

Conserving Lakeland

The magazine of Friends of the Lake District | Free to members



NUMBER 100 – SPRING / SUMMER 2026

Rusland Woods Caring for Cumbria's Rainforests

Also Inside: Our New Campaign
Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities



Friends of the
Lake District

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100 Years of CPRE



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Cover photo: Rusland Woods

Charity Number:
1100759
Company Number:
4878364
Edited by
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From the Chief Executive

Welcome to this landmark edition of *Conserving Lakeland*. Research shows that, as humans, we look for milestones in our lives, and publishing the 100th issue of our member magazine is definitely one to be celebrated.

There has been a regular newsletter produced since *Friends* was founded in 1934, and I've spent an enjoyable morning inhaling the musty smell from the earliest editions. They advertise 'lantern slide lectures', protest about 'motor char-a-bancs' on narrow bridges, and cover many campaign issues which are still familiar to us – road building, pylons, and tourism impacts. In 1983 the newsletter was re-named *Conserving Lakeland*, and that first edition contained some of the features still in the magazine today, such as book reviews. There's more about its history on pages 20 and 21.

If you're an editor from the future reading this as you research edition number 200, you'll find an impressive mix of other features in this issue, all reflecting our current landscape priorities. There's news of an

important new campaign about holiday accommodation, a feature on the amazing temperate rainforest we look after in Rusland, a celebration of our proud victory against the holiday park planned for Roanhead, an update on our quest for innovative funding models like visitor charging, the latest on our Hedges and Edges project, and news about our exciting new brand and website.



Issue One of *Conserving Lakeland*



What an incredible list of work, all being delivered by an amazing team of staff and trustees – and only possible thanks to the generous support of members like you.

Finally, I'd like to spotlight the work of our brilliant communications lead, Christian, who edits this magazine – and pay tribute to all the people who have performed this important task before him, stretching back to Kenneth Spence in 1934.

Michael Hill
Chief Executive

Friends of the Lake District is dedicated to protecting Cumbria's landscapes. We also represent the *Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)* in Cumbria.



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Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities: *Our New Campaign*

A recent report into holiday accommodation and housing, commissioned by *Friends of the Lake District*, has laid bare the scale of the problem facing communities across the National Park. Our campaigns officer, Aila Taylor explains how this has led us to take action.



Communities across the Lake District are suffering from hollowing out – a loss of core public services and the erosion of the social fabric – as a result of depopulation. An excess of second homes and short-term holiday lets has led to dwindling populations of permanent residents, and a lack of affordable housing to support a younger, working population in the National Park.

We commissioned a report into the issues last year and its findings paint a worrying picture. 28% of dwellings in the Lake District National Park are unoccupied – more than double the Cumbrian average – and 92% of holiday lets in the Lake District National Park are in buildings that would be suitable as homes for full-time use. As the number of unoccupied homes has increased, the permanent population in the Lake District has decreased, compromising the future for local schools and businesses.

Our new campaign is asking for tighter restrictions on short-term lets so that affordable housing for permanent residents is prioritised – helping to replenish local populations, restore community vibrancy, and support public services such as schools, shops and doctors' surgeries.

“The availability and affordability of homes in the Lake District National Park is an issue which has been raised with us regularly by Parish Councils and our members,” explains Leanne Parr, our planning officer. “We also had many discussions on this issue at various events last year, both with local people and visitors. The message has been the same... people are finding it difficult to buy or rent homes within the National Park due to the demand for short-term visitor accommodation. As a result, communities are being hollowed out, local businesses are struggling to recruit employees, and local



Houses in Ambleside, many used as holiday lets

services and skills are being lost. The National Park's resident population continues to fall while more and more pressure is put on the National Park Authority to approve housing in less sustainable locations, often with negative impacts on the landscapes that make the Park special.”

Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities aims to support local communities in the Lake District by reducing the amount of empty and under-used homes, and increasing the number of houses occupied full-time by permanent residents.

The campaign will involve lobbying politicians to implement changes to legislation, events to engage with local communities, and collaboration with campaign allies across the UK such as the Campaign for National Parks.

We are campaigning for four main objectives:

- New legislation to make dwellings, holiday lets and second homes separate use classes, with planning permission required to change between uses.
- The introduction of a mandatory national register for short-term let visitor accommodation.
- New legislation requiring short-term holiday lets to have a mandatory license from the Local Authority.
- A requirement for buildings that are suitable as homes, but being used as holiday lets, to pay council tax (plus any premium in place) rather than business rates.

If these changes are implemented, it will encourage short-term holiday lets to be offered as long-term rental properties instead. It will also provide more information about the scale of short-term holiday lets in the Lake District so that authorities are better able to assess the problem.



Key safes for holiday lets in Windermere



Staff shortages mean businesses are suffering

Some people might argue that trying to restrict second homes and short-term holiday lets (such as Airbnbs) is damaging to local businesses. However, evidence from our report shows that the opposite is true. When villages and towns become dominated by empty or part-time homes, local businesses struggle to survive, especially in the off-season, when income from tourism is less reliable. Furthermore, the increase in short-term holiday lets takes business away from traditional Bed and Breakfasts, hotels and hostels. A community made up largely of permanent residents provides stable employment, sustains local businesses throughout the year, and helps to maintain the social fabric that makes places like the Lake District special in the first place.

Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities is not about opposing tourism. Tourism is vital to the Lake District's economy, and visitors will always be welcome. Instead, this campaign is about achieving a better balance – one where tourism can thrive alongside healthy, resilient communities. By ensuring more homes are lived in year-round, we can support local workers, families, and young people to stay in the area, while also creating a more sustainable future for the region.

We believe everyone deserves access to an affordable home and the chance to be part of a thriving community. With your support, we can push for the changes needed to make that a reality in the Lake District.

How you can get involved in our Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities campaign:

- Sign our petition to implement legislative changes.
- Visit our stalls at Cumbrian shows throughout the summer (see page 14).
- Attend our community events.
- Attend our webinars on topics such as Hollowed Out Communities and Regenerative Tourism.

More details about the campaign, petition, related events and webinars can be found on our website. Visit www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/fairerhousing

Become a Volunteer Campaigner

We are looking for volunteers to help with our campaigns such as Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities.

The role can be catered according to your interests, but could include:

- Having input into what our campaigns involve.
- Helping us on stalls at events such as county fairs.
- Writing to your MP.
- Sharing our petitions and events calendar with your local community.

Free training sessions will be provided in topics like community organising and political campaigning.

Please email campaigning@fld.org.uk to find out more.

Rusland Rainforests: Veterans in the Making



In the last issue of *Conserving Lakeland*, we explored our woods in Rusland as we uncovered the indicator species of Atlantic rainforests. This issue, we return to Rusland to look at a pilot project in Bull Coppice that may play a vital part in its future survival.

A recent ecological survey highlighted that Bull Coppice wood in the Rusland Valley has few veteran trees, likely due to its history as a coppice woodland for nearby bobbin mills. Joe Leaper, a tree surgeon with 17 years of experience, has been leading a pilot project, in partnership with the organisation Plantlife, to experiment with tree veteranisation. Initially drawn to tree surgery by his passion for climbing, Joe quickly became fascinated by trees and their role in the ecosystem. In this Q&A, he explains the importance of veteran trees for woodland health and the process of tree veteranisation.

What is tree veteranisation?

Veteran trees are basically really old trees. The special thing about them is not so much their age or impressive size, but some of the features they have developed that aren't usually found on younger trees. These gnarly old trees will have lost limbs, creating cavities and rot holes, and exposed heart wood. They will also have dead branches and areas of fresh growth. All of these things are perfect habitats for a variety of life, from bacteria and fungi to plant life, invertebrates, birds and mammals. The aim of veteranisation is to replicate these features in younger trees.



Bull Coppice wood

The work also creates gaps in the forest canopy allowing different light levels into woodland floor. A patchwork of tree crowns rather than a more uniform screen allows different lichens and plant species to flourish on the woodland floor.

Tree veteranisation has actually been going for as long as humans have been chopping away at trees – old practices such as pollarding and coppicing have a similar affect – but these were not based on the understanding of trees, habitats and conservation principals. Modern understanding of trees and their physiology have led us towards less damaging pruning practices. I see it as an ongoing experiment, as is the case with many types of conservation work where the affects may take decades to play out.

