



National
Trust

Looking after the Lakes, for now and for the future

A shared purpose for the Lake District

A full-page background image showing a vast, snow-covered mountain landscape. In the foreground, a dark-colored sheep is seen from behind, walking across the snow. The middle ground shows rolling hills and valleys covered in snow. In the background, more mountain ranges are visible under a sky with a bright, low sun, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall scene is peaceful and majestic.

This is about the Lake District; its dramatically beautiful valleys and fells, its people and culture, its wildlife, and what it means to us as a nation, and to people from even further afield. And it's about the National Trust's part in helping look after the Lake District for everyone, for now and for the future.



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The National Trust has been looking after special places in the Lake District on behalf of the nation for the past 120 years. It's our birthplace, our spiritual home, somewhere we care deeply about.

Dramatic view down onto Troutbeck Park Farm from the high fell at Townend, Cumbria.
Year photo taken: 1948.
© National Trust Images / J Hardman



Troutbeck Park Farm today – one of the most famous Herdwick sheep farms in the Lake District.
© National Trust Images / Paul Harris





A cultural landscape: this 18th century deed map of Troutbeck Park is a vivid representation of the farm in its setting.

© National Trust Collections / Dayve Ward

At the heart of our work will always be our commitment to our conservation purpose; recognising and protecting the special places and ways of working that define the Lake District. But that doesn't mean trying to freeze things in time.

While the landscapes of the Lake District have got a timeless beauty, they have in fact for thousands of years been changed and adapted to the evolving needs of people. Right now is certainly no exception, with everything from wildlife to the weather in flux. And with our exit from the EU leading us to rethink – as a nation – our relationship with land and the rural economy.

The National Trust is playing its part in leading the thinking about how best to manage and adapt to this change. We've been making the case for supporting land management that brings a full range of benefits to society; encompassing access, beauty, clean water, green energy, healthy soil, and high quality food. And which in the process secures the natural and cultural fabric of the Lake District – its traditions, views, soils, water, wildlife – so that the Lakes can continue to enrich the nation for generations to come.

Nature underpins all of this – all that we value in the Lakes, and everything that any of us might seek to achieve. And while the Lake District has an exquisitely beautiful natural environment, it is by no means in universal good health.

We are losing soils, our wildlife has declined, and our rivers are in a pattern of repeated flooding. We think that addressing these issues is core priority for the Lake District. Now is the time to do this, and this will be at the heart of everything we do.

We see a shared purpose in this, since we think serving the needs of society provides the best case for securing ongoing support and payment for the Lake District and its landscapes. And we think that protecting the things that

underpin our ability to do this makes sense whether you are a farmer, a conservationist, or run a bed and breakfast.

We know that this raises lots of practical questions and we don't pretend to have all the answers. Indeed we can't, and have no wish to, work in isolation. So we want to have conversations with people; from those who live and work here to the much wider community who love the Lake District and come here to visit. From these conversations we want to work together to create a shared and sustainable future for this very special part of the country.

Join the conversation

We're keen to talk. You'll see us around if you're out and about in the Lakes, so please come up and have a chat. You can also get in touch online: **@NTlakedistrict, #lookingafterthelakes**

Ancient footprints

Troutbeck Park was the farm where Beatrix Potter famously turned her hand to raising Herdwick sheep. But the ragged army of ancient ash pollards on the hillside here comes from a more ancient era, before the English Civil War, when the Park was a hunting forest. Uncut now for years, and grazed hard underneath, these precious relics are living on borrowed time. As part of an extensive restoration programme, we're taking action now to fence, ease off the grazing, recut the pollards, and plant up the next cohort.



Ash Pollard tree at Troutbeck Park Farm
© National Trust Images / Paul Harris

The Lake District – for everyone

“a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and an interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy”
William Wordsworth

The Lake District plays a part in the lives of millions of people. For the greatest number of people, it's a place that they come to visit, with friends and with their families; day-tripping to Windermere, hiking up fells, maybe camping out under the stars. For others it's where they live and make a living, and have their roots and their community.

It's a place with very practical, functional connections. Like the flows of fresh drinking water it supplies to the 800,000 people in Greater Manchester who get their water from Thirlmere. Or the good it does for people's health, by providing a place to come out – even occasionally – into the views, fresh air, and nature. It's also come to have more abstract meanings and cultural importance – through poetry and art, and through the way the landscapes here have been held up as a contrast to industry and modernity.

