



Lake District
National Park

State of the Park 2023

November 2023



Foreword

The Lake District has witnessed some significant challenges over the past five years, each leaving a mark on the canvas of this remarkable place.

The Report is a comprehensive assessment of the Lake District's current condition, and through analysis, it aims to shed light on the current state of affairs, highlighting both the successes and the vulnerabilities that lie within this special landscape.

The key challenges identified in the State of the Park Report 2018, which are taken forward in the Partnership's Plan 2020-2025, remain relevant going into the future. When the Partnership drafted this Plan, it was with the awareness that many of these challenges required a long-term emphasis and investment. Collectively therefore the Authority and members of the Partnership must continue to focus effort and resources on addressing these priorities to conserve and enhance the Lake District, and its Special Qualities.

I commend the dedication and efforts of the Authority, the Lake District National Park Partnership, individuals, communities, conservationists, and Government bodies who tirelessly strive to preserve the essence of the Lake District. This report highlights many encouraging trends including for example archaeology and the historic landscape, improving condition of waterbodies, increasing amount of woodland, and a more diverse profile of visitors. However, it is recognised that the delivery of actions does not always match the scale of ambition or pace of change necessary. There is much more to do to address the vulnerabilities that this report identifies including:

- Delivering the ambitious transformational actions of the Partnership's Plan.
- Addressing the gaps in data and our knowledge, particularly around the condition of habitats and species to better understand and deliver nature recovery.
- The need to focus efforts on nature recovery and climate adaptation.
- Securing appropriate levels of payment for public goods and services to support the future of farming, nature recovery, conserve the cultural landscape, and the race to achieve net zero.

Over the next five years various external factors will influence the management, development, and sustainability of the Lake District. Understanding and effectively responding to the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) factors are critical for the Lake District's sustainable management, fostering sustainable and responsible tourism, and preserving the ecological and cultural heritage for future generations.

The Lake District welcomed over 18 million visitors in 2022 but most people may not be able to list all, or even a handful, of the Park's Special Qualities. However, they do connect with each of these Qualities whether from the products or services it provides, visiting, or taking inspiration and enjoyment from art, images, or social media posts. The language may be evolving but it's still the people, places, nature, and climate that shape our connections to this nationally and internationally important place.

There are broader indicators to consider how the Lake District is faring as a Protected Landscape in the 21st Century and whether in this context the Lake District is on a path to success. The most recent visitor profile shows a clear shift towards an increasing proportion of more diverse and younger visitors; a visitor profile that better reflects today's national population. Whilst more can be done to ensure deeper connection and welcome of underserved

groups and in ensuring we have the right infrastructure to enabling sustainable tourism, this is a hugely welcome change in ensuring Lake District serves all of society.

The Authority will continue to deliver Government's priorities for Protected Landscapes. This includes understanding how our Protected Landscape contributes to the Government's commitment to 30 by 30 and protecting 30% of UK land for nature and biodiversity by 2030. The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme has proved to be a beneficial scheme in supporting farming and conservation of the cultural landscape through its funding themes of people, place, nature, and climate in what is an otherwise concerning funding environment.

Today the Lake District is more relevant than ever as the nation seeks to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change, restore nature, and continue to recover from the health, wellbeing, and economic effects of the Covid pandemic. Lockdowns reinforced the importance of the great outdoors to a new audience and their social media followers, and over the coming years the Lake District can support health services and people improve their health and wellbeing.

The Authority and members of the Partnership have a responsibility to protect, conserve, and restore this special place so that it remains a place for everyone. I hope that this State of the Park Report will serve as a catalyst for positive change and collective action.

Tiffany Hunt MBE



Chair of the Lake District National Park Authority



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1 Introduction to the State of the Park Report

What is a State of the Park Report?

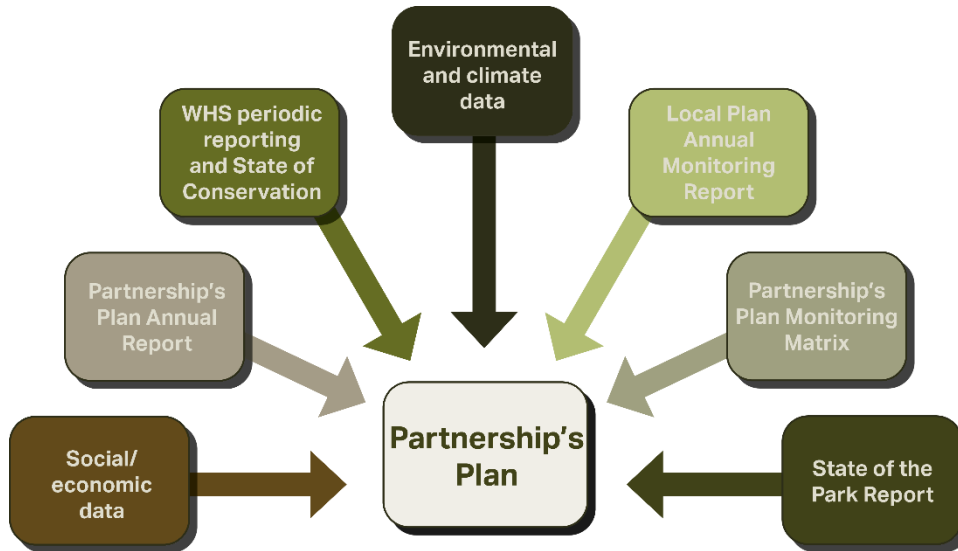
- 1.1 This State of the Park Report, produced on a five-yearly cycle by the Authority with support from other Partner organisations, provides:
 - the most recent key facts and figures about the Special Qualities of the National Park;
 - describes positive or negative trends and issues affecting the Special Qualities; and
 - forms an important part of the background evidence for the review of the [Lake District National Park Partnership's Plan](#).

- 1.2 In developing and implementing policies for the planning and management of their areas, National Park Authorities should document and clearly express the [Special Qualities](#) of the National Park and the status and positive or negative trends affecting these qualities.

- 1.3 [Special Qualities](#) are characteristics that distinguish National Parks from each other and from other parts of the country. For the Lake District these are:
 - A world class cultural landscape.
 - Complex geology and geomorphology.
 - Rich archaeology and historic landscape.
 - Unique farming heritage and concentration of common land.
 - The high fells.
 - Wealth of habitats and wildlife.
 - Mosaic of lakes, tarns, rivers, and coast.
 - Extensive seminatural woodlands.
 - Distinctive buildings and settlement character.
 - A source of artistic inspiration.
 - A model for protecting cultural landscapes.
 - A long tradition of tourism and outdoor activities.
 - Opportunities for quiet enjoyment.

- 1.4 The State of Park Report's primary purpose is to measure the condition and trends of the Special Qualities of the National Park which in turn informs the preparation of the next Partnership's Plan. However, it is not the only source of data that considers how the Lake District is faring and whether the Partnership's Plan is helping to conserve and enhance and enable people to enjoy the Special Qualities. The Partnership also produces an Annual Report to monitor how successful it is being in delivering the Partnership's Plan. We have sought to identify where the current Plan is supporting the management and therefore influencing trends in the condition of the Special Qualities. As well as the State of the Park Report other data and evidence also supports the development of the Partnership's Plan (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Data and evidence which contributes to the preparation of the Partnership's Plan



How do Special Qualities relate to the World Heritage Site attributes of Outstanding Universal Value?

What is Outstanding Universal Value?

Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) means cultural and, or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.

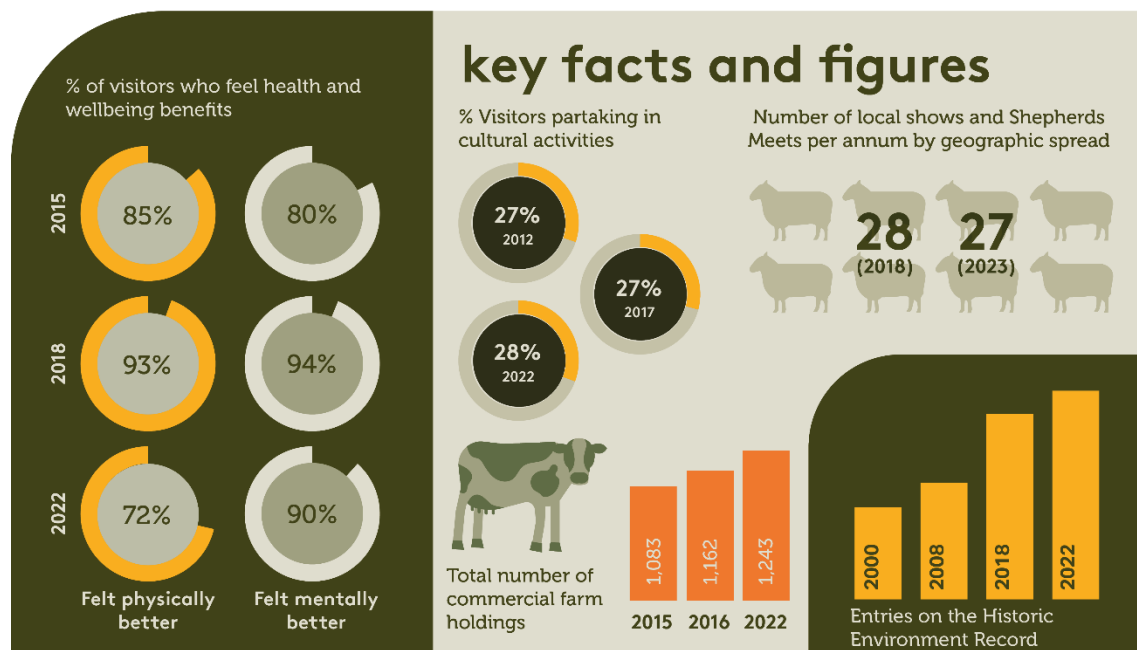
- 1.5 The [Special Qualities](#) of the Lake District contribute in different ways to the Outstanding Universal Value of the area recognised by World Heritage Site Status. Each of the attributes of [Outstanding Universal Value](#) are specific aspects of each of the Special Qualities.

2 How are we doing?

A World-class Cultural Landscape

Condition: Moderate

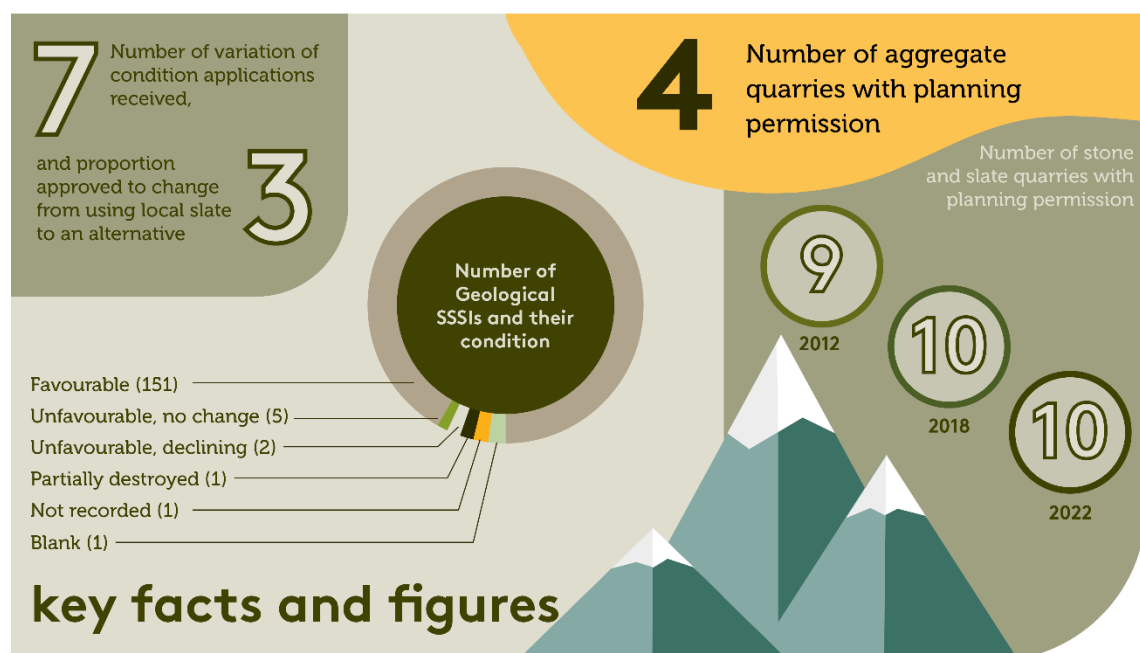
- 2.1 There are several interventions in place that are having a positive impact on the condition of this Special Quality particularly in the context of the historic landscape, including the industrial heritage, semi-natural woodlands and the opportunities provided to enjoy the cultural landscape, for example through local shows and events. The 'moderate' condition relates to the significant challenges, including impacts on the cultural landscape, such as the viability of farming, and the challenge of climate change. Climate change is one of the factors affecting the condition of our important habitats and wildlife and these effects will require future monitoring and investment to understand the impacts in more detail and to enable the Lake District to adapt to changes in the landscape.
- 2.2 The cultural landscape continues to be a source of artistic inspiration and provides opportunities for quiet enjoyment. Latest visitor profile data highlights a clear shift towards an increasing proportion of more diverse and younger visitors; a visitor profile that better reflects today's national population. Visitor numbers have almost returned to pre-2019 levels but patterns of visits have changed as a result of the covid pandemic. The next few years will show if numbers continue to grow based on past trends or are levelling off, but continued and increased investment is also needed to maintain the public rights of way network and access routes on the High Fells to reduce erosion and enable public enjoyment. Some of these pressures on key routes and places may be eased through 'attract and disperse' strategies.



Complex geology and geomorphology

Condition: Good

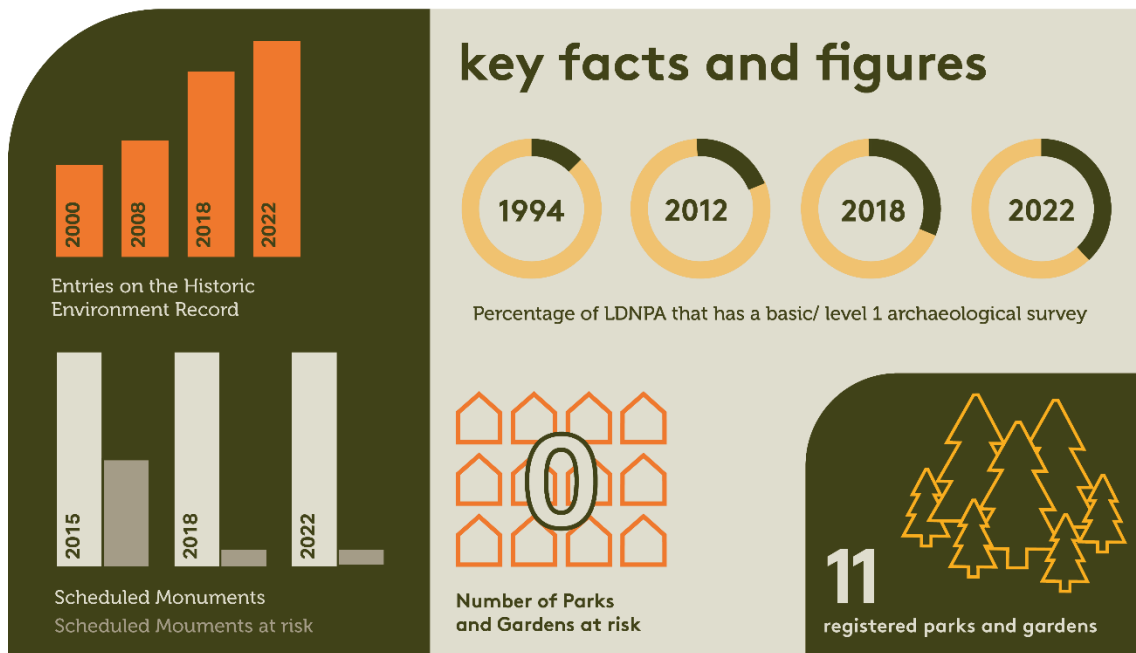
- 2.3 Quarrying and mining is a recognised part of our cultural landscape and industrial heritage. It has also greatly influenced the distinctive characteristic of the Lake District. There has been no significant change in the number of quarries with permission to extract minerals, and the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) has adopted Planning Policies to ensure local natural and mineral resources are safeguarded from the pressures of development. The rich quarrying and mining history is supported and enjoyed by many people, because the continued low key extraction of minerals helps to support the repair of traditional buildings and ensure that new buildings have a sense of place and contribute to the local distinctiveness of the Lake District.



Rich archaeology and historic landscape

Condition: Good

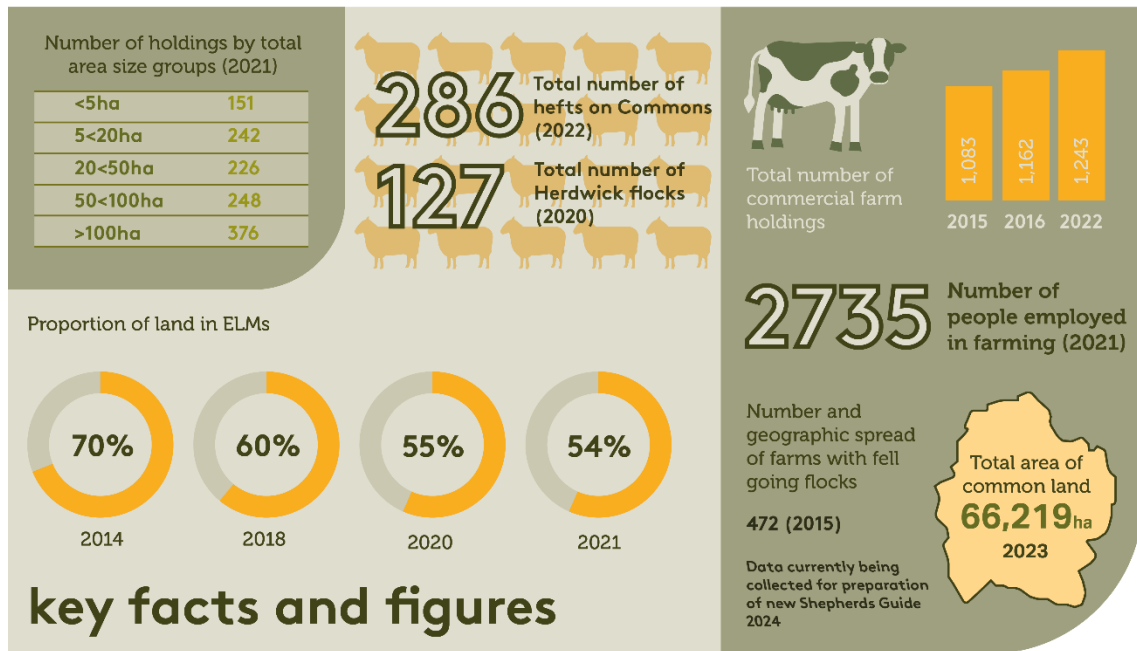
- 2.4 The landscape, buildings and ruins, walls and historic remains are just some of the features that make up the historic environment. The trend for each indicator is in line with the ideal status as a result of a number of conservation projects and interventions being delivered, maintaining and protecting the archaeology and historic landscape of the Lake District. There have been considerable increases in the area of the National Park surveyed and increases in the number of entries in the Historic Environment Record which contribute to improved knowledge and understanding of features in the Lake District.



