

Nature and Land Management Evidence Review

Introduction

The Lake District was designated a national park in 1951. A number of its Special Qualities are relevant to this evidence paper including: complex geology and geomorphology; the high fells; wealth of habitats and wildlife; mosaic of lakes, tarns, rivers and coast, and extensive semi-natural woodlands. Further Special Qualities have the potential to be influenced by land management change, including world class cultural landscape; rich archaeology and historic landscape; unique farming heritage and concentration of common land; opportunities for quiet enjoyment.

The English Lake District was also designated as a World Heritage Site cultural landscape in 2017.

Relevant outcomes stated in the Partnership Plan 2020-2025

- We will champion farming led nature recovery, supporting agricultural transition and delivery of the multiple public goods and benefits identified in the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- We will deliver the ambition and vision of the nature recovery priorities identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- We will develop and grow the network of landscape scale nature recovery areas and delivery approaches that combine farming, forestry and land management choices to achieve nature recovery, and a broader range of multiple public goods and benefits.
- Core areas of nature recovery will cover at least 10% of the National Park by 2025.
- We will increase private financing in natural capital and green growth to create more jobs and enhance the natural environment.

Facts, figures, trends

1. Geodiversity

1.1. The Lake District has a varied geology, ranging from the Skiddaw Group in the north of the Park, granite outcrops in the East and West, the Borrowdale Volcanics found in the Central Lakes, to the Limestone scars in the south of the Park.

1.2. 83.9% (78) of geological SSSIs features are in good condition, whilst 3 are unfavourable no change, 7 are in unfavourable declining condition, 1 has been

partially destroyed. The types of feature in unfavourable condition vary considerably, with no single type suffering to a greater extent than others.¹

1.3. The geology of the Lake District has shaped and continues to influence the physical landscape, nature and land management within the National Park. At the macro scale, geological processes have produced the distinctive combination of mountains, valleys, rivers, becks, tarns and lakes that we see, which in turn influence the broad weather patterns experienced across the region. This distinctive physical landscape provides both opportunity and limitations for wildlife as well as people managing the land. Micro-climatic conditions within the valleys, combined with micro-level geological influences, such as the soils present in this area and water chemistry, dictate characteristics such as local habitat types and water quality

2. Biodiversity

2.1. Across the UK nature is suffering – species abundance has declined on average by 19% since 1970, with flowering plants, mosses & liverworts and farmland birds experiencing a far greater decline (54-59%) than other species groups. Nearly one in six species in Great Britain are threatened with extinction, including red squirrels and water voles.²

2.2. 18.2% of the National Park (42,911 of 236,234 hectares) are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).³ 32.8% of these SSSIs are in favourable condition, 14.6% are in unfavourable but recovering condition, and 15.5% are in unfavourable declining condition.⁴ This contrasts with the 38% of SSSIs nationally that are in favourable condition.

2.3. 173 hectares (9.5%) of the Cumbrian Coast Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is within the National Park boundary. This MCZ is connected to the Irt-Mite-Esk-Annas catchment which is almost entirely within the Park, as well as the Ehen-Calder catchment, of which the upper catchment is within the Park boundary.

2.4. 62,469 hectares of the National Park (26.4%) has been assessed as Priority Habitat, including key habitats: deciduous woodland, (good quality) semi-improved grassland and meadows, blanket bog, lowland raised bog, upland heathland, montane heath, and coastal habitats.⁵ However, the dataset for the National Park is incomplete, with significant gaps in the extent and condition of priority habitats.

2.5. The Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)⁶ identifies 'Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance' in that they are areas where there is

¹ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025.

² [State of Nature Report 2023 - State of Nature Partnership](#)

³ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Designated Sites

⁴ [Natural England Designated Sites Data](#)

⁵ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 May 2025 – Priority Habitats

⁶ [Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

greatest potential for nature recovery, either by enhancing of existing wildlife-rich habitat, restoring degraded or fragmented habitats, and changing the current habitat type to help join up wildlife-rich habitat across the landscape.

