



The Selection Principles for National Nature Reserves in England

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are exemplary, nationally important nature reserves, where nature conservation is the primary land use and significant other benefits may be provided for people and the environment. They are held by Natural England or bodies approved by Natural England to hold NNRs. These principles are used to select all new and extended NNRs: Natural England's and Approved Bodies'.

National Importance: the National Nature Reserve must be of national importance and further the core purposes of NNRs¹

New National Nature Reserves should:

Nature:

- Make a significant contribution to nature recovery in the locality
- and/or safeguard or recover nationally important biodiversity and geodiversity

Science:

- Provide opportunities for conservation and environmental science

People:

- Encourage people to experience, engage with and enjoy nature in a variety of ways (where this does not compromise management for the conservation purpose)

Extensions to existing NNRs should add value to the site in accordance with one or more of these purposes.

Requirements (the National Nature Reserve must meet these)

- The site's purpose is to be a nature reserve and the primary land use is nature conservation
- The site is declared NNR in perpetuity or for the long term (>30 years)

¹ Core purposes given by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2006

The site will be managed to exemplary standards (the [NNR Management Standards](#)).

Each managing body has the capability and the control of land use to meet these requirements over the long term.

Purposes and attributes: the NNR must have at least one attribute for each purpose that is exemplary (or has realistic potential to become so within a defined timeframe)

Core Purpose: Nature (biodiversity, geodiversity, nature recovery)

Attributes:

- Sufficient size to support or restore ecological functions and natural processes
- Structural diversity, ecosystem heterogeneity and connectivity needed for nature recovery
- Nationally important biodiversity
- Representation of England's geological sequences
- Connection between terrestrial interest features and marine environment

Core Purpose: People (access, engagement, inclusion)

Attributes:

- Statutory or permissive public access, managed in ways that are compatible with the site's biodiversity and geodiversity
- Inclusive access and engagement
- Support for active engagement by diverse audiences
- Provision of learning opportunities (formal and informal)

Core Purpose: Science (access, engagement, inclusion)

Attributes:

- Research programmes into England's biodiversity and geodiversity
- Experimentation and innovation in any aspect of NNR purposes and conservation management
- Long-term datasets, national monitoring and surveillance schemes
- Citizen science opportunities.

Additional benefits: the National Nature Reserve should have attribute/s in at least one of these

Core Purpose: Nature-based solutions (climate change, biodiversity loss)

Attributes:

- Adaptative management to increase resilience to climate change

- Mitigation measures for climate change, including transformative change in the landscape
- Potential to reverse biodiversity loss
- Potential to safeguard vulnerable biodiversity and geodiversity from potential loss through climate change
- Opportunities to trial and research nature-based solutions to climate change and ways of reversing biodiversity loss

Core Purpose: Partnership working

Attributes:

- A committed partnership of the NNR's managing bodies
- A partnership vision and shared management framework for the whole NNR

Core Purpose: Demonstration (sharing learning and good practice)

Attributes:

- Potential for demonstration of innovation and new techniques

Potential for active dissemination of information and learning.

Further Information

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Catalogue code: NE808