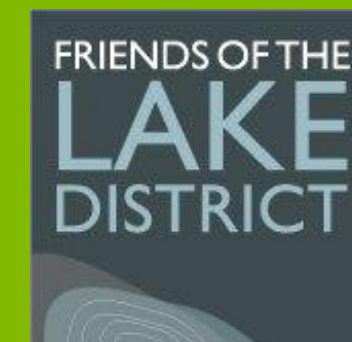


# UNDERSTANDING LITTERING AND RELATED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

RESEARCH REPORT  
MAY 2021



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

In mid-May 2020, Covid-19 lockdown measures in England were eased for the first time, allowing domestic travel for exercise to resume. This led to an increase in visitors to the Lake District National Park, which resulted in significant problems with litter and related anti-social behaviour, causing harm to the natural environment and risk to the local community.

Friends of the Lake District want to catalyse change by taking proactive steps to preventing the problem and encourage and enable visitors to 'leave no trace'.

## Method

The research was carried out in two phases; a qualitative phase of four video focus groups, followed by a quantitative phase consisting of a nationally representative survey via poll provider YouGov. Both phases were carried out with people who had visited the Lake District

since May 2020. Focus group participants must also have admitted to performing at least two littering/anti-social behaviours in a countryside environment since May 2020.

## Insights: what are the issues?

Over a quarter of visitors to the Lake District since May 2020 admit to littering (27%). The most commonly admitted to behaviour is leaving the item next to or on top of the bin (8%), followed by dropping unwanted food (7%), leaving behind toilet roll, tissues or wipes after going to the toilet outdoors (5%), leaving items of rubbish behind after eating (4%), and dropping rubbish because it was dirty, smelly or messy (4%).

Almost a quarter of visitors (23%) have engaged in at least one of the anti-social behaviours that were seen in the National Park during summer 2020. More than 1 in 20 (7%) have accidentally or otherwise caused damage to the natural environment, such as trees, flowers, or hedges, had a

barbeque in an area where they weren't certain it was allowed (6%), and left behind camping equipment because it was broken or no longer needed (6%).

## Insights: who is contributing to the issues?

Those who admitted to having done at least one of the littering behaviours presented are more likely to be male (58% are male, compared to 42% female), in younger age groups (55% are aged 34 years and under; 27% are aged 35 to 44 years), and are predominantly from the North West of England (21%), Yorkshire and Humber (18%), and London (19%). Half of litterers (51%) have children in the household, compared with 26% of non litterers.

Those who have visited the Lake District 'many times' (39%) were also more likely to admit to littering in the National Park than first time visitors (17%).

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **Insights: what is driving behaviour?**

More than half (52%) of visitors say they expect to be able to find a public litter bin in the Lake District when they need one. This is equally high among litterers (54%, compared with 51% of non-litterers). Visitors are not adapting their behaviour or expectations for the more remote, National Park environment.

1 in 5 visitors (19%) believe it is not always possible to 'leave no trace' and take all rubbish and other items away with them, when visiting the Lake District. Among litterers, this increases to 40%. Visitors suggested there are certain situations where they are 'forced' to litter, such as not finding a bin and when the item is messy or smelly.

More than 1 in 10 (13%) visitors to the Lake District in the past year believe that if they leave litter somewhere in the Lake District,

someone will come by to clear it up. A third of litterers think this (33%). Some visitors believe the local council is responsible for picking litter in the National Park.

1 in 4 visitors (26%) to the Lake District in the past year have never heard of the Countryside Code. This is higher still among litterers (30%).

## **Visitor suggested solutions**

Suggestions were largely focused on an increase in the provision of bins and other facilities, highlighting the inclination of Lake District litterers to shift responsibility away from themselves. Such suggestions included providing water fountains to reduce the number of plastic bottles being used and subsequently littered in the National Park.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the insights from this research and wider work, Keep Britain Tidy has made

recommendations for steps that could be taken to begin to address the litter, waste and anti-social behaviour issues created by some visitors to the Lake District National Park. These are outlined at pages 29 and 30 of this report.

## **Potential interventions**

One key recommendation is to consider piloting a range of intervention approaches, to robustly monitor the impact of each, identifying the most effective methods of encouraging and enabling all visitors to the Lake District to leave no trace. Some interventions that could be considered for piloting are outlined on pages 31-34 of this report.

# ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

Keep Britain Tidy is a leading independent charity with three goals – to eliminate litter, prevent waste and improve local places. We have a long history of successfully delivering campaigns and programmes that have positive impacts for society and the environment at a local, regional and national level.

In 2015, Keep Britain Tidy launched the Centre for Social Innovation, becoming the only UK charity to take a systematic approach to applying behavioural insights to tackle litter and waste issues. The Centre focuses on understanding the root causes of these issues through high-quality behavioural insights research and uses this together with behavioural science to design, pilot and scale behavioural interventions.

What makes the Centre unique is that we have expertise in both research and behavioural insights *and* litter and waste. We believe bringing these two areas of expertise together is key to tackling the issues effectively.

We work together with private, public and third sector organisations, local authorities' managerial and operational staff as well as communities, to design interventions which are cost-effective, measurable and practical to deliver. In this way, we ensure that the interventions we develop are scalable. To date, over 290 local authorities and other organisations have implemented one or more of our tested interventions.

We have won numerous awards for our work including Nudge Awards 2018, AIM Nudging for Good Awards 2017 and the Charity Awards 2016.

We are a Company Partner of the Market Research Society and all of our work is conducted in line with the Market Research Society Code of Practice.



