“Our Cumbrian landscapes are a priceless natural and cultural heritage which enrich us all. But they need continuing care. As President of Friends of the Lake District, I commend the actions in this Manifesto to all who seek to serve in the next Parliament.” - Sir Martin Holdgate CB
Politicians can only do so much, so we ask them to support only three objectives to deliver our vision for the future. We call on all parties to develop better policies so that we can have:

1. **Better Landscapes for All**

Cumbria’s landscape is special. It contains two National Parks and three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which together cover 56% of the county. Hundreds of sites in Cumbria are designated for their wildlife and heritage value too. In all, around two thirds of the county has some form of protection making it unique in England. In many places the rest of the landscape in Cumbria is also very distinctive and valuable in its own right.

Cumbria’s landscapes are peoples’ homes, work places and playgrounds, producing food and providing many benefits taken for granted such as drinking water for millions of people in North West England. Peat bogs and woods take up and store carbon, helping fight against climate change and slowing run-off of water from the hills, mitigating floods. A rich wildlife adds to the scenic beauty. Above all, the Cumbrian countryside is a place of inspiration. Millions of visitors come every year to walk on the hills and in the valleys, take in the views and leave refreshed in body and mind.

As the population of the United Kingdom grows, so the pressures on the landscape increase. But this only increases the value of places of outstanding beauty like the countryside of Cumbria. Protecting and enriching the landscapes of Cumbria is vital to our future and that of future generations. But the countryside has never been more vulnerable to outside forces such as climate change, flooding, insensitive agricultural policy and poorly planned infrastructure development.

2. **Prosperous Rural Communities**

Unless the countryside is prosperous, its population will dwindle. Villages and towns will lose their vitality and become little more than clusters of holiday homes. Farming is the foundation of rural life in Cumbria, but traditional hill farming today loses money, and an ageing population of farmers, often with no successors, has been kept going by support payments now at risk from Brexit.

Alongside land managers, many businesses contribute to the County’s economic prosperity without harming the landscape, and they need services such as good broadband links, allowing home-based ventures and farm diversification to succeed. Outdoor recreation and tourism sensitive to the landscape is the life-blood of the Cumbrian economy. In 2012 40m visitors to Cumbria spent £1.2bn supporting over 33,000 FTE jobs. 69% of all visitors came for scenery and landscape.

Cumbria’s economy depends on Cumbria’s environment. We need a ‘cultural revolution’ that recognises the role of land managers and pays them for the provision of the natural capital that their work delivers. But we also need other rural enterprises, fitting together to maintain balanced and prosperous landscapes and communities.

3. **Better Funding for the Countryside**

Prosperous Cumbrian communities will sustain rural settlements with services for residents and attractions for visitors. Good access to the outdoors requires investment not just in footpaths but in sustainable transport to get to them. Wildlife needs careful management if we are to keep our flower-filled hay meadows, ancient woodlands, and clean rivers and lakes. Historic buildings, art galleries, lake steamers, our industrial heritage and myriad other special attractions need maintenance.

Private investment cannot do this alone, and there is an indispensable role for public services to fill in the gaps where the market fails. And whilst much development can be compatible with the scenery, a landscape as precious and vulnerable as Cumbria’s needs proper planning controls.

We have a collective duty to care for the landscape of Cumbria. Scenery, wildlife, our built heritage and our history need safeguarding and care. This demands action by Government to secure a confident future for the rural economy by bringing forward the 25 Year Environmental and Agriculture Plans.

4. **Support the existing legal protection**

Our landscapes and the countryside. We call on all parties to support the existing legal protection for wildlife and the countryside.

We ask them to:

- Support the existing legal protection for our outstanding natural beauty.
- Recognise that Brexit is an opportunity to change the way support is allocated for multi-functional uses of the landscape including food production.
- Recognise and uphold the ‘Sandford Principle’, already enshrined in law, which states that the protection of the environment and its impacts through damaging developments outside their borders within their setting.
- Recognise that the protection of our natural environment is lost we risk losing the major gains in environmental quality over the last 40 years must not be lost or wasted.
- Press for secured resources to maintain our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, recognising that it is a responsibility of Government to ensure that the agencies responsible for our outstanding landscapes are properly funded and can make decisions that have landscape implications correctly.
- Make policies that actually work for Cumbria’s landscapes and the people within them. We want to see a firm Government commitment to the environment and agriculture, and adopted across all Departments as the landscape and environment underpin the whole of UK’s society and economy. Landscape and environment do not function in isolation and should not be treated as such.
- Recognise that Brexit is an opportunity to change the way support is allocated for multi-functional uses of the landscape including food production. The landscape provides not only food, fibre, fuel and building materials but also essential public goods and services necessary to sustain human life. Support using public money should sustain the supply of these non-market goods and services. It is no longer enough to just pay farmers for managing land on an area basis.
- Take responsibility to ensure that Brexit does not reduce protection for wildlife and the countryside.
- If the protection for the natural environment currently offered by EU is lost we risk losing wildlife rich landscapes to development and agricultural and forestry practices.

5. **Address climate change and its impacts through implementation of policies on mitigation and adaptation; including supporting domestic renewables, energy efficiency schemes and sustainable transport as well as making communities more resilient in the face of increased flood risk.**

6. **Press for the strengthening of the National Planning Policy Framework**

by incorporating the principle that National Parks and AONBs should be safeguarded against the impact of damaging developments outside their borders within their setting.

7. **Recognise and uphold the ‘Sandford Principle’, already enshrined in law, which states that the protection of the environment and its impacts through damaging developments outside their borders within their setting.**

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**How to achieve the goals.**

We call on all parties to:

1. **Take responsibility to ensure that Brexit does not reduce protection for wildlife and the countryside.**

2. **How to achieve the goals.**

3. **Better Funding for the Countryside**

4. **Support Friends of the Lake District, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Campaign for National Parks, and others to press for secured resources to maintain our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, recognising that it is a responsibility of Government to ensure that the agencies responsible for our outstanding landscapes are properly funded and can make decisions that have landscape implications correctly.**

5. **Recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity. Support the existing legal obligation for public bodies to maintain and enhance biological diversity.**

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**How to achieve the goals.**

We call on all parties to:
Landscape is the setting we all live in, the surroundings that we see, touch, feel, smell, hear and enjoy. Everyone depends on landscape for food, water and clean air along with many other necessities.

**It is our life support system; without it we could not exist.**

Landscape goes far beyond just physically supporting us. A beautiful and diverse landscape, with a wealth of wildlife and human history sustains, inspires and enriches our lives. Our landscape provides a proven ‘natural health service’ for body and mind which is of benefit to people and to the country.

Already vulnerable economically, environmentally and socially, the very future of Cumbria’s countryside as we know it is threatened by an uncertain post-Brexit future. Friends of the Lake District calls on politicians to give the environment the status it deserves in policy decisions, not just for its own sake, but for the economic and social benefits it provides to our nation’s people.

**Please support Friends of the Lake District**

Working to secure the future of our landscape costs money. You can support our work with a donation or by becoming a Friends of the Lake District member from only £2.50 a month. Donations and membership enable us to carry out vital work to protect and enhance the unique landscapes of Cumbria and the Lake District. Visit [www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk) or telephone 01539 720788.

**Thank you.**