Unique farming heritage and concentration of common land

Condition: Moderate

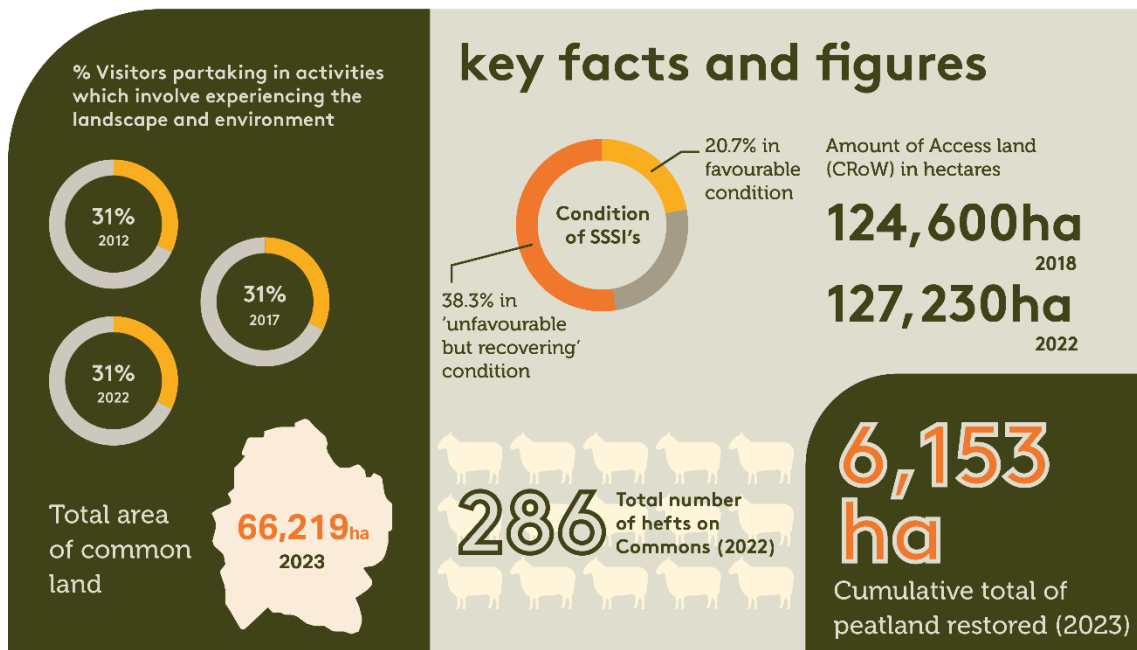
- 2.5 The world class cultural landscape of the Lake District is intrinsically linked to farming heritage and practices that takes place on the land, including on commons. There are many potential risks to this Special Quality as highlighted by the indicators. Some trends are in line with the ideal status of the indicators, but many are not. The decreasing amount of land in Agri-environment Schemes is a significant concern. The direct area-based payments of the Basic Payment Scheme will be reduced by at least 50% for all farms by 2024 compared to 2021 levels of payment. The impact of a smaller amount of land in Agri-environment Schemes is that less money is coming into the Lake District and less land is delivering environmental improvements and other public goods. However, the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been a great success in delivering investment to support climate, nature, people, and places.
- 2.6 The outcome of changes to farming practices and critical payments for land management might be contributing to changes to the management of the commons, to the number of farm holdings, and holding size. The last five years has seen notable increases in small farms (under five hectares) and a decline in farms over 100 hectares in size and a greater proportion of land being used for other land uses than farming. There has also been a notable decrease in hefted flocks on commons but stable numbers of hefted Herdwick flocks. There is a clear need to ensure activity continues to support this Special Quality and secure greater investment to support the future of farming and forestry, nature recovery and climate change.



The High fells

Condition: Moderate

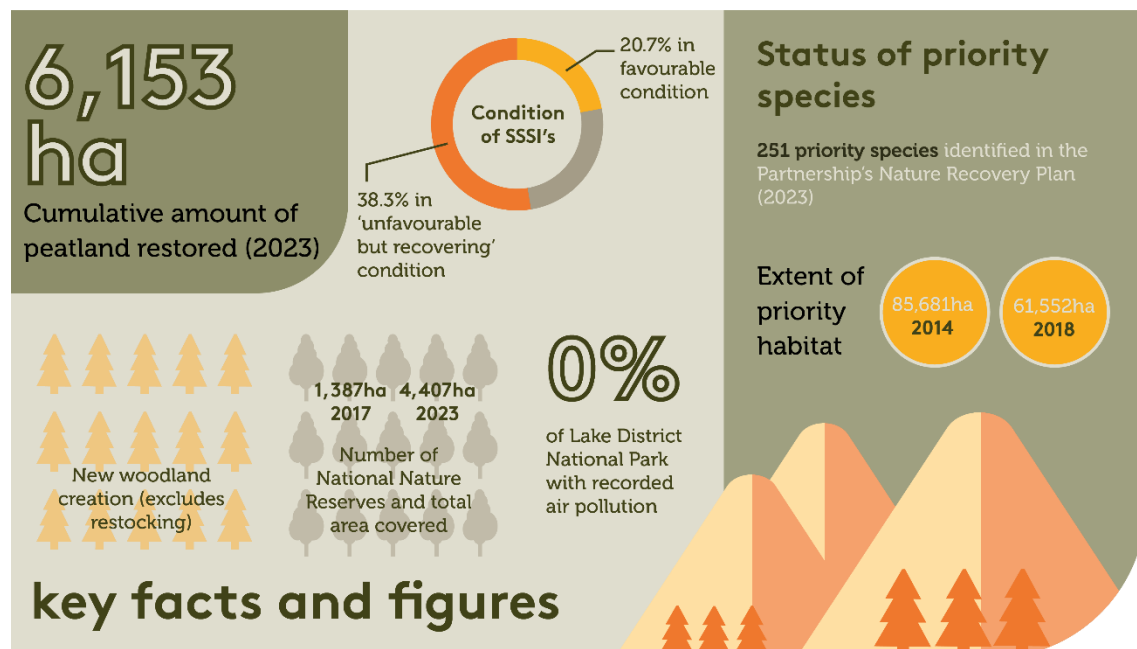
- 2.7 The high fells are distinct and easily recognisable, creating a strong sense of place. The features including large areas of common land, public rights of way, areas of habitat, and archaeology mean that this Special Quality is captured through indicators of other Special Qualities. Current interventions are helping to deliver positive outcomes such as greater carbon storage, improved access, and nature recovery but increased activity is needed to improve the condition of the high fells and deliver for nature, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, and for social, economic, and cultural objectives.



Wealth of habitats and wildlife

Condition: Moderate

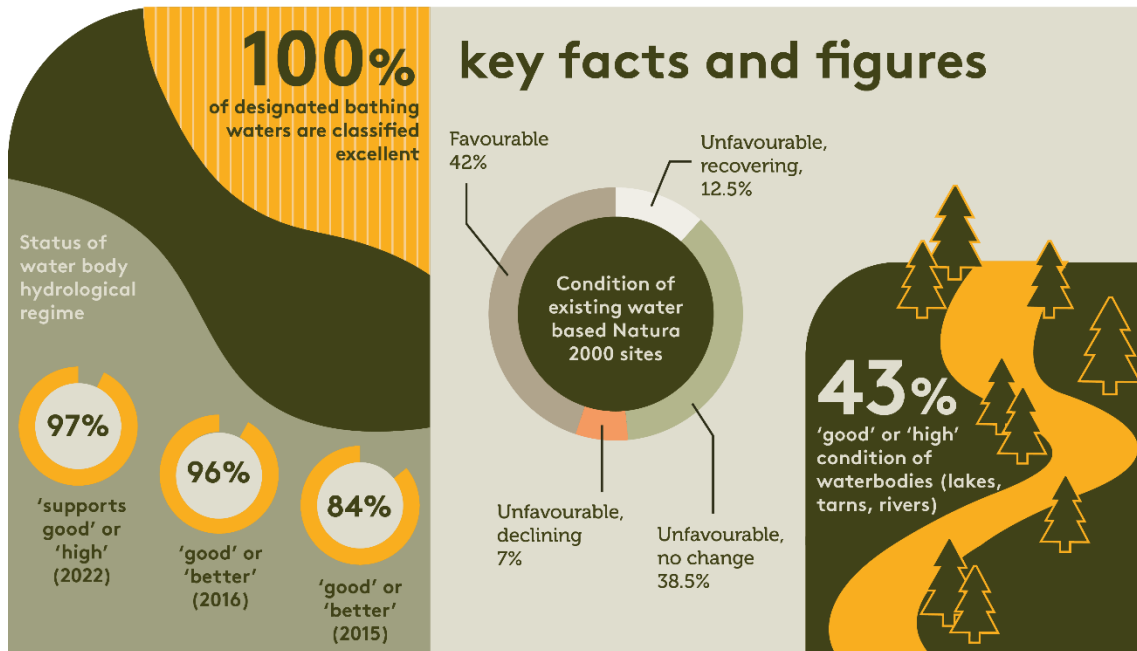
- 2.8 Almost 20% of the National Park area is designated for its biodiversity value so it is unsurprising that the Lake District is home to internationally important species, and a variety of habitats. The nationwide decline in biodiversity is well known and understood, and the Lake District has not been immune to this worrying trend. In the last 20 years much work has been done to try to maintain and restore existing habitats and species in the National Park, and lots of activity is being delivered to support nature recovery and improve the wealth of habitats and wildlife in the Lake District by the Partnership and other organisations. However, there is still much to achieve and a lack of up to date and available data continues to seriously hamper understanding and progress to improve habitats and the abundance of wildlife. Where data is available, for example condition of SSSIs, there has been a decrease in the favourable condition of SSSIs since the last State of Park Report. Peatland continues to be restored but more needs to be restored each year to achieve the Partnership Plan's ambitious targets.



Mosaic of lakes, tarns, rivers, and coast

Condition: Moderate

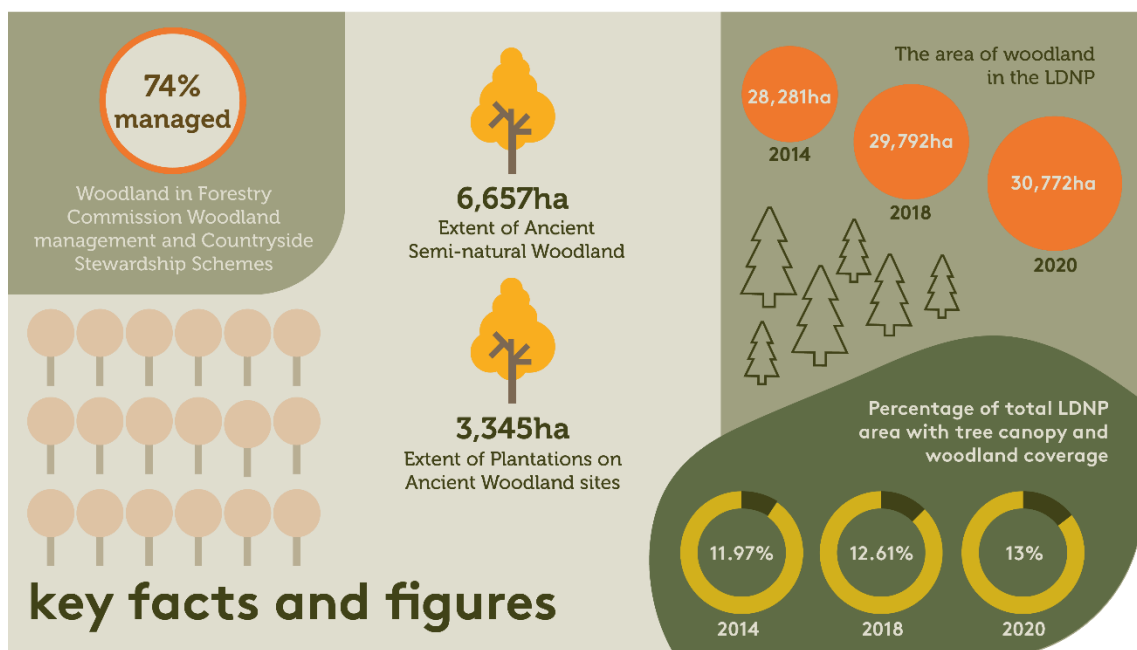
- 2.9 Water is synonymous with the Lake District, it rains a lot and there are many lakes, tarns and meres, and water courses which are being enjoyed by an increasing number of people. The condition of some water bodies in particular has received attention from media campaigns seeking to improve water quality, and in 2022 Nutrient Neutrality guidance was introduced by Natural England on four catchments affecting the Lake District as a result of high nutrient levels. However, the indicators show there has been a gradual improvement in water quality over the last 10 years, with focussed activity from the Partnership contributing to this, but a lot more work and investment is needed to help ensure the water environment continues to provide for the range of habitats and species they support and can be relied upon as a natural resource for all to enjoy.



Extensive semi-natural woodlands

Condition: Good

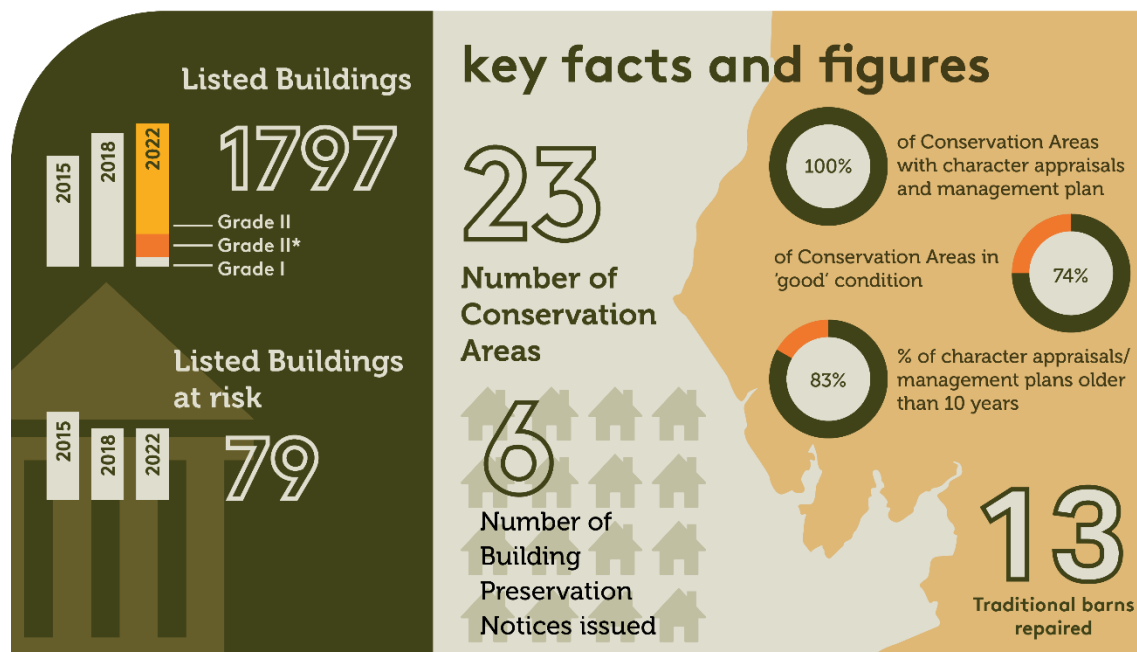
- 2.10 The area of woodland cover in the Lake District has continued to increase since the last State of the Park Report and there has been no loss of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. This is as a result of a significant amount of activity that continues to be delivered by the Partnership, but there are concerns that the rate of tree planting will not meet the ambitions outlined in the Partnership's Plan of at least 17% cover by 2050. Woodlands do remain vulnerable to the effects of climate change, invasive species, and disease, yet there are methods of protection and interventions taking place that are aimed at securing a positive future for these important habitats.



Distinctive buildings and settlement character

Condition: Moderate

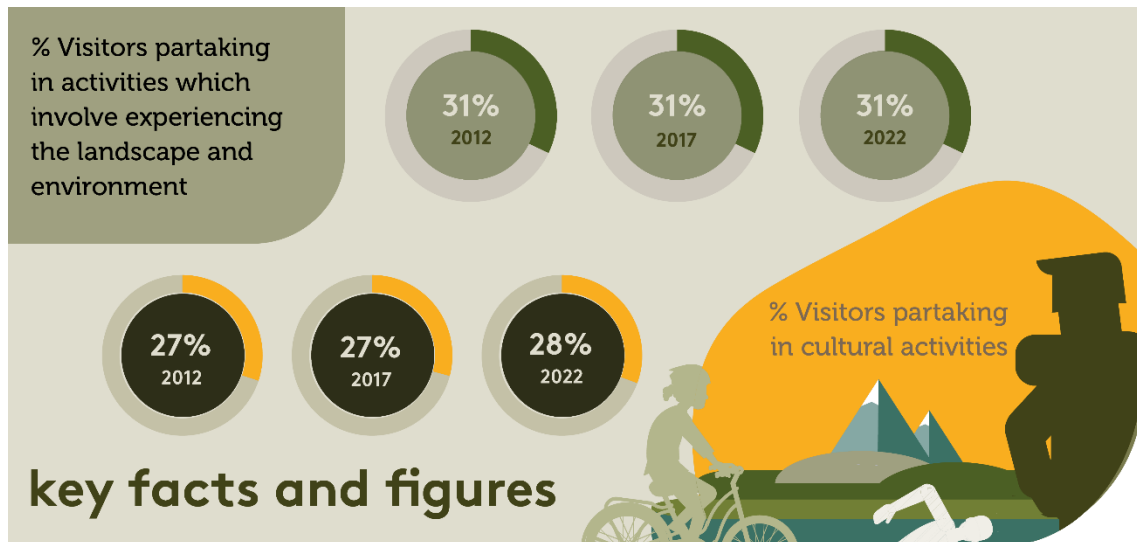
- 2.11 Distinctive buildings and settlement character are a key feature of the towns, villages, hamlets, and landscape of the Lake District. The indicators show that trends for most indicators are moving in a positive direction with interventions such as Building Preservation Notices and that 100% of Conservation Areas have Management Plans. This helps to support and promote the importance of the Lake District's traditional vernacular and sense of place. It is hoped that the Lake District Design Code Supplementary Planning Document will help to prevent inappropriate changes to the Lake District's distinctive buildings and reinforce the settlement character through new developments. However, there remain concerns that important features of buildings are being eroded through changes to the use of buildings and to address issues such as energy performance. The grant schemes to repair traditional buildings has helped to remove buildings from the Heritage at Risk register. The main concern highlighted by the indicators is that the 83% of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are more than 10 years old.



