



Membership Prospectus 2023



The Label

WFE accreditation is awarded to farms and estates that provide evidence of holistic and sustainable environmental, economic and social land management practices; recognising the multifunctional role of rural business and land use.

Accreditation is the label of excellence in championing the enhancement of wildlife and biodiversity through independent assessment.



Why Wildlife Farms & Estates?

Wildlife Farms & Estates is the England and Wales version of the European Wildlife Estates Label. It enables land managers to conduct scientifically based, evidence-led and robust audits with independent review and analysis.

The scheme encourages and enables the development of sustainable and holistic management practices that address the opportunities and challenges of land management.

AN INTERNATIONAL APPROACH

Established in 2005 and now represented by over 450 estates in 19 countries across Europe, the scheme comprises of a network of landowners and land managers who in the management of their land are committed to giving every opportunity for wildlife and biodiversity to flourish and grow. Over 1.9 million hectares are covered by the Wildlife Estates scheme.

The Wildlife Estates Label is coordinated by the European Landowners Organisation (ELO) in its promotion of responsible land management across Europe.

NATIONAL COORDINATION

Wildlife Farms & Estates - England & Wales is coordinated by a Steering Group of sixteen landowners, managers and specialists who are passionate about sustainable and holistic rural land management.

A number of Steering Group members have completed full accreditation through the independent assessment process. The Steering Group is supported by an independent Scientific Committee that helps ensure the integrity and robustness of assessment and the scheme.



Why Become A Wildlife Farm or Estate?

Rural land management faces a range of opportunities and challenges.

Wildlife Estates England & Wales is an independently assessed label of excellence and through the accreditation process empowers land owners and managers to address these complex issues:

NATURE RESTORATION & FINANCING

Protection and restoration of natural environments; understanding natural capital, insetting/offsetting, green financing opportunities, biodiversity net gain (BNG) and working with the private sector on sustainability criteria are fundamental in mitigating the impact of climate change and enhancing sustainable land-use practices.

REGULATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

Potential reform to the regulatory environment as applied to land management with greater recognition of sector-led schemes. Demonstration of best practice and the potential to facilitate access to new support schemes, reduce inspection requirements and mitigate duplication of paperwork.

POLICY

Policy has shifted away from providing financial support generated on an area basis and in the future will provide payments for a range of public goods. Key elements of these schemes will include support for improving biodiversity, habitat creation and management, carbon sequestration and landscape recovery.

ACCESS

Help understand the use of public rights of way networks, permissive access routes and green space. Recognition of both physical and mental health benefits has resulted in increasing promotion of outdoor recreation and green social prescribing.

RECOGNITION OF CHANGE

Land managers increasingly recognise the importance of monitoring and championing wildlife and biodiversity as part of holistic and sustainable land management practices that significantly contribute to developing adaptive and resilient systems at individual, local, national and international levels.

FOOD SYSTEMS & FORESTRY

Food systems & forestry - impacts on the wider environment now receive significant scrutiny from the public, industry, the supply chain and media reflecting a growing interest in understanding sustainability issues



Level One: The Fundamental Principles

At Level One, Wildlife Farms & Estates in England & Wales join the network of Wildlife Estates across Europe which uphold good practice in managing wildlife and biodiversity.

Owners and managers of Wildlife Farms & Estates commit to ten fundamental principles in the responsible management of wildlife (the Wildlife Estates Charter) and to compliance with UK/EU legislation.

