



Wildlife Trust for
**Beds, Cambs
& Northants**

Becoming a Trustee or Committee Member

Nature needs us more than ever. Could you play a part in its recovery by becoming a trustee?

[The Wildlife Trust Beds, Cambs and Northants \(BCN\)](#) is a thriving member of the movement of 46 Wildlife Trusts across the UK, working hard to help nature recover.

Since 2020 we have expanded our Great Fen vision with the £8.6million Lottery-funded Peatland Progress project, saved the unique rewilding site Strawberry Hill through our largest-ever fundraising appeal, reintroduced beavers to Northamptonshire, reached over 25,000 people through events and education, launched our Team Wilder community programme, and increased our membership by more than 2,200. See full details of the funds we raised and our results in our latest [Impact Report](#).

We've launched our plan for the next five years, [Our Wilder Future: 2030](#), alongside a new £1.5million appeal. We'll focus on protecting nature reserves, supporting wildlife conservation beyond our reserves, tackling the impact of climate change and inspiring and supporting people to engage with wildlife on their doorstep. Success will require us to make some internal transformations, so it's an exciting time to get involved.

We need people who share our passion and will work with us to keep our plan on track.

We've put together this guide to help you understand what it's like to be one of our trustees or committee members, including what the roles entail, how much time you'd be expected to commit, and what you could expect to get out of your time with us.

Why become a trustee or committee member?

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What's involved and how much time does it take?

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Why become a trustee or committee member?

There are more than [900,000 trustees](#) of charities in England and Wales. It's a vital role – trustees are at the very heart of a charity and its work.

They

- help set the strategy, ensuring it's in line with the charity's vision and mission
- have oversight of the charity's funds and how they're raised and spent
- sign off plans and policies
- review impact and lessons learned.

Trustees and committee members gain a special insight into the workings of a charity and have a close relationship with the executive (the paid employees) who lead and run the organisation.

Becoming a trustee or committee member of the Wildlife Trust BCN is a great way to:

- support nature recovery in this area, and the many people – staff and volunteers – who make change happen
- widen and deepen your wildlife knowledge
- use your current skills, develop new ones and add valuable third sector experience to your CV
- meet new people and go behind the scenes at reserves.

Above all, it's a stimulating and fun way to make a difference.

Local wildlife trusts like ours right across the UK are actively looking for trustees and committee members – watch this [short video](#) to see a range of diverse trustee voices from across the movement.

“I don't have a PhD in ecology, in fact I don't have any paid conservation experience whatsoever, but I do have marketing and communications skills. I applied to be a trustee because I wanted to use expertise I'd developed for private sector profit to support nature.

I'm learning a lot through the course of our meetings and discussions – about local wildlife and the challenges faced, about exciting new approaches to tackle those challenges, and about financing and running a large charity; all things I expected. But I've been surprised by how much opportunity there is for trustees to directly experience nature through the field trips the executive organise for us. I've been to see a lodge built by newly re-introduced beavers, walked through wildflower meadows where a rare Lizard Orchid – not seen in this area for decades – had reappeared, and met Highland cattle and Herdwick sheep grazing reserves to keep scrub in check. It's a lot of fun, and I'm grateful for the effort the team puts into sharing their passion and work with us.”

Caroline Brown, Wildlife Trust BCN trustee since October 2023

Who can become a trustee or committee member?

Trustees and committee members come from all walks of life. You don't need to be an expert on wildlife, simply someone who cares deeply about it. The best councils and committees are diverse – just like the best ecosystems! We actively encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, identities and cultures. Our Trustees are a diverse group with complementary skills. This includes not only experts with a scientific and conservation background but also, and just as importantly, others with a wide range of professional

interests and expertise, and a passion for nature. Trustees can serve for two terms of three years as a Trustee and up to six years as an officer. You can read about our current trustees [here](#).

You don't need a long career behind you before you can become a trustee or committee member. Applications from young people aged 18 or over are welcome at the Wildlife Trust BCN. Being a trustee or committee member is an excellent way to develop leadership skills, and to widen your knowledge about the functions involved in running an organisation. Young people from outside our organisation have a strong voice within it: members of our Young People's Forum attend one of our committees and often take an active role in our AGM. You can read about the Forum [here](#).

You don't need to be retired or work part-time or flexibly. Meetings are in the evenings, as are many of the field trips (which are optional). Full Council meets four times a year and the two Committees (you would be a member of one) also meet four times a year.

