



**SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST**

Charity Number: 1197743

**SBBOT Volunteer  
Policy & Procedures**

**Purpose**

This policy is to provide guidance and direction to volunteers and staff engaged in supporting volunteer activity and volunteer management. The policy is for guidance only and does not constitute a binding contractual or personnel agreement.

The aim of Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust is to welcome volunteers from the local community who will bring a wide range of skills and experience to our organisation. Volunteers will not be used to replace paid members of staff but are highly valued and recognised for the vital role they play.

All Trustees, including the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary are volunteers.

**Principles of the Policy**

Members are encouraged to become volunteers and we hope that volunteers will support all aspects of SBBOT's work:

- recording of wildlife
- ringing
- working as part of our conservation team
- providing information and welcome in the bird hides
- membership and financial affairs
- premises management and maintenance
- housekeeping duties including, accommodation and food safety routines
- garden maintenance
- staffing the shop
- fund-raising
- welcoming of visitors

- promotion and publicity
- the planning and support of walks, talks and other educational activities

A Volunteer is any individual who provides their experience, knowledge and skills to help an organisation, free of charge with the main aim being to bring benefit to the local community. Individuals may also volunteer to develop their own skills and experience to enhance their employment opportunity.

### **Policy**

This policy sets out the standards expected from volunteers as well as what volunteers can expect from SBBOT.

We aim to ensure all volunteers:

- Have a good understanding of what SBBOT does
- Feel welcomed, appreciated and respected
- Receive guidance and advice to select the right volunteering opportunity
- Know their opinion is welcomed and treated with respect
- Know what is expected of them and who to speak to for support and guidance
- Will not be used to replace paid staff
- Have safe working conditions
- Receive an induction and training where relevant
- Claim out of pocket expenses for agreed expenditure
- Receive regular feedback on how they are doing
- Have a chance to meet other volunteers
- Have the opportunity to develop personal skills
- Have all their records kept confidential

We ask all volunteers to:

- Agree to a level of commitment and uphold this commitment
- Be honest if they find they are not suitable to work in certain volunteer roles
- Respect others
- Recognise that they are a representative of SBBOT while they are volunteering

- Respect confidentiality and sign the Volunteer Confidentiality Form (Appendix 1)
- Attend recommended training sessions
- Inform the relevant persons if they are unable to attend, giving as much notice as possible
- Look after their own safety
- Report any concerns they have to the relevant member of staff
- Ask for any information or guidance if they are unsure of any aspect of their volunteering role
- Be accountable and accept constructive feedback
- Help SBBOT keep vulnerable people safe from harm
- Be reliable, responsible and professional

### **Induction and Training**

Volunteers will receive appropriate induction at the time that they take up their position. Volunteers can access all SBBOT Policies in the SBBOT Handbook.

Additional information will be provided to help volunteers in their work and volunteers will have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills through training provided, where appropriate.

### **Support and supervision**

Volunteers will be supervised and supported by a named person who will be allocated to them during the induction period. This person will provide supervision, guidance and support. The supervision will take place within a confidential and supportive environment.

The volunteer co-ordinator will meet regularly with the volunteer to review the volunteer's work and whether they need any support.

### **Role/Task description**

A short meeting between the Volunteer and the member of the team they will be working with will be arranged before the Volunteer's first visit. They will receive an outline of duties and responsibilities for their task or role.

### **Recruitment**

Volunteers shall be recruited proactively via various media to ensure that a wide range of the local community is aware of volunteering opportunities. SBBOT will use their website, leaflets, adverts in local papers, libraries, churches, hospitals, and GP surgeries – places which the whole community can access. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to gender, age, disability or other distinction that be may be viewed as discriminatory.

They will complete an initial Volunteering Registration Form which will be discussed with the volunteer's co-ordinator in order to find the right task or role for them.

