



National Trust

Who to Contact for Research Collaborations with the National Trust

Guidance for Academic Partners

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Who to Contact for Research Collaborations with the National Trust: Guidance for Academic Partners

The National Trust is a large and complex organisation, and knowing who to contact is an important part of setting up and coordinating a research partnership. This section of the guidance for academic partners explains some of the different staff roles at the Trust, where they sit in the organisation's structure, and how academic researchers might work with them in collaborative projects.



National Trust staff at Kinder Scout, commemorating the Mass Trespass as part of the People's Landscapes programme

People who work at the National Trust are based at a specific property, or sit within the regional consultancy, or work for Whole Trust based at the organisation's central office. In addition to paid members of staff, the National Trust relies on thousands of dedicated volunteers, many of whom are active researchers. The type of National Trust people that you work with will depend on your research focus and the form of collaboration you're interested in. This guide aims to make it easier for academics to identify who is the best person to get in touch with to discuss working together, and who to involve throughout the collaboration.

The National Trust's Staff Structure

This is a very brief overview of some the people you are likely to encounter while working in partnership with the National Trust on a research collaboration. The next few pages give more detail to make it easier for you to know who to contact, when and how.

	Key people for research	Where they're based	When to contact them	How to contact them	Bear in mind
Site- and property-based staff	General Managers; Visitor Experience Teams; House and Collections Teams; Rangers; Gardeners; Volunteer Managers.	At a specific National Trust site or portfolio, all the time.	When you want to speak to somebody about a research project that focuses on a specific place that the National Trust cares for.	Use this guide to identify which staff member is best positioned to advise you, then ask to be put in touch using the 'Contact Us' section on the site/ property's webpage.	They have significant operational duties and may not be able to respond immediately.
Regional Consultants	Lead Curators (these are also the Regional Research Leads); Regional Consultancy Curators; Partnership Coordinators; Visitor Experience Consultants; Regional Specialists.	At Regional Hubs, but likely to much of their time at the properties they support.	Contact the Regional Research lead to find out which property might be interested in working on your project. Other consultants are likely a be involved once the partnership starts.	Find out who the Regional Research Lead is for your area by emailing the central research team .	Regional Consultants will often have an in-depth knowledge of the research needs of several properties, without the operational demands of property-based staff. They will play an important role in partnership work.
Whole Trust staff	Head of Research and Specialist Advice; Research Manager; Research Programming Manager; Research Coordinator; National Specialist Teams	At the National Trust Headquarters, Heelis in Swindon, although they often work in other Regional Hubs.	When you'd like to be put in touch with a national specialist; when you'd like to know more about the Research Strategy; when you would like to partner with the National Trust as an organisation rather than with a particular site or region.	Email the central research team .	Whole Trust makes decisions about national strategy and are less likely to have an in-depth knowledge about the capacity to coordinate partnerships at a particular site.

Site- and Property-based Staff

The majority of research collaborations with the National Trust are between an academic and one specific site. Site-based research allows academics to build a relationship with the staff and really get to know the place they are working with, and to identify how their research fits with the site's priorities and programming plans. Whether you are interested in researching the history of a country house or undertaking scientific research in the outdoors, you will need to have a named contact at the site you are working with. You should bear in mind that staff turnover is high at the National Trust, particularly at sites and properties, so in the case of staff changes do make sure you have another named point of contact throughout your collaboration – and ideally an agreement about what will happen if your main contact leaves (this is especially important in larger collaborations). Onsite staff structure varies depending on the needs and resources of each place, and specific roles differ from property to property. Below is a summary of some of the property-based roles you can usually expect to find at National Trust places, and how they are likely to be involved in collaborative projects with academic researchers.

General Managers

Each place that the National Trust cares for has a General Manager who makes decisions about the budget, priorities, and strategic direction of the place(s) they work with. Smaller places – for example, a small manor house, or part of a coastline or woodland – are part of a portfolio, and one General Manager will be responsible for all of the places in that portfolio. Larger properties – for example, a large mansion property with gardens and an extensive estate that attracts large numbers of visitors – will stand alone, and the General Manager will only work with that property. In collaborative projects between the NT and academic researchers, the General Manager is likely to be involved at a high level and will be aware of the general focus of any collaborations, lending support when needed but delegating the detail and day-to-day coordination of the project to other members of the property team.