What you do need is a passion for nature and a belief in our vision and mission, the ability to step back from the detail and look at the bigger picture, curiosity and willingness to ask questions, an open mind and a listening ear, and a commitment to share your perspective to help solve problems/reach consensus. All trustees and committee members must also become a member of the Wildlife Trust BCN.

Trustees must not be disqualified from acting as a Trustee or as a Director of a company. Please see Charity Commission guidance [here](#) and HMRC Guidance on the Fit and Proper Person test can be seen [here](#). It is the responsibility of each Trustee to let us know if any of these details change.

Our vision, mission and core values, and why we're thinking big!

Our vision is

People close to nature, in a land rich in wildlife

Our 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

Our core values

We believe

- that we must focus on all wildlife and whole ecosystems to safeguard the natural environment;
- that everyone has a role to play in restoring nature;
- that we should value, respect and listen to our staff, volunteers, members and supporters so they can contribute fully to achieving our vision;
- that working in partnership brings more benefits than working alone;
- that conservation depends on local knowledge and good science;
- that we achieve more for wildlife by operating in an efficient and business-like manner;
- that we should operate in an environmentally sustainable way; and
- that working to restore nature should be rewarding for everyone involved

Living Landscapes

Since our inception in the 1950s, the Trust has managed nature reserves. In the 1990s, it was becoming clear that scattered, isolated nature reserves, however well-managed, were not halting the decline in nature, and what was needed was to create larger reserves, connected across a more wildlife-friendly landscape. Since 2000, we've been working to create a Living Landscape across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire by acquiring land ourselves, but equally important, by working in partnership with many other landowners and organisations.

Living Landscapes create space for mammals to move about and between, places for wild flower seeds to settle and grow, birds to hunt and butterflies to find nectar. Living Landscapes are good for people too. A healthy environment aids food production and gives us clean air and water. It gives us places to explore and enjoy.

Read more about our approach to [Living Landscapes](#) and the 9 areas we've prioritised.

The Living Landscape approach was adopted by the [Wildlife Trusts nationally](#) in 2003, and the same principles were adopted by the Lawton Review, [Making space for nature](#), commissioned by the government in 2009 and published in 2010. This was eventually given [a legal basis](#) in 2020, as a national Nature Recovery Network, and is being implemented as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, in which the Trust is playing a leading role.



What's involved and how much time does it take?

Trustees

Trustees can serve for two terms of three years as a trustee and up to six years as an officer.

You'll automatically become a member of our Council. The purpose of Council is to set the overall direction of the charity and to ensure it's well run. Our Council of trustees is legally responsible for all the activities that the organisation undertakes. The Trust is also a company limited by guarantee, of which all trustees are directors.

In practice, this is a strategic, policy-making and monitoring role, with the day-to-day running of the Trust delegated to the Chief Executive and his excellent team of staff.

You'll also join one of our two committees: Resources or Conservation, Education and Community Committee (CECC). The committees allow time for more in-depth discussion and make recommendations to Council. CECC meets about eight weeks before Council, Resources about four weeks. Rarely, a trustee may be a member of both committees.

The Conservation, Education and Community Committee consists of members of Council and up to five non-trustees appointed for four years by Council. The Committee receives reports on all the conservation education and community work of the Trust. It considers	The Resources Committee consists of Council members; non-trustees may be appointed by Council. Resources Committee receives reports on finances, marketing and fund-raising, human resources, health and safety and communications. It also considers items
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new policy and guidance for staff, and the conservation and community case for any land acquisitions.

raised by the Conservation, Education and Community Committee, and comments on the resources implications of potential acquisitions.

Additionally, and from time to time, *ad hoc* Working Groups are constituted from among the trustees, e.g. an HR Working Group considered employee benefits. These are usually task and finish groups and joining them is entirely voluntary, but a good way to get your teeth into a particular topic and have a more hands-on impact.

Committee members

You can become a member of the CECC or Resources committee without becoming a trustee. This is a great way to contribute to the Trust and learn more about a specific area of our work. Becoming a committee member may suit you if you don't yet feel ready to become a trustee, you don't currently have the time to commit to the full trustee role, or you simply want to focus on a particular area of our work.

