



# Volunteer Handbook

Bore Place – Commonwork Trust  
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## 1. Background of Bore Place

The Commonwork Trust was set up in 1977 by Neil and Jenifer Wates (pictured below) after they bought Bore Place in 1976. The founders' vision was to explore how to live and work sustainably, understanding and recognising the interconnectedness of the environmental, social, economic and political aspects of sustainability. They sought to achieve this through practical action and by working cooperatively with others in order to share and inspire change.

Today, these founding principles remain at the heart of what we do at Bore Place. Jenifer Wates, still remains closely involved at Bore Place in her role as Trustee Emeritus.

*"When Neil and I set up Commonwork in 1976, we saw it as an exploration of 'learning by doing'. We had become concerned about the exploitation of natural resources, the lack of opportunity for people to reach their full potential, and the rampant individualism of our culture, feeling that if this were to change it would require a massive shift in our thinking. Our sense was and still remains that we can contribute to this change by seeking to live it in practice and share our experience with others. This is what all our work here is about."*

**Jenifer Wates, Trustee Emeritus and Co-Founder**



## **2. Organisational vision, mission and priorities**

### **About us**

Bore Place is an historic rural estate covering over 500 acres in Kent, on the edge of London, owned by our charity the Commonwork Trust. We are situated in beautiful countryside with historic buildings, sustainable organic farming, food production and land management, woodland walks, trails and gardens, and diverse educational and learning experiences for people of all ages and abilities. All of this is underpinned by a drive and an ambition to inspire others to take action and make a difference based on our lived, real-world experience of sustainable and regenerative working and living.

### **Vision**

Bore Place believes in a world where people and the natural world work together to regenerate the environment and ourselves.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to enhance the environment in all that we do, using our lived experience to inspire people to live sustainably and lead a happy and full life.

We will achieve this by inspiring people to connect with the Earth and taking responsibility for our shared future.

### **Priorities**

- **Sustainable and regenerative environmental change**  
We will ensure we have a positive environmental impact in all that we do.
- **Inspire, educate and inform**  
We will inspire and educate people to make a difference and have a positive impact on the environment in their daily lives.
- **Understand and influence**  
We will use our lived experience in sustainability and positive environmental impact to influence leaders, and decision and policy makers.

### 3. Staff structure

Bore Place has a friendly team with a wide range of skills made up of staff who work for the Commonwork Trust as well as a wide range of partner organisations who work with us to deliver our mission. The North West Kent Countryside Partnership is our volunteering partner. Both Commonwork Trust and North West Countryside Partnership are responsible for supporting and coordinating our volunteer activities at Bore Place.

Key members of our team you will engage with are:



#### **Caroline Arnold – CEO, Commonwork Trust**

A key objective for me is to ensure that Bore Place is a place where all members of our community can benefit from our 500 acres! I am a keen supporter of volunteering and am committed to ensuring that we offer volunteering opportunities at Bore Place that meet the needs of the Trust and the volunteers in equal measure.



#### **Becky Baldock – Bore Place Volunteer Administrator**

Creating opportunities for everyone to visit and enjoy time in the countryside at Bore Place is a key part of my role. As well as arranging visits for schools to come and explore the farm, I work on our community programme of events and courses and provide the admin support for the volunteering programmes at Bore Place.



#### **Catharine Smith – Lead SEND Tutor & Bore Place Education Garden Coordinator**

Being brought up in the gorgeous Kent countryside as part of a farming family, I have a strong passion for nature and getting young people outside and engaging with the most beautifully sensory environment. It is key for future generations that we educate young people about reducing the impact we have on our natural world and helping them access interests in the natural world. My role includes overseeing the education garden so it can be used as a learning resource for all our visitors.



**Lynne Flower – Bore Place Volunteer Task Coordinator**

I first joined Bore Place in 1997 to share my experience in outdoor natural history teaching with visiting schools. I have always been passionate about wildlife and have worked for Kent Wildlife Trust in outdoor education, and at other Field Centres. I have also volunteered for 40 years, helping to manage wildlife habitats, and leading conservation tasks. I am a licensed 'bat advisor', involved in amphibian monitoring, and with my husband Peter, involved in a project to monitor and help barn owls. I am keen to continue caring for our wild environment and encouraging others to share my joy in wildlife.



**Peter Flower – Bore Place Volunteer Task Coordinator**

Whilst pursuing a career in Materials Science I have worked as a volunteer for the Kent Wild-life Trust for over 40 years. In that time I organised and led working parties on a number of reserves before becoming Warden of a reserve, a rich mix of woodland, grassland and ponds. As Lynne became more involved with education at Bough Beech so I spent more time managing habitats and running events at Bough Beech. I am a trained scrub cutter user.



