. At the height of its operation it employed some 60 people.

Mention was made earlier of the acquisition of land by the former Board at Silecroft, Neaum Crag and Meathop for the establishment, and in the case of Silecroft the upgrading and extension of, touring caravan sites to help meet demand. By 1980, demand had eased, additional sites were available and the decision was made to sell Meathop and Neaum Crag. Anticipated capital expenditure was an additional factor with the latter. Silecroft followed in 1990.

Michael Taylor resigned in 1985 to take up the position of Director of the Countryside Commission for Scotland. The advertisement for his replacement attracted 250 applicants. John Toothill, a linguist by background, a former production manager in industry and more recently the Board's Chief Administrative Officer, was appointed.

Much of the work carried on by the Board over the twenty three years of its existence was low profile but nonetheless important. What follows is a flavour of this work.

## **Development control**

The development control workload steadily increased over this period with the number of planning applications determined during the year rising from just over a 1,000 in 1974-75 to a high point for the Board in 1989-90 of 1,548 of which 25 per cent were refused. All decisions were made in-house; delegation to the District Councils had ended with local government reorganisation. The number of appeals determined during that year was 124.

A notable decision involved the Limefitt Caravan and Camping site in the Troutbeck valley. The site had consent for 200 tents and 55 caravans but the operator, by taking advantage of the general planning permission to use land for 28 days a year, augmented this in peak periods by using other fields under its ownership in the valley for camping. This boosted the number of tents to around 700, with potential for an increase to around 1,000. The Board was concerned about the impact of such a large number of tents in a particularly beautiful valley and made a direction removing the general planning permission. The operator immediately applied for a formal grant of planning permission for use of the fields in question. This was refused and the operator

1974  
to  
1997

appealed. In his decision, the Minister applied the Sandford principle, which had been established as government policy in 1976 and which provided that in the event of irreconcilable conflict between the two national park purposes, the first, conservation of the environment, should prevail over the promotion of recreation. The operator secured some enlargement of the approved site but the use of the fields was refused. The refusal resulted in the payment of compensation to the operator for the loss resulting from the removal of the general planning permission.

Another proposal which occupied a considerable amount of staff time was that by UK Nirex Ltd in 1991 to drill a series of deep boreholes to determine the suitability of an area adjacent to Sellafield for the construction of a deep repository for low and intermediate level radioactive waste. While the repository would not extend under the National Park, four of the boreholes were to be drilled within the Park. The Board refused the applications because the drilling rigs, illumination, buildings, security fencing and hardcore compound would have an unacceptable effect on the landscape. Nirex appealed and two of the appeals were upheld by the Minister; two were refused. Radioactive waste disposal remains a current issue. At the time of writing, discussions are taking place with the National Park Authority, amongst others, about the possibility of constructing a deep repository near Sellafield but outside the National Park boundary to house high level radioactive waste. The Authority will have to determine its position on the matter later in the year.

On a more positive note, in 1982 the Board, after extensive negotiation, approved a large timeshare scheme with associated leisure and recreational facilities in the old gunpowder works between Elterwater and Chapel Stile in the Langdale valley. It was the largest holiday development ever granted permission in the National Park and represented a major employment boost for the area.

### **The wardens' service**

The calls on the warden service continued to increase and the number of fulltime wardens increased to 10. They were supplemented by paid weekend wardens for the summer months. To secure improved coordination of the work programme, the National Park was divided into two areas: north and south, and two of the wardens were given responsibility for each area. The range of work included involvement in mountain rescue, the promotion of mountain safety, encouraging the control of dogs at lambing time, general patrols, work parties, fire prevention, litter clearance, the protection of birds of prey, monitoring wild camping, coordinating volunteer work parties, working with the Upland Management Service in maintaining the rights of way network, boat patrols on Ullswater, Coniston, Derwentwater and subsequently Windermere, running pathfinder and other recreational courses and giving talks to the public.

Valuable support for the wardens' service in coping with this range of work continued to be provided by volunteers; indeed, the Annual Report for 1988-89 observed that "without volunteers much of the work achieved by the National Park Authority on the ground would not be possible". In addition to the normal range of work, volunteers by 1987 were undertaking boat patrols on Coniston, Ullswater and Derwentwater to enforce the speed limits and to promote safety. Subsequently, they also provided assistance on Windermere.

1974  
to  
1997

The number of voluntary wardens over this period continued at around the 300 mark. To ensure standards were maintained, volunteers served a probationary period and were required to complete two weekend training courses. Membership was reviewed on an annual basis. One training course which proved popular with volunteers was dry stone walling. The trained volunteers established a 'hole in the wall gang' which was on call to deal with urgent repairs. In addition to the voluntary wardens, the National Park were fortunate over the years in securing important assistance from a number of other voluntary groups, foremost among whom was the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

The Head Warden's reports over this period abound with anecdotes: the fell walker who took shelter from a storm in the stretcher box on Styhead Pass and who had to be released by a passing warden some time later after the latch on the lid closed; the walker who boasted to one of the wardens that he had just achieved his life-long ambition of climbing Scafell Pike - the warden didn't have the heart to tell him he was descending Great Gable; the warden who encountered six fox hounds stranded by an ice field near the summit of Skiddaw and who carried them down one by one to the waiting huntsman; and the warden who rescued a crag fast dog which expressed its appreciation by biting him.

In 1979, on the advice of the Countryside Commission, the title of 'warden' was changed to 'ranger', a title which more properly reflected the range of work now undertaken by the service. The number of fulltime rangers had risen to 13: a chief ranger, two area rangers and 10 rangers. The volunteers opted to remain as 'voluntary wardens' until their 50th anniversary in 2004 when the title was changed to 'voluntary ranger' or 'volunteer' depending on the nature of the work undertaken and the level of commitment.

In 1986 John Wyatt, the National Park's first full time warden and for many years the Board's Chief Warden and then Chief Ranger, retired. John was awarded an MBE in recognition of his services to the National Park over 26 years.

## **The information service**

In 1974 the Bowness Bay Information Centre was opened bringing the number of centres operated by the Board to eight. A ninth, the Seatoller Base, was opened in 1976. The aim was to provide a base where groups and individuals could learn something of the area and of the people among whom they would be taking their holiday. A centre at Waterhead was opened in 1982 and the one in the Old Court House, Ambleside was then transferred to South Lakeland District Council (SLDC). New permanent centres were opened at Glenridding and Pooley Bridge in 1986, a caravan service was introduced at Gosforth in 1987, although the results were disappointing, and a centre was established in partnership with SLDC at Broughton in Furness in 1996. The numbers attending the eleven centres in any one year rose from around half a million in 1974 to over a million in 1988. In 1985 the first information point was established in the shop at Elterwater and others followed in isolated shops in other parts of the National Park. A virtual information centre was established on the web in 1996 and by 2010 it was attracting more than 1.2 million visits a year.