All of these layers of human experience matter. They matter because the depth of value they represent makes the Lake District amount to even more than the sum of its, very beautiful, parts.



Images, clockwise from left:

Children enjoying craft activities at National Trust Children's Book Festival at Wray Castle © National Trust Images / James Dobson

National Trust tenant farmer, Gary Dixon, handles a Herdwick sheep in the pens at Hill Top Farm © National Trust Images / Paul Harris

Walkers with member of National Trust staff at Stickle Ghyll © National Trust Images / Paul Harris

Visitors walking along the west shore of Windermere © National Trust Images / James Dobson

National Trust Sticklebarn pub in Great Langdale © National Trust Images / Paul Harris

Visitors in a rowing boat at Fell Foot © National Trust Images / Steven Barber



The Lake District is a special place to me because it packs a great but subtle variety of mountains, lakes, geology and beauty into a small place. There is nowhere on earth quite like it. Looking after this evolving masterpiece, through working with our energetic Partnership, will keep it special and loved by many for years to come.

Richard Leaf, Chief Executive,
Lake District National Park Authority



© Simon Bickersteth

I love the Lake District because it feels like my back garden. One minute I can be swimming in a lake and the next I can be on the highest mountain in England.

Tomek, visits regularly from Carlisle



© National Trust Images / Steve Barber

I am so lucky to live and work in the Lakes – on a sunny summer's evening I love nothing more than a wild swim, exploring the bridleways on my mountain bike or hiking up high to see the sunset over our beautiful mountains!

Clair Payne, Assistant Ranger



© Harriet Fraser / somewhere-nowhere.com

The Lake District offers a constant source of creative inspiration. It is the place that I chose to put down roots because it is fulfilling in so many different ways; the landscape is sublime, the people wonderful. There is something about the various moods that the land wears through all the seasons – there is nowhere else quite like it. It holds strong echoes of the past, but it is also forward thinking in its approach to managing all the complex asks of the rich landscape.

Rob Fraser, Lake District artist



© National Trust Images / Jonny Walton

It's such a wonderful place – the scenery, the people. When it came time to retire we moved up here because we were always holidaying here – spending the holidays here with the kids since they were knee-high. It's just a fantastic place to be.

David Brooks, Fix the Fells volunteer



The Lake District is special to me because it can inspire and sustain so many emotions, from wonder through to peace. It generates respect for the people who live and earn their livings here, their predecessors, and how they have looked after and shaped the land and it has looked after and shaped them.

Douglas Chalmers, Chief Executive,
Friends of the Lake District

Highclose

On the road up over from Grasmere to Elterwater, just west of Loughrigg Fell, Highclose is a grand Victorian villa set amongst formal gardens and its own arboretum. Before the Douglas firs and giant redwoods powered skywards around it, the terraces and big wide windows would have impressed guests with views down over pretty nearby farms, and away into the wilder depths of Great Langdale. 'The finest view in Westmorland' according to Harriet Martineau's 1855 guidebook. But equally important, possibly even more so, is the fact that this splendid place is now a Youth Hostel. Wetsuits drip on the verandas, boots are stacked by the steps, and the fresh air is taken in by youngsters out having their first – vital, formative – taste of outdoors and adventure.



Walkers with a dog at Highclose © National Trust Images / Chris Lacey

The National Trust directly looks after around one fifth of the land in the Lake District National Park, but we are committed to playing our part in all of it.

Great Gable, bought by climbers returning after the Great War, recalling their lost brothers in arms. Entrusted to our hands for all time.

Where we fit in – the National Trust and the Lake District

We've been here for a while now. And it's certainly the case that the Lake District has shaped the National Trust at least as much as we could ever shape the Lake District. The very idea of the National Trust – and the conservation movement as a whole – came about because some influential Victorians, with the Lake District in mind, saw how important it is for the life of the nation to have places of calm and beauty staked out and protected, away from the bustle and grind of modern life. It's a notion that caught on here, and caught on globally.

