

Volunteering with Natural England:

Volunteering for people, places and nature



Volunteering Promise

Introduction

Volunteers are at the very heart of the nature conservation movement. Your contribution makes a real difference and is a critical part of the collective effort to conserve England's special places and wildlife for the benefit of all of us and for future generations. We value your dedication, energy and enthusiasm and appreciate that you freely give your precious time for our shared cause.

This 'Promise' is our agreement of what we can expect of each other and shows how you can help to shape the volunteer programme so that it is as supportive for you as possible. We work hard to ensure our relationship with volunteers works well, and the Volunteering Promise supports this by setting out the actions that you or we can take to this end.

We are committed to supporting our existing network of volunteers, welcoming a new generation of naturalists and sharing the achievement and celebration of future successes with all of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name of the Chief Executive of Natural England.

Chief Executive
Natural England

Who is this Promise for?

This Promise is an agreement between Natural England and its volunteers. It should be read in conjunction with any personal volunteer placement agreement you have agreed with the organisation. All new volunteers will receive a copy of the Promise at the start of their placement and all existing volunteers will be able to access a copy on our website or request a copy directly from a supervisor.

As a volunteer with Natural England, you can expect –

- To be treated with courtesy and respect as a valued member of the volunteer network
- That we take care of your health, safety and welfare to the same standard as we do for staff, as laid out in Natural England's Health & Safety Policy. This will include processing relevant sensitive data about personal health gathered on your Expression of Interest form or via other official channels.
- That you will be involved in a role which matches your skills and interests and that also helps to achieve our business objectives

- That we will always be mindful of your voluntary status and your right to decline involvement at any time
- That everyone will have equal opportunity to volunteer based on ability, aptitude and practical issues such as location and costs. We will not discriminate against anyone and will encourage diversity amongst our volunteers
- That we will take good care of your personal information and not use it for anything other than managing and supporting your volunteering role in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Sensitive data you provide about personal health will be processed to ensure you and others are kept safe whilst you volunteer for Natural England in keeping with our Health & Safety policy. Please see our privacy notice www.gov.uk/government/publications/natural-england-privacy-notice for more information.
- That we will reimburse your agreed out of pocket expenses in line with our volunteers' expenses policy
- That we will recognise and acknowledge the contribution that you make to the organisation, to the local community and to nature conservation
- That we will provide an induction for new volunteers, provide refresher training and invest in training and development for existing volunteers where appropriate
- That we will tell you if there is a problem and encourage you to work with us to put things right
- That we will provide clear official guidance and other information appropriate / necessary for your role in an easily accessible form
- That we will communicate with you in a professional, clear, courteous and open manner
- That we will welcome and encourage your feedback and provide regular opportunities to do so

As our volunteer we expect you to -

- Abide strictly by our health and safety policy and procedures
- Respect and welcome diversity amongst our staff, volunteers, the public and our partners
- Be aware of issues of confidentiality – respecting personal or sensitive information that you may have access to even if you leave your voluntary role
- Treat staff, volunteers, the public and our partners with courtesy and respect both in person and in any correspondence, including via social media
- Carry your identity card and any necessary permits
- Help us to keep our records up to date by telling us about changes
- Tell us when things go wrong and, where we have not upheld the Promise, give us the opportunity to put things right
- Follow the code of conduct for volunteers set out below and tell us if you have any issue which means you might not be able to follow the code of conduct

Code of conduct for volunteers

Volunteers are ambassadors for Natural England. We know that you will act professionally when you are volunteering with us and we ask you to be aware that members of the public may see you as the public face of the organisation. The code of conduct for volunteers echoes many of the requirements for our staff (who also have additional codes including political impartiality and whistle blowing procedures)

Whilst you are acting as a volunteer, we respectfully request the following -

- that you will act with honesty, integrity and impartiality
- that you will act responsibly and to keep personal views and judgements separate from the time when you are acting on our behalf
- that you will not misuse your position of trust and responsibility as a Natural England Volunteer
- that where you enter people's homes as part of your role (as with a Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor), you always show your identity card and that you act with honesty and integrity

- that you do not accept gifts, hospitality or any other benefit where the purpose of the giver is to use undue influence on you or to seek benefits from you that you could only bring because of your involvement as a Natural England Volunteer
- that you deal with the public fairly, promptly and sensitively
- that you do not frustrate the implementation of Natural England policies by taking inappropriate action or declining to take an agreed action
- that you are not involved in any activity that could bring Natural England's name into disrepute. For some activities, we may decide that your continued involvement as a volunteer is not compatible with the activity even if you choose to do this outside of your time with us as a volunteer. For example, non-peaceful campaigning activities which have the potential to harm others

Whilst you are acting as a volunteer, you must comply with the following –

- You have obligations for your own health and safety and that of other people who might be affected by your actions or omissions. We expect you to carry out your role safely and to tell us immediately if there is any health and safety issue which could affect you or those around you
- You must use Natural England estate, items of property and infrastructure with care and respect and only for what they are intended
- You must comply with our IT security and access policies where you have been granted access
- You must comply with the law and uphold the administration of justice

If you do not follow the responsibilities set out in this Promise, we retain the right to end or suspend your placement with or without warning depending on the nature of the reason for ending/suspending the placement. We will always explain the rationale behind our reasoning and give you the opportunity to respond.

If we do something that does not uphold this Promise, you can tell us about it and expect us to take action to put things right and to explain what action we have taken.

Dealing with problems

If you have an issue with your voluntary role or have any problems affecting your involvement with the organisation, you can inform your volunteer supervisor and they will work with you to try to solve the issue.

If speaking to your supervisor doesn't result in a satisfactory outcome, or, if you feel that you cannot discuss your issue directly with your supervisor; you may contact the Adviser for your area. A list of Advisers is available on our website or you can contact the Volunteer Enquiry team by emailing volunteer.enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk or by calling 0208 026 1225 or 0208 026 1254.

These arrangements for volunteers are in addition to the general complaints procedure that you have access to and which can be found on via www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/complaints-procedure. However we recommend that you contact your supervisor, local Adviser or the Volunteer Enquiries Team for support before you submit a formal complaint.

Giving us feedback

We welcome constructive feedback on how we might improve the service and support that we give to you. If you would like to make a suggestion please contact your supervisor or your local Adviser. If you would like to say thank you to a member of staff or another volunteer, or if you would like to share a good idea, an inspiring story or an example of good practice, please also get in touch through the same route.