In addition to answering visitors' queries, the centres provided information about the National Park, they were retail outlets for maps, guides and other lakeland goods, most of them offered an accommodation booking service,

1974  
to  
1997

some offered fishing permits and, in a few, it was possible to register power boats for use on Windermere.

In 1974 the Board, in conjunction with Cumbria Tourist Board, inaugurated a recorded weather service using information from the meteorological service and from the Board's own fell top assessors who provided a daily report from the summit of Helvellyn. The service proved popular and by November 1982 it had logged more than a million calls. Nine years later, the number had exceeded five million. During much of its life, the Weatherline service has been fortunate in attracting sponsorship, first from Cadbury's Chocolate Break and then in subsequent years from British Aerospace Military Division, from Glaxo Holdings plc, from Hawkshead, the clothing firm, and from Blacks.

*Touring caravans parking overnight in a layby, 1970s.*



In 1975 a Caravan Advisory Service was launched, also in conjunction with Cumbria Tourist Board and with assistance from site operators, to provide telephone information about vacant pitches. It was a response to the overcrowding of existing sites, the creation of unauthorised sites and the use of lay-bys.

In its first year of operation, the service fielded some 4,000 calls. Over the next nine years, the number of calls steadily declined, partly as a result of an increase in the number of pitches and partly as a result of a campaign to persuade people to book in advance. The service eventually closed in 1984.

## **Access**

Reference has already been made to the work undertaken by rangers and the volunteers in patrolling popular routes and leading guided walks. In 1974 the Sandford Committee had recommended that national parks should be able to assume responsibility for public rights of way in their areas. In the light of that, discussions took place with the newly created Cumbria County Council over the delegation to the Board of responsibility for some of the rights of way in the Lake District. In 1975 agreement was reached on transferring responsibility for those rights of way in that part of Eden District Council in the National Park. Subsequently, the agreement was extended to cover the entire National Park and that is the position today. It was a considerable responsibility to take on. The National Park has a rich heritage of public footpaths, bridleways and byways extending to an astonishing 2,175 miles. Some eight million walkers and an increasing number of cyclists enjoy the trails every year. This all gives rise to heavy wear and tear and monitoring the condition of routes and carrying out repairs is an important part of the work. Like Wonderland, the staff and volunteers involved have to run very fast just to keep in the same place; no sooner have problems been resolved in one place than they occur in another. In 2005 a general right of responsible access to open access land was conferred by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Given the long-established tradition of tacit agreement by landowners



*'Green lane' driving*

to public access to the open fells in the Lake District, the new right did not make a noticeable difference to the numbers taking access; but the legislation conferred additional responsibilities on the National Park Authority for oversight of the new arrangements over some 500 square miles of open access land. It also required the preparation of a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan to identify gaps in the heritage of routes, a task that has been undertaken in conjunction with Cumbria County Council. The Plan is rolled forward on a regular basis.

One aspect of access to the countryside which has caused tension over the years between recreation and conservation has been the use of 'green lanes' (byways open to all traffic and unmetalled unclassified roads) by four wheel drive vehicles and motor bikes.

The activity has been growing in popularity but, unfortunately, it can bring noise into quiet areas and the use can cause particular problems of wear and tear. These are issues which the Board had discussed with the Trail Management Advisory Group and a management strategy, the Hierarchy of Trail Routes, was developed which combined route management with voluntary restraint. Routes were colour coded according to the level of use, condition and the volume of complaints. Signs requested drivers to comply with the voluntary code of behaviour for the colour of route. Traffic regulation orders could be made, with Highway Authority consent, if the voluntary code proved insufficient. Later, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 conferred power on national park authorities to make their own traffic regulation orders. An example is Gatescarth Pass which runs from Longsleddale to Mardale. Because of deterioration in the condition of the route, locked gates have been placed at both ends and a permit system now operates to allow a controlled level of use.

*Fixing the fells*



A voluntary code of practice has also been introduced to address the problems created by large-scale charity challenge events. These typically involve large numbers of walkers converging on Wasdale or Borrowdale in a short space of time, often at night time, for an ascent of Scafell Pike, as part of a three peaks challenge including Snowdon and Ben Nevis. The volume of people can give rise to intrusion, litter, traffic congestion and environmental damage. The voluntary code seeks to limit nuisance, restrict starting times and requires marshalling and the provision of water and toilets.

Quite apart from challenge events, the sheer volume of booted feet on popular routes year after year has given rise to serious erosion of the

1974  
to  
1997

fell-sides. This was seen initially in terms of a landscape problem and the Upland Landscape Restoration project set about tackling some of the worst examples. Eventually, in 2007 the National Park Authority, in partnership with the National Trust and Natural England secured Heritage Lottery Fund money to launch a five year 'Fix the Fells' project. Like its predecessor, the purpose of the project was to reduce the scarring of important landscapes caused by upland path erosion, itself caused by the passage of millions of feet.

However, the objectives went wider than that and included flood prevention, pollution control, carbon storage and, generally, promoting greater understanding of the uplands. The project involved repair and restoration work to be undertaken by some 80 additional volunteers recruited and trained for the purpose, and by contractors. The project was supported by the Friends of the Lake District, the Tourism and Conservation Partnership and the Ramblers Association.



*Chapel Head Scar,  
Whitbarrow.*

In 1976 the Board was asked to mediate in a clash between recreational and conservation interests over access to the cliffs at Chapel Head Scar, Witherslack and the dispute provides an interesting illustration of the difficulty of managing some conflicts. The cliffs on the limestone escarpment provide a habitat for a variety of rare limestone plants. They also provide opportunities for challenging rock climbing routes. Unfortunately, it seemed that adherence to the cliff could only be achieved by the removal of the vegetation cluttering up the cracks and holds. The 'gardening' activities of the climbers caused consternation among conservationists. Negotiations commenced with the Nature Conservancy Council, the Cumbria Naturalists' Trust, the British Mountaineering Council and the landowner to try and find an acceptable solution.

Negotiations were protracted and were not assisted by the publication in early 1977, despite a request not to do so, of a climbing guide to the cliff. The author of the guide asserted that the popularity of the scar as a climbing venue was inevitable and "the only way a major and prolonged confrontation with the conservationists can be avoided is for climbers to be allowed to climb on the crag"! This rather undermined the spirit of compromise at the heart of the negotiations and did not bode well for the effectiveness of a voluntary code. To reconcile the conflicting interests, the Board secured delegated power from Cumbria County Council to designate the Scar a local nature reserve and then promoted byelaws to manage rock climbing so that it can take place in a way that is consistent with the nature conservation interest.