1. Identifying a manager and supervisor of the estate concerned
2. Undertaking active wildlife management following a long-term integrated wildlife management plan
3. Maintaining records and monitoring the implementation of the wildlife management plan
4. Undertaking sustainable shooting, stalking and/or fishing according to the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity or equivalent in national legislations
5. Managing for a sustainable balance of game and wildlife and their shared habitats
6. Improving, whenever possible, biodiversity and species – notably those favourable to pollinators
7. Compliance with all legal requirements, relevant national codes of practice and European environmental legislation (e.g., Natura 2000) or equivalent in national legislations.
8. Adhering to the requirements of the agreement between Birdlife International and FACE on Directive 79/409/EEC, the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity, and the EU Commission's Guide on Hunting under the Birds Directive or equivalent in national legislations
9. Maintaining active engagement with local communities and undertaking education/awareness raising activities
10. Making the required effort to prepare to apply for Level Two accreditation as soon as the estate has in place its strategy, management plans and baseline data (such as referred to in commitments 2 and 3 above), and within a reasonable period (no longer than 5 years).



Level Two: Accreditation

In England & Wales, accreditation under Level Two of the Wildlife Estates Label is awarded following an independent assessment and review process via completion of a detailed questionnaire and visit to the applicant.

Recognises that an estate or farm is managed in the best possible way so as to integrate wildlife, flora, fauna and all natural resources.

- The elements highlighted above are integrated with all appropriate commercial activities, including Agriculture, Forestry, Game Shooting and Tourism.

Presents robust, credible and measurable evidence of wildlife conservation and biodiversity governance.

- To be robust the scheme requires this to be based on good science, to be credible it must be easily understood, accepted and trusted, and to be measurable the scheme requires to start from a sound database.
- Requires a policy of record-keeping (species present, control of pests and invasive non-native species, deer management etc.) and monitored implementation, verified by independent audit.

Shows to a wider audience how good management of biodiversity is, and must be, balanced and integrated.

- Demonstrates this management to all levels of government and administration, NGOs, policy-makers, people of influence and other organisations, and to local communities by providing facilities for visits and platforms for practical discussions and education.

Sets a standard of excellence in the active, sustainable, measurable and intergenerational management of nature and natural resources by landowners.

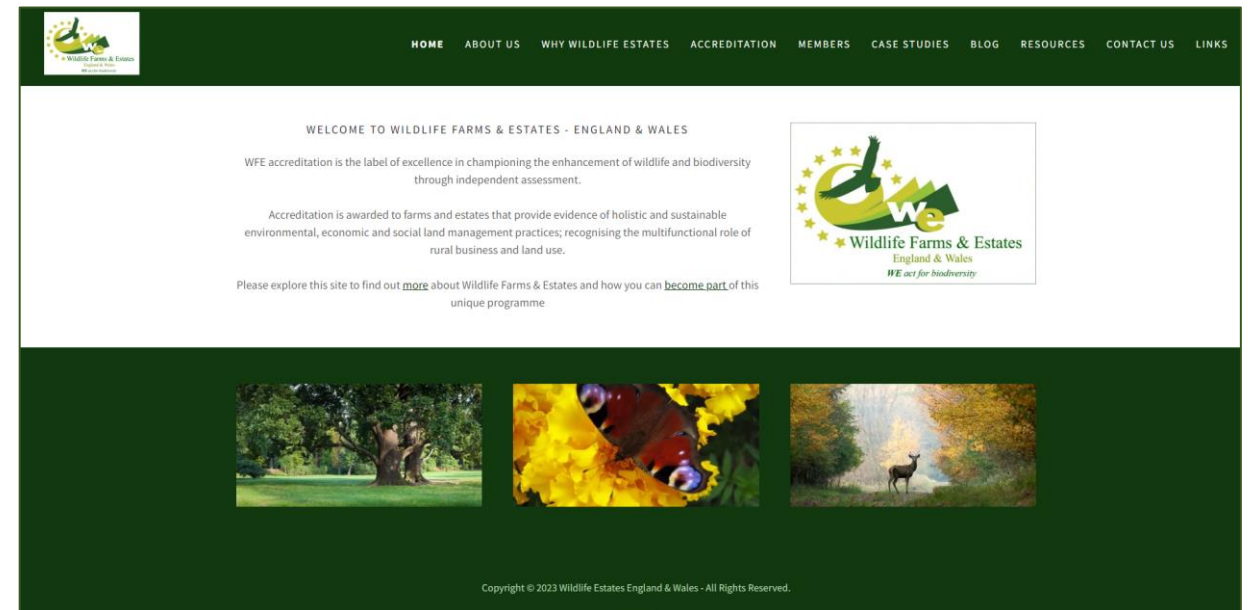
- Land managers must demonstrate understanding of the species, habitats and natural resources present on the property and take steps to conserve, increase and where possible reinforce these, with a prime focus on maintaining, creating or expanding appropriate habitats across their property.
- Land managers must pursue best practice in conservation, including taking measures to improve and enhance the quality and biodiversity of the natural resources that are under their stewardship. In particular soil, woodland, water and wetlands, montane and coastal zones (where applicable), the sustainable management of shooting, fishing and the control of pests, vermin and invasive non-native species where these take place on the estate.



