



The magazine of Friends of the Lake District
Free to members

Conserving Lakeland

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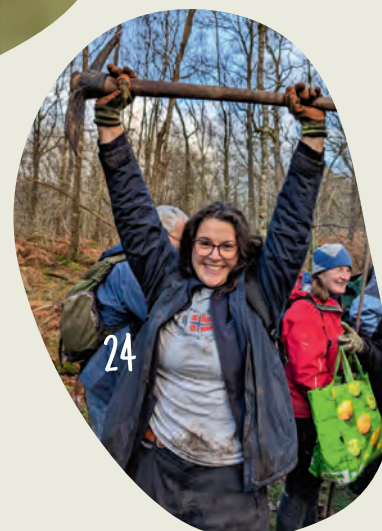


**Has it been a cleaner,
calmer summer?**

Our litter and fly-camping
survey returns

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Conserving Lakeland is your magazine – tell us what you'd like to see in it! Send comments to the address below or email christian.lisseman@fld.org.uk

Friends of the Lake District

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Meet our new chief executive

We're pleased to announce the appointment of Colin Walker as our new chief executive officer. Colin, who lives in Langwathby, formerly worked at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, where he was responsible for their transport policy. He was previously the lead cycling delivery manager at British Cycling and has over 20 years' experience working in policy and campaigning at several organisations, including Save the Children, Mind, and War Child UK.

Colin joins us at a time when we are busy campaigning for fairer housing in the National Park, continuing our work tackling the litter and fly-camping that scars the landscape, and building on the successes of our Hedges and Edges project. You can read all about this work, and much more, in this issue of Conserving Lakeland.

When his appointment was announced at the end of June, Colin said: "Having spent my entire life enjoying and benefitting from everything that Cumbria has to offer, I am delighted to have the opportunity to give something back. I cannot wait to get started, working to ensure that the county's beautiful and world-renowned landscapes are protected and enhanced for the benefit of those that live and visit here today, and for generations to come.



The sheer popularity of our county inevitably gives rise to challenges, and we will continue to campaign and fight for measures that will help mitigate these challenges, for the benefit of our beautiful fells and lakes, the communities that live amongst them, and those that come to enjoy them."

Colin is expected to take up the role of CEO later in the summer and his appointment follows the retirement of Michael Hill, who stood down at the end of May. You can read Mike's piece, *Farewell from the fells*, on the following pages.

Thanks for your continued support of Friends of the Lake District.

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Become a member and join thousands of like-minded people in looking after this unique and beautiful place.

Visit: www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/join-us or contact info@fld.org.uk | 01539 720788.

Already a member? Once you've read this magazine, please pass it on to a friend and encourage them to join us.



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

New look and feel for Conserving Lakeland

You'll notice that we've made a few changes to Conserving Lakeland following our rebrand earlier this year. Alongside a few design tweaks, we've changed the paper that the magazine is printed on. Rest assured that the paper is still sustainably sourced. We'd love to hear your thoughts on these changes and to know what kind of things you would like to see in future issues of Conserving Lakeland. Email christian.lisseman@fld.org.uk.

Farewell from the fells

As he prepares to step down as CEO of Friends of the Lake District, Michael Hill reflects on landscape, change, and the paths we choose, during a favourite walk up Wetherlam.

This year I made the difficult decision to retire from full-time work, so I am leaving Friends of the Lake District at the end of May. While working with the team to ensure the charity continues to thrive, and supporting the search for my replacement, I've been reflecting on my time as CEO and everything we achieved together.

I've done a lot of this thinking where my brain works best, and my body feels at home - out on the mountains. Last weekend I did one of my favourite circular walks, from a book I've used for decades - *Great Mountain Days in the Lake District* by Mark Richards. He describes a lovely loop up Wetherlam from Coniston, and as I walked it with my dog Gem, everything seemed to fall into place. I made peace with my decision to move on.



As we left Coniston, climbing steeply up Yewdale Fell, I could hear the bustle of human activity in the valley below. The town was preparing for the Bluebird K7 festival, recently scaled down after concerns about traffic - a reminder of why transport remains such an important campaign issue for Friends of the Lake District.

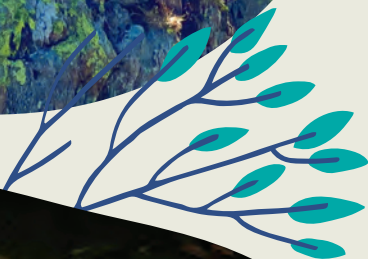
But as I reached the top of the first climb, the traffic noise and church bells were replaced by the song of a cuckoo, the burbling of a beck, and the calls of the Herdwicks - reminding me that despite 18 million visitors a year, there are still tranquil places in the Lake District landscape.

In fact, on the top of that first plateau it felt like I was the only human on earth, but there were plenty of bees, butterflies, willow warblers, northern wheatears, and tree pipits to keep me and Gem company. (I know this thanks to the brilliant 'Merlin' app which identifies birds and makes every walk an ornithology lesson.)

As the majestic Helvellyn range gradually came into view far away to the north, I was confused by some new fencing that had appeared since I last walked this route. Fences on fell-tops are often intended to protect areas of regeneration, but they can also interrupt rights of way and become visually intrusive. It's a perfect example of the kind of 'landscape balance' issue that Friends of the Lake District often faces - complex and nuanced, with no easy answer.



By kind permission of Mark Richards / Cicerone Press



And as we descended into Tilberthwaite, there was more evidence of those landscape tensions. Deep knobbly tyre-tracks showed that trail motorbikes had been through recently (this was a footpath, so they were riding illegally). Tilberthwaite is a place where 'green lane driving' is hotly contested - whether the legal or the illegal kind.

The walk took us up past the abandoned slate quarries, reminders of the landscape's rich industrial heritage, and then we started to see much smaller tunnel entrances, nothing more than holes vanishing into the hill. Like its busier neighbour (Coniston Old Man), this mountain is a piece of Swiss cheese, bored through over centuries by miners on their hands and knees, searching for elusive veins of copper. The Lake District is a landscape shaped by geology, ice, water, nature, farming, industry, visitors, and many other influences.

I always forget how scrambly the last section of this route is - up chimneys and over precarious boulders until you hit the summit, with its incredible 360-degree view. Gazing down on Elterwater Quarry while we ate lunch, I reflected on the battles we've fought during my time at Friends. If I had to pick one campaign I'm most proud of, it would be breaking the taboo around visitor levies and pushing that debate into the mainstream. I hope that will prove to have the biggest long-term benefit for these landscapes, generating much-needed income to offset the impacts of mass tourism.

For the first time ever walking this route, we managed to follow the little-used path down past Black Sails and Levers Water, as outlined in the book. We'd previously missed it and descended via other routes - but I was glad to suddenly spot the cairns marking the path.

For me, navigation cairns are a great example of a 'light touch' human relationship with mountain landscapes. They are not only profoundly useful (they've saved us several times in the snow when paths are obscured) but they are also a communal geographical record, created stone by stone by generations of travellers, and largely unnoticeable unless you're looking for them. They say to me "This is the way, fellow traveller. You're on the right track. You'll be ok."

Hopefully I'm on the right track with my next phase of life. Look after yourselves, and thank you for walking beside us, as loyal Friends of the Lake District.

