

## 9. Presentation – The National Trust

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Richard Higgs, General Manager for the National Trust will attend the meeting to make a short presentation on the work of the National Trust in South Somerset.

### **Background information about the National Trust**

Of the 19 National Trust (NT) properties in Somerset eight are situated in South Somerset, seven are in Area North and the remaining property, Lytes Cary Manor is in Area East just a short distance from Somerton.

The business of the NT at the properties also includes five holiday lets and 500 acres of agricultural estate. Annually there are in the region of 250,000 visitors to the properties in this district, they are a mixture of local people, day visitors and people on holiday in the county or region; their visits not only support the National Trust but also make a significant contribution to the local economy through secondary spend with other local amenities and services. In Somerset it is estimated that visitors spend over £1.08 billion a year and approximately 31,700 people (9% of Somerset's employment) are employed in tourism related jobs; a recent survey commissioned by the county tourism partnership confirmed that culture and heritage continue in their popularity, so play their part in encouraging new and repeat visits.

The day-to-day running of National Trust properties relies heavily on the willing band of volunteers that welcome visitors and explain historic relevance. In South Somerset alone there are 600 volunteers regularly supporting the Trust, giving a combined total of about 38,000 hours service per year. The Trust also supports young people at the beginning of their careers through apprenticeship schemes; in South Somerset there are currently apprentices in the areas of building and horticulture.

The Trust has recently reviewed its focus nationally, in addition to its commitment to customer satisfaction and to providing a memorable customer experience; it has recognised the need to engage with the communities living in the vicinity of its properties, the Trust has therefore developed its "Going Local" strategy. It recognises that the long held perception of the Trust is that of custodian of old buildings and is working to change that perception through local engagement and by diversifying how the properties are enjoyed. Outdoor activities, themed events, artistic interventions and diversification of use of buildings are being developed as forward moves for the Trust.

Richard Higgs is the General Manager for the National Trust's properties in South Somerset and, in addition to property management; he oversees a number of initiatives to raise the profile of the Trust locally and to ensure their activities engage with today's audience.