

Skomer Island Commercial Operator

Code of Conduct 2024 (updated 25.09.23)

By registering your business to operate on Skomer Island, you are agreeing to follow this Code of Conduct. Any action by you or your clients in contravention of this code, or actions that cause unnecessary distress or disturbance to wildlife will result in your group being asked to leave the island immediately at your own expense. Your business will also be prevented from operating on the island in the future.

It is a NRW requirement for commercial operators to register their activities.

Please read the Code of Conduct carefully.

It is your responsibility to ensure your clients are familiar with their obligations under the code whilst on Skomer. We would recommend that your clients are given the opportunity to read and agree to this information before their visit.

There are four sections to the Code of Conduct. Please **ensure you read through the sections which are relevant to your group type.** These are:

1. Day Visitor Code of Conduct.
2. Overnight Stay Code of Conduct.
3. Photography Code of Conduct – relevant for DAY AND OVERNIGHT trips to Skomer.
4. Kayaking / Boating Code of Conduct.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Code of Conduct please don't hesitate to contact Rob, the Skomer Visitor Officer, on 07530796150, prior to your visit.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

The Skomer Team

Day Visitor Code of Conduct

- Please advise your group to bring sealed bags to adhere to our biosecurity regulations. **Any unsealed bags will not be permitted to land on Skomer.**
- All groups must listen to the introduction talk given by WTSWW staff. These talks contain important safety information specific to the day, as well as the time of departing boats.
- Return boat times are allocated and fixed. Please make sure your group is back at the landing at least 15 minutes before departure of your allocated boat.
- The guide/group leader should remain with the group at all times during the visit, in order to ensure the behaviour of clients is maintained throughout.
- Please obey the instructions of island staff and volunteers.
- All members of your group must stay on the paths at all times.
- Please stick to the public paths; research paths and paths cordoned off are not to be used.
- All bags and equipment need to be kept on the paths at all times. This includes tripod legs and walking poles.
- Do not obstruct wildlife or other visitors, be respectful to other island users.
- Limit your time spent in one place, especially the Wick, in order to make space for other visitors and the wildlife.
- It is your responsibility to ensure the health and safety of your group, including making sure cliff edges are not approached and care is taken on uneven, slippery and steep paths.
- Pop up hides, trolley carts, and similar are NOT allowed to be used on the island.
- Please make sure that your group takes all rubbish home, including cigarette butts. In dry conditions extra care must be taken with cigarettes to prevent fire.
- Pursuits which exceed normal day visitor activities e.g., bug hunting, collecting of plants etc. must be agreed to by the Warden/Visitor Officer in advance.
- We ask that the group leader be easily identifiable by our staff and volunteers at all times. This could be via branded clothing, lanyard, sticker, etc.
- In case of emergency, please ensure your clients follow instructions given by WTSWW staff.

Overnight Stay Code of Conduct

Before Arrival

- **At least 8 weeks before** - Please provide the Booking Office at the time of final payment all group members' names (islands@welshwildlife.org / 01656 724100).
- **No later than 48 hours before** - Please fill in the visit form before every visit (available [here](#) or on our [website](#)).
- **The day before** - please contact our Visitor Officer on 07530796150. You should call between 12pm and 5pm. This will provide you with an update on sailing times and weather conditions, and before this time this information has not been received from the boat crew. Please ensure that all group members have read the pre-arrival information. This includes the Hostel Booking Information Pack and Biosecurity Information (this should have been sent out to you but is also available on the [website](#)).

On Arrival

- All guests must attend the hostel induction upon arrival.
- Please ensure your group follows our biosecurity regulations. **ALL LUGGAGE MUST BE SEALED.** Plastic boxes with lids, cardboard boxes taped shut, bags and rucksacks with zips are all recommended. Carrier bags, bags closed with Velcro or press studs are not suitable. For more guidance, please refer to our biosecurity leaflet. Any unsealed bags will not be permitted to land on Skomer.
- Guests should bear in mind that all bags will be **passed off the boat**, rather than physically carried.
- With the weight of individual bags and the number of items per person continuing to increase, we need to introduce extra safeguarding measures with regards to luggage. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (1992) require employers to reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. We have a legal duty of care for our staff and guests and self-employed commercial operators are required by the regulations to take the same steps to safeguard themselves as employers must to protect their employees, in similar circumstances. As such:
 - WTSWW staff will no longer handle oversized bags and will not expect other hostel guests to do so. Commercial operators should be mindful of the size, shape and weight of bags and boxes and the environment in which bags are handled (i.e., the jetty in Martin's Haven and the steps in Skomer North Haven.)

- WTSWW operate a zero-tolerance policy for oversized bags. These will be left at the bottom of the steps for only the person who packed them to carry/unpack and lift into and out of island vehicles.
- Island baggage rules should be communicated to your guests before their visit;
 - Individual bags or boxes should be **limited to a maximum of 15kg** in weight and items over 10kg should be clearly marked as 'HEAVY'.
 - If an item needs handling by two or more people, it is not suitable for Skomer, whatever its weight.
 - We ask you to recommend a three bag limit per person (including all photography equipment, food and personal items).
 - Remember that baggage can be difficult to grasp if it is too large, rounded or smooth, especially when wet. Bags and boxes should be selected with suitable handles or handholds.
- Our Dumper Truck will transport your luggage from North Haven to the Farm. We always try our best to load all bags into our Dumper Truck, but there may be times where some luggage needs to be carried – if guests cannot carry their own bags, then they are too heavy to bring to the island.