One aspect of access to the countryside where the National Park Authority has actively been encouraging increased use is by people with limited mobility. Over a number of years, the 'Miles without Stiles' project has built

1974  
to  
1997

up a portfolio of routes providing access for wheelchair users, families with pushchairs, the visually impaired and dog walkers with less active dogs. There are at present 41 routes extending to some 80 kms, including two routes, Latrigg and Blea Tarn, which take users into the fells. The routes are graded according to gradient and surface condition.

## Upland management

Phase II of the Upland Management Experiment, run in cooperation with the Countryside Commission, came to an end in 1976. In view of its success, the Board decided to establish the service on a permanent footing for the whole of the National Park. As with the experiment, the object of the service was to integrate farming and recreation by undertaking work on the ground to reduce conflict and repair damage. The work included repairing and replacing path furniture, including bridges, the drainage, repair and improvement of paths, tackling path erosion and dry stone walling. Where possible, work on paths was undertaken so as to fit in with plans to extend and improve the network. Initially, much of the work was undertaken by farmers, themselves. By 1986, however, the service had grown to the point where it had become the Board's main task force for project work. The emphasis had changed to a more coordinated assault on the backlog of path obstruction and maintenance problems found throughout the Park using teams of permanent and self-employed workers. The term 'upland management' was discontinued and the staff were absorbed into new area teams working under the new Park Management Department and with a wide range of skills and broader responsibilities than the Upland Management service. Nonetheless, an important function of the area teams remained the undertaking of work to reduce conflict between the farming community and visitor recreation.

## Brockhole

Brockhole grew in popularity as a centre for interpreting the changing Lake District over the early years of the Special Planning Board's existence. By 1977 it was catering for some 170,000 visitors a year who came to view the exhibitions, to watch audio-visual presentations on a range of lakeland topics, to listen to lectures, to browse in the shop, to enjoy the cafeteria or simply to stroll in the gardens and picnic on the lake shore. A busy programme of

*The Lake District Visitor Centre at Brockhole.*



events attracted a large number of school parties, educational groups and overseas visitors. And the centre was also a focus for local and national amenity and conservation bodies who used the meeting facilities and who found that Brockhole allowed them to contact a wider public. In 1980 an animated tableaux depicting characters from the well-loved Beatrix Potter stories was acquired with assistance from Frederick Warne & Co, the publishers, and proved popular.

In 1986, John Nettleton, the first Director of the centre, retired. His services had been recognised by the award of an MBE.

By 1989 throughput at Brockhole had dropped to around 77,000 and the Board embarked on a major face lift to coincide with the 21st birthday of the centre. This involved a new restaurant, film theatre, exhibition area, events hall and visitor reception along with a new exhibition.

1974  
to  
1997

## Youth and schools Liaison

The Youth and Schools Liaison Service was established in 1974 and developed naturally from the educational activities at Brockhole. Its objective was to maximise the educational value of visits to the National Park by schools and youth groups. Conservation, good countryside behaviour, environmental awareness and safe enjoyment were all themes which Tony Shearer, the first youth and schools liaison officer, attempted to get across. Thorough planning and preparation of a visit was seen as the key and the newly appointed officer spent much of his time visiting teachers and youth leaders within Cumbria and handling information requests from further afield. Numerous queries were received about accommodation for groups; occasional queries were received about the location of discos in the National Park! Such was the demand for assistance that a second officer was appointed in 1976 operating from the Blencathra Centre to provide more comprehensive coverage across the northern area of the Lake District. The liaison officers saw their job as providing a service rather than promoting the use of the National Park. Apart from visiting schools and answering requests for information, their work involved meeting and talking to parties once they were in the area, organising courses for teachers and leaders and producing publications, including the ever popular 'Bad Weather Alternatives'.

Because of the pace of change in education in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Board reviewed its educational service to ensure that it was responsive to this change. The Youth and Schools Liaison Service became the 'Education Service' and the 'tutored' side of education involving residential courses was concentrated mainly at the Blencathra Centre. There the service joined forces with the Field Studies Council to create a new centre of excellence for the teaching and practice of environmental education in the National Park. Brockhole remained an important focus for the Education Service handling day visits with some 13,500 school children visiting the centre ever year. In 1996, a joint venture with the North West Water Authority established the Brockhole Environmental Education Centre offering free courses to school children on all aspects of water and the water cycle.

## Sponsorship

Mention was made earlier of the generous support from sponsors in maintaining the Weatherline service. Over the years the National Park Authority has been fortunate in attracting different forms of sponsorship. For example, Hawkshead (outdoor clothing company) donated money from the sale of boots to tackling upland path erosion and, later, donated money from the sale of its Shoreline jackets to dealing with lakeshore erosion. Blacks and Hawkshead have both provided sponsorship for the Events programme. And Railtrack has donated money to encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport such as trains, buses, boats and bikes.

In 1993 the Board, together with Cumbria Tourism and the National Trust, established the Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership to fund conservation projects through a visitor payback scheme and other forms of fund raising. By way of illustration, the Ullswater Steamer Company provided funding from ticket sales for repair of the popular Howtown to Glenridding footpath; the Fallbarrow and Limefitt Caravan Parks provided funding for footpath repairs on Yoke and Ill Bell; the Newby Bridge Hotel funded footpath access to Summer House Knott; and Wainwright's in Chapel Stile funded

1974  
to  
1997

repairs to the Stickle Tarn path. In the first ten years, the Partnership raised over £310,000 and by 2010 the sum had risen to £160,000 per annum with the total exceeding £1.7 million. The Partnership continues today as a charitable trust under the title 'Nurture Lakeland'.

### **The National Park Review Panel**

In 1991 the National Park Review Panel published its report. It had been set up to identify the main factors which affected the ability of national parks to achieve their purposes and to make recommendations. The panel, which included John Toothill, the National Park Officer, proposed fundamental changes to the system for managing national parks. One of its main recommendations was the establishment of new national park authorities freed from local authority control. This was given effect in the Environment Act 1995 and led to the demise of the Lake District Special Planning Board.

Another key recommendation of the Review Panel was that an Association of National Park Authorities should be formed to represent the views of national parks at the national level and to advise governments on policy and legislation. Such an Association was quickly established with the membership comprising the chairmen of each national park authority. The first Chairman of the Association was Steele Addison, the Lake District Chairman from 1989 to 1999, and the first Secretary of the Association was John Toothill. The appointments reflected in some measure the regard in which the work of the Lake District National Park was held at that time.