How did you go about choosing which trees to work on in our woods?

Choosing the most suitable trees was the biggest head-scratcher of the whole project. There are some older trees in the woods that are beginning



Joe Leaper at work

to show some veteran features, which is great, but it's a slow and evolving process. We chose to work on younger trees with the aim of leapfrogging this older generation, creating veteran features that will become habitats over the next few years. The older cohort will continue to reach that state naturally over a longer period of time. Oak and birch are the predominant species in the woods, so we chose to work on those.

We selected healthy trees with no obvious structural faults. Healthy, structurally sound trees are more likely to withstand the impact of the work and will also take longer to develop these veteran features naturally than their less perfect neighbours.

And how did you go about the work itself?

We used a variety of techniques, some of which are well known, others still a little experimental. We removed the tops of the trees and allowed the wood to rip and tear as much as possible. We also used chainsaws to sculpt the tops to give a jagged and rough finish to create lots of pockets for water and debris to accumulate. Lower branches were ripped off in a similar manner (often referred to as coronet cuts).

We created v-shaped channels running down the trees to mimic lightning strikes. These expose a lot of wood and potentially create water channels, all of which will encourage decay and the moving-in of micro-organisms. We mimicked woodpecker holes by boring out small holes in the tree with a small chainsaw. Over time the surrounding bark will begin to occlude over the hole, leaving a smaller entrance and a nice cosy hole behind for smaller bird species to nest in.

We also created bird and bat boxes. But, rather than screwing boxes onto

the tree, we actually cut a slice of tree out. We then cut this slice down to leave the outer edge, took a small strip off the top or bottom, then re-attached this piece, creating a cavity in the tree with an entrance for birds and bats to access. So in the short-term we are creating a nesting habitat and in the long-term this will begin to decay, creating a larger cavity in the tree allowing different organisms to make a home in there as well.

How have you found doing this work?

Veteranisation is exciting work. To allow a large branch to rip and tear itself off the tree is, by its nature, quite unpredictable – we use caution and patience to reduce risk as much as possible. There is also a creative element, as we try to replicate natural wounds through our coronet cuts. Sculpting the top of a tree, tied on with ropes, secured in a harness, chainsaw in hand, is quite a unique experience!

I understand why some people might view this type of work as environmental vandalism, and I feel a degree of conflict and remorse when we cause harm to healthy young trees. However, when the focus is shifted to the wider woodland and its overall ecology and biodiversity, this is a worthwhile intervention. It's an amazing privilege to do work like this, where the chain of events we begin will continue to roll on for decades into the future.

Dam Mire Update

This time last year we were asking for your help to expand Dam Mire Wood in Threlkeld. Thanks to your generous support, work should – by the time you read this – have started on the new bridge that will cross Kiln How beck. We also plan to take down the dividing fence between the two pieces of land in the coming weeks, meaning visitors can easily explore the full site.

The bridge means that we can now do even more for nature at Dam Mire. We have purchased two nest boxes for dippers and pied wagtails to go under the bridge, to encourage the birds to nest. The bridge will also allow us to get a mini digger on site in future, when we have the go-ahead to put in some ponds and scrapes to add more biodiversity. Make sure you keep an eye on our Land Manager's Diary, available on our website, for further updates.



View over Dam Mire

Help Us Look After Our Cumbrian Rainforests

Temperate rainforests – also known as Atlantic woodlands – are defined by high rainfall, humidity and mild temperatures. These exceptional conditions allow mosses, ferns and lichens to cloak trees and rocks, creating landscapes found in very few places on Earth.

Historically, these woodlands covered around 20% of the UK. Today, that number is less than 1%. That's why we're asking you to help us launch an ambitious project to restore a precious Lake District rainforest we've been gifted.

Over the last two years, our successful restoration of Bull Coppice and Resp Haw woods have shown what is possible. As a result, we are being entrusted with an adjoining woodland, expanding our stewardship to 72 acres of potential temperate rainforest in the Rusland valley. We now have a powerful but time-sensitive opportunity to bring this rainforest back to life. With your support we will boost biodiversity, lock away carbon, and safeguard one of the UK's rarest ecosystems. To do this we need detailed habitat assessments, species monitoring, veteran tree care, glade creation, and invasive-species control.

Please support our Rainforest appeal today: www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/rainforest-appeal



Championing the Commons

Policy officer Amanda McCleery explains how *Friends of the Lake District* helps keep the commons of Cumbria thriving.



Little Asby Common © George Carr Media; Mardale (inset)

Commons are essentially unfenced, open spaces. They are a remnant of the medieval manorial system, whereby the lord of the manor owned the whole of the land, but local farmers were allowed to make use of the manor's wasteland for activities such as grazing. Nearly one third of all English commons are found in Cumbria. In fact, 16% of the county's total land area is common land.

Despite the name, commons are privately owned spaces. For example, *Friends of the Lake District* owns Little Asby Common in the Westmorland Dales. Commoners are those people with 'rights of common' over the land, largely linked to a specific property and listed in Common Land Registers held by county councils. Grazing is the most well-known right of common but there are several other recognised rights, such as estovers – all about cutting bracken or underwood for fuel, building repair, or animal bedding. Many commons are located on the fells above hamlets and villages, and many upland hill farms in Cumbria rely on the right to pasture on common land as they have insufficient land next to the

farm (inbye land) for all their animals throughout the year. Since the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act, registered common land has also become open access land. This means everyone can enjoy recreation on foot across these spaces.

There are wide-ranging benefits of common land, as shown in our 2023 multiple capitals assessment of Little Asby Common. They provide vital grazing for livestock, and the farms in turn support both local businesses and services. They provide a home for wildlife and habitats, with 21% of England's SSSI area being common land. They absorb rainfall – 'slowing the flow', and contributing to clean water. The grassland, trees and peat bogs all help to store carbon. 82% of commons are in protected landscapes and commons are a key reason for the World Heritage Status of the Lake District National Park. 11% of Scheduled Ancient Monuments are on commons too. Hefted flocks, communal gathers and shepherds' meets are all part of the shared land management of commoning. This cultural heritage is an important part of the social fabric of upland communities.

Making a Difference on Commons

At *Friends of the Lake District*, we have been championing these important upland landscapes throughout our long history. In addition to owning and managing Little Asby Common, we lobbied national government as part of the drafting of 2006 Commons Act, and supported the return of hefted flocks to the Cumbrian commons after the 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak.

Our 'behind the scenes' commons work is making a difference too and our input into Mardale is a good example of this. We attended a site visit to this common, above Haweswater, with the RSPB and Local Access Forum back in 2023, in order to discuss the proposal for several fenced enclosures for tree planting and six research plots. Next, we wrote to the RSPB with our requests and last year we responded formally to the Planning Inspectorate. This all resulted in the RSPB agreeing that they are

responsible for removing all the fencing at the end of the scheme and that they will not apply for renewal of the fencing when the scheme finishes. They have also moved the top fence line of one of the enclosures further down the slope, so users will not feel hemmed in when walking between two Wainwright summits, particularly as there is already an existing fence up there. And, following our concerns, they have agreed to treble the distance between the western fence line of another enclosure and the popular Gatescarth Pass byway that links Haweswater with Longsleddale.

In responding to the Planning Inspectorate on applications for temporary fencing on common land, we thoughtfully consider all aspects of public interest – namely nature conservation, conservation of landscape, public access, and protection of heritage. And we are seeing some of our suggestions being taken on board in their decisions.

When fencing was proposed at Little Langdale and Greenburn Commons, the Planning Inspectorate agreed to our request for a time period of 15 years. We suggested this duration in order to give new saplings, in harsh upland conditions, longer to become established and thus avoid the need for a future application to renew the fencing. They also accepted that the fencing should be plain, rather than barbed wire, as it is designated open access land.

Ongoing Challenges of Common Farming

With no current bespoke agri-environment funding for commons, these ancient spaces face serious threats. So much so that the filmmaker Sarah Beddington, normally reporting on war zones, created a piece exploring the challenges faced by upland hill farmers on commons. Her powerful 20-minute film *Common Ground* is heartbreaking and inspiring in equal measure. Definitely worth a watch. We've included a link to it on our website. Visit www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/commonground.

