

Reserves Access Policy and Procedure

1. Background and Introduction

We recognise the importance of welcoming visitors to our reserves at all times where possible with the proviso that this does not conflict with the conservation priorities and only placing restrictions on access when there is a threat, or threats, to the nature conservation interest, personal safety or placed by the landowner.

2. Policy Statement

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust will encourage unrestricted public access to its reserves for the quiet enjoyment of the countryside and the study of nature unless there are agreed reasons, conservation or otherwise, to restrict access.

For the purpose of the policy statement:-

“public” includes members or non-members

“agreed” means agreed by Conservation Honorary Officers and Conservation team managers

“reasons” include:-

- Ownership and legal limitations (e.g. restrictions imposed by owners)
- Conservation of rare species/endangered habitats
- Limitations to damage/wear of a reserve including physical damage to the habitat, disturbance of its wildlife and its potential for peace and quiet
- Health and safety considerations
- Prevention of establishment of rights of way
- Control of dogs/dog walking, horses, bikes etc.,
- Prevention of organised activities not approved by the Trust

3. Advantages of this policy

A number of advantages arise from this policy:-

- The Trust will be complying with the requirements of our charitable status
- The Trust will become more widely known and therefore attract more members
- It promotes the Trust as an involved, caring member of the community
- It promotes support of and creates more understanding and appreciation of wildlife and conservation

4. Management of access to the reserves

In order to manage access to the reserves it is necessary to classify the status of that reserve.

4.1 Access status of reserves

The four basic categories of reserve are:-

- (a) Reserves with unrestricted public access
- (b) Reserves with public access but with some restrictions at stipulated times

- (c) Reserves with public access but requiring some form of permit to visit
- (d) Reserves with strictly controlled and arranged public access

The status of each reserve will be defined by a statement from the Trust in the Management Plan, Guide to Reserves, the website, and other relevant media or by signage on the reserve.

4.2 Operating restrictions

Category (b) reserves: No permit will be required. Information regarding access restrictions will be made available in publications, social media, websites, and on entrance signage.

Category (c) reserves: Permit required. The membership card is seen as the general form of permit for category (c) reserves, with non-members (including groups) being able to obtain a temporary permit for access to a particular reserve for a stipulated period.

Category (d) reserves: Access will be by arrangement only. Access will be restricted to include Open Days, target groups and individual visits for demonstration and scientific purposes.

4.3 Methods of access management

Category (a) reserves

Encouragement to visit category (a) reserves will be achieved by making these reserves well known and accessible to both members and non-members. Provision of positive information about the location and contents of a reserve by the use of open days, leaflets, information boards, websites and other forms of publicity will provide the stimulus to visit a reserve. Provision of facilities such as car-parks, picnic tables, clear points of entry, informative signs, nature trails, marked pathways etc., may be used and will ensure that these reserves attract the largest proportion of visitors.

Category (b), (c), (d) reserves

Controlling access to these reserves will primarily be achieved by providing clear information about the reserve access arrangements. Signage will give details of ownership, wildlife interest and information relating to access arrangements. Entry points to such reserves will be discreet.

Only category (c) reserves access will be controlled by the use of formal permits.

5 General points

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, (CROW Act) sites designated as Open Access are The Devil's Spittleful, Piper's Hill and Dodderhill Commons and Pound Green Common. On those three sites the conditions of the Act will apply. This does not alter the "agreed" reasons required in order to restrict access. However, on CROW Act sites an application to the "access authority" local authority must be made for approval to restrict public access. An example of this might be during the ground-nesting bird season.

Our nature reserves are logged with Worcestershire County Council under Section 31(6) Highways Act 1980. The document is a statutory declaration to state that no additional public rights of way are in existence on our land as of 25th November 2010. The declaration lasts for 10 years, whereby it will then need to be renewed by completing the necessary form. New reserves are logged and declared under section 31 as they are acquired.

As a rule all visitors to reserves will be encouraged to:-

- Keep to footpaths
- Obey the country code
- Respect all signs/barriers restricting access to certain parts of reserves
- Keep dogs under control and clear up and remove dog fouling
- Keep horses and cycles to public bridleways

It is difficult to control determined access and/or misuse of a reserve. However, such activities will be actively discouraged by:-

- Discouraging car parking at sensitive sites
- Providing clearly marked pathways
- Use of physical barriers to discourage visitors from straying off Public Rights of Way and/or permissive paths
- Notices stating what is discouraged and why

Implementation of the policy is currently the responsibility of Trust staff supported by volunteer wardens. The Trust encourages members to become wardens and take a proactive role in looking after reserves. Additionally a longer term objective is to review the potential for a ranger type service to control the access/misuse of vulnerable sites.