# 1997 to date

## The Lake District National Park Authority

### The first year

On 1 April 1997 the Lake District Special Planning Board ceased to exist and, by virtue of the National Park Authorities (England) Order 1996, responsibility for the management of the National Park passed to the newly created Lake District National Park Authority.



*The Lake District National Park logo is based on the view from Wastwater.*

1997 was the year that a Labour government under Tony Blair swept into power following a landslide victory at the general election. It was also the year that Diana, Princess of Wales, died following a car crash. The UK transferred sovereignty of Hong Kong to China. McDonald's won the McLibel case, the longest trial in English legal history, against two environmental campaigners. 'Love Shine a Light' by Katrina and the Waves won the Eurovision song contest for the UK. A survey by Strathclyde University rated Kendal the best town in England in terms of quality of life. And the first Harry Potter novel was published.

The establishment of the Lake District National Park Authority heralded more than just a change of name. The statutory wording of the purposes of National Parks was revised; the Sandford principle (giving greater weight to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage in the event of irreconcilable conflict between the two statutory purposes) was placed on a statutory footing; a duty 'to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park' was introduced; and there were minor changes in the functions of the Authority. The number of members dropped from 30 to 26. Of these, 14 were appointed

# 1997 to date

by the constituent local authorities and 12 by the Secretary of State for the Environment. To secure greater local accountability, five of the 12 ministerial appointees were selected by the Parish Councils in the Park from among their councillors. Subsequently, the number of members was reduced further to 22 with 12 appointed by the local authorities and 10 by the Minister (including four selected by Parish Councils).

The budget for the Authority for the year 1997-98 was £5,542,767. The composition of the budget reflected new financial arrangements introduced by the Environment Act 1995. Approximately one half came from central government grant (£2,837,000). About one sixth of the budget (£945,667) came from a levy on the constituent local authorities, equal to one third of the government grant. The levy was apportioned according to the number of members appointed by an authority. The rest of the money making up the budget (£1,760,100) came from income raised by the Authority in the form of parking charges, planning application fees, sales from information centres and Brockhole, the Coniston Boating Centre and grants and sponsorship from other bodies.

## 1997 to 2004

In 1997 European funding was confirmed to enable research to be undertaken leading to the preparation of major management plans for two mountain massifs: Helvellyn and Skiddaw. Both are areas of outstanding importance for nature conservation, both are important to the local farming economy and both, but particularly Helvellyn, are proving increasingly popular for recreation.



*The summit of Helvellyn.*

A key objective is to test a massif-wide approach to resolving land management issues. The aim is to incorporate conservation objectives into land management and to identify long term solutions to the issues arising in such fragile areas which may be relevant to other mountain areas. A partnership involving the Authority, English Nature, United Utilities and local

land managers has been established and a range of landscape, wildlife and recreational management projects are being undertaken.

John Toothill retired in 1998 after 27 years working for the Lake District National Park, 12 of them as National Park Officer. His contribution to the National Park over this period was recognised by the award of an OBE. The Chairman, Steele Addison described him as “a brilliant leader of a successful team”. The Lake District National Park, he said, “has grown in stature under his leadership”. His place was taken by Paul Tiplady, a chartered Town Planner and Landscape Architect and formerly the Chief Officer of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.

In 1999 the Authority was delighted by the award of an MBE to Derek Tunstall. Derek had been a voluntary warden for 25 years and Chairman of the service since 1994. In welcoming the award, Peter Phizacklea, the Chairman of the Authority, referred to Derek’s enormous contribution to the volunteer service and to the essential work of the service itself.

2001 saw the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Lake District National Park and the Board celebrated the event on Mayday Bank Holiday with a ‘Partners in the Park’ day held jointly at Brockhole and at the Glebe, Bowness. A live broadcast of Blue Peter from Brockhole, conservation activities, a postcard competition, a giant birthday cake, display tents and a fly past by a Spitfire and a Hurricane were amongst the highlights. Other events during the year included the launch on Valentine’s Day, with the benefit of a huge Valentine card signed by 124 celebrities, of a fundraising appeal to raise money for conservation and community projects; the publication of an account of the Voluntary Warden Service by John Wyatt; a 50th anniversary photography competition; and a ‘National Park in Action’ weekend at Brockhole.

Unfortunately, the celebrations were overshadowed by what Paul Tiplady described as “the most serious crisis the National Park has ever faced”. Foot and mouth disease arrived in the National Park. As mentioned earlier, an epidemic in 1967 had resulted in people being asked to stay off the hills. This time, however, the impact was more severe. On 20th February 2001, the first case of foot and mouth disease was identified in England. It spread to Cumbria during March and, despite all precautions, by the end of the month nine cases had been reported in the National Park. By the end of April, that number had doubled and by July the number of reported cases had risen to 52. Ninety-eight per cent of the National Park was designated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as infected. The Authority was part of the Cumbria Foot and Mouth Disease Task Force. All footpaths and bridleways across or adjoining agricultural land were closed and more than 10,000 restriction signs were put in place by the rangers and the voluntary wardens. Access to the lakeland fells was closed. The Authority’s rural car parks, access land and woodlands were closed. So too were the Authority’s commons, Bassenthwaite Lake, Coniston Boating Centre, and the self catering accommodation at Greenside Mine and at the Blencathra Centre. Disinfectant mats were put in place on the roads across the Authority’s commons. Fell top assessments were discontinued, site visits by staff and members were cancelled, publication of the Events Guide was postponed and all Authority vehicles were disinfected when leaving and returning to depots. Apart from helping to contain the spread, a helpline was established and manned seven days a week and the Authority provided up-to-date information on the situation in the National Park for the public. The Authority joined with the National Trust and others in pushing for the vaccination of hefted flocks.

# 1997 to date

And an attempt was made to support the rural economy by making it clear that the National Park remained open for visitors staying in the towns and villages and travelling on tarmac. A monthly publication, *Right Here, Right Now*, gave information about the radically revised events programme. It was not until January 2002 that Cumbria was eventually declared 'disease free'. By that time, very substantial damage had been done to the rural economy and the interdependence of farming and tourism had been thrown into sharp focus.

One piece of good news in 2001 was the hatching of an osprey chick on the Authority's property at Bassenthwaite, the first in the Lake District since 1842. Osprey nests had been discovered from time to time in the National Park, generally by climbers, and where these were known the rangers in conjunction with the RSPB, and supported by the voluntary wardens' service, had provided protection. Two adult ospreys had been observed at Bassenthwaite Lake over several summers and a nesting site was constructed to encourage breeding. Perseverance was rewarded when an egg was eventually laid in April 2001. The National Park Authority, in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and the RSPB, set up closed circuit television and provided round the clock monitoring of the nest.

