

Out there



Lake District
National Park

Our Access and Recreation Strategy

2023–2028



Out there

Access and Recreation Strategy, Lake District National Park 2023-2028

March 2023

Executive Summary

Our vision for countryside access and recreation in the Lake District is:

A well-connected access network fit for purpose in the 21st Century with high quality infrastructure, facilities and services meeting the needs of all residents and visitors.

We have identified four priority themes of work, and under each of these are a series of strategic goals that will contribute to the achievement of our vision. The four priority themes are:

- Improve: rights of way and countryside access
- Manage and maintain: rights of way, countryside access and recreational activities
- Promote and engage: connect more people to nature and the special qualities of the Lake District
- Integrate: with health and wellbeing, sustainable transport and the economy

This strategy is an update on the 'Out There' strategy developed in 2017. It highlights the enormous benefits to the economy, the environment, health and wellbeing and communities that arise from access and recreation in the Lake District National Park and notes the achievements so far. Its scope covers informal, low impact, recreation and has a focus on the rights of way network, not only because 70.3% of our visitors go for a walk (Cumbria Visitor Survey 2022) and nationally walking is the most popular form of exercise taken, but also because this is an area where we have the tools through our promotion and management of the rights of way network to make change. However, there are many other forms of outdoor recreation that can be undertaken in the National Park, including running, cycling (road and off road), horse-riding, climbing and water-based activities such as outdoor swimming, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding and other water sports. Indoor and formal recreation is very important but out of scope of this strategy. Our position on use of unsealed roads by motor vehicles remains as set out in our [position statement](#) and is not considered within this strategy.

Since the strategy was written in 2017 there has been progress in a number of areas including:

- Reconnection of the Keswick to Threlkeld Trail, which carried 265,000 people in 2021, benefitting the economy to over £15 million.
- Development of two new Miles without Stiles routes (at Orrest Head and Dunmallard), and online promotion, including videos and QR code linked roundels of these inclusive routes.
- The visitor demographic in the Lake District has become younger and more diverse.
- We have developed a new Partnership Plan and this has been updated to reflect the Strategies and Key Outcomes within that document.

The goals set out under the four headings of improve, manage, promote and integrate access and recreation opportunities will benefit the health and wellbeing of residents and communities, the economy and reduce carbon.

This Access and Recreation Strategy, along with its action plan will inform the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) until such time as plans can be developed with Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Councils.

Access and Recreation in the Lake District

Our vision: A well-connected access network fit for purpose in the 21st Century with high quality infrastructure, facilities and services meeting the needs of all residents and visitors. We have identified four priority themes of work:

+ Improve: rights of way and countryside access

- Developing the Coast to Coast National Trail, accessibility improvements, and new and improved access through the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme.



+ Manage and maintain: rights of way, countryside access and recreational activities

- Improving ease of use of rights of way, supporting the Fix the Fells programme, and maintaining Miles without Stiles routes to a high standard.



+ Promote and engage: connect more people to nature and the special qualities of the Lake District

- Provide information, guided walks and waymarking to ensure the Lake District is for everyone. Continue education work at Brockhole and engagement on enjoyable, responsible and safe visiting.



+ Integrate: with health and wellbeing, sustainable transport and the economy

- Draw together activities focussing on villages and towns enabling residents and visitors to take part in healthy sustainable active travel. Connect towns on the edge of the national park through active travel routes.



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Context

Every year an estimated 19 million visitors come to the Lake District, the majority attracted by the world class opportunities for access and recreation in a spectacular landscape.

The Access and Recreation Strategy for the Lake District National Park was developed in 2017 to recognise the importance that this access is managed and resourced through a strategic framework to meet our vision for the national park. Five years on some things have changed, but the underpinning principles remain the same, therefore this is a review of that strategy, not a wholesale re-write.

The Covid Pandemic had wide ranging effects on people throughout the world, and its impacts are being felt on the way people access the Lake District. During the lockdowns people explored their local area and the nature on their doorstep. For residents in the Lake District this meant quiet roads for cycling, walking and horse riding but for people living in towns and cities further away the mental and physical stresses of not being able to enjoy outdoor spaces meant that once the lockdowns were eased visitors flocked to the Lake District in unprecedented numbers. This included many visitors who had not visited before and a younger and more diverse demographic. Whilst overall numbers have started to return to normal levels the positive trend for a different visitor demographic and the population's enthusiasm for outdoor recreation has continued, which we hope can lead to a lifelong understanding and appreciation of the environment.

A key target of the 2017 Access and Recreation Strategy was to welcome a younger more diverse demographic to the Lake District. The 2022 Cumbria visitor survey shows that substantial changes have been achieved:

The latest Cumbria Visitor Survey results highlighting increased visits from younger people and a more diverse audience of people visiting.

Age:

In 2018 52% of visitors to Cumbria were under 50, in 2022 74% were under 50.