Michaela



Our litter and fly-camping survey returns

We're re-running our survey into litter, fly-camping and anti-social behaviour to see if recent efforts to tackle the issues are having an effect.

As the spring bank holidays came and went, reports of litter, illegal camping, inconsiderate parking and other anti-social behaviour started reaching us - both via social media posts and through emails from those affected. With that in mind, at the end of May, we relaunched our short survey to take a snapshot of people's experience of littering, fly-camping, and anti-social behaviour in the National Park.

Last year, we received 785 responses to our survey which ran over the summer months. The majority of those who responded (82%) were permanent residents of Cumbria. 97% of respondents said they had encountered litter, 80% reported wild-fires or barbecues, and 77% fly-camping. The lasting effects of illegal camping and leaving rubbish in the landscape aren't just visual. Litter and the relics of barbecues and fire pits can kill wildlife and livestock, damage soils, leach into water systems, trigger wildfires, and cause health hazards for people too.

Since last year's survey, there are signs that those responsible for visitor management are giving these issues more attention. New Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) have come into force in parts of the National Park, and stories of crackdowns and fines have appeared in the local and regional press. Through this year's survey, we want to understand if the commitment to ramp up enforcement is having an effect on the ground.

The findings of the new survey will be used in campaigning for improvements to policy and practice relating to visitor behaviour: more frequent visits to fly-camping hotspots, tougher action on those responsible, and better preventive measures.

Jeremy Smith, our head of campaigns and engagement said: "We know from our survey last year that there is genuine concern and frustration about the scale of littering, inconsiderate parking and fly-camping across the Lake District. We welcome the fact that these issues are being taken more seriously, but it's vital that words translate into action and results. As the summer season ramps up again, we're hoping this survey will shine a spotlight on the problem areas that still exist, while also highlighting where tougher enforcement is making an impact."

By mid-July, as this edition of Conserving Lakeland was being put together, we'd already received over 680 responses to the survey. We won't be able to get a full picture of the current situation until the survey closes at the end of August, but there are some interesting things to note about the responses we've already had.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given their profile, the most commonly cited locations of anti-social behaviour were Keswick, Derwentwater, Ullswater, Buttermere, Ambleside and Windermere.





In our 2025 survey, when asked how the situation compared to the previous year, 42% of respondents said they felt things were significantly worse. This figure is currently, at the time of writing, at 28%. Does this mean we are turning a corner? Perhaps it's too early to tell. This year, 61% of respondents said that they did not report what they had encountered to anyone else. This is slightly higher than last year (58%). Of course, all these people have made a report to us, so it's not as though they don't care. Anecdotally, an expectation that nothing will be done is as much part of people's reasoning as unclarity as to whom to report to.

Meanwhile, the efforts to manage visitor behaviour by agencies such as the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA), local councils, and Cumbria's Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner office continues. LDNPA is looking at how it can "influence the influencers" on social media, while the PSPOs continue to be enforced and interactions with offenders publicised. Cumberland Council has an online reporting tool where people can log incidents of litter and fly-camping, giving details of when and where it is happening.

Julie Edmondson, from the litter pick and campaign group the Keswick Binfluencers, says the councils' new reporting portal offers hope that things may improve: "Last year we saw some of the worst littering and fly-camping the Lakes has faced - abandoned tents, fire pits, rubbish left in beauty spots, and huge pressure on volunteers and the landscape. This year, we're more hopeful. With the new PSPOs in place and stronger clampdowns on fly-camping, there is now improved reporting, more patrols, and clearer enforcement. We know the problem won't vanish, but with people using the reporting portal and the authorities now working more closely with communities, we're optimistic this summer will be cleaner, calmer, and kinder to the Lakes."

Our survey will run until after the August Bank Holiday weekend. Anyone, regardless of whether they are a resident or a visitor to the Lake District can take part via www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/litter-survey. We'll report on the full findings in the next issue of Conserving Lakeland.

Lakes Litter appeal

The Lake District should be a place of beauty, peace and escape. But for many people who live here, or who love these landscapes, summer brings something different: litter-strewn lay-bys, abandoned tents, blocked roads, and dangerous campfires that leave communities and visitors feeling frustrated, ignored and unsafe.

Friends of the Lake District has led the way in demanding tougher enforcement, better visitor management and serious, coordinated action from those responsible for protecting the National Park. We continue to elevate the voices of local communities and put their concerns directly in front of decision-makers.

There are some encouraging signs, including new Public Space Protection Orders and tougher enforcement in some hotspots. But much more needs to be done, and without continued public pressure, progress could easily stall.

That's why we need your support today with our Lakes Litter appeal. Your donation will help us:

- **Expose the true scale of the problem through research and surveys**
- **Campaign for stronger enforcement and better visitor management**
- **Amplify the voices of communities and volunteers**
- **Hold public bodies to account**

We cannot allow a "free-for-all" approach to tourism to damage the landscapes, wildlife and tranquillity that make this place so special.



See the enclosed letter or visit www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/lakes-litter-appeal to make a donation.

Together, we can help keep the Lake District a place of beauty, nature and enjoyment for everyone.

Letter of agreement

Here's an update on our campaign calling for fairer housing to help build stronger communities.

Since its launch in March, we've had a tremendously positive reaction to our Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities campaign that seeks to give a fairer chance to people wanting to live and work permanently in heavily-touristed areas like Cumbria. Across our national parks and protected landscapes, local people are being priced out of the communities they call home. A surge in the number of second homes and short-term holiday lets has reduced properties available for permanent residents and caused house prices and private rents to rise far beyond wages. In turn, communities are being hollowed out as school rolls shrink and businesses struggle to recruit workers and remain viable year-round.

Our petition calling for, among other things, a mandatory registration and licencing scheme to give local authorities the power to refuse new holiday lets where a significant proportion of properties are already used as such, continues to gain support. We've also been out and about across towns and villages within the Lake District to speak to local people who are affected by these issues, and to visitors who may not be aware of the problems.

In May, together with parish councils and community groups from across Cumbria, and supported by allies from other parts of England, we published an open letter to Steve Reed, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The letter called on him to take decisive action against the proliferation of short-term holiday lets and second homes.

The letter starts: "We, the undersigned organisations, are united in our belief that the proliferation of short-term holiday lets and second homes is having a distortionary effect on the housing market in and around tourist 'hotspots', with significant negative impacts on local communities. House prices have increased and the number of properties available for long-term rent has

sharply decreased in areas like the Lake District, North Yorkshire, Devon and Cornwall as well as in cities like York. Properties given over to holiday lets and second homes are underused and often empty. The consequent decline in an area's permanent population renders local schools and services unviable, all the while local people are priced out of the areas that they grew up in and have little choice but to move away, taking with them the very fabric of the community."

The open letter shows the depth and breadth of feeling within Cumbria and beyond, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has since sent a written reply, stating: "We recognise that more needs to be done and are considering what additional powers we might give local authorities to enable them to respond to the pressures created by short-term lets."

Louise Dunn, recent Mayor of Keswick and local councillor, was one of those who supported the letter. "Communities in the National Park need meaningful action from the authorities to find homes for people living here permanently and to deal with the particular issues we face related to housing," she said. "We need a licensing system for holiday lets to provide a mechanism to reduce how many there are in particular areas and stop nuisance behaviour and we need to tax holiday lets appropriately."



