

3. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM A SURVEY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS. Julie Graham Associates

- 3.1** The full report of the survey of public perceptions is presented in **Appendix VI**. A selected sample of over a hundred people were interviewed in August and early September 2002. The sample profile, methodology and the structured discussion guide used in the interviews are presented in detail in the report. Respondents were asked to comment on what they valued about the Lake District and to share their views on the proposal to add the Lake District to the World Heritage List.
- 3.2** A well-defined range of perceptions has emerged from the study and provides a useful balance with the specialist and expert views gathered in discussions with organisations in the Lake District. There were discernible differences in the pattern of responses from the three user groups (local people, domestic visitors and international visitors) in some areas and high consensus in others. Generally, the Lake District's scenic qualities, its diversity and compactness, its peacefulness and the freedoms of access were of high importance to all groups. International visitors tended to value heritage and traditional aspects more highly than local people and domestic visitors. The themes that are drawn from the research are outlined below. Though different in emphasis from the significant aspects identified by stakeholder organisations, there is a strong consensus in the main areas, with the exception of cultural associations. Interestingly, although the human dimension of the landscape and its traditions are among the most highly valued attributes, the specific cultural elements that are integral elements in this legacy (historic and archaeological features, cultural associations and the history of conservation) tend to be perceived as of less importance.
- 3.3** The survey provides a good indication of the range and emphasis of public perceptions about important aspects of the Lake District's landscape, and of the benefits and disbenefits of inscription. The results will make an important contribution to designing further stages of consultation and the building of consensus on the merits of progressing with the World Heritage proposal for the Lake District.

Summary of key themes from research

3.4 What do people value about the Lake District?

- Its landscape and scenery (all groups)
- Its diversity and compactness (all groups)
- The peace and tranquillity that can be found (all groups)
- The freedom to roam and the access to the countryside (all groups)
- Its landscape is a human landscape – influenced by people and tradition over time (international visitors)
- The sense of identity, community and tradition (local groups)
- The high quality of life (local groups)
- Its heritage history and tradition (international visitors)
- Walking / hiking (domestic visitors)

3.5 What is of less importance to most people about the Lake District?

- Its association with poets, artists and writers
- The fact that it was the birthplace of the conservation movement in England
- Its historic and archaeological features

3.6 What are the Lake District's outstanding universal values?

- Its landscape and scenery
- Its landscape is a human landscape – influenced by people and tradition over time
- Its diversity and compactness
- It is unspoilt and natural when compared to other areas of the world
- It is a place for escapism and retreat – quite different to the rest of England

3.7 What might World Heritage Status mean for the Lake District?

Positive themes (The views of the majority)

- It will lead to improved access to and increased awareness of the Lake District for international visitors.
- It will be good for conservation and will signal a move towards sustainable objectives.
- It will create a sense of pride and global recognition for the Lake District.
- It will mean tighter controls on development.
- It will encourage people to visit.

Negative themes (The views of the minority)

- It will have a negative impact on the daily lives of those who live and work in the Lake District.
- It will have a negative impact on the holiday experience of those who holiday in the Lake District.
- It will lead to an increase in house prices and further limit access to the local housing market for local residents.
- It will lead to general price increases.
- It will lead to the loss of the sense of local community that currently exists.

3.8 How aware are people of World Heritage Sites and what meaning do they attach to them?

- More generally, awareness of World Heritage Sites is not very high.
- Awareness of Stonehenge as a World Heritage Site is good.
- Awareness of Hadrian's Wall as a World Heritage Site is low.
- Local groups and domestic visitors do not visit World Heritage Sites simply because they are classified as such.
- World Heritage Status may encourage international visitors to visit the Lake District.