- 2.6. Of the 251 rare and/or threatened species in the Lake District, 21 species are identified by the Partnership as a priority for opportunities to restore, reinforce, or reintroduce populations⁷
- 2.7. Cumbria LNRS identifies 20 priority species or groups that require bespoke action due to risk factor, representative of Cumbria, or a nationally significant population.
- 2.8. In the National Park species recovery programmes have been established, for species such as Pine Marten and Pearl Mussel; 9 species recovery programmes are in development for species, such as Water Voles and Black Grouse.
- 2.9. Invasive non-native species are present in the park. These include mink, signal crayfish, giant hogweed, *Crassula helmsi*, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, American skunk cabbage, grey squirrel, and *Rhododendrum ponticum*
- 2.10. There are five species of wild deer that exist within the National Park. Red deer and roe deer are regarded as native species; Sika and fallow deer are classed as introduced species; Muntjac are regarded as invasive. Despite agri-environment schemes and deer management in Lake District, high deer populations persist and expand, with no single density threshold for habitat damage. Research literature suggests a maximum density of 4-5 red deer or 25 roe deer respectively per km² for natural regeneration to respond.⁸
- 2.11. A number of tree diseases are present in the National Park and threatening certain species. Ash die back is widespread across the UK and the Park⁹, *Phytophthora ramorum* (larch disease) is widespread along the west coast of the UK and present in the Lake District (3 Statutory Plant Health Notices have been received by LDNPA to date). The 6 demarcated areas for *Phytophthora pluvialis* in England include Cumbria¹⁰ but the scale of issue is unclear. 2022 mapping¹¹ of *Phytophthora austrocedri* (disease of juniper) indicates definite cases in the Lake District, though the extent/scale of this disease is unknown.
- 2.12. Internationally nights are becoming around 10% lighter each year¹² and research shows that light pollution has a negative impact on wildlife by disturbing their natural behaviour¹³. However, Cumbria was assessed in 2016 as the 1/3 darkest county in the England, with the National Park area (excluding main settlements) comprising a large portion of the dark sky areas within Cumbria¹⁴.

⁷ [Lake District National Park Partnership Nature Recovery Delivery Plan, 2022.](#)

⁸ Watson, P, Putman, R, Langbein, J and Green, P. 2009. A review of the threshold densities for wild deer in England above which negative impacts may occur.

⁹ [State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2025](#)

¹⁰ [Phytophthora pluvialis - GOV.UK](#)

¹¹ [Phytophthora austrocedri disease of juniper and cypress - Forest Research](#)

¹² [Light pollution is skyrocketing | Science Journal](#)

¹³ Page 38 of [Good Lighting Technical Advice Note \(TAN\) - Full Version by Friends of the Lake District](#)

¹⁴ [Night Blight: Mapping England's light pollution and dark skies, CPRE, 2016](#)

Additionally, VIIRS satellite data shows there was a reduction in light pollution between 2015-2020, in part due to Cumbria County Council's street lighting LED replacement programme¹⁵. There are limitations to satellite data and it has not been possible to determine whether light pollution has remained stable at 2020 levels or is increasing, though the opening of a new observatory at Grizedale Forest in the South of the park indicates light levels remain very low in this area. Data on impacts on Lake District wildlife populations has not been obtainable.

- 2.13. There are 941 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in the Lake District which accounts for 67% of all CWS in Cumbria. County Wildlife Sites are designated for their local significance – important habitat types or sites which support rare species and offer real potential for nature recovery. Until 2024 there had not been a programme for surveying and monitoring the condition of these sites for 15 years while half of the sites in Cumbria had never been surveyed. Recent funding for the surveying project is currently projected to end in late 2025 - to date 940 of Cumbria's 1405 CWSs have been surveyed.
- 2.14. One of five national Protected Site Strategy pilot projects lead by Natural England is underway in the National Park. The geographical focus of the project is on three SSSIs in the South Lakes: Duddon Mosses, Rusland Valley Mosses and Nichols Moss. The aim is to bring together key stakeholders to address on and offsite pressures on protected sites and to help restore precious habitats, species and geodiversity.

