

*RSPB Reserves and Local Economies*

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

On 31 March 2002, the RSPB managed 176 reserves across the UK, covering 121,082 hectares. This paper examines the impact of these reserves on the local economies around them.

## Assessing the economic impacts of RSPB reserves

RSPB reserves support economic development in a variety of ways:

- They provide **direct employment** for staff involved in reserve management and associated activities;
- **Spending by employees** supports local economic activity,
- In the same way **spending by volunteers** also supports local economies;
- **Direct expenditure by reserves** on goods and services provides income and employment for local firms and the use of **commercial contractors** also provides additional employment and income for local businesses;
- **Grazing lets and agricultural tenancies** provide additional income and employment for local farmers;
- **Visitors to reserves** spend money in the local economy;

This report estimates the scale of these economic impacts. It collates data on employment, income and expenditure by the RSPB, as well as information on tenancies and grazing lets. It summarises the results of a number of visitor expenditure surveys. The economic impact of these activities is estimated using multipliers derived from input: output tables and tourism multiplier studies.

In total, we estimate that RSPB reserves support more than 1,000 FTE jobs in local and regional economies across the UK:

## Total local employment attributable to RSPB reserves

Type of Impact	Local/Regional Employment (FTE)
Direct employment on reserves	268
Employment in regional offices/HQ concerned with reserve acquisition and management	40
Spending by employees	31
Spending by Volunteers	4
Total direct reserve expenditures (of which attributable to contractors)	101 (50)
Grazing lets/agricultural tenancies	101
Indirect employment from farming operations	123
Spending by Visitors	335
<b>Total</b>	<b>1003 +</b>

This employment is supported by spending of £19 million per year by the RSPB and visitors to its reserve

## **Case Studies of Reserves and Local Economies**

The report examines in detail the economic impact of 12 reserves across the UK: Abernethy, the Anglesey reserves, Forsinard, Geltsdale, Loch Gruinart, Lake Vyrnwy, Mersehead, Minsmere, Otmoor, Pulborough, West Sedgemoor and Vane Farm. Between them, the 12 case study reserves are estimated to support almost 320 FTE jobs in local and regional economies, when all economic impacts are included. This is equivalent to nearly 8 FTE jobs per thousand hectares. The jobs per hectare figure varies markedly by reserve, being highest for relatively small reserves with large numbers of visitors, such as Pulborough Brooks and Vane Farm, and lower for more extensive upland reserves.

## **Conclusions**

RSPB reserves support more than 1,000 FTE jobs in the UK, with the largest impacts coming through direct employment of RSPB staff, and the effects of expenditures by visitors on local economies. Many of these jobs are located in more remote rural areas – and most are on less productive land - with few alternative employment opportunities. Reserve management can have a significant impact on local economies, especially around the larger reserves that generate significant numbers of visitors. Spending by visitors to reserves occurs throughout the year, helping to extend the tourism season.

These impacts are increasing, as the RSPB acquires and manages more land, and develops new facilities for visitors. Nature conservation is a growth sector, unlike agriculture and forestry, both of which have shed large numbers of jobs in the last decade. The RSPB plans to spend £20 million over the next five years on acquiring new reserves, including three major new reserves in urban fringe locations. We expect new RSPB reserves to employ 70 new staff and attract an extra 300,000 visitors. In total, we expect that these new reserves will support 250 FTE jobs in local and regional economies by 2007.

While aggregate figures suggest that RSPB management is not particularly labour intensive, most of the individual case studies in this report demonstrate that RSPB management has actually increased the economic impact of the site in question. This suggests that – rather than displacing economic activity from productive sites – the acquisition and management of RSPB reserves tends to bring benefits to sites that previously supported little or no economic activity.

This report has focused on RSPB reserves only. The economic impact of the conservation sector as a whole is significantly greater. There are more than 18,000 FTE jobs in nature and landscape conservation in the UK, while conservation organisations spend more than £500 million per year in England and Wales alone. Nature conservation helps to support a significant proportion of the rural tourism market, worth £12 billion per year in England alone.