

# South West Lakes Trust

## Environmental and Sustainable Recreation Policy



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*Protecting & conserving the natural environment*

*Providing facilities and opportunities for leisure,  
accessible to all, regardless of age or ability*

*Education of the public about wildlife and  
conservation*

*Conserving items and buildings of archaeological  
and historic interest*

## **1. Introduction**

South West Lakes Trust was set up in the year 2000 for the benefit of the general public to provide and enhance sustainable recreation, public access and nature conservation on and around inland waters in the South West of England. It aims to protect and enhance the environment and promote the social importance and health-giving opportunities available to the whole community.

The lakes and reservoirs provide havens for wildlife and sites for visitors to enjoy informal and active recreation in beautiful countryside.

This Policy aims, within economic limits to safeguard and improve the environment for all - habitats, flora, fauna, visitors, employees and volunteers; and to protect the countryside for future generations.

## **2. Overview**

South West Lakes Trust and its subsidiaries consider the environmental consequences of any actions and proposed actions in carrying out its activities. The Trust will monitor and review its performance continuously in order to contribute to and support environmental improvement.

The employees of the Trust are an important resource. The Trustees are committed to providing a safe working environment with the emphasis on sustainable working practices, recycling and minimisation of waste and pollution.

Suitability of a recreational or public access use at a particular site is assessed by the following factors: conservation designation; safety; compatibility with environmental factors prevailing at a site; compatibility with other established recreational activities/public access; requirements for built facilities; noise and light pollution, air pollution, potential water pollution; demand and of course all this is subject to compatibility with water supply operations.

Wherever possible natural building materials will be used from local sources and consideration will be given to the easy removal of a building when its purpose is fulfilled. Demolition materials will generally be incorporated on site, if landfill can safely be avoided.

Green audits will be carried out at all installations to ensure that best environmental practices are being employed.

The Trust will seek to minimise the use of energy and develop alternative sources, including renewable energy, the use of natural light, solar panels and incorporation of high thermal insulation where practicable. Special attention will be paid to the efficiency of buildings and vehicles.

IT will be used as an alternative to paper in internal and external communications, wherever practicable, and all waste paper used in the Trust's offices and other premises will be recycled. The Trust's publications and stationery will be obtained from environmentally friendly sources, again wherever practicable.

### **3. Environmental Policy**

South West Lakes Trust takes all possible steps to protect, maintain and enhance a sustainable and healthy environment.

We are committed to:

- Conserving our natural resources by minimising negative impacts through sustainable management and education
- Protecting and enhancing habitats and species
- Minimising pollution by reducing the use of harmful substances
- Reducing, reusing and recycling
- Complying with relevant environmental legislation and regulations
- Purchasing local products and services wherever possible and feasible in line with our sustainable procurement policy

We will seek to achieve a safe and sustainable environment for future generations and for South West Lakes Trust.

### **4. Sites**

South West Lakes Trust manages 46 sites on behalf of South West Water the terms of which are dictated by a management agreement.

The sites range from one acre waters with narrow strips of surrounding land to reservoirs of over 500 acres surrounded by hundreds of acres of land.

Within Devon, Cornwall and West Somerset the sites vary from high moorland to urban fringe and everything in between and habitats include semi-natural ancient woodland, Culm grassland, valley mire, wet woodland, lowland meadow and heathland.

Some of the fauna on the sites include Biodiversity Action Plan species such as Greater Horseshoe bat, dormouse and otter and others contain rich bird, invertebrate and small mammal life.

Many of the sites have designated nature reserves (special protection zones) and several have statutory conservation designations such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR), many of the sites are also designated as County Wildlife Sites and fall within National Parks.

Within the Trust's management are five Angling and Watersports Centres which offer a variety of activities for people of all ages and abilities. There are also an additional 31 angling waters (a combination of coarse and trout). The majority of sites have informal public access facilities such as footpaths with several also having play and picnic areas.

The following table shows the facilities and conservation designations in place at the sites within the Trust's management.

