

## Friends of the Lake District, UK

### Douglas Chalmers

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### 1. What is Lake District?

The Lake District as it is thought of today stems from the influence of the romantic poets, including Wordsworth and Coleridge. The Lake District National Park was designated in 1951, after lobbying from Friends of the Lake District (formed in 1934). Today it attracts 16.8 million visitors a year who spend £1,146 million. This currently equates to 24 million visitor days per year, so the challenge is to encourage visitors to stay longer and to spend more money,



**Figure 1.** Cumbria's Stunning Fells and Lakes In the centre of the Lake District is a special and internationally valued landscape with high scenic value and strong historic and cultural associations. Photo: Friends of Lake District Archive.

The Lake District is intimately associated with the English literature of the 18th and 19th centuries. Thomas Gray was the first to draw attention to the region, when he wrote a journal of his Grand Tour in 1769. Later on in the Romantic period, William Wordsworth's poems were most famous and influential.



Figure 2.

In the Romantic period the poems of William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850) were most famous and influential. Wordsworth was known as one of “the Lake Poets”. Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", inspired by the sight of daffodils on the shores of Ullswater, remains one of the most famous in the English language. Of his eighty year life, sixty were spent amid its lakes and mountains,

Picture: Portrait of William Wordsworth by Benjamin Robert Haydon in National Portrait Gallery of UK.

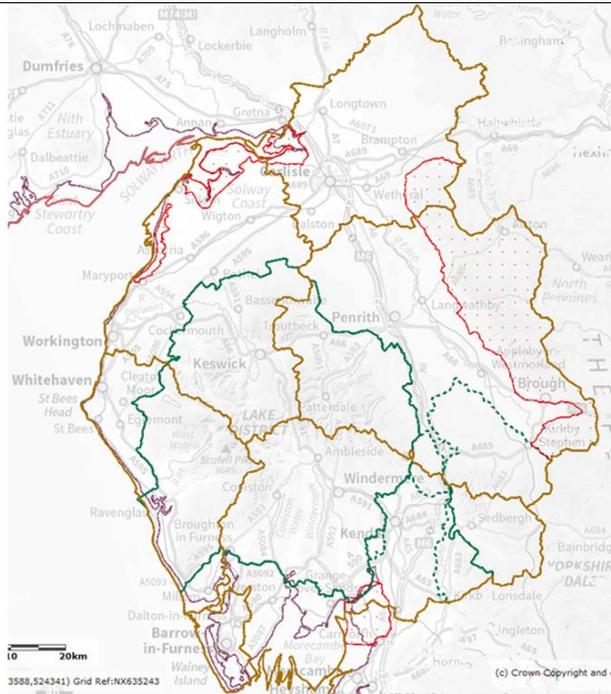
The landscapes in the Lake District are unique and world famous. The highest mountain in England, Scafell Pike, 978 m above sea level, lies in the Lake District National Park. The geodiversity and biodiversity are extremely rich. The cultural history linked to the grazing of sheep and man's activities can be seen in the landscape.

National Parks in the United Kingdom are settled and worked landscapes, mostly in private ownership where resident communities use the local resources to make a living. They are often described as **private land managed for public good**.

In the Lake District National Park over 60% of land and water is owned by individual private owners. Others include the National Trust (Charity) – 21%, United Utilities (Water plc) –8%, Forestry Commission (Government agency) – 5% and the Park Authority – 3.8%. The population inside the National Park borders is just over 40 000.

United Utilities use the Lake District part of Cumbria as the water catchment for 3 million residents of Manchester. The water takes 2 days to travel 155 km along pipes working on natural gravity alone.

Recent proposed sales by the Lake District National Park caused public uproar, suggesting that many people may believe that our Parks are in fact publicly owned.

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|   | <p><b>Figure 3.</b></p> <p>The Lake District is part of Cumbria in the North West of England.</p> <p>Cumbria (red colour) is the third largest county in area in England (6,768 km<sup>2</sup>), but has a population of only 500,000.</p> <p>The major road route between England and Scotland and the West Coast Rail line pass through the county. There is major industry in Carlisle, Barrow and on the West Coast, including nuclear power generation, but the county is predominantly rural and the roads where the majority of visitors go become congested easily.</p> |
| <p><b>Figure 4.</b></p> <p>Cumbria has a County Council and six District Councils. The current national Government is offering devolution of powers and funding to various parts of the country, Cumbria wants to be part of this.</p> |  <p><b>Cumbria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Local Authorities</li><li>National Parks</li><li>Parks</li><li>Extensions</li><li>Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li></ul> <p>Map details: Includes a scale bar (0-20km), grid reference (3588,524341) and (Grid Ref: NX635243), and a copyright notice (c) Crown Copyright and...). Key locations shown include Carlisle, Windermere, Keswick, and Barrow-in-Furness.</p>   |

## 2. Who are the Friends of Lake District?

Friends of the Lake District is a Charity and is the only membership organisation dedicated to protecting and enhancing Cumbria's landscapes. We operate across the whole of the county of Cumbria acting as the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in the county. Cumbria includes the Lake District National Park, part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We have over 6,000 Members, and on social media we currently have more than 6,500 Twitter followers and 2,400 Facebook likes. Members can join as Individuals or jointly, or as Corporates. We currently receive a donation from the National Trust specifically for a project called Fell Care Days, and we have a small portfolio of grant making trusts who give to us annually.