3. Terrestrial Habitats (including wetlands)

- 3.1. 97% (228,086 hectares) of the National Park is comprised of terrestrial habitat.¹⁶
- 3.2. Woodland canopy (including recently planted new woodland) covers 31,145 hectares (13.2%) of the Lake District¹⁷, just below the national average of 13.5%.¹⁸ Of this, 6,657 hectares is classified as Ancient Semi-natural Woodland (ASNW). There has been no reported loss of this habitat since 2018.¹⁹ 7,412 hectares of the National Park are coniferous woodland (assumed plantation).²⁰
- 3.3. Lake District woodland includes temperate rainforest; supporting rare specialised species this habitat type only covers 1% of the UK.²¹ 6,477ha of rainforest fragments are mapped, but with 90% of Lake District woodland located in areas where conditions are favourable,²² this woodland type remains significantly unrecorded.

¹⁵ [Light Pollution | Friends of the Lake District](#)

¹⁶ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Land Cover

¹⁷ [National Forest Inventory GB 2023 | Forestry Commission Open Data website](#)

¹⁸ [Forestry Statistics 2024 – Forest Research](#)

¹⁹ [National Forest Inventory GB 2023 | Forestry Commission Open Data website](#)

²⁰ [National Forest Inventory GB 2023 | Forestry Commission Open Data website](#) - 'Woodland' areas by woodland category

²¹ [A plan to recover England's temperate rainforests - GOV.UK](#)

²² Tim Richards and Guy Shrubsole, Lost Rainforests of Britain, <https://map.lostrainforestsofbritain.org/>

- 3.4. 100 hectares of new woodland creation in the Lake District have been funded through English Woodland Creation Scheme between April 2021 and March 2024²³. Between 2021 and 2023, total woodland area (excluding non-woodland category) increased by 904 hectares. This is more than double the woodland cover increase seen between 2018-2021²⁴. National Forest Inventory data reflecting 2024 additional planting is not yet available.
- 3.5. A range of other valuable tree habitats including hedgerows, wood pasture, small copses, traditional orchards and in-field tree (known as ‘trees outside woodland’) cover a further 2% (4,629 hectares) of the Lake District.²⁵ This compares to 4.7% of England which has trees outside woodland and orchard canopy cover.²⁶
- 3.6. The Lake District comprises 19,486 hectares of upland heathland (8.2% of the Park), and 1064 hectares mountain heaths and willow scrub²⁷. The national importance of the Lake District’s upland heath and montane habitats is recognised through the landscape-scale designation of large areas of our uplands.
- 3.7. Only 8,590 hectares of the Park (3.6%) are categorised as species-rich grassland, including 242 hectares of upland hay meadows.
- 3.8. 97% of hay meadows were lost between 1930 and 1990s,²⁸ In 2020, 16 hay meadow restoration sites in Cumbria were being monitored by Floodplain Meadow Partnership, a handful of these being in the National Park.
- 3.9. Wetlands (bog, fen, marsh and swamp) make up 30,884 hectares (13%) of the National Park²⁹. Species-rich priority wetland habitat areas in the Park include blanket bog (8,862 hectares), lowland fens (613 hectares), lowland raised bog (939 hectares) and reed beds (18 hectares)³⁰.
- 3.10. The England Peat Map shows a total area of Lake District predicted peat habitat of 88,322.34 hectares, of which 52,473 hectares are shown as deep peat. Around 80% of England’s peatlands are in dry and degraded states.³¹

²³ Forestry Commission English Woodland Creation Offer Database

²⁴ [Forestry Commission Open Data website](#) – National Forest Inventory 2018-2023

