

Report from the Windermere Lake User Forum June 2018

Members of the Lake Administration Committee will be aware that elected members of SLDC and appointed members of the LDNPA agreed to a new Plan for Windermere which no longer recognises the Lake User Forum as a Partner.

The members of the Lake User Forum had become increasingly frustrated that the views of lake users were not being acted upon in policies, developments and plans affecting and taking place around the lake over recent years. Investment made into the shore side developments and facilities so often omitted the relatively small requests from the wider and diverse lake users.

This invariable meant that the meetings became more confrontational. Ultimately the decision to exclude the Forum from the partners in the Windermere Plan was not a surprise. However it has created a concern about how the voice of those with interests in the lake can now have their views known. The proposed method of an annual conference and reliance on staff from the two authorities being able to represent the views of thousands of people is not thought to be sufficient. Some representatives retired from the Forum and the remaining members met to review a way forward. The meeting was very positive and it was decided that a new approach should be considered.

At this time the commercial operators, public transport providers, sailors and power boat representatives are considering the formation of a less structured association of lake users. Boat Clubs have expressed an interest in joining such an association should it be created. The wealth of knowledge and diversity of views across differing activities and uses and within the same activities is very complex. The Forum provided valuable knowledge and views on such important issues as the review of the Bye Law, Exemption Policy, Event Registration Scheme and proposed Boat Safety Scheme. It also provided an important role in helpfully holding authorities to account to deliver what they promise.

The reality of lake users is that they do not fall into one category. Many users enjoy diverse activities on the lake. In fact some people or families can participate in sailing, swimming, canoeing and power boating all in one day or on a regular basis. It is hoped that if such an association can be created with multiple strands of interest rather than one chair with representatives for specific interest groups, that this new association will be able to provide access to independent and experienced lake users for the two authorities as their officers take responsibility for implementing the projects within the Lake Windermere Plan.

The plan for the Lake is very limited and focused and shows no links to the other Plan for Windermere and Bowness. These two plans show no links the LDNPA local plan for Windermere, Bowness and Ambleside. Hopefully someone is keeping an overall control on this diverse approach to managing this precious area and keeping the efficiency and costs of administering these various plans relative to their focused topics. There are many aspects of lake use, such as car parking, boat storage, fuel and management of lake use that are no longer part of any plan and it is hoped that these will not remain blind to planning and development considerations by omission.

Kind regards

Carole Shaw
Previous Chair of the terminated Lake User Forum.