



# The National Trust for Scotland

## A POLICY FOR LEARNING

2006 - 2009

### 1. **Background**

The National Trust for Scotland is the conservation charity that protects and promotes Scotland's natural and cultural heritage for present and future generations to enjoy.

The Trust is Scotland's largest voluntary conservation organisation, with over 270,000 members, 498 permanent staff, 885 seasonal staff and approximately 2,500 volunteers. It has over 116 properties in its care, including over 75,631 hectares of countryside. Over one and a half million visitors are recorded to Trust properties each year, and countless thousands visit the countryside properties. The Trust cares for a great diversity of properties, including mountains, coastlines, islands, woodlands, battlefields and historic sites, gardens, castles, mansions and industrial heritage.

### 2. **Aims**

The Trust aims to offer the widest possible access to the properties in its care while ensuring their conservation. Its management of these important elements of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage provides an extensive resource of source material suitable for all sectors of the education community. The education department's main function is to facilitate access to the Trust's resources for educational purposes thus promoting their conservation to learners of all ages inspiring them to learn and care about Scotland's cultural and natural heritage.

### 3. **Key Principles**

Certain key principles underpin all of our education and interpretation work. These will guide our actions and ensure the standards and quality to which we aspire. These key principles encompass our work in both Education and Interpretation and while they may differ in emphasis for each distinct area they will always contribute to and support the Trust's Policy for Learning.

#### **4. Education Principles**

*Education is a continuous life-long process. What we learn in the classroom is but a small part of the knowledge each one of us will acquire in a lifetime. The resources in the care of the National Trust for Scotland should be available to learners of all ages and interests and the Trust should offer the widest possible access to these resources.*

1. Education is an investment activity and should support the long term aims of the Trust
2. Supporting access, enjoyment and education at the properties managed by the Trust is the prime function of the education section
3. The education strategy should support and be integral to the NTS operational planning process
4. All education work should support our conservation work while allowing the widest possible access to the properties in our care
5. Our education programmes should aim to be as inclusive as possible and should support learners of all levels and backgrounds.
6. Regional Education Officers will support property staff, lead regional based projects and will also support national strategies and projects
7. All NTS staff involved in education plus appointed contractors should operate safe, systems of work having particular regard for the safety of learners while they are at Trust properties.
8. The educational programmes on offer at our properties should be assured in their quality.
9. Outreach programmes should be developed that will enable us to engage with learners and communities who may not be able to visit Trust properties. Different regions will have different balances between property based work and outreach.
10. All learners regardless of age and circumstance have a right to access the educational resources managed by the Trust

#### **5. Interpretation principles**

*Interpretation is the process of communicating messages and stories about our cultural and natural heritage to an audience, providing them with enjoyment, inspiration and a wider understanding of our environment*

1. The Trust should interpret the unique significance and stories of properties in our care
2. The interpretive approach should be inclusive and accessible to a wide audience regardless of ages, ability, background and interests
3. Interpretation should respect the feel of place and the tangible and intangible conservation values
4. Interpretation should cater for our visitors' needs and provide them with an enjoyable experience
5. Interpretive facilities and programmes should be based on best practice interpretive theory and be delivered through creative and innovative design and high production values
6. Interpretation requires appropriate staff skills, knowledge and professional expertise and the provision of adequate resources
7. Interpretation should be based upon accurate up-to-date research and a thorough understanding of the heritage resource
8. Interpretation should raise public awareness of the Trust's values and conservation work

## **6. Rationale**

*Education is a key activity for the Trust and all staff have an important supporting role to play.*

It is important that the Trust has a structured, strategic approach to education and has agreed common policies that will be understood and promoted by all staff regardless of position. Education within the Trust is not something to be delivered solely by Education Department staff. Every property manager, guide, gardener or ranger has an educational capability and responsibility and should be supported by the education department.