²⁵ [Trees Outside Woodland Map - Forestry Research, 2024](#)

²⁶ [Forestry Statistics 2024 – Forest Research](#)

²⁶ [Forestry Statistics 2024 – Forest Research](#)

²⁷ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Priority Habitats

²⁸ [Recovering lost hay meadows: An overview of floodplain-meadow restoration projects in England and Wales](#)

²⁹ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Land Cover

³⁰ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Priority Habitats

³¹ [England’s peatlands mapped for first time in major step towards their recovery - GOV.UK](#)

4. Water

- 4.1. The Lake District's 16 lakes account for 7,917 hectares of the National Park³², and there are 11,143km of watercourse. Only 1,384 hectares (17.5%) of the lake habitat is considered species-rich priority habitat.
- 4.2. In the Lake District 43% of sampled waterbodies were in 'good' or 'high' ecological status in 2022 under the Water Framework Directive, compared to 37% in 2019. 2025 data will be available later in the year. Water bodies often fail to reach good or high status due to human activity that restrict beneficial uses, alter natural conditions (e.g., flood control, erosion management), and negatively impact climate resilience, amenities, wildlife, and fisheries. Poor water quality, both surface water chemical status and groundwater quantity and quality, are also contributing factors.³³
- 4.3. The occurrence of micro plastics in waterbodies is a global issue. In the UK and Ireland untreated water contains on average 4.9 microplastics per litre³⁴ which left untreated will have negative effects on living organisms, disrupting their ability to feed, reproduce, and defend against predators.
- 4.4. 30 year 'Lakes Tour' data collected by UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology measures trends in water quality conditions. This data suggests a decline in major ion concentrations and nitrate concentrations across the lakes over this period. Additionally total phosphorous and 'chlorophyll A' concentration are identified as a key driver of lake productivity. Phytoplankton communities across all lakes are diverse, whilst zooplankton community diversity varies between lakes.³⁵
- 4.5. Four catchments and their designated features (River Eden SAC, River Derwent and Bassenthwaite Lake SAC, River Kent SAC and Esthwaite Water Ramsar) are designated for Nutrient Neutrality due to phosphorous pollution from a range of input sources.
- 4.6. Bathing Water status is a statutory designation made by the Environment Agency under the Bathing Water Regulations to protect bathing waters. In the Lake District there are eight lake inland water designations: [Coniston Boating Centre](#), [Coniston Brown Howe](#), [Monk Coniston](#), [Derwent Water at Crow Park](#), [Windermere - Fellfoot](#), [Windermere - Rayrigg Meadow](#), [Windermere - LakesideYMCA](#), [Windermere - Millerground Landing](#) and one coastal designation at [Silecroft](#).
- 4.7. 2024 reported data suggests that six (66%) are classified as excellent; one as good and two as poor (Coniston Boating Centre and Derwentwater at Crow

³² Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Land Cover

³³ Environment Agency 2022, Water Framework Assessment Data.

³⁴ CEHUK 2019: Sampling Micro Plastics in Water Supplies for UKWIR (UK Water Industry Research)

³⁵ [CEH Lakes Tour 2021-2 summary](#)

Park) due to exceeding the threshold for [Escherichia coli](#) or E. coli (EC) and [Intestinal enterococci](#) (IE).³⁶

