

SECTION 3 | A BACKGROUND INTO WINDERMERE



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**17.7
million**

annual national and
international visitors drawn to
the Lake District National Park

.....

.....

**10.5
miles**

long, making it
England's largest
freshwater lake

.....

.....

**2.5
metres**

of annual rainfall –
one of the highest
levels in England

.....

Windermere is England's largest freshwater lake, situated in the heart of the Lake District National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Windermere is home to rare and protected species, sustains thousands of jobs and is the jewel in the crown of the Lake District National Park, which generates around £2.4 billion in annual tourism revenue and attracts millions of visitors every year from across the UK and beyond.

The lake stretches over 10.5 miles and sits within a 220km² (85 square miles) catchment of interconnected lakes, tarns and rivers, including many nationally and internationally significant water bodies such as Esthwaite Water, Blelham Tarn, Elterwater and Grasmere.

Residents and visitors to Windermere are served by a range of wastewater infrastructure broadly categorised as public and private. Public refers to the ten wastewater treatment works (WwTW), six storm overflows and

network owned and operated by United Utilities. Private infrastructure typically refers to the estimated 1,800 septic tanks and around 90 permitted package treatment plants across the catchment used by properties and businesses.

Windermere remains one of the most environmentally, culturally and economically important landscapes in England, and underpins the Lake District National Park's visitor appeal, which attracts around 17.7 million visitors each year, both nationally and internationally.

The Lake District has played a defining role in shaping environmental consciousness, from the Thirlmere campaign of 1876, where the principle of protecting nature for the nation was first widely argued, to its ongoing influence on global approaches to landscape conservation.

The area has inspired generations of artists, poets and writers, figures such as William Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter, while local scientific institutions continue to advance international understanding of lake ecosystems.

Windermere not only attracts and inspires but supports quality of life for residents and the experience of millions of visitors from around the world. Its health is critical not only to those who live and work here, but to the national landscape it defines.

This unique combination of environmental, cultural, scientific and economic significance places a responsibility on current generations to ensure Windermere is protected and restored for the future.

An iconic natural asset



Windermere is at the heart of the Lake District National Park's visitor economy, which generates **around £2.4 billion** in annual tourism revenue and attracts approximately **17.7 million visitors** annually.



Windermere is England's largest natural lake, and holds around **300 billion litres** of water, enough to fill **120,000** Olympic swimming pools.



The Lake District experiences some of the highest levels of rainfall in England, with some areas averaging **over 2.5 metres** each year, alongside a trend towards wetter winters and drier summers. Extreme rainfall events could be **four times as frequent** by 2080 compared to the 1980s.



The lake sits within a glacially formed landscape of **steep valleys and ancient rock formations**.



Windermere supports **nationally and internationally important** protected freshwater species. These include Arctic charr, Atlantic salmon, sea trout, European eel, white-clawed crayfish and European otter, alongside brook lamprey, river lamprey and bullhead.



The catchment supports **over 20 Sites of Special Scientific Interest**, a Special Area of Conservation and an internationally important wetland site.



The catchment supports **over 60 bird species**. Many of them are sensitive to water quality changes, which can impact their populations and habitats.