A source of artistic inspiration

Condition: Good

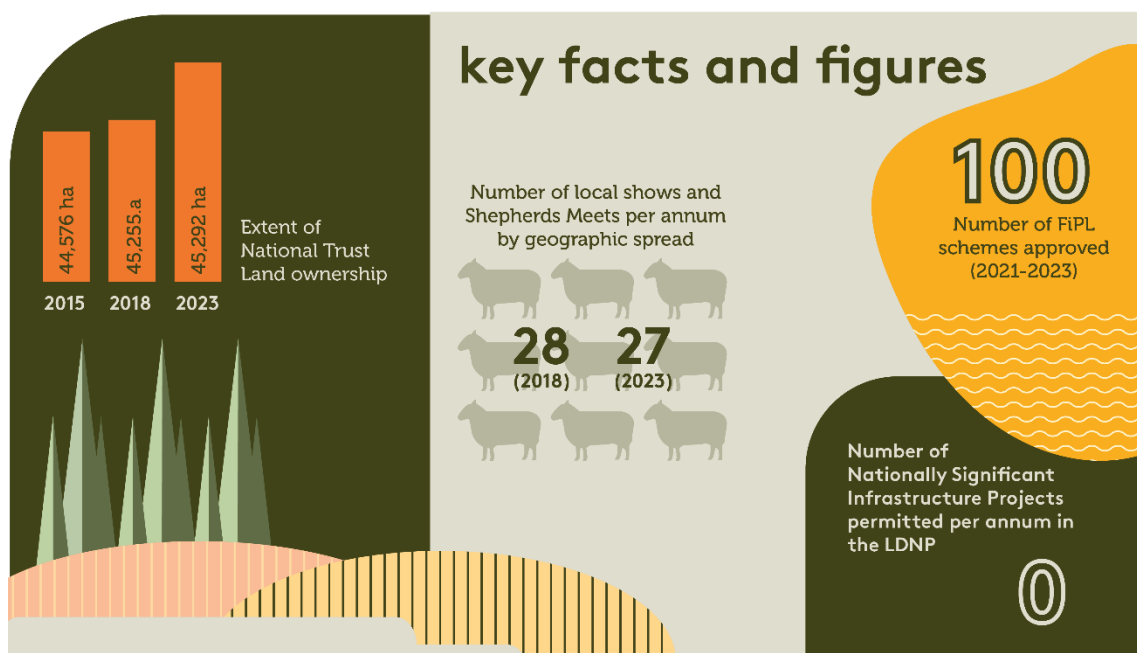
- 2.12 The Lake District continues to be a source of artistic inspiration and is enjoyed and expressed through a variety of books, photographs, sculptures, paintings and digitally via social media. There are also many festivals and events that take place throughout the year which provide the opportunities for people to explore their relationship with nature, and where the cultural landscape provides artistic inspiration or spiritual or physical refreshment.



A model for protecting cultural landscapes

Condition: Good

- 2.13 Plans, policies and strategies are in place to further the conservation and enhancement of the extraordinary harmony and beauty of the Lake District, its Special Qualities and international and national significance, including the protection of the relationship being people and the natural environment. National Park designation and World Heritage Site inscription and the collective work of members of the Partnership support this, and the indicators highlight good trends – National Trust land ownership has increased and the number of local shows and shepherds meets has almost remained the same. The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is also supporting the conservation of the cultural landscape through its four themes of people, place, nature, and climate.



A long tradition of tourism and outdoor activities

Condition: - Good

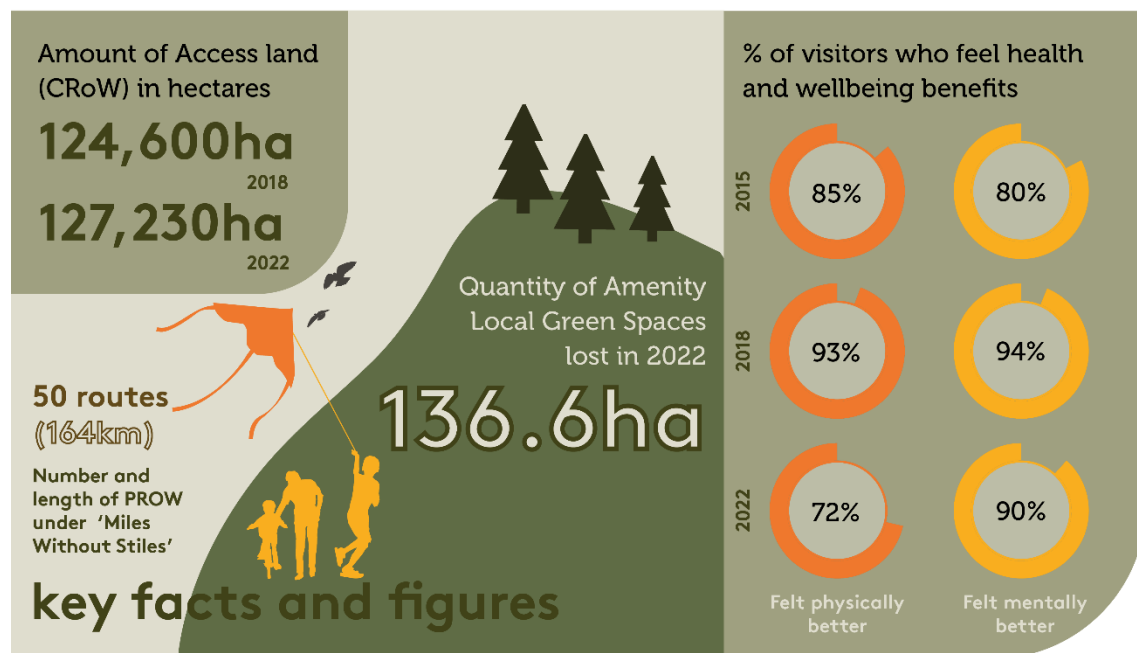
- 2.14 In 2022, 18.14 million visited the Lake District and 96% of visitors rate their visit as 'very good' or 'good'. Tourism and outdoor activities have been significantly affected since the last State of the Park Report in 2018, primarily as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but a number of positives have also emerged. As restrictions lifted a new audience of visitors discovered the Lake District, and the latest data shows they continue to enjoy the Lake District and this Special Quality. Whilst visitor numbers haven't quite reached the numbers in 2019, the proportion of visitors aged 16-34 has increased by 6%, and visitors from minority ethnic communities increased to 22% in the Lake District and 16% across Cumbria representing a 14% increase. This demonstrates a visitor profile that better reflects today's national population and that the Lake District is a place for everyone. The average length of stay has decreased but the proportion of visitors who stay more than one night has increased. Visitors are still partaking in cultural and adventure activities at the same levels, and the number of 'Miles without Stiles' routes has increased. The trends for the indicators for this Special Quality are encouraging given the global pandemic, apart from the ease of use of the rights of way network, which has seen a significant decline in ease of use since 2018, and action is needed to address this decline as walking and cycling infrastructure is at the heart of the visitor offer.



Opportunities for quiet enjoyment

Condition: Good

- 2.15 The Lake District continues to provide many opportunities for quiet enjoyment and there have been many significant investments in improvements to multi-user trails, and rights of way over the last five years which has enabled more people to enjoy health and wellbeing benefits associated with being in a National Park. The number of people reporting feeling physically better has fallen but the percentage of people who feel mentally better has remained almost the same. There continues to be significant amounts of different accessible green infrastructure available across the Lake District for people to enjoy without any notable losses of greenspace.



Conclusions

- 2.16 The Lake District is a cultural landscape with various distinctive qualities, each requiring specific attention and actions. While the overall condition is moderate to good, significant efforts and resources are needed to overcome challenges posed by climate change, farming sustainability, nature recovery, water quality, and tourism impacts and access to the countryside. Encouragingly, the Lake District remains a source of inspiration and a model for protecting cultural landscapes, showcasing its enduring importance and ambition to be *an inspirational example of sustainable development in action* as outlined in the Partnership's [2030 Vision](#). Through targeted interventions, increased collaboration, and strategic planning, the Lake District can continue to evolve as a resilient, harmonious landscape that preserves its natural and cultural heritage for future generations. The State of the Park Report highlights some key issues that need to be addressed due to declining trends:

- Addressing the gaps in data and our knowledge, particularly around the condition of habitats and species to better understand and deliver nature recovery.
- Ensuring appropriate levels of payment for public goods and services to support the future of farming, nature recovery, and the race to achieve net zero.
- Ensuring there is appropriate infrastructure to enable people to visit sustainably, including addressing the declining ease of use of footpaths and other rights of way.
- Addressing the number of Conservation Areas with Appraisals and Management Plans older than 10 years.

- 2.17 A number of other issues that are reported through other mechanisms, that also feed into the preparation of the next Partnership's Plan, will also need to be subject to the Partnership's focus. The latest Census data shows that the resident population continues to decline, business surveys highlight a shortage of available workforce, the Cumbria Visitor Survey highlights an increased use of private vehicles to travel around the Lake District, and the Local Plan evidence base highlights challenges around the affordability of housing for working people and low numbers of affordable housing being built, coupled with increasing numbers of holiday lets in many of the Lake District's Settlements. Visitor numbers have almost returned to pre-2019 levels but patterns of visits have changed as a result of the covid pandemic. The next few years will show if numbers continue to grow based on past trends or are levelling off.
- 2.18 Some recommendations begin to emerge through the analysis of the indicators which will need to be explored by the Authority and the Partnership through the preparation of the next Partnership Plan.

3 Performance against Monitoring indicators framework

What are we monitoring?

- 3.1 Each of the indicators reported on have been chosen to provide as clear as possible a picture of the condition of each of the thirteen Special Qualities. This provides the main means by which we can measure the state of the conservation of these Special Qualities. Each Special Quality is of equal importance. The indicators that we have chosen are focussed specifically on measuring how each Special Quality is faring individually.

How do we monitor?

- 3.2 Many of the relevant data sets and other information used in this report is collected and held by partner organisations. The data collected is all secondary data, i.e., collected primarily for another purpose but analysed and updated by National Park area. As with the 2018 State of the Park Report there continues to be issues with collection of data, maintenance of up-to-date data, and access to relevant data across a multitude of public bodies with resource issues being cited as a problem for data collection.
- 3.3 We have used indicators that specifically measure the state of the Special Quality, and in some cases, we have included indicators that measure the management of the asset/special quality.

How do we measure our success?

- 3.4 Each indicator has been allocated an 'Ideal Status' and a 'trend' column of either:
- Green – in line with ideal status.
 - Amber – generally in line with ideal status.
 - Red – not in line with ideal status.
 - Grey – data or trend analysis not currently available.

How is condition measured?

- 3.5 The condition of each Special Quality is defined as either:
- Good - maintain level of interventions, if applicable,
 - Moderate – monitor and/or consider greater interventions as appropriate,
 - Poor - interventions necessary.

Ongoing data collection

- 3.6 Information on recent trends is available for most indicators and this is included in the report. For others we currently only have the initial baseline data, and in a few cases the information is still being gathered.

Annex: Indicators and Analysis of the Special Qualities

1. Special Quality: A World Class cultural landscape Features of this Special Quality

- 1.1 The Lake District National Park designation is principally based on the quality of its landscape, the diversity of which is key to its beauty and significance. The components for this Special Quality include Villas; Picturesque planting and gardens; coast; lakes; distinctive farmland; fell; woodland; industrial activity; and settlements. It also includes rich archaeology and historic landscape and all the components of Attributes of Outstanding Universal Value such as extraordinary beauty and harmony, industries, shows and traditional sports, opportunities for quiet enjoyment and spiritual refreshment and conservation movement.

What do we mean by a cultural landscape?

A Cultural Landscape is a term used to describe the combined works of nature and people that express a long and intimate relationship between people and their natural environment.

Indicators

- 1.2 This Special Quality is overarching, and to avoid duplication, its condition is measured through the raft of relevant indicators included in the individual Special Qualities that follow.

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Climate change resulting in changing weather patterns, extreme weather events, rising temperatures.
- Diseases and pests including non-native species.
- Biodiversity decline resulting from continued unfavourable habitats condition and habitat fragmentation.
- Uncertainty over changes to funding for farmers.
- Lack of awareness of why the Lake District is a cultural landscape, and the features that make up the cultural landscape.
- Land management such as over /under grazing.
- Visitor management and their behaviours.
- Decline in rural communities and rural isolation.
- Impacts of new development.

Commentary

- 1.3 The extraordinary beauty and harmony of the landscape and the fusion between a natural landscape and farming system are the two most important attributes of Outstanding Universal Value that support this Special Quality. Whilst the landscape needs to be able to accommodate change and adapt to social, economic, and environmental challenges, changes should be achieved in a sensitive manner in order to protect the authenticity, integrity and characteristic of

the Lake District, so the cultural landscape can continue to be enjoyed by current and future generations.

- 1.4 Climate change remains a key vulnerability in managing this Special Quality, not least flooding, higher temperatures, wildfires, and changes to habitats. Conserving the cultural landscape and enhancing the natural environment to adapt to and mitigate against the impacts of climate change can cause tensions particularly where it effects local industry and the physical appearance of the landscape. Whilst the Farming in Protected Landscape programme has helped deliver many environmental schemes, as indicators in this report identify, there are significant concerns regarding the financial and social viability of hill farming and upland land management, as well as challenges regarding biodiversity loss and ecosystem function.
- 1.5 Access to the High Fells via numerous Public Rights of Way and designated Access Land has long been one of the main attractions for people to visit the Lake District, which understandably brings with it its own issues. Significant work on the upland paths has taken place through the Fix the Fells Partnership whose remit is to restore environmental damage and enhance upland paths, with great success.
- 1.6 Distinctive settlements and the local vernacular give the Lake District a strong sense of place. Policies are in place to conserve and enhance these distinctive characteristics including the recently adopted Design Code Supplementary Planning Document by the Lake District National Park Authority. All the designated Conservation Areas have a Character Appraisal and Management Plan in place. The historic landscape and rich archaeology of the Lake District is cared for and appreciated. The area of the Lake District that has had an archaeology survey has increased as has the number of traditional barns repaired via capital grant funding.
- 1.7 The Lake District continues to be a popular tourist destination and provides an array of opportunities to experience nature, achieve spiritual refreshment and enjoy the cultural landscape and its attributes. The local industries and the skills needed to maintain the cultural landscape are affected by the availability of the working age population, which unfortunately continues to fall in the Lake District.

Who is enjoying this Special Quality?

- 1.8 This Special Quality is enjoyed by all, whether it's the physical appreciation of nature by engaging in recreational activities such as fell walking, rock-climbing, cold-water swimming, or pony trekking or through the visual appreciation in books, exhibitions, or sightseeing. In 2022 18.14 million visited the Lake District and the latest Census data shows 38,993 people are permanent residents (Census 2021).

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- 1.9 Case Study – World Heritage Site Periodic Reporting

- 1.10 Periodic Reporting is one of the core conservation monitoring mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention. The State Parties are invited to submit to the World Heritage Committee a Periodic Report on the application of the World Heritage Convention in their territory. For Europe, and therefore the UK, the reporting period was 2022-2023, and the final report will be examined by the World Heritage Committee in 2024. The report forms the baseline for the development of targeted Action Plans at national and regional levels, which respond to the needs, challenges, threats, strengths, and opportunities identified and presented as a result of the Periodic Reporting exercise.
- 1.11 Key findings include some attributes are considered to be compromised as some loss or alteration has occurred due to the impact of climate change, tree diseases or uncertainty over changes to funding for farmers. The 'Agro-pastoral system' is compromised, where the loss or alteration of many aspects of this attribute has occurred, which is leading to a reduction in the significance of this attribute. When viewed alongside the effects of climate change and nature these findings should be taken as an early warning, with the recommendation to concentrate efforts on monitoring and providing support to these attributes.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality

Condition: Moderate

Reason

- 1.12 There are several interventions in place that are having a positive impact on the condition of this Special Quality particularly in the context of the historic landscape, including the industrial heritage, semi-natural woodlands and the opportunities provided to enjoy the cultural landscape, for example through local shows and events. The 'moderate' condition relates to the significant challenges, including impacts on the cultural landscape, such as the viability of farming, and the challenge of climate change. Climate change is one of the factors affecting the condition of our important habitats and wildlife and these effects will require future monitoring and investment to understand the impacts in more detail and to enable the Lake District to adapt to changes in the landscape.
- 1.13 The cultural landscape continues to be a source of artistic inspiration and provides opportunities for quiet enjoyment. Latest visitor profile data highlights a clear shift towards an increasing proportion of more diverse and younger visitors; a visitor profile that better reflects today's national population. Visitor numbers have almost returned to pre-2019 levels but patterns of visits have changed as a result of the covid pandemic. The next few years will show if numbers continue to grow based on past trends or are levelling off, but continued and increased investment is also needed to maintain the public rights of way network and access routes on the High Fells to reduce erosion and enable public enjoyment. Some of these pressures on key routes and places may be eased through 'attract and disperse' strategies.

2 Special Quality: Complex geology and geomorphology

Features of this Special Quality

- 2.1 The components for this Special Quality include a diversity of rock and minerals; rich mining and quarrying history and how local natural resources influences the built environment. The most common purpose of quarrying in the Lake District today is to extract stone and slate for building materials.