- 4.8. Many other sites across the Lake District are known to be popular with swimmers but do not meet the [designation criteria](#) or have not been proposed to the Environment Agency.
- 4.9. Important research and survey outputs are anticipated in 2025 that will help inform our understanding of current and future lake water quality. Over the next 5 years the Environment Agency's Lakes Surveillance Network will monitor lakes over 2 hectares using innovative techniques, such as eDNA analysis, satellite imagery, and aerial photography. This data will provide a detailed picture of water quality in catchments, highlighting national conditions and trends.
- 4.10. The Lake District supplies over 30% of Northwest England's drinking water every day, this equates to supplying over 2.5 million people in Cumbria, Lancashire and major urban centres such as Manchester.³⁷
- 4.11. 110km of rivers (9.6% of our watercourses³⁸) within the Lake District National Park are failing Environmental Quality Standards due to pollution from abandoned metal mines.³⁹ The Water and Abandoned Metal Mine (WAMM) programme⁴⁰, delivered by the Environment Agency, Mining Remediation Authority, and Defra, is implementing schemes to mitigate metal contamination from mines such as Gates Ghyll and Threlkeld, which will significantly improve water quality up to 25km downstream.

5. Air Quality

- 5.1. Air quality in the UK has improved significantly in recent decades but continues to be the biggest environmental risk to human health and a source of harm to the natural environment. Acid deposition results from the emission of acid gasses to the atmosphere - particularly sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and hydrogen chloride, generated principally through the burning of fossil fuels by power stations and heavy industry.
- 5.2. Greatest excess acidity occurs in regions of Northern, Central, Eastern and South West England, whilst exceedance of critical loads (for avoiding sensitive habitat impacts) of nutrient N remains widespread across the UK.⁴¹
- 5.3. The lichens and bryophytes that inhabit rainforests are particularly sensitive to atmospheric pollution, and because pollutants are often released in rainfall.⁴²
- 5.4. Research indicates acid deposition from air pollution impacts upon acid-sensitive upland lakes and streams and downstream habitats, through changes in algal

³⁶ [Environment Agency Bathing Water data](#) 2024.

³⁷ [United Utilities Business Plan 2025-30 Summary](#)

³⁸ [Lake District National Park State of the Park Report 2023](#); water courses are defined as rivers, canals and surface water flows.

³⁹ [Abandoned metal mines in England: baseline length of rivers and estuaries polluted by harmful metals - GOV.UK](#)

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/metal-mine-water-treatment>

⁴¹ [State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2025](#) – Pollution chapter

⁴² [State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2025](#)

assemblages to direct toxicity effects on fish and aquatic insects. Lake Tour survey data trend analysis suggests acid deposition impact reductions are evident over the longer-term (1984-2021).

- 5.5. The Cumbria Atmospheric Nitrogen Strategy (CANS) focused on raised bogs states atmospheric nitrogen pollution affects habitats through eutrophication and acidification, and through the direct toxic effects of nitrogen gases such as ammonia (NH₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). There is substantial evidence of nitrogen impacts on ecosystems, including the loss of sensitive species of vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens.⁴³

6. Land Management

- 6.1. Most of the land in the Lake District is privately owned (approx. 63%).

Landowner	% of Park (approximately)
United Utilities	8%
Forestry England	5%
Lake District National Park Authority	3.2%
Cumbria Wildlife Trust	1%

- 6.2. Agriculture is the dominant land use in the Lake District – registered farm holdings cover 148,431 hectares (63%) of the park.⁴⁴ Only 2,108 hectares of this is arable land⁴⁵ (see Farming evidence part for more information on agriculture)

- 6.3. There are 3,345 hectares of plantation woodland on Ancient Woodland sites (PAWS)⁴⁶.

- 6.4. 29% (8,809ha) of woodlands in the Lake District are publicly managed by Forestry England. 45% (13,539 hectares) are managed privately under Forestry Commission and Countryside Stewardship sustainable management schemes, leaving 26% (7,853ha) of woodland not managed or under unknown management.⁴⁷

- 6.5. Poorly managed woodland can limit woodland diversity, especially rainforest indicative species, whilst proactive interventions can be highly beneficial: limiting spread of tree disease and INNS; encouraging structural diversity; phased halo thinning of conifer plantation and achieving the right grazing

⁴³ UKCEH. 2025. Cumbria Atmospheric Nitrogen Strategy: A pilot Protected Site Strategy for raised bogs affected by air pollution. Monitoring design report.

