



Valuing our Volunteers Policy

What is this policy about?

The contribution of volunteers is vital to the success of the BES and to our ability to deliver our strategic goals. There is no part of the Society or its activities that is not lead by, or delivered in collaboration with, volunteers from the ecological community and beyond.

Our Aims

- Our inclusive and equitable volunteering culture is enhanced and shared across all areas of the Society
- Volunteers are proactively supported, valued, recognised and respected for their professionalism, dedication and quality of service regardless of their career stage and geographical location
- Volunteers are empowered to play an active leadership role in the BES and the wider ecological community

1. Who does this policy apply to?

The growth of society is due to the efforts of our existing volunteers and increases the opportunities for new volunteers, this policy is for anyone who is already, or is thinking about volunteering their time and expertise. It is also for all staff and committees who are involving volunteers in BES business.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no contractual obligation for the volunteer to attend or to undertake tasks. However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability and a shared set of expectations, which this policy seeks to outline.

Volunteers are both members and non-members, they are undergraduates through to retired individuals and they are based all over the world. They are all individuals who provide their time and expertise to support the BES in the delivery of its activities, either on a time-limited project or a longer-term commitment to core activities. They do not receive any cash remuneration.

Designated staff members are paid staff with responsibility for delivering activities and projects in collaboration with volunteers, they work closely with volunteers ensuring that their engagement with the Society is constructive, fulfilling and meets the needs of the volunteer and the society. They will act as the first point of contact for volunteers.

The Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that all staff, committees, working groups and ad-hoc groups in, and working with, their teams comply with this policy.

The Board of Trustees are themselves all volunteers and serve as Chairs across our committees and working groups. They are responsible for ensuring the Society develops, resources and implements best-practice in the policies, systems and processes that value all volunteers.

2. Diversity and Inclusion

The Society is committed to an inclusive, equitable approach to working with volunteers. All staff and volunteers are expected to embed best practices in diversity and inclusion at all stages of their work, abide by the Society's codes of conduct and report issues if they are concerned.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Volunteer roles across the organisation are very varied and the responsibilities of all roles are clearly laid out

Volunteers can expect to:

- have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- receive adequate support and training to deliver the role and responsibilities asked of them
- volunteer in a safe environment
- be always treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses and to know the timescales, process, and forms for this
- have opportunities for personal development that are clearly defined
- be recognised and appreciated
- be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- know what to do if something goes wrong

We ask volunteers to:

- carry out tasks within agreed guidelines and timeframes
- declare any conflict of interests that arise
- raise any concerns they might have about their role
- uphold the organisation's values and comply with organisational policies
- contribute positively to the aims of the organisation and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- adhere to any confidentiality requirements associated with their role at all times

4. Recruitment

We are committed to ensuring an open and appropriate recruitment process which reflects the nature of the volunteer role and likely career stage of individual volunteers.

Where references are required for a volunteer role, the staff member responsible for the volunteer will ensure they are obtained

Some roles may require further checks such as DBS checks which will be undertaken in accordance with the latest guidance. Volunteers will be notified of this requirement and processes within any advertisement. The “Safeguarding Officer” will be responsible for DBS checks and ensuring all appropriate compliance procedures.

Recruiting staff will discuss the most appropriate recruitment process

Opportunities will be advertised on our website, networks and mailing lists and via social media. Where appropriate, will also promote opportunities through targeted recruitment sites that are likely to reach audiences and their expertise that our networks do not currently reach.

Any new roles for volunteers must be agreed with the Senior Management Team before they are advertised.

5. Induction and Training

Volunteers will receive a full induction which will include:

- 1) An introduction to other volunteers where appropriate and staff members they will be working with regularly
- 2) Clear written role descriptors and guidance on the role they are to undertake and opportunities to ask questions
- 3) Instructions on how and when to claim expenses
- 4) Where “training” is required to deliver the role, this is provided through the most appropriate mechanisms. No costs will be incurred by the volunteer
- 5) Clear guidance on the internal communications channels available to the volunteer
- 6) Links to all relevant policies
- 7) A digital summary of the relevant section of all our policies related to
 - a. Valuing volunteers
 - b. Codes of conduct
 - c. Our duty of care and where appropriate safeguarding policies
 - d. Travel policy
 - e. EDI policy

6. Support and mentoring

Each volunteer will have a named staff member, who is responsible for any training, facilitating any mentoring, as well as any certification of and recognition of contributions, giving feedback and answering queries.

7. Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity to share their views and opinions of their experiences of volunteering with us.

We recognise and reward our volunteers in different ways that reflect the diversity of the people who volunteer with us, their career stage and the nature of their role.

8. Confidentiality

Only staff who need to see information for purposes related to volunteer involvement will be able to access it. We will not pass information on without permission.

Volunteers who will have access to confidential information are provided with clear guidance and asked to abide by the society's GDPR processes and any data handling requirements

9. Expenses

Where agreed, we will reimburse all reasonable expenses incurred by volunteers on production of receipts or appropriate evidence and expenses incurred are in line with relevant policies

Where costs may prohibit/ exclude volunteer engagement, volunteers are and should feel able to discuss their circumstances with staff.

10. Raising concerns

Sometimes problems do arise. In the first instance, any volunteer with a complaint or concern should bring it up with their designated staff member. If the issue cannot be resolved by informal discussion, then it can be taken up by contacting the senior management team.

11. Code of Conduct

The BES has a full duty of care policy that covers all activities and a general code of conduct that applies to all areas of BES.