Read the full open letter

You can read the full open letter on our website and watch a video of Louise Dunn talking about the problems of holiday accommodation in Keswick on our YouTube channel. Visit www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/fairerhousing to find out more and to add your name to the petition for fairer housing and stronger communities.



 @friendsofthelakes

Photo: Our campaigns officer Aila takes to the streets to call for action

Blueprint for Cumbria's mayor

With less than a year to go until they are elected, our policy officer Kate Willshaw outlines what we'll be asking of candidates hoping to be Cumbria's first mayor.

The people of Cumbria will elect a mayor for the first time on 6 May 2027 to head up the newly formed Cumbria Mayoral Combined Authority. Over the next year, we'll be quizzing all of the candidates on their views about environmental and community issues in Cumbria and pressing them to recognise the importance of the county's landscape for communities, businesses, and the health and well-being of residents.

From 2027, mayoral elections will take place using the Supplementary Vote system where voters have the opportunity to rank their first and second choices for mayor. This means that the votes of more people count towards the result and candidates secure office with broader backing from their community.

Why is it important for Friends of the Lake District to engage with the mayoral election candidates? The mayor will have powers and money to influence things that have an impact on Cumbria's landscapes including the environment, climate change action, transport, housing, health, communities and the preparation of a plan that coordinates housing distribution, economic growth, and infrastructure for the county. The mayor will also have the power to raise a visitor levy on holiday accommodation across part or all of Cumbria - funds that should be used to mitigate the impacts of tourism on the county.

We want to determine each prospective mayor's position on issues that will have an impact on the landscapes, environment and communities of Cumbria. This is so that we can put together a picture of which mayoral candidates, if elected, would deliver the best outcomes for the county's landscape. It will also help Cumbrians to be confident in what they will be voting for.

Some of the things that we're asking candidates to commit to are listed below, and you can read the full list on our website:

- Prioritise housing for local people, specifically by supporting our "Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities" campaign, for example.
- Improve public transport for both residents and visitors, set out how they will secure additional long-term sustainable funding to deliver improved transport across the county.
- Embed support and funding for the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership.
- Implement a visitor levy to address the invisible burden that tourism imposes on the landscape and communities of Cumbria and the Lake District.
- Lead the development of a model of regenerative tourism so that the visitor economy has a positive impact on Cumbria.
- Develop a county-wide strategy to deal with the blight of anti-social behaviour such as fly-camping, littering, and illegal parking.
- Call for secure funding for existing Higher Level Stewardship schemes and address the lack of funding for commons, and back farming methods with a reduced impact on the environment.
- Ensure that all residents of Cumbria, especially those in the most deprived areas, get access to green spaces to improve their health and well-being.

Our 2026 Kirby Lecture will look at what a Cumbrian mayor might mean for the county and the National Park. It takes place on Friday 27 November at Ambleside Parish Centre. Book your tickets on our website: www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/kirbylecture2026.

From the land we look after

Friends of the Lake District's land manager, Jan Darrall, gives an update on two big projects currently on the go.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of members and supporters last year, exciting work has continued in the extension field at Dam Mire Wood, Threlkeld. In March, our contractor Dan installed a new access bridge over Kilnhow Beck, providing direct access from the car park and allowing us to bring a mini digger or quad bike onto the site if needed.

We have also installed two unusual bird boxes on the underside of the bridge for dippers and pied wagtails, which like to nest over water. These birds can be choosy, so it may be a year or two before any move in.

Dan also removed the fencing between the new and old sites, added two ditch crossing points and installed new entrance gates. For the first time, visitors can now walk around the whole site.

We are awaiting a funding decision on our planned ponds and scrapes. We are also looking at adding tree planters and, if planning allows, extending the path from the new bridge to the existing route.

Meanwhile, there is so much happening in our woodlands in Rusland Valley that it is hard to keep up. Resp Haw

and Bull Coppice were gifted to us some years ago by local resident David Archibald. Shortly before he died, he also gifted us his other nearby woods in the valley – Woodcock, Birch Parrock, Jonny Brow and Hall Brow. After a three-year transfer process, the woods became ours in late April. Together, they add 26ha, giving us a total of 33ha, or 81 acres, of woodland to care for. The Archibalds kindly allowed us access to the woods as part of our two-year rainforest project with the charity Plantlife, so surveys have already confirmed that they are Atlantic rainforest.

We have ambitious plans to make these woods more diverse and resilient. As regular readers of Conserving Lakeland will know, Atlantic rainforests are ecosystem hotspots, supporting plants, lichens and bryophytes found in no other habitats. This rainforest habitat once covered 20% of the UK's western coasts; today, it covers around 1%. We have a real opportunity to restore these woodlands and rejuvenate a significant area of rainforest.

We have been blown away by the generosity of members and supporters who donated to the restoration. Our Big Give Earth Raise appeal, which matched every £1



Volunteer thanks

Our annual volunteer awards took place in Staveley at the end of April. This was our chance to thank our dedicated team of volunteers who not only help look after our land through regular workparties and property watching, but also support us at events and shows, sit on the board of trustees, and lend a hand in the office.

The winner of our Outstanding Volunteer of the Year award this year was Marion Brown who supports our work with the rainforest woodlands in Rusland.

All our volunteers are stars, and we genuinely could not do our work without this help, so thank you all!

Photo: Marion and her volunteer award



Photos: The new bridge at Dam Mire; volunteers at Rusland Woods

donated, reached its £20,000 target with two days to spare. We are also delighted that Westmorland and Furness Council has awarded us nearly £15,000 to support rainforest restoration.

Deer browsing on natural regeneration and newly planted trees is a major challenge. We cannot fence every wood, so we plan to create large enclosures, around 30-40m across. We are also trialling Trico, a sheep-fat-based product sprayed onto new tree shoots to deter deer with its smell and taste.

The woods are fairly evenly aged, with few young or understorey trees such as hazel, rowan and hawthorn. These shrubbier species are valuable for wildlife and will help make the woods more diverse. We will also need

support from tree surgeons to thin selected areas and remove invasive beech.

Bracken is another problem in these woods; in places, it can grow as tall as a person. We are planning experimental work with Adam, our neighbouring farmer, including bracken rolling and, we hope, short periods of cattle grazing to help trample it down.

Finally, we need to put a monitoring programme in place to track what this fantastic work is achieving, and more surveys will be needed. If you would like to get involved in rainforest work, register to volunteer on our website: www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/volunteer.

Keep up to date with all the latest news from our land via Jan's weekly Land Manager's Diary on our website.



Note from the chair

Welcome to this edition of Conserving Lakeland and our annual review which provides us with the opportunity to share the range and complexity of the work being delivered by our staff and volunteers.



I would like to start by recording the thanks of trustees and myself to our former CEO Michael Hill, who retired at the end of May. Mike played a massive role in ensuring that the structure, operations and governance of Friends of the Lake District are fit for purpose, today and for the coming years. Having ensured that the foundations have been put in place, the decision to retire did not come easily to him. I am certain that you will join me in thanking him for his service and wishing him all the best for the future.

