

The state of access and recreation

Measuring changes in access and recreation

The Lake District's varied scenery and historic environment provide for a wide range of sport, recreational and leisure activities. This has grown and changed over time and now there is the highest concentration of opportunities in England for active pursuits, including walking, fell running, orienteering, rock climbing, horse riding, mountain biking, canoeing, fishing and inland boating.

The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 has given people the right to walk over large areas of registered common and open country, building on a long tradition of open access to the fells in the Lake District. Fifty five percent of the National Park is accessible on foot by right.

As the National Park continues to change, we need to monitor how access and recreation is being managed to ensure that a balance exists between the needs of everyone. We also need to understand how accessible the National Park is for people. The rugged terrain already makes it difficult for those with limited mobility to access parts of the National Park. Barriers such as stiles, gates and steps may offer additional restrictions.

We will measure the following indicators:

SOP15

Changes in accessibility

1. Total length of public rights of way that meet 'ease of use' survey standards
2. The length of paths that are available for different categories of people with limited mobility

SOP16

Changes in recreational activities

1. Profile and number of different activities

SOP15

Changes in accessibility

Walking is one of the principal leisure activities within the Lake District National Park. In 2002, one in three of the estimated 8.2 million visitors went for a walk for over four hours. Any changes in the accessibility of the 3,010km public footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic in the National Park will therefore be an important indicator to measure.

We will use the standard measure of 'ease of use' to assess the accessibility of our rights of way network in the National Park. 'Ease of use' is a measure of the way the right of way is signposted, the condition of its surface, stiles and gates, and any obstructions, such as vegetation.

We must understand how accessible the National Park is to those with any limited mobility, within the constraints of the Lake District's terrain, recognising the importance of landscape and heritage when considering improvements to paths.

Length of routes accessible to those with limited mobility

| 1998 | 2003 |
|--------|--------|
| 88.8km | 95.3km |



Source: Lake District National Park Authority, 2003

There has been an increase in routes accessible to those with limited mobility over 5 years.

In the future, we will measure accessibility according to new guidelines from the Countryside Agency. There will be two indicators which will measure paths accessible for people with limited mobility, and paths accessible for many or some people with limited mobility. This will provide a clearer indication of accessibility across all types of mobility and will help the planning of new paths in the future.

65.7%

*of the rights of way pass
'ease of use' standards*

SOP16

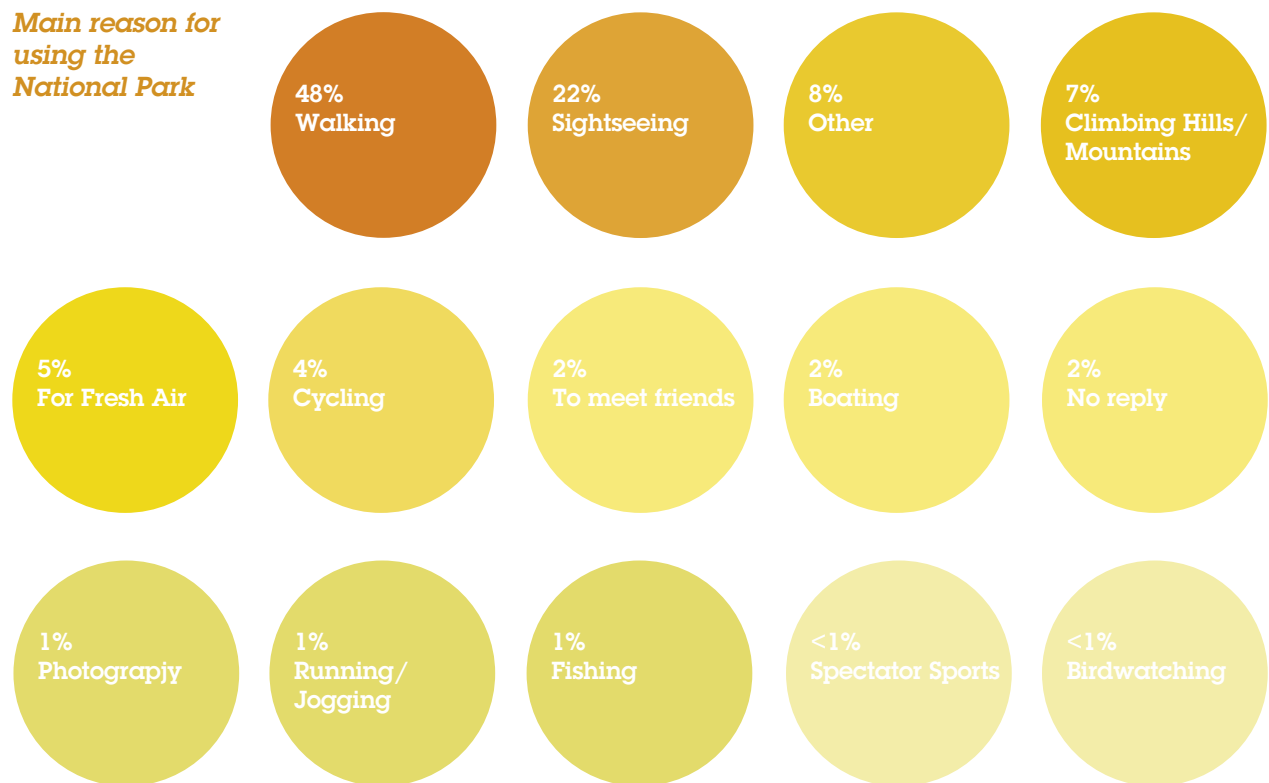
Changes in recreational activities

It is important to understand the full range of activities taking place in the National Park, not just walking. We will use a range of data sources to provide information about what people want to do in the National Park, what is available for them to do, what people are actually doing, and where and how different activities are being managed.

The Lake District National Park Needs and Preferences Survey will provide clear information about people's needs and preferences for countryside recreation and access within the National Park. The most recent study was undertaken during the summer of 2001. Almost half of those surveyed (48%) visited the National Park to go walking. Sightseeing was the next most important reason, quoted by almost a quarter (22%) of visitors.

Source : Lake District National Park Authority Needs and Preferences Survey, 2001

Main reason for using the National Park



Most visits by staying visitors occur in the A591 corridor (60%), Keswick (59%), Windermere (56%), Ambleside (53%) and South Lakes (51%).

Source: All Parks Visitor Survey, 1994 (multi-response survey)

We will use information from the next needs and preferences survey, due for completion in 2005, to provide a benchmark to measure any changes in this information.

There are also an increasing number of useful initiatives that will provide information about the impact of management on specific recreational activities within the National Park. These include management of larger scale events such as the Three Peaks Challenge and trails management. The trails management review already provides information about the use of key routes at specific locations.

It will also tell us what the impact of certain management activities has been on the use of these routes. We have been monitoring levels of recreational green road driving on 20 of the most popular routes for three years, which already shows that there is an increase in popularity of this activity.

The navigable lakes surveys will tell us what people are doing on Derwentwater, Windermere, Ullswater and Coniston. We also have information about Bassenthwaite Lake, the only large lake where management for nature conservation is given greater priority than recreation.

Monitored levels of vehicular use on 20 routes

| Time interval | 4x4s | Motorcycles | Total |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------|--------|
| March 2002-March 2003 | 4,616 | 13,829 | 18,445 |
| March 2004-March 2005 | 8,624 | 17,011 | 25,635 |

Source: Lake District National Park Authority, 2005