Personal message from the Regional Director

I’m proud to lead the South West region, one of the five regions and two countries that make up the National Trust’s estate. The South West is one of our largest regions, covering the six counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire - a large geographical area extending from Hidcote to St Michael’s Mount to Studland Bay.

The South West is a region of fantastic and much-valued landscapes, with two National Parks and four World Heritage Sites, including England’s only natural World Heritage Site. It has a high proportion of listed buildings and outstanding archaeology, as well as many key sites for wildlife, including Purbeck which is one of the most biodiverse places in the United Kingdom. Surrounding it all is the South West coast – the region’s great asset and one of the most spectacular walks in the world according to *Lonely Planet*.

These spectacular landscapes, combined with our fantastic heritage and visitor offer, make the South West the UK’s favourite place to holiday. The west of the region is the country’s top domestic tourism destination, with its beaches, coastline and countryside being the main draws.  Cornwall attracts around five million visitors in the summer months.

The South West is a region of contrasts in its domestic population. It is England’s most rural region, where key issues for the countryside - food and farming, coastal change and erosion, renewable energy - have a strong resonance and a high profile. But further east there is a stronger urban focus, with lively centres such as Bristol offering potential to grow support from new audiences.

This is why I’m so keen to attract Regional Advisory Board members who can help the National Trust grasp the opportunities our region offers, and rise to the future challenges we shall need to overcome. The National Trust has a large and diverse estate in the South West; combine this with the talent and commitment of our staff and volunteers, and we have the opportunity to deliver across all areas of the ‘Playing our Part’ strategy over the next ten years.

The ambitions we’ve set out in our plans reflect our core purpose – to look after special places for ever, for everyone. Our challenge is to remain relevant – responding to the needs of today while remaining true to the legacy of our past - as well as upholding the highest standards. We want people to feel that this is their National Trust and that our places are their places – a part of their lives today and in the future.

If you feel that you can bring your external knowledge and experience, and your passion for the South West’s natural and historic environment, to help us achieve this, then we would love you to consider joining us as a Regional Advisory Board member.

The National Trust in the South West

* 5.7 million visitors per year at 65 pay-to-enter sites (24% of all Trust visitors)
* Generating significant income to reinvest in conservation:
  + £14.5 million rental income from our let estate – farm and residential (32% of total Trust contributions)
  + £6.5 million profit from catering and retail (23% of total Trust contributions for catering and retail)
  + £2.2 million profit from holiday cottages (44% of total Trust contributions for holiday cottages)
* 52,000 hectares of countryside and 20% of the South West coast
* Over 2,000 regular and seasonal staff, alongside 13,500 volunteers who contribute nearly 1 million hours of time each year.
* Over 600,000 members living in the region (14% of households)

Working with our volunteers and tenants, we look after some truly special places. They include some large estates - Killerton, Holnicote, Arlington, Cotehele, Kingston Lacy, Corfe Castle – comprising many of our 200 farms and 1,600 cottages.

We own land within every Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the South West, and within both National Parks (Dartmoor and Exmoor). Our countryside sites include Golden Cap, Studland Bay, Glastonbury Tor, Stonehenge landscape, Kynance Cove, Bolt Head & Bolt Tail, Lizard Point, Porlock Heaths and Avebury. The defining feature of our estate is our coastal ownership: 52% of landholding is coastal and we care for 68 beaches.

We play a part in protecting four World Heritage Sites - the Jurassic Coast, Stonehenge & Avebury, Cornwall & West Devon Mining, and the City of Bath – and protect 613 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. We have over 500 Listed Buildings and the core of 13 whole villages, including Sherborne, Arlington and Lacock.

We ensure that the nation can enjoy some of the UK’s finest historic houses and gardens, such as Tyntesfield, Stourhead, Kingston Lacy, Hidcote, Lanhydrock, Killerton, Dyrham, Cotehele, Castle Drogo, Dunster Castle, Knightshayes, Corfe Castle and Trelissick.

Projects that give a flavour of the National Trust’s work in the South West include:

* Looking after what we’ve got through investing in key conservation projects at Castle Drogo and Dyrham Park
* Restoring a healthy, beautiful environment by working in partnership to create more space for wildlife and people along the South West coast
* Creating experiences that move, teach and inspire through projects such as Writing Places at famous literary houses (home to Thomas Hardy, Agatha Christie and Samuel Taylor Coleridge) and, in the outdoors, opening a new cycle hub at Lanhydrock