

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a bright red puffer jacket and a pink headband, is sitting on a sand dune. She is looking out towards the ocean under a grey, overcast sky. The foreground is filled with tall, green beach grasses. The background shows a sandy beach and the ocean with some waves. A dark log or branch lies on the sand in the distance.

Wild places for people and nature

John Muir Trust Strategy 2019-21

JOHN
MUIR
TRUST

Who are we?

The John Muir Trust is a membership based conservation charity dedicated to the protection and experience of wild places. The Trust was founded in 1983 and was inspired by the life and works of John Muir (1838-1914), the Scots-born founding father of modern conservation and the inspiration behind national parks. We operate in Scotland, England and Wales and are the guardians of some of the finest wild places in the UK including Ben Nevis, Helvellyn and Schiehallion.

Why wild places?

Wild places contribute to our lives in many varied ways. They encourage recreation and active lifestyles. They bring us closer to wild nature. They can improve health and wellbeing. They underpin local and national economies. In many areas, both remote and urban, they are a diminishing resource, affected by inappropriate land use and unsuitable development. We exist to help people connect with and experience wild places; to protect wild places from development that compromises their character; and to work with others to enhance, repair and rewild ecosystems and landscapes.

What is our strategy?

This strategy has been drawn up to enable the John Muir Trust to meet the needs for which it was set up in the most relevant and effective ways, recognising that the world around us is changing. It also sets out our ambitions, intentions and the direction of travel for the next few years.

Due to the uncertainties of climate change and development pressures, we cannot take wildness and wild places for granted. Other challenges we face include our changing relationship with the European Union – which could impact on funding and regulation – and its associated economic uncertainty. Economic and demographic changes and increasing leisure time are creating opportunities but also visitor pressures. Climate change impacts on all wildlife, while land reform and other social agendas are changing the relationship between people, land and nature. To support these processes and the demands society makes of modern charities, we must be well-run, and open about the impact of our work. We welcome people engaging with us and contributing to our work, because that allows us to do more.

Regenerating birch woodland at Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve

Photograph: Mark Hamblin/scotlandbigpicture.com



“More and more, in a
place like this, we feel
ourselves part of wild
nature, kin to everything.”
John Muir

What is wildness?

Wildness is all around us. Wild nature survives even in our most densely populated cities, along riverbanks and disused railway lines, in public parks and private gardens, on gap sites and road verges. Wildness also exists on a more dramatic scale in some of the more remote and rugged parts of our land, where the terrain can be difficult, the weather hazardous and the sense of solitude is very strong.

Wildness is something we experience and is generally associated with characteristics such as remoteness from modern artefacts (roads, buildings etc.), hazardous or rugged terrain, solitude and the presence of wild nature. It also evokes the idea of things that are untamed and natural. Wild places are where we can experience wildness, while the term 'wild land' refers to larger areas within which wildness is a dominant experience. These things are different from wilderness – areas where there is virtually no evidence of human impact – which no longer exists anywhere in the UK.



Reforestation on Tanera Mor

Photograph: Niall Benvie / scotlandbigpicture.com

Our aim is to inspire and connect

We want to inspire people by encouraging them to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places and wild nature and to get involved in managing and repairing natural systems.

Everyone should have opportunities to enjoy the social, economic, cultural, health, environmental and aesthetic benefits that wildness can offer, and to participate directly in nature conservation work.

Encouraging people and communities to experience the benefits of wild places – physical, psychological, educational, cultural, social and economic – is a key aspect of our work. We will inspire people from all walks of life to connect with nature across a whole spectrum from our towns and cities to our wildest landscapes. By doing so we increase the likelihood they will come to value wild places and will join us in protecting, conserving, rewilding and repairing them.

A family at Sallochy Bay, Loch Lomond
Photograph: Alan Oliver/ Alamy

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Our aim is to protect and conserve

We will protect and conserve wild places across Britain, seeking to reduce the twin threats of inappropriate development and damaging land management practices.

Since the John Muir Trust was founded, our wild world has diminished drastically. Tens of thousands of species are lost every year as a result of human activity. Habitats are destroyed for development and agriculture, and climate change is threatening our global ecosystem. We want to protect and sustain wildness with people and nature at the heart of that process.