Our new CEO, Colin Walker, will be joining us at a time when there are several key issues to progress. On water, we need to work with like-minded organisations to campaign for our proposals to the Secretary of State to strengthen the legislation and increase funding packages to stop the pollution of the lakes and rivers across the Lake District by water companies, commercial activity

and poor agricultural practice. On transport, the start of the tourist season has seen the return of parking issues with robust enforcement of parking restrictions being required to allow buses, public service vehicles and those who work within the area to be able to use the roads. We will work with the local authorities and the Lake District National Park to deliver on Cumbria Tourism's Destination Plan to double the number of visitors arriving by bus, coach and trains to 15%, and to increase active and sustainable travel to 40% of all journeys. On communities, we will maintain the momentum created by the launch of our Fairer Housing campaign which balances the recognition of the economic benefits brought by holiday homes and Airbnbs with the need to maintain and regenerate our communities. If you have not already done so, please go to our website and sign our Fairer Housing petition.

It is good to see that the Lake District National Park and local authorities have responded to our representations regarding visitor management and sustainable tourism by introducing a Visitor Management Action Plan for 2026. The plan contains a number of measures including the provision of better transport options, strengthened parking controls, greater use of Public Space Protection Orders and a hotline run by Cumberland Council to report incidences of fly-camping and anti-social behaviour.

The arrival of the new CEO will dovetail with the mayoral elections for the Cumbria Combined Authority in May of next year. We look forward to working with the new mayor and will willingly share our evidenced based knowledge to help them make decisions which are best suited to protecting the unique beauty of our landscape and the communities who live within it. We are the only organisation who has commissioned research into issues such as: Who Pays for the Lakes, Measuring Tranquillity, and Visitor Accommodation in the National Park.

The above is only a very quick run through of the numerous issues and areas of activity delivered by our team. The support and protection we provide would not be possible without the funding provided by our members through membership fees, gifts, legacies and corporate funding. Thank you for your continued support and for being a true friend of the Lake District.

Malcolm Boswell, Chair

Photo: Blue green algae in Windermere © Matt Staniek



April 2025 - March 2026

Our year in review



It's time for a look back at some of the highlights from the last year at Friends of the Lake District.

A year in policy and planning

It was another busy year for the planning and policy team, providing expert advice to partners and members. We responded to 26 planning applications, over half within the Lake District National Park, focusing on landscape (including dark skies), alongside nature, housing affordability and heritage.

Our responses represented less than 1% of applications across Cumbria, with only 15 objections. Even then, we offered constructive solutions. Of those objected to, 40% were withdrawn or refused, while only 8% were approved without addressing our concerns - demonstrating clear impact. A notable success was the refusal of the Ullock Moss car park near Catbells.

We also responded to seven applications relating to fencing on common land and made six additional responses, including one regarding the forestry road at Thirlmere. We engaged in 13 policy consultations, including national reforms, and wrote to the Government three times, on hedgerows, rivers, and commons funding respectively.

We also developed a new method to measure tranquillity, strengthening protection of peaceful places, and launched a planning outreach programme to support local councils.

Dark skies

We continued to provide lighting advice through planning responses, alongside delivering popular talks and events. We also contributed to guidance on reducing obtrusive light. Through the Go Wild Under the Stars project, we worked with local schools to highlight the link between dark skies and nature, installing light pollution (TESS) monitors as part of the international Stars4All initiative. We also supported councils to design improved residential lighting schemes, reducing impacts on biodiversity and the health and well-being of communities.

Our campaigning year

A major success was the refusal of plans for 230 lodges at Roanhead in November 2025, following a strong campaign with local communities and partner

organisations. The development posed significant risks to the internationally important Duddon Estuary and Sandscale Haws National Nature Reserve.

We were disappointed to lose the judicial review of the Elterwater Quarry adventure attraction, which we believe will increase traffic and undermine tranquillity in the Langdales. We will continue to monitor impacts and hold the developer to account.

We advanced the case for a visitor levy, commissioning YouGov research showing strong support (68% of Cumbrians and 64% of visitors). Government plans announced in November 2025 to allow the mayor for Cumbria - to be elected in May 2027 - to raise a visitor levy represent a major step forward.

Our first survey on visitor pressures (785 responses) highlighted widespread concerns about litter (97%), fires (80%) and fly-camping (77%), with most respondents reporting worsening conditions. This evidence helped drive stronger enforcement measures.

In March 2026, we launched our Fairer Housing, Stronger Communities campaign to address the growing loss of permanent residents from Lake District communities arising from the proliferation of short-term holiday lets and second homes.

A year on our land

Following a successful fundraising campaign, we began work on the extension of Dam Mire Wood in Threlkeld last year which has involved a new bridge and removal of the fencing between the two sites. We also continued to work with the charity Plantlife on the rainforest restoration programme in our Rusland Valley woodland. This work included surveys, creating tree enclosures, trialling tree veteranisation, and dry stone wall repairs.

We joined the Cumbria Seed Bank project to help reverse the decline of rare grassland wildflowers using our Mazonwath hay meadow. We also showcased the value of our land through a second Multiple Capital Assessment (MCA) of Hows Wood in Eskdale. This 8ha native woodland was found to deliver £2.28 million annually across natural, cultural, social, human and financial benefits, building on our first MCA at Little Asby Common.

Photo: Celebrating victory outside Kendal Town Hall over the Roanhead decision

April 2025 - March 2026

Our year in pictures and numbers

35 volunteer
workparties

94 new
volunteers
welcomed

20m dry
stone wall
restored



30ha
woodland
cared for

3,797 volunteer hours

Volunteers helped look after our land, worked in the office, supported us at events, and gave their time as trustees.

Photo: © George Carr Media



44 events

We held guided walks (such as the one in Tebay pictured above), dark skies talks and switch-offs, litter picking, conservation days, rural skills competitions and training, hedge planting, and webinars.



1,100 wildflowers

Volunteers help plant wildflowers at Mazonwath as part of the Cumbrian Seedbank project.

Photo: © George Carr Media



11 virtual tours

We launched four new virtual tours last year, and you can now visit 11 beautiful pieces of land that we look after from the comfort of your armchair!

Photo: © Colin Aldred / Aerial Artwork



145 children

We worked with children from schools across Cumbria as part of our Go Wild Under the Stars project.



1.4km overhead lines undergrounded

We continued to work with SP Electricity North West. Overhead lines between Meathop and Ulpha were removed and placed underground, enhancing the coastal landscape.

Photo: © SP Electricity North West



The annual **Kirby Lecture** took place in Kendal Town Hall. Gavin Capstick, CEO of the Lake District National Park Authority, and Louise Dunn, a Keswick councillor and local mayor, took to the stage with Michael Hill for a discussion about tourism.



We started sponsoring Patrick, a **Fix the Fells** ranger, contributing to this impressive partnership project that's helping stop erosion and keep paths open.



250 bags of litter collected

Litter, fly-camping and inconsiderate parking made the headlines last year. 785 people filled in our questionnaire about litter and fly-camping in the Lakes. In March, we coordinated the annual Great Cumbrian Litter Pick. 34 groups took part, with over 300 volunteers collecting more than 250 bags of litter.

Photo: © Keswick Binfluencers



Hedges and Edges

Our Hedges and Edges project, supported by funding from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), continued to grow, with a programme of planting days and training events helping to restore important boundary habitats and support biodiversity.

2,961m
of hedgerow
rejuvenation
via laying and
restoring

2,049m
new hedges
planted

17,860
trees planted

25 sites
worked on

42
people trained in
hedge laying

27 event
days

107
volunteers



Photos: Hedge laying competition
© George Carr Media; students tree planting © Jonny Gios

April 2025 - March 2026

Fundraising and finance

In April 2025 we ran our first Big Give, Green Match Fund campaign for our Dam Mire restoration project and, alongside our regular appeal, raised a total of £26,358 for this important project. In July 2025 our Hedges and Edges Nature Recovery appeal raised £9,655 and our Christmas Fighting Fund appeal raised £15,850.



