

Wildlife Reserves Development Policy

Revised for inclusion in Management Plans



Scope of this Policy

This policy sets out the views of the Scottish Wildlife Trust in relation to the acquisition, management and disposal of areas of land recognised as Trust Wildlife Reserves.

Policy Headline

The Scottish Wildlife Trust defines the purpose of its reserve network as follows:

“The Scottish Wildlife Trust will acquire and maintain a network of wildlife reserves to safeguard a broad representation of wildlife found throughout Scotland, and to act as examples to others and for the public benefit including enjoyment, information and education.”

Collectively the Trust reserves will meet this definition, although not all of the functions stated above will be found on every reserve. The overriding function of the reserves should be for the protection and enhancement of Scottish wildlife.

Management of the Trust reserves should reflect the wider local, regional and national habitats and species requirements, contributing to land management and policy initiatives which support the conservation of Scottish wildlife at an ecosystem scale, in line with the Trust’s vision of A Living Landscape.

Rationale

1. Wildlife needs a place to live. The system of wildlife reserves, maintained by the Trust, other non-government organisations and individuals, supplements and compliments the statutory site network (SSSI, SAC, SPA, RAMSAR) and land managed for wildlife in the wider countryside (includes Local Nature Conservation Sites, semi-natural areas on farms, private land etc.). Where possible, working with neighbouring landowners and other organisations, the Trust will consider how its reserves can benefit habitat range and species populations at the national, regional and ecosystem scales.
2. The Trust considers that the acquisition of reserves gives such areas of land security, continuity of management, a high standard of care and control of land uses in favour of wildlife whilst providing it with hands-on experience of management which establishes the Trust’s credibility in practical wildlife conservation. This knowledge can then be used by the Trust to encourage others to adopt similar practices, either directly or indirectly by influencing government policy.
3. In order for the Trust to fulfil the purpose of the network as defined above it is required to acquire and dispose of reserves from time to time. The Trust currently manages 120 reserves covering approximately 20,000ha.
4. The Trust’s reserves provide places where people can see, learn about, and enjoy wildlife in a controlled environment. They also provide a focus for Trust members and activities and an opportunity for the Trust to encourage more people to understand and engage with the values of the organisation.
5. In order for the Trust to maintain a network of reserves, to the required standard, that fulfils the defined purpose it has to consider the acquisition and disposal of reserves within a clearly defined policy and procedure. This procedure should be based on an objective assessment of the potential reserve, its intended purpose and its impact on the organisation and the existing reserve network.

The Reserve Network

6. The Trust will consider acquisitions and disposals, via application of the approved policy, within the context of the overall reserve network. The network should aim to be broadly representative of all forms of Scottish wildlife and be managed and maintained to agreed objectives and standards. These objectives and standards should be clearly defined within a costed management plan.

Policy Guidelines for Management

17. All Trust reserves, held under any tenure, will be managed in accordance with a ten year management plan. The reserve management plan (RMP) will be produced within 12 months of initial acquisition. All management decisions and activity will be undertaken in accordance with the objectives and actions as stated within the RMP. A risk assessment, allied to the RMP will be reviewed annually.
18. The RMP will define how the reserve can link and contribute to wildlife conservation initiatives at the local, regional and national scale.
19. The Trust will consult with tenants, neighbouring landowners, active Trust members, statutory agencies and other stakeholders in the preparation of the RMP where appropriate.
20. The Trust will seek to implement the necessary actions required to meet the objectives as stated within the RMP. The ability of the Trust to undertake these actions will be dependent on the availability of resources. Notwithstanding this the Trust will maintain its reserves to a minimum standard, defined in the RMP, which will include implementation of all necessary legal and health and safety requirements.
21. The Trust will seek to manage its reserves in accordance with best practice. Where it is in a position to do so, the Trust will use its reserves to demonstrate best practice or innovation to others.
22. The Trust will seek to maintain an inventory of habitats and species which occur on its reserves. These data will be managed and shared in accordance with the principles outlined by the National Biodiversity Network. The Trust retains the right to withhold any information relating to its operations or habitats and species which it deems sensitive or which could lead to a detrimental impact on the organisation or the wildlife on its reserves.
23. The Trust will seek to maximise the value of its reserves to the local community. This will be done by facilitating access, encouraging local member involvement and supporting local businesses and contractors where possible and within European procurement laws.
24. Unless specifically stated all wildlife reserves are open to the public. Where facilities are provided the Trust retains the right to levy an appropriate fee. Due to operational, health and safety or conservation related matters access may be restricted to reserves or specific areas of reserves at certain times. This is in accordance with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
25. The Trust will rigorously defend its reserves from any activity or development which is counter to the objectives of the Trust or those specifically stated within the RMP.
26. The Trust will expect to receive market rate remuneration for any services, sporting rights, agricultural and commercial practices undertaken on its reserves. These activities can only be undertaken where they do not conflict with the objectives for the site stated within the RMP.

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