

16.i Conservation Management

Summary

Ennerdale has an outstanding range of natural and cultural assets. The concept of 'wild land' in Ennerdale encompasses both the ecological and cultural history of the valley. The landscape we see today is a result of society's relationship with the land, influencing the various attributes of flora, fauna and heritage features. There are also a number of important geological features. The best examples of these vegetation types and geology are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Almost half the Wild Ennerdale area is designated as SSSI and SAC (Special Area of Conservation - the highest tier of designation in the UK) which provides a good indication of the national and international importance of the valley. Similarly, as Ennerdale has been subject to low intensity farming on a limited scale (since potentially the Bronze Age) the preservation of earlier landscapes offer cultural links with the past and some exceptional archaeological remains.

The conservation objectives for the SSSI and SAC's describe what the designations are there to achieve. They list the features of interest and describe what their good ecological health looks like. The vision and guiding principles will be used to deliver healthy ecological communities within both the designated sites and the broader valley. There is acknowledgement that the distribution and extent of some vegetation communities may change but the balance is likely to be in favour of restoring and supporting natural ecosystems and vegetation.

Conservation management is a component of several of the other processes operating in the valley, particularly forestry, farming and water extraction. When and how we choose to intervene for 'conservation' reasons will be a matter of ongoing debate and an integral part of the evolution of the Wild Ennerdale approach. Some forms of management will remain relatively straight-forward, such as the limited removal of vegetation to protect archaeological sites. However others, such as the extent to which spruce regeneration should be controlled, will be harder matters to decide. As such, 'trigger levels' for intervention will be determined primarily by the extent to which any action will enhance or detract from the wild character of the valley. At present, the Partnership's conservation management work is limited to those interventions needed to restore some balance to the range of 'natural' processes which operate. Examples include the removal of mature seed bearing spruce and the introduction of broadleaf seed sources to the eastern end of the valley, along with the introduction of large herbivores. An exception to this is where work is required for safety or legal compliance reasons.

Actions (within next 10 years)

- Develop a better understanding of changes to vegetation habitats and species in Ennerdale.
- Introduce extensive year round naturalistic grazing by large herbivores (cattle) to create and maintain structural diversity and open areas within the valley.
- Allow Red Deer to establish as a herd. Maintain culling as there are no natural predators.
- Deliver the SSSI conservation objectives for the designated areas Remove rhododendron from the valley.
- Monitor the heritage features within the valley and consider management recommendations from the Historic Landscape Report

[Linked maps: I & L](#)

[Linked photos: Plates 1 - 63](#)