Our 2025 sale of calendars, cards and other merchandise raised £26,733.

We were pleased to welcome 167 new members last year.

We are so grateful for everyone's support and donations.



Thank you

Thank you to our members, supporters and partner organisations for all their support during the last 12 months. From generous donations to the hard work of our volunteers, we are grateful for all the contributions that we've received to help us protect and enhance Cumbrian landscapes.

We also wish to express our sincere gratitude to those who left a gift to Friends of the Lake District in their will: Irene Adams, David Baldock, Clifford Bell, Cedric Briscoe, Derek Brooks, Bernard Casby, Mary Cooper, Elizabeth Eyre, Margaret Gaffney, Diana May Hall, David Huxley, Joyce Jacobs, Mary Kent, Paul Langley, Grahaeme Lauder, Peter Lucas, Brian Mahle, John David Mathews, Gloria Muchowski, Barbara Peel, Walter Pennington, John Pickard, Eileen Richmond, Jean Savage, Pat Schwarzenbach, Roger Stephenson, and William Willink.

Leaving a lasting legacy is a wonderful way to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the tranquillity and beauty of these special places. If you'd like to know more about leaving a legacy, please contact anne-marie@fld.org.uk.

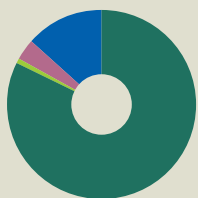
We'd also like to thank and honour donations made in the memory of: Doreen Allinson, Jeremy Bourne, David Cutforth, James D Foster, John Iddon, Joyce Langtree, Anthony Morris, Judith Helen Moy, John Pickard, Christopher David Roberts, and Margaret Wilson.

Mrs Smith donated in memory of her son.

Mr Whitehead donated in memory of his son.

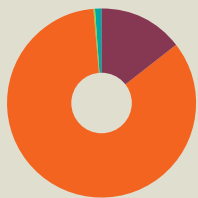
And finally, we'd like to thank our benefactors for their continued support: Catherine Ashton, John Berry, James Brockbank and Louise Ronane, John Campbell, Richard Coates, Philip Cropper, Margaret Haigh, John Harris, Peter Hughes KC, John and Margaret Jackson, Brian Leigh-Bramwell, Rosamund Macfarlane, Matt and Taysia Malone, Jim and Sue Martin, Elizabeth Reddaway, and Andrew and Michelle Stewart.

Total income £788,340



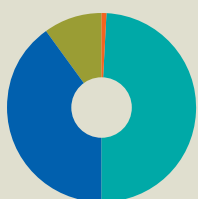
- Income from donations, legacies, membership subscriptions, and grants £649,899
- Charitable activities £6,591
- Trading activities £26,733
- Investments £105,117

Total expenditure £1,535,175



- Generating voluntary income £223,539
- Charitable activities £1,292,245
- Trading activities £6,097
- Investment management £13,294

Total funds / Net assets as at 31 March 2026 £6,444,068



- Intangible assets £60,461
- Tangible assets (including land) £3,172,881
- Investments £2,581,347
- Net current assets £629,379

The figures above are extracted from our 2025/26 accounts. A full annual report containing the audited accounts will be made available to download from www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk and the Charity Commission website from the beginning of September 2026.

Membership matters

Invitation to the 2026 Annual General Meeting

We're pleased to invite you to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Friends of the Lake District. This is an opportunity to come together to celebrate our achievements and help shape our next five-year strategy.

Date and time: Friday 25 September 2026, 11.00am - 4.30pm

Venue: Victoria Hall, Main Street, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria, LA11 6DP

11.00am: Arrival and refreshments

11.30am: Welcome and AGM

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Confirm the minutes of the 2025 AGM
3. Chairman's report
4. Annual report and accounts
5. Questions
6. Any other business

Please note only members can vote in the AGM. All AGM papers will be available in advance at www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/agm2026. If you would like paper documents on the day, the documents in alternative formats, or you wish to vote by proxy, please contact us on 01539 720788 or email us at info@fld.org.uk.

1.00pm: Lunch

1.45pm: Review of the year and questions to the panel

3.00pm: A choice of the following sessions:

1. Walk and talk - Join us for a walk and informal discussion along the promenade, exploring key issues around planning and landscape protection.
2. Strategy workshop - Help shape our next five-year strategy, discussing ideas and the direction of the charity.

4.00pm: AGM finishes. Staff will be available after the AGM has finished if you'd like to chat to one of us.

Where possible, we encourage attendees to travel via public transport to the AGM. There will be a small gift for those who are able to - please let staff know when you arrive.

The train station is a 10-minute walk from Victoria Hall, with regular services running between Barrow and Lancaster. There are hourly bus services during the day between Kendal and Barrow, passing through Grange-over-Sands, on the X6 and 530.

There is no parking on site. The nearest car park to Victoria Hall is on Main Street (LA11 6DY), with other car parks available.

We hope you're able to attend the AGM as your input is invaluable to our continued success and growth of the organisation.

Please confirm your attendance by emailing info@fld.org.uk, calling us on 01539 720788, visiting our website www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/agm2026, or by completing the enclosed booking form and returning it to Friends of the Lake District, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7SS, before Friday 19 September 2026.

Photos: Last year's AGM; Victoria Hall, Grange-over-Sands



From blossom snacks to hedgerow facts



Naomi Walker brings us the latest Hedges and Edges project news - including last winter's planting successes, foraging events, and how she's looking for volunteers for an exciting new project to map hedge health and biodiversity.

Last winter we planted a whopping 17,860 trees, created 2,049 metres of new hedgerows and rejuvenated 2,961 metres of hedges for a total of over 5km of work! This wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of our dedicated volunteers, who spent 815 hours tree planting, and our skilled contractors. Thank you all for taking part and doing your bit for hedgerow conservation! I've been back to several of our sites from last year, such as the Ecobarn near Dent, and almost all the trees are looking happy, healthy, and green!

This winter we'll once again be planting new hedgerows and restoring hedgerows in need. Last year we set our target of 4km of hedgerow work and completed 5km. This year we're setting our sights even higher and aiming to complete 6km of work! We already have several hedges booked in and will soon be advertising more widely to farmers and landowners.

Hedge habitat survey

Hedgerows are massively understudied, and while there is some data available, it often doesn't contain information about biodiversity or the condition of the hedge. Healthy biodiverse hedgerows can support hundreds of different species of plants, insects, animals and birdlife and provide natural wildlife corridors through our countryside. Sadly, only 20% of hedgerows in England are currently in good condition, with many disappearing due to lack of management and investment.

That's why we're starting a new citizen science project as part of our Hedges and Edges work. Volunteers will learn how to use the Great British Hedgerow Survey method, developed by The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), in training sessions that I will be leading on. Trained volunteers will then be matched up with farmers and landowners local to them who are keen to have their hedgerows surveyed. The hedge surveys will record hedgerow structure (height, width, and overall structural health), and plant species in the hedge and in the margins of the hedge.

