



National
Trust

Volunteering Charter

Updated September 2023

Welcome

The National Trust was started by volunteers in 1895. With a legacy of more than a hundred years, volunteering is a big part of who we are.

We are grateful for all the time, energy and skills that volunteers bring, and we want the Trust to be a great place for everyone to volunteer.

As a volunteer myself, I'm really pleased to see this Charter come to life. I'm grateful to all the volunteers and staff who took part in creating it on our behalf.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'René Olivieri'.

Volunteering is an important part of my own life and I'm proud to be a National Trust volunteer. From my experience, I believe volunteering helps nature, history and people to thrive.

Volunteering brings people together, and by creating great volunteer opportunities we can benefit individual lives as well as wider society.

I appreciate that creating a great place to volunteer doesn't happen by accident. A lot of work happens behind the scenes with teams providing the right support. Thank you to everyone who supports volunteering.

Whatever your role, volunteer or staff, I hope this Charter is a great help to you.

René Olivieri
Volunteer and Chair of the National Trust

Who is the Charter for?



A volunteer talks to a visitor at
Brockhampton, Herefordshire

Calling all volunteers

Our Volunteering Charter is for all National Trust volunteers – whether you’ve just started or you’ve been volunteering here for years. Or maybe you’ve been thinking about volunteering and want to get a flavour of what’s involved. Whether you volunteer at one of the beautiful places we look after, with our central or regional teams or remotely – this is for you.

Calling all staff

Our Volunteering Charter is equally for anyone who supports volunteers – whether you’re a volunteer manager, a leader or someone who works alongside volunteers. You may be the welcoming face when volunteers arrive, the manager of a large team of volunteers, a project manager or a senior leader – this is for you.

What's the purpose of the Charter?



Every National Trust volunteer and volunteer manager is unique.

People have different expectations, motivations, personalities and skills. The places we work and volunteer in are all different too: historic houses, urban city centres, coastal and rural landscapes, central offices, regional hubs. Some people volunteer remotely too.

Whatever the reason for volunteering, and whatever the team or the role, we want every volunteer to have a positive experience.

This Volunteering Charter **has been created for, and by, volunteers and staff** so that everyone understands:

- why volunteering is important, and
- how we can work together to create a great place to volunteer.



Volunteers engaging with children at Powis Castle, Powys



Volunteering at the National Trust

If you already have experience of volunteering with the National Trust, we think we can probably still surprise you.

Volunteers are involved in all kinds of interesting things.

Including: research, photography, welcoming visitors, our Board of Trustees and Council, archaeology, our specialist advisory network, in our cafés and shops, telling stories in historic houses, looking after gardens and parks, monitoring wildlife, protecting the coast, inspiring schoolchildren...

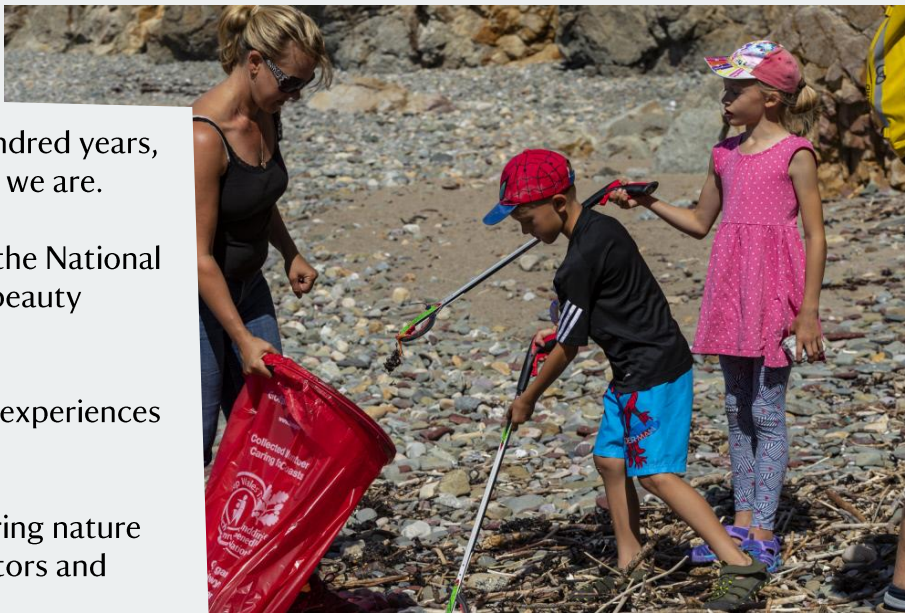
...and the list goes on.



Clockwise from top left. A volunteer taking a break dressed as Rudolph at Lyme, Cheshire. Gardener at work at Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk. Volunteer in the second-hand bookshop at Blicking Estate, Norfolk.

Why volunteering matters

- With a legacy of more than a hundred years, volunteering is a big part of who we are.
- With the support of volunteers, the National Trust can protect more nature, beauty and history.
- Volunteers bring different skills, experiences and perspectives.
- Volunteering is a great way to bring nature and history to life – both for visitors and volunteers.
- Volunteering makes a positive difference to people's lives and to wider society, and can help to bring National Trust places and local communities closer together.