Membership Resources

Wildlife Farms & Estates provides members with a range of resources on relevant topical issues:

- Dedicated website for England & Wales providing members with regular articles and briefings.
- Membership e-newsletter
- Farm & Estate visits
- Annual conference
- Online seminars





Members

Wildlife Estates Scotland

- *Separate scheme operated by Scottish Land & Estates*
 - *64 estates at Level Two*
 - *482,000ha land accredited*
 - *Majority is private land but also includes NGO holdings (e.g. RSPB)*
- Further information in appendices*





HOLKHAM ESTATE, NORFOLK

Situated atop the Norfolk coast covering much of the North Norfolk ANOB, Ramsar sites, Natura 2000 (SSSI) sites and more, Holkham estate first achieved Wildlife Estates (WE) accreditation in 2012. It was the first English estate to achieve the label and because there was no English WE organisation, was adjudicated from WE headquarters at the European Landowners (ELO) headquarters in Brussels.

The estate encompasses 25,000 acres. In-hand farming covers 6,500 acres of arable land (all run under a regenerative agriculture regime and under either HLS, CSS or an SFI pilot) 2,000 acres of grazing for a suckler beef herd of South Devon cattle and 600 ewes, much of it on the 4,000 acre Holkham National Nature reserve. This has been run in-hand for a decade, having been previously managed by Natural England. Fifteen farm tenants farm c.10,000 acres and forestry covers 2,000 acres. There is also a 900 acre deer park in which sits the Palladian hall built 1734-64. The estate manages its woodland under a Continuous Cover Forestry regime. It manages a mixed wild and reared shoot as well as a herd of Fallow deer. It manages multiple tourism operations including a 20 bedroom hotel (The Victoria), a large 70 acre holiday park (Pinewoods), 3 cafés, 5 car parks (2 on the beaches) and multiple events in the deer park and hall, including Christmas at Holkham, organised by Lady Leicester. It has 280 residential houses, nearly all rented to local people and key workers (North Norfolk has the third highest incidence of second homes in the UK) and some commercial lets.

CLA member, The Earl of Leicester, discovered Wildlife Estates whilst visiting Scotland and attending an early WES (Wildlife Estates Scotland) Plenary Session in 2010. He initially believed that a European accreditation would hold the estate in good stead within a British context, but now sees it as a means of demonstrating best practice. He also views the relatively rigorous Level 2 accreditation as a means of encouraging landowners and managers to learn more about the biodiversity and habitat they have on their holding, thereby enabling them to make more informed management decisions, leading to improvement of the natural capital in their care. Estate employees and local enthusiasts increasingly take part in conservation work and local experts are only too pleased to become involved.

Case Studies



FORD & ETAL ESTATES, NORTHUMBERLAND

On the edge of the Tweed Valley, just south of the Scotland/England border, Ford & Etal Estates comprises 5500 hectares of land on either side of the River Till shortly before it joins the Tweed. Being north of the Cheviot Hills, the topography and land use are effectively in the Borders tradition.