When surveys are complete, the information will be uploaded to the PTES website for us to use. The aim of the survey is to show the current condition of hedges in Cumbria so we know what improvements can be made, and gain information which will help us apply for more funding for hedges. We'll also share the information with Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, who are hoping to put together a larger hedgerow dataset for the county showing the condition of hedgerows in Cumbria.

Hedge biodiversity has not been mapped before so this project is very exciting - it could help us and other environmental organisations unlock more funding and action for hedge habitats.

Savouring the wild gifts of the hedge

As part of National Hedgerow Week in June, we ran our second Forage and Feast session at Low Sizergh Farm, led by foraging expert Abbi Lawson. This session was all about spring edibles, mostly of the floral kind. We toured the farm's hedges, exploring the edible species that grow in and around them. We tasted raw almondy hawthorn blossom, sorrel leaves with a citrus zing, and delicious wild garlic flowers. At the Growing Well yurts we were treated to a feast of hedge-plant inspired foods and drinks, including nettle bread, dandelion honey, wild garlic pesto, herby crackers, hawthorn flower cheesecake and elderflower cordial among others, and heard about the work of Growing Well, a mental health charity using green social prescribing to help those in need. We have more foraging sessions planned for the coming months, so do come and join us.





To cut or not to cut?

Now we're past the midpoint of the year, thoughts of the upcoming winter and the hedgerows that will inevitably be cut have started to creep into my mind. Trimming hedges isn't bad, in fact it can help to encourage new growth and renewal if done correctly. But it is common to see hedgerows cut to the same place year after year, which can damage them in the long run. Wood is a living thing, and every cut is a wound. Cutting to the same spot every year creates a gnarled scar or 'hard-knuckle', which limits the hedge's ability to rejuvenate and leaves it more prone to infection.

We want to encourage farmers to cut a little less regularly, once every two years where they can, and to cut a little higher and wider than the year before (known as incremental trimming). This prevents scarring on the hedge, and encourages blossom, which can only grow on second year wood. The blossom of course becomes berries - vital food sources for birds and wildlife. Once the hedge is too large to cut, it should be laid rather than continually trimmed. Hedge laying is what creates the classic hedgy shape and prevents hedge plants growing into trees.

Hedges and Edges is part-funded by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)'s Hedgerow Heroes project.



Photos: Blackthorn blossom and bee; Abbi Lawson running a Forage and Feast session; some of the amazing hedge-plant inspired foods at the Forest and Feast event; newly planted rose growing

Stay involved with our Hedges and Edges project

For upcoming events including volunteer hedgerow survey training days and forage events, turn to page 24.

If you fancy volunteering with us this winter, find out more and sign up at www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/volunteer.

We'll be running a hedgerow management session later in the year, and there'll be plenty of opportunities to help us plant more hedges in autumn. Check the website for future events or sign up to our monthly e-newsletter for updates.

Underground bonanza

Our policy officer, Amanda McCleery, outlines some exciting news in our aim of removing overhead wires from the stunning landscapes of Cumbria.

Friends of the Lake District has campaigned ceaselessly for undergrounding of electrical wires since its foundation in the 1930s. We helped ensure that stunning valleys, from Ullswater to Buttermere, remained wire-free, with the cables being put below ground. In Wasdale, a cable was even laid deep down on the lakebed!

We also campaigned for companies to remove overhead lines that were already up and ruining views. In 2003, we commissioned a report from Cardiff University that was instrumental in persuading the government energy regulator, Ofgem, to establish an undergrounding allowance a couple of years later. That funding has enabled regional electricity companies to take down poles and wires in National Parks and National Landscapes across Britain.

Since then, we have worked tirelessly with protected landscape teams in Cumbria to support SP Electricity North West to remove overhead lines from these special places. 58km of wires have been removed from the Lake District National Park alone.

Little Asby Common

We're delighted to announce that work has now begun to remove overhead wires from some Friends of the Lake District land - Little Asby Common in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Over 2km of overhead line will be removed from this stunning open landscape.

As our land manager, Jan Darrall, says: "Little Asby Common is a wild and special place and for years has

been spoilt by poles crossing the fell and skyline, like a row of marching soldiers. It is fantastic to be part of a partnership project that will restore the beauty of this special place for us all to enjoy, but at the same time give more resilience to the power supply of local residents. This has been an aspiration of ours since we bought the common in 2003. A real win-win for our beautiful Little Asby landscape!"

Storm resilience

SP Electricity North West was also successful in its funding bid to Ofgem to make part of its network more resilient, following the prolonged power cuts in Cumbria caused by Storm Arwen in 2021. As a result, they are installing over ten miles of new underground cable from Ambleside to Coniston. This is to increase the resilience of Coniston against future storms.

So, our campaign for undergrounding across Cumbria is entering a new era. Now, the benefits - and associated funding - are not only improving the view of these special landscapes, but also making towns and villages more resilient in the face of ongoing climate change. Rest assured that Friends of the Lake District will continue to push for undergrounding at every opportunity as there is plenty more to do!



Planning and policy updates

Collaborative practices bursaries

Friends of the Lake District funded four bursaries for the course Collaborative Practices in Land Management, run by University of Cumbria. The course, which focussed particularly on common land, was delivered through workshops, lectures and site visits, including one to Derwent Commons above the Newlands valley hosted by our staff team. There, our policy officer Amanda McCleery, told the students more about the process involved in s.38 applications to the Planning Inspectorate for fencing on registered common land. She also talked about how Friends gets involved in the process: attending site visits and commenting on draft proposals, as well as responding to formal applications. Amanda also explained how we worked with Professor Lois Mansfield to measure the true value of Little Asby Common using a multiple capitals assessment.

Permitted development for turbines

We have submitted our response to the Government consultation on permitted development rights for wind turbines on non-domestic sites that remove the need to apply for planning permission subject to certain conditions and exclusions. While we support the drive for renewable energy, our response asks for due consideration to be given to landscape, heritage and biodiversity. Protected Landscapes, including National Parks, are excluded from the proposals, but there is no reference in the consultation to the importance of the setting of these important areas. That means, for example, a turbine could be placed on the very edge of a national park, and be visible within it.

Housing development in Barrow-in-Furness

Together with the Lutyens Trust and a significant number of local residents, we have objected to an application for 110 new houses on a key, historic approach into Barrow. The development will also result in landscape and visual harm, harm to the setting of nearby heritage buildings, and harm to the health and well-being of those residing in Furness General Hospital - evidence has shown that having a view of an open space aids recovery time for those in hospital.

Lakes management plan

In our response to the consultation regarding the Lake District National Park Partnership's Management Plan we raised concern about the lack of ambition in the plan around transport and regenerative tourism. The plan provides a real opportunity to drive positive change forward by reducing reliance on private vehicles and therefore preserving the qualities that people come to the National Park to experience. As things stand, this opportunity is being missed.

Tranquillity training

Following our tranquillity study that established a method of identifying and assessing tranquillity and the threats to it, we provided training to staff in the Planning Team at Lake District National Park. This will help enable them to consider tranquillity as they develop their new Local Plan and when determining planning applications.

Water works

As featured in issue 98 of Conserving Lakeland, we responded to the Independent Water Commission, chaired by Sir Jon Cunliffe, that looked in detail at the water industry and the significant reform needed. In answer to this investigation, there have been two water-related announcements from the Government. In January 2026 they published a White Paper called "A New Vision for Water". Then, as part of May's King's Speech, they announced that a Clean Water Bill will be introduced into this Parliament. We're waiting to see the detail of the new bill and in the next issue of Conserving Lakeland we'll bring you more news of our work to press for change.



