

## **1. Introduction**

Ennerdale is the most westerly valley within the Lake District National Park. The mountains give way to a flat coastal plain then the Irish Sea beyond, within a distance of just a few miles. The physical environment of Ennerdale has stunning attributes: high mountains, rocky outcrops and scree, large, diverse woodlands, dynamic rivers, a majestic lake and some of the most highly valued flora & fauna in the country. Human presence is an essential part of 'nature' and has shaped the look and feel of Ennerdale over a long period, through early woodland clearances, farming and latterly commercial forestry.

The scale and style of human activity in Ennerdale is now changing with a shift away from economic productivity as the primary output. There is a move towards lower input, more sensitive management whereby natural processes are given a greater hand in determining how the valley will evolve in the future. The Wild Ennerdale partnership has been established to drive this initiative forward and enhance the wild qualities of the valley.

The natural attributes of Ennerdale, its large scale and remoteness from habitation lends itself to evolving as a wilder place. Those involved as 'managers' of Ennerdale are passionate about it's future and recognise the high landscape value and as a resource to many for recreation and livelihoods. There will no doubt be challenges ahead; the level of interest however, support and enthusiasm from local people and wider audiences (nationally and internationally) have already demonstrated that we are working towards a new and exciting phase in Ennerdale's evolution.

So what will Ennerdale look like in 50,100 or 200 years time? The reality is we don't really know. Based on our hopes and aspirations, we can however make broad assumptions; that we will have a series of naturally evolving and inter-acting eco-systems across the valley that are far more robust in the face of stresses such as climate change (for example). Farming and forestry will continue to have a role in the valley, but with the aim of maximising ecology and landscape value. We cannot predict exactly how the boundary between fell and forest will change over time, nor how bio-diversity may develop as natural processes take greater hold. 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.

The Wild Ennerdale Partnership 2006