

# Securing nature, serving people

The next 35 years at Haweswater



Working in partnership for  
wildlife, water and people





# The next 35 years at Haweswater

This document is about Haweswater, all 30 square kilometres of fells, crags, commons, woods, gills, becks, tarns, bogs and water.

As much as being about what Haweswater is, this is about what Haweswater does; how it serves the needs of society. For generations, Haweswater has supported local livelihoods, helping to sustain a community with a link to the land. Likewise, Haweswater has enriched the lives of generations of visitors who come here to climb the fells, spend time with the wildlife, or enjoy the views. And millions of people across the north-west have grown up drinking its water.

It's our responsibility to make sure the landscape here at Haweswater can continue to do all of these things, and more, for future generations. This document sets out the principles for how – in a time of environmental and economic uncertainty and change for landscapes like these – we propose to go about doing that.

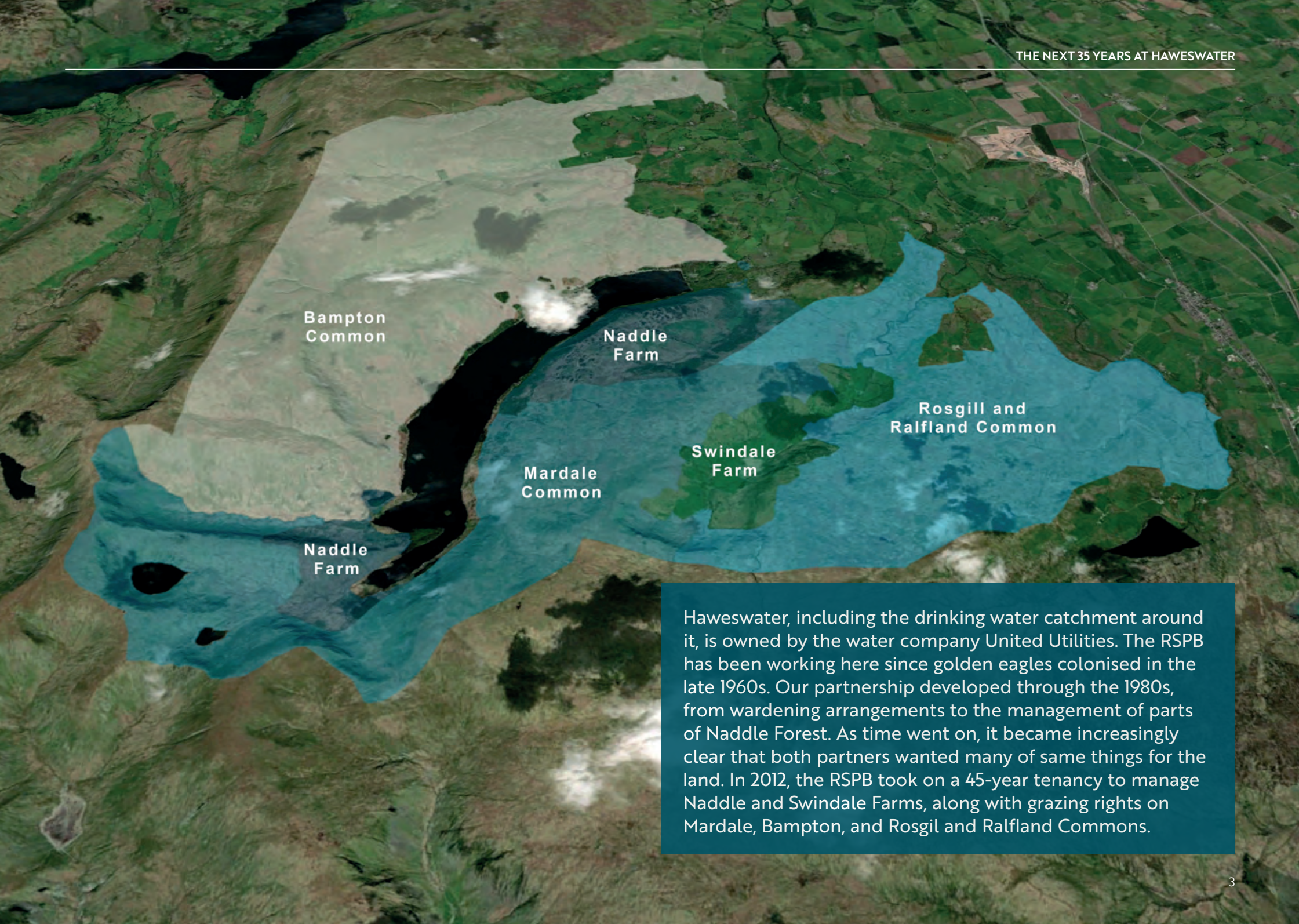
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"Working at Haweswater over the next 35 years will mean working with change. Much of that change will be driven by big external factors – climate, politics and shifts in the land economy – that are beyond our control. But how we respond to change is within our control, and, in that, we see opportunities for Haweswater. Opportunities in what Haweswater can do for you – for society, and for the livelihoods it can sustain as a result. And opportunities for nature to be even more vital and inspiring: resurgent alpine and floodplain meadows, juniper on the fellsides, salmon in the rivers, healthy ancient woods, and the hum of insects and birdlife that will follow."

