

Know Before You Go

**A guide for creating and updating the information
on your wildlife reserve's website**



Using this template

Why ‘Know Before You Go’ matters

The aim is to give people the information they need before they visit your reserve. A good ‘Know Before You Go’ page will help people understand what the reserve is like and what to expect before they visit. For people with accessibility needs, the page will help them make an informed decision about whether the reserve is suitable for them to visit.

Types of reserve

Wildlife reserves and natural spaces are very diverse. Some have a wide range of facilities that make them more accessible for people to access and visit. Other reserves are either not open to visitors at all or have either limited or no facilities.

If you are writing ‘Know Before You Go’ information for one of these ‘wilder’ sites, you may not be able to complete all of the information in this template. However, every reserve should complete the ‘Introduction’ section, which includes accessibility information.

Form and structure

This guide is separated into the following sections.

- Introduction
- What to expect
- Exploring the site
- Getting here and parking
- Facilities
- Staying safe
- Contact us

Each section includes categories that cover a range of things that people want to know about your site when they think about visiting. It may be useful to consider keeping the information in the same order as this guide on your page.

The first sections are for you to provide an overview of the reserve and describe the experience of visiting. It’s a place for sharing key details and where you explain why people are likely to enjoy their time at the reserve.

Further down the page is where your information will help people understand if the reserve is likely to meet their needs. You can be more specific about some of the practical things that really matter to people, including how accessible the reserve is likely to be for visitors.

Style and language

Your Know Before You Go page should be written in clear language. You should write as if you are speaking directly to a single reader.

For example:

“You can walk your dog if it is on a lead.”

Please follow the principles of plain English as described by the Plain English Campaign.

Including images and videos

We know that many people find it useful to be able to see an image or video of a reserve before they visit. It gives them a sense of what to expect and in some cases can help people decide if the reserve is likely to meet their accessibility needs.

Support to complete the template

Email wildaboutinclusion@wildlifetrusts.org if you have any questions or need help to complete your Know Before You Go information.

If you are not part of The Wildlife Trusts

The sections, categories and questions in this template should be useful for any organisation or place that welcomes visitors. Please feel free to use it and adapt it to your own setting.

Introduction

You must complete an 'Introduction' section of your Know Before You Go page in full. This should appear at the top of the page, providing an opportunity to showcase the reserve and featuring the most essential information.

Summary

An overview of the reserve in one paragraph. Include an opening sentence that describes the reserve and makes people want to visit.

Then consider the following questions:

- Is the reserve open to the public?
- What are the main reasons people enjoy visiting the reserve?
- Are there regular activities to take part in or groups to join?
- Who typically visits the reserve?

Accessibility

A statement that covers the main accessibility features of the reserve, such as disabled parking spaces and accessible toilets. If there are no or limited accessible facilities, you should make that clear here too.

Consider the following questions:

- What is the important accessibility information that visitors need to know about the reserve?

Video of the reserve

A short video of the reserve can give visitors a better idea of what to expect when they visit. It can also be used to highlight some of the important accessibility concerns, such as trail and path surfaces.

The video could cover the following questions:

- What do the reserve's main features look like?
- What kind of wildlife is at the reserve?
- What are the surfaces like around the reserve?
- What is the reserve like for someone with accessibility needs?
- What do visitors think about the reserve when they visit?
- What are the staff like at the reserve?

Opening and closing times

Be clear about when people can visit the site and add any information that makes it easier for them to decide when is best for them to come.

Consider the following questions:

- When does the reserve open and close?
- Are different parts of the reserve open at different times?
- Do opening times change throughout the year?
- Is the reserve open on bank holidays and at Christmas?
- When is the busiest time to visit?
- Is it safe to visit when it is dark?

Address

Provide accurate address information and include any details that might make it easier for visitors to find the reserve.

Consider the following questions:

- What is the address for the reserve? Include the full address, including postcode and What3words information.
- Is there more than one address?
- Is the postcode a reliable way of finding the site using Google Maps, Apple Maps or similar service? If not, give extra directions.
- Are there any landmarks to look out for?

What to expect

This section is for you to highlight and showcase all the reasons someone may want to visit the reserve. It should give them a real sense of what the experience of visiting is like, which can cover both its activities and attractions, as well as more specific details.

About the reserve

Explain what it is like for a visitor to be at the reserve, including any notable features or facilities that will help them understand the experience. This is also a great place to highlight and showcase some of the key reasons why people usually visit.

