



Volunteer handbook

Essex Wildlife Trust

Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**



Essex
Wildlife Trust

Message from Andrew Impey, CEO

People are at the heart of everything that EWT does for wildlife and no-one more so than our amazing volunteers. As an organisation, we simply couldn't function if it wasn't for the unsung heroes who help keep many of our Nature Discovery Centre's, reserves and offices running on a daily basis. As CEO, I cannot over emphasise just how grateful I am for that enduring level of support and commitment.

My wish is that this relationship is mutually beneficial and that you get out personally just as much as you put in. I want you to feel acknowledged and appreciated and most of all, I want you to feel part of the Trust and everything that we are trying to achieve for wildlife in Essex.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrew Impey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Andrew Impey
CEO Essex Wildlife Trust

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Hello and Welcome

The Trust has around 1,400 volunteers who work to protect Wildlife for the future and for the people of Essex. Without volunteers the Trust would not be able to function as widely as it does. Volunteer time allows the Trust to protect 87 nature reserves, manage over 8,000 acres of land and run 10 Nature Discovery Centres which are educating over a million visitors a year. Volunteers make a huge impact on the wildlife and people of Essex.

This handbook covers the basic information you need as a volunteer but don't hesitate to contact your supervisor or the volunteering team with any queries you might have.

The History of the Trust

The Trust began on 02 October 1959 when a group of volunteers formed the Essex Naturalists' Trust. Volunteering is the very cornerstone on which the organisation was founded. Over the years the Trust has grown immensely in size, influence, and achievement but we are still reliant on volunteers.

Essex Wildlife Trust is the county's leading conservation charity. It has almost 40,000 members. It is supported financially by members, donors, customers, local businesses and grant making organisations. It is one of the largest of the 46 county Wildlife Trusts.

Our Vision

A county **rich in wildlife** with people **connected to nature**.

Our Mission

Protecting wildlife and **inspiring** a lifelong love of nature.

Our Values

Our values are **fundamental** to who we are and how we operate as an organisation.

In all areas of our work we are:

- Inspiring
- Collaborative
- United
- Professional

How Essex Wildlife Trust is managed

Essex Wildlife Trust is a registered charity and is governed by a Board of Trustees. A professional staff team is employed to deliver the organisation's aims and objectives. This team works closely with local volunteers and partnership organisations. We also work in association with the trading subsidiaries of Essex Wildlife Trust: Essex Wildlife Sales, Thameside Nature Park Ltd, Chafford Gorges Ltd and Essex Ecology Services (EECOS). These are all limited companies that exist to achieve aims consistent with that of the Essex Wildlife Trust.

Our Board of Trustees is elected by the members, and the trustees carry ultimate responsibility for actions carried out in the name of the Trust. They decide on policy, agree the annual budget and work at a strategic level to ensure we fulfil our responsibilities as a charity. The trustees delegate the general management of the Trust to the CEO, who is responsible for all staff and volunteers.

Teams

The Trust is made up of 6 overarching directorates.

- Conservation
- People & Culture (including Volunteering)
- Engagement
- Commercial
- Finance & Systems
- Essex Ecology Services (EECOS)

Conservation

The Conservation directorate is broken down into four key areas of responsibility:

- Nature Reserves & Natural Capital
- Landscape & Rivers
- Marine & Coastal Recovery
- Conservation Evidence

The teams work with landowners including developers and farmers, councils and the general public. They also work closely with local volunteers to monitor and respond to planning applications. They manage our 87 nature reserves covering over 8,000 acres of land. Conservation staff and volunteer wardens work with teams of Work Party Volunteers to carry out practical management activities on our reserves.

Office Based Teams

Our **People & Culture, Finance, Fundraising, Membership, Communications** and **Project Management** staff and volunteers work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep the organisation up and running. Volunteers play a vital role in supporting these teams through administration, database management and reception work.

Nature Discovery Centres and Sales

We have 10 Nature Discovery Centres in Essex and our Commercial team look after these. Our centres attract over a million visitors each year. We use the centres to **educate** and **engage** these visitors and to fundraise. Volunteers are vital to the centres as they are the face of the Trust. Centre volunteers meet and greet the public as well as performing the vital maintenance and upkeep of our facilities including lending a hand in the retail outlets and cafés.

Wilder Learning

The Wilder Learning team coordinates educational activities for children and families. They run Wilder Learning events and deliver specific projects like Forest Schools and the Nature Nursery. We have a team of professional Wilder Learning Officers to deliver these services. Each officer has their own group of dedicated volunteers who help with all the activities.