What do we mean by geology?

Geology looks at how the earth formed, its structure and composition, and the types of processes acting on it.

What do we mean by geomorphology?

Geomorphology looks at landforms including understanding the structure of landscapes and the history of landforms.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	2018 SoP	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ1 (SQ4)	Number of stone and slate quarries with planning permission	9 (2012)	10 (2018)	10 (2022)	No significant change	Green
SQ2 (new)	Number of aggregate quarries with planning permission	4 (2004)	4	4 (2022)	Decreasing	Green
SQ3 (new)	Number of Geological SSSIs (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and their condition.			161 (2022) Favourable – 151 (93.8%) Unfavourable – no change 5 (3.1%) Unfavourable – declining 2 (1.2%) Partially destroyed 1 (0.6%) Not recorded 1 (0.6%) Blank 1 (0.6%) (MEOPL 2022)	No loss and Improving condition	

SQ4 (new)	Number of variation of condition applications received, and proportion approved to change from using local slate to an alternative	0 (1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018)		7 applications received. 3 approved (43%) (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023)	No significant increase	Green
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Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Non-mineral development sterilising minerals.
- Climate change affecting the condition of Geological SSSI's.
- Cost and availability of local stone and slate.
- Level of skills and people to 'work' minerals.
- Damage or loss of geological exposure as a result of vegetation encroachment, agricultural or forestry activity.
- Damage to important outcrops from irresponsible collecting and sampling.

Commentary

- 2.2 Minerals can only be worked where they occur. Local materials, such as blue and green slate and stone, are critical to the ongoing maintenance, repair, and evolution of the historic and wider built environment. This local stone and slate are also in demand for some new development. As such, local quarrying and mining activity is vital to meet the Lake District's needs for the materials that make such a positive contribution to local distinctiveness. Although there is no escaping the fact that quarrying has impacts not least on the landscape, quarrying is a recognised part of our cultural landscape and industrial heritage and is an important local employer providing opportunities for highly skilled manual jobs.
- 2.3 The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) evaluation report in the English Lake District World Heritage nomination recommends that the Authority (the LDNPA) considers how it can provide assurances that quarrying activities within the English Lake District will be progressively downsized and extraction volumes limited to what is needed for carrying out conservation of the assets supporting the attributes of the property.
- 2.4 We have introduced several new indicators for this iteration of the report to get a better understanding of the condition of this Special Quality based on likely impacts to this Special Quality. Additionally, Indicator SQ1 has been amended since the previous State of the Park Report to better reflect mining and quarrying operations in the Lake District. We are reporting on the number of slate and stone quarries with extant planning permissions, rather than the number of 'active' sites. In this context, the number of stone and slate quarries with planning permission, of which there are ten, has remained constant since 2012, and not all are 'active'. Due to the nature of the slate, it is not quarried all year round, instead it is

extracted only when needed. 'Active' in this context means where activity has occurred during the last 12 months. Only Broughton Moor is currently active.

- 2.5 List of building stone/slate quarries in the Lake District with extant planning permission:

Quarry: Petts, Kirkstone Silver Green and Sea Green, Expiry Date: 31 December 2030

Quarry: Broughton Moor, Mid green often highlighted by contrasting white veins and tone changes, Expiry Date: 21 February 2042

Quarry: Low Brandy Crag, Grey stone often highlighted by contrasting veins, Expiry Date: 30 November 2026

Quarry: Honister, Westmorland Green slate, Expiry Date: 21 February 2042

Quarry: Brathay, Kirkstone Brathay – a dense blue/black stone with a fine golden thread, Expiry Date: 21 February 2042

Quarry: Bursting Stone, Olive green often highlighted by contrasting veins, Expiry Date: 31 December 2030

Quarry: Elterwater, Pale green stone often highlighted by contrasting markings, Expiry Date: 21 February 2042

Quarry: High Fell, Expiry Date: 31 March 2024

Quarry: Spout Crag, Great Langdale, Expiry Date: 21 February 2042

Quarry: Peatfield, Light green coloured slate, Expiry Date: 31 December 2026

- 2.6 There are four active hard rock (aggregate) quarries providing limestone, igneous and sandstone rock, as follows:

- Shap Beck Quarry supplies around 650,00 tonnes of crushed kiln feed limestone to Shap Fell processing plant nearby (Tata Steel) and used in the large-scale production of lime for steelmaking. It also has an on-site plant for making asphalt for road surfacing. It is a key producer of agricultural lime.
- The 'blue' quarried rock from Shap Blue Quarry is used exclusively for hardcore purposes, and as aggregate for tarmacadam and concrete plants.
- Shap Pink yields light Shap which is primarily worked as aggregates and dark Shap tends to be used architecturally.
- Kendal Quarry supplies building aggregates, including walling stone and decorative aggregate in the form of clean limestone.

- 2.7 All of these have extant planning permissions until 21 February 2042. The policies in the Local Plan only allow an extension of time and not a physical extension to an area of extraction. All current mineral planning permissions are kept under review, by the Authority's Compliance Team.

- 2.8 New development is normally required to use slate sourced locally within Cumbria. Natural slate sourced in Cumbria is more expensive than most other

roofing materials due to high labour and expensive operational costs. The following is a price guide per square metre (from a variety of source publications):

- Cumbrian slate £75 per sqm.
- Welsh slate £40 - £60 per sqm; (Welsh Dark Blue Grey Celtic grade £61 sqm).
- Spanish slate £27.50 sqm (quality varies massively) Kentdale Blue Grey 'Ultra' £37 per sqm.
- Brazilian slate £30 per sqm (made from mudstone not metamorphic rock).

- 2.9 As well as being told natural slate sourced from quarries locally are too expensive, we are also informed when assessing planning applications that developers cannot source locally quarried slate within a reasonable timescale, which can lead to hold ups in completing new homes. The Authority has a good working relationship with Burlington Slate with regular contact. Currently the wait is around 6-8 weeks, which seems acceptable.
- 2.10 Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we received seven applications seeking permission to change the roof material previously approved, three of which will result in the use of a non-local slate. The assessment of variation in condition applications is largely based on appearance and the impact on the character of the area. In these circumstances, it was determined that the use of an alternative roofing material would not have a detrimental effect on the character and local distinctiveness of the area. Most re-roofing doesn't require planning permission, so we have little control or ability to monitor the change. Of the applications received it does not appear to be a significant issue. However, these applications should be monitored especially if cost of Lake District slate remains a factor in property owners' decision making.
- 2.11 The Endangered Crafts List 2023 (heritagecrafts.org.uk) highlights hand riven slating as endangered. Crafts classified as 'endangered' are those which currently have sufficient craftspeople to transmit the craft skills to the next generation, but for which there are serious concerns about their ongoing viability. According to the list, there are 3 professionals (main income) working as slate masons in Cumbria, with between 21-50 professionals estimated to be working in Welsh slate.
- 2.12 Limestone pavement is one of the UK's rarest and most vulnerable wildlife habitats, and according to Cumbria Wildlife Trust there is only 2,000ha of limestone pavement remaining in the country, approximately 950.98ha (47 percent) of which is within the Lake District. Of the nine Limestone Pavements in the Lake District Whitbarrow and Yewbarrow LPO is particularly important as it is located within the Morecambe Bay Pavements Designated Special Area of Conservation and Whitbarrow Site of Special Scientific Interest. Clints Crag is partly within the Clints Crag SSSI.
- 2.13 Limestone Pavement Orders are a planning constraint and considered when assessing planning applications. Fortunately, we do not get many planning applications within a Limestone Pavement Order. Regionally Important Geological Sites of which there are currently 141 within the Lake District,

(Cumbria GeoConservation Society via CBDC January 2023) also a planning constraint and considered when assessing new development proposals.

- 2.14 Using MEOPL data, of the 161 Geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Lake District approximately 3 percent are of unfavourable – no change condition (Brathay Quarries, Gill Beck and Meathop Woods and Quarry) and 1 per cent (Eycott Hill) is in an Unfavourable- declining condition.

What is a Limestone pavement?

Limestone pavements are areas of hard limestone exposed by the scouring action of ice during the last ice age, creating deep crevices and clints of worn limestone. In Cumbria this limestone dates from the Carboniferous period. They support a number of rare plants and a variety of rare or uncommon invertebrates. A Limestone Pavement Order makes it illegal to disturb or remove limestone pavement, or even loose rock.

What are Regionally Important Geological Sites?

Regionally Important Geological Sites are sites of regional and local importance for their geology that have not been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Who is enjoying this Special Quality?

- 2.15 There will be many who enjoy experiencing the rich mining and quarrying history whilst visiting the Lake District. The following are a sample of some known examples:
- Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society (CATMHS) is a society interested in Historical industrial sites and recently hosted a National Mining Conference and has a regular series of events.
 - Visitors to Threlkeld Quarry Museum.
 - The Cumbria Geoconservation group have resources trails, etc on their website.
 - Under [Learning](#) on our website there is a section on 'Landscape and geology' and our education service has produced a geology factsheet for students to download.
 - The National Trust own the last working mineral mine in the Lake District at Force Crag which is open a few days a year.
 - Honister is England's last working slate mine and guided mine tours are offered to explore deep underground and learn about the fascinating world of slate mining.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- To address the ICOMOS recommendation, the LDNPA adopted Policy 27: Mineral Extraction of the Lake District National Park Local Plan 2020-

2035, which does not support new mineral sites for quarrying and mining, or the physical extension to an area of general aggregate extraction.

- The LDNPA has adopted a criteria-based Minerals Safeguarding Areas policy (Policy 28) which draws attention to the presence of important mineral resources in the decision-making process, making sure that they are adequately and effectively considered in the land-use planning decisions.
- Limestone Pavement Orders are a planning constraint and considered when assessing planning applications.
- Regionally Important Geological Sites, of which there are currently 141 within the Lake District (Cumbria GeoConservation Society via CBDC January 2023), are a planning constraint and considered when assessing new development proposals.
- The LDNPA has adopted a Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (September 2023) which guides potential applicants on local distinctiveness and use of local building materials.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality

Condition: Good

Reason

- 2.16 Quarrying and mining is a recognised part of our cultural landscape and industrial heritage. It has also greatly influenced the distinctive characteristic of the Lake District. There has been no significant change in the number of quarries with permission to extract minerals, and the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) has adopted Planning Policies to ensure local natural and mineral resources are safeguarded from the pressures of development. The rich quarrying and mining history is supported and enjoyed by many people, because the continued low key extraction of minerals helps to support the repair of traditional buildings and ensure that new buildings have a sense of place and contribute to the local distinctiveness of the Lake District.

2 Special Quality: Rich archaeology and historic landscape

Features of this Special Quality

3.1 The components for this Special Quality include settlements, agriculture - field systems; industry (including mining).

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP 2018	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ5 (SQ6a)	Number of Scheduled Monuments	281 (2015)	287 (2018)	287 (2022)	No decrease	Green
SQ6 (SQ6)	Number of Scheduled Monuments at risk	118 (2015)	22 (2018)	20 (2022)	Decreasing	Green
SQ7 (new)	Number of entries on the Historic Environment Record	5,884 (2000) 6,400 (2008)	16,408 (2018)	17,798 (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ8 (new)	Percentage of LDNP that has basic/level 1 archaeological survey	11% (1994) 20% (2012)	30% (2018)	35% (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ9 (new)	Number of Registered Parks and Gardens			11 5 Grade II*; 6 Grade II (2022 Historic England)	No loss	
SQ10 (new)	Number of Registered Parks and Gardens at risk			0 (2022)	Decreasing	

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Levels of understanding and appreciation of the cultural landscape.
- Damage to archaeological sites through bracken and scrub growth and other natural threats, such as animal burrowing.
- Deterioration of industrial remains, walls, agricultural land and buildings through lack of maintenance and investment.
- Land use change, including impact of nature recovery if not assessed for archaeology.
- Climate change impacts, such as flooding.

Commentary

3.2 The landscape, buildings and ruins, walls and historic remains are just some of the features that make up the historic environment. It is an asset of enormous

cultural, social, economic, and environmental value. It can be a powerful driver for economic growth, attracting investment and tourism, and providing a focus for successful regeneration.

- 3.3 The work of the Authority is supported by a very effective Volunteering network. Over the last ten years the archaeology volunteers have:
- Archaeologically surveyed 2,000 hectares of land;
 - Helped to remove 50 sites from the Heritage at Risk Register;
 - Undertaken many conservation work parties at the Duddon Iron Furnace, Boot Mill, Rusland Tannery and various lime kilns, potash kilns and lead smelters.
- 3.4 The number of Scheduled Monuments remains consistent as has the number of Scheduled Monuments at Risk with a small decrease since 2018. New indicators have been introduced for the number of registered parks and gardens and their condition. The data collected this year helps to establish a baseline for future reporting.
- 3.5 There has been a significant increase in the portion of the Lake District that is covered by an archaeological survey, resulting in approximately a third of the National Park covered by a basic/level 1 archaeology survey. This is primarily a result of surveying activity being undertaken through work programmes involving the Volunteer Network and the National Trust have undertaken programmes of survey on their land at Derwentwater, Little Langdale, Yewdale and Tilberthwaite and Greenburn Common.
- 3.6 The number of entries in the Historic Environment Record (HER) continues to increase as records continue to be logged and the knowledge of the historic environment continues to be improved. It contains details on local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes and is regularly updated.

Who is enjoying this Special Quality?

- Many of the visitors to the National Park every year enjoy the archaeology and historic landscape whether it is visiting registered parks and gardens or simply enjoying features when walking the fells and visiting settlements.
- 50 volunteers logged archaeology duties in 2022, undertaking 497 jobs, totalling 303 days or 2,275 hours.
- Over 100 people enjoy the LDNPA Archaeology Conference every year which is now in its 20th year.
- Under [Educational resources](#) on our website there were around 350 page visits between May 2022 and 2023.
- Several local archaeology societies enjoy this Special Quality including Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Cumbria Industrial History Society, and the Cumbria Local History Federation, representing the local history societies.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- The LDNPA continues to undertake bracken control with the help of our volunteers to deal with the bracken, this helps to get sites off the Heritage At Risk register.
- The LDNPA and National Trust continue to improve the amount of land archaeologically surveyed within the National Park.
- The LDNPA continues to manage and maintain the Historic Environment Record (HER). A project has just been completed to improve how the HER works and it is soon to be available on its website. The National Trust also maintain their own Historic Environment Record for their properties.
- The LDNPA continues to monitor the delivery of actions identified in the Historic Environment Strategy resulting in improvements to the Historic Environment Record, removal of sites from the Heritage at Risk Register, and improved interpretation and learning from sites and features.
- Use archaeology as a tool for engagement with harder to reach audiences, such as the recent Romans in Ravenglass excavation project.
- Where feasible we interpret sites in the field, including the Coniston Coppermines and the New Sedgewick Gunpowder Works.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality

Condition – Good

Reason

- 3.7 The landscape, buildings and ruins, walls and historic remains are just some of the features that make up the historic environment. The trend for each indicator is in line with the ideal status as a result of a number of conservation projects and interventions being delivered, maintaining and protecting the archaeology and historic landscape of the Lake District. There have been considerable increases in the area of the National Park surveyed and increases in the number of entries in the Historic Environment Record which contribute to improved knowledge and understanding of features in the Lake District.

4 Special Quality: Unique farming heritage and concentration of common land

Features of this Special Quality

- 4.1 The components for this Special Quality include a distinctive pattern of land use and enclosure and open fell, drystone walls, pollarded trees, vernacular architecture, hefted livestock, communal gathers, traditional breeds, continuity of farming families, shepherd meets, agricultural shows, dialect, and skills such as walling, hedge laying, and coppicing.
- 4.2 The pastoral system that has evolved in the Lake District for over a thousand years and its continuation by today's farmers maintains a unique farming legacy. The farming system is based on rearing the native Herdwick sheep and other traditional breeds, and the landscape reflects a distinctive communal farming system including common land, hefting, stone walled field boundaries and the field systems. The Lake District has the largest concentration of common land in Britain.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ11 (VO11)	Proportion of land in Environmental / Land Management Schemes	70% (2014)	60% (2018)	55% (2020) 54% (2021)	No significant change	Red
SQ12 (SQ3a)	Area of protected landscape features managed, restored and created under Agri-environment schemes 'high-value' options	95,181ha 40% (2018)	95,181ha 40% (2018) 4,871m hedgerows	Data requested not provided	No decrease	
SQ13 (SQ7)	Total area of common land	64,500ha / (2015)	66,252ha / (2018)	66,219ha / (2023)	No decrease	Green
SQ14 (SQ14*)	The length of temporary fencing on Registered Common Land under an agri-environment schemes.	143km (26 distinct consents dating from 2000 to 2015) (2018)	143km (26 distinct consents dating from 2000 to 2015) (2018)	Data not available until 2024	Decreasing	

SQ15 (new)	Total number of hefts on Commons	313 (2017)	313 (2017)	286 (2022)	No significant change	Amber
SQ16 (SQ8*)	Total number of herdwick flocks and number hefted.	132 (2012) – Cumbria	136 flocks in Cumbria (2018 HSBA census data) 96 hefted (2018 HSBA census data)	127 flocks in Cumbria (HSBA members 2020) 96 hefted (2022)	no significant change	Green
SQ17 (SQ9)	Number and geographic spread of farms with fell going flocks	472	472 (2015)	Data being collected for publication of new Shepherds Guide 2024	No significant change	
SQ18 (SQ10)	Total number of commercial farm holdings	1,083 (2013)	1,162 (2016)	1,243 (2022)	No significant change	Amber
SQ19 (SQ11)	Number of holdings by total area size groups	<5ha = 79; 5<20 ha = 193; 20<50ha = 200; 50<100ha = 237; >100ha = 374 (2013)	<5ha = 65; 5<20ha = 232; 20<50ha = 221; 50<100ha = 236; ≥100ha = 408 (2016)	<5ha = 151; 5<20ha = 242; 20 <50ha = 226; 50<100ha = 248; >100ha = 376 (2021)	No significant change	Amber
SQ20	Number of people employed in farming	2,491 (2013)	2,635 (2016)	2,735 (2021)	No decrease	Green

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Dependence for food on consumer/ supermarket led markets and macro-economics.
- Deterioration of walls, agricultural land and buildings through lack of maintenance and investment.
- Not enough understanding and appreciation of the farming heritage.
- The results of extreme weather events, including erosion by flooding and storms, and drought.
- Inappropriate agricultural management.
- Diffuse and point sources of pollution.
- Changes to farm tenure and ownership – fragmentation of holdings.
- Changes to hefting practices on commons.