**Lee Schofield,**  
RSPB Senior Site Manager at Haweswater





Haweswater, including the drinking water catchment around it, is owned by the water company United Utilities. The RSPB has been working here since golden eagles colonised in the late 1960s. Our partnership developed through the 1980s, from wardening arrangements to the management of parts of Naddle Forest. As time went on, it became increasingly clear that both partners wanted many of same things for the land. In 2012, the RSPB took on a 45-year tenancy to manage Naddle and Swindale Farms, along with grazing rights on Mardale, Bampton, and Rosgil and Ralfland Commons.





# Why Haweswater matters to people


**A mile or so up the narrow road behind the village of Bampton, on the north-eastern edge of the Lake District National Park, the strong quiet landscape of Haweswater unfurls unexpectedly.**

You might not guess until you arrive, but there's quiet drama in the sweep of the reservoir, curving round to the foot of High Raise, High Street and Harter Fell. You could take it for a simple place of blank open fells, rocks and water, but when you come in close you can still find fragments of rare alpine meadows on some of the crags, remnants of ancient woods and old trees, blanket bogs and valley mires. There are even Ice Age fish in Blea Water – the deepest tarn in the Lakes.

It's the sort of place where you could imagine the landscape is frozen in time, like the Ice Age fish. But when you look closer, the hill-top cairns, copper mines and commons, the vegetation on the hills and the water in the reservoir itself, are in fact an open record of change. It's a landscape that has been shaped by people and culture, nature and time.

There are times when you can stand at the end of the road, at Mardale Head, and be forgiven for thinking Haweswater has been deserted by humans. And yet this is a place with vital connections to people's lives.





"Exploring Haweswater over 20 years has brought a deep sense of place. Starting with walking and climbing, the wildness drew us in and led us off the beaten track. We began to see things like beetles, adders, rare plants, fungi and lichens. It's amazing that our local patch has magical ancient woods, exciting remote crags and grand scenery."

**Caz Walker,**  
local resident and RSPB volunteer





Haweswater is home to rare ring ouzels, which come here from the Mediterranean and North Africa each spring to breed.



# Haweswater is...

## A workplace

Haweswater plays an active part in the rural economy. Most of the business here has its roots, one way or another, in the landscape. Whether that's farmers raising livestock on the fells and commons, or the Haweswater Hotel doing its trade with people who come here to be immersed in the surroundings. Likewise, the RSPB has a permanent and growing team of hands-on staff, plus local and residential volunteers, based out of Naddle Farm. United Utilities' people are here too, continually improving and maintaining the infrastructure needed to gather and hold 84 billion litres of water a year from the surrounding hillsides.

