

Volunteer Handbook

**Your guide to being a volunteer with
Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust**



Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

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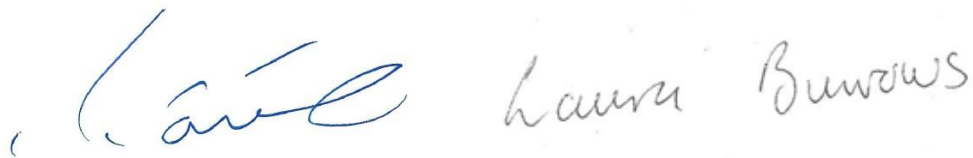
Welcome!

Thank you for registering as a volunteer for the Trust and agreeing to share your time and skills to support us. The strength of the Trust is built on the partnership between volunteers and staff, working together for our common cause, to support our local wildlife.

We strive to encourage and support all our volunteers, and to offer a friendly and enjoyable environment in which to make a difference.

As a local charity, volunteers play a vital role in everything we do. We are committed to treating all volunteers with respect and fostering an inclusive, open and ethical culture, guided by the National Council for Volunteer Organisations (NCVO) Ethical Principles.

Thank you for sharing your time

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Burrows". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Laura" being more prominent and the last name "Burrows" following it.

Peter Tallantire
Chair

Laura Burrows
Chief Executive

About Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Formed in 1964, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) is a local nature conservation charity, with over 24,000 members choosing to protect and restore wildlife and help our community to connect with nature. We are part of The Wildlife Trusts – a federation of 47 local charities, a million members strong, and the UK's biggest movement for nature. Together, from right here on your doorstep, through the hallways of power, we can change things, so people and wildlife can thrive together.

More than 600 amazing volunteers already support our work, contributing thousands of hours every year to restore habitats, care for nature reserves and connect communities with the natural world. Their passion, energy and commitment make an invaluable difference across Hertfordshire and Middlesex - and quite simply, we couldn't achieve what we do without our volunteers.

At HMWT we believe that wildlife should be able to thrive alongside our everyday lives and that everyone benefits from having access to nature. If we work together, nature will recover and we will create a greener, sustainable and wilder future for wildlife and our communities.

Our current [Wilder Herts and Middlesex Strategy 2030](#) is underpinned by three goals:

- More land in Hertfordshire and Middlesex is managed and protected for nature
- More people are standing up for wildlife and taking action for nature's recovery
- Nature plays a central and valued role in helping to address climate issues and people's health and wellbeing

We are achieving these goals through a varied programme of delivery.

For nature

- Managing our nature reserves which cover habitats including ancient woodland, lowland meadows, heathland, wetlands and lakes. They are managed to maximise their value for wildlife and to be welcoming places for visitors.
- Providing advice to landowners such as schools, golf courses, local authorities and farmers on action they can take for wildlife.
- Delivering a landscape-scale river restoration programme with a focus on protecting chalk streams – 10% of the world's chalk streams are in Hertfordshire.
- Leading key species recovery schemes such as Water Vole surveys, conservation and reintroduction projects
- Coordinating removal of invasive non-native species (INNS) such as Himalayan balsam and mink from our rivers and other habitats
- Monitoring and surveying our nature reserves, local wildlife sites and other locations across other sites
- Hosting the Herts Environmental Records Centre which alongside planning colleagues plays a vital role in informing the planning agenda, commenting on planning applications, local plans and major infrastructure.

For people

- Offering support for local communities to take action for wildlife on their patch – running workshops, providing advice and supporting activity planning, for example for ponds, wildlife gardens, and improvements to school grounds or shared community spaces
- Running a varied events programme including guided walks, themed talks, arts and crafts activities, skills and training sessions, family activities and much more.

- Delivering bespoke activities for key audiences such as running Wild Wellbeing programmes connecting people with nature to support their mental and physical health and offering opportunities for younger audiences to expand their horizons, skills and routes to work.