Meathop View Improved

Over the winter, SP Energy North West removed a long stretch of poles and wires at Meathop, within the Lake District National Park. This follows work done in 2022 to take down other wire clutter, and means that 2km of overhead line have been dismantled from this open coastal landscape popular with both local walkers and cyclists with its views over Morecambe Bay to Arnside Knott.

Friends of the Lake District has always campaigned for the reduction of wire clutter on the landscape since we were founded in the 1930s. In 2005, following our lobbying of the energy regulator, Ofgem introduced an allowance that enabled regional electricity companies to place overhead wires underground in protected landscapes. Since then, over 145km of poles and wires have been removed from National Parks and National Landscapes in the North West, 58km of that being within the Lake District National Park itself. The Meathop scheme forms part of the current £6.5m programme that SP Energy North West is now undertaking.

Tracey Cuthbertson, who oversees the undergrounding schemes for SP Energy North West in Cumbria, said: "We're delighted to be able to enhance the local landscape by removing these power lines and poles, so everyone can enjoy this beautiful part of Cumbria.

"Our electricity network is vital to ensure our customers across the North West receive a reliable power supply to their homes and businesses, but we do understand that sometimes it can impact the local landscape. We're committed to working with the communities in which we operate, and we continue to work closely with the Lake District National Park Authority to help further protect this stunning area."

Also over the winter, *Friends of the Lake District* responded to a detailed Ofgem consultation on the next five-year period (2028 - 2032). Overall, we stressed the importance of undergrounding for both improving the view and climate resilience, and requested that funding is increased so undergrounding can be expanded to include heritage sites outside protected landscapes. We also asked that there is environmental representation on any new independent stakeholder group that might be established in the future.



Lines coming down at Meathop © SP Energy North West

Protecting Peaceful Places



Head of planning, Lorayne Wall, updates us on work to map tranquillity across the National Park.

You may have read in earlier editions of *Conserving Lakeland* that we have been working with Wild Land Research Limited and Lune Geographic to create a method for assessing tranquillity in the Lake District – essentially asking “where are the peaceful places?”

Being able to access peace and quiet, calmness and natural surroundings is crucial for our health and well-being. It also provides opportunities to really understand, enjoy, and immerse ourselves in the Park’s special qualities.

The tricky bit though is that tranquillity is about how a place makes us feel. It’s very subjective, and that makes it hard to measure. This also means it’s difficult to defend when threatened.

At the court case relating to the proposed Zip World development at Elterwater, the judge made the comment that ‘tranquillity can’t be measured’, suggesting it is impossible to make a case for whether something would or wouldn’t impact on tranquillity. In a national park, where opportunities for ‘quiet enjoyment’ is one of the identified special qualities, and where tranquillity is a key characteristic of the landscape, it is vital that peace and quiet can be measured and monitored.

The idea of this research then wasn’t to identify and broadcast where the remaining quiet, calm and peaceful spots are, but to establish a method of identifying and assessing them in a defensible way. It also had to be a way that could be readily repeated in future, so that changes can be measured over time, meaning we can demonstrate where decisions are affecting tranquillity, whether positively or negatively.

The research began by mapping known fixed elements within the National Park. These elements, which affect how peaceful, calm and tranquil a place can



Little Langdale Tarn © Alan Hassey

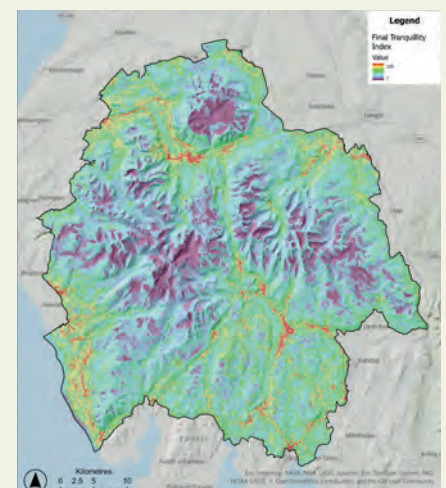
feel, were informed by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). They include factors known to have a negative effect for most people, such as roads, built-up areas, and high recreational use, and those known to have a positive effect, such as water, open views, and woodland. Each factor was assigned a weighting, then various digital geographic tools were used to calculate the impact of each factor in any given location in the National Park. A visualisation of this impact was then created on a map by assigning a colour to the figure generated.

The second part of the research involved the public who took part in an exercise to identify which places in the Lake District they considered peaceful or tranquil. These results were also mapped, enabling us to test and corroborate the results of the first stage.

The results of the first stage of the research and the public participation closely matched each other. In both cases, the areas identified as most peaceful, calm or tranquil are mainly in the remote high fells and isolated valleys, where there is least exposure to features that detract from peace and tranquillity, while the areas

identified as least calm and peaceful align with major transport corridors and tourist hubs.

Although this is what we expected, this work means that we are now able to provide firm, objective evidence of the level of peace and tranquillity for any given part of the Lake District. This is vital when we’re working to protect the places that are peaceful from proposals that will harm them (or seeking to ensure that tranquillity is not further eroded in other areas), as well as when we’re calling for more nurturing and regenerative approaches to managing the Park.



Tranquillity map

We've already begun to use the research, sharing it with relevant organisations so that it can inform their work, including the Lake District National Park Authority and the Lake District National Park Partnership, so that it can be referred to in decision-making and the drawing up of the new management plan for the Park. For example, the research shows the stark impact of roads, transport routes and traffic on the peacefulness of an area, further backing the case for a transformative approach to transport in the Park.

We'll also use the evidence in our own planning responses, to influence both planning proposals and local and national planning policies, and in other work we are involved in such as piloting a method to monitor wider landscape change.

Planning and Policy Updates

Planning Process Changes

In December 2025, the Government launched a consultation into changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF guides Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans (which must be in accordance with it) and is a material consideration for local authorities when determining planning applications. We submitted a formal response to the consultation and our head of planning and policy Lorayne Wall was also part of a regional, cross-organisational round table discussion with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Royal Town Planning Institute.

We welcome a number of the proposed changes to the NPPF, such as the strengthened requirement for a vision-led approach to transport and stronger restrictions to limit the opportunities for developers to water down contributions (such as for affordable housing). However, we have concerns regarding the wording of a number of policies and

the fact that the Government has missed opportunities, for example to better connect the NPPF with Local Nature Recovery Strategies, to deal with issues such as light pollution and to address the growing numbers of second and holiday homes within national parks (and the impacts on communities that this creates). It is anticipated that the final NPPF will be published in the summer.

Planning Outreach Programme Continues

Over the next few months, we'll be continuing our planning outreach programme, delivering workshops to town and parish councils, and other organisations. During these sessions, we discuss the planning system and explore the Development Plan and Development Management processes through a combination of presentations and interactive exercises. The sessions are also an opportunity for organisations to discuss local planning matters and seek advice from our head of planning and policy and planning officer. The response received from parish councils we worked with in 2025 has been overwhelmingly positive and we look forward to helping other organisations this year. If you would like more information about the programme, please contact planning@fld.org.uk.

Windermere Gateway

The Windermere Gateway is a large project involving new housing, businesses and transport connections. In January, Westmorland and Furness Council declared that the housing scheme, including the anticipated outline planning application, cannot proceed to the timetables set out by Homes England to enable the necessary highways infrastructure

improvements. As a result, the grant agreement, which would have enabled this infrastructure to support the housing, will not be taken forward at this time. We understand that the Council is seeking alternative sources of funding. We hope that this will not impact the viability of the project and result in a subsequent reduction in the proportion of affordable housing delivered. We will continue to follow the evolving plans closely and take opportunities to comment on the detailed aspects of the plan to push for the best possible outcomes for the landscape and community.

Hodbarrow Nature Reserve, Millom



We have recently provided comments to Cumberland Council on proposals for a new visitor centre at Hodbarrow Nature Reserve in Millom. Whilst we support the development aims in principle, we have several concerns regarding the proposed level and type of external lighting so close to important protected habitats on the Duddon Estuary. We urge anyone currently drawing up proposals which include external lighting elsewhere in Cumbria to consider the guidance within the Cumbria Good Lighting Technical Advice Note (available on our website) at the earliest stage.

Keep up to date with all the planning and policy news by signing up to get our monthly *Postcard from the Lakes*. See www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk for details.

Roanhead Saved!