EECOS

EECOS (Essex Ecology Services) is one of the subsidiary companies of the Trust. They are an ecological consultancy and perform ecological site audits. They do not take on volunteers.

What do Essex Wildlife Trust Volunteers do?

There are a huge range of diverse volunteering roles with the Trust. You can find our current vacancies on our website <http://www.essexwt.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer> or speak to the Volunteer Team for more information.

Nature Discovery Centre

Centre volunteers come into contact with thousands of visitors each year. They are at the forefront of communication about the work of the Trust and engaging people with nature.



Work Party

Work party volunteers carry out on the ground management of nature reserves. Volunteers can be involved with a range of tasks including coppicing, scrub clearance, hedge laying, stock management and surveying.

Wilder Learning

Wilder Learning volunteers assist our staff in delivering activities for children. These include Nature Nursery, Nature Tots, Forest Schools, after school clubs, school visits and birthday parties.



Surveying

Survey volunteers get involved with recording wildlife and habitats across the county. These roles are very self-directed but we provide various training days according to our need for surveyors.

Food & Beverage volunteers

F&B Volunteers help at our Nature Discovery Centres across Essex. Cafes contribute to the thousands of pounds raised by the Essex Wildlife Sales company each year to support our conservation work. Roles include helping serve tea, coffee, sandwiches and cake and hot food in some centres.





Volunteer Wardens

Volunteer Wardens are key volunteers that take responsibility for a specific reserve or area. They can be involved with the maintenance or monitoring of sites. Some of the volunteer wardens also run work parties and events on their site.

Volunteer Code of Professionalism

Essex Wildlife Trust volunteers are **ambassadors for the Trust**, and we ask them to conduct themselves with the same level of professionalism required of staff. As such we have outlined a code of conduct for volunteers:

1. **Respect** all staff, volunteers and visitors at the Trust.
2. Always give as much **notice** as possible to your supervisor when you are unable to attend a previous commitment.
3. Be **polite** and welcoming.
4. **Do not swear**, act threateningly, shout or be offensive to others whilst representing the Trust.
5. Do not endorse **negative opinions** about the Trust whilst volunteering. If you have an issue, follow the proper channels to deal with this.
6. Be respectful of the Trust's **property** and treat it with due care.
7. Follow the **Trust's policies** on Equality and diversity, Health and Safety, confidentiality, and any other relevant policies.
8. Do not volunteer under the influence of non-prescription drugs or alcohol. Always let us know if you are taking prescription drugs that could affect your volunteering.
9. Always follow the **Codes of Good Practice**.

If you cannot meet the above requirements, you may no longer be able to continue with a volunteering placement (please see 'Ending your volunteering' page 19).

Our Commitment to Volunteers

Our Policy

Volunteers are vital to Essex Wildlife Trust and are involved in every aspect of its work.

The aim of involving volunteers in the work of the Trust is to:

- Ensure Essex Wildlife Trust's aims and **priorities are achieved**.
- Bring new **skills, knowledge and enthusiasm** to the Trust which complements those of the staff, so that together we are able to be more successful.
- Increase the Trust's contact with **local communities** throughout Essex.
- Ensure the **resources** of the Trust are used efficiently to maintain a sustainable future for the Trust.

These aims are underpinned by the following principles:

- The Trust is committed to **equality and diversity** in relation to the recruitment, selection, and involvement of volunteers.
- Each volunteer's role will be clearly **explained**.
- The Trust will ensure that volunteers are properly **integrated** into the structure of the organisation, and will provide induction, training and support appropriate to their role.
- The Trust expects that its staff at all levels will **work positively** with volunteers.
- Staff and Volunteers will treat each other with **respect** and courtesy.

Support and Supervision

You will have at least one named person as your main point of contact, who may be a member of staff or another volunteer. Queries or concerns will be addressed by this person in the first instance; however, the Trust also employs dedicated staff for volunteers who can provide additional support or guidance, should this be needed.

Mandatory training for all volunteers

Mandatory training for all staff and volunteers is provided via our compliance system **SmartLog**. When you register as an Essex Wildlife Trust volunteer you will be set-up with a SmartLog account and assigned the mandatory training modules for your role.

For all volunteer roles these include:

- Health & Safety at work
- Fire Awareness
- Manual Handling
- Basic GDPR
- Slips, trips and falls
- Safeguarding Awareness

Refresher training is required on an annual basis in order to continue volunteering with the Trust.

