

The state of the landscape

Measuring landscape change

A range of natural processes combined with human activity, particularly agriculture and land management, have produced the landscape of the Lake District National Park today. These processes and activities have been varied and the character of the landscape is therefore diverse.

Changes to the Lake District landscape have varied in scale, character and impact over the years. For example, the construction of reservoirs and extensive planting of upland areas in the 19th and 20th centuries, led to campaigns to maintain access rights and protect the landscape. In fact it was, in part, increasing concern over landscape change that encouraged the growth of many conservation bodies and, ultimately, the designation of National Parks in England and Wales.

The landscape will always be vulnerable to many different pressures. In particular, changes in the economic viability of farming and land management practices result in dramatic change in the landscape.

The key indicators we will use to measure change in the landscape in the future are:

SOP1

Changes in landscape character

1. Number of changes inconsistent and consistent with defined landscape character
2. Changes in townscape character
3. Mapping tranquillity, including light and noise pollution
4. Changes in vegetation mosaics

SOP2

Changes due to conservation-based management practices

1. Area of woodland managed within the Woodland Grant Scheme

SOP3

Changes due to recreation

1. Number of fell path erosion scars

SOP1

Changes in landscape character

Mapping of all the different landscape types in the Lake District National Park through a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment is due for completion in 2006. Using this information, we will choose sample views which identify and measure the factors that are directly affecting visual landscape change. This will be done in an objective way using a tested methodology. We will measure individual elements or cumulative change that affects the landscape character in a negative way, while monitoring changes that support or enhance landscape character and develop special qualities. For example, we will measure where walls have been restored and hedges re-laid.

The assessment of landscape character will be supplemented by analysis of three key features – townscape, vegetation and tranquillity.

We will examine the character of the townscape within the main market towns – Windermere, Bowness, Keswick and Ambleside, measuring the number of vacant premises, the type and condition of services, signage and the quality of the public realm.

Using the same sample techniques, we will be able to monitor changes to the vegetation mosaics – the pattern of different vegetation across the landscape – and any factors that affect tranquillity across the whole National Park. This will include noise and light pollution.

Sample views defining landscape character within the National Park



Change which is consistent with the character



Change which is inconsistent with the character

SOP2
Changes due to conservation-based management

To establish how much of the landscape is being managed to conservation standards, we will use woodland as the key indicator. This will be done where there is a specific commitment to conservation management through the Woodland Grant Scheme.

2005

There are 28,931ha of woodland in the National Park

32% managed within the Woodland Grant Scheme

Source: Forestry Commission, 2005

SOP3
Changes due to recreation

People of all social groups and abilities are able to participate in a wide range of sport, recreational and leisure activities across the Lake District. The varied landscape provides great opportunities and choice, but at the same time it is vulnerable to damage and overuse. Some of the damage has a wider visual impact on the landscape and nature conservation. The key indicator chosen to symbolise such damage is the number of fell path erosion scars. These occur as a result of intense use by walkers, fell runners, off-road driving, mountain bikers, climbers etc.

1999 14 major fell path erosion scars

2005 7 major fell path erosion scars

How has it changed?



There are now half as many major fell path erosion scars