Ethnicity:

In 2018 2% of visitors in the Lake District responded that they or someone in their party considered themselves to be a member of an ethnic minority community, in 2022 this figure had increased to 16% for Cumbria and 22% in the Lake District

Disability

The percentage of visitors who said that they or someone in their party had a long-standing health issue or disability that limits their daily activity has fallen since 2018, to 14% but this is partly affected by a high percentage preferring not to say and is still double the percentage reported in 2012.

	2012	2015	2018	2022
Yes	7%	14%	18%	14%
No	93%	86%	81%	80%
Prefer not to say	-	1%	1%	6%

The activities undertaken have also changed in the last 5 years, the table below shows the change in activities that visitors took part in:

	2018	2022
Short walks < 2 miles	61%	56%
Long walks > 2 miles	44%	23%
Cycling	6%	14%
Outdoor swimming	6%	13%
Paddleboarding/kayaking	-	11%
Mountain Biking	3%	8%
Bird watching/nature study	-	4%
Watersports	8%	3%
Rock climbing/mountaineering	3%	1%
Horse riding	1%	1%

We will continue to work to help meet the needs of visitors, supporting visitor behaviour that is kinder to the landscape, our communities and the environment.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2017-2023



- Promoting and maintaining 50 Miles without Stiles accessible paths including the new route to the spectacular viewpoint of Orrest Head.
- Reopening the Keswick to Threlkeld Railway Trail in 2020, which welcomed 265,000 visitors in its first year, contributing £15m to the local economy.
- Establishing the Ullswater Way, opened in 2016 as an iconic walking or running challenge, with an estimated 70,000 users per annum and a community-led heritage programme to support and engage.



- Welcoming new school and youth groups from communities outside the national park through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund learning programme at Brockhole.
- Restarting the volunteer-led guided walk programme in which 1389 people participated in 2022.
- Completing the Routes to Resilience programme in 2018 which repaired 74 bridges, 58 paths and 30 gates and stiles.
- Restored 26km of upland path between 2019 and 2022 through the ERDF funded Fix the Fells programme



- Adding 15km of path to the rights of way network and upgrading 691 gates and stiles to improve accessibility.



- People of all ages visiting the Lake District. In 2018 52% of visitors to Cumbria were under 50, in 2022 74% were under 50.

Welcoming a more diverse visitor mix. In 22% of visitor groups including someone in their group who considered themselves part of a minority ethnic community, up from 2% in 2018.

Helping the visitor economy recover from the Covid pandemic. 70% of all visitors enjoyed a walk whilst visiting the Lake District, in 2022, spending an estimated £945 million per annum.

THIS RESULTED IN

Health and wellbeing benefits to the nation through and after the Covid pandemic by managing safe, enjoyable and responsible visiting. 72% of visitors felt physically better and 90% felt mentally better as a result of their visit to the Lake District.

Where are we now? Achievements 2017-2022

1. Miles without stiles

This network of easy or accessible routes is a huge success and are popular with people who may have limited mobility and disabilities, families with small children, less frequent visitors to the countryside and multigenerational groups of mixed ability who want easy to follow, safe and well surfaced routes. The Lake District National Park was at the forefront of developing 'access for all' paths and coined the term 'Miles without Stiles', which is now used nationally. In 2022 we celebrated our 50th Miles without Stiles route with the creation of the Orrest Head Trail and now have 125 km of Miles without Stiles routes.

2. Rights of Way improvements

Through managing the Lake District's Rights of Way network we have made continual improvements including adding 15km to the network through creations, diversions and modification orders. Upgrading and replacing furniture such as stiles to open up routes to make the routes accessible to a wider range of the community. However, these achievements are set against the challenge of maintaining a network of 2215km of footpath, 927km of bridleway and 72km of byways.

3. Trail creation

Through the GoLakes Travel programme we created over 50km of new and improved bridleways and a network of promoted cycle trails in the central and south east of the Lake District. These have been very well used and we have continued to maintain these for the large number of people who walk, wheel, cycle and ride horses on them. Since 2017 we secured funding to create and improve more routes including reopening the 5km long Keswick to Threlkeld Trail, and the 5.6 km Southern Windermere Trail, which will be open in 2023. LDNPA has secured investment of £12 million in path and trail improvements in the last 5 years.

4. Open Access Land

Since 2005 800 km², of the Lake District has been designated as Open Access Land. On this people are able to undertake informal activities on foot such as walking and running. At the outset we improved access points and raised awareness of the opportunities, and have continued to improve access to them, including in 2020 creating a new footpath linking to the open access land at Eycott Hill. We have continued to work with landowners to ensure that where environmental tree planting schemes take place public access is maintained.

5. Fix the Fells

This is a partnership project between National Trust, LDNPA, Natural England and Friends of the Lake District, which seeks to maintain upland paths for people, the landscape and through reducing sediment flow the environment. Increased use of upland paths has led to accelerated erosion and through sensitive restoration this can be tackled. Between 2019 and 2022 Fix the Fells has delivered an extensive programme with additional ERDF funding which has repaired 25,696m of path erosion. This work is supported by a skilled team of 130 volunteers, who maintain 209 routes and monitor a further 192, approximately 1000 days work per annum. It costs around £0.5mIn per annum to continue Fix the Fells' work, which is secured by external grants.