*Ospreys began breeding again in the Lake District in 2001.*



A male chick was hatched in June and between June and August more than 25,000 visitors came to view the birds. Visitors could see the birds hunting over the lake from the Dodd Wood telescope viewing site or enjoy close up views of the birds in their nest at the live video monitoring site at the Whinlatter Visitor Centre. The birds bred again successfully the following year, attracting more than 100,000 visitors, and have bred successfully every year since.

Also in 2001 rangers and voluntary wardens helped in the recovery of the remains of Donald Campbell's speedboat, *Bluebird*, from Coniston Water where it had lain since Campbell's ill-fated attempt on the World Water Speed record on 4th January 1967. In the same year, the Authority granted planning permission for an extension to the Ruskin Museum in Coniston to house *Bluebird*.

*Recovering the remains of Bluebird in 2001.*



That was not quite the end of the story. In the interim, work has been going on to rebuild *Bluebird*. In 2009 the Authority was asked to agree to an amendment to the speed limit byelaws on Coniston Water to allow a one-off trial of the reconstructed *Bluebird*. At the time of writing, the Authority has agreed to promote such an amendment and confirmation by the Minister is awaited. The trial has still to take place.

# 1974 to date

In 2004 the voluntary wardens' service celebrated its 50th anniversary. Celebrations included a tree planting, the launch of a Volunteers' Gold beer, the publication of *Putting Something Back* by Sheila Richardson, a walk by volunteers round the Lake District boundary and a mass litter pick. A major review of the service during the year resulted in some changes, including a change of name to the Lake District Volunteers Service. The service comprises a core of trained and committed voluntary rangers undertaking the full range of tasks, providing leadership within the Service and working closely with the rangers. The revised service also makes it easier for people (volunteers) to volunteer occasionally and to undertake only those tasks in which they are interested. To promote better integration with the Authority, the review recommended the setting up of a Volunteers' Forum comprising volunteers, staff and members and the appointment of a volunteer coordinator.

## **2005 to 2011**

2005 was the Authority's 'annus horribilis'. Members had approved a new management structure with six directors to bring new thinking to the organisation. At the same time, extended pay scales had been negotiated with staff. The resulting increase in the cost of running the organisation, coupled with the imposition of a severe efficiency savings requirement, caused financial difficulties. There was standing room only at the January 2005 Authority meeting when Kerry Powell, the newly appointed Director of Finance, advised that although the Authority was not yet in financial crisis, decisive action would be needed if it was to be avoided. There was, she said, a pressing need to address a potential and increasing shortfall in the budgets for 2005-6, 2006-7 and 2007-8. Costs would have to be reduced and income increased. If members were to be able to set a balanced budget for the forthcoming year, as required, by the end of March, real cash-based savings were needed immediately and that would require disinvestment in some areas. The District Auditor had expressed concerns about the Authority's overall financial standing. Members were warned that redundancies were likely.

One decision that had been made in anticipation of the need to make savings was the cancellation of the programme of volunteer-led guided walks. The decision was made partly because of the departure of the two members of staff with oversight of the programme, partly because of a need to make immediate cash savings and partly also because of a feeling that more needed to be done in the events programme to engage with minority groups. Unfortunately, because of the need to act quickly, the decision was made without consultation with the Volunteers Service. It caused a great deal of resentment amongst volunteers and led to widespread adverse publicity. In response to the reaction, Authority members, at the February meeting, went out of their way to record their appreciation of the work of the Volunteers Service and a motion to restore the events programme was carried, in part because of an offer of sponsorship for that year. A working group was set up to look at ways of extending future events programmes to a wider audience and this led in due course to involvement in the Mosaic project designed to engage with minority groups. The recommendations of the 2004 review with regard to better integration between the Authority and the Volunteers Service were given effect: a Volunteers' Forum was established and Tim Duckmanton was appointed to the post of volunteer coordinator in August 2005.

Nonetheless, the need to make immediate savings remained. After consideration of options, the decision was taken to reduce the investment

in information services. While the objective was cash savings, the decision reflected the fact that other bodies had moved into information provision and that visitors were increasingly accessing information in other ways. The centres at Waterhead, Pooley Bridge and Borrowdale would remain closed for the season pending a decision on the future of all the centres. Eventually, the Authority decided to close the information centres at Coniston, Grasmere, Pooley Bridge, Hawkshead, Waterhead and Borrowdale. The centres at Keswick, Bowness Bay and Ullswater, which between them attracted about two thirds of the visitors, would continue and would allow the Authority to provide a reasonable geographic spread across the Park. Meanwhile, the Authority would explore with Cumbria Tourism ways of improving the coordination of visitor information provision within the National Park.

To add to the Authority's woes during 2005, it had volunteered to be a guinea pig for the new National Park Performance Assessment. The process involved a self assessment followed by peer review by external assessors. The Authority had recognised the need for, and the value of, some form of external audit of its work. The eventual report in April 2005 was critical of the Authority's performance in a number of important respects. The criticism acted as a catalyst for improvement. The Authority embarked on a three year programme of comprehensive improvement focusing, amongst other things, on strategic planning and management, modern governance, organisation development, communications and the use of resources. A budget was allocated and a small team established to carry the programme through.

One of the principal criticisms of the Performance Assessment was the absence of a clear and dynamic vision. Over the next year the Authority worked to develop this. An early step was the setting up of the Lake District National Park Partnership drawing together, at that time, 18 key organisations (now 23) involved in the delivery of national park purposes and with an independent chairman, Lord Clark of Windermere. The Vision was eventually agreed by the Partnership in May 2006:

"The Lake District National Park will be an inspirational example of sustainable development in action: working together for a prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences, vibrant communities – and all sustaining a spectacular landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage".

Twenty-four key delivery aims were identified to achieve the Vision and, for the Authority, these aims underpinned the three year business plan which is rolled forward on an annual basis. Subsequently, the Partnership embarked on the preparation of a new five year management plan for the National Park setting out the Vision and the outcomes which showed how the national park purposes and the associated duties were to be delivered over the period 2010-2015. It was, in effect, a delivery plan for the Vision. By giving ownership of the plan to the Partnership, the Authority broke new ground. As Bill Jefferson, the Chairman of the National Park Authority, stated in the Forward to the Plan when it was eventually adopted by all the partners in September 2010, "The critical difference to previous approaches is that this plan has been prepared and therefore owned by the organisations needed to secure its delivery".

It was the first time a national park plan had been created in this way and reflected the comment by Defra that "national park management plans are plans for national parks, not just park authorities". It was hoped that, by securing buy-in from the partners coupled with clear arrangements for monitoring the Plan and for measuring delivery, there would be a better



*The Partnership Plan for the National Park.*

prospect than was the case under previous plans for making real progress towards achieving the Vision.

