

## The Lake District World Heritage Site and the John Muir Trust



The Lake District National Park gained World Heritage Inscription in July 2017 as a 'Cultural Landscape'.

What does that mean? What makes the Lake District a World Heritage Site?

How is the John Muir Trust working with its cultural – and natural - landscape?

And where can you find more information?

The John Muir Trust values and celebrates the wildness of the World Heritage Site including its mountains, woods and lakes. Recreational challenge and experience of wildness are a result of both the cultural landscape and the natural habitats and features of the Lake District.

The John Muir Award, the main engagement initiative of the John Muir Trust, has been established in Cumbria since 2002, helping people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with, understand and care for the special qualities of the Lake District National Park. More recently the John Muir Trust has taken on management of Glenridding Common in the Ullswater valley, and with it the responsibility to maintain its 'outstanding universal value' as a cultural, natural, and recreational landscape.

### What is a World Heritage Site?

World Heritage Sites are places considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value – to have special importance for everyone, globally. They are listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and represent the most significant or exceptional examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage.

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THE ENGLISH  
LAKE DISTRICT  
WORLD HERITAGE SITE



## The Lake District – Identity, Inspiration, Conservation

The Outstanding Universal Value of the Lake District, as set out in the Nomination Documents, is seen in the unique and interdependent fusion of three core elements – Identity, Inspiration, Conservation. This combination is recognised as a prime example of the “combined works of nature and of man”<sup>1</sup>.

### Identity

"The distinct mountainous area, modelled by glaciers into radiating valleys has been shaped by a long-standing agro-pastoral land-use system which is still practiced today." The traditional culture of farming over 1000 years in the spectacular natural setting is recognised as giving the Lake District an exceptional harmonious beauty. Central to its **identity** is upland hill farming with its local sheep breeds such as the Herdwick and the stone walled field system of inbye, intake and common fell grazing with sheep 'hefted' to their own fellsides. Against this background are the social cultural traditions of shepherds' meets, dialect, agricultural and sporting shows with their fell races, Cumberland wrestling and hound trails.

(Boxed text is interpreted from the [Nomination Documents](#) text.)



### John Muir Trust activity - Identity

- At [Glenridding Common](#) the Trust is committed to the agro-pastoral land use and its cultural significance (as noted in a Lease Agreement and Management Plan). Examples of actions include working with graziers to maintain sheep gathering routes, and engagement and understanding of the inter-relationship of challenging mountain environments and of Commons and Commoning through use of the John Muir Award.
- Use of the John Muir Award will engage people, particularly those under-represented as visitors to National Parks, with spectacular landscapes, Common Land and cultural themes. As a partner in the Foundation for Common Land-led HLF 'Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons' project, we will promote an increased awareness of common land and its significance.

### Inspiration

"This landscape came to be appreciated from the 18th century onwards by the Picturesque and later the Romantic Movements, which celebrated it in paintings, drawings and words." The writings of people such as Wordsworth and Coleridge led people to appreciate the beauty and value of the Cumbrian (and wider) landscape. This **inspiration** offered by the nature, landscapes and culture continues today, as seen in the work of modern artists, as the backdrop for tv programmes, with sculpture in the landscape, as well as the rising popularity of adventure tourism, sporting challenge events and festivals of all kinds.

<sup>1</sup> From the definition of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes.

### John Muir Trust activity - Inspiration

- The John Muir Award encourages a connection with the landscape and wild places. It promotes curiosity, outdoor activity and quiet contemplation through knowledge and values-based learning in a spirit of fun and adventure. Achieving an individual John Muir Award includes celebrating and sharing these experiences with others in original and creative ways. Around 3000 people every year achieve a John Muir Award in Cumbria.



- In May 2018 a highly successful John Muir Trust AGM and national Members' Gathering held at Glenridding engaged members with the natural and cultural landscape of the Lake District. A strong sense of the importance of the Lake District to local communities was emphasised by the Parish Council Chair and through presentations and excursions from Foundation for Common Land, Fix the Fells, archaeological experts and The Outward Bound Trust.

### Conservation

"The beauty of this landscape and awareness of its Universal Value both in itself and in its capacity to nurture and uplift imagination, creativity and spirit, along with threats to the area, led directly to the development of a conservation movement which has had global influence. This includes the establishment of the National Trust, and the global movement of protected areas and management\* of recreational experience within them as developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature."

Today this requires collaboration between farming, tourism and conservation organisations (embodied in the Lake District National Park Partnership) to care for the cultural landscape in the face of contemporary issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pressure on traditional farming systems and visitor impact.

\*<https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about/protected-areas-categories/category-v-protected-landscapes/seascape>

### John Muir Trust activity - Conservation

- To achieve a John Muir Award each participant meets a Conserve challenge, taking active responsibility for a wild place. The collective impact of this activity locally can be seen in a [Lake District National Park Summary](#) and nationally in a [Conserve Audit 2015](#).
- At [Glenridding Common a management plan](#) commits the John Muir Trust to working with graziers, local community, youth and National Park Partnership organisations to identify actions to mitigate flood risk, visitor pressure, footpath erosion and biodiversity loss, as well as enhance wildlife and natural habitats.



- A volunteer conservation work programme encompasses both John Muir Trust led activity as well as partnership working with the Friends of the Lake District and the University of Leeds at [Hardknott Forest](#). In addition the employment of a young local Glenridding Common Ranger has increased capacity to engage with the public and with outdoor learning groups.

### Did the Lake District influence John Muir?

Yes! Muir took inspiration from Wordsworth and Coleridge, and he recognised that wild places were essential in their capacity to nurture and uplift imagination, creativity and spirit. Such influences, his understanding of the natural world and recognition of threats to it led to his campaign which influenced the creation of a global family of National Parks. “Have visited Wordsworth's and Colerige's [sic] graves & Dorothy's and the childrens...a robin... came and sang on the maple as I stood with damp eyes and a lump in my throat”.<sup>2</sup>

### Find out more about the Lake District as a World Heritage site:

- **What is a World Heritage Site?** Read about UNESCO and link to the list of World Heritage Sites [here](#).
- **Lake District World Heritage website** – [find out more](#) and get involved.
- **The case for why the English Lake District deserves World Heritage Site status** is set out in the [4 volumes of its Nomination Dossier](#) on the Lake District National Park website:
  1. Nomination Document – this sets out why the Lake District is internationally special, described in the document as being of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’.
  2. Valley Descriptions and History - provides a more detailed description and history for each of the 13 valleys.
  3. Volume 3: Appendices - copies of legal texts and management plans that apply to the area.
  4. The Management Plan for the English Lake District 2015 – 2020 - the management plan for the Lake District both as a National Park and a potential World Heritage Site.

### The John Muir Trust in the Lake District

- John Muir Trust and [Glenridding Common](#) – read about our involvement, the draft management plan and see answers to some Frequently Asked Questions.
- Read the John Muir Trust Spring 2017 Journal [article about Glenridding Common](#).
- Read about how the John Muir Award is encouraging people to enjoy, connect with and care for the Lake District in our [#BrilliantResidential in the Lake District National Park](#) case study.

**“The Lake District has long been a place both to seek adventure and to learn about the environment and our relationship with it. In a world of diverse challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and physical inactivity, it has never been more important to inspire young people to be adventurous, to have hands-on real life experiences of our world in order that they understand and care for it.”**

Richard Leafe, CEO, Lake District National Park Authority.



John Muir Trust, updated July 2018.

<sup>2</sup>John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings. Baton Wicks Publications; 1996.