## A life support system

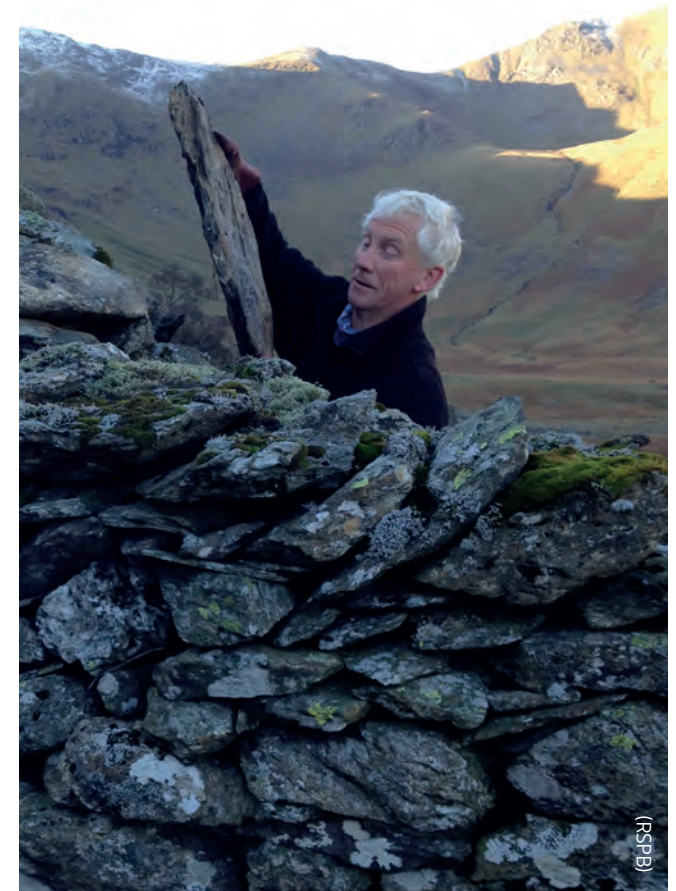
It's no small matter that Haweswater provides one quarter of all the drinking water for north-west England. It's a marvel of time-tested engineering that connects the taps of millions of homes to some of the nation's most beautiful landscapes. In the headwaters of the River Eden, Haweswater also plays its part in helping to regulate the flow of water on its journey down to Carlisle and into the Solway.

## A place to escape and be inspired

Haweswater isn't a honey-pot like the Langdales or Windermere. But that's probably how the people who come here like it. And 70,000 people do visit each year. With its secluded splendour, it's the kind of place that lures local families to spend time outdoors, which is great for both their physical and mental wellbeing. Others from further afield park up and hike out into the fells, pass through on the Coast to Coast path along the western shore of the lake, or rock climb on Gouter Crag over in Swindale.

## A home to wildlife

Haweswater matters to nature too. The crags and ledges on Harter Fell and around Blea Water shelter hanging gardens of precious alpine meadows – a fifth of all that are left in the whole of England. Crags are home to ring ouzels and peregrine falcons. Golden eagles have made a home here in the past – perhaps one day we can entice them back.



(RSPB)

It's our responsibility to make sure the landscapes here at Haweswater can continue to be all of these things, and more, for future generations.



# Change, and how we're responding

**There are shifts in the tectonics of what makes land and landscapes like these tick. Shifts in the land economy – who will pay farmers for what? Where might the markets for their produce be in the future? Shifts in the climate – storms and droughts are becoming the new normal. And shifts in what society needs and expects from its landscapes.**

These shifts, and the challenges and uncertainty that come with them, are common to anybody operating a business on land in the uplands. And we don't expect any of this to let up over the coming decades. Nor do we expect to be able to predict precisely how and when all these changes will play out. You'd need a crystal ball to know what agricultural subsidies will look like in three years' time, never mind 35. But we do think it would be verging on reckless not to respond and to plough on as if nothing was happening.

**Our response here at Haweswater, and our management in general, is built on some fundamentals**

We know that Haweswater matters to people, whether for its drinking water, wildlife or because it provides places to get away from it all. That matters in itself, but it also matters because it provides the basis on which the land here, and the businesses linked to it, can remain viable. If Haweswater delivers value to people, and continues to do so even as society's needs change, then there will always be a case for investing in and sustaining this landscape.

We also know that whatever Haweswater delivers to society is underpinned by the natural fabric of the landscape here: the rocks, soils, watercourses, plants and animals. That's always been the case, whether for copper, timber, wool, milk, meat or water, and it will continue to be the case in the future, whatever society needs from us. We will look after the fabric of the landscape over the next 35 years and beyond. It's our duty to pass on the landscape to future generations in at least as good a state as we found it – after all, we're only passing through.



