



The National Trust  
for Scotland

# **DOGS AT TRUST PROPERTIES POLICY**

**Revised September 2007**

# DOGS AT TRUST PROPERTIES

## INTRODUCTION

The Trust welcomes a wide range of visitors to the properties in its care. As an organisation that protects and promotes Scotland's natural and cultural heritage, our aim is to make everyone welcome at our properties, enabling access and promoting a greater understanding and enjoyment of them. We want to inspire people to support our conservation values and learn more about our work. Allowing people to engage with Scotland's heritage in an enjoyable and interesting way is a key part of encouraging people to discover more about the Trust.

For many people, bringing their dog with them to a Trust property can enhance the enjoyment of their visit; exercising their dog may even be the main purpose of the visit. For those with assistance dogs, the visit would be impossible without their dog.

The following sets out the legal context for the Trust's policy on dogs at Trust properties, followed by the Policy Guidance.

## LEGAL CONTEXT

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (the Code), which came into effect on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005, describes the right of responsible access enabled by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

The Act enshrines the new access arrangements in Scotland. Our new access rights, and responsibilities, extend to people with dogs, provided that the dog(s) are under proper control.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code offers useful interpretation of these rights and responsibilities:

- never let your dog worry or attack livestock;
- do not take your dog into fields where there are lambs, calves or other young animals;
- do not take your dog into fields of vegetables or fruit unless there is a clear path, such as a core path or a right of way, but keep your dog to the path;
- if you go into a field of farm animals, keep your dog(s) on a short lead or under close control and keep as far as possible from the animals; if cattle react aggressively and move towards you, keep calm, let the dog go and take the shortest, safest route out of the field;
- during the bird breeding season (usually April to July), keep your dog under close control or on a short lead in areas such as moorland, forests, grassland, loch shores and the seashore;
- in recreation areas and other public places avoid causing concern to others by keeping your dog under close control or on a short lead; and
- pick up and remove your dog's faeces if it defecates in a public open place.

The definition of a 'short lead' within the Code is less than two metres and 'close control' means that a dog responds to commands and is kept close at heel<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 also applies, making it an offence for the person in charge of a dog not to clear up after it, if it defecates in any public open place.

## POLICY GUIDANCE

This policy outlines the way in which dogs can be welcomed at Trust properties whilst ensuring their presence does not affect the health, safety or enjoyment of other visitors, staff or volunteers.

- All dogs under proper control and accompanied by responsible owners who clean up after them, will be welcomed at Trust properties.
- Assistance dogs (such as guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people or other disability assistance dogs, including assistance dogs under training) are allowed full access to all public areas of the property, including walled gardens, cafes, restaurants and shops.
- All other dogs are permitted access to public areas of the property, except for buildings open to the public, including cafes, restaurants and shops. In the immediate area beside buildings open to the public or within the immediate proximity of other visitor facilities, including car parks, dogs should be under close control or on short leads.
- Dogs, other than assistance dogs, are not permitted in walled or enclosed gardens. This is to prevent physical damage to gardens or damage from urinating or fouling and to help ensure the health and safety of staff and volunteers who care for the gardens.
- During special events at properties it will be at the discretion of the Property Manager and events organiser as to whether dogs, other than assistance dogs, may be permitted. This is in the interests of public health and safety and will be clarified by Property Staff prior to the event.
- Dogs owned by Trust staff, volunteers, tenants or visitors staying in holiday accommodation at a property are permitted within working and private areas of a property including buildings, but not in buildings open to the public or walled or enclosed gardens. Dogs owned by members of staff, volunteers, tenants or long stay visitors must be under proper control at all times and under close control in areas immediately beside buildings open to the public or within the immediate proximity of visitor facilities, including car parks. The owner should always ensure that the presence of their dog does not have a detrimental effect on the health, safety or enjoyment of others or on the ability of staff and volunteers to carry out their work. Working dogs should also be considered in this way.
- Resident staff, volunteers, tenants or visitors staying in Trust holiday accommodation are required to seek prior agreement from the Trust if they wish to keep dogs at a Trust property.
- There is one important exception to the Trust's generally welcoming approach to visitors' dogs. Dogs cannot be allowed onto the islands of St Kilda because of the risk their presence would pose to the fragile ecosystem. Dogs could bring new parasites to the islands' isolated animal populations or disturb the wild sheep and birds. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code explains the responsibility that visitors to the outdoors have to care for the environment. More information about enjoying access to St Kilda responsibly is given in the NTS/SNH leaflet 'St Kilda - A Guide to Access' copies of which are available from NTS offices or on the St Kilda pages of the NTS website ([www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)).

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Outdoor Access Code – section 3.54

## PROVISION FOR DOGS

Provision should be made for dogs within property grounds, even if dogs are excluded from particular areas of the property. Many properties are greatly valued by local communities as a place to walk dogs. Signage plays an important part in helping visitors to understand clearly where they can and cannot take their dogs. Signs and other interpretive tools vary between properties and their location and number are determined by property staff. The Trust has a responsibility to provide sufficient information for dog owners through its publications and website, including the type of facilities provided at properties that welcome dogs and where on the property they will be permitted.

Whilst the welfare of dogs at Trust properties is primarily the responsibility of dog owners, the Trust can in some instances provide facilities that benefit dogs and their owners and also help to protect the property. These facilities include: areas to exercise dogs, with clear signs leading to these areas; provision of dog-waste bins; or shaded parking. Provision of these facilities depends on the type of property and the perceived risks and benefits of their provision.

Where issues arise that cannot easily be resolved, recourse to the local Council's Access Officer can be made.

### Further Information

For further information please contact:

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