In November last year, a decision was reached about proposals for a large development near a precious piece of coastline on the Furness peninsula... and the result couldn't have been better.



Campaigners celebrate outside Kendal Town Hall

When plans for a holiday resort at Roanhead Farm, nestled between Barrow and Askam-in-Furness, first surfaced, the reaction from local residents, and environmental and conservation organisations, was swift and passionate. The prospect of thousands of visitors descending onto the tranquil beaches – home to rare habitats and the endangered natterjack toad – galvanised a coalition determined to defend this unique corner of the Furness peninsula.

Friends of the Lake District joined forces with the National Trust, Woodland Trust, RSPB, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, and Cumbria GeoConservation. Together, we issued a joint statement outlining our objections, emphasising the proximity of the proposed development to internationally protected sites.

The campaign against the development also quickly became a grassroots movement. Local residents formed the Save Roanhead group, rallying communities from Askam and Ireleth, Dalton, and Barrow. We joined forces with the group to ‘Make a Stand on the Sand’ on 11 July 2023, a powerful demonstration of opposition that drew widespread media attention.

We also helped empower the local community. As Claire Gould from Save Roanhead recalls, “I’d not heard of *Friends of the Lake District* before. When they explained how *Friends* sometimes fought planning applications – not just in the Lake District, but around Cumbria – it felt really important. There was a sense that the development was a done deal, and that local people didn’t have a say in it. But the knowledge that we had a chance, and that people could have a voice and make a difference, gave us the confidence to keep going.”

The decisive moment arrived on 24 November 2025, when the Westmorland and Furness Council Strategic Planning Committee met at Kendal Town Hall. The committee agreed with their planning officer’s recommendation and rejected the application for the development.

Speaking after the result, Dan Taylor, general manager for the National Trust, reflected on the significance of the victory: “Sandscale Haws is one of the most important coastal sites in the National Trust’s care. The committee has voted to refuse a very large planning application which would pose an existential threat to this very special and fragile ecosystem.”

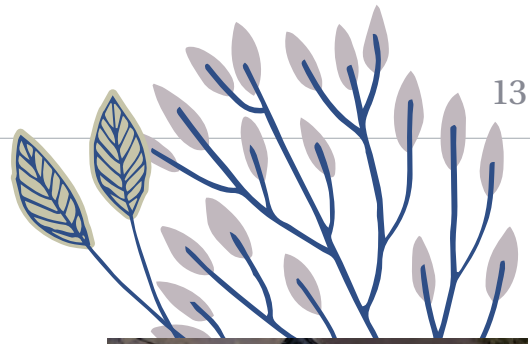
Claire expressed profound relief: “Not only would the proposed development have had a terrible impact on important wildlife habitats in this area, but also an impact on local people like me who currently enjoy the tranquillity and remoteness at Roanhead. I know there are thousands of people who will be overjoyed at this news. We’ve saved something really special.”



Make a Stand on the Sand, Roanhead

The story of saving Roanhead is a testament to the power of collaboration. The refusal of the holiday resort is more than a planning decision – it’s a victory for nature, local people, and the principle that, together, we can make a difference.

Note from the Chair



Welcome to 2026. The snowdrops are out, the first daffodils are emerging, and a light dusting of snow sits on Skiddaw and the Northern Fells. Although we may have escaped the worst of the winter weather, continuing strong winds and power disruptions remind us that undergrounding cables, as you can read about on page eight, is not only visually beneficial, but vital for community resilience.

The consultation on the new Lake District National Park Management Plan closed on 31 January, and I am grateful to our policy and planning team for their detailed response. This plan will shape how we protect the Lake District and support those who live and work here. We will continue to work with the Lake District National Park Partnership to ensure the issues we have raised are properly addressed before the final plan is published.

The Lake District is a national treasure, open for all to enjoy, but that right comes with responsibility. Enjoyment of this landscape cannot come at the expense of others, livestock, or the natural environment. Our recent work addressing litter, fly-camping, and illegal parking – and our collaboration with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner on these issues – has received welcome attention in the media. The efforts of our volunteers, our contributions to Fix the Fells and Hedges and Edges, and the way we manage land on your behalf, all help care for the landscape.

We remain committed to promoting greater use of public transport and cycle routes to reduce reliance on private vehicles. The environmental and visual damage caused by car use is clear, but the impact on residents – farmers unable to access fields, communities trapped in traffic, and emergency vehicles delayed – is equally significant. The scarred verges along the Whinlatter Pass show that

more car parks are not the answer. We welcome the rejection of the Cat Bells car park proposal and applaud the alternative: parking in Keswick and travelling by ferry. The success of the Ullswater shuttle bus, and services covering Buttermere and Wasdale, shows that visitors will choose alternatives when they are convenient. We will continue to champion proposals that help people arrive at and explore the Lakes using public transport.

Local communities are an essential part of the Lake District's character. They help shape the landscape and care for it on behalf of the nation. I am pleased that we are leading research into the impact of holiday homes and Airbnbs. While recognising the financial contribution made by those using holiday accommodation, there is a significant impact on those who want to live locally and on local services. Hospitality businesses are particularly affected, often having to bus people in or house staff in rooms that could otherwise be used by guests. We continue to work with partners to promote affordable, sustainable housing that fits within existing settlements and to encourage the use of empty or derelict properties. Linking new housing to improved public transport offers an opportunity to strengthen rural communities.



The Derwentwater ferry © Catherine Illsley



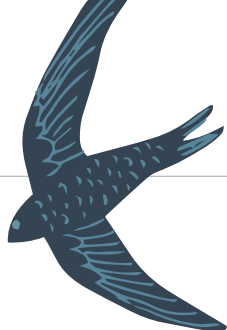
Malcolm Boswell

Managing the Lakes requires sustained funding. Our report *Who Pays for the Lake District?* helped spark a necessary debate about how the National Park is paid for. Government funding to England's national parks has been cut by around 40% over the last 15 years, and the Lake District National Park Authority suffered yet another 9% cut this financial year. Local authorities face similar pressures. The argument that central government should return business rates to fill the funding gap has not succeeded. A levy of some kind is clearly needed, a view supported in last year's YouGov survey we commissioned. Current funding is not enough to provide the improved public transport network visitors need or to maintain the landscape. We therefore welcome the Government's proposals to provide the option of a bed tax in addition to a visitor vehicle levy. How funds are raised and distributed will be complex, but *Friends of the Lake District* is well placed to lead the discussion and working collaboratively with other organisations will enhance the decision-making process.

As always, my sincere thanks go to our members, volunteers, staff, and trustees for your continued support and dedication to protecting the Lake District.

Malcolm Boswell, Chair

Events



For more information about any of these activities, and to book, visit www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/events or contact the *Friends of the Lake District* admin team on 01539 720788.



Great Cumbrian Litter Pick

Friday 27 & Saturday
28 March 2026

This annual county-wide event brings people together to take community action for a cleaner Cumbria. Whether litter picking whilst you walk in the fells, or joining an organised litter pick group, it's easy for everyone to get involved. Register your litter pick with us on our website.



Monthly Guided Walk

Our popular monthly guided walk programme starts on 22 April with a walk around Great Asby. Please see our website for booking details.



Country Shows

We'll be at the following events this year, so come and say hello if you're passing!

- 📍 Country Fest, Westmorland Showground
30 & 31 May
- 📍 Festival of the Lake, Windermere Jetty Museum
27 June
- 📍 Penrith Show, Brougham Farm, Penrith
18 July
- 📍 Westmorland Dales Festival, Kirkby Stephen church green
26 July
- 📍 Ambleside Sports, Rydal Road
30 July
- 📍 Keswick Show, Pump Field, Braithwaite Old Bridge, Braithwaite
31 August



Dry Stone Walling Competition

Saturday 30 May 2026

📍 Barkin House Farm, Gatebeck (just off B6254 after Old Hutton)

Bringing competitors from across the country to showcase this traditional craft, this is a brilliant day out for all the family, whether you're attending as a competitor or spectator.



Volunteer Workparties

Our programme of volunteer workparties is available on our website. Volunteers of all skill levels are welcome to come along and join us. You may get wet and muddy, but there'll be cake, laughs and some wonderful scenery.