Balancing the budget for the financial year 2006-07 proved challenging for the Authority and resulted in a severe squeeze on spending and a reduction in the workforce by 29 posts. However, by November 2007 the Audit Commission was able to acknowledge the Authority's success in stabilising and strengthening its financial position and improving its financial management.

A review of the Authority in 2008 showed major improvements in all areas with the assessment team commenting that it was the fastest organisational turn around that they had seen. The transformation of the organisation crystallised that year when the Authority was one of the first public bodies to achieve the national Customer Service Excellence Award. The award, which applied to the whole of the organisation, demonstrated the positive customer service approach which had grown out of the improvement programme. To retain the award, an organisation must continue to ratchet up its standards year on year and it is pleasing to record that the Authority successfully retained the award in 2009, 2010 and again in 2011. The Assessment Report in May 2010 stated:

“Good relationships with business partners, who have a strong role to play in the economic success of the Lake District National Park, have resulted in high levels of cooperative working. Increasingly, the Authority is developing more in-depth insight into the needs of customers and potential customers and consultation remains central to its work”.

It wasn't all bad news in 2005. The planning service, which had been identified two years previously by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as one of the worst performing planning authorities in the country in terms of speed of decision-making and development control monitoring, was singled out as one of the fastest improving authorities in the country. By 2008 matters had improved to the point where the Government recognised it as the best performing service in Cumbria and the best performing among the national park authorities.

The meetings of the Development Control Committee at this time differed in significant ways from the meetings of the Committee in 1951 and 1974. First of all, in 1951 all decisions were made behind closed doors. Not only were applicants and objectors unable to address the Committee, they couldn't even get through the door to listen to the deliberations of the Committee. Now, in this age of openness and transparency, not only can the public attend meetings and listen to the debates but applicants and objectors can address the Committee about particular applications. Secondly, in 1974 every application was determined by the Committee. As the National Park Authority received around 1,000 applications in that year, rising to more than 1,500 by 1989, every Committee had to deal on average with some 120 applications. To get through the business, applications were decided a page at a time. Now a scheme of delegation is in place which provides for extensive delegation of decision-making to officers (almost 90 per cent of decisions). This has the effect of speeding up the decision-making process. It also means that the schedule of applications for decision by the Committee contains only the eight or so major or controversial applications so that members have time to consider them fully. Of course, openness, transparency and a thorough consideration of every application is not necessarily synonymous with a happy applicant. On one occasion a disgruntled local applicant for planning

# 1997 to date

permission described the Development Control Committee as “a neo-fascist paramilitary junta”!

And in line with well-established precedent, the Authority was required to embark on the process of preparing yet another new form of development plan. The Joint Planning Board and the Special Planning Board were both required to devote considerable time and resources to preparing new forms of development plans. So it was with the Authority. The focal point was to be the Core Strategy, a document which was to show how the Authority intended to deliver the Vision for the National Park strategically and spatially over the period to 2025. Speed of preparation and flexibility to changing circumstances were to be the hallmarks of the new form of plan. In fact, like earlier development plans, the procedures were such that it took a long time to prepare and it was not until October 2010 that it was eventually adopted.

As before, the provision of housing for local people was a key issue in the development plan. Mention has already been made of the evolution of the Lake District ‘homes for locals’ policy. Ministerial endorsement of that policy

was reflected in the approval in 2006 of the Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan. Policy H20 of that Plan restricted new housing in the National Park to that which contributed to meeting an identified housing need. Very largely it was about meeting the need for affordable housing. The Authority had been monitoring the housing position and with the percentage of second and holiday homes in some villages now topping 70 per cent it was clear that the need for affordable housing in the National Park was stronger than ever.

The new policy in the Core Strategy made provision for meeting both affordable and local needs housing. These terms were subsequently defined in a Supplementary Planning Document adopted by the Authority in 2010. This made clear that the policy now extended beyond meeting the needs of local people who could not afford to compete in the market and included meeting demand for housing from people having a defined ‘local connection’ with an area, including people previously resident in an area who now wished to return. The purpose of the extension was to contribute towards supporting vibrant and sustainable communities.



*Affordable housing contributes towards supporting vibrant and sustainable communities.*

One other aspect of the Core Strategy deserves mention because it is thought to be a first for a development plan. The Strategy recognises that the National Park can be divided spatially into distinctive areas. Five are identified: North, East, Central and South East, South, and West. The document explains what each area is like now, what the issues are and what it is hoped to do about them over the Plan period (to 2025). For example, 44 per cent of all development over the Plan period is expected to take place in the Central and South East Area whereas only seven per cent is expected to take place in the East Area.

While there are core policies which apply throughout the National Park, area-based policies reflecting the differences are developed for each distinctive area. But it is not only policies which reflect the distinctive areas. The Planning

# 1974 to date

and Park Services have been reorganised so that they can respond to the issues arising in each area.

Paul Tiplady retired in 2006 and Richard Leafe was appointed Chief Executive with effect from June 2007. Richard has a background in geography and coastal geomorphology and had held several managerial posts with English Nature and then Natural England, most recently as Regional Director for the North West, before taking up his appointment with the National Park.

In 2007, the Authority undertook a review of the future of the Lake District Visitor Centre at Brockhole. The centre was running at a substantial loss which the Authority could ill afford. After considering options, it was decided that the objective should be to provide a world class visitor centre for the National Park. It was clear that this would require significant investment. A project board was set up and a Development Programme Director was appointed to carry this forward. In June 2009 a master plan was approved by the Authority involving a phased approach to the redevelopment of the site. It included a new lakeside ferry hub with a new jetty capable of accommodating large steamers and water buses, restoration of the Grade II Mawson gardens, a high ropes course and a treeline walkway, a watersports centre targeted at the

taster market, an indoor interactive visitor attraction, a Cumbrian retail facility including a farm shop, a large new café facility, a taster climbing wall and indoor and outdoor adventure play areas. The Authority has been fortunate in attracting grant aid from the European Regional Development Fund for the lakeside ferry hub with the new jetty which opened in 2011.

In 2008 the Authority was given an opportunity to play a more direct role in supporting the farming community. Farming is the dominant land use within the National Park and the Authority and its predecessors had, for a long time, been mindful of the key role which farmers and landowners play in creating and maintaining the landscape which visitors come to enjoy. In the 1991-92 Annual Report, the Chairman of the Special Planning Board, Steele Addison said:



*Farming plays an important part in shaping the landscape.*

“The appearance and beauty of the National Park depends to a great extent on the management of its magnificent uplands and for centuries it is sheep farming which has maintained this fragile, harsh environment. Open moorland with its heathers, grasses and juniper and lowland meadows bounded by traditional dry stone walls are very much appreciated by the millions of visitors who flock to the area”.