# INTRODUCTION

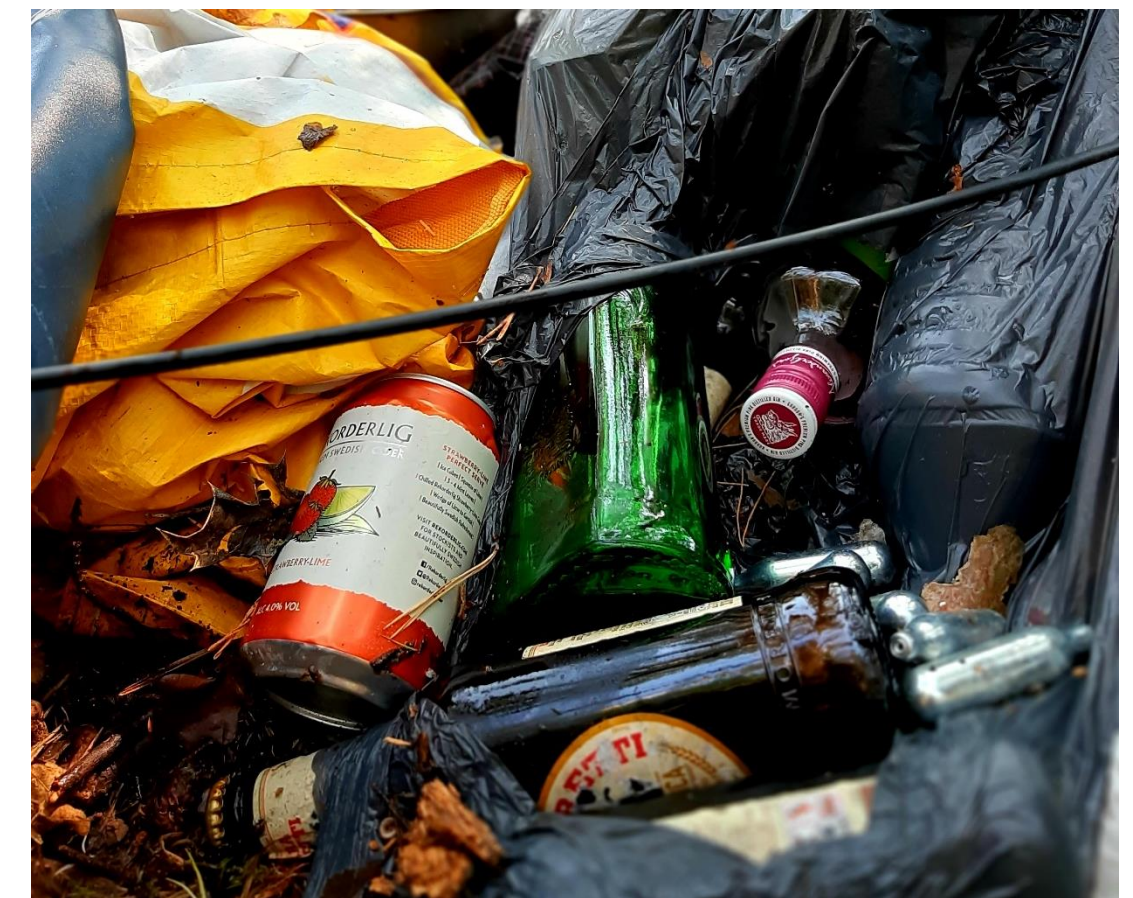
## Background

In mid-May 2020, Covid-19 lockdown measures in England were eased for the first time, allowing domestic travel for exercise to resume. This led to an increase in visitors to the Lake District National Park, which resulted in significant problems with litter and related anti-social behaviour, causing harm to the natural environment and risk to the local community.

Unprecedented amounts of litter and waste were left behind by visitors, including laughing gas canisters, leftover food, broken glass, toilet waste, condoms, and whole encampments. Other issues included fly-camping, vandalism to trees and dry stone walls, and use of disposable barbeques, posing a fire risk. The scale of the clean-up operation overwhelmed the resources of the National Park, National Trust Rangers,

Cumbria Police, council staff and volunteers. With restrictions on foreign travel set to carry on for some time, more must be done to prevent this behaviour from continuing. Friends of the Lake District want to catalyse change by taking proactive steps to preventing the problem and encourage and enable visitors to 'leave no trace'.

In order to tackle the issues and develop effective solutions, we believe that the triggers and barriers to responsible behaviour and respectful enjoyment of the Lake District National Park must first be identified.



# INTRODUCTION

## Aim and objectives

Through this research we aim to better understand littering and related anti-social behaviours occurring in the Lake District National Park.

The objectives of this research are to:

- Identify the demographic profile of the Lake District's litterers
- Identify, understand and explore why they are littering and leaving waste behind, and to gather behavioural insights to understand the triggers and barriers to littering and responsible waste disposal in the National Park
- Understand the links between littering, leaving waste behind and other antisocial behaviours alongside them
- Identify and understand awareness and perceptions of the National Park as a

protected landscape and the extent to which they place value on it

- Identify awareness and understanding of the Countryside Code
- Explore what would work to change litterers' behaviours and seek their input into what solutions might look like
- Use these insights to inform recommendations for targeted interventions and activity to change visitor behaviour and prevent littering, the leaving of waste and related anti-social behaviour from occurring across the National Park

# METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in two phases; a qualitative then a quantitative phase, as outlined below.

## **Qualitative phase**

Four video focus groups were carried out with people who had visited the Lake District since May 2020, either as part of a daytrip or overnight stay. Sessions were 90 minutes long and there were 6 participants in each group.