The Estate is structured in a traditional landlord/tenant style. It comprises mixed farming of all types, forestry and woodland of approx. 700 ha, some 190 let residential properties, 35 commercial lets in redundant farm buildings, opportunities for traditional country sports and a range of countryside attractions for visitors and locals such as a working water-driven corn mill, walking and cycling trails, historic buildings, annual community events and crafts enterprises.

The former in-hand estate farms, amounting to some 900 ha, were placed into Contract Farming arrangements in the mid 1990s.

The estate has responsibilities for two Special Areas of Conservation and one Ramsar site.

The estate's policy has always been that of looking at all aspects of land management, and its effect on the community, when weighing up strategy and taking decisions. A healthy and attractive countryside means healthy and attractive wildlife, which in turn provides a healthy and attractive space to live and work. There is a strong socio-economic driver within this healthy and attractive setting. An estate is not healthy unless its tenants are healthy.

In November 2021 Storm Arwen destroyed approx. 12% of the estate's timber stocks, leaving some 18,000 tonnes of timber on the ground. A large element of this was mature Scots Pine whose life had been extended to provide habitat for the Red Squirrel, still found on the estate. It will be a miracle if Red Squirrels survive the loss of this valuable habitat.

Accreditation at Level Two of the ELO's Wildlife Estates label provides valuable information about the health of wildlife on multifunctional estates across Europe, helping to reinforce the message that landowners and land managers are the best placed to manage the land. This is not only useful to the ELO at European level but also to agencies at national level. It is also of immense value as a cross-cutting management tool in the running of a multifunctional estate.

James Joicey

Case Studies



Case Studies

PLOWDEN ESTATE, SHROPSHIRE

Nestled in the Shropshire Hills AONB, Plowden Estate achieved Wildlife Estates accreditation in 2021. The 3,500-acre agricultural estate comprises dairy, arable and livestock farming through in-hand, tenancy and contract arrangements. It also has residential cottages, sporting and commercial lets and a heritage management plan.

CLA member Roger Plowden discovered Wildlife Estates while on the CLA's Policy Committee. Impressed by the advantages for promoting natural capital and biodiversity, he prepared an application.

"It provides an incentive to assess existing natural capital," says Roger. "This can help plan our 25-year improvement journey. We want to be an exemplar and showcase excellence in biodiversity – we are not there yet, but we have plenty to build on. When applying, we saw the label as a fast track into the new environmental schemes and going above and beyond what is required. We are building a team of local experts conducting different baseline surveys into our natural capital, such as ecology, fungi, birds, butterflies and beetles. It is inspiring, and has made us think about the habitats and food sources these species need."

"The label also encourages collaboration, and we are looking to improve wildlife corridors based on our water courses, hedgerows, and small woodlands. We are involving our fishing club on the river, our woodland management team, and, of course, our farmers. I found it enlightening to find out about what we have on the estate – the label brings it all together. A key factor is farming and how it needs to change due to climate change and energy costs – we are moving towards more regenerative systems, with less artificial inputs."

With thanks to CLA/Jasmin McDermott having first been published in CLA Land & Business, October 2022





MONKTON FARLEIGH ESTATE, WILTSHIRE

Charles Hobhouse first heard about Wildlife Estates whilst visiting the ELO Headquarters in Belgium and really liked the idea of sharing wildlife and habitat knowledge with Land Owners from other Countries. He was keen to be a Pilot for WEE when the opportunity arose.

Monkton Farleigh Estate is 612 hectares in the west country, 6 miles from Bath, with a good balance of arable land (60%), permanent pasture (25%) and woodland (15%) which provides a diversity of habitats. The arable has recently changed to a “no till” system. Fields not sown with autumn crops are planted with cover crops which grow throughout the winter, benefitting both soil organic matter and wildlife. This part of the country is of national importance for bats so the permanent pasture is managed for the benefit of both bats and a beef suckler herd on a low stocking rate. Attempts have been made to follow the principles of continuous forestry, although ash dieback has had a severe effect on this. Woodland thinnings are sold to local people for firewood as well as fuelling the Estate’s woodchip boiler. There are thirty let Residential Properties.



