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Press Release

Fix the Fells plays a vital role in the Lake District

Fix the Fells is playing a vital role in conservation in the Lake District uplands, according to a new report by independent consultants.

Fix the Fells – a multi-agency project that repairs and maintains upland paths in the Lake District National Park – carries out work to address and prevent erosion caused by people using the fells for recreation.

The work, which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) until June 2023, aims to protect and restore the World Heritage Site, with its internationally important landscape, habitats, species, history and culture. It creates sustainable paths for people to enjoy.

AMION Consulting Ltd have produced an evaluation report, as required by the ERDF grant funding, which concludes that Fix the Fells is having a significant positive impact on the experience of visitors to the fells through improvements to the visual landscape and to the quality of walks.

The project is also having a very positive impact in terms of changing the behaviour of visitors in relation to protecting the environment when walking in the fells. Visitors view the work of Fix the Fells to be very important in preserving the Lakeland environment and in reducing erosion damage.

In 2022 Fix the Fells Rangers and Volunteers repaired erosion on over 3.8 miles (6 km) of path. The work took place on 30 different paths all over the Lakes from Scafell Pike to Helvellyn, from Coniston to Keswick, and around Ullswater, Grasmere and Buttermere.

Most of the erosion repair work is carried out by hand by highly skilled and dedicated National Trust Rangers who work high in the fells in all weathers. Rangers in the north of the Lake District, for example, walked 765 miles (1231 km) in 2022 going to and from their remote work sites. In the western fells the Rangers walked 1,657 miles (2667 km), particularly around Scafell Pike, and between them they climbed over 160 vertical miles (259 vertical km).

A large and essential part of the work on the paths is carried out by volunteers, who, the report says, make a vital contribution as well as receiving substantial personal, social and health benefits themselves.

In 2022, 110 Fix the Fells Volunteers spent 2,597 days working in the fells, maintaining the paths and repairing erosion. The Volunteers come from all walks of life, retired and working, and all are passionate about giving something back to the fells they love. An impressive 78 (66%) of them contributed more than the minimum 12 days/year asked of them, and two especially committed volunteers contributed over 150 days each.

Volunteers maintain, repair and monitor 733 paths on a regular basis, every 2, 3, 4, 6 or 12 months, bi-annually or 5 yearly. In 2022 they walked a total of 764 paths. They make sure the paths don't deteriorate further by clearing out the drains, which are the channels built to take rainwater off the paths to stop them from eroding.

Volunteers also carried out 236 "work parties" in 2022, where they repair eroded sections of path by hand. This number is higher than had ever been achieved before. It means that many more paths were kept in good order and made more resilient for the future.

Fix the Fells Programme Manager Joanne Backshall said: "This report highlights the significant benefits of the work of the Fix the Fells Rangers and Volunteers. It illustrates the importance of their work to the natural beauty and economic vitality of the Lake District National Park.

"We hope we can continue this vital work when our current European grant funding ends in June this year. We are looking for additional funding to meet a significant looming shortfall.

"Without our work, the Lake District fells would quickly deteriorate to the scarred landscape of the 1980s and 90's, when gullies more than 90 feet wide and 12 feet wide were clearly visible along rights of way across the fells. Increasing recreation, visitor numbers and severe weather events would soon take their toll and result in similar damage appearing."

All the work is funded by grants and donations. At the end of 2022 Fix the Fells had received over £1 million from ERDF since the grant began in April 2019. By the end of the ERDF project in June 2023, £1.5 million will have come from European funding. This is approximately 45% of the annual funding needed - the total spend in the 2022/23 financial year is over £800,00 and the remaining funding all comes from donations.

The work of Fix the Fells contributes to mitigating the decline in nature and climate change in the Lake District National Park. It stabilises soils, allows vegetation to recover and reduces habitat and species loss. It reduces sediment run-off into lakes and rivers where it harms wildlife. It slows the flow of water off the fells and reduces flood risk and water discolouration. The work captures carbon in vegetation and soils and helps to reverse and mitigate climate change. Fix the Fells is critical in reducing future damage to the scenery and biodiversity of the Lake District, for people, nature and climate.

