

AMBLESIDE'S  
NATURAL PLACES  
AND SPACES

# AMBLESIDE LOVES NATURE!

## NATURE IN AMBLESIDE

This booklet celebrates Ambleside's favourite natural places and spaces, why people love them and what people would like to see improved for nature in and around town. It has been produced by Ambleside Action for a Future, (AAFAP); a network of local residents working together to mitigate the climate and environmental crisis and build community resilience. This includes working with local groups, farmers, landowners and other organisations to help take care of our landscape in a sustainable way through maintaining and planting trees, and creating and managing space for nature and wildlife.

## WHAT WE ASKED PEOPLE

We surveyed almost 400 local residents, school children, students, visitors and people who work in Ambleside. We wanted to identify actions that can help the local community respond to climate change, by working with nature to store more carbon and making the area more resilient against flooding. These projects go hand-in-hand with restoring nature, and might include tree planting and maintenance, the creation of wildflower meadows, improving water quality and growing more plant-based food. This project was called Net Zero with Trees and Bees and was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

## EVERY ACTION MATTERS

The following pages give the results of the survey and show that people love their local natural spaces and are ambitious to see improvements made. There is growing awareness that the climate and nature crisis are affecting Ambleside now. We all need to take action and we've included practical suggestions on how you can make a difference to the places you love. To find out how to get involved with AAFAP, or get more information on this and other projects see our website – [www.aafaf.uk](http://www.aafaf.uk)

## TEAM AMBLESIDE

AAFAP's work is made possible by local residents, volunteers, landowners and farmers, local businesses, charities and public organisations working together. Thank you to all who are supportive and are involved in our work. We are grateful to all those people who filled in the survey, to the pupils and teachers at Ambleside and Grasmere schools, The Lakes School and John Ruskin School. We also would like to thank the library and parish centre as well as local businesses.

We are particularly grateful for the support of Cumbria Wildlife Trust, who provided advice for this project. We also thank National Lottery players and the National Lottery Community Fund for funding this work. Illustrations are by Kate Sutton. Printing and design by Fullpoint Design.

## WHAT DOES THE CLIMATE AND NATURE CRISIS MEAN FOR AMBLESIDE?

There is much to celebrate about Ambleside's natural spaces and places. Our nature, landscape and cultural heritage make this place special. But we are facing a climate and nature emergency, and the two are inextricably linked. Climate change is increasing nature's decline. The loss of wildlife and wild places reduces the ability of the planet to absorb the effects of human activity and leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change. One cannot be solved without the other.

We know that restoring nature can help soak up carbon emissions - known as natural solutions to climate change - whilst contributing many additional benefits like reducing the risk of flooding, cleaning our drinking water, and improving people's health and wellbeing.

[WWW.CUMBRIAWILDLIFETRUST.ORG.UK/  
ABOUT/WHAT-WE-DO/FIGHTING-CLIMATE-CRISIS](http://WWW.CUMBRIAWILDLIFETRUST.ORG.UK/ABOUT/WHAT-WE-DO/FIGHTING-CLIMATE-CRISIS)



OUR SURVEY RESULTS

AMBLESIDES FAVOURITE NATURAL PLACES and SPACES



1 LOUGHRIGG, LILY TARN and TODD CRAG. FEELS WILD + EXTENSIVE

9 RYDAL CAVES NATURAL BEAUTY & PEACEFUL

4 RYDAL Water WILD SWIMMING and Dog WALKING

3 STOCKGHYLL WOODS and WATERFALLS WONDERFULLY WOODY and BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS



7 SWEDEN BRIDGE OPEN FELLS + SOLITUDE

RIVER ROTHAY BIRDWATCHING and



EVER CHANGING

2 ACCESSIBLE, RELAXING ROTHAY PARK

KIDS LOVE IT!