Volunteers beach cleaning at
Marloes Sands, Pembrokeshire



Benefits of volunteering

People volunteer for the National Trust for lots of reasons.



A volunteer greeting visitors to Brownsea Island, Dorset.

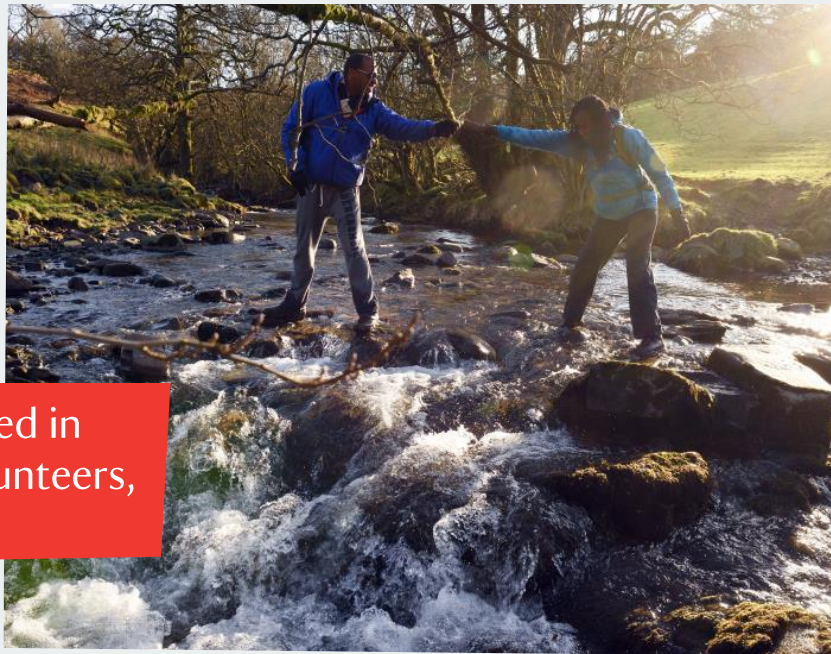
For some, it could be the opportunity to get involved in a cause they believe in. It might be seen as a chance to support a local place that is special to them. It might be about sharing skills or developing new ones. It may be a social thing: belonging to a team, meeting a variety of people and sharing memorable experiences. Or volunteering could simply be about having fun and making friends, while doing something positive and worthwhile.

If you volunteer, whatever the reason – thank you.

Supporting volunteering is a team effort

Great volunteering experiences can only happen with the support of the teams around them – welcoming people on their first day, recruiting, managing, training, developing policies to keep people safe or giving people access to systems. It's a team effort.

If you're involved in supporting volunteers, thank you.



A helping hand in the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park, Wales.

Introducing our shared commitments

There are some things that every volunteering experience should have in common.

These 'shared volunteering commitments' have been created by more than 500 volunteers and staff.

They are a way of describing what all volunteers can expect from the National Trust and, in turn, what the National Trust asks of volunteers.

With more than 500 people sharing their ideas, you can imagine that not everyone had the same opinion. We carefully considered all feedback. Visit *myvolunteering* or Acorn to understand how volunteers and staff shaped this Charter.

These shared commitments sit alongside the National Trust's values – which were also created by staff and volunteers.

Love people and places People and places need each other to thrive. We care for nature, beauty and history for everyone, for ever.

Welcome everyone We are for everyone. We play a positive role locally and nationally connecting and inspiring people.

Think now and for ever Be part of creating a lasting legacy for the future by valuing what we have, embracing change and moving forward.

Make it happen We move forward with purpose and focus, always aiming to simplify and improve.

Our shared volunteering commitments



Staff and volunteers taking a break at Basildon Park, Berkshire.

Volunteers and staff have worked together to develop these shared volunteering commitments, helping all of us to understand each other's different needs and expectations. Together, with these commitments to guide us, we can create a great place to volunteer that benefits volunteers, teams and the wider National Trust.

Understanding the
National Trust and our roles

Valuing everyone

Staying connected

Keeping each other safe

Our shared volunteering commitments



Understanding the National Trust and our roles

The National Trust will:

- share a clear outline of your volunteer role, and introduce you to your named contact
- share and promote the work of the Trust, both nationally and locally, explaining our cause and your part in it
- where possible, involve you in changes that affect your volunteer role.

As a volunteer, I'm asked to:

- take time to understand my role, and get in touch with my named contact if I have any questions
- be supportive of the work of the National Trust and my wider team when I'm volunteering
- help my team respond and adapt to changes when they happen.

Valuing everyone

The National Trust will:

- promote the National Trust's values, explaining and demonstrating their importance
- show appreciation for what you do, saying thank you regularly and celebrating the difference that volunteers make (both locally and nationally)
- make you feel truly welcome, treating you with kindness, respect and dignity
- create an environment that's built on mutual respect and free from bullying, harassment and discrimination
- where possible, offer you opportunities to develop and share skills and knowledge relevant to your volunteering
- pay your out-of-pocket expenses in line with the Expenses for Volunteers document.