Dates for Your Diary

Our **Annual General Meeting** will take place on Friday 25 September (TBC).
Our **Fell Care Day** returns on Thursday 12 November.
This year's **Kirby Lecture** will take place on Friday 27 November (TBC).
More details of these events will be published on our website in the coming months and in the next issue of *Conserving Lakeland*.

Don't Forget to Gift Aid it

Gift Aid is a Government scheme that allows charities to claim back tax on donations made by UK taxpayers. For those eligible, every pound given to *Friends of the Lake District*, whether through an appeal donation or membership fee, we get an extra 25 pence from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), at no extra cost to you. These additional funds help us continue vital conservation work and strengthen our campaigning efforts.

£10 → giftaid it → £12.50

Eligibility

To allow us to claim Gift Aid, donors must complete a Gift Aid declaration form to confirm they are a UK taxpayer and provide their full name and address. This can be done online, written, or verbal – you will find Gift Aid forms on our website and on our appeal donation forms. Donations must be made from your own money, and you must have paid enough tax in that financial year to cover all Gift Aid being claimed on your donations. If not, you are responsible for paying any shortfall. A Gift Aid declaration covers any donations made now, in the future, or any that have been made in the last four years to *Friends of the Lake District*.

We cannot claim Gift Aid on some types of donations and payments, including (but not limited to):

- Donations from companies.
- Donations made on behalf of someone else.
- Donations from sales of products, for example from a fundraising cake sale.
- Shop purchases.
- Event ticket purchases.
- Gift Memberships or Corporate Memberships.
- Donations processed through tax-efficient payment schemes, including payroll giving or Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), as tax relief has already been claimed.

If you're unsure about your eligibility, you can find helpful guidance at: www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid

Member Benefits

There are specific criteria we must meet to ensure compliance with the Gift Aid scheme, including the benefits we offer our members. Items or activities directly related to our charitable aims are unaffected. These include receiving *Conserving Lakeland*, webinars, talks / lectures, and guided walks. As we are the Cumbrian branch of CPRE, we also offer discounted entry to historic Cumbria attractions through our partnership.

From April you will notice some changes to the member discount benefits. To ensure we remain compliant, our benefits must not exceed the value of the tax we can claim back. Percentage-based discounts can affect eligibility, so these benefits will be discontinued after 31 March 2026. We appreciate your understanding as we make these necessary adjustments.

Do I need to inform you if my details change?

If you have an active Gift Aid declaration, please contact us if:

- You want to cancel this declaration.
- You change your name or home address.
- You no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you're eligible and haven't already signed a Gift Aid declaration, we'd be grateful if you would consider it and make your support go even further.

Should you have any queries, please contact our admin team: info@fld.org.uk / 01539 720788.



Friends of the Lake District

A New Look

In this 100th edition of *Conserving Lakeland*, you may have noticed that the *Friends of the Lake District* logo has had a makeover. You'll see more changes in future social media posts, letters from us, leaflets, and in this magazine.

We're also launching a new website at the end of March that will make it easier to see what we're up to and follow the progress of our various campaigns and other work. There may be a short period of disruption when the new site launches. This might, for example, mean the shop is temporarily unavailable – although you'll still be able to buy things such as our landscape gifts over the telephone.

Why these changes?

We're aware that we need to work harder to attract new people and grow our supporter and membership base. The more people we attract, the louder our voice is when we talk about important matters, such as our new Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities campaign. We hope you like the new brand as it's unveiled in the coming months, and that you find our new website a source of useful updates and information. Feedback is, of course, always welcome.

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact our admin team: info@fld.org.uk / 01539 720788.

Signs of Support for Visitor Charging



Head of campaigns and engagement, Jeremy Smith, explains how two announcements towards the end of last year show that our call for a visitor levy is being heard.

If you spend any time talking with residents, rangers, bus drivers, café owners, or the volunteers who care for the Lake District, a single theme emerges: the places we love are under strain. Sewage discharges blight lakes and rivers; carbon emissions rise with every car queue into a honeypot valley; litter and fly-camping scar the landscape; and local communities – hollowed out by second homes and short-term lets – struggle to hold onto the services and social fabric that make life here possible.

Against that backdrop, two developments now on the table could reshape how we pay for and manage the impacts of tourism: a proposal to give local mayors the power to introduce an overnight visitor charge, and a Lake District National Park Partnership report recommending further modelling of a visitor vehicle levy to fund world-class, sustainable travel. Taken together, they sketch a future in which those who visit these landscapes can help to keep them alive – rather than unwittingly eroding the very qualities that draw people here.

Why a Visitor Levy Matters

The fiscal reality is stark. Council tax revenues based on a permanent resident population of 39,000 are inadequate for managing the impact that 18 million visitors have on infrastructure and services in the Lake District. The Lake District National Park Authority gets its own grant from the Government, but this amounts to a mere 26 pence per visitor to the Park. A visitor levy would help to break the cycle of increasing tourism impacts and decreasing budgets available to councils and the National Park Authority.



A visitor vehicle charge could pay for more public transport around the Lake District

The announcement made in the run up to the 2025 Budget empowering local mayors to set an overnight stay charge is an important step towards aligning costs with use. This isn't about penalising enjoyment; it's about making sure tourism pays its way so that the natural environment and local communities can thrive. We have long argued for such an approach, documenting in our 2024 report *Who Pays for the Lake District?* how similar levies across Europe fund maintenance, habitat restoration, and transport improvements without discouraging visitors. Cumbria is set to elect a new mayor in 2027 and it'll be interesting to see which of the candidates standing for election agree with the idea of such a charge. Opposition to the charge often comes from parts of the tourism industry, who warn that any charge risks denting the local visitor economy. Yet evidence

from elsewhere suggests that this fear is overstated: when modest levies are transparently ring-fenced for improvements, visitor numbers remain robust. In fact, given the current pressures, refusing to introduce a levy of any kind may be harmful to the sector because deteriorating experiences (think packed car parks, polluted water, and eroded footpaths) drive visitors away far more than a small nightly fee earmarked for improvements.

Public sentiment is moving too. In the YouGov poll that we commissioned last year, 68% of Cumbrian residents and 64% of past or prospective visitors expressed support for some kind of visitor charge to protect and enhance the Lake District's landscapes. That's not a grudging acceptance – it's a mandate for change rooted in a shared desire to preserve what's precious.

Transformational Travel

While an overnight charge could help fund broad environmental and community needs, a visitor vehicle charge is a mechanism tuned to one of our most acute problems: how people get to and move around the Park. Congestion, emissions, and the sheer footprint of private cars are among the most visible impacts of high visitor numbers. A recent report commissioned by the Lake District National Park Partnership argues for clarity of purpose: set out a vision for world-class sustainable travel to and within the Park, and model how a vehicle levy could fund the infrastructure to make that vision real.

Friends of the Lake District is a proud member of the National Park Partnership which is made up of many organisations, including representatives from the business, community and voluntary sectors, the two Cumbrian unitary authorities and the Lake District National Park Authority itself. In February 2025, a special meeting of the Partnership debated the findings of our *Who Pays for the Lake District?* report and established a 'Task and Finish Group' to explore funding for sustainable transport. By September, that group had finalised its own report calling for a clear vision and detailed costing for a vehicle levy. The authors of the report were unequivocal in their conclusion: "the Partnership faces a choice: whether it wishes to try to work towards the kind of systemic change in the way people travel around the

Park or whether it prefers to continue the current slow, incremental approach, which although constructive, will not deliver systemic change."

A Fork in the Road?

One of the Partnership's roles is to develop a new Management Plan for the Lake District as the current one comes to an end this year. The Management Plan will help guide the decisions made in the coming years about the Lake District and what happens within it. In deciding whether to incorporate the transport group's conclusions into the draft Management Plan, the Partnership opted to water down the recommendations made in the report. Although it agreed an objective to 'improve integrated sustainable travel and reduce dependency on private vehicles by working with relevant authorities to create and deliver a plan for improvements in sustainable and active travel', it declined to adopt the call for transformational improvements – despite this term anchoring both the existing Management Plan and the National Park's own Smarter Travel plan, which commits to 'catalyse transformational change in the way people get to and around the Lake District.' As such, the decision represents a regressive step towards a weaker vision for change at a moment when ambition is urgently required.

