

Scottish Natural Heritage – parks are still open

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has closed public facilities, including visitor centres and toilets, on its National Nature Reserves across Scotland for the health and safety of both staff and visitors.

But most of SNH's beautiful and varied reserves remain open for the public to enjoy during this difficult time, while following the social distancing guidelines set by the government.

Due to its exceptional location and circumstances, the Isle of May National Nature Reserve will close to all other than resident SNH staff who will continue to its management on a care and maintenance basis.

In addition, it is expected that Noss National Nature Reserve will not open in May as planned, but this will be reviewed as circumstances develop.

This will be a very stressful and anxious time for many people, and spending time outdoors and connecting with nature can help improve physical and mental health. In a recent survey, around 9 in 10 outdoors visitors reported benefits to their mental and physical wellbeing, with 67% saying it helped them to relax and unwind and 64% saying it improved their physical health.



Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) growing beside the mountain trail at Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve, April 2015.

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Stewart Pritchard, SNH's Senior Advisor on Nature Reserves, said: "At SNH, we are working hard to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic in a way that ensures we look after both our staff and the public we serve.

"Our advice is to take care of yourself and others by following the government's social distancing guidelines and, when possible, relax and keep active by continuing to explore and enjoy local nature reserves, parks and spaces.

"Simple activities such as getting out for a walk, breathing fresh air, listening to birdsong or watching wildlife can all greatly improve our health during times of uncertainty and stress." Find details of national nature reserves in each area of Scotland at <https://www.nnr.scot/>

For those unable to get out and about, there are also podcasts available, telling stories about Scotland's nature, habitats,

landscapes and native species,
at <https://www.nature.scot/information-hub/podcasts>