⁴⁴ [Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June - Defra, April 2025](#)

⁴⁵ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Land Cover

⁴⁶ Natural England 2024 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release December 2023 - Extent of ancient woodland within Protected Landscapes

⁴⁷ Forestry Commission, 2024 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release Feb 2024 - Area of woodland in Protected Landscapes under sustainable management

balance so that dense understory is controlled, but tree regeneration is possible.⁴⁸

- 6.6. 15% (35,825 hectares) of the National Park has been mapped as covered by bracken. The Lake District's bracken cover constitutes nearly half of the bracken cover mapped across all English National Parks combined, and the percentage cover is almost double any other National Park.⁴⁹
- 6.7. The England Peat Map shows that some areas of predicted Lake District peat is under conifer plantation, and that substantial areas are impacted by erosion or drainage features⁵⁰. However, a cumulative total of 9,674 hectares of upland and lowland peatland have been under restoration since 2013.
- 6.8. Work is ongoing by partners and others to tackle invasive species and raise awareness about biosecurity, with work in 2024 covering the Derwent catchment, Ullswater, Elterwater, Grasmere, White Moss, Rydal, Ambleside and Windermere.⁵¹
- 6.9. A number of long-term landscape-scale land management change projects seeking to restore nature are in train, such as those at Wild Ennerdale by Forestry England, National Trust and United Utilities; Wild Haweswater by RSPB and United Utilities and changes at the privately-owned Lowther Estate. Cumbria Wildlife Trust's latest new nature reserve at Skiddaw Forest is also aiming to restore upland temperate rainforest.
- 6.10. Others such as Ullswater CIC, the West Cumbria, South Cumbria and Eden Rivers Trusts, and Woodland Trust are delivering landscape scale change through making many and small changes with farmers on their land to integrate nature, restore natural features and increase the resilience of the landscape to flooding and periods of drought.
- 6.11. The Lake District Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines⁵² provides Area of Distinctive Character (ADC) descriptions and guidelines for managing landscape change within the National Park. The long-term impact of the increasing impetus for land management change on the National Park's special qualities and ADCs remains to be determined.
- 6.12. 130,100ha (55%) of land is currently managed under an agri-environment scheme⁵³. There are 435 live Countryside Stewardship (CS) Higher Tier Scheme agreements.⁵⁴
- 6.13. There are 71 live Commons Agreements in either CS Higher Tier or Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS) in the Lake District. A

⁴⁸ [State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2025](#)

⁴⁹ Natural England 2025 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release – 7 March 2025 – Land Cover

⁵⁰ [England Peat Map \(EPM\) Portal](#)

⁵¹ Lakes Biosecurity Priority Area Meeting Update – May 2025.

⁵² [Landscape Character Assessment: Lake District National Park](#)

⁵³ includes Higher Level Stewardship, Countryside Stewardship and Sustainable Farming Incentive; Rural Payments Agency/Natural England Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Data Release 4 July 2024 – Area of land managed under agri-environment schemes.

⁵⁴ Natural England Cumbria Area Team – May 2025

number of commons also took up the Sustainable Farming Incentive option to produce a written assessment of the soil, vegetation, historic & archaeological features on moorland. However, the area of common land covered by these schemes has not been able to be determined⁵⁵.