To be included in the groups, participants must also have admitted to having done at least two littering or anti-social behaviours in a countryside or national park environment since May 2020. We also ensured the recruited participants represented a range of visitor types, including wild campers, included a mix of

first time and repeat visitors, and a range of demographic groups.

Participants were recruited through an experienced market research agency, using a screening questionnaire to ensure each person met the criteria for inclusion. Participants were given a cash gift as a thank you for their time.

Focus group results were analysed using thematic analysis, identifying the key themes to come from the discussions.

## **Quantitative phase**

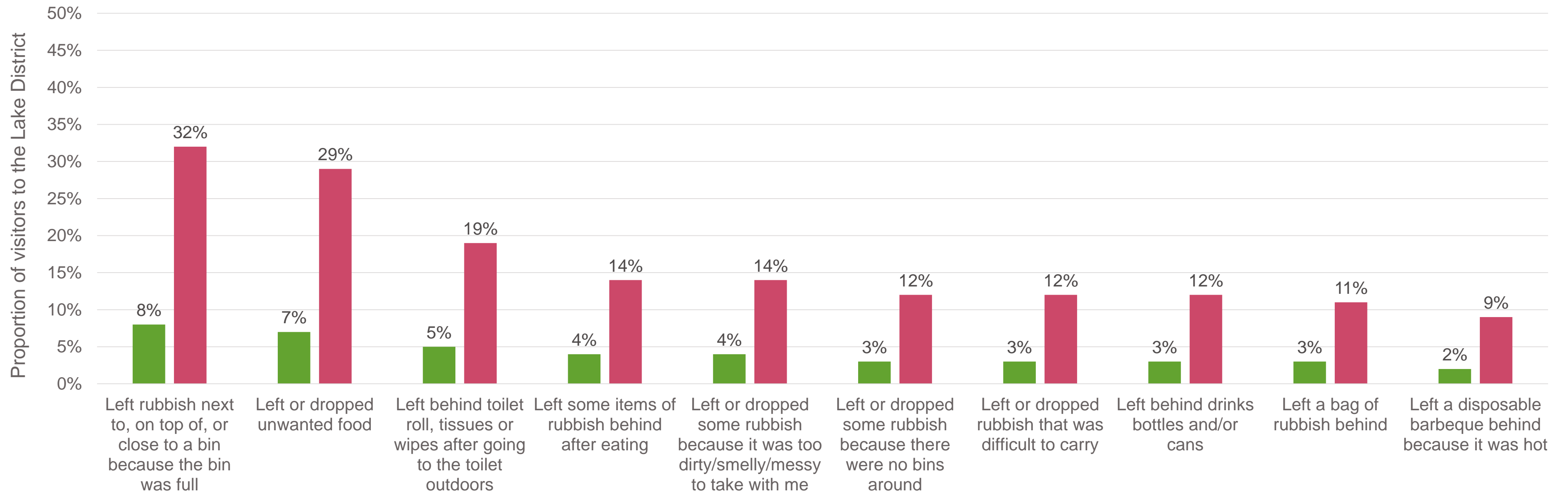
A nationally representative survey was carried out via poll provider YouGov, with people who have visited the Lake District since May 2020. The survey had a total sample of 608, and data was analysed to identify significant findings and trends.

# **KEY INSIGHTS: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?**



# LITTERING BEHAVIOURS

Over a quarter of visitors to the Lake District National Park since May 2020 admit to littering (27%). The research identified the different ways in which people are doing this; the graph below shows the proportion of all visitors who admitted to having done each littering behaviour in the Lake District National Park, alongside the proportion of all litterers who admitted to having done this.



Bases: all visitors = 608; litterers = 157

Littering behaviour  
 ■ All visitors ■ Litterers



# LITTERING BEHAVIOURS

As shown in the graph, the most commonly admitted to littering behaviour among recent visitors to the Lake District is leaving the item next to or on top of the bin (e.g. if the bin is full); 8% of all visitors have done this. This was followed by dropping unwanted food (7%), leaving behind toilet roll, tissues or wipes after going to the toilet outdoors (5%), leaving items of rubbish behind after eating (4%), and dropping rubbish because it was dirty, smelly or messy (4%).

When taking into account the huge amount of visitors the Lake District sees each year, these are substantial numbers of people leaving litter in the National Park, harming the natural environment.

When discussing these types of littering behaviours in focus group sessions, participants explained there are certain

situations or circumstances where they feel they have no option but to leave their litter. Some examples of this were when they have tried looking for a bin for “around 10 to 15 minutes” and haven’t seen one, the item is too heavy or bulky to carry along with other belongings, or when the item is messy and so they don’t want to put it in their backpack.

