

11. Public Engagement

The involvement of people in the Wild Ennerdale process is an important part of the vision. A key aim is to bring greater social benefit to people, particularly the local community¹ and wider communities in West Cumbria, through opportunities for recreation and learning. Within this overarching aim are a number of factors which contribute to bringing 'greater social benefit' by:

- Encouraging a 'sense of ownership' with the valley, both now and in the long term by involving people in the development process and incorporating views and opinions.
- Supporting people's livelihoods by developing ideas for low impact, sustainable business activities which maximise the wild land value of the valley.
- Providing opportunity for exploration, adventure and being close to nature. With this comes recognition that these qualities are more than just physical, but can bring emotional and spiritual benefits too.
- Facilitating learning outside the classroom to develop an interest in nature and wild places.

Since 2000, a dedicated National Trust Community Learning Officer has improved and developed community links and this, along with a (more recent) Wild Ennerdale Project Officer ensures that public engagement remains an important part of the Wild Ennerdale process.

Examples of Project & Consultation Work:

- Junior Wardens

A programme of monthly events with local children and parents to foster a greater interest and sense of ownership of the valley. Increasingly activities are centred on Wild Ennerdale.

- Local Events Programme

A programme of monthly events planned throughout the year to encourage local people from nearby parishes and communities in West Cumbria to develop a greater understanding of the work of the National Trust, with some events specific to the Wild Ennerdale partnership.

- Education work with schools

Visits into schools and site visits by groups to undertake environmental projects and activities. Example includes 'Hands on Heritage' – a project looking at the archaeological assets in Ennerdale.

- Informal learning with youth/community groups

Using different mediums such as art and theatre to enable people to engage with the Ennerdale valley in new and innovative ways. Examples include:

- Arts in Trust event (2002) – 300 children worked with artists to encourage thought, expressions and feelings about Ennerdale. Culminated in a three-day event at Low Gillerthwaite Field Study Centre.
- The Untold Story (2004) – using creative arts to explore the significance of landscape – theatre production of 'The Spirit of Ennerdale' based on historical evidence and local folklore.
- General public meetings, displays at agricultural shows, parish meetings etc.
- Wild Ennerdale website provides access to partnership information and reports, photo gallery and webcam (www.wildennerdale.co.uk).

¹ Residents in the Ennerdale valley and the nearest village of Ennerdale Bridge