Meetings

Council and committee meetings are on a Tuesday evening, from 6pm to 8pm. You can join meetings in person at our offices in Cambourne, or remotely via Teams. Working Group meetings are arranged to suit their members.

Council meets four times a year, as does each committee. We circulate papers the week before a meeting and trustees and committee members are expected to have read them and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them.

We also encourage trustees to attend the AGM, followed by a Members Day of guided walks and other activities, in October.



The away day and field trips

Away days and field trips take place across the three counties.

The away day is an annual day for strategic planning between trustees and the Executive. It takes place in April and is followed by a nature reserve visit led by a ranger of our Head of Conservation.

CECC committee has an annual evening field trip to view novel conservation practices in action, followed by an informal dinner. Resources committee members are welcome to attend.

Staff at the Trust often alert trustees to interesting wildlife-spotting or listening opportunities.

Officers

Officer posts are Chair; Vice Chair; Honorary Secretary; Honorary Treasurer; and Chair of Conservation, Education and Community Committee. These posts have specific responsibilities within the Council.

When a vacancy for an officer role arises, and you feel ready to take on more responsibility and get more deeply involved, you can put yourself forward to be considered. These roles take up more time, but are very rewarding.

Officer roles are elected annually by members at the AGM, and trustees can serve in these roles for up to six years.

From application to induction

We advertise vacancies as and when they arise. We need to ensure we retain a diverse mix of skills and experience on Council, so if we're seeking someone from a particular field, the advert will specify that. Alternatively, please do contact our Chief Executive, Brian Eversham, via the Cambridgeshire office.

Candidates who make it to shortlist stage will be interviewed – usually by the Chair of trustees and the Chief Executive.

Successful candidates for committee member posts will be invited to join the committee. In the case of trustees, the successful candidates will be 'co-opted' onto the Council pending voting by members at the next AGM. This is nothing to be afraid of – members are generally very supportive of prospective trustees.

As a trustee you will be re-elected by members every three years and can serve two terms (i.e. up to six years).

As a further part of good governance procedure and statutory obligations, we also ask each Trustee for a declaration of relevant interests when they begin their tenure which is then sent to individual trustees before each Council meeting for any update. The Register is reviewed by the Hon Secretary and any relevant items or changes are reported verbally to Council. We also ask new trustees for some personal information which needs to be provided as part of our bank's 'Know your customer' statutory requirements.

Induction

We give trustees a warm welcome and a comprehensive induction to the work of the Trust and being a trustee, at a date and time to fit around your work or other commitments. The induction will cover these topics:

- Impact Report and Accounts
- How the Trust functions
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Financial year
- Membership
- Nature reserves and wardens
- Education and Community work
- Wildlife Trust Ecology Groups and Training Workshops
- Wildlife Watch
- Council
- Committees
- Local Members' Groups
- Officers and Trustees 2025-26
- Articles of Association
- Links to Charity Commission guidance on being a good trustee



Questions are welcome at any time, and part of the fun of being a trustee is the continual learning.

Useful background information

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough was formed in 1994 from three existing Trusts. Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Wildlife Trust (founded as the Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Naturalists' Trust in 1960) and the Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust (founded in 1958 as the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Naturalists' Trust and known as CAMBIENT) merged in 1990 to form the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust. This Trust then merged with the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust (founded in 1963) and the Peterborough Wildlife Group (founded in 1987) in 1994. The name was shortened to "The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire" at the AGM in October 2011.

The founders of the Trust were mainly keen amateur naturalists but included academics and professional ecologists. The first staff were administrators, but gradually conservation staff were employed. The Trust is now run by a very effective combination of Trustees and over 1000 volunteers working with 100 staff.

The Trust is a member of Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT), which acts as an umbrella body carrying out lobbying and public relations on behalf of all Wildlife Trusts, and facilitates joint working. Member Trusts have the use of the Wildlife Trust logo and share the resources, best practice and special experience of other member Trusts. Membership of RSWT gives the Trust a national voice and profile, as well as respectability by association, in the eyes of those unfamiliar with its particular work. However, each member of the network remains entirely independent in terms of governance and charitable status. The independent Trusts and the RSWT cooperate under the banner of The Wildlife Trusts through a Memorandum of Co-operation.

The Trust continues to support the work of the RSWT: chair and CEO attend regular strategy meetings, our CEO co-chairs a national working group on nature reserves and many other staff take part in workshops and events.

Organisational Structure (including committee roles)