In support

- Carrying out fundraising to encourage new members and donations
- Preparing proposals for funding from grants, partnerships and businesses
- Developing relationships and partnerships to secure our work for the future

Your contribution as a volunteer

At a time when wildlife is under greater pressure than ever before, as a volunteer you are helping turn the tide for nature. By giving your time, you are making a real and lasting difference to the places and wildlife you care about.

Volunteering is also a chance to invest in yourself: to enjoy the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of being outdoors, experience the satisfaction of practical action, and build friendships with people who share your passion for nature.

Thank you for joining us

Together, we are creating a wilder future for Hertfordshire and Middlesex

Volunteer Agreement

Our Volunteer Agreement outlines our mutual expectations – what the Trust expects of volunteers and what you can expect of us.

Volunteers are expected to:

- Maintain and uphold the good name and reputation of the Trust.
- Act in accordance with the role that you have been assigned and aim for high standards.
- Be accountable and cooperate with members of staff/other volunteers to accept constructive comments, instructions and guidance.
- Keep in regular contact with your Primary Contact to ensure each is aware of any updates or changes to your role or activities, and to raise any concerns or questions you might have.
- Act in a courteous and respectful manner to your fellow volunteers, members of staff and the public.
- Abide by the Trust's policies, procedures and standards, including for health & safety, data protection, equality, safeguarding and fundraising.
- Take part in any training required for your volunteer role.
- Take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your actions.
- Respect the need for confidentiality.
- Inform the Trust if you no longer wish to volunteer or, if your circumstances change (including your health), or if you require adjustments to support you in your role.
- Avoid handling money (such as donations) and never apply for funding from another body on behalf of the Trust unless specifically authorised to do so. This is to protect you and ensure we comply with fundraising and financial regulations.
- Accept that ultimate responsibility and decision-making for the charity and its activities rests with the Board of Trustees and the Senior Management Team.
- Understand that if you do not demonstrate the behaviours set out in the Volunteer Agreement, you may be asked to cease volunteering for the Trust.

What you can expect of the Trust:

- Recognition and celebration of your contributions through volunteering including invitations to special events
- A friendly and supportive atmosphere so that your volunteering is a rewarding and enjoyable experience
- Being made to feel part of the team, and treated respectfully, fairly and consistently.

- Support and regular contact through a Primary Contact, with clear guidance on your role and what activities you should be delivering.
- A safe and healthy environment in which to work and liability insurance cover in case of injury whilst volunteering.
- Access to relevant Trust policies, procedures and guidance, as well as training and support to carry out your role.
- Further information to give you a good understanding of the wider work of the Trust to help you better understand the value of your contribution.
- Fair and consistent approach to resolve complaints or issues you may experience as a volunteer.
- Evaluation of our volunteering programme to support us all to develop and improve.

Volunteering with the Trust

We aim to support all our volunteers and to recognise and celebrate your valuable contribution to our work.

Team Kinetic

All volunteering activities will be made available through our Team Kinetic Platform, where you can book and manage sessions, get updates and find access to resources to support your volunteering. You can find links to Team Kinetic via our [volunteering page](#) on the Trust website.

Primary contact

Most volunteers will have a named supervisor (Primary Contact) who will be either a member of staff or an experienced volunteer. This person will lead your induction when you start volunteering, provide support, feedback and answer queries. In the case of Nature Reserve volunteers, your Primary Contact will be shared by the Reserves Team and guidance provided at each Work Party session.

For most volunteer opportunities you will be able to book and cancel your attendance on a planned activity using the Team Kinetic Platform. For those signed up for flexible roles, please let your Primary Contact know if, for some reason, you are unable to carry out your regular task as usual.

Policies and Procedures

When you register to volunteer with the Trust, you automatically agree to follow the Trust's policies and procedures relevant to your role.

You will be required to read and confirm you have understood a small number of mandatory policies and procedures before taking part in any volunteer activity. For some roles, you will be required to confirm that you have understood additional policies and procedures before you can sign up to take part. These requirements will be made clear on the Team Kinetic platform and weblinks provided to documents as needed. You can also find all volunteer related policies and procedures on our website - <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteerpolicies>.

Induction

The nature of your induction will depend on your role. Office-based roles, for example, will be different from those working on reserves or supporting at events. Use this opportunity to ask questions to ensure we have covered everything you need.

