



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

Changes at your Trust

Like most organisations, the National Trust for Scotland is forecasting a significant drop in income in the year ahead. Long before 2008 drew to a close, it was clear that doing nothing about this situation in 2009 was not an option. So by early March 2009 we announced some important decisions about what needed to be done.

The Trust is having to make considerable cost savings to ensure our financial health and stability through the economic recession. We have proposed significant reduction in staffing levels and changes at 11 of our 130 visited properties.

As a charity, independent of both the Scottish Government and the larger National Trust based in England, we rely heavily on income from investments and the value of legacies, which usually take the form of share portfolios and property bequests – both areas considerably affected by the recession.

In addition, a large part of our day-to-day funding comes from membership and admissions. You, our members, represent over 30% of our annual income and now, perhaps more than ever, we appreciate your continued support of the Trust's great work, the proposed changes and also your assistance in encouraging supporters, friends and family, to become new members.

Following the announcements in March, the Trust has been consulting with its staff, the recognised union, central and local government and several communities, to explore alternative solutions. It is anticipated that the impact of any changes will be confirmed by late May. We have been encouraged by the creative ideas and support generated by this essential process, however there can be no doubt that some difficult decisions will have to be made.

Communicating with our Members

Amongst the Trust's 309,000 members 59% live in Scotland, almost 35% live in England and 6% of members live abroad. And as we currently have e mail addresses for 10% of you, inevitably the alternative most inexpensive way for us to contact you is right here through our website and in our Scotland in Trust magazine, which is published three times a year.

To give you some examples of what we have to carefully consider, one second class mailing to 189,000 members home addresses would cost the Trust over £40,000 in postage alone. Also, including a one page letter to members posted alongside our Scotland in Trust magazine would cost us £27,000. So we hope you can appreciate the challenge here, at a time when making cost savings is essential.



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Members Questions and Answers

These Questions and Answers are designed to explain to members some of the background behind the recent proposals.

Q: Why is the Trust having to make these cuts?

A: The Trust must achieve a breakeven budget to boost its general fund. On top of existing financial challenges, the recession is having a significant impact on the charity. Cost saving measures must be made now to achieve financial stability for the long term.

Q: Could this not have been avoided?

A: The Board and senior managers within the Trust were already taking action to address our finances. A three year plan to improve our funds was underway, achieving £1.5 million annual savings in overheads before the recession began to bite. Faced with falling income however, the Trust is no different from other organisations – we had to act.

Q: Don't I as a member have a say in these decisions?

A: Our members elect members to represent them on the Trust's Council and the Trust's Council and Board (which is appointed by Council) have the responsibility of making the relevant decisions throughout this process. The Trust consults with its membership via the Council and at a meeting of the Trust's Council on 27 March, the Board explained the rationale behind its current proposals, which the Council endorsed.

Q: So as a member am I getting value for money from my membership?

A: Our priority is to ensure that members and visitors to the Trust's properties can still have a thoroughly enjoyable experience. We appreciate that reducing staffing levels may affect some aspects of our properties but our goal is that this will have no adverse effect on the visitor experience. We value the support of our members and visitors and that means providing a really good service. As well as properties, members also enable the Trust to carry out its vital conservation work too. From preserving fine art works, carrying out archaeological digs on Iona to conserving sea eagles on Canna, this work would simply not be possible without the support of members.



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Q: There's talk of 11 properties having to close. Is this likely?

A: We are considering making changes at 11 of our visited properties but it is certainly misleading to say we are "closing" 11 properties. We are actively seeking ways to keep them open through consultation with many stakeholders and are pleased with the constructive nature of these discussions to date.

This consultation is ongoing and varies in nature between most of the 11 properties. For example the only difference to Haddo House is that access to the house will be through pre booked tours. This already happens in quite a number of National Trust properties in England. In addition to our daily pre booked tour the local authority has kindly agreed to fund an additional daily tour.

Q: Will these proposed changes result in a different type of Trust in the future?

A: The Trust must adapt to become the strong, responsive organisation it needs to be to thrive in the 21st Century. In reality there may well be things we have to do less of or simply stop doing. However, our aims to inform, inspire and engage everyone in the protection and promotion of Scotland's heritage remain and we will continue to work hard to achieve this through conservation, access and education.

Q: How will you keep members informed of your decisions?

A: We will make good use of our website so keep a look out on www.nts.org.uk We will continue to update members through Scotland in Trust magazine and through our ebulletins, through answering questions sent to the Customer Services Centre, communicating with Members Centres and of course through the Council meetings and AGM.