There is no doubt that a viable Lake District farming industry can do much to conserve the landscape in a positive way. But landscape considerations have not been the only factor. The Authority has a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities in the National Park and upland farmers are one such community. However, until recently there was little it

# 1997 to date

could do directly to help achieve this. Mention was made earlier of the Upland Management Experiment which sought to reconcile the interests of farmers and visitors. Subsequently, the designation in 1993 of the Lake District as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), the largest in the UK, raised the profile of environmentally benign farming. Farmers entering the ESA scheme would agree a 10 year plan with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to farm in a more traditional and less intensive way and in return would receive annual agri-environment payments under the scheme and access to capital grants for conservation works. A mid-term review of the scheme in 1998 showed a good take up and an encouraging reduction in environmental deterioration. The incidence of environmental enhancement was less clear cut.

In 2008 the Authority entered into a pilot Environmental Land Management Service (ELMS) with Natural England under which National Park rangers would work with Natural England to help farmers and landowners subject to ESA agreements to identify eligible projects for funding and to help with the preparation of Conservation Plan applications. Over the period of a year, rangers made more than 150 farm visits and helped complete 154 Conservation Plan applications. Conservation Plan works included the planting and restoration of more than 45 kilometres of hedgerows, more than 14 kilometres of dry stone wall restoration, the restoration of 35 traditional farm buildings, peat habitat enhancement works and the protection of 21 archaeological features.

However, by 2010 Natural England was no longer adding new capital works to existing ESA agreements so there was no longer a call to help with Conservation Plan applications. Instead the service developed so that rangers could help farmers and landowners with initial advice and with assistance in completing applications under the emerging Higher Level Stewardship Scheme which provides funding for farmers and other land managers delivering benefits for biodiversity and the natural environment.

Recently the Authority has set up a Farming and Forestry Task Force to create a direct line of communication with leading farmers and foresters in the National Park. And the Lake District National Park Partnership's Land Management Strategy Group ensures an integrated approach to the complexities of catchment-wide management.



*The B4 network promotes sustainable transport.*

The Authority, in conjunction with partners, launched the 'Low-carbon Lake District' initiative at a major conference in 2008. It was a response to the national agenda on action for climate change and the pressing need to reduce carbon emissions in the UK. Key themes of the initiative were communities reducing energy costs and generating renewable energy from water, wind, sun and wood; tourism businesses tapping into the growing market for low-impact holidays; the promotion of more sustainable transport options like the B4 Network: bikes, boots, boats and buses; and the locking of greenhouse gases into the landscape through good land management. The Authority was determined to lead by example by developing a carbon budget for the National Park, by formulating planning policies promoting energy efficiency and supporting renewable energy, by setting a target of reducing its own carbon emissions by 25 per cent by 2012 against 2007-08 levels and by using its sustainable development fund to support community renewable energy projects. Progress by the Authority in reducing carbon emissions was reflected in 2009 in the National Fleet Heroes Award for the best public sector fleet of less than 250 vehicles, and again in 2010 when it won the leadership category of the Award.



*Severe flooding at  
Bowness Bay,  
November 2009.*

In 2009 Peter Phizacklea, Cumbria County Councillor, the longest serving member of the Authority and, it is thought, the longest serving member of any national park authority, retired after 32 years. During that period he had served twice as Chairman, from 1981-85 and from 1999-2002. His enormous contribution to national parks and to local government was acknowledged in 2003 with the award of an OBE. Ronnie Calvin, a Cumbria County Councillor, retired as a member at the same time having completed 28 years service, a close second!

The Lake District experienced record levels of rainfall in November 2009 which led to severe flooding with devastating impacts on communities and businesses. Cockermouth was particularly badly hit. Windermere lake rose by four feet causing many boats at moorings to capsize. Staff and volunteers were heavily involved in rescue and recovery work. Bowness Bay Information Centre and Coniston Boating Centre were both flooded. Subsequent inspection showed that 194 bridges and numerous paths had been damaged in the National Park and a major programme of repair was put in hand with grant aid from Defra.

In June 2010 the incoming coalition government, faced with an unprecedented level of national debt, immediately reduced the National Park grant by five per cent and embarked on a Comprehensive Spending Review to reduce public spending. The Authority, as part of its financial management arrangements, had anticipated a substantial reduction in the funding of National Parks from 2011 onwards, and had initiated financial scenario planning as early as autumn 2009 so that it would be ready to deal with grant reductions when they came. Careful financial management in the setting of the 2010-11 budget and during the 2010-11 financial year allowed more than £1,000,000 to be removed from the 2011-12 budget projections. This meant that the Authority was well placed to absorb the cut when it was eventually announced. In December 2010 the Authority was notified that its grant was to be cut by 28.5 per cent in real terms over the next four years, a huge cut in funding by any standard. The Authority had approved a strategy in anticipation of the announcement. This defined the way in which the Authority intended to deliver its purposes and its Vision in the light of the reduction in spending. While the Authority would be doing less, the objective was, nonetheless, to be 'fit for purpose'. The strategy identified priorities and triggered the reorganisation and redirection of some services. The strategy adopted a two stage approach to phasing budget reductions so as to provide as much certainty for staff and as much stability for the organisation as it was possible to achieve in the circumstances. Annual financial savings of £522,000 would be required to balance the budgets. Twelve posts were to be lost in the first stage. It was anticipated that a further tranche of savings would be required to balance the 2013-14 and 2014-15 budgets.

# 1997 to date

On a more positive note, the Government has shortlisted the Lake District for nomination to UNESCO for inscription as a World Heritage Site. If successful, it will stand alongside the Taj Mahal, the Egyptian pyramids, the Grand Canyon, Hadrian's Wall and Stonehenge as a site of Outstanding Universal Value. The Lake District was first nominated in 1985 under the 'Natural Area' category but the bid was deferred by UNESCO because the Lake District did not pass the 'natural integrity' test. The Lake District is a living, working landscape. In 1993, as result of the deferred bid, UNESCO added a new category of 'Cultural Landscape' to the World Heritage list. The Lake District was included by the Government in a tentative list for nomination in 2000 but this was not taken forward. Now the Authority is part of a county-wide partnership working on a World Heritage Site Management Plan. It is anticipated that inscription would have positive economic and social impacts on Cumbria.

Finally, and coming full circle to the beginning, Black Sail Youth Hostel at the head of the Ennerdale valley is back on the agenda. At the time of writing a planning application has been submitted to the Authority for an extension. It has yet to come before the Development Control Committee. It will be interesting to see whether, after 60 years of the National Park, the design and materials better reflect the location of the Hostel than the application which came before the Lake District Planning Board shortly after it had been established.