(Appendix 1)

### **Criminal records**

If the volunteering role requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check the volunteer co-ordinator will notify the volunteer and arrange for them to complete an application. A volunteer may start before their check is complete as long as they are fully supervised. A negative outcome will result in a volunteer position being refused. Volunteers for other roles, such as those involving handling money or other financial transactions or with access to SBBOT's IT systems, may be asked for a Volunteer Reference – see Appendix 2

### **Maintaining records**

Records will be maintained on each volunteer, including initial registration details, copies of all written communication and correspondence/reports received from other organisations related to the volunteer and any other relevant documents. We have a statutory requirement to keep records for a period of seven years after a volunteer has left. These documents shall be considered confidential and the volunteer's permission shall be sought before details are disclosed to any external organisation except where withholding information would leave SBBOT liable to prosecution.

### **Confidentiality**

All information provided by the volunteer will be stored in confidence in line with Data Protection Laws.

Only authorised Trustees and staff will have access to volunteer information.

### **Health and safety**

Volunteers will receive clear information during the induction process regarding health and safety procedures and receive appropriate support and training. Volunteers are expected to follow the Health and Safety Policy; a full copy is available on the website. Volunteers have a duty to take reasonable care of themselves and others.

Volunteers are covered by the SBBOT'S insurance policy while engaged in approved activities. However, personal belongings and any motor vehicles are not covered by this policy.

### **Equal opportunities**

SBBOT recognises that volunteering can provide opportunities for career and self-development. In accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy, volunteer placements will be open to individuals irrespective of race, religion, gender, disability, sexuality, age or marital status. Where a prospective or existing volunteer demonstrates hostility to, or a clear lack of support for equal opportunities he/she will be deemed unsuitable for a volunteer position. All volunteers are required to make a commitment to this policy. A copy of this policy is available on the website and in the Office.

### **Safe-Guarding**

Volunteers have the responsibility to report any concerns that they may have regarding Safe-Guarding to the Volunteer Co-ordinator. If the concerns are related to the Co-ordinator themselves then it should be reported to the Warden or the Chair of the Trustees. It is not the role of the volunteer to investigate concerns. SBBOT has a Safe-Guarding policy, which sets out the guidelines and procedures to follow regarding any concerns. A copy of this policy is available in the Office and on the website and online training will be given where appropriate to the role.

### **Absence**

Volunteers are expected to inform the Observatory if they are unable to attend an event, giving as much notice as possible to allow time to make alternative arrangements. SBBOT has a duty to let Volunteers know if arrangements change.

### **Concerns and Grievances**

If a volunteer has any concerns or grievances, they are encouraged in the first instance to speak to the Volunteer Co-ordinator. If the grievance involves the Volunteer Co-ordinator, concerns should be discussed with the Warden or Chair of

the Trustees. Copies of both the Grievance and Disciplinary policies applicable to Trustees, Volunteers, Members and Visitors are available in the Office.

We welcome all ideas and suggestions on any of our policies, training, role descriptions, practice, etc.

Please let us have your views by either speaking to the Volunteer Coordinator or a Trustee.

### **Expenses**

SBBOT values the support they receive from volunteers. Our policy is that volunteers should not be out of pocket but also should not gain financially. Volunteers should be able to ensure that they can justify any claim made for expenditure. Travel expenses using public transport will be paid; tickets or receipts must be presented.

State Benefits - People are allowed to volunteer without it affecting state benefits, but they must remain available for and actively seek work. However we advise volunteers to contact the Benefits Agency to ensure claims will not be affected. We are happy to provide a letter which states you are a volunteer and only claim expenses. For more information see [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

### **Task/Role Description**

Volunteers will be given clear instructions by their Team Leader before undertaking a task and will be expected to follow these instructions. We would never expect a volunteer to undertake or participate in work they did not feel comfortable or capable of doing. Should the volunteer decide they do not like the role they have been allocated, they are welcome to change to an alternative.

Date Approved by SBBOT Council: 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2026

Expected Date of Next Review: August 2029

## Appendix 1



### SBBOT - Volunteer Form

Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust, Guilford Road, Sandwich Bay, Kent  
CT13 9PF Tel. 01304 617341 Charity Number: 1197743

|                      |                 |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>TITLE:</b>        | <b>SURNAME:</b> | <b>FIRST NAME:</b>    |
| <b>MOBILE No.:</b>   |                 | <b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b> |
| <b>HOME ADDRESS:</b> |                 |                       |