This is particularly troubling given the underlying reality: the vast majority of visitors to the Lake District both arrive and travel around by private vehicle. This creates chronic congestion

and widespread unauthorised parking that damages verges, blocks emergency and farm access, and degrades the very landscapes people come to enjoy. And that's before even considering the climate impacts.

The Management Plan went out for public consultation at the end of last year, and the Partnership is now in the process of reviewing feedback. It remains to be seen, as of the time of writing, if the recommendations for properly exploring the case for a vehicle charge and how this might be implemented will be included in the final plan.

As *Friends'* CEO Michael Hill put it in a press release we issued at the opening of the public consultation, "this is a real fork-in-the-road moment for the Lake District. The draft Plan conveys strong ambitions but falls short in its objectives. In effect, it recognises what is needed, but baulks at attempting to deliver it. Unless a stronger transformational intent comes through in the Plan's objectives and targets, we risk a slow drift into a Lake District of overwhelmed infrastructure, degraded landscapes and hollowed out communities."

Ultimately, the question isn't whether we ask visitors to contribute, it's how to do so fairly, transparently, and purposefully. Granting a future Cumbrian mayor the ability to set overnight charges creates one pillar; modelling and introducing a visitor vehicle levy builds the other. Together, they can fund the infrastructure and stewardship needed to protect the Lake District for generations.

Kirby Lecture Generates Lively Tourism Debate

Our annual Kirby Lecture took place in Kendal on 14 November 2025. Chaired by Dame Fiona Reynolds, a panel comprising of Gavin Capstick, CEO of the Lake District National Park Authority, Councillor Louise Dunn, Mayor of Keswick, and *Friends'* CEO Michael Hill debated the topic *Towards the Limits of Tourism?* After some initial input from the panel, a lively debate ensued, with more questions from the floor than could be answered in the time allowed, particularly focusing on the possible benefits and challenges of some form of visitor charge. You can listen to the debate on our YouTube channel (📺 @friendsofthelakes).



Kirby Lecture 2025

Hedges and Edges

Our nature recovery officer, Naomi Walker reflects on the work that's taken place since starting our hedges and edges project and the benefits to nature that hedgerows provide.

Walking in the Lake District this time of year, you may notice delicate clusters of small white flowers on dark thorny branches. These are blackthorn blossoms, and they're usually the first flowers to bloom on British hedgerows, heralding the approach of spring. These tenacious plants are an important food source for invertebrates such as the sloe pug and magpie moth. Our Hedges and Edges project, supported by funding from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), is dedicated to supporting biodiversity and, by planting and protecting flowering species, we can do just that.

By the end of March we will have completed over 2,000 meters of new hedge planting, and blackthorn is just one of the many species we included in our hedge mix. Other flowering species we like to use are wild cherry, crab apple, hawthorn, rowan, and dog rose. With the seasons shifting and flowering times becoming less predictable, it is crucial that our hedge plants are diverse. By including plants that flower and provide berries or nuts at varying times of the year, we make sure there's a constant source of food available for wildlife. It also helps compensate in years when some plant species might be doing poorly due to bad weather or disease.

Hedges also help support a varied 'herb layer' or margin, which may



Volunteers at work planting hedges © Jonny Gios

be occupied by spring flowering plants like herb robert, germander speedwell, and daffodils. Since 1970, the distributions of 54% of flowering plant species have declined, and we have less than 3% of our pre-WW1 wildflower meadows left. Hedges help by creating a favourable microclimate; hedge trees regulate the climate around the plants and protect them from harsh weather. With 85 - 95% of the UK's insect-pollinated crops relying on wild pollinators, it is crucial that we support them and the wildflowers they rely on for survival. Before planting, we encourage leaving 1.5 metres on each side of a hedge and fencing it off, which allows the hedge margin to flourish by preventing livestock grazing or other agricultural activity (such as ploughing).

After a long winter of hedge planting, laying, and rejuvenation, it's wonderful to see the blossoms starting to emerge. But we couldn't have done all this fantastic hedgerow work without our wonderful volunteers and contractors, who have worked tirelessly through all weathers to get new plants in the ground and existing hedgerows laid.



Blackthorn blossom



Hedges and Edges Winter 25/26 achievements: September 2025 - February 2025 in numbers

I hope that, over the summer, we can start running more activities and citizen science events that put the spotlight on our wonderful flowering species.

Jack of All Trades

Jack Ellerby, who first joined *Friends of the Lake District* as a policy officer in 2002, is leaving. He gave us a few reflections on his time here.

Before working for *Friends of the Lake District*, my career was in planning, and I worked for the National Park Authorities for the North York Moors, the Lake District, and Exmoor, where I led on planning policy development, community engagement, and some development management (determining planning applications).

I originally came to *Friends* for a three-month spell to cover a policy officer who was on sabbatical. In Exmoor four great years later, I was missing the Lakes and the north of England, and I applied for the vacant policy officer job at *Friends* and joined in July 2002.

Over 12 years, I covered a range of policy areas and project work, including: energy, forestry and woodlands, transport, Environmental Improvement Grants, national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscapes), the Flora of the Fells Project, and the Hedge Laying and Dry Stone Walling competitions.

After 12 full-on years at *Friends*, I needed a mental break. I'd always loved manual outdoor work, and wanted a career in that while I was fit enough. I set up as a self-employed landscaping contractor in August 2014, carrying out a whole range of work including garden maintenance, tree planting and felling, hedge laying and dry stone walling. I loved every minute, the diversity and working in many beautiful locations, including several jobs on *Friends'* land.

But, after seven years, I was diagnosed with severe Crohn's disease, and doing hard physical work involving bending was putting too much strain on my body. The position of dark skies project officer with *Friends* came up and I was appointed in March 2020. Unfortunately, I started the very day

Covid lockdown kicked off, which wasn't much fun. Still, we organised an online Dark Skies Events Festival, and I was able to take the Dark Skies Cumbria project forward in many ways, changing to dark-sky friendly lighting in a number of villages and towns around Cumbria, organising star gazing and Big Switch-Off events, and writing lighting guidance for new developments. In the last 18 months I've helped to shape and set up the Hedges and Edges project, which is doing great work now with Naomi in post and a good team supporting the project.

Managing life with severe Crohn's disease has been extremely tough – I've had 11 hospital stays and several surgeries. It's sad to be ending my career to better cope with chronic illness, but I'm proud that I'm prioritising my own health over work for the first time in my life!

I'm not leaving the conservation world. When I can I'll be out volunteering on *Friends'* land, and with other conservation groups, and I'll continue running dry stone walling training with the Dry Stone Walling Association and with private clients. This summer I'll be training up my new Cocker Spaniel gun dog, Meg – she's going to be a little cracker like my other dog (her great granny) Bea.



Jack at Sweden Wood, Windermere, 2012



Jack's Proudest Moments at *Friends of the Lake District*

No one is an island, so what I've helped achieve has been with immense support from many wonderful colleagues.

- Getting *Friends'* woodlands back into better management and expanding the number and diversity of woods.
- Introducing conservation volunteering to the organisation and building up the Hedge Laying and Walling competitions.
- Helping get the Lakes and Dales National Park Extensions over the line and forcing the previous government to abandon plans to sell off the public forests, like Ennerdale, Grizedale and Whinlatter.
- Establishing effective project delivery on reducing light pollution and expanding and improving the management of hedgerows across Cumbria.
- Working with such dedicated and passionate people to deliver positive changes in the landscape.

Memories of the Lake District

For our 100th issue of *Conserving Lakeland*, we've spoken to three people who reflect on their connections to both *Friends of the Lake District* and the landscape.

When *Conserving Lakeland* first appeared in the summer of 1983, it marked a quiet but important shift in how *Friends of the Lake District* spoke to its members. According to David Birkett, who helped create the magazine, the motivation was simple.

"Before this, what we had was a newsletter and minutes from meetings – committee reports," he recalls. "But they were a bit stuffy and very internal."

A sub-committee of the *Friends of the Lake District* executive committee looked specifically at communications. Their conclusion was that members needed something a bit lighter, more engaging, and more reflective of why they supported the charity in the first place.

"The idea was to produce something for the members – by the members – that kept people more engaged in what was going on," David says.

That principle shaped the early years of *Conserving Lakeland*. Articles were written by members and trustees, drawing on lived experience of the landscape. As noted in an editorial piece in the first magazine, it was to be: 'a vehicle for membership involvement in shaping and steering current and future campaigns and events.'