During your Stay

In relation to your accommodation:

- Please respect the needs of other guests in the hostel, of island residents, and the wildlife. Please remember that families and other groups will be staying in the hostel and so commercial operator groups may be asked to use the kitchen/dining facilities at specific times so that other guests do not feel squeezed out by large groups.
- Electricity is a limited resource on Skomer. Please don't charge batteries overnight, when we aren't producing solar power. Please advise guests to bring extra, pre-charged, camera batteries. **Extension leads are not permitted.**
- Water is also limited on Skomer. There may be points throughout the season where the shower facilities are closed, and guests are asked to use the compost toilets during daylight hours. Your clients should be prepared for this.

In relation to exploring the island:

- All members of your group must **stay on the paths at all times.**
- Please stick to the public paths; research paths and paths cordoned off are not to be used unless special arrangements with the Warden/Visitor Officer have been made.
- All bags and equipment need to be kept on the paths at all times. This includes tripod legs and walking poles.

- Do not obstruct wildlife or other visitors, be respectful to other island users.
- Please obey the instructions of island staff and volunteers.
- It is your responsibility to ensure the health and safety of your group, including making sure cliff edges are not approached and care is taken on uneven, slippery and steep paths.
- Pop up hides, trolley carts, and similar are NOT allowed to be used on the island.
- Please make sure that your group takes all its rubbish home, including cigarette butts. In dry conditions extra care must be taken with cigarettes to prevent fire.
- The Wick is a sensitive area and receives high visitor pressure. Avoid visiting the Wick during day visitor hours (11am and 5pm during peak season). Your group will be asked to leave the Wick if they are there too long during day visitor hours.
- Limit your time spent in any one place, especially the Wick, in order to make space for other visitors and the wildlife.
- Pursuits which exceed normal overnight visitor activities e.g. moth trapping, collecting of plants etc. must be agreed to by the Warden/Visitor Officer in advance.
- We ask that the group leader be easily identifiable by our staff and volunteers at all times. This could be via branded clothing, lanyard, sticker, etc..
- In case of emergency, please ensure your clients follow instructions given by WTSWW staff.

Photography Code of Conduct

Please remember that the welfare of the subject is more important than getting the photo. Our seabirds are at their most vulnerable when they are breeding, and people can cause unnecessary stress at an important time in their life cycle. Here are a few key points to remember:

- Always photograph animals from a safe and respectful distance.
- If an animal shows any sign of stress, move further back down the path or leave altogether.
- Never try to force an animal to do something. Remember that the impact of many people is cumulative: you might be the 100th person that day that a puffin has to avoid while it is trying to feed or care for its young.
- Never block access to burrows or nests with bags, tripods or yourself.
- Treat the habitat with the same regard that you have for the animals themselves.
- Limit your time spent in one place, especially the Wick, in order to make space for other visitors and the wildlife.
- Overnight guests are asked to avoid busy areas like the Wick during day visitor hours. After day visitor hours there is still a strict policy of not staying in one place for more than 30 minutes. This allows birds, including our oystercatchers and puffins to attend their nests.
- The use of drones is strictly prohibited without the appropriate licence from NRW.

Manx shearwaters actively avoid light and therefore do not like bright lights or flash photography. We therefore ask for you to abide by the following:

- No flash photography.
- Please only use torches with a low intensity red light. Remember to ask the Visitor Officer for red tape to adapt your white-light torches!
- Only stay with a bird for a short time to allow it to safely return to its burrow. Please do not surround a bird and only view them from a respectable distance where they are free to move away.
- **Do not touch or pick up any seabirds.**

Kayaking / Boating Code of Conduct

In a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) the disturbance of wildlife is a criminal offence, furthermore all species of bird are protected from killing or disturbance while nesting. The Wildlife and Countryside Act prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places.

- Keep at least 50m clear from the cliffs around Skomer during the seabird breeding period (April-August).
- Keep at least 100m clear from seal haul-outs (e.g. on Rye Rocks, Garland Stone) during the entire year and beaches and caves during the seal pupping period (August-December).
- Keep an eye on the wildlife at all times. If you notice stress behaviour (seabirds: bobbing heads, flying off ledges. Seals: lifting of heads, bulging eyes, shuffling) retreat immediately.
- Respect No Access Zones, see Pembrokeshire Marine Code (<http://www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk/>).
- No flash photography.
- Do not approach rafting birds. If moving through a raft is unavoidable reduce speed to a minimum.
- Move on after 10 minutes watching.
- Keep noise and movement on the boat to a minimum when watching or passing wildlife.
- We ask that the group leader be easily identifiable by our staff and volunteers at all times. This could be via branded clothing, lanyard, sticker, etc.