#### EMERGENCY DETAILS:

|                                                                                                                                        |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Name &amp; Phone Number of your Emergency Contact:</b>                                                                              |  |
| <b>Any Medical Issues we should be made aware of (for your own safety), including any allergies and any medication you are taking:</b> |  |
|                                                                                                                                        |  |
| <b>Name &amp; Phone Number of your Doctor (in case of emergency):</b>                                                                  |  |

Please tick the role(s) you are volunteering for:

|                  |  |                          |  |                     |  |              |  |
|------------------|--|--------------------------|--|---------------------|--|--------------|--|
| <b>Trustee</b>   |  | <b>Conservation Team</b> |  | <b>Events</b>       |  | <b>Other</b> |  |
| <b>Shop</b>      |  | <b>Walks</b>             |  | <b>Fund Raising</b> |  |              |  |
| <b>Education</b> |  | <b>Trips</b>             |  | <b>Ringling</b>     |  |              |  |
| <b>Publicity</b> |  | <b>IT/Wifi Support</b>   |  |                     |  |              |  |

#### Confidentiality:

- You acknowledge that in the course of your volunteering role with the Trust that you may have access to Confidential Information, and you agree to accept the restrictions described below.
- You shall not (except in the proper course of your duties), either during your time of volunteering for the Trust or at any time after its termination (however arising), use or disclose to any person, company or other organisation whatsoever (and shall use your best endeavours to prevent the publication or disclosure of) any Confidential Information.  
This shall not apply to:
  - any use or disclosure authorised by us or required by law;
  - any information which is already in, or comes into, the public domain other than through your unauthorised disclosure; or
  - any protected disclosure within the meaning of section 43A of the Employment Rights Act 1996.
- Any breach of your confidentiality obligations owed to us may result in summary termination of your volunteering arrangement on the grounds of gross misconduct.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust - Volunteer Reference Policy**

#### **Purpose**

To help ensure that volunteers working in the Observatory Shop are suitable for the role and can provide a safe, welcoming and trustworthy service to visitors.

#### **Policy**

1. All new Shop Volunteers, and volunteers in other sensitive roles, should normally provide one character or work-related reference before starting.
2. References may be obtained from a previous employer, volunteer manager, colleague, teacher, or another person who has known the applicant for at least two years and is not a close family member.
3. References may be requested in writing, by email or by telephone and should be treated as confidential.
4. The Volunteer Coordinator and a nominated trustee will review the reference before confirming the appointment.
5. Any concerns raised will be discussed with the applicant before a decision is made.
6. Reference records will be retained securely in accordance with the Trust's data protection procedures and accessed only by those involved in volunteer recruitment.
7. In exceptional circumstances, where a suitable referee is unavailable, the Trust may accept an alternative assessment such as an informal interview and probationary period at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator/nominated trustee.

**Please ask your referee to complete and submit our SBBOT Shop volunteer reference request form below:**

## Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust - Volunteer Reference Form

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**Volunteer Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Referee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**How long have you known the applicant?** \_\_\_\_\_

**In what capacity do you know the volunteer applicant?** \_\_\_\_\_

Have you any reason to believe that this person should not work unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults? **Yes/No** (Delete as applicable)

Are you aware of any criminal cautions or convictions held by this person? **Yes/No**

**Please comment briefly on the applicant's:**

1. Reliability and punctuality:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Honesty and integrity:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Ability to work with members of the public and as part of a team:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Any concerns about their suitability for a retail volunteer role (if applicable)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Any concerns about their access to SBBOT's IT systems if applicable

**Would you recommend this person as a volunteer?** Yes / Yes, with reservations / No

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**Additional comments:**

### **Important Notes**

This post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. It is not, therefore, contrary to the Act to reveal any information you have in relation to the candidate in relation to any “spent” convictions. Any such information will be kept in confidence and considered only in relation to the candidate’s suitability for this post.

The lawful basis used for processing data is legitimate interest. In an emergency situation or where there is a risk of serious harm, we may need to / be required by law to share information without your consent.

Please confirm that you give permission for the above-named volunteer candidate to view this reference should they exercise their right to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

I confirm that I give permission for the above-named volunteer candidate to view this reference should they exercise their right to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

**Please confirm that you have read and understood the above**

**Referee Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Email/Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_