5 WANSFELL STUNNING VIEWS

13 LOUGHRIGG TARN SET IN A beautiful BOWL

12 CLOSE TO LAKE + HISTORY BORRANS PARK

11 TAKE A DIP in THE Water!

10 SKELGHYLL WOODS GIANT TREES, CALM.

6 BIRDHOUSE MEADOW AREA Waterscape, grasses, BIRDS

WATERHEAD

8 WINDERMERE LAKE MAKES ME HAPPY

SOME THINGS TO  
LOOK OUT FOR

GREAT VIEWS  
UP RYDAL VALLEY  
TOWARDS FAIRFIELD

UNIVERSITY  
SPORTS PITCHES.  
REDWING OFTEN  
FEED HER IN WINTER

ROTHAY PARK

AND PINK FLOWERED  
'SALMONBERRY'  
THAT HAVE  
ESCAPED FROM  
GARDENS

AAFAF LOOK AFTER  
MILLER BRIDGE  
WILDFLOWER MEADOW  
HOW MANY KINDS OF  
FLOWER CAN YOU  
FIND?

BLACKTHORN  
BUSHES GIVE  
BLOSSOM IN APRIL  
& SLOES IN AUTUMN

HOCKEYFIELD  
NATURE  
RESERVE  
LOOKED  
AFTER BY  
UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS

LOOK OUT FOR  
ELMS THAT HAVE  
SURVIVED DISEASE

SCHOOLWOOD PLANTED IN 2014,  
HOW QUICKLY IT'S GROWN!

RIVER  
ROTHAY

STONEY LANE  
STOCK GHYLL



MILLER BRIDGE

FLOODS HAVE WASHED  
AWAY SOIL TO EXPOSE  
TREE ROOTS

WOOD  
ANEMONES  
HERE IN  
EARLY SPRING



AAFAF PLANTED APPLE + PLUM  
TREES HERE IN 2020 FOR EVERYONE  
TO ENJOY

PLAY PARK



DIPPER



GREY WAGTAIL

THE BIG ROCKS IN THE PARK WITH OAKS ON THEM ARE  
ROCHES MOUTONNES CARVED OUT IN THE  
ICE AGES, THEY ARE SMOOTHER AND  
LOWER TO THE NORTH WHERE THE  
ICE CAME FROM

CHURCH

PIG NUT  
IN MAY

LOOK OUT FOR  
JACKDAWS AND  
MAYBE A PEREGRINE FALCON



## COMMENTS FROM OUR CHILDREN.

We asked children from Ambleside & Grasmere Schools and The Lakes School what they think about nature in the area.

I love the nature but it is getting ruined so this is why we need to save it.

I like to go to the waterfalls but people need to stop littering.  
I like to go to bonans park but people need to stop pumping stuff into the lake.  
I like going to the park but people smoke and leave their cigarette's every where.

Lake - Stop Polutring.  
Park - dont litter.  
Stream - dont litter.

More Trees!

Don't Dig up Pete  
Stop Pollution

You can make your own garden better by putting out bird feeders, bird baths, bird boxes and flowers for bumble bees. This is one of my favourite places because I can see wildlife like birds, mice and insects.

More bird homes in gardens.  
More bird feeders.

- 1 Plant trees
- 2 Protes

We could make ambleside better by taking a moment to appreciate nature and put more bird feeders out  
You could stop littering!

~~My~~  
waterfalls

Park

wansfell

I like them because

~~the~~ the park is fun so I can play with my friends. I like the waterfalls and wansfell because it's ~~calm~~ calming

More bird houses/food  
electric cars instead of diesel or petrol  
Solar pannels  
more flowers/trees  
use less paper/stop cutting down trees  
less plastic  
litter goes in the bin!  
create more rivers  
feed other animals

Wild flower meadow with lots of varieties.  
Animi forest with snails, hazel, loral ect. ecc  
Plant more trees on the edge of mountains

I like about Ambsid because they are lots of lakes, birds and water and lots of things to spot.

SOME OF THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN WE SPOKE TO WILL STILL BE ALIVE IN THE YEAR 2100. THEY WILL BE YOUNG ADULTS IN 2050, AND ALMOST ALL WILL BE STILL BE AT SCHOOL BY 2030. IF URGENT ACTION IS NOT TAKEN TO ADDRESS THESE CRISES, WHAT FUTURE DO THEY HAVE?