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Appendix 1 : Reserves Access Status

Reserve	Category	Operations on use of Category
Ailshurst Coppice	C	Restriction factors: Small reserve, population of yellow star of Bethlehem
Avon Valley reserves	D	Restriction factors: Fen and riverside habitats. Prevent disturbance to species of breeding bird. Difficult to access.
Badgers Hill	A	Low level promotion Access on site is minimal No threat to species present
Baynhall Meadow	C	Restriction factors: Small reserve, unimproved grassland
Beacon Wood	A	Low level promotion
Betts Reserve	A	Low level promotion
Bishops Field	A	Low level promotion
Blackhouse Wood	A	Low level promotion. Good access
Blackstone Farm Fields	D	Restriction factors: Land to undergo re-creation/management works Agricultural activity
Boynes Coppice / Meadow	B	Low level promotion Access restricted to Public Right of Way during flowering period
Broadmoor Wood	A	Low level promotion Good access on site
Broadway Gravel Pit	A	Low level promotion
Brotheridge Green	A	Low level promotion
Brown's Close Meadow	C	Restriction factors: No pathways, unimproved grassland
Burlton's Meadow	C	Restriction factors: No pathways, unimproved grassland
Button Oak Meadow	C	Restriction factors: Small reserve, unimproved grassland
Chaddesley Wood	A	Good access Restrictions on access to meadows during grazing and flowering periods
Chance Wood	A	Low level promotion Good access
Crews Hill Wood	A	Low level promotion. Good access
Devils Spittleful	A	Good access
Drake Street Meadow	C	Restriction factors: Small reserve, unimproved grassland

Reserve	Category	Operations on use of Category
Droitwich Community Woods	A	Good access
Duke of York Meadow	B	Low level promotion Access restricted during flowering period
Eades Meadow	B	Low level promotion Access restricted to Public Right of Way and Trust mowed pathway provided during flowering period
Feckenham Wylde Moor	A	Good access
Foster's Green Meadows	B	Low level promotion
Jim's Wood at Fetterlocks	D	Restriction factors: Difficult access around site, old quarrying holes,
Gilvers Lane Meadows	B	Low level promotion No paths around site, only viewable from Public Right of Way
Grafton Wood	A	Good access
Grimley Brick Pits	B	Low level promotion No paths around site, only viewable from Public Right of Way. Difficult terrain
Grovely Dingle	D	Restriction factor: Difficult access around site
Gwen Finch Wetland	D	Restriction factors: Prevent disturbance to otters and nesting birds, difficult access on site Planning condition
Hanley Dingle	A	Low level promotion Paths on difficult terrain
Hardwick Green Meadows	B	Low level promotion
Hill Court Farm & The Blacklands	D	Restriction factors: Prevent disturbance to ground nesting birds, difficult access on site
Hollybed Farm Meadows	B	Low level promotion
Hornhill Wood	C	Restrictions on permit only required by owner
Humpy Meadows	B	Low level promotion Access restricted to Public Right of Way and field edges during flowering period
Hunthouse Wood	A	Low level promotion Paths on difficult terrain
Ipsley Alders	A	Good access
Knapp and Papermill	A	Good access
Knowles Coppice/ Meadow	A	Access restricted during flowering period
Lion Wood	A	Low level promotion Good access

Reserve	Category	Comments
Long Meadow	B	Low level promotion Access restricted to Public Right of Way and field edges during flowering period
Lower Smite Farm	A	Public access restricted to Public Right of Way and farm trail
Marshlands Meadow	C	Restriction factors: Small reserve, unimproved grassland
Melrose Farm Meadows	B	Low level promotion Restrictions in place during flowering period
Mill Meadow	C	Restrictions on permit only required by owner
Monkwood	A	Good access
Naunton Court Fields	B	Low level promotion: Agricultural activity
Newbourne Wood	A	Low level promotion Good access
Pennels Bank	A	Low level promotion Paths on difficult terrain
Penny Hill Bank	B	Low level promotion Access restricted to field edges during flowering period
Penorchard Meadows	A	Good access
Piddle Brook Meadows	B	Low level promotion
Pipers Hill and Dodderhill Commons	A	Good access
Poolhay Meadows	B	Low level promotion. Access restricted to Public Right of Way during flowering period
Pound Green Common	A	Low level promotion
Randan Meadows	C	Restriction factor: No pathways
Randan Wood	B	Low level promotion No pathways
Rookery Cottage Meadows	D	Restriction factor: Condition required by owner
Ryefield Meadows	C	Access restricted to Public Right of Way or for organised "events"
Sands Meadows	B	Low level promotion: Fragile site.
Spinneyfields	D	Restriction factor: Complicated access restrictions
Stockwood Meadows	C	Restrictions on permit only required by owner
Tiddesley Wood	A	Woodland: Good access. Restrictions on entry to fenced previously Red Flagged areas Grassland and orchard: Access only on Public Right of Way or for organised "events"

Reserve	Category	Comments
Trench Wood	A	Good access
Tunnel Hill Meadow	C	Restrictions on permit only required by owner
Upton Warren Flash Pools	C	Management of visitor numbers
Upton Warren Moors Pools	C	Management of visitor numbers
Wilden Marsh South (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)	B	Low level promotion. Difficult terrain and unmarked pathways. Signs used to control access during breeding season
Wilden Marsh North (Associated British Foods)	D	Difficult terrain and unmarked pathways
Windmill Hill	A	Good access