- Lack of people and skills levels required to manage commons, habitats, agricultural land, and woodland.
- Agricultural transition/ sudden withdrawal of public subsidy.
- Declining amount of land in agri-environmental schemes.

What do we mean by protected landscape features?

Protected landscape features include dry stone walls, stone gate posts, hedges, kests, planting, management of woodland, wood pasture and orchards, archaeological features, hay meadows and species rich grassland.

Commentary

4.3 Government reform of agricultural policy is witnessing the phasing out of subsidies for land ownership and tenure to encourage land managers and farmers to deliver environmental goods and services alongside food production, which in the main will contribute towards addressing some of the vulnerabilities affecting this Special Quality. The direct area-based payments of the Basic Payment Scheme will have been reduced by at least 50% for all farms by 2024 compared to 2021 levels of payment. This transition has followed on from a period of decrease in the amount of land in agri-environment schemes. Several LDNP Partners are involved with local initiatives such as Catchment Sensitive Farming which supports farmers to protect water, air and soil through tailored advice, support, and grants. The schemes available to pay for environmental and climate goods and services will help habitat restoration and connectivity along with climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Farming in Protected Landscape Programme is demonstrating effectively how funding can deliver for nature, climate, people, and place. Countryside Stewardship aims to look after and improve the environment by:

- Conserving and restoring wildlife habitats.
- Flood risk management.
- Woodland creation and management.
- Reducing widespread water pollution from agriculture.
- Keeping the character of the countryside.
- Preserving historical features in the landscape.
- Encouraging educational access.

4.4 As of June 2020, there were 429 agreements for Higher Level Stewardship covering 118,969ha and 329 agreements for Countryside Stewardship covering 11,770ha which equates to approximately 55% of the National Park. This trend shows that the proportion of land in Environmental / Land Management Schemes has continued to decrease further since the last State of the Park report and is now 15% lower than it was in 2014. Fewer new agreements are starting than old agreements expiring. The new Countryside Stewardship Scheme has been less popular with many farmers who were previously in the Environmental Stewardship Upland Entry Level Scheme. The impact of this is that less money is

coming into the Lake District and less land is delivering environmental improvements.

- 4.5 The Cumbria County Council Common Land dataset (managed by the Commons Registration team but with the caveat that it may contain inaccuracies as it is not the definitive version) highlights since 2018 a total of 34.9ha of common land has been removed from the Register. This is represented by small parcels of land spread across 17 commons (which may include land that was incorrectly registered). During this period 1.04ha of land at Eskdale Common has been added. On Common Land 55.92ha enclosed by 7,676m of fencing for nature recovery and climate adaptation activity but the length of temporary fencing on Registered Common Land under an agri-environment schemes will not be available until 2024.
- 4.6 Hefting is becoming more concentrated onto fewer commons, with fewer hefts per common. Hefting has been lost on one common completely due to a change in landlord policy. The overall situation is that 27 hefts have been lost in five years which represents a nine per cent change, these changes need to continue to be tracked as there may be pockets of land where more significant changes are taking pace. The number of native breed Herdwick hefts has remained static over this period.
- 4.7 20,000 people are employed in the rural and agricultural sector in Cumbria which equates to 8% of employed adults in Cumbria, and includes vets, forestry staff, sales operatives, agricultural engineers, and food production operatives (Cumbria Observatory 2022). In the Lake District this includes 2,735 people working directly in farming jobs. Northwest England is also home to 20% of England's sheep herd. These statistics highlight the importance of the rural and agricultural sector in the Lake District (Agriculture in the UK Evidence Pack September 2022 update). Ensuring the next generation of rural and agricultural workers is Cumbria Federation of Young Farmers Clubs (Cumbria YFC), which has over 1,700 members between the ages of 10 – 28 years who are provided with a host of opportunities to learn new skills, take part in competitions, access training, and actively supporting local communities through charity work and community projects. Their competitions include dry stone walling, hedge laying and stock judging. Since the last State of the Park report the rural and agricultural specialist college, Newton Rigg has closed. Kendal College now offers agriculture courses and Myerscough College in partnership with Ullswater Community College, Penrith also offers land-based education including Level 2 and Level 3 Agriculture.
- 4.8 From 2013 to 2021 the total number of commercial farm holdings (SQ21) has increased from 1,083 to 1,243 with increases across all size groups, although the number has decreased since 2016 for holdings over 100 hectares. This represents an increase of approximately 13% in the number of farm holdings. The data shows that there are many more smaller (less than 5 hectare and 5 to 20 hectares) farm holdings which account for the majority of the increase, and this has the potential to lead to the fragmentation of farm holdings and agricultural land. The total farmed area has decreased from 152,777ha in (2016)

to 146,443ha (2022), which indicates a greater proportion of land being used for other land uses. 14% of the farms in the Northwest England are tenanted farms, and usually have a younger age profile, (Agriculture in the UK Evidence Pack, Defra, 2021). We wanted to include a new indicator – ‘The number of tenanted farms in the Lake District,’ to monitor the effects of changes in agricultural practices on tenant farms, as we are aware that some tenant farms are not being re-let as they have greater potential for returns for the landlord through credit and grant schemes. Unfortunately, we have not been able to collect an accurate baseline figure for the number of tenanted farms in the Lake District. The National Trust own a large number of tenanted farms in the Lake District. They have re-let 10 of these farms since 2018. Understanding data relating to the number of tenanted farms would be beneficial for future State of the Park Reports to understand the scale of changes.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 4.9 Farming, land management, and the commons make significant contributions to Special Quality 1: World Class Cultural Landscape; and Special Quality 5: The High Fells. Visitors, residents, students, and businesses all enjoy this special quality. There are 27 local agricultural shows and Shepherds Meets that take place each year, which are popular with local communities and visitors alike, and it is also enjoyed through farms open days, tours, and education visits, such as: Miller Farming; Lakeland Farm Visitor Centre; Old Hall Farm, Bouth; Low Sizergh Farm; Strudda Bank, Calderbridge; Rawfoot, Bampton; Nook Farm, Borrowdale; Rach Ghyll; and Rosgill Hall.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- Delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme to secure improvements for nature, climate, people, and place. This four-year programme will deliver approximately £4m investment in the Lake District and has in 2021/22 and 2022/23 awarded grants of £1,593,978 supporting 100 projects.
- Many Partners including National Trust, NFU, and LDNPA staff have supported farmers, foresters and land managers with business and environmental advice and learning opportunities, including establishing the Ladies with Livestock group, and New Entrants Group.
- The Friends of the Lake District run annual dry-stone walling and hedging competitions, to help support and secure the skills needed to maintain these iconic and much-loved features of our cultural landscape.
- Delivering landscape adaptation projects to develop resilience to the effects of climate change, for example the Cumbria Innovative Flood Resilience Project, implementing Natural Flood Management (NFM) interventions in the catchment upstream of Grasmere village to reduce the flood risk categories of properties in Grasmere village.
- Revising the Shepherds’ Guide to establish a baseline and description of fell going flocks and to understand and support their viability.

- Supporting DEFRA-funded Landscape Recovery pilots, such as that in the Upper Duddon, to find a working balance between farm viability and increased biodiversity and nature recovery.
- Supporting farm clusters including the West Lakeland Community Interest Company (CIC) and Ullswater Catchment Management CIC to enable farmer-led conservation-focused farming.
- Working across the sector to bring together specialist advisers to support farmers and land managers through the Agricultural Transition in understanding how new grant schemes through the government's Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMS) can support their businesses.

What is the Farming in Protected Landscape programme?

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is a part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan. It offers funding to farmers and land managers in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks and the Broads Authority. It is not an agri-environment scheme.

The programme funds projects that:

- Support nature recovery
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change
- Provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
- Protect or improve the quality and character of the landscape or place

The programme will run until March 2025.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Moderate

Reason

- 4.10 The world class cultural landscape of the Lake District is intrinsically linked to farming heritage and practices that takes place on the land, including on commons. There are many potential risks to this Special Quality as highlighted by the indicators. Some trends are in line with the ideal status of the indicators, but many are not. The decreasing amount of land in Agri-environment Schemes is a significant concern. The direct area-based payments of the Basic Payment Scheme will be reduced by at least 50% for all farms by 2024 compared to 2021 levels of payment. The impact of a smaller amount of land in Agri-environment Schemes is that less money is coming into the Lake District and less land is delivering environmental improvements and other public goods. However, the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been a great success in delivering investment to support climate, nature, people, and places.

- 4.11 The outcome of changes to farming practices and critical payments for land management might be contributing to changes to the management of the commons, to the number of farm holdings, and holding size. The last five years has seen notable increases in small farms (under five hectares) and a decline in farms over 100 hectares in size and a greater proportion of land being used for other land uses than farming. There has also been a notable decrease in hefted flocks on commons but stable numbers of hefted herdwick flocks. There is a clear need to ensure activity continues to support this Special Quality and secure greater investment to support the future of farming and forestry, nature recovery and climate change.

5 Special Quality: The High Fells

Features of this Special Quality

- 5.1 The components for this Special Quality include landscape character, common land, access, wildlife, and archaeology.

Indicators

- 5.2 This Special Quality is overarching, and to avoid duplication, its condition is measured through the raft of relevant indicators included in some of the other Special Qualities.

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Inappropriate fencing on fells, and non-removal of fencing after it has achieved its purpose or has exceeded its functional lifespan.
- Erosion and soil degradation from climate change, increased frequency of extreme wet and dry weather events, and increased recreational pressure.
- Inappropriate agricultural management, inappropriate grazing levels
- Agricultural transition/ declining amount of land in agri-environmental schemes.
- Wildfires - since June 2022 there have been 18 separate incidents identified.
- Changes to hefting practices on commons.
- Reduction in heft numbers across the Lake District.
- Lack of people and skills levels required to manage commons, agricultural land, woodland and deliver nature recovery and peatland restoration.

Commentary

- 5.3 The High Fells in the Lake District are distinct and easily recognisable, giving them a strong 'sense of place'. This landscape character is a strong visual feature of this Special Quality, and is influenced by a variety of factors, including the seasons, the weather and environmental enhancements, such as habitat restoration and tree planting. Common land remains an important component of the High Fells helping to sustain the unique farming heritage of the Lake District. Access to the High Fells via numerous Public Rights of Way and designated Access Land has long been one of the main attractions for people to visit the Lake District, which understandably brings with it its own issues.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 5.4 The two main ways of enjoying the High Fells is through the physical experience of walking, running, or cycling along Public Rights of Way or open access land, or by admiring the scenery from the car or public transport for example.
- 5.5 In the Cumbria Visitor survey 65.5% of respondents said their main reason for visiting the Lake District was 'for the physical scenery and landscape'.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- Key partners are working together with Commoners and Commons Associations to agree long term commons management, supported by agri-environment schemes, that deliver nature, climate, cultural, and economic benefits.
- The National Trust and Foundation for Common Land are leading a partnership delivering the Our Upland Commons project on three commons in the LDNP. This project is demonstrating good practice for partnership working on commons.
- The Authority continues to protect and conserve the important archaeological sites on the High Fells, by undertaking bracken control, helping to reduce the number of sites on the 'At Risk' register.
- Members of the Partnership have published the Woodland Creation and Tree Establishment Guidelines for the Lake District to promote woodland creation and support good decision making and ensure the right tree is planted in the right place.
- Supporting the Cumbria Peat Partnership to continue peatland restoration to reach a target of 7,000 ha of cumulative peatland restoration by 2025 in the Lake District
- Lake District Foundation, Natural England, Friends of the Lake District, National Trust and LDNPA have been delivering the 'Fix the Fells' Partnership for over 20 years, delivering almost £10 million investment to deliver environmental enhancements and repair damaged paths and erosion.
- Revising the Shepherds' Guide to establish a baseline and description of fell going flocks and to understand and support their viability.

Case study: Fix the Fells Partnership

- 5.6 The Fix the Fells Partnership's remit is to restore environmental damage and enhance upland paths, thereby preventing erosion. Activities include renewal of eroded surfaces, stone pitching by hand, path definition to keep people on the sustainable line and sub-soil inversion by machine. This enhanced drainage and landscaping protects habitat above and below the improved path by re-directing water off the path and focussing on the sustainable line.
- 5.7 A Summative Assessment of the Fix the Fells Project delivering funding from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (March 2023), concluded Fix the Fells has played a vital role in conservation in the Lake District uplands by carrying out work to address and prevent erosion caused by people using upland paths. 100% of the Fix the Fells work programme has been delivered, and 96.6 per cent of designated upland paths and associated landscape in the programme has been maintained on time against a target of 80%. 40 separate paths have been worked on through the ERDF funding, and 33.8 hectares of surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status has been achieved against a target of 32.7 hectares.
- 5.8 Fix the Fells has had a major impact on the awareness and behaviour of visitors with regard to erosion. 83% of visitors now give greater consideration to erosion when walking in the fells.



Images of the fast-eroding section of path on Loughrigg Fell, the existing old narrow pitching was largely being by-passed. The other image shows a path under repair by stone pitching.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Moderate

Reason

- 5.9 The high fells are distinct and easily recognisable, creating a strong sense of place. The features including large areas of common land, public rights of way, areas of habitat, and archaeology mean that this Special Quality is captured through indicators of other Special Qualities. Current interventions are helping to deliver positive outcomes such as greater carbon storage, improved access, and nature recovery but increased activity is needed to improve the condition of the high fells and deliver for nature, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, and for social, economic, and cultural objectives.

6 Special Quality: Wealth of habitats and wildlife

Features of this Special Quality

- 6.1 The components for this Special Quality include internationally important species, and a variety of habitats. The Lake District supports a unique assemblage of wildlife and habitats. Many of the habitats and species found in the Lake District are recognised in their own right for their biodiversity importance at an international level with almost 20% of the National Park area being designated for its biodiversity value. In addition, some of the species that occur here are of European importance. There is an abundance of freshwater habitats, including lakes, tarns, and rivers each of which reflect their distinct valley catchments.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ21 (SQ16)	Condition of priority habitats	32.5% (2014)	Changes in methodology = no trend	Data not available – action in Partnership's Plan (FFNC Action 2f)	Improving	
SQ22 (SQ17)	Extent of priority habitats	85,681ha (2014)	61,552ha (2018)	Data not available – action in Partnership's Plan (FFNC Action 2f)	Increasing	
SQ23 (new)	Number of National Nature Reserves and total area covered	1,387ha (2017)		10 4,407ha (2023)	Increasing	Green
SQ24 (SQ18)	Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).	26.9% in favourable condition. 64.5% in unfavourable recovering conditions (2014)	23% in favourable condition. 62% in unfavourable recovering condition (2018)	8,931ha/20.7% in favourable condition. 16,544ha/38.3% in 'unfavourable but recovering' condition (Aug 2023)	Improving	Amber

SQ25 (SQ19)	Status of priority species		288 priority species within the Park with legal protection or of conservation concern have been identified. (2018)	251 priority species identified in the Partnership's Nature Recovery Plan (2023)	Improving	No trend as different methodology used
SQ26 (SQ20)	Amount of peatland restored	0 (2015)	Cumulative total 2013-2018 4,967ha (2018)	Cumulative total 6,153ha (2023)	Increasing	Green
SQ27 (VO8i)	New woodland creation (excludes restocking)	102.4ha (2013/14)	177.5ha (2017/18)	Data requested not provided	Increasing	
SQ28 (VO8ii)	New scrubland creation	2,282ha (2017)		Data requested not provided	Increasing	
SQ29 (new)	Percentage of LDNP with recorded air pollution			0% (2022 data)	Decreasing	

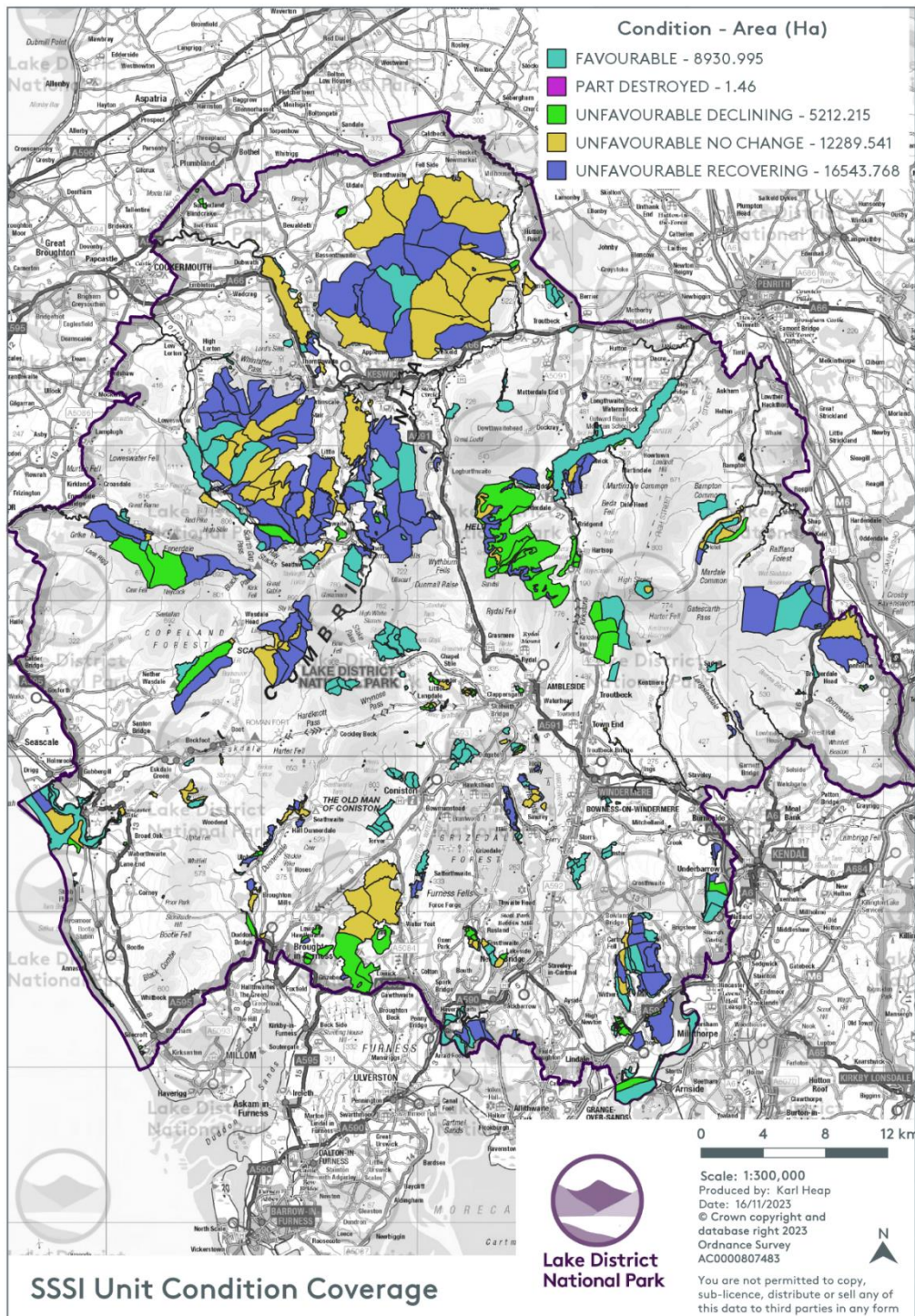
Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Loss of biodiversity.
- Fragmented habitats, resulting in a lack of connectivity between habitats for wildlife to move along and between.
- The results of extreme weather events, including erosion by flooding and storms as well as increasingly long periods of dry weather.
- Impact of development proposals.
- Inappropriate agricultural management.
- Diffuse and point sources of pollution.
- Climate change, for example rising temperatures and increased intensity of rainfall.
- Invasive non-native species, both those present and potential future arrivals.
- Frequency of review and lack of data relating to the condition of habitats and species, within and outside of designated sites.