In 2014, our volunteers gave us 4,041 hours of their time, equivalent to €110,000. In 2015, our 3 Fell Care Days alone involved 347 people whose outputs included 29m of dry stone walling, 61km of uplands path maintenance, 3 bridges built and replaced and over 4,000m<sup>2</sup> of vegetation cleared. They also ate over 800 pieces of cake!

Friends of Lake District is a landowner in its own right, and we receive Basic Payments and environmental payments from the EU. Being a landowner also gives us credibility when lobbying and helps us to better understand the issues affecting land management. Our properties include one adjacent to the market town of Kendal and enjoyed by its residents. Other properties include woodland, upland meadows and an upland common, not only rich in environmental, cultural and archaeological features, but where other farmers, called “commoners”, have the right to graze their animals.



Figure 5.  
Friends of Lake District owns some of Cumbria’s uplands.  
Photo: Friends of Lake District Archive.

A significant part of the National Trust’s holding in the Lake District National Park was given to them by the Friends of the Lake District and also left to them by a local farmer, Mrs William Heelis, better known as the children’s author Beatrix Potter.

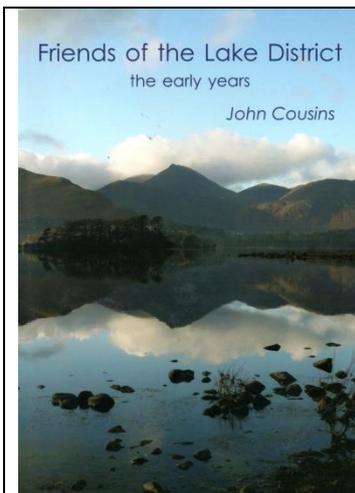
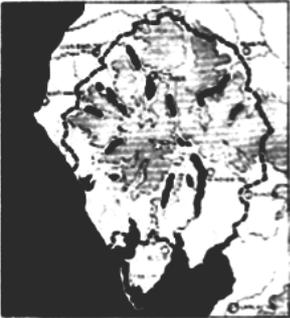


Figure 6.  
The story of the early years in the history of the Friends of Lake District is told in the study of John Cousins, published by the Lancaster University. It is the first detailed study of the inception of this kind of organisation, and was commissioned to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of its foundation.

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| <p><b>IF YOU WALK<br/>CLIMB OR CYCLE<br/>IN THE ENGLISH<br/>LAKE DISTRICT—</b></p> <p><b>IF</b> you would see its beauty preserved unspoiled—</p> <p><b>IF</b> you would safeguard its footpaths and public access—</p> <p><b>IF</b> you would prevent the construction of main roads over its mountain passes—</p> <p><b>IF</b> you would control all quarrying, mining and industrial activities in its area—</p> <p><b>IF</b> you would banish from it all litter, advertisement hoardings and unsightly petrol-pumps—</p> <p><b>IF</b> you would like any new buildings in its area to conform to local architectural traditions—</p> <p><b>IF</b> you would have the Lake District reserved as a National Park—</p> <p><b>JOIN</b></p> <p><b>“FRIENDS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT”</b></p> <p><b>SEND YOUR SUBSCRIPTION (2/6 minimum)<br/>to the Hon. Treasurer, Sawrey House, via Ambleside.</b></p>  | <p><u>Figure 7.</u></p> <p>This “IF –THEN” advertisement was published in the very beginning of history of the Friends of Lake District in 1934.</p> <p>The Friends of Lake District has now spent 81 years focusing to protecting the Cumbria’s landscapes.</p> <p>The world has changed since 1934, but Friends of the Lake District must remain relevant.</p> |
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**Three Strategic Aims of Friends of the Lake District:**

1. Looking to the future for Cumbria’s landscapes by securing and enhancing landscape character and adapting our landscapes to impacts of climate change.
2. Engaging People in Cumbria’s future landscapes by sustaining upland landscapes in time of change and helping people to understand the benefits landscapes provide for themselves.
3. Securing our organisation for Cumbria’s landscapes with positive profile and sustaining our organisation.

These could be described more simply as to:

- Protect and improve our landscapes.
- Support local communities.
- Educate and inspire.