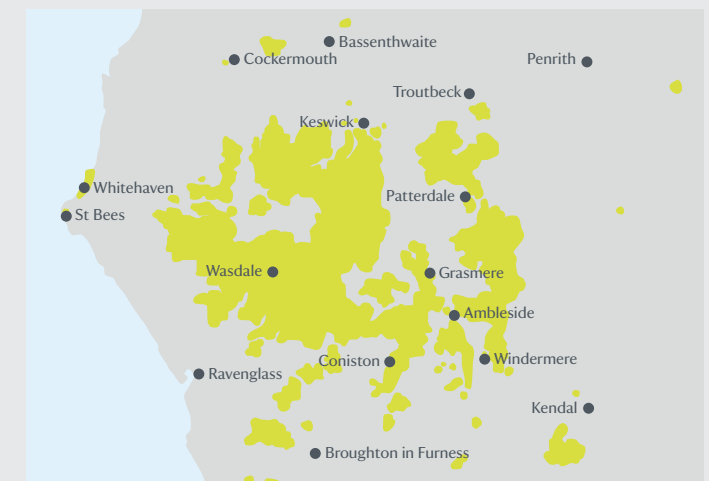
So now our land in the Lake District makes up by far the biggest portion of our holdings in Britain. And the epic landscapes we have been entrusted with here have come to us precisely because of what we are. Enshrined by an Act of Parliament to look after special places on behalf of the nation; for everyone, forever. Like the historic bequests of fourteen farms and four thousand acres of land by Beatrix Potter. Or Great Gable, a whole mountain bought by members of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club after the First World War, to remember their lost friends, and *'vested in the National Trust for the use and enjoyment of the people of our land for all time.'*

We don't take these responsibilities lightly. And it's not just our responsibility to the intentions of the people who were able to pass these places on. It's our responsibility to the generations of people who've made these places part of their lives and their families' histories. And to the people who will in the future.

Of course, underpinning all of this, it's our responsibility to the places themselves.

Land in our care

(land in our care is indicated in green)



Our philosophy for land in the Lake District

All that we do in the Lake District is guided by a practical understanding of our responsibilities, and of the task at hand. But it's important to be clear and open about how our way of thinking – our philosophy about land, nature and people in the Lake District – also guides our actions.

For example, because we think that the Lakes are 'for everyone' and in many ways a national property, we put a huge amount of focus on making our places in the Lakes welcoming and accessible to as many parts of the community as we practically can.

Similarly, our thinking on the relationship between nature and culture in the landscapes here, and our attitude to change in the Lake District landscape both have very practical implications in what we do.

Treating nature and culture as two sides of the same coin

This is a defining feature of the Lake District; you don't get one without the other. People have been here, cutting trees, digging holes, building bridges, hefting flocks, writing poems for most of the years since the ice crept back up to the North Pole, 12,000 years ago. It's not just that we have shaped and been shaped by nature. When we get the balance right, we're part of nature in the Lakes. It's why people have got together behind the Lakes' World Heritage Site nomination. And it sits at the heart of what we imagine for the future.





Black Crag and Troutdale woodlands in Borrowdale
© National Trust Images / John Malley

Ancient oak coppice stools in Borrowdale

The ancient oakwoods that perch and sweep down the steep sides of Borrowdale are crammed with nature. Really special nature. Drenched by eleven feet of rain a year, they're genuine rainforests – the trees and rocks draped in sodden coats of mosses, liverworts, ferns and lichens. This isn't diminished by the fact that these woods have been worked, hard, since we could first get at them with stone axes. Over time, the old oaks here were cut and recut into multi-stemmed coppice stools for posts, pit props, bobbins, barrels, bark for tanning leather. And charcoal, which was used to smelt the ores won from mines like Goldscope, just around the corner. It's all part of the same, evolving, picture.

Working with a changing landscape

You can't just take a landscape in the Lake District and protect it like a famous oil painting, capturing it as a snapshot in time. The valleys and fells here are evolving masterpieces. They're as much about the future as the past. And a core part of their magic comes from the fact that that they are always in a process of change. Being shaped by the actions of nature, people, and time. So, working with change – keeping the landscape alive and thriving – is part of our responsibility.

Goldscope mine

The landscapes here are like an open record of change. Like the abandoned Goldscope copper mines, first worked up in the Newlands Valley by German miners – experts brought in by the Elizabethan Company of Mines Royal. The wealth they created, and the new blood they brought in, brought big changes locally in Keswick. It built houses and smelting works, and sent networks of miners' tracks and packhorse trails out into the surrounding hills. Of course, the results aren't all just a historic record. Paths, tracks and houses are all very much part of the present – walked, ridden, lived in, loved. Change is at its best in these rich and layered landscapes when it reworks and repurposes what came before.