Consider the following questions:

- What nature, heritage or other walking trails are at the reserve?
- What seating and shelter are at the reserve?
- How many benches are there, where are they and how far apart are they spaced?
- What lighting is there throughout the reserve?
- What ground or surface type is throughout the reserve?
- Are the walking trails and surfaces suitable for a person with a mobility aid?
- Are trails and surfaces suitable for someone who finds it hard to walk?
- Are there any particularly steep hills in the reserve?
- How many bins are there, what type are they and where are they?
- What phone and data signal can I expect?
- What has the reserve done to help everyone feel safe and welcome?
- Who typically visits the reserve?
- When is the reserve busiest and quietest?
- Are there any issues with crime or anti-social behaviour that visitors should be aware of?

Wildlife

Describe the kinds of wildlife that visitors can expect to see when they visit the site. Include any specific environmental features and be clear if there are any key rules people should know about before they visit.

Consider the following questions:

- What grazing animals are at the reserve?
- What bird species are at the reserve?
- Where can visitors see wildlife at the reserve?
- Is the wildlife in areas that are easy to access?
- Are there bird hides? Are the bird hides accessible?
- What plants, trees and fauna are at the reserve?
- Are there any ponds, rivers or other places where there is water?
- Is there a webcam that allows people to watch wildlife from home?
- What are the rules about wildlife?

Activities

Explain the different activities that visitors can take part in at the reserve. Think about what people may need to know when they are deciding whether the activities are for them. Be clear if there are any accessibility issues that might affect visitor's decision to visit.

Consider the following questions:

- What are the main things to see and do at the reserve?
- What other activities are available?
- Are there accessible activities available?
- How much do activities cost?
- Can visitors borrow or hire equipment, such as binoculars?
- Which activities are not accessible to some people?
- What is not allowed? Give examples like fishing, remote controlled boats, drones, swimming or canoeing.
- Are there signs to show where visitors can do activities?
- How do visitors report something that isn't allowed?

Sights and sounds

Explain what visitors are likely to see and feel when they are at the reserve. Include any facilities that may help people experience the reserve, especially if they have accessibility needs.

Consider the following questions:

- Are there any quiet areas where visitors can think and reflect?
- What sights, sounds and smells can someone with sensory needs expect?
- Are there any accessible sensory experiences?
- Is there an audio tour available?
- Is there a webcam to watch the reserve or its wildlife online?

Exploring the reserve

A section to describe what facilities and experiences visitors may get as they explore the reserve. Try and give people a sense of what it will be like for them to move around the site, as well as any information or support they can get to help them.

When you arrive

Describe what visitors should expect when they first get to the reserve. Include information that helps them picture what it will be like to enter and start using the reserve.

Consider the following questions:

- What will the entrance area look like when visitors arrive?
- What surfaces are there in the car park or main entrance area?
- What is the surface like around and near disabled parking spaces?
- If the surface is gravel, how deep is it?
- Where should visitors go first when they arrive?
- Where do visitors go to get information about the reserve?

Buildings and staff

Describe the key buildings at the reserve and what they are for. Include information on who they might expect to be there when they visit, including any support they may be able to get from members of staff.

Consider the following questions:

- Is there a visitor centre? If so, what are the opening times?
- Is there a place to get food and drink?
- Will there be someone there to welcome visitors when they arrive?
- Is there somewhere visitors can get information?
- Are there staff members that visitors can speak to if they need help?
- Is there anyone on the reserve responsible for safety and security?
- When are staff members or volunteers available?
- Are there hearing loops, Braille, or anyone with special training there to help visitors?
- Are there facilities or spaces available for activities such as prayer or for breastfeeding?

Signs

Describe the different types of signs available at the reserve. Give visitors a sense of how easy it will be for them to find their way around and get to the facilities and activities they want to.

Consider the following questions:

- What signs there are where visitors arrive?
- Where are signs placed throughout the reserve?
- What type of signs are there? Examples include simple directions, information about wildlife and maps.
- Are there accessible versions of signs?

Languages

Provide information on any information available in different languages and what support is there for people whose language isn't catered for.

Consider the following questions:

- What languages are used on signs?
- What languages are used throughout the reserve?
- Can visitors ask for information in their language?
- Does information have Easy Read versions?
- Will someone be able to help if visitors don't understand information or signs?

Guided tours and groups

Describe any guided reserve tours or regular groups that people can join. Include who they are for, how often they run and what the people who attend enjoy about them.

Consider the following questions:

- Is there a guided tour available at the reserve?
- Are there regular groups that visitors can join? If so, share what groups are available, how often they run and other useful details.
- Can people watch a virtual tour of the reserve online?