We want positive change rather than landscapes frozen in time. We will manage our land in line with the 28 key principles set out in our Wild Land Management Standards Handbook.



Conservation work party volunteers with rubbish they collected during a two-hour beach clean near Sandwood

Photograph: Sandy Maxwell

Our aim is to repair and rewild

We will repair and rewild suitable areas of land by enriching biodiversity and by working collaboratively with others to achieve landscape-scale restoration of natural processes (for example, the expansion of native woodlands).

Centuries of tree felling, peat extraction, muir-burning, artificial draining and intensive grazing have taken their toll. We cannot piece nature back together like a jigsaw puzzle because the elements that make up our natural world are in a constant state of flux. When we talk about rewilding, we mean restoring harmony and balance, stimulating and supporting local communities to work with us to allow nature to recover and find its own way forward.

Such landscape-scale natural transformation has the potential to deliver multiple public benefits, including revitalised rural communities, reduced carbon emissions, improved soil fertility, stronger flood defences, and deeper connections between people and place.

Native trees regenerate at Li & Coire Dhorrcail, Knoydart
Photograph: Stephen Ballard



Our priorities are to inspire

- By confidently positioning the Trust as an expert voice on the benefits of wild places from the rugged large-scale Wild Land Areas of the Scottish Highlands to more localised and urban green spaces where nature has been allowed to flourish.
- By being a relevant and inclusive organisation working in broad partnerships and building the diversity and size of our support.
- By maintaining John Muir Award activity across the UK as a means of engaging with a wide range of people, especially young people, and inspiring them to understand and care for wild places.
- By growing public support for wild places, including in communities that live within or close to wild land areas.
- By influencing decision-makers, nationally and locally to recognise that wild places can contribute to social, economic, educational, health and environmental progress.



Photograph: Peter Cairns/scotlandbigpicture.com



Photograph: L Wimages



Photograph: Penny Dixie/London Wildlife Trust



Photograph: John Muir Trust

Pictured: Inspiring John Muir Award participants from London Wildlife Trust's Keeping It Wild project, families, artists like photographer and climber Dave 'Cubby' Cuthbertson and Gaelic speakers through Comunn na Gaidhlig.



Photograph: John Muir Trust



Photograph: Romany Garnett



Photograph: Pete Barron



Photograph: Blair Fyffe

Our priorities are to protect

- By influencing the priorities of all UK Governments, administrations and agencies to embed wild land/wildness-related objectives in to their policies and programmes.
- By persuading decision-makers of the need to protect our wild land and wild places from damaging land management practices and inappropriate development.
- By seeking new ways to manage wild land through acquisition or partnership.
- By better managing and engage with visitors across all the properties and places in our care.

Pictured: Supporting our Keep it Wild campaign at Holyrood, checking a wind turbine application, collecting rubbish with Fix the Fells at Helvellyn, visitors on the summit of Ben Nevis.

Our priorities are to repair

- By setting measurable targets for progress across each of our properties underpinned by realistic funding, and to demonstrate long-term wild land management in action.
- By using our Wild Ways programme to showcase the practical work we do to enrich public access to some of our most famous wild landscapes, and to build public and political support for additional funding of footpath work.
- By establishing further partnerships and programmes that create new models of landscape-scale ecological restoration, particularly for woodlands.



Photograph: Liz Auty



Photograph: Chris Goodman



Photograph: Kevin Lelland

Support

We aim to attract public support and to be a well-managed and well-resourced organisation. We are committed to effective governance, excellent service, high conservation standards, working closely with others and maintaining and developing skills.

Pictured: Working with partners at Schiehallion - via the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership and Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity - and in Assynt on a two-year Suilven path repair project.

The Trust was established “to conserve and protect wild places with their indigenous animals, plants and soils for the benefit of present and future generations”
(Memorandum of Association 1983)



Our vision A world where wild places are respected and protected, where nature flourishes and where the value of wildness is shared for the benefit of everyone.

Our mission To work with others to inspire people to get close to wild nature; speak up for the benefits of wildness; prevent the loss of wild places; manage wild places in a responsible and exemplary fashion; and repair and rewild what has been damaged in the past.

Cover photo by LWimages shows poet Helen Mort finding inspiration at Sandwood Bay

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