© National Trust Images / John Malley

Mountain biking in Wasdale
© National Trust Images / Paul Harris



Farmer Jon Watson with the flock of Herdwick
sheep at Yew Tree Farm, Coniston
© National Trust Images / Paul Harris



Aerial view of Bassenthwaite Lake during flooding
© National Trust Images / John Malley

Modern challenges

Over the past decade the natural environment in the Lake District has been tested to the limit by extreme weather – most dramatically in 2015 by Storm Desmond. And in places it has been found wanting. Hillsides slid down over roads, soils washed out into the lakes, and storm-water rushed through the valleys, taking down bridges and flooding the communities below. We don't expect to be able to hold back the weather. But we do think that events like these highlight the need to take our protection of the soils, water, wildlife and beauty of the Lakes to a new level. This is the natural fabric that supports and sustains everything any of us do here, from farming to fell-walking. And we can't take it for granted.

The principles that guide our work in the Lake District

This is about how we translate our philosophy – what we think about the Lakes – into practice.

We don't have a blueprint for how this should look on the ground. No hidden masterplan. It's a path we will navigate together with our partners – the people and organisations that share our passion for the Lakes. But we do have a set of principles against which we will measure, check and balance our decisions and our progress. These are set out below, and explained in more practical detail over the coming pages.



Images, clockwise from left:

Walkers with a member of National Trust staff at Stickle Ghyll © National Trust Images / Paul Harris

Visitors and a National Trust staff member by the boathouse at Fell Foot © National Trust Images / Steven Barber

Head Gardener Peter Tasker at Hill Top © National Trust Images / Paul Harris

These seven principles provide a system of checks and balances, guiding our work in the Lakes:

- 1 Protecting the natural and cultural fabric of the Lake District**
- 2 Working with nature**
- 3 Adapting to the changing needs of society**
- 4 Being guided by the lie of the land**
- 5 Playing our part in the Lake District community**
- 6 Finding shared purpose and working with others**
- 7 Taking the long view**

Principle 1: Protecting the natural and cultural fabric of the Lake District

This is our first responsibility, because it's the combined heritage of people, landform, soils, water, and wildlife that underpins everything that is important and loved about the Lakes.

It's about looking after the basic stock-take of rocks, soils, walls, fields, farms, trees, woods, wildflowers, fells, commons, tarns, becks, lakes, quarries, ruins, cairns, crags, screes, pikes, gills, paths, stiles, tracks, pubs, campsites, villages, businesses, skills, memories, and more. Valuable in their own right, these are our indispensable raw materials. Everything we do now, or might want to do in the future, has to be fashioned out of them.

© National Trust Images / Adrian Mills



Fix The Fells

Fix The Fells came out of a realisation that while pretty much everyone benefits from having good, solid, serviceable paths up into the fells, the responsibility to keep them that way actually falls to nobody in particular. So since 2007 this partnership of the willing has provided the critical mass to fund and carry out hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of work to improve access and reduce erosion. As well as directly improving the physical fabric of the paths, the work does an important heritage job; allowing people to follow historical pathways, trodden the same way for generations. And by keeping people to those paths, it helps secure the ecological fabric of the fells too – protecting vulnerable and slow-growing mountain-top habitats.



Principle 2: Working with nature

This is about pausing to observe, understand, and respond to the natural forces and inclinations of the places we look after.

We've a tendency as humans to engineer our way to a solution: to build a wall to stop a flood, to add a chemical to make our soil rich, or to put in a plantation when we want a wood. And it doesn't always work out for the best. In a landscape with as much natural force as the Lake District has, we think there are many more times and more places where we can let nature have more of a hand in things. So before we act we'll ask, can that river find its own course? Can the tree cover on that intake find its own balance? If we graze that fell a little less, what else will come to life?

