



Volunteer Handbook

A summary guide for all Wildlife Trust volunteers

Welcome to our volunteer community and thank you for choosing to volunteer with the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire!

Becoming a Volunteer

Please take a few minutes to read this handbook. It contains essential information to help you familiarise yourself with how the Trust operates and what to expect while you are volunteering with us. Detailed information about your specific volunteering role will be given to you by your Support Officer and / or your Task Leader. We aim to make your volunteering experience enjoyable, safe, rewarding, and beneficial.

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The Wildlife Trust – an introduction:

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire is a registered charity (and a company limited by guarantee), whose mission is to

- conserve local wildlife, by caring for land ourselves and with others;
- inspire others to take action for wildlife; and
- inform people, by offering advice and sharing knowledge.

We are among the largest and most effective of 46 Wildlife Trusts across Britain and we are a major contributor to the national work of the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. We currently manage over 100 nature reserves covering over 4,000 hectares, run education/community centres, and advise planners and landowners on wildlife and ecology. Over 1,000 volunteers support this work.

Our registered office is The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6DH. Our registered charity number is 1000412.

The Value of Volunteering

Incredible wild spaces, working alongside inspiring friends and supporting your local wildlife - that's why our volunteers keep coming back. All across our area people give us their spare time in woodlands, wetlands, amongst meadows and in communities, schools, visitor centres and offices. The Trust was started by volunteers and is still managed by volunteers through our Trustees. Volunteers remain the lifeblood of the Trust. Our work would not be possible without the time, dedication and skills volunteers bring to us.

Our opportunities can fit around the rest of your life, from one-off practical conservation days to regular commitments on our reserves, in our offices or from home. Whatever you've decided to do, you'll be part of a fantastic team helping to protect and share the amazing wildlife that calls our area home.

A message from Brian Eversham, our CEO

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire (WTBCN) was started by volunteers in 1957 and is now the largest nature conservation organisation protecting the wildlife and countryside of those three counties. Volunteers are integral to our success, and we can only deliver the level of work we do because of you.

There are lots of ways that you can volunteer for WTBCN – whether you want to help with managing our nature reserves or monitoring wildlife, helping children and young people connect with wildlife, or helping out in one of our offices. In whatever way you choose to help us, you will receive a warm welcome from our staff and other volunteers who will all be keen to make you feel part of our team.

Thank you for offering your time and expertise - it is much appreciated.

Why We Need Volunteers

Our volunteers are very important to us and make a difference by:

- Bringing specialist knowledge, skills and new ideas
- Showing commitment to the Trust which strengthens our voice
- Providing local representation which helps us to raise our profile
- Attracting match-funding for volunteers' hours when we apply for grants
- Taking on specific tasks which widen our ability to conserve wildlife

Volunteer Roles

There are many ways to volunteer in the Trust. A current list of opportunities can be found on the website here: [Volunteer | Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants \(wildlifebcn.org\)](http://wildlifebcn.org)

These may include (and not be limited to):

- Volunteer Reserve Wardens
- Local Group Committee Members
- Community Wardens
- Youth Ranger / Wildlife Watch / Little Bugs Club Assistants
- Monitoring and Research Volunteers
- Education Volunteers
- Trustees
- Finance / Admin / Office volunteers
- Work Party Volunteers
- Young Volunteers (Young People's Forum)
- Livestock checkers

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We're wild about inclusion and want our staff and volunteers to be as diverse as wildlife. As an inclusive organisation we want our staff and volunteers to better reflect the communities in which we live and work. We actively encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, identities and cultures. We believe that diverse staff and volunteers will help us create our vision of 'people close to nature, with land and seas rich in wildlife.' We will not accept discrimination by staff or volunteers. A copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy is available via your Staff Contact or from the HR department.

