

Claife Parish Council

Comments on

The draft Lake District Partnership Plan 2026-2031

Claife Parish Council would like to offer comments on the draft Partnership Plan, particularly in relation to local communities.

First, we strongly support the challenges identified in the Plan as facing local communities and support the ambition to make rural communities sustainable, vibrant and thriving with diverse economies. And to those ends, we also support the following commitments:

- The Lake District Vision encompassing ‘a thriving, working landscape, which socially and economically vibrant’.
- Communities will help deliver this Vision
- The Partnership is committed to working alongside our communities
- Implementation of the Plan will work collaboratively to co-design projects and solutions that are rooted in local knowledge and communities.
- Expanding and diversifying the workforce through upskilling and creating training and job opportunities
- Creating conditions for economic growth through infrastructure and place based investment, and promoting a regenerative visitor economy
- Devolution presents an opportunity to empower communities,

But we consider that the **means of achieving these absolutely essential commitments are far too general**; and some are not supported by sufficient actions.

Many of the ambitions in this plan were also in the previous plan but at grass roots level **communities do not yet feel empowered** to help address these challenges in a meaningful way.

And achieving vibrant communities means **integrating sustainable approaches across different disciplines which is not addressed in the Plan**, as the key issues are dealt with separately.

We set out below some comments on these issues.

Affordable housing

To increase the supply of affordable housing or occupying restricted homes, the Plan aims for:

- A target of 400 housing permissions for affordable/local occupancy homes and 400 completions
- No increase in second homes/short term holiday lets

While these maybe numerically great objectives where are these houses to be built in relation to need? And the plan is vague on how this is to be achieved. 400 permissions needs 400 applications and 400 suitable sites – not just where land happens to be offered.

To achieve these sorts of numbers in ways that deliver houses where they are needed, and where families can support local schools and businesses, requires not just numbers but an assessment of well researched socio-economic needs. Financially delivering 400 homes will also be extremely challenging as the viability of building affordable homes is already challenging.

A more strategic approach would be beneficial to identify where affordable housing is needed (taking into account the spread of inter-linked settlements that might support a nodal village) and where it can be built. Such a strategic approach could encourage partnerships of Local Housing Authorities, communities, and landowners to explore different approaches to how housing might be delivered and its types and tenures; it could also possibly attract grant funding.

And given the importance of traditional building material and practices in shaping the Lake District landscapes, **it is desirable that more guidance is provided for new affordable homes that promotes innovation, an expectation of sustainable buildings and use of resources, as well as respect for local design and materials and, above all, high quality.**

Sustainable transport

Currently the Plan aims to reduce dependency on private vehicles. Objectives have been set to;

- Achieve a 10% increase in bus passengers, bus mileage and rail station usage
- Reduce number of visitors who use cars from 68% to 58%
- Increase sustainable travel from 28% to 40%

Again these are all great objectives, but who are these directed at? Is it purely visitors? **There is also a need for local people to be able to take public transport to work.** The plan needs to be more specific about where improved sustainable transport will benefit locals and how these areas have been chosen in relation to housing, schools, etc. Similarly for visitors it would be helpful to know whether sustainable travel is to be increased in relation to visitor attractions. East of Windermere, transport will only be truly sustainable if a replacement ferry link is supported.

Whether for locals or tourists, there is no mention of where people will leave their cars to take advantage of improved transport. If there are certain hotspots where the objective is to reduce car journeys and replace them with a bus service, then users still need somewhere to park; these areas need identifying.

Socio-economic needs

Sustainable communities are, as set out in the Plan, are *‘places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all’.*

Such sustainable communities are needed, including farming communities, those that support the tourism industry and those that support the wellbeing of the region. While growing sustainable communities is an aim in the Plan, they are not adequately addressed in relation to their socio-economic needs.

Homes and transport are only two parameters that can help make communities more sustainable and vibrant, they also need communal facilities and support for education and training. We would like to see these addressed in the Plan in relation to some of the generic headings such as ‘Expanding and diversifying the workforce through upskilling and creating training and job opportunities’ (which is only stated and not pursued) and ‘expanding the diversity of the workforce’. And the **means of enhancing community cohesion should also feature in the Plan.**

Relationship between tourists and local communities

Local communities underpin the tourist industry, which in turn provides some benefits for those communities in terms of employment and services. But there are also many disbenefits including lack of housing. There needs to be a more equitable, mutually beneficial relationship between tourists and host communities. The symbiotic relationship between tourists and visitors needs to be made more specific and the benefits more fairly shared.

The plan mentions sustainable approaches to tourism but does not go far enough in committing to shifting the focus from satisfying tourists and the income they generate to a broader approach that encompasses the wellbeing of communities, and the protection of local culture alongside visitor satisfaction.

To this end, it is regrettable that the Plan does not support a Tourist Levy – to help deliver this much needed equitable approach. In our view, such a **Tourist Levy is needed and should be supported in principle in the Plan but should be renamed so that it is not seen as a tax but rather as a support for community well-being**, and the funding generated spent not just on improved infrastructure for both tourists and locals but also on housing for locals – the single most crucial parameter for strengthening the resilience of local communities.

Empowering communities

As set out above, the Plan states that ‘communities will help deliver this Vision; the Partnership is committed to working alongside our communities; implementation of the Plan will work collaboratively to co-design projects and solutions that are rooted in local knowledge and communities. These approaches are just what is wanted. But unfortunately the Plan does not put any meat on the bones and explain how these governance approaches might work.

Local communities need to part of defining the future of the Lake District. But to achieve that better representation and involvement is needed, particularly amongst the upcoming generation. **We consider that there should be more opportunities for direct involvement of communities so that they, and particularly the upcoming generation, feel part of the solutions.**

Role of Parish Councils

We consider that how the Plan relates to Unitary Authorities and Parish Councils needs to be defined. In our view **Parish Councils should have a role in delivering the Plan or at the very least have opportunities to be part of discussions on the way forward.**

29th January 2025