To make a donation to support this vital work looking after the Lake District's precious natural environment, go to www.fixthefells.co.uk/donate/

-Ends-

For more information contact Joanne Backshall, Fix the Fells Programme Manager, on 07780 227771 or joanne.backshall@nationaltrust.org.uk

Pictures



Badly eroded ground (left) and new sustainable stone path (right) on Loughrigg Fell above Grasmere.

More “before and after” images can be seen on the Fix the Fells website here: [Video and Photo Gallery – Fix The Fells](#) and Flickr feed here: [Before & Afters \(merged\) | Flickr](#)

Editor's notes:

About Fix the Fells

Fix the Fells is a partnership programme between the National Trust, the Lake District National Park, Natural England, Friends of the Lake District and the Lake District Foundation. The aim of the Fix the Fells partnership is to protect the spectacular Lake District landscape from erosion damage by repairing and maintaining upland paths.

Fix the Fells has been operating since 2001 and needs over £500,000 each year to fix and maintain over 400 miles of paths across the UNESCO World Heritage Site. All funding has to be raised from grants and donations. The project is currently part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) but this funding ends in June 2023.

Fix the Fells Rangers and Volunteers work every year to repair damage and create sustainable paths across the Lake District, to balance conservation with public access.

The core, heavier repair work is done by National Trust Rangers each year from March to November. But volunteers keep working all the year round doing maintenance work and smaller repair projects, including

keeping drains clear to divert water off the paths. If drains get blocked water can cause huge damage by washing away great swathes of topsoil and stone in heavy rainfall.

Details of Fix the Fells' work in 2023 can be seen on the website here: [Path Fixing Projects – Fix The Fells](#)

There are approximately 3,100 km (1,926 miles) of paths across the Lake District National Park. See: <https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/caringfor>

About the National Trust

The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people: Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, who saw the importance of the nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. Today, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we continue to look after places so people and nature can thrive.

The challenges of the coronavirus pandemic have shown this is more important than ever. From finding fresh air and open skies to tracking a bee's flight to a flower; from finding beauty in an exquisite painting or discovering the hidden history of a country house nearby - the places we care for enrich people's lives.

Entirely independent of Government, the National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 780 miles of coastline and 500 historic properties, gardens and nature reserves.

The National Trust is for everyone - we were founded for the benefit of the whole nation. We receive on average more than 26.9 million visits each year to the places we care for that have an entry fee, and an estimated 100m visits to the outdoor places that are free of charge. Paying visitors, together with our 5.6 million members and more than 53,000 volunteers, support our work to care for nature, beauty, history. For everyone, forever.

About the Lake District National Park

Information about the National Park can be found on our website www.lakedistrict.gov.uk

The Lake District is one of 15 National Parks. The others are: Brecon Beacons, the Cairngorms, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Loch Lomond and Trossachs, Northumberland, North York Moors, Peak District, Pembrokeshire Coast, Snowdonia, the Yorkshire Dales, the Broads, the New Forest and the South Downs.

In July 2017 the Lake District National Park was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status in the cultural landscape category. More information about the Lake District World Heritage bid can be found on www.lakesworldheritage.gov.uk

About the Lake District Foundation

The Lake District Foundation was established as a charity in August 2017. Prior to this, under the name Nurture Lakeland, the organisation had been working for 23 years to increase fundraising from visitors and the tourism industry. We also delivered sustainable tourism programmes and messages across Cumbria, gaining national recognition. The Lake District Foundation will build on this work and grow in reach, impact and influence. Our aim is to inspire businesses, visitors and other donors to support projects and programmes of work across the Lake District.

About Natural England

Natural England is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide.

Within England, we're responsible for:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity
- conserving and enhancing the landscape
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment, eg new tower hide at Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve
- promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation
- contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment, eg changes to wildlife licensing to improve flexibility for developers.

About Friends of the Lake District

Friends of the Lake District is an independent charity and the only membership organisation dedicated to protecting and enhancing Cumbria's landscapes. We believe that the Lake District offers some of the most spectacular and precious landscapes in England. We take action to protect and conserve the natural beauty of these landscapes for the benefit of visitors, local communities, wildlife and habitats.