WHAT PEOPLE LOVE

**FRESH** I LOVE SEEING

**LAMBS** THE NATURE, THE RIVER, THE BIRDS.

**BEES & TREES**

**DOG** FRIENDLY

**SAFE OPEN SPACES**

**THE FREEDOM**

**GOOD FOR THE SOUL**

**WALKING** EXERCISE

**FUN** KNOLLS OF ROCK

**CALMING**

**GIANT TREES**

**HISTORY**

**WELLBEING**

**LOCAL PEATLAND RESTORATION PROJECTS**

**COMBINATION OF RIVERS, WOODLAND + HIGH OPEN FELL**

WHAT PEOPLE WANT

**PLANTING OF NEW TREES**

**INCLUDING BY RIVERS - WE HAVE LOST A LOT IN STORMS**

**CREATION OF NATIVE WOODLAND**

**CLEANER AND MORE NATURAL RIVERS**

**WORKING WITH FARMERS TO ENCOURAGE WILDFLOWER MEADOWS**

**MORE POLLINATORS**

**REPAIRS TO FOOTPATHS**

**GETTING RID OF INVASIVE SPECIES**

**MORE BENCHES AND BINS**

**LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD**

**AN INCREASED VARIETY OF WILDLIFE**

**POLLINATORS AND EDIBLE PLANTS**

**LESS..**

**LITTER** NO POLLUTION IN OUR RIVERS + IN WINDERMERE

**DOG DIRT TRAFFIC**

# WHAT DOES THE CLIMATE AND NATURE CRISIS MEAN FOR AMBLESIDE?

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and, with 41% of species in decline since the 1970s plus 15% of species at risk of extinction, urgent action is required to stop hedgehogs, water voles and red squirrels disappearing forever. Between 2015 and 2020 almost half of all bird species' populations have declined. Farmland birds have fared worst of all, decreasing 63% since 1970. Since the 1930s, we've lost more than 97% of wildflower meadows in the UK.

Sadly, Ambleside has not been immune to these trends. For example, yellow wagtails stopped breeding here after 2000. Further afield in Haweswater, England's last golden eagle disappeared in 2016. Reedbeds have declined by 90% around Windermere's margins. They act as natural pollutant filters and habitats for fish, birds and invertebrates.

Ambleside is already experiencing more extreme weather patterns, including significant flooding in 1999, 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2015. Drought and wildfires are predicted to increase, alongside greater frequency of storms, such as Storm Arwen in 2021. Other observed or predicted climate and nature impacts include:

**CHANGES TO LAKES AND RIVERS:** Windermere is already suffering from pollution and we are seeing more blue green algae. Falling lake levels in summer mean poorer water quality as pollutants become more concentrated. Erosion caused by heavy rain will increase siltation. Long-term records show that the average annual surface temperature of Windermere has increased as much as 1.5 degrees C in the last 50 years.

**LOSS OF SPECIES:** Plants and animals which are at the edge of their range could become locally extinct. Examples include the mountain ringlet butterfly and the arctic charr.

**INCREASE IN NON-NATIVE SPECIES:** Examples include pygmy weed and himalayan balsam. Invasive plants can spread rapidly, pushing out native plants and the wildlife which depend on them.

**CHANGES TO WOODLANDS:** Woodlands will suffer more storm damage on a greater scale as seen in the 2021 Storm Arwen event. Trees could suffer from drought and increased disease, such as ash dieback, which could infect 80% of the ash trees in the area.

**DRYING OUT OF PEAT:** Peat locks carbon into the soil. It is estimated the peat in the UK stores around 3 billion tonnes of carbon – the equivalent of 20 years of UK carbon emissions.

**FOOTPATH EROSION:** Heavy winter rainfall can have a devastating affect on footpaths.

# TAKE ACTION

There are a range of actions that we can all take to improve nature, reduce carbon emissions and help reduce the impacts of climate change in Ambleside.

Our survey showed that people want to improve natural spaces in and near Ambleside. In particular:

- More wildflower meadows.
- Cleaner and more natural rivers and lakes, with particular concern around Lake Windermere.
- More trees and woodland.
- An increased variety of wildlife.

Other ideas include action on litter, community orchards and community growing of food, invasive species control, support for red squirrels and bird feeding areas. People also want more sustainable transport options, given the impacts of traffic on nature.

We've asked experts what we can do to make a difference for nature and climate change in Ambleside. The answer is bigger, better, more connected spaces for nature.



## BIGGER

We want to create more space for trees and woodland, wildflower meadows, plants for pollinators and natural capacity for water to collect during floods. In the town centre, this could include window boxes or riparian tree planting (the area next to rivers) which will also help reduce pollution.