On uncertain ground

Upland hill farmers face an uncertain future as changes to agricultural funding and farming practice reshape life on the fells. Christian Lisseman meets Pauline Blair at Miller Place Farm to hear what's at stake.

Miller Place Farm is a traditional hill farm in the Vale of Lorton where farming has shaped the land for centuries. Pauline Blair wasn't born here, but she learned the old ways from farmers who were. "I've got first-hand knowledge," she says. "Just as if I'd been born and bred in the valley."

Sitting in the front room of her converted barn with fine views out over the vale, Pauline talks passionately about her life and her work, but she circles back to the same points: the land, the sheep, and the system that binds them together. A system that is currently under threat.

Born in Ulverston, Pauline was fascinated by farming from a young age: "My mother was friendly with a farmer's wife and her daughter was the same age as me. I used to go up there in the summer holidays." There was also farming in her blood: "My great granddad was a village blacksmith and my grandmother on my father's side was a farmer's daughter."

Pauline's journey to owning and running her own farm is a tale in itself, and includes going to university to study English, marrying then becoming a teacher, getting divorced, then living in a caravan with two children, initially with neither water nor electricity - and much more besides. She's been an active grazier for over 40 years and is a self-confessed "troublemaker" who campaigns for better treatment of upland hill farmers.

Pauline is rightly proud of the environmental and conservation work that she's done on the land that she owns, planting trees, restoring meadows and reinstating hedgerows to provide shelter for her stock and increase biodiversity. She is also very proud of her flock of Herdwick sheep, the breed most associated with the Lake District fells, known for their ability to survive the harsh conditions often found here.

Pauline's Herdwicks are "hefted" to the fells that rise above her farm, so her sheep stick to their own ground without the need for fences. Hefting is not taught; it is inherited. Lambs learn their patch from their mothers, who learned it from theirs.

"One sheep keeps another in its place," Pauline explains. But when gaps appear, there can be problems. And gaps are appearing everywhere. Across the valley, farms have been sold, consolidated, or turned into holiday lettings or second homes. Farmers struggle to pass down their farms to younger generations, and even those who want



to farm struggle because the accommodation prices are so high they are priced out of the local housing market.

As a result of this decline in upland farming, the old pattern of neighbouring flocks holding each other in place is breaking down. And what used to be a shared responsibility - especially when it comes to gathering in the flocks from the fell - is now falling on fewer and fewer shoulders.

If the loss of neighbouring farms is one pressure, government policy and support (or rather, lack of it) is another. In her years as a grazier, Pauline has seen various schemes for sheep farmers come and go. She notes the failures of previous subsidies that "paid a premium on every single adult sheep," regardless of how well maintained the stock was or what real value it had. This policy led to over grazing and from the early '90s there has been pressure to reduce or remove sheep from the fells. This, Pauline argues, is not the answer. Flocks have been grazing on the fells for thousands of years and are not only an essential part of Lake District culture - and a reason for its World Heritage status - but also, when managed properly, contribute to, rather than undermine, the delicate ecological balance of the area.





Friends of the Lake District recently highlighted the issues facing upland hill farmers in a letter to government ministers, urging them to address the lack of agri-environment funding for commons.

One third of all English commons are here in Cumbria, and agri-environment payments are essential to hill farms. The lack of funding means the livelihoods of commoners are undermined (directly impacting local communities and services) and common land is not contributing to government environmental targets (such as habitat restoration).

Among other things, we've called on Defra to continue with the existing paper-based system for common land, whilst it upgrades its computer-based system to include them. That way commons can still apply for agri-environment funding.

"By having all these restrictions, it stops the farmer using their intuition and their knowledge to do what they know is right," she says. "Governments legislate to stop the bad farmers who over-graze and don't take care of the land, but that punishes the good ones who care."

Over the last few years there have been changes to the way government subsidies for farming are delivered, particularly in relation to commons. The complexity of these vast areas of land that are shared by those who have "common rights" has proven difficult for the bureaucrats to contend with.

Upland and common land farmers are currently in limbo, stuck in the old Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) and locked out of the revised Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). Most unbelievably, commoners are unable to claim payments due to a Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) computer system being unable to cope with applications that cover such large land parcels. "The computer couldn't cope with the commons," Pauline says. "So they're not giving us anything."

Her frustration with the state of play for common land funding is undeniable and understandable: "They're going to destroy the whole rural economy with what they're doing." Pauline is witnessing more farmers and shepherds giving up, and more gaps appearing in the flocks that are hefted to the fells. She's recorded the number of active local graziers over the years, noting the decline in numbers, from around 26 in 1992, 17 in 2012, to just a handful now.

Farming to Pauline isn't just a business, it's a way of life and a culture that, like the Herdwick, has been part of this landscape for generations. There are some green shoots of hope - as this magazine went to press, there was talk of a small number of commons being invited to apply for further funding this autumn. But for now, Pauline's battle to defend this way of life continues.

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**.



Hedge survey training

Saturday 8 August

📍 Low Sizergh Barn, near Kendal

Saturday 5 September

📍 Gowbarrow Farm, near Penrith

Interested in becoming a volunteer hedgerow surveyor? Attend one of these half-day training sessions to learn more about this great way of helping monitor and report on healthy hedgerows.



Foraging and feasting sessions

Saturday 8 August

📍 Low Sizergh Barn, near Kendal

Saturday 17 October

📍 Location to be confirmed - check our website

A chance to learn about edible species that grow in and around hedgerows.



Guided walk

Tuesday 11 August

📍 Little Asby Common

During this moderate 5k walk across Little Asby Common and its limestone pavements, you'll learn about the area and how we help manage it. Free for members, £5 for non-members.



Dam Mire open day

Friday 18 September

📍 Dam Mire Wood, Threlkeld

Come and explore this beautiful green space. There will be guided walks, including an evening bat walk, nature trails, treasure hunts and craft activities. The Bangers and Bats food van will be available if you want to get your dinner!



Fell Care Day

Thursday 12 November

📍 Various locations, Sedbergh

Fell Care Days are mass-volunteer conservation events which bring together local communities and organisations.

You can sign up to a task from a variety of options, all within the vicinity of Sedbergh, including tree or hedge planting, footpath work, litter picking and dry stone walling.



Kirby Lecture

Friday 27 November

📍 Ambleside Parish Centre

Join us for an evening exploring what a Cumbrian mayor might mean for the landscape and the Lake District.

Annual General Meeting

Friday 25 September

See page 17 for details.



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.

Photo: © George Carr Media



Country shows

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

Rusland show

📍 Whitestock Meadow, Rusland Valley
Saturday 15 August

Ravenstonedale show

📍 High Lane Farm, Newbiggin-on-Lune, Kirkby Stephen
Saturday 22 August

Ennerdale show

📍 The Leaps, Kirkland
Wednesday 26 August

Keswick show

📍 Pump Field, Old Bridge, Braithwaite
Monday 31 August

Record turnout for walling competition



Nearly 40 people took part in the Friends of the Lake District's annual Dry Stone Walling competition, which took place on Saturday 30 May at Barkin House Farm, Gatebeck, near Kendal.