The Estate’s goal is to run a viable sustainable farming operation in tandem with nature which also provides an attractive environment for the village community and those of us involved in working on the Estate.

The process of completing Level Two to become a full member of Wildlife Estates has taught us three useful lessons. Firstly the most important lesson learnt was that we had no baseline data to gauge how we would score for our wildlife. A bit of effort was required to find local nature experts in their field who then quickly bought into the project and helped create a proper scientific data base of what we actually have in terms of habitat and wildlife. We compiled records of surveys of flora and fauna, woodland, birds, bats, butterflies, moths, hares and roe deer and there is still more work to do. This is on going and regular visits take place every year. Meeting these nature enthusiasts has hopefully improved our own knowledge as well and we have discovered that, with better communication and discussion, we have a great deal in common with Wildlife Trusts and other well-known nature organisations which can only have a positive effect. The second lesson was that restored or increased habitat is the key to improving our nature base, which we find both interesting and rewarding, and the third lesson was that striving to become a fully accredited member of Wildlife Estates has helped us to revalue what we have and re access our long term aims for the land.

In the light of COP15, I would suggest that a national label of a gold standard aiming at integrating the management of wildlife, flora and fauna and nature in a credible and measurable way makes Wildlife Estates very relevant in today’s world and I hope it is clear from what I have written that our Estate’s goals have been enhanced by my involvement with this aim.

Charles Hobhouse

Case Studies



KNEPP ESTATE, SUSSEX

The Knepp Estate is in the Low Weald of West Sussex and is home to the pioneering Knepp rewilding experiment - 1,400 hectares of what was once an unprofitable arable and dairy farm on heavy clay. The estate is now a profitable enterprise thanks to a number of new income streams made possible by rewilding and is reshaping attitudes toward the future of land management. At a time when questions on biodiversity loss, climate change, and the need for resilient food systems have never been so important, Knepp's pioneering projects provide a hopeful solution for a more sustainable future.

Knepp's business model includes nature-based tourism, a mob grazed regenerative farm (180 hectares) and organic market garden, an online wild range meat shop, a solar farm, and commercial and residential property. A new on-site café/restaurant and shop will open in summer 2023. The estate is within several Environmental Stewardship schemes and is now looking to leverage emerging nature-based markets and opportunities.

The rewilding project, the largest of its kind in lowland Britain, is at the cutting edge of landscape-scale restoration, allowing natural processes to occur on a significant and influential scale. Herds of free-roaming cattle, ponies, pigs and deer now drive the processes of nature restoration and habitat creation, and 1.5kms of the River Adur and other dynamic natural water courses have been re-naturalised. Over the course of a little over a decade, since the project began, the estate has seen a remarkable come-back of species, many of them red data species or nationally scarce. Knepp is now a breeding hotspot for critically endangered nightingales and turtle doves. The estate has the largest population of purple emperor butterflies in the country and 13 out of the UK's 17 species of bats. Occasional visitors, like Montagu's harrier, black tern, white-tailed eagles, and even black storks, are on the rise.

Knepp is also introducing lost keystone species such as the beaver (established in the project in 2022) and charismatic species such as white storks, which bred on the estate in 2020 - the first of this lost species to breed in Britain for 600 years. The team at Knepp continues to think ambitiously and would like, one day, to have wild boar and possibly bison, water buffalo and elk roaming the estate. Knepp's latest collaborative project is Weald to Waves, connecting the rewilding project via wildlife corridors with the sea, and northwards to the Ashdown Forest. The estate's vision continues to grow with the creation of its charity the Knepp Wildland Foundation and its sister company Nattergal.

Sir Charles Burrell, the owner of Knepp Estate, is delighted that Knepp is part of Wildlife Estates – 'understanding, protecting and uplifting biodiversity is critical to creating a sustainable future for us all. It is fantastic to bring together businesses with similar visions and ambitions under the Wildlife Estates accreditation, I look forward to learning and sharing best practices together.'