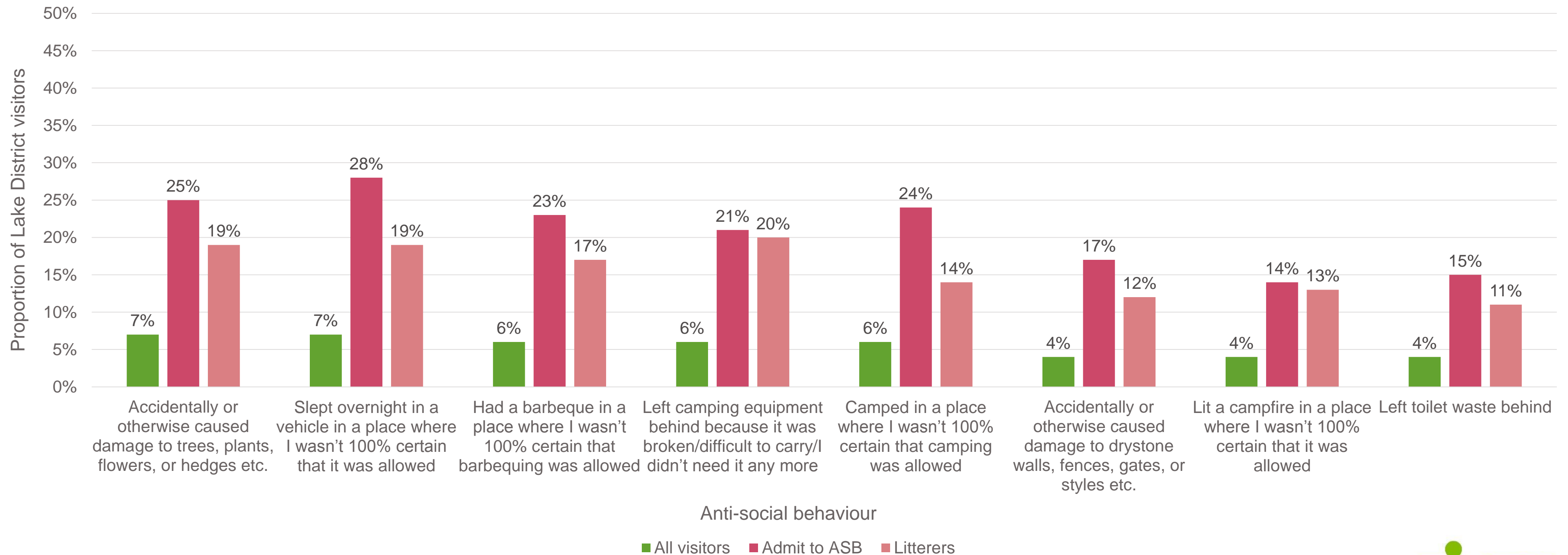
In this way, littering in the Lake District is very much situational and dependent on the context, rather than overt or habitual. Visitors are more likely to litter when they feel like they have some justification for doing so.

***“You’re like ‘I’m not carrying this around all day’, it’s like a bag of empty sandwich wrappers and things that smell... especially on a hot day, you don’t want it on you do you?”***

***“It’s completely circumstantial... I would not say it’s my habit to leave things [litter] out.”***

# RELATED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

Almost a quarter of recent visitors to the Lake District (23%) have engaged in at least one of the anti-social behaviours that were seen in the National Park during summer 2020. The graph below shows the proportion of all Lake District visitors who admit to each behaviour, as well as the proportion of people who admit to anti-social behaviour, and the proportion of litterers.



Bases: all visitors = 608; admit to ASB = 138; litterers = 157



# RELATED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

As shown in the graph, more than 1 in 20 visitors (7%) have accidentally or otherwise caused damage to the natural environment, such as trees, flowers, or hedges, had a barbeque in an area where they weren't certain it was allowed (6%), and left behind camping equipment because it was broken or no longer needed (6%). The same proportion (6%) have also camped in an area of the Lake District where they were unsure that camping was permitted.

Such behaviours are also more frequent among the litterer group, indicating that litterers are significantly more likely to carry out other related anti-social behaviours in the National Park.

Again, we can extrapolate these findings to identify the significant number of visitors to

the Lake District each year who are engaging in such behaviours and contributing to damage to the environment and risk to wildlife and local communities.

**KEY INSIGHTS:  
WHO IS CONTRIBUTING TO  
THE ISSUES?**

# LITTERER PROFILE

We can develop a profile of visitors to the Lake District who admit to littering to identify where future interventions, communications and initiatives should be primarily targeted.

## Demographics

Those who admitted to having done at least one of the littering behaviours presented are more likely to be male (58% are male, compared to 42% female) and in younger age groups (55% are aged 34 years and under; 27% are aged 35 to 44 years).

Litterers are predominantly from the regions geographically closest to the Lake District (21% of all litterers were from the North West of England and 18% from Yorkshire and Humber), as well as London (19%).

Half of litterers (51%) have children in the

household; this is compared with 26% of non litterers, suggesting that having children can increase the likelihood of littering.

## Other factors

Those who have visited the Lake District 'many times' (39%), a few times'' (23%) or 'once or twice' (21%) before were more likely to admit to littering in the National Park than first time visitors (17%). This suggests that instances of littering increases with frequency of visiting.

The majority of litterers admit to having done just one littering behaviour in the Lake District (61%), while a quarter (24%) admit to having done two of the behaviours presented.

# RELATIONSHIP TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

To understand more about Lake District visitors who litter in the National Park, we explored their current and past experiences in and connection to such countryside environments.

This group of visitors tend to have a good connection to countryside spaces. Some more frequent visitors have a deeper connection than those who visit less often; this can depend on where they currently live or where they grew up, and its proximity to such natural environments.

In focus group sessions, participants discussed many perceived benefits of these spaces, suggesting them to be quiet, peaceful, and open spaces, where they can appreciate the scenery, explore heritage sites, and escape day to day life and other people. Those with children are drawn to

countryside or National Park environments for what they can offer their children, providing space to run around, and different types of activities than they could access elsewhere (e.g. water sports).

Many participants also reported an increased use of and appreciation for countryside environments following the Covid-19 restrictions in England, Despite all participants having admitted to at least two littering or anti-social behaviours presented to them, most reported feeling angry when seeing litter and other disrespect of these environments, at odds with the behaviour they have admitted to engaging in.

