



# Corporate Strategy 2015 to 2019

Agreed 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014

## THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

The John Muir Trust is a conservation charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing wild places. Founded in 1983, the Trust takes its inspiration from John Muir (1838-1914), the Scots-born founder of the modern conservation movement. Like Muir, the Trust believes in protecting wild places for their own sake as well as the benefits they bring to us all. We currently operate in Scotland, England and Wales.

We are guardians for some of the finest wild places including Ben Nevis, Schiehallion, Sandwood Bay, Quinag in Assynt, part of the Cuillin on Skye and 3,000 acres on the remote Knoydart peninsula. We work hard to restore and protect habitats, bring back lost species and help nature flourish, both on the properties we own and through partnerships with others.

## OUR MISSION

To conserve and protect wild places with their indigenous animals, plants and soils for the benefit of present and future generations.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is of a world where wild places are protected, enhanced, and valued by and for everyone.

## OUR VALUES

These are based on the founding principles of the Trust, the collective views of our members and the ethos of John Muir. These values will underpin our approach to working with everyone. Our vision is long term, and achieving it requires us to work within complex relationships involving people, communities and nature. We do not underestimate this challenge but the values we hold will help to ensure we make progress, explain our reasoning and work with others.

- **We are bold** in our defence of wild places and our aspirations for achieving our vision.
- **We are positive**, developing solutions to challenges and promoting the benefits of our policies, ideas and actions.
- **We are honest**, acting with integrity and transparency, taking an evidence-based approach to our policies and projects. We try hard to communicate our thinking and explain why we do things, sharing learning from failures as well as successes.
- **We are collaborative**, seeking out partnerships to support delivery of our work and opportunities to work with and learn from others.
- **We are pragmatic**, seeking solutions to problems and being prepared to adapt where necessary in pursuit of our long term objectives.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last thirty years the Trust has evolved to become a significant owner of wild land in Scotland. We have influenced policies and decisions impacting on wild places across the UK and encouraged people to connect with and enjoy wild places, notably through the John Muir Award. Over 30,000 people a year complete a John Muir Award. Although the ambition, scope and reach of our work is significant, we are a relatively small organisation, dependent on charitable donations, grants and support from a membership of 10,500 people with an additional 15,000 people who engage with us and support us regularly. We aim to grow to ensure we meet challenges and opportunities now and in the future.

This strategy sets out the Trust's priorities for the next five years. We will ensure we are relevant to as many people as possible from a variety of ages and backgrounds, all of whom can benefit from connecting with wild places wherever they are. Owning or managing land in England and Wales as well as Scotland will help, as will the expansion of the John Muir Award. We expect that threats to wild places will continue at the increased levels we have seen in recent years and we will need to work at the local level as well as the strategic policy level to address these.

We will need to be bold, innovative and collaborative as we face up to the challenges of the next five years, to make a positive difference to wild places and the people and wildlife that depend on them.

This document sets out what the John Muir Trust plans to do up to 2019 towards achieving our long-term vision for wild places in the UK. It provides some of the important context as well as our ambitions. Detailed, annual, fully-costed plans will support this strategy.

## OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

### 1. To protect the wildest places across the United Kingdom

Wild places provide us with spectacular scenery and a place to escape from hectic urban living. We depend on them for recreation, for providing us with clean air, food, water and carbon storage. Many people live and work in wild places, so in addition to providing a home for nature, wild places support families, rural businesses and livelihoods. They are a part of our identity, our culture and history. However, wild places in the UK are under pressure, being lost to industrial development and urban expansion. Our sensitive upland landscapes are particularly impacted by energy developments and climate change. Proliferation of hill tracks has accelerated in the last five years and our wild coastal areas are at risk from off-shore developments. However, the Trust has been successful in influencing change. Growing public awareness and support for wild land protection encouraged the Scottish Government in 2014 to identify 20% of Scotland as Wild Land Areas<sup>i</sup> to afford it a level of protection in national planning policy. Landscape scale conservation initiatives across the UK, expansion of National Parks, community ownership and acquisitions by bodies such as the John Muir Trust have all had a positive impact and will continue to do so. There is scope to increase the level of protection for the best wild places in the UK as well as influencing policies for wilderness and wild places at EU level.

The Trust has acquired some of the most iconic wild places in Scotland and hopes to acquire high quality examples in England and Wales. Working with communities and across a range of partnerships will remain an important part of our overall approach. The Trust has put increasing resources into protecting wild land from development pressure, objecting to individual schemes as well as working more strategically on national policy and public awareness campaigns. Our membership has demonstrated a strong affinity to this aspect of our work.

