



Chief Executive's update

Recommendation:

- a **The Authority is asked to note the update on key topics since the last meeting.**

Defra Updates

- 1 Since the last Authority meeting, a change of UK Prime Minister and subsequent Cabinet reshuffle have resulted in changes to the Defra ministerial team.
- 2 Of particular relevance to National Parks, Dame Angela Eagle has been appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with responsibility for the Defra budget, international relations, senior appointments and economic growth.
- 3 Jenny Riddle-Carpenter has been appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Nature, with responsibility for planning and land use, protected landscapes, rural communities, climate adaptation, access to nature, tree planting and forestry, green finance, and sponsorship of Natural England and the Forestry Commission.
- 4 Through National Parks England and directly, we have written to congratulate the new ministerial team on their appointment. Following approval of the Partnership Plan in June, we have also submitted it formally to Jenny Riddle Carpenter and invited her to visit the Lake District.

Visitor Levy

- 5 The Government has published its response to the consultation on an overnight visitor levy in England. It intends to empower Mayoral and Foundation Strategic Authorities to introduce locally determined levies on paid overnight accommodation, calculated as a percentage of the accommodation cost. A national framework would govern scope, exemptions, administration and accountability. Revenue should support local economic growth, including the visitor economy, and local leaders would be expected to consult residents, businesses and other stakeholders before introducing a scheme.
- 6 We will continue to monitor the policy and work with partners so that if any levy was proposed in Cumbria, then it recognises the needs of protected landscapes and enables income from visitors to be reinvested visibly and fairly in the places that host them.

Biodiversity Net Gain habitat bank

- 7 A biodiversity net gain (BNG) habitat bank—the first in Cumbria—has been launched.
- 8 The Authority has supported Lowther Estate through a joint pilot scheme to restore 13 hectares of hay meadow in Cumbria.
- 9 The habitat bank is registered on Natural England's Biodiversity Gain Sites Register and offers hay meadow units to developers required to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain. Nick Hall, Nature Recovery Ranger, supported Lowther Estate by establishing the site baseline using the BNG metric, preparing habitat management and monitoring plans, exploring the legal arrangements for securing the site through a section 106 planning obligation, and agreeing an ongoing monitoring regime.

- 10 The pilot has provided valuable learning for the Authority's new Responsible Body Service and its work on Conservation Covenants, informing robust processes, legal clauses, fees and standards.
- 11 Nature recovery at the site is secured for 30 years and will deliver measurable biodiversity gains aligned with Cumbria's Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities.

New NPPF

- 12 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 17 August 2026 and took immediate effect for all planning decisions made from that date.
- 13 The NPPF sets out Government policy for plan-making and decisions on development proposals in England and is a material consideration in both. For the first time, it includes national decision-making policies. Although our Local Plan remains the primary basis for decisions, the Framework is now a significant material consideration and may reduce the weight given to conflicting development plan policies; the NPPF states that "very limited weight" should be given where policies are "materially inconsistent" with the Framework.
- 14 Key implications of the new Framework include:
 - a. The Government expects the NPPF to carry direct weight in decisions, particularly where Local Plan policies are materially inconsistent with it.
 - b. A permanent presumption in favour of development applies within settlements and, in specified circumstances, outside them; future decisions may need to apply this presumption.

- c. Core National Park protections in Policy N4 are retained, although “great weight” has been replaced by “substantial weight” to align with terminology used elsewhere in the Framework.
- d. Climate resilience and wildfire mitigation are now explicit considerations under Policy CC3.

Planning Inspectors' Visit

- 15 In early September, we hosted a meeting of the Planning Inspectorate’s northern casework team, understood to be its first joint event with a local authority.
- 16 The event focused on heritage, including the World Heritage Site. On the first day, Georgia Barnes, World Heritage Site Coordinator, provided an overview of the Site, while Andrew Smith, Head of Development Management, examined heritage issues through casework with colleagues from Historic England. On the second day, Rose Lord introduced the new Windermere Villas Conservation Area before taking inspectors onto the lake to view the issues discussed. Attendees responded positively to the visit.

