

Written Evidence submitted by The Lake District National Park Partnership (TPW0039)

Background

The Lake District was designated as a National Park (NP) in 1951 and inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2017.

UNESCO inscribed the English Lake District in recognition of its outstanding universal value (OUV) that comes from the interactions between its living agro-pastoral land use system and its spectacular natural landscape. The OUV also covers the appreciation of this landscape that evolved through the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, and its role in the pioneering conservation initiatives of the 19th century. The Lake District is recognised as one of the most important cultural landscapes in the world. Sustaining the OUV of the WHS is an obligation of government to the World Heritage Convention, 1972.

The Lake District National Park Partnership's (LDNPP) formation in 2006 revolutionised how partners began to collectively work together to help manage the Lake District. Now with 25 partners and considerable experience it is a real driving force for sustaining and enhancing the Lake District.

The LDNPP 2030 Vision for the Lake District is that it will be seen as "an inspirational example of sustainable development in action". It will be a place where its prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences and vibrant communities come together to sustain the spectacular landscape, its wildlife and cultural heritage. And all partners will be united in achieving this.

Through empowerment from the Lake District National Park Authority the LDNPP is responsible for the preparation of the statutory Management Plan. The LDNPP combines the management requirements of both a National Park and World Heritage Site to ensure that we take a single strategic approach that is consistent and appropriate for both designations.

The LDNPP's State of the Park Report 2018 identified the key inter-related challenges of nature decline, vulnerability of farming and associated cultural heritage and the climate emergency.

The LDNPP's next Management Plan 2021-2025 will set out the LDNPP's proposed approach to managing the following key strategic challenges:

- Climate Action
- The future of farming and forestry, nature recovery and climate change
- Vibrant communities and a prosperous economy
- A Lake District for Everyone
- Sustainable transport

The Management Plan will work towards the goals of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, and the recommendations of the National Landscapes Review (Glover).

Within the Lake District the LDNPP wants to see increasing woodland and non-woodland tree cover to further nature recovery, climate change mitigation and government aspirations but this must be done sensitively without destroying its Outstanding Universal Value, requiring a focus on the right trees in the right places.

It is clear that the UK's response to climate change will require a significant increase in tree planting nationally. Measures to combat climate change, and to mitigate its impacts, are a necessity if we are to protect over the long term nature, farming and our historic environment. In addition, an increase in tree planting also offers many other benefits, for example, recreation (physical and mental wellbeing) and for the supply of wood for construction, heating and power

generation, and skills and jobs. We support the aims set out in the UK Government's 25 year Environment Plan for increased tree planting nationally in appropriate places. There are considerable public benefits of trees in the landscape for water management, sediment control, carbon storage, recreational shelter and agricultural conditions such as shade and shelter for livestock.

In the Lake District there are significant opportunities for the right type of woodland creation through tree planting as well as natural regeneration of trees and shrubs. Wood pasture, which is more open than woodland, would be suitable on many lower valley slopes and still enable some grazing of livestock. There is also potential for more riparian tree planting and those areas less favoured by grazing livestock and linking areas to form critical nature corridors. We agree that new woodlands (and indeed wood pastures, scrub, scattered trees etc) need to be well designed and in appropriate places.

A decision to plant is essentially the landowner's. The LDNPP is working with Lake District communities, farmers, foresters and land owners to encourage and support a local place-based community and land manager led approach to planning and delivery of woodland creation and increasing other tree cover through planting and other techniques, in ways that will restore nature, address the climate emergency and secure cultural heritage. The LDNPP will work with the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot to embed the priorities for woodland creation in the development and delivery of the next National Park Management Plan 2021-2025.