Commentary

- 6.2 Currently, the Partnership does not have the resource to assess the condition and extent of priority habitats. This is identified as a research question in the Research Framework. This action is also addressed in the LDNPP Plan Forestry, Farming, Nature, and Climate outcome as well as the LDNPP Nature Recovery Plan. Although agreed upon, resources have not yet been found to develop a framework and collect the data. However, at the time of writing the Cumbria Local Nature Partnership, with support from partners, are leading work to scope and establish an on-going system of monitoring.
- 6.3 There is 43,196 hectares of SSSI in the Lake District of which 20.7% is in a 'favourable' condition and 38.3% in 'unfavourable but recovering' condition. The condition of SSSIs is assessed on a rolling basis and there is therefore a significant time lag between actual changes in site condition and the date when these will be recorded. A large proportion of the area of SSSIs in the Lake District consists of the upland habitats (about 70% by area). Therefore, the management of the upland sites is the biggest single influence on SSSI condition when reported on by area. The grazing regimes on these sites (number of livestock, time of year they are grazed and geographic distribution of livestock across the site) are by far the biggest influence on their condition. The most significant difference in the SSSI condition figures is the reduction in the area recorded as 'unfavourable recovering' between 2017 and 2023. This condition category includes sites where evidence has been seen of an improvement in condition after a change in management. However, on a single assessment visit, it is impossible to know whether a site will continue to improve over time such that the habitat will actually reach favourable condition. The reduction in the area recorded as 'unfavourable recovering' largely reflects the fact that many upland sites will have improved in condition following a previous reduction in grazing, but then after a time, stopped recovering further (i.e. will have reached a new equilibrium). Sites cannot continue to be recorded as 'recovering' if no further evidence of recovery is observed. The grazing regimes on many of these sites will have been adjusted (or will be adjusted) before the renewal of their Higher-Level Stewardship agreements, but any subsequent changes to habitat condition will not yet have been picked up in the SSSI condition data. There are also many other factors that affect the condition of SSSIs, but these are less significant by area.

Figure 2: Condition and distribution of SSSI in the Lake District (2023)



6.4 Peatland continues to be restored, between 2019 and 2021 1,031ha was restored at Armbboth phase 1, Bampton Common, Shap Fells and Little Mosedale, and in 2022 a further 154.5ha of peatland has been restored, contributing to a cumulative area of peatland restored 6,153ha (Annual Report Cumbria Wildlife Trust 2023). However, there is a need to restore more to achieve the 7,000

hectare target identified in the Partnership Plan by 2025. However, a number of sites have already been surveyed and have restoration plans prepared.

- 6.5 National Nature Reserves (NNR) are designated by Natural England and are rare, precious areas which protect some of the country's most important places for wildlife and geology. There are 221 National Nature Reserves in England covering 105,000 hectares, 10 of which are in the Lake District covering 4,407ha, approx. 2% of the National Park area. In November 2022, Wild Ennerdale became the latest National Nature Reserve to be declared in the Lake District. The Lake District is also home to two Local Nature Reserves. As well as nature reserves there is 1,849ha of Special Protection Areas (SPA), 37,320ha of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and 772ha of RAMSAR sites. There is some overlap in these designations and with SSSIs, but it highlights that a considerable area of habitat in the Lake District is protected.

National Nature Reserves in the Lake District:

- Bassenthwaite Lake which is an open water habitat.
- Blelham Bog which is a peatland habitat.
- Duddon Mosses which is peatland and fen habitat.
- Rusland Moss which is peatland habitat.
- Whitbarrow which is a woodland, lowland grassland, limestone pavement habitat.
- Roundsea Wood and Mosses which is a woodland and peatland habitat of
- North Fen which is a peatland habitat.
- Sandybeck Meadow which is grassland.
- Tarn Moss which is a peatland habitat.
- Wild Ennerdale which contains rivers, lake, wetlands, woodland and scrub, upland heaths, grassland, mountain heath and tall herb habitat.

Local Nature Reserves in the Lake District:

- Drigg Dunes and Gullery, Ravenglass which contains Dune grassland, saltmarsh, home to over 300 plant species, a variety of insects and butterflies, waders and natterjack toads and covers 377.4ha.
- Whitbarrow Scar which is a limestone pavement habitat of 33.1ha.

- 6.6 The LDNP Partnership's Nature Recovery Plan has identified 251 rare and/or threatened species, and initiated a process to identify their requirements to determine which species should be able to be restored through habitat restoration in the National Park for:

- Species that could be restored through restoration and broad scale management of priority habitats.
- Species that require highly targeted or localised species-specific management in priority habitats.
- Species that rely on important habitats for wildlife which aren't classed as priority habitats.

The Plan has prioritised these species to highlight the opportunities for restoration, reinforcement, or reintroduction: Alpine Catchfly; Arctic Charr; Black Grouse; Corncrake; Curlew; Freshwater Pearl Mussel; Golden Eagle; Hazel Dormouse; High Brown Fritillary; Juniper; Netted Carpet Moth; Osprey; Otter; Pine Marten; Red Squirrel; Salmon; Vendace; Water Vole; White Clawed Crayfish; White Faced Darter; and White-Tailed Eagle.

6.7 It is important to recognise that distribution changes, improving abundance and eventually leading to removing these species from this list will take time, resource and a great deal of effort of Partners. Some activity is already taking place for example:

- Curlew Recovery South Lakes: Farming in Protected Landscapes funding bought nest monitoring equipment, electric fences, and a study into the conservation of local curlews with the aim of improving curlew breeding success, improving curlew conservation awareness and understand better the number of curlews and breeding successes and failures.
- Red Squirrels: There is evidence to suggest the red squirrel population in the north of England is being maintained, largely due to the commitment and dedication of conservation groups such as Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the 14 red squirrel groups in Cumbria, made up entirely of volunteers.

6.8 An Air Quality Management Area(s) (AQMA) is a spatial designation for an area which has failed to meet national air quality guidelines. Their size can range from a single street to a whole local authority area. Data provided by the two Unitary Councils identify no AQMA within the Lake District National Park Boundary.

A sample of Government Environmental Targets - Biodiversity

To halt the decline in species abundance by 2030

To increase species abundance by at least 10 % by 2042, compared to 2030 levels.

To improve the England-level GB Red list Index for species extinction risk by 2042, compared to 2022 levels.

Restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042, alongside our international commitment to protect 30% of our land and ocean by 2030.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- Residents and visitors who value habitats and wildlife for their intrinsic qualities, health and wellbeing benefits and inspiration they provide.
- Nature conservation groups and communities who care for the habitats and wildlife and take action to conserve and enhance them.
- Natural history groups and naturalists with specialist interests that collect data, record and survey the natural environment.
- School, college and university groups and other organised groups who visit the Lake District for nature field trips and research.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- Drafting a Nature Recovery Plan for the Lake District which sets out the Partnership's aim to restore nature in the National Park, by improving its functioning and resilience to future climate change and providing a wonderful green destination, whilst at the same time supporting the local economy. It describes how the Partnership will contribute to restoring nature on 30% of land by 2030. Approximately 1185.5ha of peatland have been restored since 2018, and further sites have been surveyed and restoration plans drawn up to enable us to reach our target of 7,000ha restored by 2025.
- Supporting DEFRA-funded Landscape Recovery pilots, such as that in the Upper Duddon, to find a working balance between farm viability and increased biodiversity and nature recovery.
- Supporting farm clusters including the West Lakeland CIC and Ullswater Catchment Management CIC to enable farmer-led conservation-focused farming.
- Delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme to secure improvements for nature, climate, people, and place. This four-year programme will deliver approximately £4m investment in the Lake District and has in 2021/22 and 2022/23 awarded grants of £1,593,978 supporting 100 projects.
- Friends of the Lake District alongside the Westmorland and Furness Council, Cumberland Council and LDNPA have prepared a Good Lighting Technical Advice Note.
- The Partnership made a significant contribution to the publication in May 2021 of the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot, this has since underpinned the development of the new Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- The LDNPA are preparing for the implementation of mandatory biodiversity net gain, with the establishment of habitat banks and also collaborating with other Cumbrian local planning authority partners to coordinate how the current LNRS pilot outcomes and future statutory LNRS outcomes will be delivered for the benefit of people and nature.

Case study

6.9 Case Study: Good Lighting Technical Advice Note

Artificial lighting can affect bat roosts, access points and foraging routes and there are nine species of bats found in Cumbria. All bat species are designated and protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which includes their breeding and roosting sites. Artificial lighting can affect bat roosts, access points and foraging routes. Friends of the Lake District along with Cumberland Council, Westmorland and Furness Council and the LDNPA have produced a Lighting Technical Advice Note to help new development adopt appropriate lighting design to limit the effects of new development on nocturnal animals, including bats.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Moderate

Reason

- 6.10 Almost 20% of the National Park area is designated for its biodiversity value so it is unsurprising that the Lake District is home to internationally important species, and a variety of habitats. The nationwide decline in biodiversity is well known and understood, and the Lake District has not been immune to this worrying trend. In the last 20 years much work has been done to try to maintain and restore existing habitats and species in the National Park, and lots of activity is being delivered to support nature recovery and improve the wealth of habitats and wildlife in the Lake District by the Partnership and other organisations. However, there is still much to achieve and a lack of up to date and available data continues to seriously hamper understanding and progress to improve habitats and the abundance of wildlife. Where data is available, for example condition of SSSIs, there has been a decrease in the favourable condition of SSSIs since the last State of Park Report. Peatland continues to be restored but more needs to be restored each year to achieve the Partnership Plan's ambitious targets.

7 Special Quality: Mosaic of lakes, tarns, rivers, and coast

Features of this Special Quality

- 7.1 The components for this Special Quality include water quality, range of habitats and species and water as a natural resource. The National Park has a rich variety of becks, rivers, lakes, tarns, and coast. Although each river and lake have their own distinct identity, together with their catchment of mountains, woodland and farmland, they collectively contribute to the high-quality scenery and natural resource which is so distinctively ‘The Lake District’ and unique in England.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ30 (VO3)	Condition of existing water-based Natura 2000 sites	Favourable = 1,285ha; Unfavourable Recovering = 465ha; Unfavourable No Change = 1,240ha; Declining = 310ha (2018)	Favourable = 1,285ha; Unfavourable Recovering = 465ha; Unfavourable No Change = 1,240ha; Declining = 310ha (2018)	Favourable = 42%; Unfavourable Recovering = 12.5%; Unfavourable no change = 38.5%; Unfavourable declining = 7% (2020)	Improving	See commentary
SQ31 (SQ2 1)	Condition of waterbodies (lakes, tarns, rivers)	39% ‘good’ or better (2013)	37% ‘good’ or better (2016)	43% ‘good’ or ‘high’ (MEOPL June 2020)	Improving	Green
SQ32 (VO4)	Status of water body hydrological regime	84% ‘good’ or ‘better’ (2015)	96% ‘good’ or better (2016)	97% ‘supports good’ or ‘high’ (2022)	Increasing	Green

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Water pollution from point and diffuse sources.
- Climate change resulting in rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns, and sea level rise.
- Extreme weather events, flooding and erosion.
- Tourism pressures resulting from the use of water bodies, disturbance to habitats and wildlife, and soil erosion.
- Invasive non-native species.

Commentary

- 7.2 In the Lake District there is 26 miles of coastline including the Kent Estuary, Greenodd Sands, Duddon Estuary, and the Irish sea coast in West Cumbria. There is also a total length of 710 miles (1,143.00 km) (National Park Performance Indicator SP158 (March 2023)) of water courses which includes

rivers, canals, and surface water transfers. Of this, 43% has 'high' or 'good' ecological status (SP159), and 48% with 'moderate' ecological status (SP160) demonstrating an improvement of 5% in 'good' or 'high' status between 2013 and 2020.

7.3 Using information provided by the Environment Agency, 97% are captured within the 'supports good' or 'high' classification, which is a small rise on the previous report in 2018. According to official statistics published by DEFRA in 2022, all of the designated bathing waters in the Lake District were classified as excellent. This is the highest, cleanest class. The designated bathing waters are located at:

- Windermere, Millerground
- Windermere Rayrigg Meadow
- Windermere Fellfoot
- Windermere Lakeside YMCA
- Silecroft

7.4 In freshwater habitats and estuaries, poor water quality due to nutrient enrichment from elevated nitrogen and phosphorus levels is one of the primary reasons for habitats sites being in unfavourable condition. Excessive levels of nutrients can cause the rapid growth of certain plants through the process of eutrophication. The effects of this look different depending on the habitat, however in each case, there is a loss of biodiversity, leading to sites being in 'unfavourable condition'. Evidence also suggests that eutrophication can lead to an increase greenhouse gasses which contribute to climate change¹. To achieve the necessary improvements in water quality, it is becoming increasingly evident that in many cases substantial reductions in nutrients are needed. In addition, for habitats sites that are unfavourable due to nutrients, and where there is considerable development pressure, mitigation solutions are likely to be needed to enable new development to proceed without causing further harm (known as Nutrient Neutrality). The water dependent habitat sites that are in unfavourable condition due to elevated nutrient levels (phosphorus) in the Lake District are:

- Esthwaite Water Ramsar
- River Derwent & Bassenthwaite Lake SAC (only applies to catchments of Bassenthwaite Lake (River Derwent and Tributaries SSSI unit1) and River Marron (unit 124 of River Derwent and Tributaries SSSI).
- River Eden SAC
- River Kent SAC (only applies to catchments of units 104 and 111 of River Kent SSSI)

7.5 Government has established nutrient targets in the Environment Act 2021 to address the two principal sources of nutrient pollution by 2037:

- Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution from agriculture to the water environment by at least 40%.
- Reduce phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater by 80%.

¹ [European Sustainable Phosphorus Platform - Eutrophication significantly increases greenhouse emissions](#)

The Lake District National Park Authority is aiding the achievement of these targets through the Nutrient Neutrality Local Mitigation Project. This is a catchment based, partnership project which the LDNPA is leading. The project is funded by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and its Board consists of representatives from Cumberland Council, Environment Agency, LDNPA, Natural England, Westmorland and Furness Council and United Utilities. The role of the partnership is to help developers to deliver nutrient neutrality by identifying mitigation sites and solutions within the affected catchment areas.

- 7.6 There are eleven Natura 2000 sites within the Lake District. The data for the condition of these sites was not readily available, so we have extracted the data from the Sites of Special Scientific Interest Units (Natural England Open Data) that relates directly to a Natura 2000 sites. There are 101 interest units which have been used and the data highlights that 42% of the sites are in a 'favourable condition' and 12.5% in 'unfavourable recovering' condition. It is difficult to do a direct comparison with the previous figures due to the change in data source, however, given only 17% of the interest units have been re-surveyed since the last State of the Park Report in 2018 it can be assumed the situation remains largely similar.

What is a Natura 2000 site?

Natura 2000 is a European network of protected nature areas where certain species of animal and their natural habitats are protected in order to preserve biodiversity. They include Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar sites.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 7.6 A variety of people enjoy this special quality including:
- Residents who value their local habitats and wildlife, enjoy access to water for on-water activities, and taking exercise next to water.
 - Visitors who experience habitats and wildlife, enjoy access to water for on-water activities and taking exercise next to water, and people who are inspired by water and the scenery.
 - Conservation volunteers, individual visitors and residents who are birdwatchers, botanists, etc.
 - School groups and organised groups who visit the Lake District for nature study, outdoor education, and activity.
- 7.7 With more than 16 lakes, numerous tarns plus 26-mile stretch of coastline, there are plenty of opportunities to go rowing, paddling, swimming, sailing, and boating. The most recent Cumbria Visitor Survey (2022) highlights notable increases in people outdoor swimming, paddleboarding and kayaking.