'Knepp Estate is one of the most exciting wildlife conservation projects in the UK, and indeed in Europe. If we can bring back nature at this scale and pace just 16 miles from Gatwick airport we can do it anywhere. I've seen it. It's truly wonderful, and it fills me with hope.'

John Lawton, author of the Making Space for Nature report

Case Studies



Membership Fees

Fees rates 2023:

Application Fee for Level 1	£150
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Annual Fee for Level 1 member	£50
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Accreditation fees for Level 2:

Band 1 - <1,000ha land managed	£600
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Band 2 - >1,000ha land managed	£800
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Annual Fee for Level 2 member - Band 1	£200
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Annual Fee for Level 2 member - Band 2	£267
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Only Level 1 *or* Level 2 fees will be applicable.

Additional support from independent advisers is available to Level 2 candidates at an additional cost.

Please contact us for further information.



What next?

We welcome inquiries about accreditation from all farms and estates who recognise the importance of enhancing wildlife and biodiversity through a range of sustainable land management practices.

Please contact our secretariat to discuss the next steps in becoming a WFE Accredited farm or estate using the email below or click [here](#) to be taken to our web contact form.

wildlifefarmsandestates@gmail.com



Appendices: The Wildlife Estates Concept 1/2

Background

The Wildlife Estates initiative began in 2005 under a three-year pilot initiative established by the European Landowners Organisation (ELO), encouraged and supported by DG Environment to evidence good land management. It was subsequently formalised by ELO in 2009 as a de facto association of estates which undertake to uphold ten principles of management in regard to wildlife (the Level One Charter) and, at the higher Level Two, are accredited with the Wildlife Estates label. Accreditation at Level Two recognises an estate as going 'above and beyond' the ten principles and being an exemplar of its type. Accreditation at Level Two is for a five-year period, after which it can be renewed.

Structure

The governing document of Wildlife Estates is a Convention drawn up by ELO. It was most recently revised in 2020. It is governed by Belgian law and provides for an annual congress, a Board nominated by ELO, a Steering Committee which includes representatives of national committees and is responsible for coordinating the WE initiative and confirming the individual awards of accreditation. It also provides for a Scientific Committee which brings together experts from different countries and bioregions. Each country has a National Committee which operates in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity.

Development

Number and area of estates:

Currently, 461 estates accounting for some 1,924,000 ha are accredited at Level Two in the following countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Czech Republic, Denmark, England & Wales, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Spain and Sweden. There are plans to extend the area further (e.g. into Bulgaria).



Appendices: The Wildlife Estates Concept 2/2

Generally, there is not a long wait between signing the Level One Charter and achieving accreditation, although in Scotland, in part due to local circumstances, many estates have opted to sign up to the Charter only.

The term 'estate' (territoire) refers simply to the area in question, without any assumptions as to a minimum size. A number of small properties (one of 65 ha in Flanders and another of 21 ha in Italy), or groups of small properties under a single management (there are two of these in France), have been awarded the label at Level Two.

The ELO's Convention on Wildlife Estates allows the National Committee of each participating country a degree of leeway in designing and administering the label within its territory. Chapter V of the Convention covers the national structures:

CHAPTER V: NATIONAL STRUCTURE

Article 38: The WE initiative is developed at the national level through National Committees. Members of National Committees may be composed of individuals, corporate persons, and organisations with a legal or de facto personality, based on their expertise in private land conservation, commitment to the goals of the WE initiative, and capacity to develop the initiative through encouraging potential label holders. They may co-opt appropriate national experts to advise them. A member from each National Committee shall be appointed to the Steering Committee by the Board.

Article 39: National Committees are responsible to the Steering Committee for the WE initiative in their own country. They act as a filter for their own country in the award of the WE label. The Committees are in charge of organizing national monitoring and verification of estates/ territories who wish to obtain the label by means of an independent written assessment consistent with the methodology agreed by the Scientific Committee. They may adapt the WE logo to incorporate national flags or other national symbols appropriate to their country.