Therefore our priorities for the next five years are:

- To safeguard important high quality wild places in the UK, both through ownership and by working in partnership
- To defend Wild Land Areas in Scotland and other important wild places across the UK when they come under threat from inappropriate developments
- To influence policies that have the potential to threaten our wild places and encourage development of progressive policies based on the benefits that wild places bring to people and wildlife

## **2. To enhance wild places for people and nature**

Our wild places are home to some of our most valued wildlife and landscapes. All wild places have at some stage been managed and many large areas are ecologically impoverished following centuries of overexploitation through, for example forest clearance, burning and overgrazing by deer and livestock. With ambition and resources, there is huge potential to reverse these trends and improve our environment for the benefit of people and nature. The Trust encourages and welcomes a shift towards landscape scale conservation, more sustainable agriculture, the principles of rewilding, the restoration of ecosystems and appropriate reintroduction of native species to reinvigorate natural processes. Investing in our natural environment, making it more resilient in the face of climate change, will benefit us all and especially the people who live and work there.

The Trust has developed and implemented Wild Land Management Standards<sup>1</sup> across the properties it manages and has encouraged their implementation by other land owners. This includes managing statutory designations (80% of the statutory features on Trust properties are now in 'favourable condition'), sustainable management of deer, maintaining footpaths, enhancing native woodlands and removing litter. Much of the work has been carried out by volunteers and in partnership with communities and other organisations. The Trust's conservation fund has provided £100,000 over the last four years to projects on Trust and partner properties to enhance natural processes, wildlife and visitors' enjoyment of wild places. The Trust advocates land management policies that would regulate and incentivise positive wild land management.

Wild places in and around urban areas have also benefitted from positive management. John Muir Award participants undertake litter picks, path and habitat improvements, clear invasive species and undertake wildlife surveys, contributing over £1million worth of volunteer time every year. People's health and wellbeing is enhanced when they have access to wild places.

Therefore our priorities for the next five years are;

- To collaborate with communities and other organisations on landscape-scale initiatives, rewilding and ecological restoration projects
- To influence policies and decisions that have the potential to improve the ecological health and resilience of wild places
- To improve the ecological condition of our own properties by continuing to implement wild land management standards
- To minimise adverse human impacts and enhance people's experience of wild places
- To enhance wild places including in urban areas through promotion of the John Muir Award

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wildlandmanagement.org.uk/management-standards>

### **3. To encourage people to value and care for wild places.**

The importance of connections between people and nature is well-established for health and recreational benefits, for life balance, for wellbeing, for creative inspiration, for learning, and for aesthetic and spiritual sustenance. Less prominent is the imperative to take responsibility to care for and improve wild places, and to value them. The role of partnerships, and the involvement of local communities and communities of interest in promoting this work, is crucial. There is also scope to relate actions to government policy, initiatives and targets<sup>2</sup>.

Many opportunities exist to inform, support and encourage positive connections with wild places. Such as the recognition of the need to balance screen time with real time; the momentum around Outdoor Learning as a mainstream approach to education across the UK; the health-giving value of outdoor experiences; the growth of outdoor recreation in lifestyle choices; and the view that family time in wild places is quality time.

The Trust promotes a strong message, to quote John Muir, that 'people need beauty as well as bread'. We actively interpret and communicate his ethos as relevant and inspiring.

Our properties have for 30 years offered a focus to communicate this and experience first-hand the qualities of wildness. Our reach is extended throughout the UK into thousands of communities, organisations and homes through the John Muir Award. This connects the Trust with audiences and partners that are often disconnected from wild places and environmental issues, but who value a helping hand to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places on their own terms. Over 30,000 people a year also engage with the Trust and its message at our Wild Space visitor centre in Pitlochry. Volunteers provide a valuable contribution to the work of the Trust, especially on our properties.

Therefore our priorities for the next five years are:

- To incorporate the use and values of wild places into a range of public policy initiatives including health, wellbeing and education
- To continue to promote uptake of the John Muir Award across Scotland, England and Wales
- To promote awareness of and engagement with the values of wild places to new and established audiences including volunteers

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/green\\_paper\\_nature\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_act\\_full\\_final.pdf](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/green_paper_nature_and_wellbeing_act_full_final.pdf)

#### **4. To be an efficient, effective, creative and sustainable organisation**

The sustainability and funding of an organisation is key to ensuring that ambitious goals are achievable. Some basic principles are required: staff are motivated, supported and happy in their jobs, income at least matches expenditure, investment is made in core business support functions, the organisation works within its legal, regulatory and governance limits and the charity is delivering maximum impact on its vision. Societal, political and technological changes are shifting the way in which people gather information and connect with each other. Despite increased competition for funding and concerns about government funding, recent predictions of increasing consumer confidence, philanthropy and regular giving patterns in the UK are optimistic for the future funding of charities.