- 7.8 Established in 2008, the Great North Swim Windermere is a weekend long celebration of open water swimming, where those taking part can choose from six different open water swimming distances to suit all ages, abilities and level of experience. It took place in 2023 on 9-11 June and attracted over 22,000 participants.
- 7.9 Epic Events run an open water swimming calendar including Epic Lakes Swim at Ullswater, Derwent, Coniston and Windermere and Chillswim at Coniston 5.25 miles end to end, Ullswater 7.5 miles end to end, Windermere 11 miles end to end.
- 7.10 The navigable lakes include Coniston Water, Derwent Water, Ullswater and Windermere. Windermere Lake Cruises has a large fleet of launches and 'steamers' which operate the full length of Windermere. On Coniston there are the Steam Yacht Gondola and Coniston launch, Ullswater Steamers on Ullswater and the Keswick Launch on Derwent water.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- Drafting a Nature Recovery Plan for the Lake District which sets out the Partnership's aim to restore nature in the National Park, by improving its functioning and resilience to future climate change and providing a wonderful green destination, whilst at the same time supporting the local economy. It describes how the Partnership will contribute to restoring nature on 30% of land by 2030.
- The Partnership is making significant contributions to developing the first statutory Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy, following up the achievements from the pilot strategy published in May 2021
- In recognition of the significance of the water quality issues in the Windermere and Leven catchment, the Partnership in July 2023 added a new action to the Partnership Plan to deliver actions to improve the water environment of Lake Windermere through the Love Windermere Partnership. The LDNPP is now working with that partnership to take this action forward.
- Supported by the Partnership, the LDNPA is partnering with Revere to develop an innovative Water Quality Finance model, using nature-based solutions, to develop water quality credits for intercepting phosphate from diffuse and point sources of pollution to prevent it entering Lake Windermere.
- Leading the Nutrient Neutrality Local Mitigation Project which has delivered a Mitigation Solutions Report and Call for mitigation Sites and will produce guidance for developers and a portfolio of mitigation solutions following site pre-feasibility assessments.
- The Love Windermere Partnership has been set up to address the long-term decline in water quality in Lake Windermere. Through a number of Partners, the programme is primarily concerned with addressing the nutrient load entering the lake.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Moderate

Reason

- 7.12 Water is synonymous with the Lake District, it rains a lot and there are many lakes, tarns and meres, and water courses which are being enjoyed by an increasing number of people. The condition of some water bodies in particular has received attention from media campaigns seeking to improve water quality, and in 2022 Nutrient Neutrality guidance was introduced by Natural England on four catchments affecting the Lake District as a result of high nutrient levels. However, the indicators show there has been a gradual improvement in water quality over the last 10 years, with focussed activity from the Partnership contributing to this, but a lot more work and investment is needed to help ensure the water environment continues to provide for the range of habitats and species they support and can be relied upon as a natural resource for all to enjoy.

8. Special Quality: Extensive semi-natural woodlands

Features of this Special Quality

- 8.1 The components for this Special Quality include internationally important habitats, concentrations of Ancient Trees and regeneration. The semi-natural woodlands add texture, colour, and variety to the landscape. They provide a home for native animals and plants and define the character of many valleys in the Lake District. These woodlands have been used for centuries as a source of raw materials for local industries.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ33 (VO6)	The area of woodland in the LDNP	28,281ha (2014)	29,792ha (2018)	30,772ha (National Forest Inventory report 2020)	Increasing	Green
SQ34 (new)	Percentage of total LDNP area with tree canopy and woodland coverage	11.97% (2014)	12.61% (2018)	13% (2020)	Increasing to 17% by 2050	Green
SQ35 (SQ22)	Extent of Ancient Semi-natural Woodland	6,656ha ASNW (2013)	6,656ha (2018)	6,657ha (March 2023)	No loss	Green
SQ36 (SQ22 a)	Extent of Plantations on Ancient Woodland sites	3,333ha PAWS (2013)	3,333ha (2018)	3,345ha (March 2023)	Increased PAWS restoration	Green
SQ37 (SQ23)	Woodland in Forestry Commission Woodland management and Countryside Stewardship Schemes	8% (2014) Methodology changed	75% - managed (2017/18)	74% managed (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ38 (new)	Area of woodland felled by type			Data requested not provided		

What is Ancient-Semi natural woodland?

Ancient semi-natural woodland is mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural vegetation (not planted). It includes all woodland sites with evidence of continuous cover since 1600 AD.

What are Plantations on ancient woodland sites?

Planted Ancient Woodland Sites are woodland sites which contain evidence of former ancient woodland, or for which there is recorded evidence of former ancient woodland, and which have subsequently been planted with coniferous or broadleaved trees.

Government Environmental targets – woodland cover

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5% to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050.

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

8.2 This Special Quality is vulnerable to:

- climate change such as rising temperatures, changing weather patterns and extreme weather events.
- Invasive non-native species.
- Diseases, such as ash dieback.
- Levels of understanding and appreciation of semi-natural woodlands, particularly ancient semi-natural woodland and trees with protection orders.

Commentary

8.3 The area of woodland within the Lake District has increased and now covers 13 percent of the total area. The extent of both ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites have both increased slightly. The Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland dataset has recently been updated by Natural England, resulting in two new areas at Great Ore Gate (southwest of High Cunsey).

8.4 There are currently 376 confirmed Tree Preservation Orders in force, of which 255 cover woodland areas equating to 302.5ha. Since 2020, the Authority has made and served 56 Tree Preservation Orders. These are served when there is a threat to trees. In 2020 16 orders were served, in 2021 – 14, and in 2022 there were 19 orders served.

8.5 According to the Forestry Commission England Managed Woodland Headline Performance Indicator (2022) a total of 22,184 ha of woodland in the Lake District is managed and 7,877ha is unmanaged, meaning 74% of woodland is in active management.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

8.6 Residents and visitors who either access woodlands themselves for recreation or work, or to appreciate woodlands in the landscape.

What is the Partnership doing?

- Publishing Woodland Creation and Tree Establishment Guidelines for the Lake District to promote woodland creation and support good decision making and ensure the right tree is planted in the right place.
- Through support for the DEFRA-funded Landscape Recovery pilots, supporting sensitive additional planting and regeneration in targeted areas such as the Upper Duddon valley.
- Woodland Futures Cumbria – Cumbria Woodlands has partnered with the Lake District Foundation to encourage woodland management and woodland creation across the county of Cumbria, helped by £499,800 from the Trees call to Action Fund. Woodland Futures will work across Cumbria, directly benefitting existing woodlands, encouraging future woodlands and supporting landowners and professional in the sector.
- The Thirlmere Woodland Restoration project – Funded by the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, Cumbria Woodlands partnered with the Lake District Foundation and United Utilities from January 2022 until March 2023 to deliver important nature restoration activities in the Thirlmere valley.
- Wild Ennerdale (Forestry England, National Trust, United Utilities and Natural England) continue to expand native woodland on site and remove Sitka Spruce to a point where it doesn't dominate the forest.
- The Farming in Protected Landscape programme has awarded grants that will result in 12,204 trees being planted.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Good

Reason

- 8.7 The area of woodland cover in the Lake District has continued to increase since the last State of the Park Report and there has been no loss of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland. This is as a result of a significant amount of activity that continues to be delivered by the Partnership, but there are concerns that the rate of tree planting will not meet the ambitions outlined in the Partnership's Plan of at least 17% cover by 2050. Woodlands do remain vulnerable to the effects of climate change, invasive species, and disease, yet there are methods of protection and interventions taking place that are aimed at securing a positive future for these important habitats.

9 Special Quality: Distinctive buildings and settlement character

Features of this Special Quality

9.1 The components for this Special Quality include traditional vernacular, simply functional character, local building materials, villa architecture and historic settlement types. The local architecture varies from the traditional vernacular buildings with related characteristics to more formal, “polite” architectural styles associated with the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian periods, including those from the Classical, gothic and Arts and Crafts movements. Local materials include a wide range of building stones such as slate stone, volcanic boulders and cobbles, limestone and sandstone depending on the varied local geology.

Indicators

Indicator	Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend	
SQ39 (SQ26)	Number of listed buildings	1771 (2015)	1791 (2018)	1797 (SPI55 December 2022) 32 Grade I; 121 Grade II*; 1,644 Grade II	No decrease	Green
SQ40 (SQ5)	Number of listed buildings at risk	87 (2015)	77 (2018) (7 Grade I & II*, 70 Grade II)	79 (2022) (9 Grade I & II*, 70 Grade II)	Decreasing	Amber
SQ41 (new)	Number of traditional barns repaired under capital grant programmes	0 (2018)	0 (2018)	13 (2023)	Increasing	Green
SQ42 (SQ25 a)	Number of Conservation Areas	23 (2015)	23 (2018)	23 (SPI53 December 2022)	No decrease	Green
SQ43 (SQ24)	Percentage of Conservation Areas with character appraisals and management plan	96% (2014)	91% (21 of 23) (2018)	100% (KP1287 2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ44 (new)	Percentage of character appraisals / management plans older than 10 years.	17% (4 out of 23) (2013)		83% (19 out of 23) (2023)	Decreasing	Red

SQ45 (new)	Percentage of Conservation Areas in 'good' condition			74% (KPI288 December 2022)	Increasing	
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What do we mean by 'good' condition?

Based on an assessment criterion which Historic England uses to assess overall Conservation Area condition – there are 4 grades optimal, poor, fair, and very bad.

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Climate change and flooding.
- Understanding of the energy performance of traditional buildings, which may be compromised through works initiated by Energy Performance Certificates and the need/desire to conform with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in order to rent out properties.
- Change of use of working farms being sold to become non-agricultural uses such as holiday lets, second homes and residential homes.
- Development pressure which may affect settlement character and individual buildings; specifically through the range of Permitted Development rights which can significantly affect the historic character of individual buildings and settlements.

Commentary

9.2 Around the National Park, the number of listed buildings has risen from 1,791(2018) to 1,797(2023). This dovetails with the increase in the number of Building Preservation Notices issued, there was one in 21/22; four in 22/23, one so far in 23/24. There has been a slight increase in the number of listed buildings at risk since 2018 which collectively is approximately 4% of the actual number of listed buildings. LDNPA are actively engaging with owners on some Listed Grade II buildings at risk to encourage and support the necessary works required to repair and/or improve their condition.

What is a Building Preservation Notice?

Building Preservation Notices (BPN) can be used to prevent un-listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest from being demolished or altered in a way that might affect their special character. The BPN is usually issued on the basis that the building will subsequently obtain listed status and that it will allow time for the listing process to be followed.

9.3 Whilst the World Heritage Site nomination document identified some good examples of villas in the English Lake District, however, they were only a small

sample as we do not have comprehensive data. We have identified the number of villas and villas at risk as important indicators for the future and a villas survey and assessment will take place in 2023-24.

- 9.4 There are still 23 Conservation Areas, but Keswick Conservation Area has been extended since the last State of Park Report. The revised Keswick Conservation Area and Management Plan was adopted in 2022, meaning 100% of Conservation Areas have character appraisals and management plans. However, many (83%) are now over ten years old, and it is best practice to do a review and refresh them every 5-10 years.
- 9.5 The internationally celebrated vernacular farmsteads of the Lake District are under pressure as farms cease to be working farms and sites are sold on for residential use/holiday letting. Maintaining the agricultural character of farmsteads is extremely difficult once the farming activities cease and the desire of new owners is to tidy up and gentrify what was once a messy, active farmstead. All of which challenges the authenticity, integrity, and character of the Lake District.
- 9.6 The EPC system is designed for assessing modern, cavity construction buildings and often underrates solid walled buildings and recommends highly intrusive interventions which are not compatible with either the construction or heritage values of buildings. The quick fixes often recommended in EPCs (double glazing, wall insulation) are rarely compatible with traditional buildings and often have unintended consequences of causing interstitial condensation and damp.
- 9.7 The Design Code Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by the Authority in September 2023. Its status as an SPD means the code is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The Code sets out a number of specifications for new developments, including new homes, extensions, conversions and shopfronts, in a simple, concise and illustrated way that is specific to an area. The Code provides clarity about what is meant by high quality locally distinctive design, in the context of Local Plan Policy 06 Design and Development to deliver more beautiful and sustainable places that function well in terms of accessibility, energy efficiency, biodiversity and carbon neutrality. The Code supports this special quality by inspiring design excellence, through the creation of beautiful buildings and places which celebrate and reinforce the unique character, identity, heritage, and culture of the Lake District.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- Residents and businesses, people living and working in towns and villages, and distinctive buildings.
- Visitors enjoy this special quality whether it's by visiting or staying in buildings, or visiting town centres and villages.
- Artists and photographers.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- The Partnership's Climate Action Key Outcome Group are gathering evidence to inform how best to engage with central government on the issue of the EPC system on traditional buildings.
- The Partnership is also exploring the negative impact of VAT on the repairs of traditional buildings in order to raise the issue with government.

- The LDNPA is drafting guidance on the better maintenance and repair of traditional buildings, being responsive to their materials.
- The LDNPA is the first authority nationally to publish a Design Code (October 2023). The code encourages new developments to take inspiration from the surrounding landscape and contribute to the distinctive character of the Lake District.
- The LDNPA has delivered the Historic buildings restoration grant. This was a capital grant launched by Defra in 2018, to help farmers and land managers restore historic buildings, projects started in 2019. In 2019/2020, one Defra funded scheme was completed; in 2020/2021, two schemes were completed; in 2021/22, five schemes were completed; and in 2022/23, two Defra schemes were completed.
- The LDNPA are delivering the Farming in Protected Landscape Programme (FiPL) which is helping to support the repair of traditional farm buildings. It was launched in 2021 and runs until March 2025. In 2021/22, one scheme was completed; in 2022/23, two schemes were completed. Funding has also been granted through FiPL to undertake feasibility studies on a further 25 buildings, and £100,000 has been allocated to fund urgent repair works to the highest priority sites in 2023/24. FiPL funding is also being used to conserve archaeological features such as the shard fencing which is a particular characteristic of the Lake District.

9.8 **Case Study: Bridge End Barn, Longsleddale**

Bridge End Barn in Longsleddale was amongst the first in the country to benefit from the Defra pilot grant scheme launched in 2018; a scheme which aimed to sensitively repair traditional farm buildings for continued agricultural use and preserve the appearance of the surrounding cultural landscape.

This Grade II listed traditional bank barn dates back to 1741 and had been on the Lake District National Park's 'Buildings at Risk' register since 2010. Following a three-stage application process, a grant was offered to cover 80% of the costs of sensitively repairing and bringing the building back into use. The barn has undergone specialist conservation work including repairs to the roof, walls, and internal joinery, with new rainwater goods added to help protect the building from the worst of the weather.

Between 2019 and 2022, 10 barns across the National Park were repaired as part of a DEFRA funded pilot project jointly managed by Historic England and Natural England, with the Lake District National Park leading delivery on the ground. Four of these sites are listed buildings and all were at risk of loss or deterioration repair work being undertaken.

Capital grant schemes such as the DEFRA Traditional Buildings Pilot are vital for conserving key components of our Special Qualities and nationally important designated heritage assets.



Before and after images of Bridge End Barn, Longsleddale. After images © Historic England – James O. Davies

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Moderate

Reason:

- 9.9 Distinctive buildings and settlement character are a key feature of the towns, villages, hamlets, and landscape of the Lake District. The indicators show that trends for most indicators are moving in a positive direction with interventions such as Building Preservation Notices and that 100% of Conservation Areas have Management Plans. This helps to support and promote the importance of the Lake District's traditional vernacular and sense of place. It is hoped that the Lake District Design Code Supplementary Planning Document will help to prevent inappropriate changes to the Lake District's distinctive buildings and reinforce the settlement character through new developments. However, there remain concerns that important features of buildings are being eroded through changes to the use of buildings and to address issues such as energy performance. The grant schemes to repair traditional buildings has helped to remove buildings from the Heritage at Risk register. The main concern highlighted by the indicators is that the 83% of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are more than 10 years old.

10 Special Quality: A source of artistic inspiration

Features of this Special Quality

- 10.1 The components for this Special Quality include the sustainable relationship between humans and nature and festivals. The unique beauty of the Lake District's distinctive pastoral landscape has inspired generations of artists and writers. The English Lake District provided inspiration for the most significant of British Romantic poets and artists; there is clear evidence from the thousands of visitors who flock to the Lake District each year that its harmonious beauty continues to inspire the human spirit.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ46 (SQ32)	% Visitors partaking in activities which involve experiencing the landscape and environment	31% (2012)	31% (2017)	31% (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ47 (SQ33)	% Visitors partaking in cultural activities	27% (2012)	27% (2017)	28% (2022)	Increasing	Green

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Pressure for development changing the landscape and individual buildings.
- Levels of tourism.
- Climate change resulting in changes to the landscape.

Commentary

- 10.2 The Lake District has been a source of artistic inspiration for years from paintings and poems through to landscape sculptures and art installations, and it's a photographer's paradise, with inspiration to be found around every corner. The indicators, which come from the Cumbria Visitor Survey, shows that the number of visitors undertaking activities that involve the landscape and environment and cultural activities has remained consistent over the past 10 years, but with a slight increase in visitors partaking in cultural activities. However, the indicator only tells part of the story as several festivals take place annually within the Lake District; and they are many and varied in content but linked to the inspiration that the Lake District gives to many people. The main one is the Kendal Mountain Festival which is a four-day celebration of outdoor culture, films, speakers, literature, and art, and aims to capture the essence of the relationship between humans and nature, and where the cultural landscape provides inspiration. It comes as no surprise that the Lake District was the UK's most Instagrammed National Park with more than 2.5 million mentions in 2020.

- 10.3 There are other events where the linkage to the landscape is less defined, but which offer a variety of activities and outdoor experiences such as:
- Country Fest which takes place annually in June and celebrates rural life, food and drink, countryside activities, live music.
 - The Keswick Mountain Festival is an entertainment and multi-sport event.
 - Dark Skies Festival showcases the great outdoors, celebrating the mountains and outdoor activities.
 - Lakeland Comic Arts Festival highlights the best of comic artists, writers, and creators.
 - Lake District Summer Music Festival which has been running since 1985.
 - Kendal Calling is a music and arts festival held annually at Lowther Deer Park hosting 40,000 people over 4-days.
 - Keswick Convention – an annual event hosted by the Keswick Ministries

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 10.4 There are many exhibition spaces and galleries that host exhibitions showcasing art inspired by the Lake District including the LDNPA's Gaddum Gallery at Brockhole which hosts a regular changing programme of exhibitions by talented local artists. Lakeland Arts run programmes from their spaces including Windermere Jetty, and Rheged hosts a variety of exhibitions such as the 40 Farms exhibition by Amy Bateman between September 2022 and January 2023. Therefore, a great many people including residents, visitors, and artists enjoy this special quality. There are also several local art societies such as:

- The Arts Society Cumbria
- The Lake Artists Society
- Cartmel Art Society
- The Arts Society Westmorland
- Kendal Art Society
- Keswick Art Society
- Crosthwaite Art Club

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- The LDNPA host the Gaddum Gallery at Brockhole which puts on regular exhibitions. It also hosts and organises a number of events and festivals such as supporting organising the Comic Arts Festival.
- Cumbria Tourism has a significant role promoting and supporting a number of festivals and events including the Taste Cumbria events.
- The Partnership is supporting a Black Nature in Residence artist to September 2024. The artist will work with the Partnership, local schools, and communities, with their outputs to be showcased at the Brockhole Centre on Windermere.
- The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme supports a number of projects which conserve, protect or enhance the World Heritage Site. Recent funding has supported the continuation of experiments at the Brantwood Estate on Coniston Water, ensuring the legacy of John Ruskin - a Victorian

writer, artist, and social reformer - continues, and that visitors have the opportunity to learn about his role in Lake District history.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Good

Reason

- 10.5 The Lake District continues to be a source of artistic inspiration and is enjoyed and expressed through a variety of books, photographs, sculptures, paintings and digitally via social media. There are also many festivals and events that take place throughout the year which provide the opportunities for people to explore their relationship with nature, and where the cultural landscape provides artistic inspiration or spiritual or physical refreshment.