Importantly, scale and nature of planting needs to be sympathetic to its context. Right tree in the right place. In sensitive landscapes such as the Lake District we would always want to see agencies working together to try to agree appropriate locations for tree planting, developing consensus where possible through a multi-agency group to establish an overall planting strategy for such a sensitive area. Flexibility in approach is essential. The scale and nature of planting will vary depending upon the sensitivities of a location and can deliver different outcomes, supporting climate mitigation, employment, or regeneration of existing woodlands. An approach to woodland/ tree planting in one valley within the English Lake District, for example, may differ from that in another.

Tree planting needs to be encouraged by an appropriate economic model - it needs to show a return and encourage the development and retention of relevant skills. Under present payments for land management, bare land is always more valuable than tree'd land (unless it is conifer at scale on very poor land). Bare land will always find a grazing tenant which will provide you long term with an income. Very few land owners are willing to sacrifice long term security for a short term gain and/or a biodiversity gain which provide no income. Fundamental change is required as to how we value natural assets and reflect those in land management payments. The UK farming industry is about to go through the biggest change in a generation but farming is more than a business, it is a culture and a way of life, an issue that is especially important in our WHS landscape. Helping farmers, especially small to medium sized family farms, thrive through the changes will require skilled advisers who understand the farming systems, the existing and potential ecological interest of the land, the full range of cultural landscape values and the best means of realising value from the full range of options available. Increasing woodland coverage as well as the number of trees outside woods in hedgerows, wood pastures and the benefits derived from these can be part of the way forward. Consideration needs to be given to how organisations operating within designated landscapes have the capacity and capability to support the land management community.

We seek collaborative working. Seeking to build consensus and agreement through consultation and dialogue - in considering where appropriate places for tree planting lie and scale and purpose of planting, design, species choice, establishment techniques. Also such collaboration should seek opportunities for tree planting as part of other projects.

As part of the next National Park Management Plan the LDNPP is developing some “woodland creation principles” for the Lake District which will help guide landowners, agents, NGOs and agencies as to how to optimise multiple benefits through woodland creation in the Lake District.

There is a risk to our existing woodlands, and therefore aspects of our cultural landscape, from disease. Natural regeneration is a key to safeguard the genetic diversity of our native trees and shrubs and allow the more resistant individuals to survive. It also reduces the risk of importation of tree diseases. Therefore natural regeneration should be a pillar of upland wood pasture creation and response to Ash Die back in the LDNP, in which significant areas of ash wood habitats, including pollards & wood pasture, are under existential threat. Other diseases such as that affecting Larch (*Phytophthora ramorum*) is a particular problem in the Lake District and replanting will need to occur to replace trees lost to this disease.

There is a need for proportionate and effective approach to protect the integrity of the WHS. The Lake District is a complex place with many different national and international designations which all need to be factored into any policies. It is recognised that within legislation for Environmental Impact Assessments there is a zero threshold for woodland creation in sensitive ecological designations such as SSSIs and within the World Heritage Site, adding a layer of regulation which other areas may not have. We need to ensure sufficient flexibility to be able to deliver wider UK Government goals whilst acknowledging that there are challenges within the Lake District, given our WHS inscription, that require us to protect those features for which we were inscribed. The significance of this cultural landscape embraces trees and woods as part of its agro-pastoral system and romantic landscape. Woodlands have provided local industry with materials and employment and many woodland skills are retained. Sustaining this patchwork of woodland, is an important element of protecting the outstanding universal value of the WHS.

Conclusion

There is strong support for additional tree planting which brings a range of benefits in line with the vision of the LDNPP and our strategic challenges. However, and importantly we need to ensure a holistic approach - one which acknowledges the importance of the UK's responsibilities on climate change, nature recovery and World Heritage status and seek to build consensus and agreement through consultation and dialogue - in considering where appropriate places for tree planting lie and the scale of planting in any particular location. There is also an urgent requirement to establish an economic model that provides the appropriate incentives for those investing in tree planting to receive both a return for commercial output and for the public goods that are generated.

Given the uniqueness of the English Lake District in this debate I can confirm that we provide further evidence if required and engage with the Select Committee if deemed helpful.

November 2020