The Trust needs to position itself to take advantage of the above predictions for charitable giving, together with the opportunities presented through new ways of communicating. In particular the way in which charities interact with people, and how people engage with each other, has changed since the advent of the internet and social media, and the Trust needs to realise these opportunities. The Trust has expanded steadily in its thirty-year history. While the Trust's charitable objects remain the same, their relevance and the associated challenges have grown. As a result the Trust is doing more, with increased staff and total costs rising from £1.6m in 2009 to over £2.3m in 2014.

The Trust has made good progress in building its business infrastructure, investing in the fundraising department and creating the communications department. Modern business systems are being introduced. For the Trust to move forward, it needs to generate sustainable, more predictable income which requires appropriate fundraising and engagement capabilities, and the provision of an efficient and effective business support structure.

Members are the foundation of the Trust. We will provide opportunities for active engagement. We aim to grow our membership and supporter base, keeping them informed, engaged and retaining their support.

Therefore our priorities for the next five years are:

- To raise income levels from a wider range of sources, to match the core demands of the organisation and improve our financial resilience.
- To increase our member and support base and provide opportunities for their involvement
- To improve the quality and effectiveness of our on-line, media and physical presence to communicate, engage and win support
- To maintain a motivated workforce and invest in improving the skills and knowledge base of the organisation
- To upgrade our business support services to allow staff across the organisation to work more efficiently and effectively

**MONITORING & REPORTING FRAMEWORK**

This table indicates how successful delivery of our priorities will be determined and reported. Other success measures are identified in our operational and departmental plans. Our annual report will reference these priorities as well as other important aspects of our work and achievements. Our priorities are of equal value and collectively help to deliver our vision.

Our Priorities	Success Measures	Reporting Framework
1. To safeguard important high quality wild places in the UK, both through ownership and by working in partnership	Greater extent and geographical spread of land influenced by JMT	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
2. To defend Wild Land Areas in Scotland and other important wild places across the UK when they come under threat from inappropriate developments	% of positive outcomes against large scale development proposals in Wild land Areas and other important wild places across the UK	Update live planning log Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
3. To influence policies that have the potential to threaten our wild places and encourage development of progressive policies based on the benefits that wild places bring to people and wildlife	Incorporation of Wild Land/wild places/wildness considerations into new public policies and policy narratives of other organisations	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
4. To collaborate with communities and other organisations on landscape-scale initiatives, rewilding and ecological restoration projects	Increase in the number and range of organisations and the area of land under restoration Provide communities with opportunities to engage with the Trust, offer their views and actively participate in our work	Annual open events on Trust properties Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
5. To influence policies and decisions that have the potential to improve the ecological health and resilience of wild places	A statutory framework for deer management in Scotland and peatland restoration plans for all nations of the UK	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
6. To improve the ecological condition of our own properties by continuing to implement wild land management standards	Over 80% of designated features in favourable condition and increase in extent of native woodland	Publish JMT property report Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
7. To minimise adverse human impacts and enhance people's experience of wild places	Increased % of footpaths repaired and maintained. Enhanced visitor interpretation on and off site.	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
8. To enhance wild places including in urban areas through promotion of the John Muir Award	12 month Conserve Audit carried out John Muir Award partnerships engaged in urban rewilding projects	Publish conserve impact report
9. To incorporate the use and values of wild places into a range of public policy initiatives including health, wellbeing and education	Trust work and policies referenced in public policy documents	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members

10. To continue to promote uptake of the John Muir Award across the UK	Increase in the number of awards and geographic distribution of providers with at least 25% targeting social inclusion	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
11. To promote awareness of and engagement with the values of wild places to new and established audiences including volunteers	Increase in number of Award providers and strategic partnerships Increase in regular online engagement with the work of the Trust Increase in the number of volunteer days contributed on Trust properties	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members Annual work party report
12. To raise income levels from a wider range of sources, to match the core demands of the organisation and improve our financial resilience.	Meet income targets and maintain free reserves within policy limits Grow membership above 1% trend growth	Monthly management accounts Ad hoc reporting to finance committee Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
13. To increase our member and support base and provide opportunities for their involvement	Retain at least 90% of existing members annually Grow membership by at least 1% annually Increase in the number of members involved with local groups	Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
14. To improve the quality and effectiveness of our online and physical presence to communicate, engage and win support	Increase the number of members and people who engage with us through social media and visit our website. Increase in online donations, memberships and sign-up to e-news. Increase in public awareness of the Trust	Monthly management team report Quarterly report to trustees Annual report to members
15. To Invest in improving the skills and knowledge base of the organisation to include staff and volunteers	Continual improvement in quality and effectiveness	Annual staff survey Board effectiveness survey
16. To maintain a motivated workforce and invest in improving the skills and knowledge base of the organisation	At least 85% of staff enjoy working for JMT	Annual staff survey
17. To upgrade our business support services to allow staff across the organisation to work more efficiently and effectively	ThankQ and Office365 implemented across the organisation	Annual staff survey