



UPDATE: National Trust asks Alamy to remove images of its properties

The National Trust is at the centre of a rights battle with photographers after the institution asked for images of its properties be taken down from the stock photography website Alamy.

Speaking to BJP, Alan Capel, Alamy's head of content, explains that the National Trust 'made us aware of their photographic policy regarding images of their properties. We were aware of that policy before and had passed on that information to our photographers. The policy is that such pictures cannot be used for commercial gain.'

A spokesman for the National Trust tells BJP that 'as a charity, the National Trust's own photo library provides an important source of income which helps support our conservation work. Whilst we encourage people to take images out of doors for their own use we, like many other property owners and organisations, do not allow images to be taken for profit. As such, Alamy has agreed to remove National Trust images from its collections.'

The National Trust flagged a series of images offered on Alamy, according to Capel. 'We contacted the photographers about it,' says Capel. 'We're not saying that these images necessarily breach the National Trust's policy, we just asked the photographers to check if they did. If for example, the picture was taken from a public footpath, if the picture was taken before the policy was put in place or if the land was not owned by the National Trust at the time the picture was taken, then we won't ask the photographer to remove the image.'

Alamy has given 12 days to photographers flagged by the National Trust to review their images. 'We try to be fair to both sides,' says Capel. 'We don't want to see an image removed when it shouldn't be. There is a feeling that Alamy was bullied into this, but that's just part of our normal review process. Images submitted to Alamy should be free from any copyright claims.'

Nonetheless, the requests have angered some photographers. 'A lot of the images [that have been threatened of deletion] were taken from public roads and footpath,' says an Alamy photographer. 'The National Trust seems to be shooting itself in the foot with that request, because a lot of the photographers are saying that if they can't commercialise the photos they have, they will give them away for free, which will kill the National Trust's photo library.'

The National Trust's request has also pushed photographers to study the institution's terms and policies, leading to the discovery of a possible rights-grab in one of the Trust's competitions.

The institution is running the Picture Yourself contest, which invites photographers to 'share your favourite photos of special places and moments'. However, the competition's terms claim a perpetual, royalty-free, worldwide, non-exclusive licence on any image submitted to the competition.

The terms read: 'If you submit any material to us, you agree to grant The National Trust a perpetual, royalty-free, worldwide, non-exclusive licence to use your contribution in all media. This includes the right to copy, edit, publish, grant sub-licences and exercise all other copyright and publicity rights over the material. If you do not want to grant these rights, please do not submit your contribution to us.'

Photographers have already referred the competition to Pro-Imaging – a pan-European that claims to represent the interests of photographers and flags competitions deemed to be grabbing copyrights.

'The fact that [photographers] have spotted a rights grab in the photo competition makes the situation look much worse for the National Trust Photo Library,' says photographer John Linton. 'One has to ask why would the institution want the copyright on them if they weren't worth anything? And do you want to give away pictures that people could make money from, to get your picture in this competition?'

Responding to BJP's questions, the National Trust says that its picture library is composed of a 'mixture of commissioned shoots and contracted agency photographers who we share any profits with. As you can imagine we are inundated with requests for the latter.'

The spokesman adds that the images entered in the Picture Yourself competition 'are not intended for the picture library'.