11 Special Quality: A model for protecting cultural landscapes

Features of this Special Quality

- 11.1 The components for this Special Quality include the protection of the relationship between people and the natural environment. The Lake District was the birthplace of an innovative conservation movement committed to the defence of its landscape and communities, which led to the creation of the National Trust.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ48 (SQ29)	Extent of National Trust land ownership	44,567ha (2015)	45,255 ha (2018)	45,292 ha (2023)	Increasing	Green
SQ49 (SQ30)	Number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects permitted per annum in the LDNP	0 (2015)	0 (2018)	0 (2023)	No increase	Green
SQ50 (new)	Number of Farming in Protected Landscapes schemes approved	0 (2020)		100 schemes (July 2021 – March 2023)	Increasing	Green
SQ51 (new)	Number of local shows and Shepherds Meets per annum by geographic spread	28 (2018)	28 (2018)	27 (2023)	No significant change	Green

What are Shepherd's meets?

Shepherd's Meets are crucial events in the farming year. They are an opportunity to show off their livestock, improve their methods and learn the latest farming tech. They are also truly social occasions for farmers to come together and socialise.

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- 11.2 This Special Quality is vulnerable to forces of change such as climate change, disease of habitats and species, afforestation and deforestation, and a declining resident population.

Commentary

- 11.3 As the local planning authority for the Lake District National Park, one of the main ways the Authority can protect cultural landscapes is through the Development Plan. The Lake District National Park Local Plan 2020-2025 was adopted in May 2021 and includes a suite of policies which aim to ensure new development is carefully located and designed so they respect the 'statutory purposes' which underpin its status as a National Park.
- 11.4 There are currently 22 organisations involved in the Lake District National Park Partnership, made up of representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, with the collective commitment to work together in the best interest of the National Park, its environment, communities, economy, and visitors. A joint Management Plan [The Partnership's Plan 2020 – 2035] for the Lake District National Park and the English Lake District World Heritage Site has been prepared by the Partnership and adopted by the Lake District National Park Authority. The English Lake District gained World Heritage Site inscription in 2017, which means it is recognised by the international community as an area of outstanding universal value. This inscription helps to ensure that the cultural landscape is preserved for future generations, and the Lake District's application led to the creation of the Cultural Landscape category.
- 11.5 In 2019, the National Trust purchased Brackenthwaite Hows (also known as Lanthwaite Hill) increasing National Trust's Ownership in the Lake District. This 77 acre site is a popular viewpoint and was painted by JMW Turner.
- 11.6 Local agricultural shows and in particular Shepherds Meets are an important part of the farming calendar. There has been a Shepherds Meet at Wasdale Head for over 100 years, others take place at Buttermere, Walna Scar, Stoneside and Borrowdale. There are 27 local shows and Shepherds Meets on the 2023 Show list with a fairly equal geographical spread. All are traditional shows ranging from the small traditional Kentmere Sheep show to the larger show at Keswick and Westmorland County Show. The Authority sponsors a variety of classes at many of these shows recognising the value of these traditional events and the opportunity they present to talk to members of the public and visitors to relay key messages.
- 11.7 The Lake District National Park Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) started in July 2021 offering grant funding to farmers and land managers for projects that deliver positive outcomes for climate, nature, people, and place. In the first two years of the programme up to March 2023 the total project spend was £1,594,258. These projects involved 6 farm clusters, 224 farmers, and 14 other partner organisations. Examples of programme outputs include: 1,636ha of land managed through regenerative farming; 6,393m of new hedgerow planting; 3,727ha of existing habitat improved for biodiversity; 471ha of new habitat created for biodiversity; 10 carbon auditing projects; 7 projects supporting public engagement in land management; and 15 historic structures, buildings and features conserved.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 11.8 This Special Quality is enjoyed by all, whether it's the physical appreciation of nature by engaging in recreational activities or through the visual appreciation in books, exhibitions, or sightseeing. In 2022, 18.14 million visited the Lake District and the latest Census data shows 38,993 people are permanent residents (Census 2021).

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- The Lake District is unique nationally in being the only national park that has adopted a Partnership approach to the park's management. The Partnership's Management Plan was adopted in 2021 and regular monitoring of the Plan's delivery ensures the Partnership can track how it is doing in delivering its Plan aspirations as a living-working globally significant landscape. The Lake District therefore continues to be a model for cultural landscape protection.
- The Living Lakes: Your Local Plan 2020-2035 was adopted in 2021 by the LDNPA, and has won three industry awards for its preparation and community engagement. This Plan sets out the planning policies for the Lake District.
- The LDNPA has sponsored 30 agricultural shows and events this year, including shows, sheep dog trials, Shepherds Meets, livestock sales and young handers events to support their viability.
- Through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, providing funding to support agricultural shows, including provision of a mobile satellite broadband system to allow cashless payments to be made in areas with no, or poor broadband.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Good

Reason

- 11.9 Plans, policies and strategies are in place to further the conservation and enhancement of the extraordinary harmony and beauty of the Lake District, its Special Qualities and international and national significance, including the protection of the relationship being people and the natural environment. National Park designation and World Heritage Site inscription and the collective work of members of the Partnership support this, and the indicators highlight good trends – National Trust land ownership has increased, and the number of local shows and shepherds meets has almost remained the same. The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme is also supporting the conservation of the cultural landscape through its four themes of people, place, nature, and climate.

12 Special Quality: A long tradition of tourism and outdoor activities

Features of this Special Quality

12.1 The components for this Special Quality include fell running, the Rights of Way network, and recreational activities.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	SoP (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal Status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ52 (SQ34)	% of visitors partaking in adventure activities	11% (2012)	11% (2017)	12% (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ53 (SQ35)	% of total length of footpaths and other rights of way that were easy to use by the general public	78.2% (2015)	74.4% (2017/18)	56.0% (KP178 March 2023)	Increasing	Red
SQ54 (new)	% of visitors aged 16 to 34 years	15% (2006)	13% (2017)	19% (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ55 (new)	% of visitors from minority ethnic communities	2% in Cumbria (2012)	2% in Cumbria (2018)	16% in Cumbria 22% in Lake District (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ56 (SQ31)	Number of visitors to the LDNP	15.50 million (2013)	19.17 million (2017)	18.14 million (2022)	No significant change	Green
SQ57 (VO17)	% of visitors who stay one or more nights	16.5% (2013)	17.5% (2017)	21.9% (2022)	Increasing	Green
SQ58 (VO18)	Average length of stay	5.8 nights	5.3 nights (2017)	3.6 nights (2022)	Increasing	Amber
SQ59 (VO19)	Proportion of visitors in off season months (October to March)	36% (2013)	34% (2017)	36% (2022)	Increasing	Green

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Impact of tourism on the landscape, such as erosion of routes.
- Lack of investment and resources to deliver maintenance and improvements to routes.
- Climate change resulting in changing weather patterns and extreme weather events.

- Cost of accommodation and attractions.
- Availability of staff to support tourist industry.

Commentary

- 12.2 In 2022, 18.14 million visited the Lake District and 96% of visitors rate their visit as 'very good' or 'good'. Numbers peaked in 2019 at 19.89 million then dropped significantly in 2020 to 9.77 million due to the Covid pandemic as a result of the restrictions to leave your house, overnight stays were not permitted, and accommodation remained closed during a phased lifting of restrictions. One of the positive impacts of the Covid pandemic was that the Lake District welcomed many new visitors as people could not travel abroad, and this is part of the reason for the increasing number of 16-34 year olds being reported in the Cumbria Visitor Survey. In 2018, 5.6% people were aged 16-24 and 9% aged 25-34 (all Cumbria visitors) but in 2022, 4.0% of visitors were aged 16-24 and 15.4% were aged 25-34 (all Cumbria visitors). In the National Park these figures changed to 3.4% for visitors aged 16-24 but increased to 19% of people aged 25-34. Visitors from minority ethnic communities increased to 22% in the Lake District and 16% across Cumbria representing a 14% increase which demonstrates a visitor profile that better reflects today's national population and that the Lake District is a National Park for everyone. The average length of stay has decreased since 2018 which may be as a result of lifestyle changes or the new audience of visitors coming to the Lake District.
- 12.3 The Cumbria Visitor Survey (2022) data shows that visitors inside the National Park were more likely to have chosen to visit to be outdoors (79%), for walking (48%) and for cycling (13%). Outdoor swimming and cycling have both grown in popularity in recent years. 11% of visitors in 2022 went outdoor swimming compared to 6% in 2018 and 3% in 2012. One in ten cycled, up from 5% in 2018. 10% went paddleboarding or kayaking, a new category in 2022.
- 12.4 There are 3,219km of footpaths and other rights of way in the Lake District. The highways authority delegates their statutory duty to the LDNPA for the public rights of way in the Lake District via an 'agency agreement'. Partly as a result of the Covid pandemic due to furlough of staff, a prioritised focus on visitor management activity, but also as a result of more complex repairs such as replacing bridges and delivery of new routes, the ease of use of the rights of way network has decreased by 28% meaning only 56% are classified as 'easy to use' since the last State of the Park report. The figure for ease of use drops further for total length of footpaths and other rights of way, that follow the exact definitive line. The methodology means that the indicator is based on a minimum 5% random sample of lengths of rights of way and does not reflect the condition of every route. This is clearly a concerning trend and will need to be an area for focus in future years given their popularity of these routes amongst visitors. Strava 'heatmap' data helps us to understand the routes that experience highest use and Defra are undertaking some research that will help us to better understand the number of users on each route. This will enable us to prioritise the routes of highest use to ensure they are a focus of rights of way maintenance in the future. Residents and visitors have benefitted from two new Miles without

Stiles routes and improvements to other routes, including those delivered on the high fells through the 'Fix the Fells' project.

Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 12.5 Visitors who come to the Lake District for the wide-ranging visitor offer, comprising of day visitors and overnight visitors as well as those staying with friends and relatives. Many younger people come as part of outdoor education groups to explore the outdoors and develop new skills. Residents also enjoy the benefits and facilities that come with tourism.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- Promoting and maintaining 50 Miles without Stiles accessible paths including the new route to the spectacular viewpoint of Orrest Head.
- Reopening Keswick to Threlkeld Railway Trail in (December) 2020 which welcomed 265,000 visitors in its first year, contributing £15m to the local economy.
- Restoring 26km of upland path between 2019 and 2022 through the European Rural Development (ERDF) funded Fix the Fells programme.
- The Lake District for Everyone Key Outcome Group is working on a funding bid to explore people's barriers to accessing the Lake District (whether real or perceived).
- The Partnership is working with the Accessibility Cumbria Partnership to improve information for visitors with disabilities to the National Park.
- Creation of the Tactical Visitor Management Group (now Strategic Visitor Management Group) to respond to the visitor management challenges experienced as a result of easing restrictions from the Covid pandemic.
- Cumbria Tourism are preparing a new Destination Management Plan with the support of many LDNP Partners.
- The Partnership has commissioned an Interpretation Strategy for the English Lake District World Heritage Site.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Good

Reason

- 12.6 In 2022, 18.14 million visited the Lake District and 96% of visitors rate their visit as 'very good' or 'good'. Tourism and outdoor activities have been significantly affected since the last State of the Park Report in 2018, primarily as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but a number of positives have also emerged. As restrictions lifted a new audience of visitors discovered the Lake District, and the latest data shows they continue to enjoy the Lake District and this Special Quality. Whilst visitor numbers haven't quite reached the numbers in 2019, the proportion of visitors aged 16-34 has increased by 6%, and visitors from minority

ethnic communities increased to 22% in the Lake District and 16% across Cumbria representing a 14% increase. This demonstrates a visitor profile that better reflects today's national population and that the Lake District is a place for everyone. The average length of stay has decreased but the proportion of visitors who stay more than one night has increased. Visitors are still partaking in cultural and adventure activities at the same levels, and the number of 'Miles without Stiles' routes has increased. The trends for the indicators for this Special Quality are encouraging given the global pandemic, apart from the ease of use of the rights of way network, which has seen a significant decline in ease of use since 2018, and action is needed to address this decline as walking and cycling infrastructure is at the heart of the visitor offer.

13 Special Quality: Opportunities for quiet enjoyment

Features of this Special Quality

13.1 The components for this Special Quality include open access land and the rights of way network.

Indicators

Indicator		Baseline	Sop (2018)	Most recent data	Ideal status relative to baseline	Trend
SQ60 (SQ37)	Per cent of visitors who feel health and wellbeing benefits	Felt physically better 85%; Felt mentally better 80% (2015)	Felt physically better 93%; Felt mentally better 94% (2017)	Felt physically better 72%; Felt mentally better 90% (2022)	Increasing	Amber
SQ61	Quantity of Amenity Local Green Spaces and number lost per annum	136.6ha (2013)	136.6ha (2018)	136.5ha (2023)	No loss	Green
SQ62	Amount of Access land (CRoW)	124,600ha (2017)	124,600ha (2017)	127,230ha (MEOPL 2022)	No loss	Green
SQ63	Number and length of PROW under 'Miles Without Stiles'	48 routes (2018)	48 routes (2018)	50 routes (164km) (2022)	Increasing	Green

What do we mean by Amenity Local Green Space?

Amenity Local Green Space is a designation applied to land which makes a significant positive contribution to the visual amenity or character of a settlement and/or it provides opportunities for informal recreations (such as dog walking) by the local community. Not all Amenity Local Green Space is publicly accessible.

Potential threats and vulnerabilities to this Special Quality

- Deterioration of the quality and 'ease of use' of the rights of way network.
- Flooding and extreme weather events.
- Pressure of development on local green spaces, and inappropriate development proposals.

Commentary

13.2 The number of people reporting in the Cumbria Visitor Survey that they felt physically better from visiting the Lake District has dropped quite significantly since the last time it was reported. The survey results identified a change in demographics of the people surveyed with a much younger and diverse audience

visiting. The number of people reporting that they felt mentally better has remained similar to the last results. The findings still highlight the vast majority of visitors still feel health and wellbeing benefits from visiting the Lake District and therefore fulfilling the purposes for which national parks were created.

- 13.3 The Authority designated Local Green Spaces in 2013, and there are 118 individual sites. This designation provides protection against development of green areas of particular importance to local communities, and where there is likely to be pressure to develop the land in the future – because it is within or well related to a settlement or other development. One planning application resulted in a very small loss of Amenity Green Space was approved by the Authority in 2022.
- 13.4 There are many other opportunities for quiet enjoyment in the Lake District including at National and Local Nature Reserves. Miles without Stiles are also hugely popular accessible walking routes for everyone providing opportunities for quiet enjoyment. They take you along lake shores and riversides, to tarns and through woods, historic remains, and fell summits with amazing views. As well as not having any stiles to climb up and over, they are more accessible routes suitable for people with limited mobility, families with pushchairs, the visually impaired, and anyone who wants an easier walk with no scrambling, climbing or steep hills. Percentage of Miles without Stiles routes which meet their Miles without Stiles designation is 50% against a target of 80%, but upgrades to existing routes and new routes have been added since the last State of the Park Report.
- 13.5 Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes Accessible Green Infrastructure data for 2021 identifies that there is the following amount of accessible green infrastructure broken down into the following types of space:
- Access Land (CRoW) - 1,272ha
 - Cemeteries and Religious Grounds - 40ha
 - Local Nature Reserve - 408ha
 - Play Space Provision - 8ha
 - Playing Fields - 73ha
 - Public Park - Country Park - 1,259ha
 - Public Park – General - 1,684ha

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Who is enjoying this special quality?

- 13.6 Visitors who come to the Lake District for the wide-ranging visitor offer, including the thousands of kilometres of rights of way. For example, there were 123 guided walks in 2023, with a total of 1,486 bookings. Residents also access and use local greenspaces, including playing fields, playgrounds, and nature reserves.

What is the Partnership doing about this?

- 13.7 Despite the less people reporting they felt physically better having visited the Lake District, the LDNPA ran 123 guided walks in 2023, with a total of 1,486

bookings. It has also provided several opportunities over the last five years to encourage and help improve the physical health and wellbeing of visitors through multi-user trails and walks.

- 13.8 LDNPA completed works to improve the 8.5-mile Eskdale Trail, which runs from Dalegarth to Ravenglass. The improvements are part of the Connecting Cumbria's Hidden Coast programme led by Cumberland Council with funding from Sellafeld Ltd and the governments Coastal Communities Fund, with further support from Community Rail Cumbria, Eskdale Railway and Muncaster Castle.
- 13.9 LDNPA has delivered the West Windermere Way off-road route along the western shore of Windermere between Newby Bridge and the Ferry line, linking to the existing Windermere West Shore Way between Ferry House and Wray Castle. In addition, the following new or improved walking routes have been created during the last 3 years:
- Keswick to Threlkeld Multi-user Trail (2020)
 - Eamont Way (Penrith to Pooley Bridge) (2023)
 - Cogra Moss (2021)
 - Broadmoor Ennerdale Multi-user Trail (2021)
 - Dunmallard Wood Pooley Bridge (2021)
 - Crosthwaite Village Path (2022)
 - Stanley Ghyll (2021)
 - Orrest Head (2021)
- 13.10 The Partnership's Landscape Change Monitoring project includes 'Perception and Experience' as one of the themes that it will capture. The pilot project (under development and scheduled to begin in 2024) will explore: sense of remoteness and isolation; sense of openness, sense of tranquility, extent of Dark Skies and intensity of lake use as part of this project monitoring landscape change over time.

Conclusion and condition of Special Quality:

Condition: Good

Reason

- 13.11 The Lake District continues to provide many opportunities for quiet enjoyment and there have been many significant investments in improvements to multi-user trails, and rights of way over the last five years which has enabled more people to enjoy health and wellbeing benefits associated with being in a National Park. The number of people reporting feeling physically better has fallen but the percentage of people who feel mentally better has remained almost the same. There continues to be significant amounts of different accessible green infrastructure available across the Lake District for people to enjoy without any notable losses of greenspace.