# Conclusion

During the celebrations in 2001 to mark the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Lake District National Park, *Park Life* commented:

“Fifty years have passed since the Lake District became the country’s second National Park in 1951. Yet there is very little to show in this time for the work of one of the organisations with a major role in looking after the National Park – that is, apart from acres of empty space, lakes, forests, fells...freedom and fresh air”.

If it is right that there is little to show on the surface, this record of the work of the National Park Authority over the last 60 years shows that underneath the water the Authority, to use the analogy of the swan, has had to paddle furiously to keep it so. It is only because of the work of the Authority and its predecessors and their partners in managing change that the impacts, for example, of the advent of electricity to the valleys, or of the tapping of the lakes for water supply, or of the afforestation of the hills and valleys, or of the pressure for road improvements or of development to meet the insatiable demands of tourism, or of the millions of feet on the fellsides have not been greater. In this way, the Authority and its predecessors have sought to achieve the first of the national park purposes: conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. This is not to suggest, as Norman Nicholson put it, that the National Park is a preserved heritage landscape “smothered in good taste and embalmed in admiration”. Change has been continuous over the 60 years. The Authority’s task has very largely been about the management of change. But it has not just been about mediating change; it has been as much about accommodating change, whether through the provision of caravan sites and family holiday accommodation, access areas, launching facilities, information, the education service, interpretation, the full time and voluntary rangers, car parks, toilets and the Lake District Visitor Centre at Brockhole. In these ways the Authority and its predecessors have contributed towards the second national park purpose: ‘promoting opportunities for the enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the area by the public’.

Of course, there have been occasions when the promotion of enjoyment has come into conflict with preserving and enhancing the natural beauty. The Authority’s approach has been that much can be done by good planning and management to reconcile such conflicts. This record shows just how often reconciliation has been possible even in the most unpromising situations. But not always. Just occasionally there have been instances where the Authority has taken the view that reconciliation would come at too high a price and, in such cases, the Authority has a duty to give priority to conservation. The use of motor boats on the smaller lakes and tarns and fast motor boating on the four larger lakes are examples.

In pursuing these purposes, the Authority has also been mindful of the duty to ‘seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities

within the National Park'. While this duty only came into force in 1997, it will be evident that supporting communities in the Park has been a continuing concern for the Authority and its predecessors since the beginning. Although national park authorities are not housing providers or economic development agencies, the Authority and its predecessors have attempted over the years to facilitate both in an effort to help sustain the communities in the Park. In particular, as will be clear from this account, they have attempted to address the serious and increasing problem created for local communities by the rising percentage of second and holiday homes in the National Park. And it is expected that the new 'distinctive area' approach to much of its work coupled with the Government's 'localism' agenda will provide opportunities for fuller engagement with local communities.

Much of what the Authority and its predecessors have done has been done in association with partners and this record provides an opportunity to acknowledge that little would have been achieved without them. Some of them, such as the National Trust and the Friends of the Lake District, have worked closely with the National Park over the 60 years. The Forestry Commission, too, has been around all this time and, although it has not always seen eye to eye with the Authority, particularly when timber production was its first priority, the broadening of its remit to include conservation and recreation has been very helpful in achieving national park purposes. This is true also of United Utilities which has taken over ownership of the water catchment areas and the reservoirs from Manchester Corporation. The local authorities have changed over the 60 years and, while their agendas have not always marched together with those of the National Park Authority, a positive and productive working relationship has been achieved. This was not always so. There have been times in the past when the National Park Authority was regarded by some as the hole in the heart of Cumbria. This is no longer the case. The Authority has worked hard to become an integral part of Cumbria. The recent submission to Government of the proposal for the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership provides an example. In the submission, Bill Jefferson, the Chairman of the Authority, stressed that the relevant bodies in Cumbria, including the National Park Authority, were united in urging that Cumbria should be able to shape its own destiny by forming its own Partnership. It is pleasing to note that the submission was accepted by Government and that the Authority has a seat on the Partnership. There is no doubt that the importance of working with local authorities and with other partners in achieving national park purposes has become more apparent to the Authority in recent years. It has been fortunate in the support, the encouragement and the willingness to work together which has been evident on the part of many bodies and organisations operating in the Lake District. This is reflected in the establishment of the Lake District National Park Partnership and in the production by the Partnership of the Management Plan for the National Park.

It might seem that, with the account of imminent spending cuts and staff losses, the future looks gloomy and there is no doubt that, as with all public bodies, the next few years will be difficult. The Authority will be doing less with less. However, the Authority has tailored what it can do in pursuing its purposes to the resources available and is confident that, together with its partners, it will be 'fit for purpose' and can continue to help in the management of change. And there are major changes ahead which will require management: coping with climate change, supporting upland farming, facilitating the provision of affordable housing, responding to developments in the nuclear industry and dealing with the ever increasing volume of traffic. The Authority will continue to address these changes

with national park purposes and the National Park Vision very much in the forefront of its mind while at the same time doing what it can to foster the economic and social well-being of its communities.

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## **Chairmen**

### **Lake District Planning Board: 1951-1974**

1951-57	Charles Roberts
1957-64	Kenneth Dobell
1964-74	Gerald Grice

### **Lake District Special Planning Board: 1974-1997**

1974-1977	Gerald Grice
1977-1981	Stephen Murray
1981-1986	Peter Phizacklea
1986-1989	Tom Shelton
1989-1997	Steele Addison

### **Lake District National Park Authority: 1997-present**

1997-1999	Steele Addison
1999-2002	Peter Phizacklea
2002-2004	Michael Bentley
2004-2008	David Thornton
2008 to date	Bill Jefferson

## **Chief officers**

### **Lake District Planning Board**

1951-74	Kenneth Himsworth
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### **Lake District Special Planning Board**

1974-1977	Kenneth Himsworth
1978-1985	Michael Taylor
1985-1998	John Toothill

### **Lake District National Park Authority**

1997-1998	John Toothill
1997-2006	Paul Tiplady
2007 to date	Richard Leafe

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Andrea Hills  
David Browne  
Keswick BID/Rob Grange photography  
LDNPA

The cover shows a view of Keswick and Derwentwater from Latrigg, today and as it was in the early days of the Lake District National Park.



## Lake District National Park

With its world renowned landscape, the National Park is for everyone to enjoy, now and in the future.

It wants a prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences and vibrant communities, to sustain the spectacular landscape.

Everyone involved in running England's largest and much loved National Park is committed to:

- respecting the past
- caring for the present
- planning for the future

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