6. Flood Recovery

As the climate becomes more extreme major flooding events have impacted on the access infrastructure. Major projects have included the Routes to Resilience project which between 2016 and 2018 repaired 74 bridges, 58 paths and 30 gates and stiles through a £3 million funding award from the Rural Payments Agency. More frequent storms such as Storm Arwen in 2021 have also had major impacts, leading to work to repair paths and clear of fallen trees.

7. Promotion and Outreach

The 2017 Access and Recreation Strategy set out to encourage a more diverse and younger visitor demographic. Since the pandemic a step change has occurred in our visitor demographic. Digital communications have become an increasingly effective way to reach existing and new audiences. Our Miles without Stiles webpages have become one of the most visited pages on our website with 39,000 views in 2021 and we now have QR codes at the start of each route to link people to the mapping and information from their own devices. We have also developed through rights of way improvements and promoted other routes such as the Ullswater Way, which now has an estimated 70,000 people per year using it. We have used social media to engage with a wider audience on messages such as responsible use of the countryside through, for example, the Lake District Kind campaign. After a hiatus due to Covid the volunteer led guided walks programme has re-started and in 2022 1389 people participated.

8. Learning and engagement

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund programme at Brockhole was extremely successful in connecting young people to nature, through an extensive programme of school visits and family activities. A priority should be to continue this engagement work where funding allows. This involved two projects:

The [Green Recovery Brockhole](#) project, which included:

- The restoration and interpretation of eight priority habitats,
- The development of a fully resourced, accessible and versatile engagement programme for young people from urban backgrounds and
- A training programme that will upskill young people in habitat restoration/conservation skills.

[Generation Green](#) was led by the YHA and collaborated with all the English national parks. This enabled us to engage with schools and young people from socio-economically deprived areas of the county and region and work with partners to provide quality experiences that connect them with nature and are truly life-changing. The [celebration and evaluation report](#) includes this quote: *'On the trip was a boy whose jaw dropped as we were driving along Lake Windermere. His face was awe inspired; the fact he had seen something he had never seen before.'* Phil Leybourne, Geography Teacher, West Derby School.

Relevant strategies, local and national

The Lake District National Park Partnership Plan 2020-2025

This strategy lies within the context of the management plan for the Lake District National Park, which is developed by a partnership of 25 stakeholders and is therefore known as the [Partnership Plan](#).

The most pertinent of [The Strategies](#) within the Partnership plan is:

16. Access to high quality amenity and recreation green spaces, public realm, public rights of way, and facilities:

...b. Promote healthy living by supporting the Cumbria wide public health strategy, and projects and initiatives that improve the quality of amenity and recreation green spaces.

c. Continue to develop and maintain a high-quality public rights of way network, including supporting the Fix the Fells Partnership...

But the following strategies are also highly relevant to the Access and Recreation Strategy:

7. The continuation of the Lake District as a source of artistic, literary, and cultural inspiration

11. Growing a sustainable Lake District visitor economy

22. An effective and integrated transport infrastructure supporting low carbon travel options

23. Opportunities to discover, appreciate and experience a unique, rich cultural landscape

24. Ensure responsible visiting

The Plan sets out five key outcomes, which have monitored action plans and a partnership dedicated to their delivery:

- [Vibrant communities and prosperous economy following Covid-19](#)
- [Climate action – achieving net zero and adapting to climate change](#)
- [Future of farming and forestry, nature recovery and climate change](#)
- [A Lake District for everyone](#)
- [Sustainable travel and transport](#)

Access and Recreation is a cross-cutting issue that has relevance to all five of these key outcomes. There are specific actions within 'A Lake District for Everyone' and 'Sustainable Transport' around Access and Recreation, which will read across to the action plan in this document.

The principles of A Lake District for Everyone and Sustainable travel run throughout this document, and many of our actions are around making the access and recreation offer in the Lake District more inclusive. This includes improving access into the national park from surrounding hubs such as towns on the West Coast and from transport hubs such as Penrith Station.

Defra's 25 year Environment Plan

Published in 2018 [Defra's 25-year plan](#) includes an 8-point plan for National Parks in England:

1. Connect young people with Nature.
2. Create thriving natural environments.
3. National Parks driving growth in international tourism.
4. Deliver new apprenticeships in National Parks.
5. Promote the best of British food from National Parks.
6. Everyone's National Parks.
7. Landscape and Heritage in National Parks.
8. Health and Wellbeing in National Parks.

In January 2023 this was revised as the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#). Goal 10 is the most relevant to this strategy, which aims for 'Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment'. Stated actions include investment in the Access for All fund, the development of the Coast to Coast Path National Trail, including accessibility improvements and spurs and loops, reviewing open access maps and investing in active travel.