Article 40: National Committees must send simplified reports in agreed form and, on request, the full assessments, relating to each application to the Steering Committee, which decides on the award of the label in accordance with Article 28. The National Committee also submits an annual report on its activities to the Steering Committee prior to the GA.



Appendices: Country Case Studies - Scotland

WE was first introduced into Scotland in 2010, at a time when landownership was under threat from many angles. The label – known by its acronym of WES, Wildlife Estates Scotland – was quickly adopted by Scottish Land & Estates as a robust and independent label that helped to convey the message of responsible landownership based on objective data and care for wildlife, across all aspects of Scottish land management: sporting, farming, forestry, conservation, access, deer management etc. SLE was able to secure valuable initial pump-priming funding from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH, now NatureScot) in order to help the label become established. SNH were quick to recognise WES for its the potential to provide clear evidence for a balanced management across all types of land and a conduit through which to ensure closer working relations between the two bodies.

SLE administers the WE scheme in Scotland through a dedicated paid officer post. The scheme is supported by an Advisory Board and a Technical Committee. NatureScot is represented on the Advisory Board of WE in Scotland, as is the Scottish Government itself. The current chair of WES is Dee Ward, owner of Rottal Estate in Angus and Vice-Chair (Policy) of SLE. WES also enjoys the support and engagement of the Minister of the Environment (Mhairi Macallan MSP) who gave the Opening Address at the WE Annual European Congress hosted in Scotland in September 2021.

Scotland now has 482,000 hectares of land accredited at Level Two of the Wildlife Estates label, covering 64 estates. Several of these are now on their second period of accreditation. Whilst the majority of the land is in private ownership and privately managed, other landowners are welcomed and have achieved accreditation, notably the RSPB estate at Abernethy. The RSPB also has a seat on the Advisory Board, alongside the Scottish Gamekeepers Association and private landowners / managers.

Scotland is now the second largest country in Europe in terms of area of accredited land. It lies behind Spain and ahead of Sweden.

Its robust and independent evaluation system, undertaken by Lloyds Register, has proven to be popular in conveying an element of Trusted Operator vis-à-vis agencies of Scottish Government.

Although in general there is not a long wait between signing the Level One Charter and achieving accreditation, many estates in Scotland, in part due to local circumstances, have opted to sign up to the Charter only. There are currently a further 283 in this category.



Appendices: Country Case Studies - Belgium

Split into two provinces (Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia) Belgium is a densely populated, largely urban country in which the mix of agriculture, forestry, public access, transport infrastructure, shooting and the need for education is more akin to England, and where the Wildlife Estates label has achieved considerable success. As in Scotland, WE in Belgium is widely recognised by regional / provincial agencies as important evidence of (and a voice for) good private land management.

WE Flanders has just shy of 9200 hectares of WE-accredited land, covering 31 estates. To give this figure some perspective, the largest nature management NGO in Flanders (Natuurpunt) manages roughly 25,000 hectares. The label is attracting considerable attention from private estates who promote nature management of good quality. Demand is growing, as estate owners are keen to achieve legitimacy in the face of new government initiatives. For example, Flanders aims to create three additional National Parks – in addition to the Hoge Kempen National Park – and three new landscape parks of more than 10,000 hectares. The procedure is ‘top down’ and landowners have found themselves included in many initiatives without being consulted or involved. Accreditation at Level Two counters this. WE in Flanders is administered by the regional landowners’ association (Landelijk Vlaanderen)

WE Wallonia has almost 18,200 hectares of WE-accredited land, representing 1.1% of the total land area of the province. Estates and farms vary in size from 20ha to 270ha. It is administered by a not-for-profit company (la Fondation Wallonne pour la Conservation des Habitats) with support from the Baillet Latour Foundation.