"Dry stone walls are an essential part of our cultural heritage, providing borders for land and livestock lasting generations," said Kelley Sproston-Heath, engagement lead for Friends of the Lake District. "The walls also provide valuable habitats for a variety of wildlife. As a landscape charity, we know how vital it is to keep the art of dry stone walling alive. We have run this competition since 1980 and it was great to see such a big turnout of competitors this year, showing that this cultural skill is thriving."

This year's judges were Andrew Mason and Phillip Dolphin, both master craftsmen wallers who have won multiple competitions and are trained Dry Stone Walling Association standard assessors. Julia Aglionby, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria, gave out the prizes at the end of a long, hot day.



Professional class winner James Kidd, from Bentham, North Yorkshire, also took home the Best Overall Waller trophy on the day. Jyoti Walters, from Maulds Meaburn near Penrith, took home the award for best woman waller.

Jane Merritt, from Barkin House Farm, thanked everyone involved for a successful and inspiring day: "This was an important day for wallers and farmers to come together and learn from each other, and be recognised for their skill and commitment."

"The many benefits of dry stone walls are perhaps beginning to be recognised and appreciated, not least through the work of Friends of the Lake District and the Dry Stone Walling Association, but their true value cannot easily be monetised. It is essential that politicians, businesses and the community understand this and that grants and wages are set appropriately."

You can watch a short video of the competition on our YouTube channel.



Book reviews



The Sound of a Landscape: The Lake District in Art, Sound and Poetry MiE Fielding

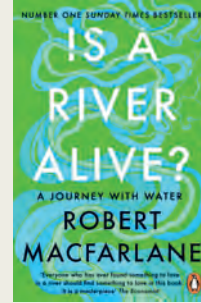
Artist, author, and sound recordist MiE

Fielding brings together painting, photography, poetry and immersive field recordings to create a beautiful and intimate celebration of the Lake District landscape.

Fielding guides the reader around the National Park, capturing the Lake District's wild splendour. What makes the book especially distinctive is Fielding's use of 360-degree Ambisonic sound recordings, accessed via QR codes, which allow the reader to hear the landscapes as well as see and read about them. This simple but imaginative addition gives the work real depth.

Fielding's lifelong interest in birds, the natural world and the environment comes through clearly, giving the book an authenticity that nature lovers will appreciate. The result is a fresh, thoughtful and highly engaging portrait of the incredible landscape: part art book, part poetry collection, part journey through sound. It's an innovative and rewarding way to experience the Lake District anew.

Review by Christian Lisseman



Is a River Alive? Robert Macfarlane

Is a River Alive? is a lyrical and poetic examination of our relationship with rivers and the natural world. Macfarlane blends travel writing, environmental philosophy, reporting, and personal reflection, all with the aim of

answering a deceptively easy question which he asked his son, is a river alive? Through his travels in Ecuador, India, and Canada he meets and talks to people about the movements that seek to grant rivers legal rights and those who view rivers as more than simply a resource to be plundered.

The central argument of the book is that rivers, landscapes, and ecosystems possess a form of agency and meaning that we in the modern world fail to understand and often ignore: 'to be silenced is not the same as to be silent, to go unheard is not the same as to be speechless. No landscape speaks with a single tongue.'

Macfarlane's prose is beautiful and immersive in his philosophical approach to the given question, and it is delivered with confidence and authority. *Is a River Alive?* is a powerful and timely piece of work that balances hope and despair while making us rethink our relationship with the natural world. It is an important book but also a wonderful read.

Review by Chris Murphy from The Book Brewery

Many thanks to The Book Brewery for supplying a copy of *Is a River Alive?* for this month's Where is it? competition.

The Book Brewery is a licensed bookshop café in Ambleside (on Lake Road). They offer 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.



Memories of the Lake District



My first life-changing experience of the Lake District was a hiking trip with the Scouts in 1958. It was the first time I had seen mountains, fells or steep river valleys.

Arriving by train into Windermere we tramped through rain and puddles carrying heavy rucksacks to the international campsite near to Bowness.

The first mountain walk was up Coniston Old Man in rain and mist. From the summit we traversed along the ridge, viewing our shadows as Brocken spectres cast upon the mist. Then suddenly, as we descended, there spread below us an unforgettable vista across the magnificent U-shaped valley of Wrynose Bottom. We had learnt about glaciation and U-shaped valleys in geography, but here was one stretched out below us wild and desolate, but incredibly thrilling. We camped in the valley in the rain, next to a burbling brook with no habitation in sight.

A couple of days later we walked from Boot in Eskdale over to Wasdale; bathing at lunchtime in Burnmoor tarn then over to Wastwater, the deepest, darkest, coldest

lake. Wasdale in certain lights can be dark and forbidding, but in the sunshine it can be so beautiful in form - so many shapes, colours and reflections. It's a wonderful coincidence that my daughter now owns a property in Nether Wasdale close to the welcoming Strands Inn.

We continued to walk across Lakeland for a total of two weeks, often in the rain, through Seathwaite, the wettest village in England, across to Ullswater and to Penrith, and the train homewards.

My close friend, who later became a Lakeland aficionado by scaling Wainwright's 214 peaks, was asked by his father: "So it was a very wet holiday?". His reply "Oh no, it only rained twice - once for ten days, then for four!"

This wonderful first experience has provoked annual walking holidays with old (now very old) school mates in Lakeland - my favourite place in the world.

Many thanks to Peter Swift for sending us this wonderful memory.

Photo: Peter (in the bright yellow t-shirt) and friends at Ashness Bridge, 2014

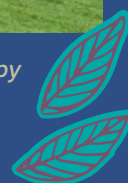
Where is it?

The Where is it? photograph in the last issue of Conserving Lakeland was taken from the cover of issue one of this magazine. We had lots of entries who correctly spotted that the photo was of Yoke, Ill Bell and the Frostwick Fells. Diane Fisher from Windermere was drawn out of the hat and wins a copy of Hedgelands by Christopher Hart. Thanks to everyone who took time to enter.

This month's photograph is supplied by Nicholas Green. If you know where this is, 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 LA9 7SS**. One winning entry will receive a copy of *Is a River Alive?* by Robert Macfarlane, reviewed opposite.



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.



Support us



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

Spread the love

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



Volunteer



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

Support our appeals



Help us continue our work tackling litter and fly-camping in Cumbria.

Buy a gift



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

Meet up

Join us at one of our many events, such as a guided walk, the AGM, and the Kirby Lecture.



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 to your will to Friends of the Lake District and help protect Cumbrian landscapes for generations to come.

On our website

This stunning photo of Fairfield by Tim Boden is just one of hundreds of entries we received for this year's photography competition which closed at the end of June. Our new online shop will soon be up and running. You'll be able to buy, among other things, our 2027 calendar featuring the winning images from this year's competition.

As well as exploring our new shop, don't forget to visit our website to access up-to-minute news stories and blog posts from our staff. This includes a fascinating post by our planning officer, Leanne Parr. We object to a very small number of planning applications every year, and in her blog, Leanne explains what factors lead us to seek changes or make an objection. There's also an update from Patrick, the Fix the Fells ranger that we sponsor, about the work that's taken place last year and the work the team are currently undertaking to tackle erosion on the fells.

Don't forget to sign up to our email newsletter Postcard from the Lakes to get monthly updates on our campaigns, work and events. Sign up at www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/newsletter.