Site- and Property-based Staff

Visitor Experience team

Larger properties usually have a Visitor Experience team, whose responsibility is to develop programmes, exhibitions and events for visitors. The Visitor Experience team will be important points of contact for collaborations with academics, as they will identify how the research fits into the property's plans and how best to interpret the research in a way that engages their visitors. In addition to this role, the Visitor Experience team will often be responsible for some of the operational elements of running the property (such as duty managing, volunteer management, first aid responses etc.). At places that don't have a Visitor Experience team, identifying how research fits into the plan for visitors is likely to be part of the responsibilities of the Operations team.

Amy Carney, House and Collections Manager at Lyme, with Alan Titchmarsh and the Sarum Missal on the TV series 'Secrets of the National Trust'.

House and Collections team

Built properties will generally have a House and Collections team. This team is responsible for looking after the building and its contents. The House and Collections team will be valuable in research projects because they will have in-depth knowledge about any relevant archives, site-specific stories and material culture. As with their Visitor Experience colleagues, the House and Collections team are likely to have significant operational responsibilities in addition to their main role – particularly in terms of volunteer management.



Site- and Property-based Staff



Ranger in the Lake District talking to visitors about the work the National Trust does.

Rangers

Rangers are responsible for the protection and maintenance of the National Trust's outdoor estates. They are the people to contact about site-specific research projects in the outdoors, and will have information relating to the site management and estate plans, as well as an idea of the research priorities to do with land, outdoors and nature. They are often interested in research projects that can expand their knowledge and understanding of the estate, and also build on the research capacity and capability of the ranger team.

Others

Depending on the nature and focus of your planned research, you might also expect to work with Volunteer Managers, Gardeners, Education teams and Marketing and Communication teams – among others. These people will usually be based full-time at the site or property itself.

Regional Consultancy Staff

The National Trust's site- and property-based staff members are supported by colleagues in the regional consultancy, who are beneficial people for researchers to work with when collaborating with the Trust. Regional consultants are specialists in a specific area – they include Visitor Experience consultants, curators, conservators, regional archaeologists and specialists in the natural environment. These regional consultants sit in teams that are led by a Consultancy Manager. Consultants tend to work with a group of properties within their region, and are often useful links between the properties and their Whole Trust colleagues.

Lead Curator

Each Region in the National Trust has a Lead Curator who sits in the regional 'Experiences' consultancy team. In addition to having oversight of the curatorial priorities for their region, Lead Curators act as the Regional Research Leads, holding regular internal Regional Research Group meetings with research-active National Trust staff and volunteers and determining the research priorities and plans for the regions. As such, they are important people to get involved in collaborative projects between academic researchers and the NT, particularly if you don't have a particular partner site or property in mind, or if you're looking to work with more than one place.



Andrew Morrison
Lead Curator, North Region

“Rigorous academic research and the sometimes totally unexpected outcomes that it produces massively increases our ability as regional consultants in the National Trust to better understand, value and engage with people across our places. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing academic research painstakingly mature and then burst out into rich dialogues opening up the past for people today”.

Regional Consultancy Staff

Consultancy Curators

In addition to the Lead Curator, each region has a team of regional Consultancy Curators who usually work to support between three and five different properties. The Consultancy Curators work with the property-based staff to help enhance the visitor experience (including programme and exhibition planning, research, and storyboarding), and are also involved with more operational elements of curatorial work (including collections reviews, archiving projects and infrastructure). Consultancy Curators are likely to be actively involved in research collaboration at the properties they work with, and academics who are starting a new collaboration at a National Trust site will find it useful to discuss their research with the regional consultancy curator that works with the property-based team.