What to expect as a Volunteer:

- A named contact, your Volunteer Support Officer (a member of staff), who will be responsible for your voluntary activity. This is the person to speak to if you are unclear about anything to do with the Trust or the work you are asked to do when volunteering
- An induction to the Trust; how it works, your role, the standards we expect and the support you will receive
- Relevant training and a clear understanding of any task we ask you to do as a volunteer
- To be valued and treated fairly

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- Expenses where appropriate and agreed to in advance
- To be safe and secure while volunteering
- To meet people and have an enjoyable experience
- Further volunteering opportunities as desired by you and needed by the Trust

What we expect from you as a Volunteer:

- That you will act responsibly as an ambassador for the Trust
- That you treat any personal information that you have access to as confidential (in accordance with GDPR)
- To abide by WTBCN policies and procedures

Volunteer Support Officers and Task Leaders

Depending upon what type of volunteering you are undertaking, you will be assigned a Support Officer and/or a Task Leader. Support Officers are staff members and are generally assigned to individuals or even groups of volunteers who volunteer regularly, while Task Leaders supervise specific tasks and may or may not be your Support Officer. Your Task Leader may be a member of staff, or another volunteer (this includes volunteers working in warden-led / volunteer-led activities / work parties). If you attend work parties, ask your Task Leader who your Support Officer is (this will be a member of staff).

Acting as an Ambassador for the Trust

As a volunteer you are an ambassador for the Trust, both when actively involved as a volunteer and also with your family and friends (both in person and when using other communication methods, such as social media). We ask all our volunteers to act responsibly and to abide by the policies of the Trust. This means you should be courteous to visitors, members, and to other volunteers, be helpful in answering questions when you are able, and to refer questions you are unable to answer to a colleague. Formal enquiries should always be referred to the relevant county in the first instance:

cambridgeshire@wildlifebcn.org

bedfordshire@wildlifebcn.org

northamptonshire@wildlifebcn.org

Induction Process

All new volunteers go through an induction process with their Support Officer or Task Leader although this may be phased over several visits. The content of the process will vary depending on the nature of your role but will at least contain a discussion of what is required of you, how you fit in to the work of the Trust, and a relevant health and safety briefing (and recorded and monitored). You will also meet other volunteers and/or staff as well as being shown around the building or site where you are volunteering.

Training and Support

You will be given relevant on-the-job training and guidance from a member of staff or an experienced volunteer to allow you to learn as you go along. For more complex / formal roles formal training will be made available as and when needed. If you have any specific training requests, please discuss them with your Support Officer or Task Leader as appropriate.

Volunteer Responsibilities

As a WTBCN volunteer you are responsible for the following:

- **Personal details**

Ensure all your personal details, address, telephone, email are kept up-to-date. If you need to make any changes please let your Support Officer / Task Leader know; they will be happy to help. We add your contact details to our central database, as well as the ways in which we can contact you about your volunteering and other aspects of the Trust's work (if you have requested this). We will send you or direct you to information relevant to your volunteering which may include Health and Safety, training, and Trust policies.

- **On Arrival**

Your Support Officer / Task Leader will keep a record of your hours but it's important to sign in when asked as this ensures we comply with health and safety obligations. Depending upon the type of volunteering you are undertaking, you may also be asked to fill out a form giving your emergency contact details for the day. These details will be held securely by your Support Officer or Task Leader and destroyed at the end of the day.

- **Your Health**

You must alert your Support Officer / Task Leader - prior to undertaking an activity/task - of any medical conditions that need to be taken into consideration. Please bring relevant medication (e.g. epi pens) with you to your volunteering activities and ensure your Support Officer / Task Leader knows where this is in case of emergency. Please ensure to update us with any changes in your health relevant to your role.

- **Illness**

If you are unwell, please do not attend your scheduled volunteering activity. Please do contact your Support Officer / Task Leader to advise them of your non-attendance.

- **End of volunteering**

Should you decide to stop volunteering please inform your Support Officer / Task Leader so we can update our records. We value the time you have given and may ask you to complete a feedback form so we can continue to develop our volunteering programme. This information ensures we have an accurate record of volunteer activity as well as providing us with a greater understanding of your experience as a WTBCN volunteer.

Health & Safety

Health and Safety is Everyone's Responsibility.

The Trust is committed to looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who volunteers for us. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the same health and safety legislative requirements as those carried out by staff. It is therefore important that you understand and accept your personal responsibility towards promoting and maintaining health and safety standards in order to provide a safe working environment for all. Please take a few minutes to read our General Code of Practice below. Your Support Officer / Task Leader will be able to brief you on the relevant working instructions and give a health and safety briefing pertinent to your role. Please highlight any concerns or questions you may have before undertaking any duty.