***“I’m starting to appreciate nature... it just clears my headspace, it’s essential. Disengaging, like, looking at things like the lakes and enjoying the beauty and things like that I didn’t appreciate before.”***

***“I think places like the Lake District and the Peak District need to be protected so that we’ve all got somewhere to escape to, because I think particularly in the last year I think we’ve all kind of seen that actually we need some outdoor space and we need to have those accessible areas that everybody can enjoy.”***

# RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAKE DISTRICT

Participants in focus group sessions included regular, less frequent and first-time visitors to the Lake District, each with different relationships to the National Park. More regular visitors tend to appreciate the more remote spots for walking or camping, while less frequent or first-time visitors tend to visit easily accessible areas with more facilities, such as the better-known lakes and towns. Families with children in particular tend visit these areas.

While all participants mentioned multiple motivations for visiting the Lake District in 2020, following the easing of restrictions, most suggested they would have typically have been elsewhere (mostly abroad) at that time if travel was unrestricted.

The decision-making process to visit the Lake District, and where within it, varied among participants. Some visited upon a recommendation from friends family, others had wanted to visit for some time and, with

travel options restricted, took the opportunity to do so. When looking at where within the National Park to visit, most participants used social media, blogs, and websites such as trip advisor and 'official' Lake District affiliated sites. One visitor used the location tag on an Instagram post to decide where to visit. Another searched online for the most beautiful areas to wild camp in the country. Others explained they typically secure their accommodation or campsite first, determining where within the Lake District they will visit.

When discussing the area, there was a general lack of awareness that, by way of it being a National Park, the Lake District is a protected landscape and the work that this involves (e.g. by volunteers and other groups). Many participants suggested this is something they would like to be more informed on.

***“I knew it was a National Park and I’m***

***sure it means it’s got rangers and all the rest of it. But to be honest I didn’t really think about it.”***

***“Not sure I was too aware of it, I mean if there were signs [about the Lake District being a protected area], they didn’t stand out.”***

***“I never thought about it but there was always an inkling that it's quite a special part of the country and there might be some extra particular restrictions.”***



# **KEY INSIGHTS: WHAT IS DRIVING BEHAVIOUR?**

# EXPECTATION OF BINS AND FACILITIES

More than half (52%) of visitors to the Lake District in the past year say they expect to be able to find a public litter bin in the Lake District when they need one. This is equally high among litterers (54%, compared with 51% of non-litterers). This is a huge proportion of Lake District visitors who do not adapt their expectations to account for more remote environments, such as National Parks. Rather, these visitors expect facilities such as bins to be widely available, as in other areas such as high streets, and for these bins to be emptied frequently enough for the number of visitors using them.

As a result, this expectation of bins being provided is leading to visitors not adapting their behaviour to account for these more rural environments, such as planning ahead,

thinking about how they will dispose of their items once they have finished with them, or planning to take it home with them. Discussions with focus group participants indicated that “take it home” is not something they are used to being required to do elsewhere, such as their local park, so do not expect to need to do that in the Lake District.

***“When I work up in London, you’re so used to just walking along with a coffee cup and then chucking it in a bin because you’ll come across one round every street corner... if you’re not used to that, having to put that cup in your backpack to then take it home with you, you’ve not got that kind of mentality.”***

***“I’m sure we’ve all left some kind of rubbish. The answer really is up to the campsite owners and countryside local councils to supply more bins and more amenities.”***

# FEELING 'FORCED' TO LITTER

1 in 5 visitors (19%) to the Lake District in the past year believe it is not always possible to 'leave no trace' and take all rubbish and other items away with them, when visiting the Lake District. Among litterers, this increases to 40%.

This supports insights from focus group discussions, where participants suggested there are many situations or circumstances where they feel littering becomes their only option. For instance, participants described occasions when they have tried looking for a bin for up to 15 minutes, have not seen one, and therefore decide to look for somewhere else to leave their rubbish. Others described occasions when the item is too heavy or bulky to carry, along with other belongings, particularly if they over-packed, underestimated how heavy their belongings would be to carry, or the item doesn't fit in their backpack. Many instances were also

described where items that were messy, smelly or sticky have been littered, to avoid needing to carry these items in their backpack.

In this way, some participants suggested that there are different types of litterer; those who are more blatant and put no effort into trying to dispose of their rubbish correctly, giving the example of those who litter at festivals for instance, and those who have tried to look at options to avoid littering but are 'forced' to do so by the circumstances. Lake District litterers generally see themselves as belonging to the latter category. This is very much linked to visitors' expectation for bins to be provided.

***"I'll carry it for a certain amount of time, but after 15/20 minutes you're like 'I'm not carrying this around all day'."***

***"I tried carrying some items for some time but it was very awkward and embarrassing the way I was carrying [them] and I had to chuck them away because there was no bins near to me. So, sometimes it's just whether it is possible or how far the facilities are."***

***"The way that I sort of broke the rules if you like, wasn't necessarily just 'Oh let's just throw something' it was [because] the bin was overflowing."***

***"If I cannot see the bin in the near vicinity, I'll give effort, let's say, five, 10 minutes of walking, then I would get frustrated and I'll try to dump it where I think it's a reasonable place to do so."***

# EXPECTATION THAT LITTER WILL BE PICKED UP

More than 1 in 10 (13%) visitors to the Lake District in the past year believe that if they leave litter somewhere in the Lake District, someone will come by to clear it up. A third of litterers think this (33%), suggesting that this perception is significantly driving littering behaviour among visitors to the National Park.

