

Caring for the Lake District National Park through the John Muir Award



Conserve Audit 2015 reveals that using the John Muir Award supported by the Lake District National Park Authority:

- **2939 participants, working with 55 organisations, helped care for nature and the Lake District National Park**
- **12,098 hours (equivalent of over 1,700 days) were dedicated to Conserve activities, with 28% contributed by participants experiencing disadvantage**
- **Activity was valued at £68,310 over 12 month period**

What's a Conserve Audit?

It's a monitoring exercise to identify the amount and type of activity carried out to meet the Conserve Challenge of the John Muir Award. This includes practical action, campaigning, and minimising impact, and captures how participants make a difference to wild places. A summary of UK-wide activity carried out during 2015 (plus details on Conserve Audits in UK and Scotland's National Parks) is available at www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/conserve-audit-2015.

Conserve Activity in the Lake District National Park

A sample of 2338 participants (79% of those involved in 2015) had their Conserve activities recorded. John Muir Award involvement ensured that they experienced first-hand what is special about the Lake District, completing a range of Conserve activities within the National Park. Others, inspired by National Park engagement, did this in places special to them and for nature in their local communities outside the Park. 95% of participants were young people (under 25) and 28% were from under-represented backgrounds, through ethnic minority or experiencing some form of disadvantage, in National Parks. Those involved included Cumbrian residents and visitors to the Lake District from throughout the UK.

What did this look like on the ground?

Participants often undertook Conserve activity in a number of locations and habitats, most frequently around lakes and rivers (77% of people), in woodlands (76%) and on mountains (70%). Other locations and habitats where contributions were made included school and outdoor centre grounds, wetlands, wildlife gardens, on the coast and in local parks.

Activities undertaken to enhance nature included:

- **Woodland activity** – 4,910m² of woodland activity including felling, coppicing and brashing.
- **Invasive non-native species removal** – 3,196m² cleared of Himalayan balsam, rhododendron and western hemlock.
- **Footpaths & fencing** – 6,285m footpath and 225m fence maintained, created or improved.
- **Wildflowers** – 1025m² planted with native wildflower seed mix.
- **Habitat management** – 724m² of bracken, beech, gorse, horsetail and ragwort cleared.
- **Litter** – 307 bags of litter collected, with 22% recycled.
- **Tree planting** – 181 native trees planted.
- **Wildlife feeders & habitats** - 104 feeders for birds, red squirrels and insects created, along with 128 wildlife habitats for birds, butterflies and moths.
- **Other** – 100m² meadow seeded, 130m ditch improved or maintained, 30m² pond restored/created, 30m hedge maintained, 5 compost heaps created, 5m wall restored and 1 wormery created.

As well as practical tasks participants took an active part in campaigns such as Drive Less, See More: Go Lakes, and Ditch the Hitchers: Cumbria Freshwater Invasive Non-Native Species Initiative. Others volunteered for Osprey Watch, and conducted surveys for the British Trust for Ornithology and the National Trust.

“What was the highlight? Helping a 94-year-old lady build the banks of her garden up after the floods by filling wire cages with stones.” Bonner Primary School on residential at The Outward Bound Trust's Ullswater Centre.

Supporting the Vision for the Lake District National Park

Much of this activity took place with organisations in the LDNP Partnership, and contributed towards their own plans in support of the [Vision for the National Park](#). Many varied examples were monitored by the Conserve Audit. Students from Keswick School volunteered with [Osprey Watch](#), working with the RSPB to inform and educate visitors. Students and adults with Cumbria Outdoors, the Outward Bound Trust, Kendal College and the National Trust's High Wray Basecamp took part in footpath maintenance work as part of [Fix the Fells](#). Volunteer work with the National Trust on footpath maintenance and West Cumbria Rivers Trusts on Himalayan Balsam control contributed to the [Bassenthwaite Lake Restoration Programme](#). Others chose to use sustainable transport to access and enjoy the Lake District as part of the Go Lakes Travel campaign contributing to [Low Carbon Lake District](#).

"The John Muir Award helps to inspire a new generation to care about nature. Getting them involved with our local issues enables them to give something back to the Lake District, whilst providing them with valuable life skills, as well as supporting them in their chosen future careers."
Catherine Johnson, Ranger, Lake District National Park.

Contributing to the Government's [8 Point Plan for England's National Parks](#) (March 2016)

This Conserve Audit illustrates how the John Muir Trust and the Lake District National Park Authority work together in ways that can contribute to the recently published 8 Point Plan. Specifically, it demonstrates outcomes in relation to:

Point 1: Connect young people with nature

2939 people engaged directly with the special qualities of the Lake District through John Muir Award participation in 2015, with 95% of these under 25. For all, this included taking some active responsibility, in the numerous ways evidenced. Further insights were shared about the natural and cultural heritage of the Lake District (often in a curriculum context), and the contemporary relevance of John Muir.



Point 6: Everyone's National Parks

Over 12,000 hours of volunteering was carried out through John Muir Award involvement in 2015 by people from all sectors of society. 28% of this was contributed by people experiencing some kind of disadvantage – from deprived areas of Cumbria (Barrow, Carlisle, the West Coast) as well as Sunderland, Manchester and London; from drug and alcohol addiction recovery groups; and some with challenging learning difficulties. Many of these participants would not normally engage in positive environmental action.

Point 8: Health and Wellbeing in National Parks

This information clearly illustrates healthy, non-sedentary, outdoor activity. It can be shown, as part of John Muir Award participation, to promote [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) - evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing promoted by the NHS.

Conclusion

Supported by the Lake District National Park Authority, the John Muir Award has been a catalyst for schools, outdoor centres and others to engage with LDNP Partnership organisations. This has enabled residents and visitors alike to learn about and take practical action to address important issues such as footpath erosion, woodland management, non-native invasive species and water quality. This direct hands-on experience reinforces their understanding and appreciation of this world class landscape, strengthening their connection with the Lake District.