### 3. Victories in our Campaigns

Friends of the Lake District has achieved a number of significant victories in the last 81 years, not least the designation of the National Parks themselves. However, when the Parks were formed in the 1950's, although "Nature knows no boundaries", politicians do. The eastern boundary of the Lake District National Park was the then major road, while the western boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park was the boundary between Yorkshire and the old county of Westmorland. The borders took no account of the quality of the landscapes or their need for protection, and a gap was left.

We had always regarded this as "unfinished business", and we produced a Report, "Cumbria's Forgotten Landscapes" that rekindled government interest leading to a Public Inquiry in 2013. The Secretary of State for the Environment confirmed the new designations in October 2015.

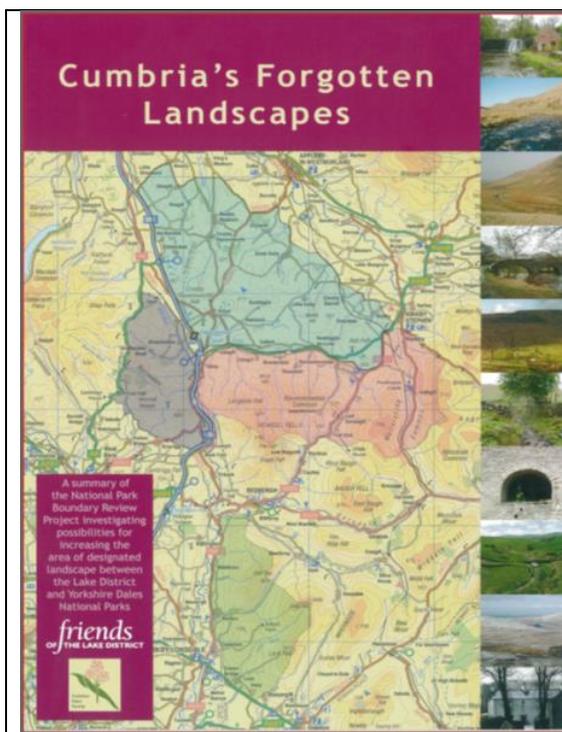


Figure 8.

The Friends of Lake District published a report of "Cumbria's Forgotten Landscapes" to address the need to redraw better natural border lines for the National Parks.

One of our current campaigns is against National Grid's North West Coast Connections Project. This is to connect a proposed nuclear power station to the rest of the electricity distribution network in UK. At the moment, National Grid has decided not to take the line offshore, nor to underground the lines, leaving us with the prospect of pylons nearly 50m tall coming through the western part of the Lake District National Park. This landscape is truly spectacular, featuring the sea, the coastal plain and the dramatic mountains of the Lake District. Our campaign, "Say No to Pylons in the Lake District" has been very successful in terms of encouraging people to write with their objections to National Grid and to politicians, and also in raising money to help us in this work.

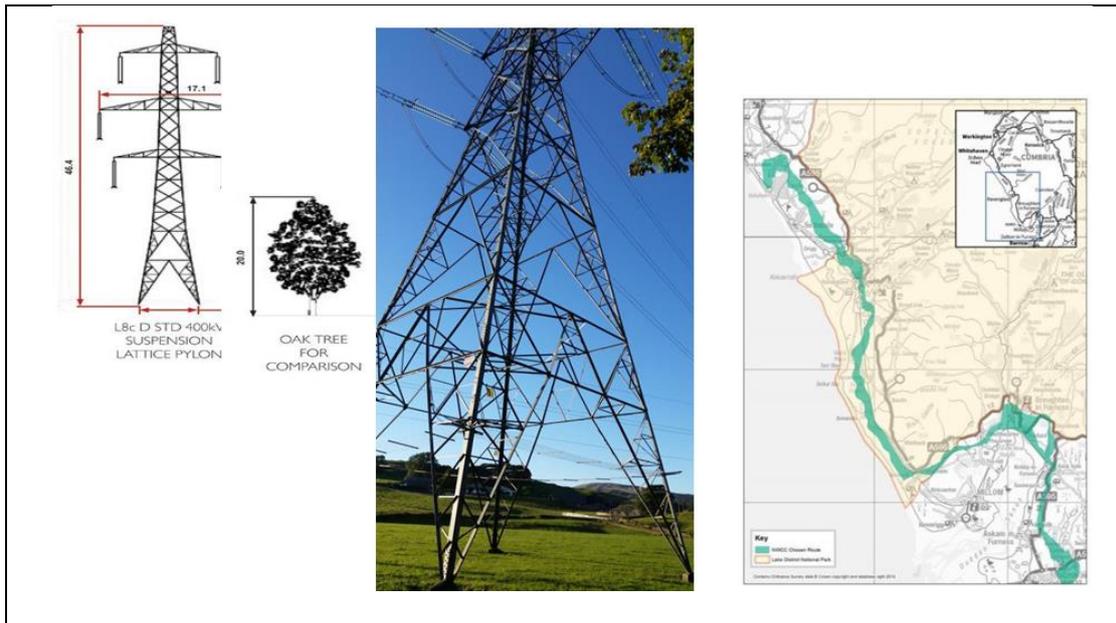


Figure 9 a-c. Friends of the Lake District is now running a major campaign against the plan for power pylons. Photos and graphics from the Friends of Lake District Archive.