It would be out of character for the Lake District not to respond to change. It's often referred to as 'an evolving masterpiece.' And a big part of what is celebrated in the Lakes' World Heritage status is the ability of the landscape and community here to co-evolve, hand-in-hand, adapting over time.



'...the organic landscape of the Lake District can never be frozen at one point in time and will continue to change, reflecting the evolution of how communities interact with the landscape. Development in the past has left a cultural legacy and development in the present and future will create new cultural values.'

From *The Management Plan for the English Lake District 2015–2020*, The Lake District National Park Partnership







"For us, this is about catchment resilience; our duty to make sure the assets over which we have stewardship can keep on delivering for people into the future."

**Paul Phillips,**  
United Utilities Catchment  
Manager (North)


# Our responsibilities at Haweswater

The environment, economy and society will continue to change over the coming decades, and with them our plans and day-to-day actions on the ground. So, we're not setting out a blueprint, or fixing a masterplan that we will roll out over time. Instead, we are setting out our responsibilities, based on the fundamentals of what matters at Haweswater. These will remain constant, shaping the way we look after the landscape here. And you can hold us to them.

Our responsibilities are set out below, and in more detail over the next pages, along with practical examples of how things might develop on the ground as a result.

1. Putting our land enterprises at Haweswater on a viable financial footing.
2. Matching our management at Haweswater to the needs of society.
3. Securing the natural fabric of Haweswater for future generations.
4. Making sure the landscape here remains unmistakably Haweswater.



A vibrant photograph of a forest landscape. In the foreground, a dense patch of bluebells with long green leaves is in focus. A narrow, mossy path winds through the middle ground, flanked by more bluebells and green vegetation. The background is filled with a thick canopy of trees with bright green foliage, suggesting a sun-dappled forest. The overall scene is a lush, natural landscape.

Of course, change isn't new to Haweswater. The tree cover here in Naddle Forest is a reminder of a much more wooded past. There's no magic number of trees that we should have in the landscape; their cover shifts with the purpose we put the land to. As we move on to serve a wider set of purposes in this landscape, expect to see more trees and shrubs spreading up gills and onto some of the valley sides.



## Responsibility 1: Putting our land enterprises at Haweswater on a viable financial footing

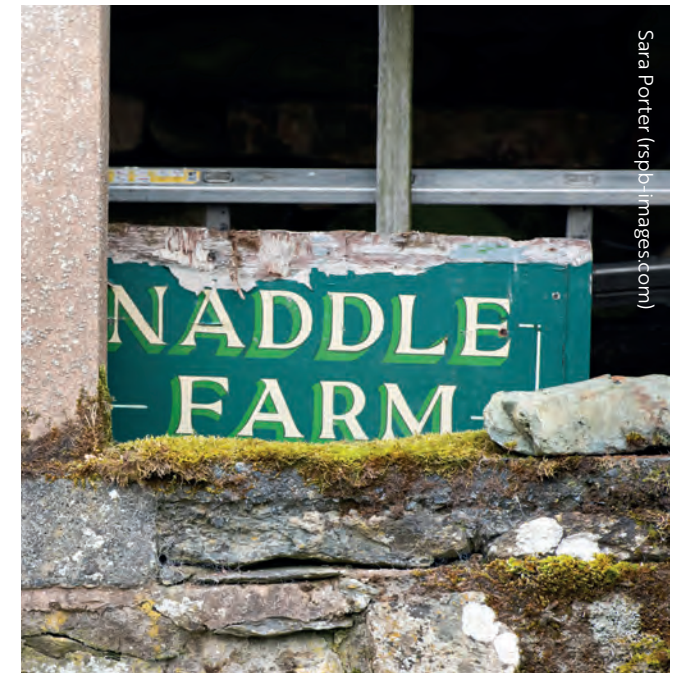




Not long ago, we made public our accounts at Naddle and Swindale Farms, so people could see for themselves the economics of our livestock operation. The picture was stark, though very much reflective of other upland farms.