*Through a strategic approach to the development and provision of interpretation the Education department will contribute to the overall quality of the visitor's experience and hence the success of the Trust.*

It is vital that the Trust's properties have a consistently high standard of interpretive material in place. A rolling programme of maintenance and upgrade must also be in place for all properties in the Trust's care. In order to provide for upgrade and replacement while catering for the needs of new properties a strategic approach to its provision is necessary.

*Education should be an enjoyable and enabling experience*

The current Corporate Plan highlights 'Enjoyment and Learning'. Education should be an enjoyable activity and the Trust with its diversity of properties provides an opportunity for a variety of innovative educational and interpretive activities. The method of delivery will vary enormously according to location, target group and educational aims. Conservation goes hand in hand with education, and the Trust aims to provide learners of all ages and backgrounds with an engaging insight into the natural and cultural heritage of Scotland. The Trust has a role in developing informed attitudes and the visitor experience should always be positive - all staff have an important role to play in ensuring this.

*The education department has an advocacy role to play in raising awareness of current conservation issues.*

As a conservation organisation it is important that the Trust's educational activities raise an awareness of environmental issues such as climate change, sustainability, biodiversity and countryside management as well as the more familiar history-based 'people in the past' topics. It is important to raise awareness of *Why* we conserve as well as *How* we do it. Opportunities for this arise in both interpretation and when working with the broader educational community.

*Education activities must support the Trust's conservation work*

The increase in leisure time and growth of outdoor activities offers both an opportunity and a challenge for the Trust. Problems such as footpath erosion may be tackled through management and maintenance but the long-term solution is equally an educational / interpretive issue. Education is a vital partner in conservation and the importance of actively involving young people in conservation activities is recognised as a priority.

*Education is as an important promotional activity for the Trust and must be of a consistently assured high quality.*

An enjoyable visit for a young person, either as a pupil on a school visit or as a member of a family making an informal visit, will encourage long term commitment to the Trust. This is equally true for all other visitors regardless of age, and our interpretation and educational activities must always aim to provide a quality experience. Monitoring and evaluation of both education and interpretation will be carried out on a regular basis.

*All education staff should be aware of current curriculum developments and best professional practice.*

The need to match the educational programmes at properties to the needs of visitors and learners of all ages is vital. Staff must be aware of current curricular thinking as

well as appropriate methods of interpretation. The need for staff development training is recognised and wherever possible this will be addressed appropriately. In addition NTS education staff should develop links with, and contribute to, current professional developments, and liaise with conservation, interpretive and educational bodies who have similar aims to those of the Trust.

*The Education department will take advantage of developments in Information and Communication Technologies*

The evolution of Internet and new technologies directly affects both how we deliver information and also how visitors and students may access the Trust's resources. The National Grid for Learning will result in totally new teaching and learning strategies with 'virtual' access to the Trust and its properties being increasingly important. The development of these new technologies allows the Trust to be more pro-active in education and consequently to raise public awareness of our role in conservation. They will also aid in the development of educational outreach programmes that will ensure that the resources of the Trust are increasingly accessible to those who are unable to visit properties in person. Advances in technology within interpretation offers both challenges and innovative solutions which should be engaged with, evaluated and applied (or rejected!) as appropriate.

## **7. Implementation**

All education staff are responsible for implementing policy but it is possible to identify core activities which will be the main focus of effort for departmental staff. While both Regional Education Officers and Interpretation staff have common areas of interest some core activities will be more appropriate to some staff than others. These include:-

- Contributing to the property statement and management planning process
- Interpretive planning
- Providing high quality interpretation at properties
- Organising and managing of educational events
- Supporting property staff in the development of educational programmes
- Promoting educational membership
- Promoting life long learning
- Promoting the Trust and its work to all sections of the educational community, our membership, visitors to properties and the public in general
- Ensuring and increasing physical and intellectual access

How these activities are implemented is detailed in the Education and Interpretation strategies with detailed implementation in Interpretation and individual regional work plans.