Maps and information

Describe the information and maps available to visitors. Include any information they can see before they visit and be clear about what they can find once they arrive.

Consider the following questions:

- What information about the reserve is available?
- Is there paper or online information about the reserve?
- Is there a paper or online map of the reserve?
- Are there accessible versions of the information and map?
- Can visitors read the information and map if they are colour blind?
- What languages is the information and map available in?
- Is there a Braille version of the information and map?
- Who can visitors tell if they need a map or information in formats different to those available?

Dogs

Describe how visitors should handle their dogs if they are allowed to take them to the reserve. Share any facilities available for dogs, but also include any information to reassure people who may not like being around dogs.

Consider the following questions:

- Can visitors take their dog to the reserve?
- Do dogs need to be on leads? If so, is that everywhere at the reserve?
- Are there dog waste bins? If so, how many and where are they?
- Can visitors take their dogs into the reserve's indoor spaces?
- Is there water available for dogs?
- Are there any places where dogs are not allowed?
- Is the site suitable for someone who does not like being around dogs?

What to wear

Suggest some items of clothing that may be appropriate for visitors to wear when they visit the reserve. Include any information that might be useful to know when the weather or conditions of the reserve changes.

Consider the following questions:

- Do visitors need to wear any special clothing?
- What kind of footwear should visitors wear? Does it change depending on the season?
- Can visitors hire or buy any clothing while at the reserve?

Getting here and parking

Knowing how to get to and park at the reserve can really help visitors prepare for their visit. Provide information about as many options as there are available, including cycling and public transport. Include any accessible facilities and describe what the experience may be like for people with accessibility needs.

Parking

Share as much about parking as possible, including how easy it will be for people to park and how much it will cost. Include information about accessible parking, including how far away the car park is to the nearest building or facilities.

Consider the following questions:

- Is there a car park?
- How many spaces does the car park have? Include disabled and family spaces.
- Where are the disabled and family spaces?
- What surface is the car park and if there is gravel, how deep is it?
- When does the car park open and close?
- How much does it cost to park?
- How do visitors pay for parking?
- Do visitors pay for parking at the start or end of their visit?
- Are there any vehicle height restrictions?
- Is there electric vehicle charging? If so, is it accessible?
- Is the car park well lit?
- How far is the car park from the entrance or nearest building?
- How is the car park kept secure?
- Is there space to securely park a mobility scooter?

Bike parking

Describe the facilities available to cyclists, including any dedicated spaces for parking and securing bikes.

Consider the following questions:

- Is there a place to park a bike?
- Where is the bike parking area?
- How many bike parking spaces are there?
- How close to the entrance or nearest building is the bike parking?
- Is the bike parking area covered?
- Do visitors need to book a bike parking space before they visit?
- Are there charging facilities for an electric bike?

Public transport

Share the different ways that people can use public transport to get to the reserve. Include or link to current transport timetables, as well as information about local taxi services.

Consider the following questions:

- Where is the nearest bus stop and train station?
- Where can visitors find the latest bus and rail timetables?
- Do timetables change throughout the year?
- What happens if visitors miss the last bus?
- Are there any cycling routes or trails?
- Where can visitors park their bike?
- Are there local taxi services?
- Are there wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) taxi services?

Facilities

Toilets

Describe the toilets available at the reserve. Include how many and where they are, as well as specific information about accessible toilets for people who need them.

Consider the following questions:

- Does the reserve have toilets?
- Does the reserve have a Changing Places toilet?
- Where are the toilets?
- Are toilets free or do visitors need to pay? If so, how much?
- What type of toilets are there? Include any accessible toilets.
- What facilities are in the accessible toilets?
- Are there any mixed-gender toilets?
- Do the toilets have baby changing facilities?
- If there are no toilets, are there other public toilets nearby?

Food and drink

Describe the food and drink facilities available at the reserve. Include what food is available and if the reserve caters for people with specific needs.

Consider the following questions:

- Is there somewhere to buy food and something to drink?
- Is there a café or restaurant?
- What food is available at the café?
- Is there vegetarian, vegan and halal food?
- Is there any gluten-free or dairy-free food?
- Are there toilets in the café and if so, what type and where are they?
- Is there indoor seating at the café? How many seats are there?
- Is there outdoor seating at the café? How many seats are there?
- Can I take my dog into the café?
- Can I bring and eat my own food?
- Are there vending machines? What is in them and how do I pay?
- Are there bins if visitors bring a picnic?
- Does the café provide accessible cutlery and crockery, such as two-handled cups, easy-grip cutlery, and plates with high sides?