The first issue included a piece about how *Friends* was trying to prevent a mass planting by the Forestry Commission on a 370-acre plot situated on the lower valley slopes of the Duddon Valley. In a bid to prevent the plantation that 'would be highly obtrusive when seen from the surrounding fells,' and which faced a huge public outcry, the executive committee offered to buy the land. The offer was rejected and planting began where 'the rude, ugly scarring of the ploughing and drainage ditches is evident for all to see.'

Another article, A View from Ambleside, noted the growing problem of traffic

in the town, while the first in a series of features looking at the various lakes in the National Park explored Ullswater, its history and recent conservation efforts. Book reviews included the walking guide *Wandering in Bowland* by A. A. Lord and *Oak Swill Basket Making in the Lake District* by Mary Barratt, in which the '19th Century photographs of the basket makers of Furness are bought to life by the author's enthusiasm.'

David contributed a series of guided walks to the magazine under the pseudonym 'Bootlegger'. The first of these was a 15km walk starting at Troutbeck church, heading up to Garburn Nook and on up to Yoke, Ill Bell, and Froswick fells before reaching the highest point of the walk, Thornwaite Cragg. It's here that Bootlegger notes: 'this popular summit is often scarred by man's unwanted litter.' Sound familiar?

Friends of the Lake District member Richard Hargreaves joined us for the Morecambe Bay walk last year. In an email exchange with Anne-Marie Rooney, our fundraising and membership officer, he revealed his close family ties to the charity.

My father was involved with *Friends of the Lake District* from its earliest days in the mid 1930s, and was one of those who helped shape the organisation in its formative years. He served as treasurer and worked closely with figures such as the charity's founder, H. H. Symonds.

Alan Bennet Hargreaves (1904 - 1996), known as A. B., was a prominent figure in the climbing community. Through climbing and walking, he developed an intimate knowledge of the fells, and this knowledge underpinned his belief that the landscape must be actively protected.



6

THE LAKES: Ullswater

by IAN DYER

In this series on the various lakes within the National Park, I'm outlining some of their attractions, including their hinterlands. In some cases, we've been involved in conservation moves to protect them. There may be future issues affecting them and in which case, I'll outline them.

GLENRIDDING
I'm starting with my personal favourite, Ullswater. It is the second largest lake

known Birkett Fell adjoining Hart Side. Birkett Fell was formerly nameless and was dedicated to the memory of the late Lord Birkett who as President of the Society was a true champion on our behalf.

WATER ABSTRACTION
In the early 1960's, the then Manchester Corporation Waterworks (since incorporated into North West Water Authority) applied to take sub-

Countryside Act, the Lake District Special Planning Board decided to control the speed of power craft on Derwent Water, Coniston Water and Ullswater (amongst others), considering these craft as "incompatible with the natural environment!" and the other lake activities. After a public enquiry in which the Society was involved, and which included fierce opposition to the proposed restrictions led by the



A. B. Hargreaves climbing

Walking in the hills was a regular and unavoidable feature of my childhood (and that of my three sisters). I enjoyed some of the walks, but these were not always comfortable experiences. My father believed firmly that “nothing is any good unless it hurts”, and that “walking on the hills in bad weather was good for the mortification of the flesh”. I remember some very wet walks!

For many years, my father served on the Lake District National Park Special Planning Board, where he was an outspoken advocate for protecting the landscape from inappropriate development. He took this role seriously, visiting sites and engaging in often contentious debates.

One story he liked to tell was how, after the war, there was going to be a car rally over Walna Scar, which had already been ploughed up badly by tank manoeuvres. He and a friend objected to the idea of the pass being used as a racing track, so they decided to drive along it themselves, but in the opposite direction to the rally so as to disrupt it.

I was made a life member of *Friends of the Lake District* by my father, a gesture that has ensured a lasting connection. His legacy, to my mind, lies in the belief that the Lake District is something to be cherished, understood, and actively defended – an ethos that *Friends of the Lake District* continues to uphold.

94-year-old Zelma, who's been a member of *Friends of the Lake District* for over 40 years, tells the story of a life-changing encounter on the top of Blencathra.

I'm originally from the middle of Ireland, but I spent most of my childhood in Dublin. When I was 17, I started going away with the Holiday Fellowship (now called HF Holidays). I went all around England with them – and beyond. As far as my mother was concerned, it was safe because you were in a house, not of hostel, although she used to tell me I was never to take food from strangers. I loved to travel and to climb. When I was 18, I was even invited by some Holiday Fellowship people to go to Austria. This wasn't long after the end of the war and my mother took a lot of persuading until she said I could go!

Not long after that, I started coming to the Lake District. I worked in a hospital, and I would leave work at six and get what was called the Mailboat from Dublin. That would get me to Holyhead in Anglesey, and then I caught the train up to Lancaster, and then up to Carlisle, and then it was a bus or coach into the Lakes.

One time, I was staying in Keswick in a Holiday Fellowship house. We took people out on trips and, because I'd been to the area several times, I was given a group of walkers and we went up Blencathra via Sharp Edge. When we got to the top, there were two young men sitting there and, as we were walking past, I fell over the feet of one of them. I said: “You should learn to keep your feet yourself!”

We had a chat, and it turned out he was staying in a nearby hostel. He asked me my name and where I was going to be the next day. Then he appeared at the Holiday Fellowship house that night. The manageress took pity on us and eventually let him stay in the men's dormitory. And a fortnight later, by the end of the holiday, I was engaged to him. I was 30 by this time, but my mother still had plenty to say about it!

Irvine, my husband, was from the Peak District area and his father was

one of the people who was part of the mass trespass on Kinder Scout. His father actually climbed with Andrew “Sandy” Irvine (the British mountaineer who disappeared with George Mallory on Mount Everest in 1924). They were best friends apparently, and my husband was named after him.

Irvine and I married within six months, and I moved to England. We travelled all over because of his job as a primary schoolteacher. He retired early due to ill health though, and when people asked: “Where are you going to go?” we both said: “As near to the Lakes as we can afford!” We eventually moved to Grange-over-Sands, where I still live.

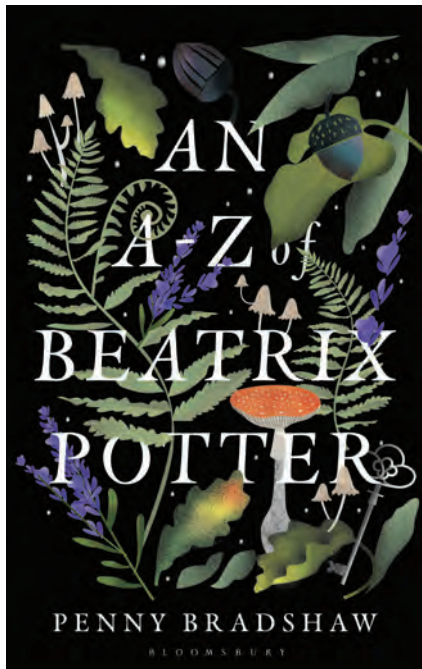
I suppose part of the reason I love this area so much is that it was one of the first places that I was able to go travelling. And, of course, because I met my husband here.

Our children always complained because we came to the Lake District every year for our holidays. But all three started walking and climbing. One of my nine grandsons is a forester, and at one stage he was planting trees at the bottom of Blencathra. He told me that he'd planted some in the shape of a Z and I to mark the place where I first met Irvine.



Zelma at her home in Grange-over-Sands, and her husband Irvine

Author Q&A



An A-Z of Beatrix Potter
by Penny Bradshaw

Penny Bradshaw's new book explores Beatrix Potter's works via a series of short, interlinked essays that take their starting point from 26 key words and phrases.

Where did the idea come from to explore Potter's work in this way?

*I have been teaching Beatrix Potter's work for over 20 years, so much of the preliminary thinking which underpins the book was developed in seminars with students at the University of Cumbria. A few years ago, I began to write some short pieces about aspects of her work which particularly interested me and I started to think about putting them together. The inspiration for the A-Z format was the publication of *An A-Z of Jane Austen* by a friend and former colleague of mine, back in 2023. As soon as I read that book, I knew that the format would be perfect for the way I wanted to approach Potter. It allowed me to explore diverse and eclectic aspects of her work, but also to reveal patterns and interconnections across the wider body of her writing.*

In putting this book together, was there anything new that you discovered about Potter that surprised you?