**Hanna Derewnicka – Bore Place Environmental Education and Community Events Intern**

I joined Bore Place in 2021 after a career change from the arts and cultural sector. I have experience of both coordinating volunteering programmes and being a volunteer myself and love working outdoors with passionate, hardworking people. I have undertaken lots of practical conservation volunteering and am studying a horticulture qualification part-time. I am trained in First Aid, Brushcutter and Strimmer.

**Isabel Shaw – Partnership Manager, North West Kent Countryside Partnership**

Isabel joined the Partnership in October 2008, having worked previously as Estate Officer at Aldenham Country Park in Hertfordshire. She has a MA degree in French and German from the University of Edinburgh and a Foundation Degree in Countryside Management from Plumpton College. Isabel is also qualified in first aid, brushcutting and safe use of pesticides. Isabel was promoted in 2017 to Partnership manager.



**Mark Gallant – Partnership Officer, North West Kent Countryside Partnership & Bore Place Volunteer Task Coordinator**

Mark Gallant started with the Partnership in February 2008. Mark was formerly the Conservation Officer with the Lea Rivers Trust, where he was involved in carrying out a range wide of conservation activities on the River Lea in East London. Mark has a BSc in Science in the Environment, a City and Guilds in Horticulture, a Higher Level NVQ in Environmental Management and is also qualified in first aid and brushcutting.



**Stephanie Johnson- Partnership Officer, North West Kent Countryside Partnership & Bore Place Volunteer Task Coordinator**

Stephanie started with the partnership in late 2017 as an assistant partnership officer and at the beginning of October 2018 was promoted to Partnership officer. She has experience in habitat management and volunteer management from working at Grosvenor and Hilbert country park. Stephanie runs our education offer at Lesnes Abbey along with leading other projects such as Natural Ways to Wellbeing. Stephanie has a BSc in Zoology and is qualified in first aid and brushcutting.



**Reece Evans – Partnership Officer, North West Kent Countryside Partnership & Bore Place Volunteer Task Coordinator**

Reece started with the partnership in July 2019. Reece was formerly the assistant partnership officer at our sister organisation Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. He gained this experience as part of his placement year at Bournemouth University completing a sandwich degree in BSc (Hons) Geography. He is also qualified in first aid and brushcutting.



**Lucy Sawyer-Boyd – Partnership Officer, North West Kent Countryside Partnership & Bore Place Volunteer Task Coordinator**

Lucy started with the partnership in August 2019. She has worked as a reserve warden for Essex Wildlife Trust and in several Country Parks. She completed an apprenticeship as a Countryside Ranger with West Sussex County Council and a Level 2 diploma in Environmental Conservation. Lucy is first aid trained and qualified in the use of chainsaws, brushcutters, pesticides and tractors.



## 4. How to find us



Bore Place, Bore Place Road, Chiddingstone, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 7AR.

[Download directions by rail and road here](#)

By train: [National Rail Enquiries](#)

Nearest mainline stations: Sevenoaks or Tonbridge (both approx. 6 miles). Edenbridge and Penshurst stations are also nearby.

By air: London Gatwick is the nearest airport (approx. 22 miles / 45 minutes by car)

Ample car and coach parking on site.

**We also have two electric car charging points (1 x 220V 13 Amp & 1 x 7kW Type 2) available to use on site.**



## 5. The volunteer role

We are so grateful to our volunteers who donate their time and skills and Bore Place could simply not function without you! Our volunteers bring so many skills, hard work, knowledge and humour and make this a wonderful place to work and volunteer.

Some of our volunteers have pursued careers and now want to give something back. Others see volunteering as a way of getting new employment skills or to integrate themselves into their local community. Whatever your motivation or background, volunteers make **a real difference** and are a key part of our community at Bore Place.

**Role title:** Bore Place Volunteer

**Purpose:** To carry out practical garden and conservation tasks as directed by the Task Leader on volunteer days.

**Responsible to:** When out on site, volunteers will be responsible to the Task Leader leading each particular task. We ask that you adhere carefully to their instructions, particularly with regard to health and safety, and tool use. The Volunteer Administrator is Becky Baldock [volunteering@boreplace.org](mailto:volunteering@boreplace.org) and you should consider her your first point of contact for any general questions or issues.

**Activities:** We carry out a wide range of practical gardening and countryside tasks including pond digging, fencing, hedge planting, hedge laying, coppicing, aquatic planting, invasive species removal, river revetment and many more.

**Location:** Our volunteering work predominantly takes place at Bore Place, but we also provide volunteer task groups to manage the nature reserve at Bough Beech Reservoir. Volunteers meet at Bore Place (unless working on a Bough Beech project). Please notify us if you are intending to attend in case meeting plans change at the last minute.

**Time commitment:** Our volunteer groups generally operate from approx. 10am-4pm (depending on weather conditions/daylight and roles). Volunteers can attend as frequently or infrequently as they choose. Our volunteer programme operates on multiple days of the week.