#### 4. Partnership for conservation of the Lake District National Park

Ten years ago the Lake District National Park Partnership was formed. This includes the Park Authority, local authorities, government agencies, representatives of the farming, landowning and tourism industries, interested charities like the Friends of Lake District, and the local University. All the partners are involved in agreeing the management of the Park.



Figure 10.

“The Partnership’s Plan – the management plan for the English Lake District 2015-2020” was developed by the Partners consortium for better coordination of different aims, tasks and actions in the National Park.

The Plan also covers the necessary management for the proposed World Heritage Site of English Lake District. The Friends of Lake District participated actively in this planning process.

In these financially lean times for the public sector, the partnership approach encourages the Park to be more commercial, fitting better with businesses while still meeting their Statutory Purposes. Richard Leafe, the Chief Executive of the Lake District National Park believes that the Partnership provides a transforming model for running National Parks. He thinks that the Partnership is ever more important, and that this facilitative approach is smarter and more commercial.

We understand that this consensus approach has many advantages, but as Friends of the Lake District has pointed out, it perhaps still has to deal with some of the major questions facing the Park, such as “How do we increase our international visitors while reducing our carbon impact?” or “How can we find a mechanism to reward our land managers who provide the landscape that attracts these visitors but who then spend money with other businesses?”



Figure 11.

The Lake District NP is now in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and the evaluation and the possible final decision of the nomination may be in final in 2017.

Photo: Friends of Lake District Archive.

The Lake District Partnership is also bidding for UNESCO World Heritage Site status for the National Park. Our bid is based not just on our landscape but also on our culture, recognising the link between people, their heritage, their communities and the effects of their activities on their surroundings. The Partnership is seeking inscription under the cultural landscape category. The spectacular landscape of the Lake District has been shaped by farming, industry, communities and the conservation movement. It stimulated poets and artists of the Romantic Movement from the late 18th century and conservationists from the 19th century. It continues to culturally inspire the millions who seek out what captivated Wordsworth, Ruskin and Beatrix Potter.

## **5. Challenges today in Lake District**

English National Parks face an uncertain future. Although our Chancellor of the Exchequer has just announced that their budgets are safe for the next five years, the Parks have suffered significant monetary cuts since 2010. Having to run a balanced budget, they have to examine commercial opportunities and those Park Authorities who own land may have to consider selling some.

The current national government is proposing a “Northern Powerhouse” development program to address and mitigate the economic gap between the North and London and the South East of

England. The emphasis so far has been empowering and connecting the City Regions of the North, including Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds.

National Parks must rise to the challenge. Our rural areas may be unable to compete on purely economic output, but we must argue for how we can contribute to the Northern Powerhouse by complementing the City Regions through various means:

- Physically, by providing food, water and building materials.
- Environmentally, by contributing ecosystem services to carbon and water management.
- Spiritually, by contributing to wellbeing, and to physical and mental health, and simply providing space and tranquillity.
- Economically. We not only contribute through tourism and land based industries but we have a strong argument that the environment we provide allows other industries across the North West to attract and retain the best possible people to their businesses.

In the immediate future, Friends of the Lake District will continue to protect and improve our landscapes, to support local communities and to educate and inspire. Our methods will continue to evolve. As a growing membership organisation, we will work to keep our work and messages relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> century,

We will ensure that future generations can continue to benefit from our glorious landscapes.

Douglas Chalmers is Chief Executive of Friends of the Lake District, the only membership organisation dedicated to protecting and enhancing Cumbria's landscapes. He joined Friends of the Lake District after 14 years as a Director of an organisation representing landowners, farmers and rural businesses.

**Appendix 1.** Presentation with powerpoint slides in PDF format; see the next file on the list in <http://www.ukko-kolinystavat.fi/pages/in-english.php>.

**See more in studies and internet:**

Cousins John. 2009. Friends of Lake District: the early years. Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Lancaster University. 148 pages.

Wain Jenny. 2011. Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit PART TWO Landscape Character Toolkit. Cumbria County Council. 42 pages. Published in internet:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/538/755/2789/4068694747.pdf>

<http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk>

<http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor/partnership>

<http://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsoftheLakeDistrict>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Wordsworth#Germany\\_and\\_move\\_to\\_the\\_Lake\\_District](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wordsworth#Germany_and_move_to_the_Lake_District)