General Code of Practice

While working, all staff and volunteers **must**:

- Take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- Co-operate with staff and other volunteers to help keep the workplace safe.

Tools and Equipment

- No-one may use or operate any tools, equipment, machinery or vehicles unless they have been trained and asked to do so.
- No-one may use any tool, equipment, machinery or vehicle while consuming / under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Full details are provided in our Health and Safety Policy which may be given to you as part of your induction (or is available on request).

Emergency Procedures

Trust Premises (to include Office Environments and Visitor Centres)

Fire drill procedure notices are displayed in all offices. All staff and volunteers are required to ensure they know what to do in the event of a fire.

On Nature Reserves / other sites

Natural hazards occur on our nature reserves and other sites and your Support Officer / Task Leader will alert you to the risks.

First Aid

First Aid kits are available at all Trust locations / premises. Trained First Aiders will be present and first aid kits available at all events and activities. No work parties can take place on any of our nature reserves unless qualified First Aiders are present. A First Aid kit is kept in each of the Trust's vehicles and premises.

Accident / Incident and Near Miss Reporting

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR)

The recording of accidents and dangerous occurrences is the basis of accident prevention.

All accidents must be reported immediately to a First Aider and to your Support Officer / Task Leader. All accidents, (except minor bumps and grazes that do not require treatment by a First Aider) must be recorded in the Accident Book that is kept with the First Aid Kit closest to hand or on the Support Officer / Task Leader's portable IT device. Your Support Officer / Task Leader will ensure this paperwork is carried out and submitted. In addition, all near-accidents and incidents must be recorded – these are recorded on Trust Health and Safety templates and, again, these will be filled out by your Support Officer / Task Leader.

The Trust promotes good health through the provision of good working practices and environments.

If you are volunteering outdoors, you are advised to:

- Read the Trust's information card regarding Weil's and Lyme diseases. There is also information on the NHS website www.nhs.uk regarding these diseases.
- Have an up-to-date tetanus inoculation (please check your current status with your GP).

Please remember to:

- Cover small cuts and abrasions immediately with a sterile dressing and ask for First Aid assistance if necessary.
- Observe good hand hygiene at all times.
- Wear any personal protective clothing that has been issued. You can request protective clothing if you believe the task requires it.
- Avoid inhaling substances and vapours which might be damaging in the long term.

Lone Working Volunteers

Some volunteers, including Volunteer Wardens, regularly undertake tasks alone. These tasks should only proceed if they have been risk assessed and found to be low risk. Please discuss with your Support Officer / Task Leader what is considered low risk.

Lone working volunteers must adhere to the Trust's Lone Working Standard Operating Procedure and supporting Risk Assessments. These can be obtained from your Support Officer and/or Task Leader.

Smoke-free Policy

The health hazards related to smoking are well documented. These health hazards impact on both the smoker and non-smoker who is exposed to second hand smoke.

To comply with the law and to protect the health of all employees, the Trust has established a smoke-free policy. The Trust prohibits smoking in all buildings (including all enclosed and semi-enclosed workplaces) and in all Trust owned vehicles. The Trust also prohibits the use of electronic cigarettes, or similar devices, in all the same locations and areas covered by the no smoking rules.

Other Policies and Procedures

Depending on your role, you may be asked to read other policies such as:

- Volunteer Agreement
- Safeguarding Policy
- EDI Policy
- IT Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Policy

Confidentiality

As a Trust volunteer you may become party to information of a confidential nature and your discretion and abidance with the relevant policies is essential. If you have any doubt about an appropriate course of action it is essential that you speak with your Support Officer / Task leader before acting.

Use of Technology

The Trust's email, internet and telephone systems are **only** to be used for business purposes.

Data Protection - A Guide for Volunteers

The Trust needs to gather and use certain information about individuals including members, volunteers, business contacts, staff and other people with whom we have a relationship.

Some volunteer roles require the collection of other's data. In such roles volunteers will be given a copy of the Data Protection Policy at the start and whenever it is updated. The Data Protection Policy describes how such personal data must be collected, processed and stored securely to meet the Trust's data protection standards and to comply with Data Protection legislation.

What is personal data and why do we need to protect it?

Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual, and could be as simple as a name, telephone number, address, email address or photo. It could be held on paper or electronically on your devices. Wildlife Trust BCN staff and volunteers are legally required to keep it safe.