During focus group discussions, participants who hold this perception typically felt that it is the responsibility of the local council to pick up litter, particularly in busier areas such as town centres. One participant suggested they had previously littered in the Lake District with the expectation that someone will come around to clear it up, and was extremely surprised when they

found out on a recent visit that no one is employed to do this.

***“I've left it [litter] and I thought someone will come and pick it up, you know, a bit later. I thought at night time someone comes and empties the bins or collects the rubbish until somebody told me there's nobody that actually does that... I felt really bad. I don't really know who goes and cleans it. I thought it's the local council.”***

# AWARENESS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE



Awareness of the Countryside Code was identified by asking visitors to the Lake District whether a) they have heard of it; b) if they recognise the logo; and c) how much they know about the information included within the code.

1 in 4 visitors (26%) to the Lake District in the past year have never heard of the Countryside Code. This is higher still among litterers, with almost a third (30%) having never heard of it.

Over half of all visitors (54%), and 50% of litterers, say they have never seen the Countryside Code logo before.

1 in 10 visitors to the Lake District in the past year say they were unaware of all the guidelines included in the Countryside Code. A further 12% say they were aware of a few, but not many of the guidelines. 41%

say they were fully aware of all the guidelines.

Among litterers these results were similar, with 9% unaware of all the guidelines and a further 14% aware of a few but not many. 37% say they were fully aware of all the guidelines included in the code.

Awareness of the Countryside Code appears to increase with age, with 57% of over 55's being fully aware of all the guidelines it includes, compared to 23% of 18 to 24's and 38% of 25 to 24's.

Awareness is also higher among more frequent Lake District visitors; with 48% of people who have visited 'many times' saying they were full aware of all of the guidelines, compared with 38% of first time visitors.



# AWARENESS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE



Focus group participants who were partly or fully aware of the Countryside Code were generally unsure on where they have they seen it advertised or communicated. Some participants recalled seeing signage near lakes and in car parks asking visitors not to litter, but could not recall other messaging related to the contents of the code.

Most participants, whether they were aware of the Countryside Code or not, believe it should be better known and communicated, either to change their own behaviour and help them to be better informed during future visits, or to help change the behaviour of others who do not currently act in accordance with the guidelines.

***“I haven’t heard of it, but I mean it’s just basic ethics of what you do when you go to the countryside.”***

***“I think I've sort of heard of the Countryside Code but wouldn't know to recite exactly what's in there. I probably have a rough idea of some of the things.”***

***“It’s obviously needed I guess but I think it’s very old fashioned.”***



# AWARENESS OF CONSEQUENCES

Discussion around the consequences of littering in the Lake District focused on it being unpleasant for the community, the appearance of the area, and the potential impact on wildlife. Some also suggested that the presence of litter would put them off visiting that area again in the future.

Participants were less likely to consider the wider consequences, such as the operation to remove litter and waste, who is responsible for this, and what it costs. They suggested that enforcement for littering, such as being fined, was highly unlikely to occur in the Lake District, compared with other more urban areas.

In conversation around the provision of bins in the Lake District, participants acknowledge that bins cannot always be placed in remote spots, however they are more likely to suggest this is because the

appearance of them would spoil the natural views and atmosphere, rather than consideration around the cost of installing and emptying these, and issues with accessibility. For instance, one participant suggested that bins could use a 'natural' design to help them better camouflage into the landscape and avoid spoiling views.

***“I would definitely not go somewhere where I know it’s a place where people make a lot of mess.”***

***“I was thinking, like, who does collect these things [litter]? Because, for me, I just thought it's like the London Borough of something, you know, like where I am.”***

***“Probably the local council isn’t it? They’ve got to employ people to do this sort of thing [pick up litter]. I never really noticed anyone doing it there like in London you see like road sweepers, but I never really saw anyone like that while I was there. I assume they cleaned it up at night rather than during the day.”***

# ACCEPTABILITY OF LITTERING

The perceived acceptability of littering among Lake District visitors changes depending on multiple situational factors, such as location and the type of rubbish they need to dispose of. Firstly, some waste items are seen as 'biodegradable' and therefore acceptable to litter; such as food, particularly fruit, tissues, and wooden ice-lolly sticks. While perhaps lower priority compared with other litter and waste issues in the National Park, this is an important perception to address.

It is also becomes more acceptable among visitors to leave litter in areas where others have done the same (e.g. adding to a pile that has already been started), when the item is placed next to a full bin, when it is left somewhere else deemed convenient for whoever picks it up, or when it is bagged-up to make it easier for collecting. Littering in these situations is generally seen as

acceptable, despite high awareness among visitors that rubbish will quickly blow away or be spread by birds, likely before anyone arrives to remove it.

Some suggested it can also feel more acceptable to leave litter in more built up/accessible areas of the Lake District, such as towns, picnic areas, and car parks, due to the perception that the Council is responsible for emptying bins and picking litter in these locations. By comparison, it is generally seen as less acceptable to litter in more remote, harder to access spots, such up in the fells.

**“We’ve got some of the pack mentality – if everyone else is doing it then it’s more acceptable.”**

**“If it’s things like food or, you know, like apple cores or things like that –**

**something that can be used again by plants – I don’t have a problem with that.”**

**“I don't throw it like I'm trying to scatter it but I try to keep it in a place where they can pick it up, the cleaning person.”**

**“There was no space [in the bin] and I just thought ‘Do you know what, I’ll leave it next to it’. Now I know full well that come six o’clock if those bins weren’t emptied, you’re going to get some wildlife that’s probably going to be sniffing around them and probably make a lot more mess.”**



# CORRECT DISPOSAL CAN BE LOW PRIORITY

Some visitors, particularly those with young children, suggested that other priorities can quickly take precedent over disposing of their rubbish correctly, in certain situations. These priorities included being tired after a long walk, and ensuring their children have everything they need (e.g. food, toilet, making sure they are warm and dry). Here, littering becomes the easier and quickest option.