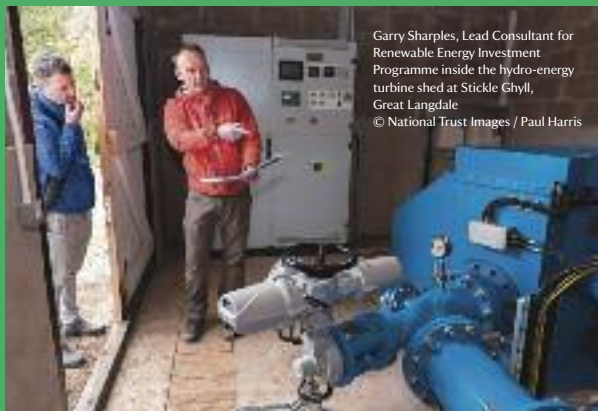


Galloway cattle in the woods in Ennerdale
© Paul Delaney

Ennerdale

Ennerdale sits in the remote north-western end of the National Park. Wild Ennerdale – the partnership that manages the valley – sits at the end of a spectrum when it comes to favouring natural over human influences. We've not walked away. But the River Liza has free rein now across the valley floor, where the fences are going and grazing is down to a small wandering herd of Galloways. And across Ennerdale the edges are blurring between forest, grassland, and scrub. It wouldn't be right everywhere. But it's worth noting some of the results. Like the way the river is no longer so flashy, and holds less sediment and colour after heavy rain.

Sunlight glancing through the trunks
of trees at Ennerdale
© National Trust Images / Joe Cornish



Garry Sharples, Lead Consultant for Renewable Energy Investment Programme inside the hydro-energy turbine shed at Stickle Ghyll, Great Langdale
© National Trust Images / Paul Harris

Principle 3: Adapting to the changing needs of society

We think that as time goes on the Lakes will become even more important to people both locally and nationally. And for a wider range of reasons – from food, to health and flood prevention, and more. We think it's right to understand, adapt to, and deliver for those needs.

At the moment most landscapes in the Lake District are structured primarily around farming for livestock. A whole range of other benefits can spring from this, but they play second fiddle to that primary purpose. In the future we'll aim for landscapes that are shaped more explicitly around the full range of benefits for society; from managing floods and providing clean water, to generating clean energy, to tourism, health, and fostering a sense of community and identity. As well as producing high quality, local food – we're definitely not saying we want this to stop.



Family canoeing on Windermere at Fell Foot
© National Trust Images / Steve Barber

Principle 4: Being guided by the lie of the land

The Lake District isn't just one landscape. The spirit of one valley might be quiet and remote, another vibrant and full of day-trippers; some places are open and windswept, others are closely wooded. We think it's vital to retain and build upon this distinctiveness.

This is an active and ongoing process, and we'll do it valley by valley, and place by place. We'll take time to tune in, talk to people, to observe, and to think, in order to find out why a place really matters, and what its natural environment is capable of. We'll develop our practical objectives in response to the particularities of each place; the pattern and potential of the fells, fields, woods and streams; its historic character, and the ideas and aspirations of the people who live and work there. And we'll be clear about how our decisions are rooted in this understanding.



Neil Johnson, Food and Farming Adviser,
National Trust talking to shepherd Joe Weir in
the Seathwaite valley in Borrowdale.
© National Trust Images / John Hamlet

Sustainable Land Management

Our Sustainable Land Management Project started off in Spring 2017 with a series of conversations with our tenants in events held across the Lake District. The Project is about building up a picture, for each valley, of how things might work in the future – what we might achieve together. It's based on three equally important sources of information and guidance: First, a new set of strategic mapping tools, developed by the James Hutton Institute, and jointly funded by our partners at United Utilities, Environment Agency, Natural England, and the Lake District National Park Authority. Second, our own local teams and experts. And third, of equal importance, our tenants who live in the valleys and carry out most of the land management. We think that working like this, valley by valley, community by community, will mean that our work is rooted in the landscape, and will make sense to the people who live and work there. And it will help create a sense of common direction and security in uncertain times.

Principle 5: Playing our part in the Lake District community

People and communities are part of the living fabric of the Lake District. And we need local skills and knowledge to make our work here come to life. So we'll make sure our work continues to create benefits for the communities here, and we'll play our part in supporting new opportunities for local livelihoods and local businesses.

These are shifting times in the rural economy; old certainties, like farm subsidies and access to export markets look set to change. This shakes the viability of many of the rural businesses that help make the Lake District what it is. And yet we would argue that land, the outdoors, and nature in the Lake District will only increase in their relevance and material value to society. And with this there will come fresh enterprise opportunities. So we'll help pursue this as an opportunity to forge a more reliable business model for powering the Lakes and supporting its communities; one that isn't so beholden to a narrow range of markets and grants.