- 6.14. The Lake District National Park covers 35% of the area of Cumbria but received only 21% (£22.5million) of the total agri-environment scheme funding issued in 2024 to Cumbrian landowners/managers (total £105.7 million) through CS, HLS and Sustainable Farming Incentive⁵⁶.
- 6.15. In 2024-25, £300,000 of Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding has supported projects specifically helping threatened species recovery and wetland creation and restoration. FiPL has also supported 21 projects working to improve agricultural soils health and 53 projects developing resilient and nature-friendly farm businesses.
- 6.16. Despite these positive projects and agreements, large areas of land continue to experience under/over livestock grazing, deer browsing pressure, the spread of invasive species, land drainage and other human impacts including disturbance from recreation.
- 6.17. However, there is increasing interest amongst both organisations present in the Park, and private landowners and managers including farmers and commoners, to take a landscape-scale perspective and plan collectively for how to support nature's recovery in the Lake District.
- 6.18. There are four Landscape Recovery Projects in development extending across 31,622 hectares (13.4%) of land within the national park boundary, and involving 100 land managers, plus 3 Commons Associations.⁵⁷ There are an additional 10 green finance initiatives involving Lake District land in development⁵⁸ with further project concepts being explored by a variety of groups. All of these projects and concepts are currently grappling with how to access the emerging green finance markets, such as legal complexities, baseline data collection, integrity and accessibility of funders. The Lake District National Park-led Nature-Based Finance Knowledge Hub seeks to facilitate knowledge sharing in this area.
- 6.19. Additionally, Lake District National Park Authority project work has supported one site to become legally secured as a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Habitat Bank to date, with 20 further sites interested in registering.
- 6.20. Based on 2023 Countryside Stewardship (CS) rates, the LDNP Partnership previously calculated that the habitat creation and 10 years of maintenance work needed to support its 2030 Nature Recovery Plan ambitions would need an additional investment injection to the area of at least £64million – 2090ha of woodland at £32.3m, 1200ha of peat at £25m and 1600ha of grasslands at

⁵⁵ Natural England Cumbria Area Team – May 2025

⁵⁶ Rural Payments Agency, via Natural England Cumbria Area Team – May 2025

⁵⁷ Lake District Eastern Fells, Resilient Glenderamackin, Penrith 2 Kendal Arc and Upper Duddon (in assurance phase)

⁵⁸ Nature-Based Finance Knowledge Hub review of known projects

£7.2m⁵⁹. This calculation however fails to capture true capital costs, revenue costs such as agreements with farmers and on-going maintenance; as well as staff costs where needed to facilitate, design and monitor the work. Additionally, an estimate of investment needed in lakes and river improvements has not been calculated. The true scale of investment needed to restore nature in the Lake District will far exceed £64million.

What does this mean?

- 7.1.**Geodiversity Protection:** Current protections and management of the Lake District's geodiversity appear effective and should be maintained.
- 7.2.**External Pressures:** The Lake District's habitats and the species that rely on them are highly vulnerable to national and global issues like air quality and climate change (see Climate evidence part for more information), which require action from national governments and businesses.
- 7.3.**Habitat Management & Biodiversity Loss:** Existing mechanisms for protected site habitat management are insufficient. There is an urgent need for accelerated action to improve site management and create space in the wider landscape for species adaptation. A significant lack of comprehensive and robust data on species and non-designated habitats hinders effective action to reverse biodiversity loss. This needs to be addressed to avoid losing key nature recovery sites and enable land managers and supporting organisations to target actions.
- 7.4.**Species Recovery:** Despite some promising initiatives, species are still struggling due to habitat loss/degradation, unsuitable management, pollution, and invasive species. Dedicated species recovery and reintroduction projects are needed alongside efforts to resolve these challenges, to help our rare and threatened species to thrive.
- 7.5.**Deer Management:** High populations of wild deer persist and are expanding their range, necessitating the urgent implementation of the new LDNPP Deer Management Strategy and utilisation of networks establishing through landscape-scale projects.
- 7.6.**Invasive Species:** Continued efforts are needed to address invasive species, with a focus on understanding their mobility and extent to enable prioritised management activity.
- 7.7.**Water Quality & Quantity:** Water underpins the Lake District (and North West England)'s economy, environment, and society but is at risk due to both water quality and quantity challenges. Investment and initiatives to tackle pollution from various sources is critical. As is coordinated and integrated catchment management that supports improved water security and enhancing ecosystems in landscape appropriate ways.