Similarly, others suggested their littering is often due to laziness, and wanting to be rid of the item as quickly as possible, without needing to put effort into finding a way of disposing of it correctly.

*“A lot of the time for me, it [littering] just derives from laziness to be honest”*

# VISTOR SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

# SUGGESTED APPROACHES

Focus group participants were asked to make their own suggestions for the types of messages, initiatives and approaches that would better support them to leave no trace when visiting the Lake District. Suggestions were largely focused on an increase in the provision of bins and other facilities, highlighting the inclination of Lake District litterers to shift responsibility away from themselves and onto the landowner. Such suggestions included:

- Providing water fountains to reduce the number of plastic bottles being used and subsequently littered in the National Park.
- Introducing an environmental tax for visitors to raise funds for more bins and staff to empty them more frequently.
- Providing paper bags (e.g. in car parks) for visitors to take with them and carry their litter home.

Participants also suggested that communicating the environmental impacts of litter and related anti-social behaviours in the Lake District would have the greatest impact on their behaviour, compared to learning about other impacts, such as how the issues affect the local community. Suggestions around this included:

- Imagery to show the negative impacts of litter on wildlife and the natural environment, such as litter floating in a lake, or blown away when it was placed next to a bin.

Other solutions suggested by participants included:

- maps to show where bins are (and where they are not), placed in car parks and other central areas.
- Messaging to highlight the cost of cleaning

up litter in the National Park and who is responsible for doing this.

- Messages displayed on the way into the Lake District to remind visitors to take ownership for their behaviour and plan ahead.
- Promote the Countryside Code and other related messages on accommodation booking websites (e.g. Airbnb, holiday cottages), and including these in confirmation booking emails.
- A Lake District ranger magazine or other type of communication to better inform visitors on the work carried out to protect and maintain the National Park.

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights from this research and wider work, Keep Britain Tidy recommends the following steps are taken to begin to address the litter, waste and anti-social behaviour issues created by some visitors to the Lake District National Park.

1. Consider piloting a range of messaging approaches, initiatives and other interventions, robustly monitoring the impact of each, to identify which are the most effective methods of encouraging and enabling all visitors to the Lake District to leave no trace. Some interventions that could be considered for piloting are outlined on pages 31-34 of this report.
2. With six out of 10 Lake District litterers travelling from the North West, Yorkshire & Humber, and London, look to focus messaging particularly in these

regions (e.g. through targeted Facebook advertisement).

3. Consider ways of embedding key messages into the online journey of those planning a visit to the area. For instance, this could include targeting relevant social media messaging via paid promotions to key groups or areas, or through applying for a charity Google Ad Grant to display relevant links when certain phrases are searched for (e.g. a link to the Countryside Code could appear on a Google search for “Lake District camping”).
4. Explore opportunities for partnering with national travel, holiday and transport businesses, such as Trainline, Avanti Trains, Airbnb, and Cottages.com, to deliver campaigns and/or messaging, priming visitors to adapt their behaviour in the Lake District, prior to arriving. For

instance, such messages could focus on the importance of planning ahead, framing the Lake District as a protected environment, or communicating elements of the Countryside Code.

5. Work with local businesses (e.g. campsites, b&b’s, shops, and hospitality) to deliver local, in-situ communications to set expectations of correct behaviour in the Lake District, once visitors have arrived. We recommend this type of in-situ messaging is important to implement, in addition to online, to capture visitors when they are likely to be most receptive. These communications will be most impactful if they are a) consistent and repeated across local businesses, and b) disruptive and salient, to capture attention, particularly of repeat visitors.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Considering the low levels of awareness of the Countryside Code, lobby for increased investment in communication around this, to increase national awareness, deter littering, and increase correct usage of the Lake District and other countryside environments.
7. Consider communicating aspects of the Countryside Code, rather than the code as a whole, where appropriate, to help make the information more easily digestible and memorable to visitors. For instance, the 'respect everyone' section of the code could be better received if promoted in certain locations and by certain messengers, such as local residents or rangers.
8. Help visitors better prepare for a lack of toilet facilities in the Lake District, to address the proportions leaving tissues and wipes behind. We suggest current communications around this are reviewed to emphasise the importance of planning for this.
9. Current wild camping guidance is contradictory and confusing, making space for visitors to interpret the rules differently. We suggest the rules and communications around this are reviewed and tightened to ensure fly-camping (e.g. around lakes and other low-lying ground) is seen as wholly unacceptable by all. For instance, this could include framing acceptable wild-camping (i.e. in the high fells) as something done by a very small minority group, emphasising the barriers to doing this, such as gaining landowner permission, carrying minimal equipment to high-ground, and ensuring plans have been made to make it possible to leave no trace.
10. This research identified there is low awareness of the Lake District being a protected landscape and the activity that this involves. Further research could be carried out to explore this in more detail, better understanding awareness of National Parks and what this means to visitors. The research should particularly explore perceptions around conservation work (e.g. of heritage and wildlife), the role of volunteer groups, local councils and landowners, and overall perceptions of landownership. We suggest the research could use a syndicated approach, with multiple national parks organisations investing smaller amounts, allowing them to gain relevant insights for their area.

# POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

1. **Use social norming to highlight the visitors who left no trace:** real-time messaging to emphasise the number of people who, in the last week, visited the Lake District and left no trace. This initiative would work to frame ‘leaving no trace’ as something achieved by the majority. Messaging could be presented at a hyper-local level, such as ‘*visitors to Hawkshead...*’ to increase its perceived relevance.

**What insight does this address?** 19% of visitors, and 40% of litterers, believe it is not possible to always leave no trace.

2. **Gateway expectation setting:** messaging on arrival to the Lake District, such as at Oxenholme station, along key entry roads, to create a feeling that visitors are now entering a different type of natural environment to those they might typically visit. Messaging would help to set an expectation on how visitors in this area should behave, and why. This would aim to particularly target daytrip visitors who may not have engaged in other Lake District related communications channels (e.g. accommodation booking) prior to arriving.

**What insight does this address?** Visitors do not adapt their expectations and behaviour to account for more remote environments, such as National Parks. There is also low awareness of the Lake District being a protect landscape.

3. **How to leave no trace guide:** quick, simple, practical tips for planning your visit to the Lake District and how to leave no trace when you leave. A checklist to help visitors plan how they will overcome barriers to leaving no trace of their visit, such as preparing to not find a bin when they need one, bringing carrier bags for rubbish, and limiting what they bring with them.

**What insight does this address?** 54% of visitors expect to be able to find a bin in the Lake District when they need one. 19% of visitors, and 40% of litterers, believe it is not possible to always leave no trace. Litterers also feel like they are ‘forced’ to litter by the circumstances.

# POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

4. **‘Protect the Lakes’ style scheme for businesses:** businesses such as accommodation booking sites and others can join a scheme which demonstrates that they care about the protection of the National Park, and would love their customers to do the same. Through the scheme, businesses can display their commitment via a recognisable badge (e.g. on their website, or a sticker in their window), and pass guidance onto customers upon booking. This would be framed as a positive and upbeat initiative, including helpful, practical tips for visitors, aiming to create a sense of community among all users of the National Park.

## **What insight does this address?**

Visitors do not adapt their expectations and behaviour to account for more remote environments, such as National Parks. There is also low awareness of the Lake District being a protect landscape.

5. **“Last bin until”:** message boards in car parks, town centres, and other locations with bins, to inform visitors that this is the last bin until the next village, destination, or for so many miles. This intervention aims to reduce the perception that bins in the Lake District are readily available, and help visitors better prepare what they will do with their rubbish once they have finished with it.

**What insight does this address?** 54% of visitors expect to be able to find a bin in the Lake District when they need one.

6. **“Lake District litter elves don’t work here”:** humorous messaging to communicate that no one is coming by to clear up litter left in the Lake District. We know that people are more likely to respond to and remember messaging that they find amusing. This could take on a variation of Keep Britain Tidy’s ‘there’s no such thing as the dog poo fairy’ to emphasise that no one is employed to remove litter in the National Park

**What insight does this address?** 13% of visitors, and 33% of litterers, think that if they leave litter somewhere in the Lake District, someone will come by to clear it up.



# POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

**7. How many individuals look after this area:** messaging to communicate the number of individuals (volunteers, rangers, residents and others) who work to maintain and protect the vast area of the National Park, to emphasise the very limited resource. Number of individuals could be presented alongside the amount of space of the park (e.g. in acres or square miles) to put this into context. Messaging could also be localised to specific villages, towns, or areas.

**What insight does this address?** 13% of visitors, and 33% of litterers, think that if they leave litter somewhere in the Lake District, someone will come by to clear it up. There is also low awareness of the activity involved in maintaining and protecting the Lake District, as a National Park.

**8. Rules for visiting protected environments:** an initiative to highlight the Lake District as a protected landscape, and encourage visitors to act in accordance with this. This would simplify and condense current guidance into a few memorable rules for visiting the Lake District, as a protected area. This could test different messengers of the rules, such as local residents, or volunteers who carry out work to maintain and protect the National Park.

**What insight does this address?** There is low awareness of the Lake District being a protect landscape, as well as the Countryside Code. Visitors also do not adapt their expectations and behaviour to account for more remote environments, such as National Parks.

**9. Picking litter takes us away from other important work:** messaging to communicate to visitors that a) volunteers pick up litter in the Lake District – no one is paid to do it; and b) these volunteers would like to be spending their time on other tasks to help improve the National Park, such as building paths, walls, and working on conservation. This could be presented from the perspective of the volunteer.

**What insight does this address?** 13% of visitors, and 33% of litterers, think that if they leave litter somewhere in the Lake District, someone will come by to clear it up. There is also low awareness of the activity involved in maintaining and protecting the Lake District, as a National Park.

# POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

**10. “We will take your rubbish”:** A scheme for local businesses, such as shops, accommodation, campsites and hospitality, to offer use of their bins for disposing of rubbish. Businesses could display stickers in their windows to invite visitors to dispose of their rubbish here, on the condition that they leave no trace of their visit to the Lake District. While some visitors will make use of the bins provided by businesses, we suggest the key aspect of this initiative is the repeated prompt for visitors to leave no trace, and highlighting the expectation that locals have for people coming to the area. This could also be extended to local residents offering use of their wheeled bins.

## **What insight does this address?**

Visitors do not adapt their expectations and behaviour to account for more

remote environments, such as National Parks. 54% of visitors expect to be able to find a bin in the Lake District when they need one.

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