As a volunteer, I'm asked to:

- get to know the National Trust's values, and bring them to life when I volunteer with the Trust
- be welcoming, treating everyone with kindness, respect and dignity
- help create an environment built on mutual respect, free from bullying, harassment and discrimination
- consider if there are ways I'd like to develop or share my skills and knowledge, to enhance my volunteer experience or my team's work
- claim any expenses promptly in line with the Expenses for Volunteers document.

Staying connected

The National Trust will:

- give you relevant and important information (local and national) in a way that's clear and accessible, and keep you updated on changes that may affect how you volunteer
- be open and constructive when giving and receiving feedback, and make time to listen when you tell us (either openly or in confidence) about your experiences
- respond to your feedback, and be open and honest if we can't act on it.

As a volunteer, I'm asked to:

- review and act on any information that's important for my role
- find out from my named contact the most appropriate way to share my thoughts and feedback within the Trust
- be open and constructive when giving and receiving feedback
- let my named contact know about any changes that might affect how I volunteer, so that I can be supported where possible.

Keeping each other safe

The National Trust will:

- make sure your volunteering experience is safe, with the essential equipment or information to support you and your wellbeing
- make sure all policies and procedures are up to date, clear and accessible
- give you clear, confidential channels to report and record risks or unacceptable behaviour
- give you training and guidance that is required by law or essential for your role, and provide it in a way that's accessible and relevant to your role.

As a volunteer, I'm asked to:

- make my safety and wellbeing a priority, along with that of others around me
- take time to understand and follow the policies and procedures relevant to my role
- report safety risks and concerns, or unacceptable behaviour, through the right channels
- complete all training that is asked of me and put it into practice.




Our shared volunteering commitments




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Planning a great volunteer experience



Here's a summary for teams to use when shaping and planning their volunteering:

Why

Be clear on why you're involving volunteers.

Is it about getting more done together, gaining different skills or perspectives, connecting more people to nature and history, or strengthening links to communities?

It should be clear how both volunteers and the National Trust benefit from the relationship.

When



- **Be creative:** volunteers with the appropriate skills and support can get involved in almost anything. There are only a few things volunteers don't do – give legal advice, manage staff, take sole responsibility for site security, or displace a member of staff.
- **Be clear** on what you're asking for, and the skills and motivation needed.


- Make sure volunteering is **well planned and resourced**.

Remember, welcoming volunteers into our National Trust teams is only one way for people to get involved. **Partner organisations and community groups** offer great ways for people to protect nature and history too.

How

Everything starts with mutual respect. Volunteers and staff have different roles but we are one team. We:

- follow the Trust's **values** and our **shared volunteering commitments**

- **adapt to change** – so volunteering remains mutually beneficial
 - find new ways for people to get involved, **so volunteering is open to more people and everyone feels welcome**.
- 

Looking ahead

I'm fully supportive of this Volunteering Charter, and I think it reinforces just how important volunteering is now, and will be in the future.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hilary'.


Nature and history need people's support more than ever. I want us to continue to be creative, to find new ways for people to get involved and to inspire more people to volunteer. I'm confident the Charter will support a consistently positive experience for our current volunteers, as well as helping us to grow the range of volunteering we offer.

We all have a role to play in bringing the Charter to life. Working together, I'm confident that it will be a great success.

Hilary McGrady
Director-General of the National Trust

And finally...

The last word needs to go to the volunteers and staff who helped create this Charter. Here are just a few people sharing their views and experiences:



‘Regardless of location, there should be a consistent approach to volunteering and the Charter will support this.’ **Kenneth, volunteer**


‘I regard this as a very important document as it provides clear expectations and structure to the relationship between the Trust and volunteers. It helps us all understand that relationship.’
Dave, volunteer

‘It was encouraging that the charter had engaged with staff and volunteers from across the organisation – definitely a case of doing with, not doing to.’ **Sarah, staff**

‘I was quite sceptical to start with but can now see where it will guide and support us as volunteers in the future. I think it will be a very good tool for volunteer managers to help in the introductions for new volunteers.’ **Hilary, volunteer**

‘I think it shows the National Trust’s commitment to excellent volunteering and team work. I was really pleased to be involved from early stages in the development of the Charter. I felt my views and opinions were listened to. We could see the changes being taken on and implemented.’ **Anna, staff**

‘The consultation was advertised through many channels and all volunteers were provided with the opportunity to get involved, should they have wished to. I felt that my voice had most definitely been listened to as a National Trust volunteer.’
Neil, volunteer





National
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If you'd like more information visit:

- *myvolunteering*
- Acorn

If you have any questions, speak to your manager or named contact.

If you'd like this information in an alternative format, please email
VolunteeringCharter@nationaltrust.org.uk



Clockwise from top left.
Volunteer in costume at Birmingham Back to Backs, West Midlands. Community volunteers laying hedges and planting trees in the Lake District, Cumbria. Staff welcoming Children to Greyfriars House, Worcestershire. Voluntary members of National Trust Council, February 2022.