

# Wild Ennerdale

The natural evolution of a wild valley



**Ennerdale is a spectacular upland landscape with rocky outcrops, extensive woodland, dynamic rivers, a lake and highly valued flora and fauna. The “Wild Ennerdale” partnership, (the Forestry Commission, National Trust and United Utilities) was established in 2002 to adopt a unique and radical approach to its management, which challenges the conventions of traditional land management practice and ownership boundaries. The project involves giving natural process greater freedom to develop our future landscapes, and to create more opportunities for people to experience its sense of wilderness. The approach is already widely acclaimed.**

## objectives

- To give freedom to natural processes allowing robust, functioning ecosystems to develop on a landscape scale.
- To consider and respect the historical and cultural assets of the valley.
- To protect and enhance the sense of wildness experienced by people.
- To develop greater public enjoyment, engagement and social benefit.
- To establish sustainable business opportunities.
- To monitor change on a large scale and over a long period of time.
- To share results and information as a demonstration project for others.

## actions

- The implementation of a shared stewardship plan, includes programmes to:
- Reduce rhododendron and Sitka Spruce, plant native broadleaves and Juniper, encourage natural woodland, open up areas for grazing, establish a red deer herd, reduce the impact of harvesting operations, facilitate natural water management processes, establish an “access code” and improve opportunities for local business and tourism providers.
  - Set up and share results from long term monitoring of vegetation and habitat change and people's experiences and use of the valley.
  - Provide recreation, learning and employment opportunities for the community (including Junior Warden scheme, local events programme, schools and informal learning).

## achievements

- Diverse organisations (a private utilities company, charity and government) have put aside their historic differences to come together to create an exciting vision.
- The National Trust is providing opportunities for learning and community involvement on Forestry Commission land.
- A ‘Wild Ennerdale’ brand and a tourism cluster to integrate activity and accommodation providers is being developed.
- The Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre and Youth Hostel Association (YHA) site are incorporating the ethos of Wild Ennerdale, including replacing a diesel generator with a water turbine which can produce over 6kw of power.
- New business has been generated for local farmers through grazing.
- People have become engaged in the landscape using art and theatre, including a three-day event at Low Gillerthwaite Field Study Centre for 300 children.

## background

Ennerdale is a remote Cumbrian valley on the western fringe of the Lake District National Park. It is 9 miles long and extends to an area of 11,640 acres (4711 ha). The valley narrows from west to east and is surrounded by dramatic ridges which include some of the Lakeland's highest summits: Green Gable, Great Gable, Pillar, Kirk Fell and Steeple. At the western end of the valley lies Ennerdale Water which supplies 60,000 customers daily with drinking water.

The area is highly significant for its rich legacy of archaeological remains and diverse habitats for flora and fauna, all with features of regional or international importance. Over 40% of the area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation. The continuous transition of vegetation types, from lakeshore through to woodlands and open heathland, to the mountain tops, is spectacular.

As the valley develops, it is hoped that there will be a series of naturally evolving and inter-acting ecosystems across the valley that are far more robust in the face of stresses such as climate change. Farming and forestry will maximise ecology and landscape value. It cannot be predicted exactly how biodiversity may develop as the natural processes are allowed to develop, however being able to observe these processes at work, over generations, will be one of the marvels of change in Ennerdale, and ensure that the lessons learnt will have a resonance far beyond the boundaries of the valley.

Information on the local and regional policy context is available at:

<http://www.wildennerdale.co.uk/stplan/text/10%20Links%20to%20External%20Organisations.pdf>

## quotes

*"This is a very positive step to bring extensive agriculture and forestry together to benefit the environment for the future."* Richard Maxwell, local farmer whose animals are grazing the site.

*"The YHA business plan to make the YHA self sustaining is in direct response to Wild Ennerdale, including limiting the number of cars accessing the site and ensuring that the building's carbon footprint is reduced in its design. This has led to an application for Green Beacon accreditation. Wild Ennerdale is in itself a framework to live life within, both on a personal level and for businesses."* T Hume, Youth Hostel Association.

## partners

Forestry Commission  
National Trust  
United Utilities

## funding

Environment Agency  
Honister Slate Mine  
Individual donations  
Natural England  
Tourism & Conservation Partnership

## lessons learnt

- The importance of agreeing a clear vision and philosophy of working.
- The power of partnership working.
- Not forcing the project, taking the time to develop it, no timescale or targets to add pressure to the project, being opportunistic.
- Making sure that there is an open dialogue with all the different organisations and the local community.