Without significant government grants – over a quarter of a million pounds in our case – our farm business here would make an enormous loss. And the fact is, we just can't be sure those grants will be there in the future. Compounded by uncertainty around markets for lamb, this raised serious questions about the financial viability of farms as they are managed at the moment.

That doesn't mean we should walk away though. We see the opportunity to secure livelihoods for the long term. However, we have had to adjust the way in which we run the farm business here – both to control costs and to capitalise on new opportunities. Diversifying our income is key.



Sara Porter (rspb-images.com)

These are precious landscapes, which can, and do, generate huge value for people and businesses across the region.



## Responsibility 2: Matching our management at Haweswater to the needs of society



This ticks two boxes. First, it's the right thing to do. Just as it was right in the past to respond to society's strategic need to secure food and supplies, we think it's right to respond to people's wider needs for affordable clean water, food, protection from flooding, and access to nature for health, wellbeing and inspiration.

Second, it's the basis on which we will be responding to our viability issue. Ultimately, society is our customer – whether it's paying us through grants or via the market. Just as we need to be tuned-in to the evolving market for meat, we need to be open to the potential for attracting income for the other things we can deliver from the landscape. We see opportunities here both from government, with its policy of 'public money for public goods', and from the private sector.



Patrick Neaves

It makes good business sense to listen and respond to what society needs.



## Responsibility 3: Securing the natural fabric of Haweswater for future generations

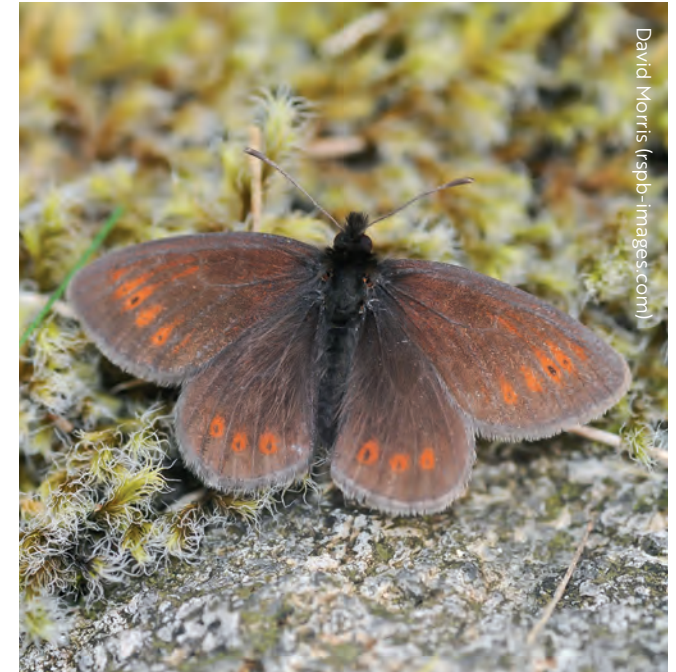


Black grouse have disappeared from Haweswater, but our work to restore the landscape and hopefully re-introduce them here will bring these striking birds back to this part of the Lake District once more.



Whatever we do at Haweswater now, and whatever people do in the future, will depend on the natural capital that is found in the landscape here. The rocks, soils, watercourses, plants and animals, and the way they come together as a living system.

While this is a system that has evolved and endured over millennia, we've learned that in a matter of decades it can be worn down. Many of the habitats and species that we value here, like the alpine plants and ancient woods, are now reduced to isolated relicts of what they once were. Others have, within the past generation, disappeared entirely from Haweswater – like the golden eagles, black grouse and corncrakes. Soils have been washed away too – including ancient accumulations of peat, resulting in the ongoing and costly problem of drinking water 'colour'. It's our job to put these declines into reverse.



David Morris (rspb-images.com)

Mountain ringlet butterflies are the UK's only true montane butterfly found only in the spectacular scenery of the Scottish Highlands and here in the English Lake District.



## Responsibility 4: Making sure the landscape here remains unmistakably Haweswater





We're talking about change at Haweswater: change driven by big external factors beyond our control, and change as a result of our response. And yet we're committed to being true to the place – to it being unmistakably Haweswater. We don't see a contradiction here. In fact, the process of the landscape adapting and evolving over time is part of the essence of Haweswater.