Combining traditional skills with modern enterprise - visitors to the Lake District enjoying woodland activities at Footprint, Windermere
© National Trust Images / John Millar

Tower Bank Arms, Near Sawrey
© National Trust Images / Paul Harris





Principle 6: Finding shared purpose and working with others

Our aim is clear; to protect and adapt the Lake District for the good of the whole of society, now and in the future. We look after and give access to breathtaking places, and our people are passionate and able. But we don't pretend to have all the answers, or the means – or desire – to work alone.

So we'll find common cause with others; collaborate, learn, and adjust at every step when it comes to delivering this. A lot of this is in the attitude we bring to our work. We'll strive to be open in our working relationships; listening to ideas and concerns, trying things out, learning, adapting, and taking part in a shared future for the Lake District.



Burnthwaite Farm, Wasdale
© National Trust Images / Sam Stalker

Burnthwaite Farm

We knew we had a shared purpose with Andrew Race when we met to discuss him taking on the tenancy at Burnthwaite Farm, over 13 years ago. We all wanted to see a farm business that balanced traditional hill farming with a warm welcome to the visitors who are drawn to the famous fells that rise up around the farm – Kirk Fell, Great Gable, Great End, Scafell Pike. It's good for visitors, good for the land, and good for business. And indeed, it's nothing new – Burnthwaite Farm has been taking guests since the 1700s, when the trade was from the packhorse trail up over Styhead Pass. We're delighted with the result – the hefted flock of Herdwicks, the beef cattle, the thriving traditional 11-bed guesthouse and the holiday cottage. For the past few years we've even been able to coordinate National Trust volunteer working holidays to provide welcome extra hands at lambing time – and providing our volunteers with a unique opportunity to try their hands at traditional hill farming. It's a great basis for a partnership; Andrew's success is our success.



Walkers at Tarn Hows
© National Trust Images / Chris Lacey

Principle 7: Taking the long view

The Lake District is an evolving masterpiece. Helping shape that evolution might occasionally mean being bold, but it doesn't involve a revolution. Few things have to happen overnight. We've been here for over a hundred years, and we're here to stay – indeed most of our land would require an Act of Parliament for it to be sold. So we'll work with people and do things when the time is right, measured at a pace to fit the circumstances.

This informs our whole approach; it's because we're in this forever that we will always invest in the fabric of the Lakes; it's why we will try to look ahead to what society will want in the future; why we think it's important to respect nature; why we understand the importance of a self-reliant rural economy. And it's why we set so much store by being part of the Lakes Community. We know that what ever goes around, comes around.

Help us make things happen

We hope this is only the start of a conversation...

The Lake District couldn't be more important to the National Trust. That's why we've laid our cards on the table here; offering up our principles and our way of thinking. It's important to us that you know where we're coming from in our work. Partly so you can hold us to account. But mainly so we can have practical conversations about what it means on the ground, and how and where we might work together. We don't have all the answers. And we respect – enormously – the hard work, knowledge, experience and passion that exists around the Lakes. So if the Lake District matters to you like it does to us, please do talk with us, share ideas with us, work with us; help us make things happen.

Follow our story

Our work, like the landscapes here, is constantly evolving. So please do keep checking in. We'll keep you updated at www.nationaltrust.org.uk/thelakes

Work with us

We can't secure the future of our landscapes alone. You might come and take a job with us, or volunteer; you might do business with us, take on a contract, concession or tenancy; we might find ourselves collaborating as organisations in a bigger group – like the Lake District National Park Partnership. If you share our passion and our aspirations, or if we just have common ground, please do get in touch – we'd love to work with you.

Support us

Right from our very beginnings everything we have achieved has been made possible by the vision and generosity of our supporters. Whether in the form of mountain-sized bequests of land and property, or individual subscriptions and local collections, this tradition of contributions is vital to our work. You can find out more about how you can support our work at www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ways-of-giving

If you'd like this information in an alternative format, please call us on 0344 800 1895. Or you can email enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk

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Front cover image: Great Gable beyond Wasdale Screes
© National Trust Images / John Malley

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