The Landscapes Review

The government commissioned Julian Glover to undertake a comprehensive review of Protected Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in 2019 ([The Landscapes Review](#)). This opened with the statement 'our system of national landscapes should be a positive force for the nation's wellbeing' it then set out a number of challenges and proposals to address them including:

- Landscapes for everyone: enabling and encouraging a more representative and diverse range of visitors to visit protected landscapes. The measures to address this included better information and signs, further outreach and engagement and landscapes that cater for the nation's health and wellbeing.
- Living in landscapes: This section stressed the importance of local communities and recommended ensuring that traffic and transport issues are addressed in order to enable people without private transport to reach protected landscapes and reduce the impacts of excessive vehicles on the environment. Recommended that national park authorities had greater influence in traffic and transport.

The government's response to the Glover Review scaled down the ambition in many areas and funding for this work is generally not forthcoming, but the principles remain in place.

Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan

[Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan](#) (CTIP) is Cumbria's overarching strategic plan for transport. It was adopted in 2022. It's three objectives are for:

- Clean and healthy Cumbria
- Connected Cumbria and
- Community Cumbria

It sets the strategic direction through the creation of transport corridors on which active travel improvements will be. For the Heart of the Lake District corridor an active travel strategy is being developed and some new active travel links are being developed through the Borderlands Growth Deal.

Drivers for change in the future

We need to be agile and keep abreast of changing behaviours, new visitor demographics and new opportunities. The follow sets out potential challenges and opportunities:

Health and wellbeing

Connections with the outdoors and green and blue spaces has been shown in numerous reports to be hugely beneficial to people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. The Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, led to many people re-evaluating the importance of open-air access and surges of visitors going to open spaces including the Lake District.

At the same time the country faces huge public health challenges, many that can be mitigated by increased physical activity. 1 in 6 deaths in the UK can be directly attributed to lack of physical activity. By continuing to provide and promote opportunities for outdoor recreation for all the Lake District can continue to meet its original purpose as a 'natural health service'.

Climate change

LDNPA is committed to reaching net zero by 2030 and the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership is working towards county wide targets. Transport makes up a major part of greenhouse gas emissions and active travel, walking, wheeling and cycling can play a big part in tackling this, particularly if developed from villages and accommodation hubs so people do not need to get in their car at any point during the day.

Cumbria is already being affected by the impacts of Climate Change, including in 2015 the devastating effects of Storm Desmond on people, their homes and infrastructure. This included substantial damage to paths and bridges requiring the Routes to Resilience programme of work and the Keswick to Threlkeld reconnection to remedy it. Since then, there have been numerous other smaller storm or flood events and infrastructure has to be not only repaired but built to a more resilient design in anticipation of future events.

Challenges and opportunities in farming

Farming is going through a time of change and uncertainty. Most of the access network passes through farmed land and it is vital that we work with farmers to welcome people onto their land and see the positives that visitors can create including diversification opportunities. We must work with visitors to ensure their impact on the farming community is positive. The [Farming in Protected Landscape \(FiPL\)](#) scheme, which is administered by LDNPA provides opportunities to fund access improvements, nature recovery and diversification and several schemes that create new public access have been approved, and we will work to increase the number that benefit people and increase understanding of and access to the farmed landscape. The new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) scheme will also potentially offer incentive for 'public goods' which can include enhanced countryside access.

Resourcing

The economic impact of national and global events is leading to uncertainty that is affecting both public and private sector finances, and this is impacting on our impact to deliver the quality infrastructure and experience that is needed in a national park and world heritage site. Yet the need for people to undertake outdoor activities to benefit their health and wellbeing is greater than ever and the economic benefits of this activity to local businesses have never been more important. Our challenge is to find innovative ways in which we can continue to provide attractive, affordable opportunities for countryside recreation that are available for everyone.

Current Need

This document, along with the action plan will inform Rights of Way Improvement for the Lake District for the next 2 years. The creation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) is prepared by the Highway Authority and was underpinned by an extensive user, resident and landowner needs and preference survey which led to a list of actions. Many of these actions have been delivered, some are still needed and in some cases the situation has changed so they are no longer required or a priority. These are to be reviewed and outstanding routes that are still relevant will be fed into the action plan along with any new opportunities.

We know that 'serious' outdoor users are generally well-catered for but that new visitors to the countryside lack the routes or the information about the routes they need and can therefore find a visit to a national park daunting. We also know that in order to reduce parking pressures in sensitive areas we need to focus on opportunities that connect with residential and visitor hubs, providing active travel opportunities.

The Sport England report '[Getting Active Outdoors](#)' also provides a sophisticated level of market research and insight into outdoor recreation participation and user motivations. The main motivators for participation were found to be around inclusion rather than personal challenge:

- To spend time with family;
- To have fun with friends;
- Alternative to traditional sport;
- To enjoy the scenery/ be close to nature;
- For fresh air and to enjoy the weather; and
- To relax and de-stress/get away from modern life.

