



Love Your Lakes Project Evaluation 2011 - 2014





Love Your Lakes is dedicated to raising awareness of the impacts of excessive phosphates on water quality in the Windermere catchment, and highlighting the actions that people can take.

This final report outlines the background, aims and outcomes of the campaign, and some key learnings and recommendations.

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The Issue

Why Love Your Lakes?

Algal blooms are occurring more regularly than they should because too many nutrients, including phosphates, are getting into the lake causing excessive amounts of algae to grow. Blue green algae are toxic and harmful to people, pets and wildlife so it's essential that we do what we can to reduce algal incidents.

What is phosphate?

Phosphate is a naturally occurring compound derived from phosphorus. However, it is also commercially processed and used in some cleaning products and fertilisers.

Algal blooms are bad news for lake users and the environment.

Walkers – algal blooms are unsightly and spoil the experience of walking around our lake.

Pets – dogs' health can be affected by toxic algal blooms.

Swimmers – outdoor swimming is a growing activity that could be threatened if water quality is not up to scratch

Arctic charr – excessive algal growth stops sunlight reaching other plants in the lake causing them to die. As the dead plants decompose, oxygen in the water is used up – bad news for any fish and animals living there. The Arctic Charr is only found in 8 lakes in England – we need to keep Windermere lovely for this special fish.

Business – Our local lakes attract up to 15 million visitors each year, and the health of our lakes directly relates to the health of the tourism industry. If Windermere turns green with algae we will have a job persuading visitors to come here!



Where does phosphate come from?

More than half of the phosphate entering the Windermere catchment comes from local sewerage systems, septic tanks and grey water. This phosphate comes mostly from dishwashing detergents and commercial laundry products (it is banned in domestic laundry detergents).

Some phosphate is removed from the wastewater that goes through sewage treatment works, but not all. The wastewater from septic tanks does not go through sewage treatment works, and there are nearly 2000 properties in the catchment area with septic tanks.

Agriculture is the second largest source of phosphate pollution. The overuse of fertiliser can lead to phosphate being washed off farmland into streams and lakes. Applying too much fertiliser to gardens can also lead to phosphate ending up in the lake.

Celebrating
the start of the
campaign at South
Lakeland Parks



"The lake is crucial to the strength of our business. One of our priorities is doing what we can to improve water quality."

Nevil Jeffery, The Low Wood Bay Resort manager

The Solutions

Farmers are addressing these problems through Catchment Sensitive Farming and agri-environment schemes which ensure that phosphate is not used in excess and farm manures are stored properly.

Householders and business owners can make a difference too by following these 4 simple actions that address the main sources of phosphate from properties:

- 1. Choose phosphate-free dishwashing products (and laundry if commercial)**
- 2. Maintain septic tanks**
- 3. Check drain connections**
- 4. Follow organic gardening practices**

Our Aims

Given that there are simple solutions to this pesky problem, the aim of the Love Your Lakes campaign was to improve the water quality of Windermere by reducing the amount of phosphate entering the lake.

We engaged with businesses, residents and visitors in order to achieve this aim. Our main objectives were:

1. To raise awareness of the issue;
2. To inspire businesses, residents and visitors to get involved and take action;
3. To celebrate business and residents that Love Your Lakes.



Outcomes - Businesses and Visitors

Accommodation providers make up a significant proportion of the properties in the Windermere catchment, so we worked with business owners and managers individually and through networks to achieve lake-friendly outcomes and to pass on the important messages to visitors.

Here are some of our vital statistics:

2000 leaflets delivered to raise awareness of the issue

142 businesses contacted to spread the word

119 businesses given bespoke support

600 laundry cards distributed to pass the message on to guests

1 business training event attended by 23 businesses

3 business drop in events

30 businesses took the P-free pledge and became Love your Lakes Approved

100s of leaflets were displayed in Tourist Information Centres so that visitors can find out more



30 local tourism businesses have signed the P-free vow



Ensuring suppliers stocked p-free products was a priority

“As a result of the work of Love Your Lakes.... Hapimag Burnside Park are encouraging our guests from all over the world to appreciate our lakes and to change their habits for the better!”

Lisa Holden, Hapimag Burnside Park

A lot of work went on behind the scenes to make this possible:

- We worked with 2 major supply chain businesses in the area to ensure that P-free options are available to businesses
- We held 5 stalls at stakeholder or partner events
- Information about the Love Your Lakes campaign was hosted on 17 other websites
- Love Your Lakes business actions are now recognized in both GTBS and CBEN award criteria, spreading the word further and helping business to get recognition for the great work that they do.
- And finally, we couldn't have done this without the help of 7 fully trained volunteers who helped us to spread the



Outcomes - Local Residents

Even though EU legislation banned phosphate from domestic laundry products in 2013, there are still several sources of phosphates from homes to be tackled. These are dishwashing detergent, wrongly connected drains, poorly maintained septic tanks, and garden fertiliser.