	Watersports	Angling	Camping	Model Boating	Car Parking	Play Area	Bird Hide/s	Horse riding	Cycling	Tea-room/refreshment	Visitor Centre	Toilets	Wildlife Protection	SSSI / SAC / SPA*	National Park	Woodlands	Picnic Areas	County Wildlife Site	EPS**	Local Nature Reserve	Footpaths
Angling Blue = coarse Green = trout																					
Argal Reservoir		Blue		Red	Red	Red	Red			3		Red	Red			Red	Red	Red			Red
Avon Dam		Green			Red							D			Red		Red				Red
Boscathnoe Reservoir		Blue																			
Burrator Reservoir		Green			Red			Red		3			5			Red	Red	Red			Red
Bussow Reservoir		Blue																			
Butterbrook Reservoir		Green													Red						
Bystock Ponds (DWT)																		Red	Red		
Cargenwyn Reservoirs																					
College Reservoirs													Red			Red		Red	Red		
Colliford Lake		Green			Red		Red						Red				Red				Red
Countess Wear (DWT)														Red							Red
Crafthole Reservoir		Blue																			
Crowdy Reservoir		Green			Red		Red						Red			Red					Red
Darracott Reservoir		Blue																			
Drift Reservoir	1	Green			Red		Red						Red								
Exeter Canal																					
Fernworthy Reservoir		Green			Red					3		Red	Red		Red	Red	Red	Red			Red
Gammaton Reservoirs		Green																Red	Red		
Jennetts Reservoir		Blue																			
Kennick Reservoir		Green											Red		Red	Red					
Lopwell Dam					Red		Red	Red		3			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red			Red
Mary Tavy/Morwellham	1														Red						Red
Melbury Reservoir		Blue																			
Meldon Reservoir		Green			Red							D	Red		Red		Red				Red
Old Mill Reservoir		Blue										4	Red			Red				Red	
Porth Reservoir		Blue			Red		Red				Red	Red	Red			Red				Red	Red
River Dart, Buckfastleigh		Green																			
River Dart, Totnes	1	Green																			
River Barle, Dulverton		Green													Red						
River Exe, Tiverton		Green																			
River Tamar, Launceston		Green																			
Seaton Borrow Pit (ED)																					Red
Roadford Lake	Red	Green	Red		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Siblyback Lake	Red	Green	Red		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Slade (Lower)		Blue																			
Slade (Upper)		Blue																			
Squabmoor Reservoir		Blue			Red																Red
Stithians Lake	Red	Green	Red		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Tamar Lake (Lower)		Blue			Red		Red				Red	Red	Red					Red	Red	Red	Red
Tamar Lake (Upper)	Red	Blue	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red			Red	Red	Red	Red			Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red

Angling Blue = coarse Green = trout	Watersports	Angling	Camping	Model Boating	Car Parking	Play Area	Bird Hide/s	Horse riding	Cycling	Tea-room/refreshment	Visitor Centre	Toilets	Wildlife Protection Zone	SSSI / SAC / SPA*	National Park	Woodlands	Picnic Areas	County Wildlife Site	EPS**	Local Nature Reserve	Footpaths	
	Tavistock Canal	1																				
Tottiford Reservoir																						
Trenchford Reservoir										3												
Venford Reservoir												D										
Wimbleball Lake																						
Wistlandpound Reservoir	2										W	W				F						

DWT – leased to Devon Wildlife Trust

ED – leased to East Devon District Council

\* SSSI = Sites of Special Scientific Interest / SAC = Special Area of Conservation /

SPA = Special Protection Area (Statutory designations)

\*\* = European Protected Species (confirmed presence)

1 = Limited activities licenced to third party only

2 = Activities licenced to Calvert Trust Exmoor only

3 = Mobile refreshment licence

W = Discover Wistlandpound Project

D = Dartmoor National Park

F = Forestry Commission

4 = New compost toilets on trial for anglers

5 = Burrator Quarry SSSI – Geological designation

Where a site has a statutory conservation designation such as SSSI or lies within a National Park then conservation takes precedence, where there is a local designation such as a LNR or wildlife protection zone conservation takes precedence in that particular area.

The Trust monitors its sites continuously and can amend or extend internal designations as required. It may be that an area is extended for a temporary basis such as during the winter.

Many of the reserves have limited public access or non at all and dogs are often not permitted. In other areas quiet recreation such as bird watching, fishing or walking may be permissible, each site is looked at individually and a simple interaction matrix is used to ascertain which activities are compatible on which sites. These individual charts are included within each site management plan.

## 5. Environmental Key Performance Indicators

On a monthly basis the Trust records the following data, this data is analysed annually and targets are set for following years.

- Green audits completed
- Carbon emission reduction<sup>1</sup>
- Waste management and recycling
- Water conservation
- Percentage of eligible land in agri-environment schemes
- Percentage of native woodlands stable/improving
- Percentage of ancient monuments stable/improving
- New conservation based projects
- Education
- Environmentally friendly products & services (see Sustainable Procurement Policy)
- Habitat and species conservation

The key performance indicators provide a mechanism to record and monitor the Trust's environmental commitments; however each target requires action plans and responsible members of staff to implement actions.

## 6. Climate Impact Action Group

In order to achieve its Environmental Key Performance Indicators the Trust has established a Climate Impact Action Group. The priorities of this group are to assess the Trust's activities and their impact on the climate and in turn how climate variability affects these activities.

The group was formed in 2009 with an initial focus on the reduction of carbon emissions. Using the monitoring system employed for the KPI's the team will set new reduction figures and write an action plan (to be in place for 2010) to reduce consumption of fuel, water, electricity, gas and oil as well as look to improve further its recycling system, local procurement and its current Green Tourism Business Scheme<sup>2</sup> awards.

The second phase (2011) will consider various climatic scenarios and assess how each variation may impact on the Trust's activities be they habitat and species management, provision of watersports, footpath routes or employee working conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Monitored through monthly mileage, fuel, electricity, gas and oil consumption

<sup>2</sup> In 2008 the following sites were awarded Gold – Wimbleball, Stithians and Lakeside, Roadford; Silver - Tamar Lakes and Lidn Park (HQ)

## **7. Biodiversity and Conservation**

Each site managed by the Trust has an integrated management plan. Many of these plans are currently being updated and include extended Phase One surveys, habitat detail and appropriate management prescriptions.