⁵⁹ [Lake District National Park Partnership Nature Recovery Plan](#), 2023

- 7.8.**Peatland Restoration:** Significant work is still needed to restore peatland habitats impacted by historical and current land management, requiring the progression of both lowland and upland identified restoration areas and ongoing support for land managers to embed restoration activities.
- 7.9.**Woodland Management & Establishment:** While existing woodlands are well-protected, achieving sustainable management across all woodlands would enhance habitat quality and species diversity. Opportunities for expanding woodland and tree cover exist and those exploring these should be guided by existing strategies and Lake District National Park Guidelines.
- 7.10.**Air Quality:** Better data and understanding of air quality impacts on habitats including peatland are needed. Sources of airborne pollutants are primarily external to the Park. However, should localised sources be identified, actions to reduce these should be explored.
- 7.11.**Light Pollution:** The potential need for actions to reduce light levels in and around settlement hotspots should remain under review due to known impacts on wildlife.
- 7.12.**Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS):** The finalised Cumbria LNRS will provide a framework for habitat enhancement and restoration, as well as focusing species recovery and reintroduction efforts. However, improvements to the underlying data are essential to ensure desired outcomes are achieved.
- 7.13.**Integrated Management:** Collaborative efforts to benefit nature across land and water are critical to manage shared pressures such as invasive species, grazing pressure, and recreational disturbance.
- 7.14.**Land management evolution:** delivery of LNRS opportunities must be balanced with the conservation of the Lake District National Park's Special Qualities. Greater support for land managers and organisations is needed to help those interested in adapting land management to navigate this appropriately whilst achieving nature objectives.
- 7.15.**Protected Site Strategies:** Natural England's strategies provide a tool to unite stakeholders in tackling pressures on protected sites, supporting the implementation of environmental policies and promoting green finance.
- 7.16.**Sustainable Farming:** Uncertainty around future government support for nature-friendly farming poses a significant threat to nature recovery and risks progress to date being lost. Continued support for farming and land manager communities to access funding for improved practices is vital.
- 7.17.**Green Finance:** Benefits of nature and carbon markets are yet to be realised in the Lake District. A place-based approach to developing local green finance markets is also crucial to drive investment in Lake District nature recovery whilst ensuring ecologically suitable interventions, as well as avoiding exacerbating inequalities in the agricultural transition, and degrading the Park's Special Qualities and Outstanding Universal Value. Continued leadership and support from the Partnership is therefore needed as nature-based finance markets develop.

References and policy context

Some of the key international, national, regional and local strategies that provide important context for updating the Management Plan include:

- [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan](#) to Improve the Environment. It sets out what we will do to improve the environment, within a generation.
- [Environment Improvement Plan \(EIP\) 2023](#) the first revision to the 25 year Plan, and the complementary Protected Landscapes Target & Outcome Framework.
- [Land Use Framework](#) This consultation explores the land use changes implied by commitments to restore nature, support food production, improve climate resilience and deliver new housing and infrastructure.
- [The Water Environment](#) (Water Framework Directive) - legislation that aims to protect and improve the water environment.
- [Plan for Water](#) (2023) plan to clean up our waters and ensure a plentiful supply for the future
- [The UK Forestry Standard](#) Governments approach to sustainable forest management
- Biodiversity Net Gain - [Understanding biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK](#)
- Nutrient Neutrality - [What is nutrient neutrality? - Nutrient Neutrality - Planning Portal](#)
- [Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) - one of 48 strategy areas in England that are required by the Environment Act (2021) [in development]
- [Cumbria Coastal Strategy](#) (2020)
- [Lake District National Park Partnership Nature Recovery Delivery Plan](#) takes the Government's ambition and targets for nature recovery forwards and lays out how the Lake District National Park Partnership will contribute to restoring nature on 30% of land by 2030.
- [Lake District National Park Landscape Character Assessment & Guidelines](#)