Short-term lets regulation roundtable

- 17 Andrew Smith attended a Westminster roundtable on regulating short-term lets, convened by Lizzi Collinge MP for Morecambe and Lunesdale. Friends of the Lake District also attended as part of its Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities campaign. Participants considered the economic, housing and community impacts of increasing short-term lets and whether licensing could help address them. Andrew confirmed the Authority’s support for locally determined powers to manage holiday-let numbers, and we will continue to support Lizzi Collinge’s work in this area.

EFRA Committee – Windermere visit

- 18 On 9 September, the Authority hosted members of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee at Windermere to support its examination of water quality in the lake and wider catchment. Led by the Authority with partners from the Love Windermere programme, the visit showcased collaborative action, highlighted outstanding challenges and set out the long-term investment and partnership working needed to improve water quality. It also raised national awareness of the issues facing Windermere and the collective work underway to protect and enhance the lake.
- 19 The EFRA Committee also attended the Westmorland Show and held an oral evidence session on land use and the future of farming. Evidence was provided by Baroness Julia Aglionby, Adam Day and Lisa Bennet. A recording and transcript are available on the UK Parliament website:
[10 September 2026 - Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee - Oral evidence session - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

National Lottery Heritage Fund Success

- 20 The National Lottery Heritage Fund has confirmed development-phase funding of £243,857 for ‘Lead, Levels and Lives: the story of Greenside Mine’. The 17-month phase will run to February 2028 and develop plans to remove the site from the Heritage at Risk Register, provide interpretation, support nature recovery and engage local schools and communities. A delivery-phase application is planned for February 2028 and could secure a further £874,000 to deliver the project between 2028 and 2031.

Visitor Management

- 21 As the 2026 main visitor season ends, Cumbria's Strategic Visitor Management Group has begun evaluating its interventions and wider programme. Findings will be reported to the Group and Authority members in November.
- 22 Planning for the 2027 season will begin immediately after the evaluation.

Agro-pastoral strategy

- 23 Following a recommendation from the 2025 World Heritage Committee (during its consideration of the English Lake District World Heritage Site State of Conservation Report), we are working with Natural England, Historic England, Defra and DCMS to prepare an agro-pastoral strategy for the World Heritage Site.
- 24 The long-term strategy will address pressures on the traditional agro-pastoral system and support conservation of Theme One of the Site's Outstanding Universal Value.
- 25 Subject to partner agreement, it is expected to be completed and submitted to the World Heritage Committee before its next consideration of the Site in 2027. As this is a State Party response, the Lake District National Park Partnership and World Heritage Site Steering Group will be consulted but will not formally approve the strategy.

Wild Deer Management

- 26 Following the launch of the Lake District Wild Deer Management Strategy, the Steering Group is focussed on delivering the Action Plan. Two events are planned for this quarter, both of which have the potential to be of media interest. The Deerfest, at Rheged, over the weekend of 10-11 October will be

an opportunity for the public to appreciate the importance of effective deer management in Cumbria. This event, organised by Cumbria Connect, is being supported through our FiPL programme. In November we are then aiming to launch the Lake District Wild Venison brand and product, primarily based on the new British Quality Wild Venison (BQWV) accreditation, and it being local to the Lake District. Whilst supply will be limited initially, due to the need to develop the market chain, we hope to achieve a high-profile launch.

Concurrently we are using our FiPL programme to enhance local skills and local infrastructure, including the provision of deer larders to BQWV standard.

Historic England Annual Reception

- 27 On 15 September, Steve Ratcliffe attended Historic England's Annual Reception, this year held in Lambeth Palace, focussing on the launch of their new strategy 2026-2031 with three priorities of growth, place, and sector. In attendance were members from both Houses of Parliament and numerous representatives from the sector. The opportunity was taken to invite the Minister, Baroness Twycross to visit the English Lake District World Heritage Site.

Background papers:	None
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