The Management Plans set objectives for the site at five yearly intervals and include both operational and ecological objectives. It is the responsibility of the Conservation Team to ensure that the ecological objectives are fulfilled. Ecological objectives range from species monitoring to scrub control and grass cutting regimes to hedgerow restoration.

Habitats that the Trust manages are wide ranging and include Culm grassland, marshy grassland, native woodland, lowland meadow, coniferous woodland and saltmarsh. Many species make these habitats their home and there is confirmed presence of many Biodiversity Action Plan and European Protected Species such as a variety of bats, dormouse, otter, Marsh Fritillary butterfly, Barn Owl and Nightjar.

Besides the ecological objectives determined by the extended Phase One survey the Trust has a Biodiversity Action Plan, which is available from its website and has also embarked upon a two-year jointly funded Biodiversity Project with South West Water (Oct 2008 – September 2010).

This project employs a Biodiversity Officer to establish baseline data and to implement appropriate management for one BAP species and five BAP habitats;

- Otter
- Rhös pasture
- Lowland meadow
- Ponds
- Heathland
- Wet Woodland

## **8. Woodland Management**

Of the 5,000 hectares of land that the Trust manages just less than 1,000 hectares are forestry. In managing its woodlands the Trust will wherever economically viable

- incorporate areas of economic and sustainable forestry using appropriate species
- use species with a recognised timber use (both broadleaved and conifer) and support good silvicultural practices
- demonstrate quality of design and landscape planning in external, internal and edge design
- maximise opportunities for positive managements of non-woodland features such as archaeology
- reinstate ancient woodland
- take opportunities to reinstate heathland areas with high conservation value
- develop conservation opportunities
- provide local employment
- market locally
- develop markets for green wood and by-products from small woodlands
- apply, where appropriate, for woodland grants to assist with the provision of woodland maintenance, planning, public access and conservation

## **9. Archaeology and Historic Buildings**

Many of the sites in the Trust's management feature archaeological features and historic buildings this is particularly so at Burrator Reservoir which is host to over 150 archaeological sites. Some of these sites are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings.

It is vital that these features are protected for the future and they do not become overgrown with vegetation or damaged during forestry operations and therefore Burrator has an individual archaeology site management plan which has been drawn up with assistance from a local expert.

The Trust recognises that there are also many features at other sites including Lopwell Dam, Fernworthy Reservoir and Venford Reservoir. These features are noted within the site management plan and prescribed objectives are included in the five year management plan.

Prior to flooding the Wolf Valley where Roadford Lake now lies a five year excavation programme was carried out and much research collated by Devon County Council and Exeter Museums. Some of this information is interpreted in the Roadford Lake Visitor Centre whose design is based upon a traditional Devon Roundhouse.

## **10. Education**

South West Lakes Trust provides a variety of educational opportunities to enable visitors to learn about wildlife and conservation. These opportunities include...

- Organised school visits
- Themed guided walks, for example bat and winter bird walks
- Specialist presentations
- Rural skills courses such as coppicing and hedge-laying
- Interpretation at key locations
- Website
- Visitor centres
- Conservation volunteering opportunities

## 11. Sustainable Recreation

The Trust manages the land and water in its care to provide a wide range of safe recreational opportunities for the people of the South West and its visitors.

The charity is committed to an ambitious programme of improving existing facilities to provide better opportunities for recreation and public access.

When building new facilities the Trust will ensure that they are accessible to all and where practical convert existing facilities to provide easier access.

Formal activities such as watersports are encouraged at locations where there are adequate supporting facilities and can be provided under the management of suitably qualified employees and recognised training establishments.

Acceptable active recreations are currently:

- Angling
- Sailing
- Windsurfing
- Canoeing
- Rowing
- Pedaloes
- Model boating
- Diving (under licence)
- Raft building
- Water-skiing (limited)
- Walking
- Horse riding
- Cycling
- Orienteering
- Kite flying
- Archery
- Climbing
- Ball games
- Play areas

Other powered craft except for safety boats, training and wheelyboats are not permitted on the water.

Not every activity is permissible at every site for health and safety or environmental reasons. Other activities may be considered where they are approved by a National Governing Body of sport, can be shown to be safe in the context of the Lakes and have no environmental detriment.

Partnerships have been and will continue to be developed with local communities, councils and organisations in order to maximise the potential for provision of recreation for children and adults.

As a charity providing recreational opportunities SWLT provides subsidised formal activities for many children and people with disabilities through partnership and with local organisations.

The Trust will make use of forested areas as additional amenity areas with public access wherever practicable and will apply for appropriate grant funding in order to achieve this.

**In essence South West Lakes Trust's sustainable recreation will...**

- assist people in leading healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature
- contribute to the conservation, protection and restoration of habitats
- be based upon sustainable production and consumption
- ensure development and environmental protection are synonymous
- create equal employment opportunities
- respect UK and European laws protecting the environment

(Adapted from WTTC/WTO 1995 Principles for sustainable tourism development)