Curator Katie Taylor, working on an exhibition at Dunham Massey

Other Consultants

Other regional consultants, such as Visitor Experience consultants, regional specialists (for instance, archaeologists and gardens experts) and marketing specialists are likely to help support your collaboration as it develops, in order to ensure that as many visitors as possible are able to engage with the academic research that underpins visitor programmes.

Some regions have invested in consultants whose role it is to set up and coordinate partnerships with external organisations, such as Academic Partnership Managers, Cultural Programmes Coordinators, and Contemporary Arts Managers. These roles are useful in ensuring all partners are getting what they need from any collaboration. The Lead Curator will be able to advise academics whether these roles exist in the region they'd like to work with.

Whole Trust Staff

National Trust staff members that work on a 'Whole Trust' basis are not connected with a particular region or site. They sit in teams which decide the strategic direction of the organisation as a whole, and work to support their regional colleagues in successfully delivering these strategies. The Trust's head office is called Heelis and is in Swindon, although Whole Trust staff members often work from hubs in other regions.

The National Trust's research team is based at Heelis, and includes the Head of Research and Specialist Advice, Research Manager, Research Programming Manager and Research Coordinator. The Research Team works closely with the National Specialists who are made up of internal experts working on a particular area, including conservation, archaeology and architecture and design. These specialists offer advice and lend their expertise to site-based staff and regional consultants as needed.



Heelis, the National Trust's head office in Swindon

The research team leads on delivering the Trust's [Research Strategy](#). They hold regular Research Group Meetings with Whole Trust leadership colleagues which are organised along the three priorities in the Research Strategy ('Looking After What We've Got'; 'Move, Teach, and Inspire'; and 'A Healthier and More Beautiful Natural Environment'). The Whole Trust team also holds biannual meetings with the external Research Strategy Group, which includes senior academics from university departments including archaeology, biology, ecology and history. The specialist advice given by these group members helps to inform the strategic direction of the National Trust in terms of its research priorities.

Whole Trust Staff

“Research helps us to deliver our core purpose. It underpins our conservation work and the experiences that people have at our places when they visit. Much of the research that we do is done in partnership and we are always happy to hear from external researchers interested in collaboration. As an Independent Research Organisation, we are passionate about research that helps us to better understand our places and collections, and are keen to work with others to develop joint research projects”.



Claire Pascolini-Campbell
Research Manager, Whole Trust

In terms of research, the main role of the Whole Trust team is to raise the profile of the National Trust as an Independent Research Organisation; implement the research strategy; and coordinate the research partnerships between other organisations and the National Trust as a whole.

The Whole Trust research team can be contacted on:
research@nationaltrust.org.uk.

The Whole Trust research team is also on Twitter: @ResearchNT

Volunteers

Many sites and properties have teams of research volunteers who will be valuable assets in research collaborations with academics. Volunteers have often been involved in research for decades; as such, their knowledge and expertise of the site or property is often extensive.

Where possible, research partnerships should include volunteers. See our guidance about working with volunteers for more information.

How to get in touch

If you know which site or property you'd like to work with, contact them directly to discuss your research project. All of the places that the National Trust cares for has a website with a 'Contact Us' section. In your initial enquiry, you should ask to be put in touch with the staff member who is likely to be the most involved in your project. As a general rule, research inside a built property is likely to be of interest to the House and Collections manager or the Visitor Experience team, while research on the outdoors will be most relevant to the Rangers or Gardeners. Do bear in mind that site- and property-based staff have significant operational duties and may not be able to respond to email immediately.

If you know which geographical region you'd like to work in but don't have a specific site or property in mind, contact the Regional Research Lead who will also be the Lead Curator for that region. They will be able to advise academics directly, or put you in touch with the regional consultants who can. You can find out who the Lead Curator is by emailing research@nationaltrust.org.uk.

If you would like to work with the National Trust as an organisation, rather than on a project based at a specific site in a particular region, contact the central research team at Whole Trust who will be able to let you know how the Trust might be involved in your project. Please get in touch by emailing research@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Further information

This guide aims to give information about the staff structure of the National Trust to potential academic partners who might want to work with us.

For more information about how the National Trust operates, including documents about our governance and constitution, please visit <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/how-we-are-run>.