During the Covid 19 pandemic the above reasons became even more important, and people found their connection to nature increasingly important and essential for their mental and physical health. Recent figures from Sport England's Active Lives Survey shows that levels of walking in the adult population grew during the pandemic but have maintained and even increased that growth. Walking continues to be the most popular form of activity in the UK and can be undertaken in most cases without specialist and expensive equipment and by people with most levels of physical fitness. The Cumbria Visitor Survey 2022 also highlights that in the Lake District there has been a slight decline in walking and a growth in other outdoor activities particularly cycling, mountain biking, paddleboarding and outdoor swimming.

Definitive Map

Changes to the rights of way network and definitive map are sometimes also indicative of the need for the Rights of Way network to change in order to be fit for purpose and match current demand. We create new rights of way or upgrade from one status to another for public benefit (from public footpath to bridleway for example). Equally landowners may request diversions of rights of way from working farmyards, gardens or close to buildings. Both of these are measures of how the rights of way network has not evolved sufficiently to meet modern day needs.

Evidence of benefits

Benefits that will be realised as a result of this strategy are numerous. Benefits are not the outcomes mentioned below but they are the wider benefits that may be a result of the aggregated effects of existing networks and new developments or promotion.

These can include:

Economic benefits

The visitor economy is estimated to be worth £1.34 billion to the Cumbrian economy (STEAM 2019). This visitor economy however is underpinned by the landscape and routes to access it.

At present the Cumbria Visitor Survey reports that 70.3% (2022) of visitors to the Lake District undertake a walk whilst they visit – these people will spend an estimated £924million per annum. Whilst this may not be the sole reason for all these visits but it is clear that this is an incredibly important offer to our visitors. Add to that a plethora of other activities which rely on rights of way such as horse riding, mountain biking and others which use rights of way and open access land to access the start point such as open water swimming and paddleboarding, it can be seen what an essential part of the infrastructure our rights of way and permitted routes are.

Due to the high cost-benefit ratios because of this high usage LDNPA has been able to secure some significant funding towards improving and developing trails, over £12 million in the last 10 years, and we hope to continue to invest. The benefits realisation for the Keswick to Threlkeld Trail showed that in its first year 265,000 people used it spending over £15 million in the local economy.

If the paths are well maintained and work is ongoing to provide a more accessible and connected network, we can expect this work to benefit businesses from a small local shop to bigger accommodation businesses.

Carbon reduction and Environmental benefits

Walking and cycling as an alternative to driving has enormous potential to reduce traffic and to reduce carbon emissions. If people can be nudged towards parking up and then using active travel and public transport to get around the Lake District in line with our sustainable travel objectives it will make a difference to what is currently the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Lake District, transport.

In order to encourage this behaviour change attractive safe routes to follow must be available. In many locations they are, but better promotion is needed. In other locations route improvements are needed.

Health, Wellbeing and community benefits

According to Public Health England 1 in 6 deaths can be directly attributable to lack of physical exercise. Recreational opportunities in the Lake District give people an opportunity to take gentle or more strenuous exercise in a beautiful environment. Exercising outdoors also has enhanced mental health benefits that have been widely documented. In the Cumbrian Visitor Survey 2022 72% of visitors to the Lake District stated they felt physically better after their visit and 90% felt mentally better.

Access and recreation benefits many stakeholders including resident communities through developing shared opportunities and routes to connect people to neighbours, shops and enable people to get to work, training and education.

Benefit Realisation

These benefits will be identified in the development of projects as part of the Project Management Framework system and will be measured where possible to give us real insights into the benefits realised through the implementation of the recommendations in this strategy. We also need to identify and where possible mitigate disbenefits, including increased maintenance costs at project initiation stage. Appendix C gives more details on benefits realisation.

Where we want to be

Our vision for countryside access and recreation in the Lake District is:

A well connected network fit for purpose in the 21st Century with high quality infrastructure, facilities and services meeting the needs of all visitors and residents.

We have identified four priority themes of work, and under each of these are a series of strategic actions that will contribute to the achievement of our goal and our strategic aims. The four priority themes are:

- Improve: rights of way and countryside access.
- Manage and maintain: rights of way, countryside access and recreational activities.
- Promote and engage: connect more people to nature and the special qualities of the Lake District.
- Integrate: with health and wellbeing, sustainable transport and the economy.

Goals under the four themes

Priority theme 1

Improve: Rights of way and countryside access.

The Lake District has a population of 42,000 and annual visitor numbers can be up to 19 million (STEAM, Cumbria Tourism, 2019). Different people have different needs and preferences depending on ability and interest and whether they are looking for travel from A to B or a recreational journey. Recreation can take the form of walking, climbing, hiking (on foot or in a wheelchair) running, horse riding and mountain biking on land or water sports and swimming in the lakes.

We will develop an action plan with the following goals:

To Improve we will:

- a) Continue to develop, where external funding is available, a network of bridleways and footpaths to encourage more people to ride, wheel or walk between settlements and key attractions and to link settlements outside the National Park boundary to the Lake District.
- b) Improve disabled accessibility of the rights of way network, including continuing the Miles without Stiles programme and where available improve bridges and gates to make routes more accessible for off road wheelchairs and other less mobile users.
- c) Create a new 5-year programme of rights of way improvements based on outstanding actions and new priorities.
- d) Work with partners to develop and maintain the Coast-to-Coast path through the Lake District as a National Trail, as agreed with Natural England.
- e) Continue to engage with farmers and landowners to investigate beneficial improvements to the path network that can be made through schemes such as the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) and the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS).
- f) Monitor improvement projects according to our monitoring framework to evaluate the success of the projects and provide evidence for future developments.