We've provided advice and information to residents through materials, social media, press and events including:

- 15,380 leaflets to homes in the catchment
- 4 local school visits to inspire future generations
- 7 community presentations
- 9 community events attended including the Great North Swim
- 2,000 "Property Packs" to properties with a septic tank
- 24 press releases to print, digital and broadcast media
- 100s of posts to our Facebook page
- 240 tweets to our 1,171 twitter followers
- 47 posters in community locations
- 400 leaflets for new residents via 5 local estate agents



Swimmers and spectators visited our stall at the Great North Swim



Fun and informative leaflets helped to engage local residents with the issue

"As a result of the work of Love Your Lakes, I have become a lot more vigilant about the products I use in and around my home, and I now use chemical free or environmentally friendly alternatives. I have also encouraged my friends and family to do the same."

Sue Mimm, Love Your Lakes Volunteer



Learning and Best Practice

The Love Your Lakes campaign raised awareness of the issues and influenced action among businesses, residents and visitors. Here we highlight some lessons learned and recommendations for best practice.

Businesses

While most businesses recognize the importance of environmental sustainability, financial value is often of more immediate concern. Businesses are likely to have a preferred supplier and be reluctant to switch. We decided to work with popular suppliers to help them to stock and promote a P-free option.

The challenges and opportunities faced when working with businesses vary between small and large businesses. In smaller business the owner may be easier to contact and also more able to make changes within the business once they have been helped to focus on the issue and understand it. Scheduled business visits enable this to happen, and many owners appreciate the opportunity to put time aside to address a specific issue.

In larger businesses, one of the challenges is making contact with an employee with the authority to make changes. This varies greatly between businesses and could be maintenance, housekeeping, procurement or marketing staff. Larger businesses often recognise the marketing advantages of operating sustainably and having marketing materials on offer can be a significant draw.

Given that the tourism industry relies on an element of indulgence, businesses can be wary of talking about sustainability to their guests, but there are lots of great examples of how to get it right. Providing businesses with marketing materials, copy and images is one way to tackle this.



Love Your Lakes staff and volunteers worked with local laundry suppliers such as Berendsen to promote P-free options.

"Express Cleaning & Hygiene Supplies has been an avid supporter of Love Your Lakes. All of us live and work in the Lake District so we all have a common interest and responsibility to protect our livelihood and improve our local environment."

Brian Robb, Express Cleaning & Hygiene Supplies

Visitors

Visitors often assume that businesses are already doing their best to protect the destination, so it is important to help businesses to show that they are doing this. The Love Your Lakes Approved scheme gave businesses something tangible to share with their guests.



Marketing materials like this certificate and sticker are a fun way to start a conversation with visitors about water quality issues.

Residents

There are misconceptions that P-free products have lower cleaning ability. By giving out free samples we gave residents the chance to experience the quality of the product for themselves.

We found particular success in working with school children through the wonders of 'pester power'.

We heard from several people who had changed their behaviours at home or in business because their children were inspired by the messages of the campaign.

Engaging
with children
was a great
way to relay
messages to
homeowners



Looking Forward

In order to keep Windermere clean, healthy and beautiful for the future we need to continue to raise awareness and inspire action. Proceeds from fundraising events and Visitor Giving will be used to deliver continued support, advice and information for local businesses, residents and visitors. We aim to achieve this through the continuation of our communications strategy, which includes:

- press coverage of business and community champions;
- top tips for residents;
- continued presence on social media;
- cross promotion through industry partners.

We will also continue to update our information and advice and reprint materials when necessary, and we will continue to highlight the key messages to our tourism business member organisations.

Acknowledgements

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“As a result of the work of Love Your Lakes... the ecology of one of the most beautiful stretches of water can be secured for future generations to enjoy and use Windermere as much as I have.”

Paul McDougall, Elder Grove Bed and Breakfast

Windermere Reflections was a 3 year partnership project supported by Heritage Lottery Fund and four core funding partners; the Environment Agency, the National Trust, Lake District National Park Authority and the University of Cumbria. The programme aimed to bring long term benefit to the area and increasing the understanding of environmental issues within the Windermere catchment.



Love Your Lakes

For further Love Your Lakes information call
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