

ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES

A Statement

The National Trust has prepared a Statement of Environmental Principles, based on the core purpose of the Trust laid down in the 1907 National Trust Act, viz. "the promotion of the permanent preservation of lands and tenements of historic interest or natural beauty...for the benefit of the nation".

The Trust recognises that it should promote the protection of the environment and, in particular, strive to:

- 1. prevent avoidable damage caused by human impact on the environment;**
- 2. protect the Trust's long-term interests from environmental damage;**
- 3. be an exemplar of good environmental practice.**

The Trust has functioned as a conservation organisation since its incorporation in 1895; and is now assessing its work as an **environmental** organisation.

An internal Environmental Audit was initiated in 1990 to review all the Trust's policies and practices for their actual and potential environmental impacts.

This Audit reported in 1992 and in consequence the Trust has committed itself to a full time Environmental Practices programme in order to attempt to minimise the environmental impacts arising from all its activities.

Priority areas for changes in policy and practice and for further evaluation are:

- * energy conservation;
- * water conservation;
- * waste minimisation and re-use;
- * pollution control (principally sewage and other effluents);
- * transport;
- * agriculture and land management (especially soil protection);
- * building restoration, construction and management;
- * office management.

Training in environmental awareness and detailed environmental management skills is fundamental to this initiative.

The Trust has already invested considerably in improving standards of property management for energy conservation, sewage treatment, control of farm effluents and water conservation.

Integral with this investment has been an innovatory, environmentally-benign approach to problem-solving in many related areas of management, including:

- * pre-emptive waste minimisation
- * whole farm plans

- * energy awareness training & conservation measures
- * water conservation initiatives
- * a risk assessment for private water supplies
- * buffer zones
- * soil conservation measures
- * peatland conservation and peat substitutes
- * sustainable tourism projects
- * green buildings
- * catchment management
- * promotion of non-car access to the countryside
- * renewable energy generation
- * dry compost toilet systems
- * reedbed and wetland dirty water treatment systems

The Trust makes representations to Government, local authority and statutory agencies to promote conservation and environmental management objectives.

The Trust has an active Education Department which organises events and projects and produces information for schools and for adult groups: Environmental Education is a key component.

The Trust is involved with a wide range of other partners in environmental projects and research - NGOs, business, University Departments, professional institutes, Government agencies - at both UK and European levels.

The Trust is committed to the development and demonstration of best environmental practice in all its operations. A programme for implementing this has been prepared and is regularly updated.

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May 1995 (7/10/97) (26/1/98) (12/2/99)

Environmental Impacts and the National Trust - an Overview

Priority Areas	Environmental Impacts	National Trust Action
Buildings	<p>As well as having many historic buildings in its care, the National Trust is also responsible for a large number of other structures, including workshops, offices, cottages, restaurants and shops. The way the Trust builds and maintains these has an impact on the environment. The choice of materials can affect energy efficiency (and CO₂ output) and the wider environment. For instance, insulation materials can be made from rockwool which requires a lot of energy for its manufacture, or from recycled paper or sheep's wool.</p>	<p>New buildings (such as visitor centres) are designed to be as environmentally benign as possible by making use of passive solar design, super efficient insulation, water and energy saving appliances etc. The Trust tries to ensure that all materials used in building projects are from as benign a source as possible. The building department holds stocks of reclaimed materials for reuse.</p>
Energy	<p>All energy sources (except some renewable sources) release carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere. CO₂ is a green house gas and is implicated in climate change. Changing climates are affecting the species, habitats and buildings in the Trust's care.</p>	<p>The Trust is aiming to reduce its energy use. Efficient appliances, energy monitoring and stewardship projects (which increase accountability for the amount of energy used) can reduce consumption. For example, approximately 13,000 low energy light bulbs have been installed at Trust properties as an energy saving measure.</p>
Transport	<p>The Trust is increasingly concerned about the adverse impacts of transport, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • congestion from visitors' cars, e.g. at Dovedale and Studland Bay; • nitrogen from vehicle exhausts harming heath land and other low nutrient habitats; • car parks creating a visual intrusion into the landscape; • the land required for visitor car parks affecting the historical and archaeological integrity of a property e.g. Dyrham Park; • new roads being built across Trust land. 	<p>National Trust members challenged the Trust at the 1995 AGM to reduce car borne visits from a level of 90% to 60% by 2020. In order to achieve this, the Trust is working on a number of initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better access by public transport; • improved facilities for cyclists; • a review of car park provision; • fuel-efficient staff vehicles designed with the potential for recycling.

Waste	<p>Waste impacts on the environment in a number of ways: loss of valuable resources, need for landfill space, release of methane. Litter can be harmful to wildlife (mice and other small mammals can get caught in discarded cans and bottles, cattle can choke on plastics etc). Pollution from industrial processes and other types of waste can contaminate water. The Trust has to pay to dispose of waste created by visitors and staff and any waste that is illegally left on its land.</p>	<p>The Trust is trying to reduce the amount of waste it produces, especially packaging waste generated by its shops and restaurants. Garden waste is composted, and efforts are being made to minimise kitchen waste. Litter bins are not provided at many properties as visitors are asked to take their litter home. The Trust is currently investigating the impacts of dog faeces on its land, as there are concerns that it can lead to nutrient enrichment in habitats that are naturally low in nutrients. This can affect plant life. There are also concerns over health issues.</p>
Water	<p>Water is a key issue for the Trust, with many of its properties vulnerable to climate change and water shortages. Private water supplies, water supply charges, abstraction licences, river effluent dilution, farm irrigation, ground shrinkage and subsidence can all be affected by changes in the availability of water.</p> <p>The Trust has over 4,000 septic tanks and private sewage treatment systems which all need careful management to ensure compliance with discharge consents (limits set by the Environment Agency for suspended solids and BOD) to reduce the risk of pollution.</p>	<p>Current initiatives are targeted at reducing consumption and protecting supplies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spray & auto off taps, waterless urinals, dry compost toilets, cistern misers and flow restrictors (for staff and visitor facilities); rain water collection for garden use; the 'Private Water Supplies Manual' offers guidance which helps to protect supplies; low water consumption appliances can help to eke out supply; inspections for compliance with water bye-laws; monitor meters regularly to help identify leaks.

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September 1999