To be clear, our approach at Haweswater is for the most part about shifting the balance of its constituent parts – not editing bits out. It will retain its elemental feel – that jump from water's edge to high fell that marks Haweswater out as distinct from other valleys in the Lakes.



Michael Harvey (rspb-images.com)

We're committed to this being a cultural landscape that can adapt, as it always has done, to things that society values and is prepared to pay for.



# How have things changed?

The changes to our farm business focus on two things:

## 1. Lower volume, higher-value livestock production

We've brought stocking levels down, to reduce some of our costs, for example by decreasing our reliance on bought-in feed. And we've put our efforts into finding ways to add value to the stock we retain. Both in terms of the product itself – ultimately

meat – and its markets, and also in terms of the wider ecological and environmental benefits our animals can help us provide through managing the land.

## 2. Diversification

This is about not having all our eggs in one basket. We've done this in two ways. First, we want to play our part in sustaining and creating a thriving and vibrant local economy. So we're a base for small-scale local enterprises, who see opportunities for new products and ways to provide experiences for visitors. Second, we engage, where we can, in emerging markets for the wider benefits that landscapes like these can provide (that is, 'public money for public goods'). We also look into the potential for private investment opportunities.



## Sheep

We don't have as many as we once did, but we haven't removed them all. We rationalised our stocking levels in order to be viable and we needed livestock numbers to be in tune with the wider range of purposes we are seeking for the land at Haweswater, now and in the future. Sheep are still part of the picture, but as we've brought their numbers down, we've made room for other things to thrive – other livestock, other types of vegetation cover, and more wildlife.

There's space here to do this. And perhaps because of the reservoir – with the inherent need to manage land for water, combined with the fact that we lack the in-by-land of other valleys – there's an even stronger logic for us to be shifting the balance in the way that we are. By the same token, we respect the fact that our neighbours have their own objectives and their own ways of working the fells and commons. We recognise there are practical challenges, like stock straying off their hefts and needing to be recovered. So, especially in shared spaces like Mardale and Bampton Commons, we work together with our neighbours to come up with practical solutions.



"It's challenging but so worthwhile farming at Haweswater. Me and my family feel so lucky to have the opportunity to live and work here. We hope that our work is something that others are keen to learn from – to benefit the quality of livestock produced, the wildlife that lives here, the landscape it all sits in and the people who come to experience it."

**David Garvey,**  
RSPB Livestock Manager  
at Haweswater



# How will things continue to change?

## What does it mean on the ground?

Change is an ongoing process at Haweswater. Our plans will create a richer, more complex patchwork of ground cover with a combination of wet, wooded and open areas.

As we match the land here at Haweswater to a wider range of purposes, it should be no surprise that we will see a shift in the pattern of the land: there will be greater variation in what grows where and larger areas of a wider range of habitats.


Some of this will be the result of direct practical intervention. For example, the blocking of artificial drains that has already begun to re-wet some of our bogs, and has, in the process, secured thousands of tonnes of carbon within the peat.

But most of it will come from changes to grazing patterns – different levels of grazing from different types of animals, and sometimes no grazing at all. In basic terms, diverse grazing patterns lead to a more diverse range of habitats. And this can vary too, over time – indeed, good management involves observing, adapting, learning from and sharing the results of what we do. For many of our precious upland habitats – for example, the alpine, tree and shrub communities – easing grazing pressure for a period of time can help them to regain a foothold at Haweswater.

Juniper scrub recovering above Haweswater Most of our work is about securing and restoring features that are already here, and which would have been more of a feature of Haweswater in the past, such as juniper scrub.

Opposite page: Wildflower-rich hay meadows establishing in Swindale. When we add complexity back into the landscape, whether that's in vegetation or in the land itself, we add more stitches to the natural fabric, allowing it to hold together better.





"In this nature and climate emergency, the land at Haweswater offers a great opportunity to respond to the changing needs of society and the natural world. Our approach is all about sustaining a thriving rural economy and community alongside restoring the landscape to benefit nature, water and people too. We're already getting positive results and feedback which provides real hope for the future."

**Beccy Speight,**  
RSPB CEO





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Utilities*

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