## BETTER

We have great natural spaces, but we can make them better. This could be doing 'no mow May', planting pollinating plants, or working with others to create new wildflower meadows. It could include rewiggling rivers.

## MORE CONNECTED

Wildlife needs space to roam, move and colonise. Ambleside is almost surrounded by woodlands and our data shows where we can make these areas better connected.

We also hope to link up with other communities and organisations across Cumbria who are working together to create a local nature recovery strategy. Our work in Ambleside can contribute to this.

AAFAF already have an active programme of tree planting and maintenance. We will be working with local farmers and landowners to take forward some of the above ideas. The back page of this booklet shows how you can get involved as we develop these ideas further.

# EVERY ACTION MATTERS

## EVERYONE CAN PLAY A PART - SMALL CHANGES ADD UP



### FOOD

If food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, surpassed only by the USA and China. Reduce your food waste. For ideas look at [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

Buy local produce, eat more plant-based foods and eat less, but higher quality, locally-produced, 100% grass-fed meat from wildlife-friendly farming systems.

### ENERGY AND WATER USE

Energy used in buildings accounts for around 17% of total emissions. Using less energy will save money and reduce carbon.

FOR IDEAS ON HOW YOU CAN DO THIS, SEE [WWW.AAF.AF.UK/WARMER-HOMES/](http://WWW.AAF.AF.UK/WARMER-HOMES/)

The average person uses around 140 litres of water a day. Conserving water saves energy. Energy is needed to filter, heat and pump water to your home, so reducing your water use also reduces your carbon footprint. Using less water keeps more in our natural spaces and helps to keep wetland habitats topped up for animals like otters, water voles, herons and fish.

FOR IDEAS LOOK AT [WWW.WATERWISE.ORG.UK/SAVE-WATER/](http://WWW.WATERWISE.ORG.UK/SAVE-WATER/)



### TRAVEL

Transport currently accounts for 27% of UK emissions. Making small changes to how you travel will make a big difference! Ambleside Action for a Future is actively lobbying for a better and more sustainable transport system in and around Ambleside.

SEE [WWW.AAF.AF.UK/TRANSPORT.HTML/](http://WWW.AAF.AF.UK/TRANSPORT.HTML/)

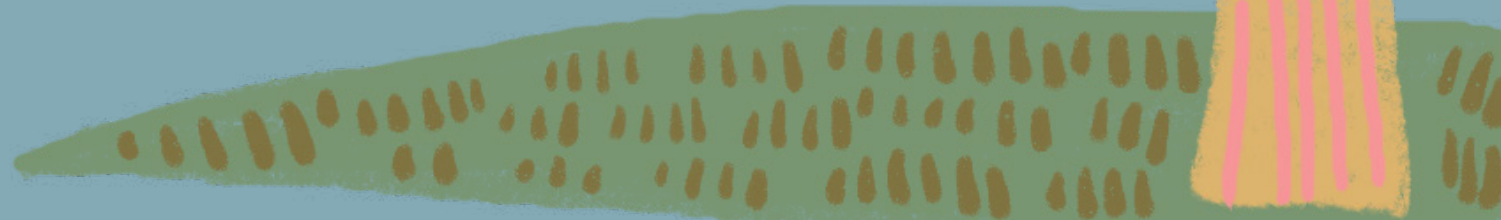
### REDUCE, REUSE, REPAIR AND RECYCLE

All the stuff we consume; clothes, gadgets and other items cause carbon emissions at each point in production. Buy fewer things, shop second-hand, repair what you can, and recycle. Plastic waste is a particular problem, with micro-plastics now being found in lakes and rivers in Cumbria.

### MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

We need those in positions of power and influence to urgently increase action on climate and nature; at both a local and national level.

AMBLESIDE ACTION FOR A FUTURE HAS A LOBBYING GROUP SEE [WWW.AAF.AF.UK/LOBBYING.HTML](http://WWW.AAF.AF.UK/LOBBYING.HTML)





# MAKE YOUR OUTDOOR SPACES BETTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE

**WILDLIFE NEEDS FOUR THINGS – FOOD, WATER, SHELTER AND A PLACE TO BREED. BY PROVIDING THEM, YOU CAN CREATE SPACES THAT ARE GREAT FOR NATURE**

**START SMALL** Small spaces can make a difference for nature. Window boxes with plants for pollinators can provide sources of food, shelter and water for birds and pollinating insects.