Essex Wildlife Trust has a **duty of care** to ensure that volunteers are not exposed to risks. Your supervisor is the best person to contact for health and safety advice and information. The **Codes of Good Practice** and a full copy of our **Health and Safety policy** are available via your SmartLog account and you should ensure you have read these. There will always be a Risk Assessment available to view at any Trust function or event.

Insurance

The Trust has public liability and employer's liability insurance which **covers staff and volunteers** alike, utilising this is **subject to receiving permission** from a relevant staff member to carry out tasks and adhering to Trust policies and procedures.

Car Insurance

If volunteers use their own vehicle on Trust business, they should inform their insurers, as in some instances insurance companies will need to adjust the insurance policy and/or change the premium. Trust business includes transporting tools, leaflets and people for the Trust. Please say you are volunteering and not working for the Trust as most insurance companies will

not charge you for this. You will be asked to confirm that you have notified your insurer if you claim for any mileage costs from the Trust.

Please be aware that you are **not covered** by the Trust vehicle insurance when using your own vehicle.

Personal belongings

Please do not bring items of value to Trust premises. Items left on Trust property are left at the owner's risk. Insurance policies do not include cash or jewelry.

Your health and safety responsibilities

- By Law, you are responsible for looking after your own safety and that of your colleagues at all times.
- It is important that you listen to the health and safety talk and tools talk which is given at the beginning of any practical task or activity and clarify any points you do not understand.
- If you see unsafe work practices please speak out in an appropriate way to ensure these do not continue e.g. by notifying your supervisor or main point of contact.
- All volunteers must complete a volunteer information form. We store data in accordance with the Data Protection Act. This information is essential for us to safeguard your well-being when volunteering with us and allows us to monitor our commitment to volunteer diversity.
- Please inform supervisors of all accidents and near misses as these will need to be recorded and held centrally.

Your health

If you have any medical conditions or illnesses, or if you are taking any medication that may **impact your volunteering** adversely, please notify us via the volunteer information form. Please be honest about any medication or health problems that may impact your ability to volunteer. This information will be treated as **strictly confidential**. If you would prefer to discuss this in person with your supervisor or a member of the Volunteering Team, please get in touch.

Please inform the Volunteering Team of any medical or health related changes which impact your volunteering. This is for insurance purposes and to ensure that the relevant risk assessments have been carried out, for your safety and the safety of others.

Our data protection policy

Whilst volunteering for the Trust you must follow our data protection policy. This means any sensitive or confidential information that you are party to whilst volunteering should not be shared. If you regularly work with confidential information you will be asked to sign a Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement. Your supervisor will inform you if this is relevant for your volunteer role.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is action taken to protect the welfare of vulnerable adults and children. We have **dedicated safeguarding officers** throughout the Trust. Your supervisor will confirm their details during your on-site induction. If you have a safeguarding concern, i.e. a concern about the welfare of a child or a vulnerable adult who is involved with the Trust please contact a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. If you are unsure of how to do this please contact Abbott's Hall reception on 01621 862 960.

Anyone volunteering with children, in any capacity, will be required to complete additional Safeguarding training which will be arranged via your supervisor.

References, Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks

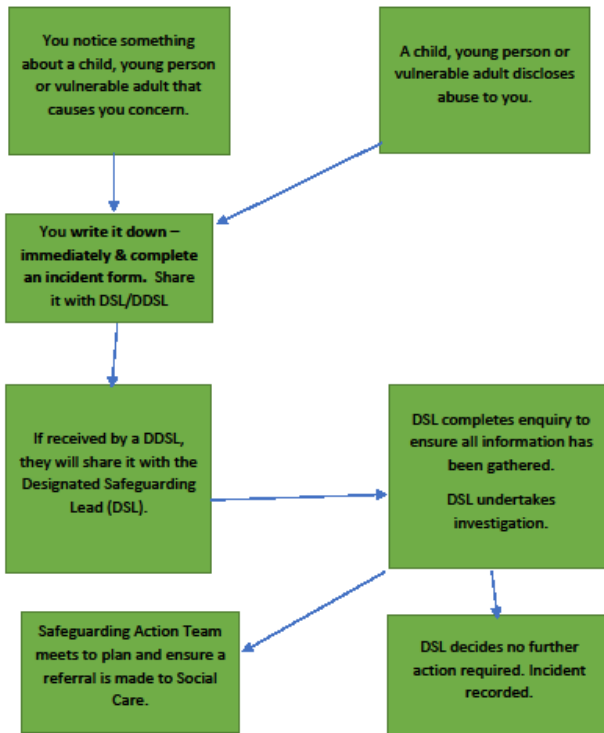
Any volunteers working regularly and unsupervised with children and young people will require an Enhanced DBS check with a barred list check (along with other vetting checks) and will complete in-house training on safeguarding.

