

AINA CASE STUDY

HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

Access to water



Identifying needs and preferences in the Lake District National Park

The Lake District National Park Authority commissioned research to identify needs and preferences related to access and recreation both on and to the water across the Park. The work sought to identify and fill gaps in knowledge whilst helping to develop ways in which the Authority could prioritise future projects and initiatives.

The research comprised a desk top review, questionnaires with interviews, written consultations and workshops. A series of focus group meetings were also held with some of the main user groups, including anglers, canoeists, boaters, sailors and those who walk or cycle by the waterside.

Five key user groups were identified, plus another group comprising landowners, managers and businesses with an interest in access to water. These groups were:

- Water contact activities such as swimming and windsurfing
- Non-powered boats including canoes, rowing and sailing
- Powered boats including pleasure cruising
- Water dependent activities such as fly fishing, angling and model boating
- Waterside independent activities such as rambling, horse riding, bird watching, etc

The research found that those living in or around the National Park were more likely to participate in almost all water based and waterside activities (apart from power boating) than those living elsewhere. There were also more potential participants living in the Park and its environs. Interest and participation in water contact activities and boating declined with age, with those aged 17-24 being most likely to participate. Interest in waterside dependent activities such as angling was found to be similar across all age groups but activities such as walking and cycling were lowest among the youngest and oldest respondents. Participation and interest in water related activities was generally lower among women, those with a long term illness/health problem/disability, and those in lower socio-economic groups. Reasons cited for non-participation included lack of interest, cost and adverse weather.

The survey provided a context for further research by showing that the National Park currently serves participants in water based and waterside activities very well, with only small pockets of users feeling that their needs are not being met. Good access to water by foot and by car was seen as important, with space to park for extended periods preferred.

AINA members may wish to consider reviewing their own priorities and work in relation to access to the waterspace they maintain and manage.