

Our Approach to Casework

This document summarises the approach the John Muir Trust takes to reviewing applications for development in or near wild land and wild places in the UK.

Overview

1. The John Muir Trust assesses whether and how it should respond to planning applications for built development brought forward under the Electricity Act 1989, or other relevant legislation, on a case-by-case basis.

Casework hierarchy

2. The Trust's charitable objectives include the protection of wild places. When it comes to allocating limited time and resources to responding to planning applications and upholding this objective, we prioritise responding to applications for new large-scale development that is likely to have a significant, direct impact on the finest wild places of the UK's four nations. In practice, this requires considering a range of factors that indicate the quality of the wild place and its sensitivity to the proposed development.
3. The Trust considers maps of wildness (such as the NatureScot map of Wild Land Areas and accompanying descriptions as well as the UK relative wildness maps)¹² to help understand the quality of wild places but recognises that no map will provide an entirely accurate boundary for where these characteristics start and end. The Trust seeks to respond to those applications where there is evidence that the proposals could significantly harm a place's wild qualities.
4. In forming a more detailed view about a proposed development that is of concern the Trust also considers: local knowledge; statutory and expert opinion; the views of other organisations with specialist environmental knowledge; nature and landscape designations, and habitats of national importance.
5. The John Muir Trust will think very carefully about raising an objection to development that has strong community support.
6. The Trust cannot foresee all types of possible future development that could harm wild places and therefore reserves some flexibility in applying its casework criteria. From experience, the Trust is aware that once development in a previously wild area proceeds, it can pave the way for additional future development or expansion in an area. We keep this in mind when viewing new development proposals.

No objection is not approval

7. The Trust cannot get involved in every application that satisfies our casework criteria and may not always become aware of such applications. The fact that the Trust does

¹ NatureScot's Wild Land Areas Map and descriptions: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/wild-land/wild-land-area-descriptions-and-assessment-guidance>

² Wild Land Research Institute has completed relative wildness mapping for the UK. For more info, see: <https://wildlandresearch.org/our-work/mapping/>

not make a formal objection to an application does not imply that it supports it. It might still have significant concerns but has not managed to find the time nor the resource to respond formally. The Trust may also decide that an alternative approach, such as engaging with a developer or supporting an existing third-party campaign, is more appropriate in some circumstances. We ask our members and supporters to get in touch with us at the earliest opportunity if they have concerns about a development's impact on a wild place.

Support where possible

8. The Trust will reactively consider any enquiry from an individual concerned about the impact a proposed development might have on a wild place. We have limited resources to respond formally to every proposed development of concern but we will aim to offer support or advice about individual cases to concerned individuals. If you are concerned about a development proposal and think we can help please email policy@johnmuirtrust.org.

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