Babies and young children

Describe the facilities people with a baby or young children can use, such as changing stations and play areas. Include any details that will help parents and carers decide if the reserve will be an appropriate place to visit.

Consider the following questions:

- Are the main activities suitable for young children? Be specific about trails and things to find.
- Is there a play area for children? What age groups is it suitable for?
- What are the safety guidelines for children?
- Can visitors bring a pushchair?
- Are there baby changing facilities? If so, where are they?
- Is there food available for young children?
- Are there highchairs available in the café?
- Can visitors heat baby milk or food?

Wheelchair access and mobility aids

Share information about the reserve that will be important to someone who uses a wheelchair. Try and describe how the reserve makes the experience more accessible and include areas or places that may be more difficult to access.

Consider the following questions:

- Are there paths suitable for a manual wheelchair?
- Are there specific areas that may be more suitable for specialist equipment, like trampers?
- Do buildings and other indoor spaces have ramp access?
- Are the different surfaces suitable for wheelchairs with a third wheel?
- Are the surfaces suitable for a powered wheelchair or mobility scooter?
- Are surfaces suitable for other mobility aids, such as a walking stick or frame?
- Is there an accessible toilet for someone who uses a wheelchair?
- Is there a Changing Places toilet?
- Is someone able to help visitors get in and out of their car?
- Is there mobility equipment for hire or loan?

Staying safe

Feeling safe is an important thing for anyone who visits a public space. Use this section to describe any safety measures you have in place and procedures that visitors may need to follow.

Safety

Describe any measures or policies in place that are there to help visitors stay safe when they are at the reserve. Include any practical information that may help people understand what to do if they don't feel safe.

Consider the following questions:

- What should visitors do if they are lost?
- What should visitors do if they are harassed at the reserve?
- What should visitors do if they feel scared or something goes wrong?
- Is the reserve a safe place for someone to visit on their own?
- Is there someone to speak to if a visitor needs help?
- Is there a phone number to call if a visitor needs help?
- Where can visitors read the reserve's safety information and policy?
- Is there a trained first aider at the reserve?
- Should visitors report accidents and who to?
- Where can visitors find the reserve's safeguarding policies?
- Are there specific entry and exit points to the reserve?
- Is the site directly next to any place of note, such as a prison, farm or other significant industry?

Emergencies

Describe what visitors should do if they find themselves in an emergency while they are at the reserve.

Consider the following questions:

- Who do I contact in an emergency?
- Where do I go if I need urgent help?
- Do you have a fire procedure?
- What support is available at the reserve if there is an emergency?
- Is there always a qualified first aider at the reserve?

Contact us

Visitors may want to contact the reserve before, during and after their visit. Use this section to help people understand what and how they can contact the reserve get more information, share feedback or make a complaint.

Contact information

Describe the main ways that visitors can get in touch with the reserve. Include different options and any information that may help people who have accessibility needs or who do not speak English.

Consider the following questions:

- How can visitors contact the reserve? Include phone, email address and social media channels.
- When can visitors call the reserve?
- Are there different email addresses for different things?
- Are visitors able to speak to a specific person?

Sharing feedback

Share the different ways that people can share feedback about their visit to the reserve. Include ways they can get in touch privately, as well as a more public review of their experience.

Consider the following questions:

- How do visitors share feedback about their visit?
- Is there someone who visitors can share their feedback with when they are at the reserve?
- How do visitors leave an online review of their visit?
- How do visitors share feedback about their visit on social media?

Make a complaint

Describe how a visitor can contact the reserve to make a complaint about their visit. Be clear that their feedback is welcome and share what happens to their complaint once it is made.

Consider the following questions:

- How can visitors make a complaint?
- What happens when someone makes a complaint?

The Wildlife Trusts are a federation of 47 charities, 46 individual Wildlife Trusts and a central charity, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. Together we have more than 940,000 members, 39,000 volunteers and 3,600 staff across the UK. We share a vision of nature in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder landscapes where people and nature thrive.



Wildlife Trusts care for – and have restored – some of the most special places for wildlife in the UK. Collectively we manage more than 2,300 nature reserves, operate 123 visitor and education centres and own 29 working farms. We undertake research, we stand up for wildlife and wild places under threat, and we help people access nature.

We work with businesses who are committed to being nature positive and take action to help restore 30% of land and seas for nature by 2030.

The Wildlife Trusts

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