**CREATE A POND** Ponds and water features can be a habitat for a huge variety of animal life, it doesn't have to be big. All you need to do is fill an old sink or washing-up bowl with rainwater, plant it up and make sure that wildlife can get in and out.

**CUT YOUR GRASS LESS OFTEN** Mowing your lawn less saves you time and makes a big difference to the wildlife in your garden. Areas of un-cut long grass are an important habitat for all sorts of insects and hungry birds which feed on them. You can create a wildflower meadow in your back garden.

**PLANT FLOWERS FOR POLLINATORS** Cumbria is home to approximately 5,000 species of wild insect pollinators, including bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies, beetles, butterflies and moths. You can plant a range of different flowers that will attract and feed pollinators.

**USE NATURE INSTEAD OF CHEMICALS** Insect and slug-eating creatures are the best alternatives to damaging pesticides. Gardeners' friends include frogs and toads, birds, and small mammals like bats and hedgehogs – all of which eat insects or slugs.

**MAKE IT MESSY** Seed heads left uncut will be enjoyed by birds. Plant stems and leaves are a great place for insects to shelter. Perennials left standing will help overwintering insects such as ladybirds. Woodpiles, compost, the decomposing and discarded off-cuts from your garden can be places for animals to live, feed and hibernate.

**PEAT FREE** Going peat-free is great for the environment and the climate. There are many excellent peat-free composts now on the market, or you can make your own!

For further information see:

[HTTPS://WWW.CUMBRIAWILDLIFETRUST.ORG.UK/WILDLIFE/HELP-WILDLIFE](https://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife/help-wildlife)



# DID YOU KNOW?

## OVER 600 years...



### 58 METRES

Ambleside has the tallest grand fir in England, at over 58 metres. Visit Skelghyll Woods, via stagshaw gardens to see it.

The oldest tree in CUMBRIA, A SWEET CHESTNUT is in Rydal HALL gardens, JUST North of AMBLESIDE.

THE woodland Trust believe that it could have been there since the early 1400s



**THE ARCTIC CHARR** a species of Fish found in Windermere, is thought to have become Trapped in the lake at the end of the last ice age. Some breed in Autumn, in shallow water. Others breed in spring in deep water.

Loughrigg FELL is nationally recognised as an important plant area for its algal flora, which stores carbon and provides food and nutrients for many freshwater SPECIES.



### Loughrigg FELL



### Mountain Ringlet

THE mountain Ringlet butterfly, found on RED screens, is thought to be one of the first butterfly species to recolonise the British Isles after the last ice age. Despite this heritage, this species is a relatively recent discovery, with the lake district population being discovered in 1809.

On A single day in summer, one acre of wildflower meadow can contain 3 million flowers across 100 species, producing 1kg of nectar sugar. That's enough to support nearly 96,000 honey bees per day and also provides food for 160 different insects.



SOIL in WILD flower meadows can store as much carbon as woodland and also reduce greenhouse gases, which can help us respond to climate change.

THE complex root systems of wildflower meadows MAKE the SOIL stable and hold on to rain water, which can mitigate flooding and stop nutrients from washing away.



" SOME OF THE WOODLANDS AROUND Ambleside are what's called ATLANTIC or temperate Rainforest and are internationally important for their lichens and Mosses. "

# WHO WE ARE

AAFAP is a network of local residents working together to mitigate climate and environmental crises and build community resilience.

We meet up as a full group once a month and then smaller groups meet up in the interim to work on different projects ranging from solar panels and energy efficiency to transport, lobbying on local and national climate and environment related policy.



WITH SUPPORT FROM



# GET INVOLVED

Everyone who shares our concerns is welcome, whether you are a local resident, visitor, student or working in the area. Even if you feel you have little to contribute, your presence is significant. Many people are in the group out of a deep concern for their own children and grandchildren – or a more overarching concern for the future of humanity as a whole.

We seek to value and respect each person and their input.

We undertake a range of practical works, such as tree planting and maintenance, planting pollinators and fruit trees. No experience or training is needed and you can do as little or as much as you like. AAFAP also have other groups focusing on sustainable transport, solar panels and warmer homes.

If you would like further information about the group and to get involved, please visit our website; [www.aafaf.uk](http://www.aafaf.uk)