Something that emerged strongly was her sense of humour. In some biographical accounts, Potter comes across as a rather unhappy figure and, in others, as quite stern and serious. However, from her earliest journal entries to her final letters, what really came through was her tendency to see the funny side of things, and to observe the world around her in a lively, humorous and satirical way. I found myself laughing out loud at some of her passing (and often very biting) observations on people she encountered. She was no respecter of status in this regard, as we see in her account of the art critic John Ruskin who, she observes, was 'not particularly clean looking' and walked around the gallery with his trouser leg caught up in his boot.

Have you always been a fan of Potter's work, and what do you love about it?

*Beatrix Potter's *Tales* were certainly part of my own imaginative repertoire as a young child, as they have been for so many generations. Having children of my own reawakened my love of her work as I read her stories to my sons. Reading her books aloud in this way*



Penny Bradshaw

made me realise that her words are just as important as her beautiful illustrations. She took a great deal of trouble over the rhythms and patterns of the language in the books which are designed to engage different ages of readers. Looking back on my own childhood reading, my favourite books were often those in which a particular (real or imagined) geographical landscape was effectively and richly evoked, and I think that this is one of the main reasons why I was drawn to her work from an early stage.

What can her writing about nature and landscape teach us about the world we live in now?

*I think the answer to this question is probably one of the most important threads to emerge from the book overall. In reading across Potter's wider body of work, I show how she brings an ecological awareness to the page via her words and her artwork. From her earliest writings to her last, Beatrix Potter was attuned to the external natural world – its seasonal patterns, non-human creatures, landscapes, flowers and trees. Her late book, *The Fairy Caravan* (1929), is a particularly important text in this respect, and a real culmination of Potter's environmental writing for children.*

*Several chapters in the A-Z explore the way in which Potter's work helps to develop environmental understanding in her young readers. The importance of this sort of education (or rather its absence) was drawn attention to in recent years by the controversial revisions to the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* which removed words such as 'acorn', 'bluebell', and 'conker', on the grounds that they were no longer in such regular use as to merit inclusion. Potter's stories help to keep these words alive in children's imaginations and are therefore an important resource in helping to encourage 'nature literacy' in the 21st century.*

Book Review



Hedgelands

Christopher Hart

Christopher Hart's *Hedgelands* is an illuminating and thoroughly enjoyable examination of one of the countryside's

most overlooked features: the humble hedge. What begins as a study of hedgerows soon becomes a compelling argument for why they matter far more than we realise.

Hedgelands's greatest strength is its accessibility. Even readers with no background in ecology, habitats, or land management will find it easy to

follow. Hart breaks information down into bite-sized sections, explaining ideas clearly and often with a touch of humour. This makes the book feel inviting rather than academic, making it a quick yet insightful read.

Throughout *Hedgelands*, Hart builds a strong case for the ecological importance of hedges – as wildlife corridors, biodiversity hotspots, and living links between fragmented habitats. By the end, it is difficult not to agree with Hart that we need more hedges, both in rural and urban landscapes, if we are serious about restoring nature and saving our close-to-extinct animals like the hedgehog, and various farmland and woodland birds.

Where is it?

The 'Where is it?' photograph in the last issue of *Conserving Lakeland* was of Pasture Beck Valley from Threshthwaite Mouth, photographed by Susan Broad. Well done to Virginia Castick for supplying the correct answer and thank you to everyone who took time to enter.

This month's photograph is from the cover of Issue One of *Conserving Lakeland*. So, where is it? If you know, please send the answer along with your name and address to christian.lisseman@fld.org.uk. Or post your entry to 'Where is it?' Competition, Christian Lisseman, Friends of the Lake District, Murley Moss, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7SS. One winning entry will receive a copy of '*Hedgelands*' by Christopher Hart, reviewed above.



If you have a photograph that you would be happy to share for a future competition, please send it to christian.lisseman@fld.org.uk with this subject line: 'Where is it? photo'.



© George Carr Media

Friends of the Lake District volunteers planting hedges at Hebblethwaite Farm in January 2026

What makes the book particularly inspiring is its emphasis on practical action. Hart does not stop at explaining why hedges matter; he offers ideas for how a hedge revolution might begin at a local level. His suggestions, particularly around involving schools and communities, make the challenge of environmental restoration feel achievable rather than overwhelming. Hart does not ignore the economic cost and challenges of a full hedge revolution, however he points out there is a longer-term gain to be had from expanding our hedge mileage – his key lesson being: 'What's good for us is good for nature, and what's good for nature is good for us.'

Hedgelands is an engaging, hopeful read that leaves you better informed and quietly motivated.

**Review by Chris Murphy
from The Book Brewery**

Many thanks to The Book Brewery for supplying a copy of *Hedgelands* for this month's 'Where is it?' competition. The Book Brewery is a licensed bookshop café in Ambleside (on Lake Road), offering a wide range of books as well as space to sit with a coffee or a glass of wine in the evening. Check their website and social media pages for up-to-date opening days and times. They also offer their space up for events and community groups. Visit thebookbrewery.co.uk to find out more.

Support Us

  Friends of the Lake District
 @friendsofthelakes   @friendsoflakes

There are plenty of ways that you can continue to support our work protecting Cumbrian and Lake District landscapes:



Volunteer

Learn new skills and meet new friends while making a tangible difference to the landscapes you love.



Spread the Love

Share your passion for the landscape by inviting your friends and family to join our community and become members too.



Support our Appeals

Help us restore important Atlantic rainforests in Cumbria. See page seven for details.



Buy a Gift

Our landscape gifts mean you can give a loved one something meaningful that supports our precious landscapes.



Join our Campaigns

We're calling for fairer housing to make stronger communities in the Lake District. See page four for details.



Honour a Loved One

Keep memories alive by donating in their name, ensuring that their legacy lives on through the landscapes they loved.



Leave a Gift in your Will

Include a gift in your Will to *Friends of the Lake District* and help protect Cumbrian landscapes for generations to come.



2025 competition entry by Andy Simpson

Photography Competition 2026

Our annual photography competition will launch in April, and we can't wait to see your images of the stunning Lake District and Cumbrian landscapes. We welcome and encourage images from all different times of day, seasons and weathers. Delve into your back catalogue or hit the fells with your camera and send your images! See our website for more details about how to enter.

CPRE at 100: Loving the Countryside, Then and Now

100
YEARS



Campaign
to Protect
Rural England

In 2026, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) marks its centenary, celebrating 100 years of standing up for the countryside. CPRE was born at a time of rapid change. New roads, housing and industry were transforming rural England, often without thought for landscapes, wildlife or local communities. From the very beginning, CPRE brought people together to argue for something simple but powerful: that the countryside matters, and that decisions about its future should serve people, nature and place. They played a central role in securing England's National Parks and Green Belts, protecting hedgerows and footpaths, shaping planning law, and standing up for landscapes under threat.

As it reaches this milestone, CPRE is reflecting on its achievements and looking to the future. The centenary is a call to action: CPRE invites everyone to 'Love Your Countryside' – to protect what matters, restore what's been lost, and connect with the places that sustain us. Throughout 2026, CPRE will host events and campaigns, including a national 'Letter to England' initiative, essays reimagining rural life, and a month-long celebration encouraging local action.

CPRE's strength lies in its grassroots movement and local partnerships. Volunteers, members, and partners shape the countryside from the ground up. The enduring relationship between CPRE and *Friends of the Lake District* exemplifies the value of local voices in protecting cherished landscapes. *Friends of the Lake District* is proud to represent CPRE in Cumbria.

As Roger Mortlock, Chief Executive of CPRE, notes: "CPRE's story has always been shaped by strong local partnerships, and our relationship with *Friends of the Lake District* is one of our longest-standing and most valued. From standing together against damaging development in the 1930s to working on shared challenges today, we're proud of what we've achieved together – and of the role local voices continue to play in protecting the landscapes people care about most."

As we look to the next hundred years, CPRE's message is hopeful and clear: together, we can create a countryside that is beautiful, resilient, and loved by everyone.

For more on CPRE's history and centenary plans, visit www.cpre.org.uk/celebrating-our-centenary.