Outcome

- More people walking, riding and wheeling on an extensive and inclusive network of trails that connect key settlements and attractions.
- Promoted short walks from settlements providing health and wellbeing benefits.
- A better connected and more accessible rights of way network.
- A greater knowledge of participation across the national park that will help inform and focus future priorities.

Manage and maintain: Rights of way and countryside access.

We have 3,100km of rights of way, over 800km² of open access land and the largest concentration of inland waterways in England. Both the asset itself and the impact of the activities that take place on it need to be and are managed by the LDNPA and key partners such as the National Trust, Forestry England and landowners. This management takes a variety of forms, from statutory legal duties relating to maintaining and managing the rights of way network and open access land, dedicated programmes such as the Routes to Resilience flood recovery and Fix the Fells upland path repair, to proactive management of activities that minimise potential for conflict and encourage sustainable use of the National Park.

In managing and maintaining access, we will:

- a) Maintain a high-quality rights of way network so it can benefit the environment and the economy and the health and wellbeing of communities and visitors.
- b) Increase the overall ease of use of all rights of way whether through new Agency Agreements with Westmorland and Furness, and Cumberland Councils or through other agreed forms of partnership working.
- c) Maintain Miles without Stiles routes to a high quality to meet their accessibility grading and improve facilities such as resting places where possible and improve access for disabled people to the rest of the rights of way network.
- d) Work with Lake District Foundation (LDF) to secure funding to maintain and improve the recreation network, including making it more accessible for disabled people.
- e) Improve resilience of the path network and seek funding to respond to repairs needed after substantial storm and flood events.
- f) Support the repair, maintenance and management of upland paths through the Fix the Fells programme.
- g) Keep the definitive map up to date and work towards making this information available on the LDNPA website to ensure everyone has access to this information we hold.
- h) Work with volunteers to check and make minor maintenance improvements on rights of way.
- i) Manage use of the lakes and water bodies of the national park in partnership with landowners within the byelaws agreed.
- j) Work in partnership to encourage responsible use of the Lake District environment.
- k) Advise on the sustainability of large-scale outdoor events, through advice to the multi-agency Event Advisory Group or an alternative multi agency partnership coordinated by the new unitary authorities and seek contributions to repair of the routes used where relevant.
- l) Continue to respond to consultations on changes to access arrangements such as tree planting on Open Access land and support Natural England and DEFRA in the proposed review.

Outcome

- The benefits realisation work on any new improvement project will demonstrate the ability to maintain the new infrastructure.
- A rights of way network that is more resilient to erosion and flooding.
- Recreation use of all kinds and scale is carried out in a responsible manner that respects the needs of others and safeguards the special qualities of the national park.
- Consistent signposting and waymarking of routes will ensure more people access the countryside in confidence and know where to go.

Promote and engage: connect more people with the Lake District National Park.

The Lake District is a place that everyone should be able to enjoy. We believe that everyone should have equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of countryside access, but it is increasingly apparent that certain sectors of the population do not access the national park as much as others, for various social, economic and cultural reasons. We will work under the principles of the 'Lake District for everyone' section of the Partnership Plan to address this.

There is a huge amount of information available about the Lake District and how to enjoy it, both in print and digitally. Some produced on a commercial basis and other user-generated content on various digital and social media platforms. LDNPA already provide information with a focus on accessible routes through our Miles without Stiles work, other promoted routes such as the Ullswater Way and responsible use of the outdoors, but we could do more to enable people to enjoy and understand the special qualities of the Lake District and to nudge people to more sustainable visiting.

To promote and engage we will:

- a) Work with partners to make it more attractive for a diverse demographic to visit the Lake District.
- b) Ensure that we include information that enables disabled people to choose the routes and activities that give them the best experience of the Lake District.
- c) Evolve our learning and engagement offer, including our work at Brockhole, and collaborate with partners and secure additional funding to widen the audience who are engaged with the National Park.
- d) Develop high-quality information about access to the countryside, with a focus on on-line and digital information.
- e) Develop our guided walks programme to encourage wider participation, understanding and engagement.
- f) Waymark and interpret key promoted routes, with a focus on more accessible routes and routes from village hubs. Details of this will be set out in the signage strategy.
- g) Message about responsible visiting in the Lake District to manage visitor behaviour through evolution of the successful 'Lake District Kind' campaign.
- h) Continue to support, in partnership with the local authorities a Local Access Forum to advise in accordance with s94 of the CROW Act.

Outcome

- We will continue the trend towards a more diverse visitor demographic visiting and engaging with the Lake District.
- All visitors will feel more welcome in the Lake District and feel the health and wellbeing benefits of visiting the national park but will also understand the need to care for the landscape and communities of the Lake District.
- Visitors and residents will understand and feel more connected to the special qualities of the Lake District.

