

**Background** Ennerdale is a spectacular upland landscape with rock outcrops, extensive woodland, dynamic natural rivers, a glacial lake and highly valued flora & fauna. Established in 2003 Wild Ennerdale is a partnership of people and organisations led by the principal landowners in the valley, The Forestry Commission, National Trust and United Utilities with the support of Natural England.

Wild land is a relatively new concept in the UK and involves giving natural processes greater freedom to develop our future landscapes. Nature conservation in England is generally focused on small-scale **interventions, Wild Ennerdale is one of the UK's largest wild land projects allowing ecosystems throughout the valley to evolve with greater freedom.** Its experience in managing land through minimal human intervention is already widely recognised and shared by others.

## Vision

**“to allow the evolution of Ennerdale as a wild valley for the benefit of people, relying more on natural processes to shape its landscape and ecology”**

## Guiding Principals

- Give freedom to natural processes allowing robust, functioning ecosystems to develop on a landscape scale
- Consider and respect the historical and cultural assets of the valley.
- Protect and enhance the sense of wildness.
- Develop greater public enjoyment, engagement and social benefit.
- Establish sustainable business opportunities.
- Monitor change on a large scale and over a long period of time.
- Share results and information as a demonstration to others.
- Only intervene where complimentary to the Vision or where a threat to the vision is posed.
- Focus management and decision making more at the landscape scale.

## Achievements

- Three different organisations, Government, Charity and Private Utility Company operating as one landowner.
- 1500ha Pillar SSSI in improving condition.
- Commended in UK Landscape Award 2010.
- Significant community involvement eg Partnership Newsletter circulated to over 500 local houses every 3 months via Parish Magazine team..
- Wild Ennerdale Volunteers contributed over **£25,000 in volunteer hours during 2010/11.**
- Three all year round extensive grazing herds of cattle roaming over 930ha of forest, mountain and valley bringing back a missing natural process and significant new business to local farm tenants.
- Completion of baseline monitoring programme including birds, vegetation and forest.
- Partnership website sees over 12,000 visits annually from over 70 countries and has over 400 Facebook fans.
- Over 25,000 native broadleaves and 5,000 Juniper planted.
- 25ha of heathland created and 6ha of bog in restoration. Existing Native woodlands expanding.
- Projects supporting survival of Arctic charr, Marsh Fritillary, Red Squirrel and Pine Martin.

# Shaping the landscape naturally

**Context and Continuity** 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 Lakeland's highest summits** such as Great Gable and Pillar both over 3000ft high. At the western end of the valley lies Ennerdale Water which supplies over 60,000 customers with drinking water.

The area is highly significant for its rich legacy of archaeological remains being described as the Lake District's best remaining example of a settled medieval valley. It is also home to diverse habitats for flora and fauna, which range from regional to international importance. Over 40% of the area is designated as 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' and "Special Area of Conservation". The continuous transition of vegetation types, from lakeshore through woodlands and open heath land, to the mountain tops, is spectacular.

As the valley develops, it is hoped that there will be a series of naturally evolving and interacting 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 natural processes are given greater freedom. 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.

**Funding** The Partners, Natural England, Individual donations, Environment Agency, The Tourism & Conservation Partnership & Honister Slate Mine and Original Buff.

With emphasis on low input management, ongoing costs will continue to be met by the partners to avoid the risk of becoming too funding driven and influenced by external policies and agendas.

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## Lessons Learnt

- Spend time agreeing a clear vision and philosophy of working.
- The power of partnership working.
- The important role of advocacy, winning champions in influential places.
- Allowing time to develop relationships, without a fixed timescale or targets to add pressure to the project,
- Mimicking natural processes by being opportunistic.
- Gathering of base line monitoring early in the process.