Support and development

You will receive training and supervision to support you to carry out your role safely and effectively. We will highlight any particular training that you require in order to start or take on new activities.

Review

You will be able to review your volunteer role and activities (you may have more than one) with your Primary Contact from time to time, a chance to gather and receive feedback and to discuss any further training and development needs.

For roles with a higher level of responsibility such as Reserves Warden, regular discussions will be held. There will be an initial 3-month probationary period for a volunteer new to one of these roles with a higher level of responsibility to ensure that it is working well for the volunteer and the Trust.

Expenses

The Trust will reimburse pre-agreed, reasonable, out-of-pocket expenses to volunteers. There is a cap of a 40-mile round trip on mileage expenses per day, except for volunteers such as Trustees, Committee Members and Wildlife Sites Surveyors where additional travel is required as part of their role. The Trust encourages the use of public transport wherever possible. Ask your Primary Contact if you would like an expenses form to make a claim.

Recording your time

To help recognise the invaluable contribution volunteers make to the Trust, it is very helpful to be able to record the amount of time you give. It is of particular use in funding applications as it helps to evidence the level of support we receive. You will be able to log your volunteer hours on the Team Kinetic platform, and these can be verified by your Primary Contact.

Your health

Please inform your Primary Contact of any relevant health issue that could affect your volunteering or if your health changes in a way which could affect your ability to carry out your role. This information will be treated sensitively and held in accordance with our Data Protection Policies. The Trust will seek to make reasonable adjustments to your role to accommodate you wherever we can.

Problem solving

For most people, volunteering at the Trust is an enjoyable and positive experience, and any issues which occur are normally resolved quickly. However, we realise that situations occasionally happen where you may be unhappy about your experience, or where a complaint has been made. Any such situations will be dealt with fairly, objectively and consistently.

The Trust sets a high standard of behaviour for its staff and volunteers and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. In the case of a serious act of misconduct (violence, theft, harassment, non-compliance with a health and safety instruction, bringing the Trust into disrepute, abusive behaviour) a volunteer will be asked to leave immediately.

If you have a comment or complaint to make against the Trust or another volunteer, please follow our [Complaints Policy](#) or [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

Keeping us updated

Please let us know if your contact details or contact preferences change, particularly if you have a new emergency contact, so we can update our records. We will store and use personal information in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#).

Insurance

The Trust's Employer's Liability Insurance provides cover against liability for injury sustained by volunteers as a direct result of their involvement with Trust activities.

Volunteers are expected to carry out only those tasks that are suitable for their ability, taking into account factors including age, capacity, competency and medical conditions, without causing any

harm or injury to yourself or others, or damage to property. If you have any issues or conditions which may affect your ability to carry out your role, please speak to your Primary Contact.

Stepping down

We understand that volunteers may wish to cease their involvement at any time, for a variety of reasons. If you decide to leave, we ask that you discuss this with your Primary Contact. It is always helpful to have feedback as this helps us learn and develop the way we involve volunteers.

Sometimes the Trust may conclude that a volunteer is no longer able to continue in their role for some reason, in which case you will be either invited to take on a different task or required to step down.

Communications and the Media

While we would like volunteers to help raise the profile of the Trust through social media, the press, radio and TV, it is important that the Trust staff team always deal directly with the broadcast media. If you are contacted by the media in your capacity as a Trust volunteer, you must speak to your Primary Contact or our communications team – media@hmwt.org - before agreeing to take part in any media opportunities related to the work of the Trust.

Volunteers must not make disparaging or defamatory statements about the Trust, its staff, other volunteers or members (past or present), or other stakeholders, and should avoid any communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Trust's reputation, even indirectly. Volunteers who bring the Trust into disrepute are likely to be required to step down as a volunteer.

Confidentiality

We ask you to respect other people's privacy and keep sensitive information confidential. Volunteers are expected to respect the requirements for confidentiality in their work with the Trust and you may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement if your role requires it.

Telephones, Email and Internet

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

Thank you again for volunteering with the Trust