If you find that you are in this situation but do not have a DBS check, or you are unsure whether you will need one, please contact the [Volunteering Team](#) as soon as possible.

The Trust may request references for volunteers when the role of the volunteer includes handling of money, keys, or other activities with levels of responsibility including the supervision of groups.

What to do if you have a safeguarding concern

What to do if you have a safeguarding concern



Email: safeguarding@essexwt.org.uk

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Samantha Quill 01621 862950 and Richard Yates
07841 032058

ESCB initial response team – (advice) 0345 6037634

ESCB concerns about a child – 0333 0138936 out of hours – 0845 6061212

ESCB concerns about a vulnerable adult – 0333 0131019 or 0345 6037630

Benefits and rewards of volunteering

Volunteers gain a wealth of benefits from volunteering.

- Contributing to achieving the aims and objectives of the Trust
- A feel-good factor of helping people and wildlife
- Making a difference
- Keeping active and healthy
- Meeting new friends
- Gaining confidence
- Seeing beautiful places
- Improving knowledge and learning new skills
- Gaining work experience
- Improving overall health and wellbeing
- Developing a new understanding of our landscapes
- Having fun

We support volunteers by providing:

- Travel expenses
- Training
- Inductions
- Volunteer social events
- Logo uniform
- Relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Dedicated staff members
- A 10-20% discount in our visitor centres and cafes

Travel expenses

- The Trust can provide reimbursement for travel expenses but please talk to your supervisor prior to incurring these costs as we may not be able to support some expense claims.
- As an organisation we actively encourage sustainability and as such we pay mileage to motorcyclists, cyclists, and to people carrying a passenger on Trust business.
- To claim expenses you need to fill in an expenses form and a BACS form your supervisor will be able to guide you through this process.
- Expenses are paid directly into your bank account, we cannot pay them in cash.
- You cannot claim a flat rate of expenses. Your expenses should reflect an actual cost: e.g. the actual mileage of your drive.

Training and courses

- Mandatory training is provided online via SmartLog. Additional support is available in order to make these training modules accessible for all volunteers, please speak to your supervisor for further information
- In some circumstances we also offer specific training to volunteers to assist with the work they are doing for the Trust, such as: first aid, tractor driving, chainsaw use and brush cutting.
- We regularly train volunteers as part of our day to day work in skills such as: using hand tools on work parties, surveying wildlife and using tills in our centres.

Logo Clothing

- Essex Wildlife Trust logo clothing is supplied to volunteers in **public facing roles**.
- Please speak to your supervisor who can access the Logo Clothing Order Form.
- All volunteers can get access to a Trust name badge, please email volunteering to order one.
- We don't supply new logo clothing for our volunteers on practical work parties.
- Logo clothing should be returned if you give up your volunteering activity.
- Logo clothing should not be worn for anything other than Trust business.
- Clothing should not be used to imply that the volunteer is on official Trust business when they are not.



Arrangements for volunteer concerns and issues

If at any point during your volunteering you wish to raise a concern or issue, the process is outlined below:

1. Discuss your concern with your supervisor. This is often the simplest way to resolve a problem as talking it through with the help of your supervisor can often lead to a satisfactory resolution.
2. If you believe the above step has not resolved your concern, then write down your complaint in detail. If you are referring to a specific incident, you should include dates and names. Send this to the Business Partner - Volunteering as soon as possible after an incident or concern.
3. The Business Partner - Volunteering will investigate your concern and keep you informed about the process
4. If you feel your issues remains unresolved this can be escalated and reviewed internally.

For more information, please see the Procedure for addressing volunteer issues and ending volunteering.

Ending volunteering with the Trust.

Circumstances change and at any point you can stop volunteering. There is no set period of notice required. Giving us as much notice as possible is useful to help us find a replacement. Any feedback on your volunteering experience would be useful to us.

Please contact the volunteering team who can provide you with a link to the anonymous feedback survey.

Useful contact information

	Contact
Volunteering Team	Rosie Abbott (Business Partner - Volunteering) Helen Brand (Volunteering Officer) volunteering@essexwt.org.uk

Designated
Safeguarding
Officers

Sam Quill (Director of People and Culture)
Rich Yates (Director of Engagement)
safeguarding@essexwt.org.uk





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