Integrate: with health and wellbeing, sustainable transport and the economy.

The natural access asset of the Lake District and the recreational opportunities that it provides cannot be viewed in isolation. There are wider impacts both positive and negative that arise from it. This will be evaluated in more detail through the benefits realisation work on the Access and Recreation Programme, which is detailed in Appendix C.

Many studies have shown that being outdoors has enormous benefits to mental and physical health and wellbeing. The Lake District offers the experience of walking, cycling, riding or other outdoor activities to almost 20 million visitors per annum. Activities such as walking are lower impact and cost, appealing to visitors who would not see themselves as 'outdoorsy', but who are not currently as active as they could be. Our surveys have shown that being active on holiday encourages people to be more active in their daily lives, so the benefits felt whilst on holiday can then be translated into someone's everyday life.

A healthier population clearly has benefits to those people and their families through a happier, healthier, longer life, but also benefits the NHS through reduced demands on their services for illnesses that can be reduced or prevented through a more active lifestyle.

Our sustainable travel and transport priorities and actions to deliver them have been set out in the [Partnership Plan](#) and in our [2040 Travel Vision](#), so that detail is not replicated here. The importance of transport and recreation nodes both within and outside the National Park is articulated as part of the active hubs and connections outside the National Park actions. The need for people to access recreation sustainably and inclusively is paramount, and that is an understanding that runs throughout this strategy.

To Integrate we will:

- a) Work with partners to draw together the activities available from key settlements to develop active hubs, reducing the need for residents and visitors to travel.
- b) Work with the highways authorities and other partners to develop and promote active and sustainable travel routes linking settlements and attractions.
- c) Develop and promote routes to health and wellbeing, including trails for less active and disabled people such as Miles without Stiles routes, multiuser trails, longer barrier-free routes and short walks.
- d) Work with partners to create better sustainable links for active travel from the towns on the edge of the Lake District into the national park.
- e) Continue to deliver the actions set out in the [Partnership Plan Sustainable Travel and Transport Key Outcome](#).

Outcome

- Outdoor recreation that caters for all.
- Recreation hubs and active travel that reduce the need for visitors to drive by motor vehicle and enable visitors without access to a motor vehicle to reach the national park.
- A national park that has realised its potential contributing to the health and wellbeing and economy of the nation.
- Visitor carbon impact on the national park is reduced.

Appendices

Appendix A: Action Plan

No.	Project	Priority theme ** main * additional				strategy ref.	Action	
		Improve	Manage	Engage	Integrate		Action 2023/24	Action 2024/25
1	West Windermere Way	**		*	*	1 a), 1 b)	Complete to YMCA and investigate north of YMCA	Have agreed plan that can be delivered if funding becomes available
2	K2T Extension	**			**	1 a), 1 b)	Undertake ecological and flood risk assessments, initial design and land negotiations	Start construction (subject to funding)
3	Coast to Coast Path	**				1 d)	Undertake preparation and initial practical works	Deliver practical works
4	FiPL access improvements	**	*	*		1, e)	Fund at least 3 improvements to access and recreation	Fund at least 5 improvements to access and recreation
5	Monitoring		*			1 f)	Coordinate existing monitoring to align with our monitoring plan, and produce annual summary	Consider additional work to better inform
6	Rights of way improvements	*	**			1 c)	Make 5 upgrades to rights of way according to our strategic priorities	Make 5 upgrades to rights of way according to our strategic priorities
7	Benches on MWS	*	**		*	2 c)	Install 30 benches and perches	
8	Rusland Moss	**				1 b)	Install 150m boardwalk	

9	Eamont Way	**		*	**	1 a), 4 d)	Support community to complete footpath and promote	Ongoing promotion and maintenance
10	Maintain the rights of way network		**		*	2 a)	Deliver improvements to ensure ease of use survey result improve from 56% to 60% by March 2024	Ease of use survey result 65% by March 2025
11	Miles without stiles routes		**			2 c)	Deliver improvements to ensure that these reach 75% pass rate by March 2024	Pass rate of 80% by March 2025
12	Fix the Fells Programme	*	**			2 f)	Complete ERDF funded programme of improvements and prepare and secure funding for next 3 year work plan.	Subject to funding available
13	Funding	*	**	*	*	2 d)	Work with LDF to increase funding to maintain and improve routes	
14	Volunteering		**	*	*	2 h)	Support engagement of volunteers in rights of way survey and maintenance	
15	Manage Lakes and Water bodies					2 i) 3 g)	Water safety campaign led by Lake Rangers and explore options to review small lakes byelaws	
16	Lake District Kind campaign		*	**	*	2 j), 3 g)	Share messages that promote responsible behaviour in the countryside	