As a guide, if you treat the personal data of others as you would like your own personal data to be treated you can't go far wrong!

Keeping it safe

If you are given personal details please keep them safe and protect them from getting lost, damaged or stolen until they can be passed to an employee of the Trust. For example, we need Volunteer Application Forms for new volunteers and information about a volunteer's medical or physical condition that restricts the tasks they can do. Some simple security measures include keeping paperwork with you, storing it in a secure place when not in use and putting strong passwords on all your devices.

If personal details are no longer required, or you cease volunteering for the Wildlife Trust BCN, you must dispose of all personal data securely i.e. delete or shred.

Keeping in touch with others

If you are sending out an invitation via email please use the bcc functionality so that email addresses are not shared amongst the email group (unless you have permission from all of the group to do so).

Feel free to swap your personal contact details with other volunteers if both parties consent to this. This may help you to co-ordinate volunteering activities and/or transport arrangements.

Privacy

We are committed to keeping the personal details of our volunteers secure. Our Privacy Policy for Volunteer Data explains how and why we use your personal data to ensure that you remain informed and in control of your information.

Further Information

Details of how Wildlife Trust BCN processes personal data can be found here [Data Protection Policy | Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants \(wildlifebcn.org\)](#)

Details of how Wildlife Trust BCN protect your privacy can be found here [Privacy Policy | Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants \(wildlifebcn.org\)](#)

If you have any questions please get in touch with your Wildlife Trust BCN contact, or for any data protection specific questions please email rachel.hopper@wildlifebcn.org (Head of Legal Compliance) or mia.randall@wildlifebcn.org (Data Officer).

Keeping your details up to date

Please keep your Wildlife Trust BCN contact up to date with any changes to your volunteering availability or skills, and any relevant training.

Insurance

The WTBCN carries Public Liability Insurance cover, which covers volunteers who are undertaking tasks on its behalf, either on Trust property or under direction of the Trust. If any damage is caused to third parties and their properties whilst work is being carried out, you are covered.

The Trust also provides Employer's Liability Insurance which covers all volunteers carrying out work under its direction, following health and safety and other relevant guidelines.

Driving Your Car as Part of a Trust Activity/Task

It is important that if you are carrying out a task/activity for the Trust that involves using your own car, you must inform your insurers; you may require 'occasional business cover' on your policy. Your car is not covered by the Trust's insurance.

Driving a Trust Vehicle

If, as part of your volunteering, you are required to drive a Trust vehicle, you must, please, provide us with a copy of your driving licence, along with a code, available from the DVLA [View or share your driving licence information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) This enables the Trust to check your driving record – essential for insurance purposes. It is essential we have this before you drive a Trust vehicle.

For drivers under 25 years of age the Trust will need more information. Please ask your Support Officer / Task Leader to contact the Accounts Manager.

When driving a Trust vehicle, you are covered under the Trust's insurance, as long as we have the information above.

Problem Solving

We aim to make all volunteering experiences positive and enjoyable and to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively, and consistently. We encourage frequent two-way communications as a means of preventing problems before they arise. However, we do realise that problems sometimes occur and therefore the Trust has a Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure which will be provided to you on request.

If you encounter a difficulty with any aspect of the role or the role isn't working out as hoped, please talk to your Support Officer / Task Leader as soon as possible for advice and support. Together you should try to work out any difficulties. If finding a solution is not possible this shouldn't be seen as a failure. Speak to your Support Officer about finding a more appropriate role, or to find out about other opportunities visit: www.wildlifebcn.org/volunteer-opportunities.

Alternatively, you can contact the Trust's Local Groups and Volunteer Support Manager at Rachel.price@wildlifebcn.org

Although dealing with complaints can be difficult, it can give us a positive opportunity to improve the way things are done and provide a better service. If you wish to make a complaint or you receive a complaint from someone about anything to do with your volunteering role with the Trust, please pass the information to your Support Officer / Task Leader. We will work together to find resolution to the issue.

Our Thanks!

Even if your Support Officer / Task Leader has not had the opportunity to thank you personally after every event and/or activity, please remember that the WTBCN does appreciate all your volunteer hours, whenever and wherever you give them. The strength of the Trust is built on the partnership between volunteers and staff, working together for our common cause. Thank you!