



## RSPB Scotland: Our commitment to working with communities and local stakeholders

As a charity, we work to inspire people about the natural world, helping to protect threatened wildlife while supporting sustainable local economies and flourishing communities. In Scotland, we have the privilege of managing 77 nature reserves, covering 72,000ha, and these sites are looked after in pursuit of our charitable aims to conserve birds and other wildlife, along with their habitats, and to encourage public enjoyment and learning about nature. We also help the Scottish Government deliver and meet its international obligations and targets to enhance the natural heritage.

Most of our sites are designated, by Scottish Natural Heritage, as Sites of Special Scientific Interest under domestic wildlife protection legislation, and/or as Special Protection Areas or Special Areas of Conservation under the EU “Birds” and “Habitats” Directives. In this context, we are required to protect and enhance the special wildlife features for which they are classified in order to contribute to both UK and European efforts to conserve biodiversity, and which is reported as one of the benchmarks of the [Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework](#).

RSPB Scotland aims to be an exemplar in terms of good community relations. To this end, we have consulted local communities for many years, and over time, have adjusted our community consultation guidance to reflect best practice, based upon Scottish Government and other relevant advice. In particular, we hope this guidance is consistent with the Scottish Government’s [Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#), produced under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. We consider that good relations locally are part of the routine work of RSPB Scotland reserves site staff. The benefits are reciprocal; communities feel engaged in the decision-making process of our sites, and they can in turn come to appreciate the wider nature of our work, and the societal benefits of protecting the environment.

We pride ourselves on contributing to local economies. Many of our nature reserves support the local tourism industry and provide magnificent nature and landscape spectacles that are unique to Scotland. Livestock, timber and venison help support local rural businesses, and more widely the greater Scottish economy. Where possible, we use the services of local suppliers to carry out contract work on reserves. Our nature reserve facilities are often made available for communities, such as for hosting the Kinross Agricultural Show which takes place annually at Loch Leven.

We work to manage the land in a variety of ways that suit the local circumstance and conservation needs. They are usually bought as either freehold tenure but, often, we also work through management agreements with local landowners and farmers, who usually retain involvement through farming or grazing the land in a manner that supports the conservation of the site. All of our sites have 5 or 10 year management plans depending on their complexity and scale. Those management plans which cover protected sites must be agreed with Scottish Natural Heritage.

The development of these management plans with local communities is integral to our approach. For all our sites, we consult with neighbours, Community Councils and other local partners to inform our draft management plan proposals, so to ensure that we can address any points of concern or provide opportunities for involvement at an early stage. We will adjust our proposals where we can to accommodate these local views within the wider legal and charitable constraints within which we operate.

To ensure a consistent and thorough approach, we keep our community consultation guidance to staff regularly updated. We made sure to cross-check our latest version with most recent Scottish Government best practice [advice](#), and we have shared this guidance with both Scottish Government and the Scottish Land Commission.

This will ensure that:

- Our decision-making will be more informed and in tune with those whom our actions will affect.
- There will be greater satisfaction from communities and other stakeholders with our outcomes. Through the engagement process, our neighbours and other stakeholders will feel they have input into the final results and that everyone's views have been taken into account. They will also be able to understand the full range of perspectives on any issue under consultation, and understand if their perspective is dominant, or if it is not shared and if there is a need for compromise.
- In turn, this will lead to a greater chance for the management plans for RSPB Scotland's sites to achieve success that is acceptable to all stakeholders.

RSPB Scotland believes consultation of this sort represents good governance and transparency, demonstrates our desire to engage in meaningful, two-way communication, and recognises the important contribution of our stakeholders.

To ensure this inclusive approach works, RSPB Scotland is committed to being an exemplar of communication excellence, so all stakeholders are informed and engaged in our work and plans for our sites.

We will:

- Ensure our work is well represented in local news and media outlets, and our digital social platforms and our website have regular, up-to-date information about our activities on reserves.
- Submit update columns to established community forums and publications, and will host 'meet the team' events at the reserves, advertised in these local media channels.
- Hold talks, or attend special events for the community where there is an education/community or fundraising opportunity.
- Encourage community involvement in providing monitoring of species and habitats, and taking wildlife photographs from our reserves (where it doesn't interfere with or risk disturbance of subject species).
- Create volunteering opportunities at the reserve to offer hands-on conservation and land management experiences.
- Provide information on behalf of partnership projects on our reserves and to tourism outlets.
- Have one-to-one discussions with neighbours or stakeholders to ensure they are fully aware of the facts surrounding our management.
- Respond to any local enquiries timeously and thoroughly.

In doing so, RSPB Scotland hopes its reserve management model is recognised as an exemplar of good communication and engagement practice, where neighbours, communities and other stakeholders see us as open and transparent, as well as being fully consistent with the [Scottish Government's Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#).