17	Open access land		**	*		2 l)	Support work on Open Access Review	
18	Online information			**	*	3 d)	Develop social media photography and film for 5 Miles without stiles routes	Develop 5 MWS film and online information on other short walks
19	Guided walks programme			**	*	3 e)	Continue to develop and include more inclusive routes on Miles without Stiles	
20	Waymarking and signage strategy			**	*	3f	Write a guidelines to waymarking on paths and trails	
21	Signage of Miles without stiles routes		*	**	*	3 f)	Install QR code links to maps at the start and waymark all Miles without stiles route	Consider further information and interpretation on these routes
22	Active hubs	*		*	**	4 a)	Develop outline plans for routes from 5 active hubs	Deliver routes and information on 5 active hubs, and develop actions for 5 more
23	Sustainable travel links	*			**	4 b)	Support highways authorities in the development of links including Dunmail Raise and Thirlmere West	
24	Continue to develop and improve accessibility for disabled people in the national park	*		*	**	4 c)	Develop programme of works through Access for All funding	Deliver Access for all programme

25	Links from hubs outside the national park	*		*	**	4 d)	Support the development of the Penrith station hub and seek further development work on the Cleator Moor to Ennerdale link	
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Appendix B: Waymarking process guide

[to be added, to include guidance on where to waymark and examples of good practice.
See Action 20 - to complete in 23/24]

Appendix C: Monitoring Framework

The following targets and indicators will allow us to monitor whether we are delivering the priority themes. These indicators are not intended to be an exhaustive list but provide a proportionate approach to monitoring delivery of the Strategy.

Theme	Target	Indicator	Standard	Data Source	Baseline
Promote Improve	An increase in visitors between 16-34 to the Lake District	Percentage of visitors between 16- 34 to the Lake District	High: 50% increase on the baseline (2018) by 2040 Medium: 25% increase on the baseline (2018) by 2040 Low: 10% increase on the baseline (2018) by 2040	Cumbria Tourism Visitor Survey	17% (2018) 22% (2022)
Promote Improve	An increase in people cycling on promoted routes	Percentage of people cycling on key promoted routes between attractions or settlements	High: 25% increase on the baseline by 2040 Medium: 15% increase on the baseline by 2040 Low: 5% increase on the baseline by 2040	LDNPA people counters on promoted routes (K2T, etc)	Tbc (2022)
Improve	Secure funding to improve routes for people riding, walking or wheeling	Amount of funding secured to deliver more people riding, walking or wheeling	High: £7.5m secured by 2028 Medium: £5m secured by 2028 Low: 2.5m secured by 2028	A&R Programme Board	0 (2023)
Integrate	Improve the role of Rural Service Centres to function as Recreation Hubs	Number of settlements functioning as Recreation Hubs	High: 13 Recreation Hubs by 2028 Medium: 8 Recreation Hubs by 2028 Low: 5 recreation Hubs by 2028	LDNPA analysis	0 (2023)
Maintain	Increase the percentage of Miles without Stiles (MwS) which meet	Percentage of Miles without Stiles (MwS) which meet their MwS designation	High: 85% by 2028 Medium: 75% by 2028 Low: 60% by 2028	LDNPA KPI 226 (MwS Survey)	50% (2022)

	their MwS designation				
Maintain	Increase the percentage of total length of footpaths and other RoW that were easy to use	Percentage of total length of footpaths and other RoW that were easy to use	High: 75% by 2028 Medium: 70% by 2028 Low: 65% by 2028	LDNPA KPI 78 (RoW Survey)	56% (2022)

Appendix D:

Benefits realisation information capture

Capturing the benefits realised from any projects developed through this programme is important. In order to capture the benefits realisation information, the following table has been developed to be used when developing project documentation.

PRxxxx	Project Name: xxxxxxxx		Date: xxxxxx	
Anticipated Benefits to be Realised				
	Out There Strategic Benefits	Key B1 – Health & Wellbeing and community Benefits	Key B2 -Carbon Reduction/ Environmental Benefits	Key B3 – Economic Benefits
1	Will the project deliver benefits against key Out There strategic benefits?	y/n	y/n	y/n
2	If “yes” please give details of anticipated benefits to be realised and approximate timeframes.			
3	In addition to benefits identified at (2) above, or if the answer to (1) is “no”, are there any other benefits to be realised by the project which relate to other programmes?			y/n
4	If “yes” please details of anticipated benefits to be realised with their approximate timeframes and programme area to which they relate, if known, below:			
Anticipated Disbenefits*				

	<p>*A disbenefit is an outcome that would create additional work or cost e.g., downstream maintenance or a could have a negative consequence e.g., increased litter due to greater visitor numbers.</p>	
5	Does the project, when implemented, introduce an ongoing maintenance liability?	y/n
6	<p>If the answer to (5) above is “yes”, please provide as much detail as possible below e.g., km route to be maintained / number of bridges to be maintained / guttering and/or drainage to be cleared etc. Please estimate the number of man hours work if possible.</p>	
7	Is it envisaged that there may be other disbenefits from the project other than any maintenance liability identified above?	y/n
8	<p>If the answer to (7) is “yes” please provide details of anticipated disbenefits, and their potential impact if known, below:</p>	