**Requirements:** No formal qualifications or experience required: on-the-job training will be provided. All we require from you is that you are able to follow the instruction of the Task Leader – if you would require additional support to do this, please let us know in advance how we can support you. If it is deemed that you are not carrying out a task safely,, you will be asked to stop. If a volunteer fails to stop an activity when requested or frequently or intentionally poses a threat to health and safety, further action may be taken.

Volunteers should come prepared with appropriate clothing for the weather and steel toecap boots if you have them. We have personal protective equipment such as gloves and waders for you to use.

**Benefits:** Volunteers will gain training and experience in use of tools, and in practical countryside management skills, which could help towards future employment.

The social benefits of volunteering are many, with the opportunity to work as part of a team and to take part in associated social events.

## **6. Recruitment procedure**

### **First contact**

Prospective volunteers can contact Bore Place by phone 01732 463255 or email [volunteering@boreplace.org](mailto:volunteering@boreplace.org). The Volunteer Administrator will then contact them to ask them to complete an application form and will follow up to arrange an informal interview. They will be asked about their general health and if there are any adjustments that would help them with their volunteering role.

### **Interview**

Prospective volunteers will be invited to Bore Place for an informal interview which allows them to ask questions and get a feel for the organisation, and allows Bore Place to assess what volunteering roles may be appropriate and best use their skills and capabilities. Bore Place may reject or place on hold applications from prospective volunteers where volunteer numbers are already very high, or where any other issues could affect the health and safety or working dynamics of the rest of the group.

### **Taster sessions**

After the informal interview, new volunteers are invited to attend two taster volunteering sessions during which both parties can confirm that they are happy for the volunteer to continue attending for as long as they wish.

### **Formalising your volunteering**

Volunteers undertaking work at Bore Place will be required to have a DBS check (this is a criminal record check) which will be arranged by the Volunteer Administrator. All volunteers will be asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement which acknowledges their expectations of Bore Place and vice versa, and confirms that they have undergone training and induction.

## **7. Your personal information**

All personal information about volunteers will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and GDPR. It will be held securely by the Bore Place team and only used in relation to your role as a volunteer. It will not be accessed by any other user or organisation.

## **8. Communication, supervision and support**

The Volunteer Administrator (and, indeed the rest of the team) is available on the Bore Place number or through email during office hours to answer any questions you might have.

Each month's list of task days will be sent out to you either by email or WhatsApp (as agreed with yourself), and it will also be displayed on the Bore Place website (under the *Volunteers* section).

You will be invited to review your progress and enjoyment of volunteering in a meeting with us on an annual basis.

We hold twice-yearly "thank you" social events – a picnic or barbeque in the summer and a walk and meal at Christmas time.

On each task day there will be at least one member of staff present to supervise the group. In cases where there is an increased health and safety risk (e.g. where a power tool is being used or on riverbanks) there will be two.

Each member of staff is qualified and has the necessary experience to lead the task and provide support to volunteers on issues such as correct use of tools, and health and safety issues. They are also qualified in first aid.

## **9. Grievance procedure and general feedback**

In the event of any issues occurring for either the volunteer or for Bore Place, these will be discussed between the relevant volunteer and the Volunteer Administrator. Every effort will be made to resolve problems that arise and where this is not possible, either because health and safety is being permanently compromised or because the team dynamics are being adversely affected, we may reluctantly agree to part ways.

Please feel free to offer feedback and suggestions to us, should they occur.

## **10. Volunteering while receiving benefits**

Generally speaking, those receiving benefits are entitled to volunteer and their benefits should not be affected by doing so, although we do advise any volunteer who is receiving benefits to inform their benefit office and/or their job centre about their commitment to volunteering. The Department of Work and Pensions has published a useful guide to this: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits>

## **11. Change in Personal Details**

Please update us about any changes to your personal details so that we can continue to keep you updated about Bore Place's news, events, and opportunities. It is also important that we are able to contact you or your designated person in case of emergency.

## **12. Health and Safety**

Bore Place adheres to health and safety policies. If you would like to see copies of any of our health and safety policies, just ask.

We take health and safety extremely seriously and have taken numerous precautions to ensure that our volunteers' time with us is as safe as possible.

- We adhere to our health and safety policies
- We complete ongoing risk assessments
- Staff undergo regular training on all aspects of health and safety
- Volunteers receive a refresher health and safety talk on every task day
- Careful tools training is given to volunteers
- Tools undergo appropriate maintenance
- Weather and environmental conditions will be constantly reviewed during every task day and plans adjusted accordingly.

If you ever feel less than safe on task day or observe another volunteer conducting themselves in an unsafe way, please report this to the Task Leader.

## **13. Safeguarding**

Bore Place runs programmes for children and adults at risk and has Safeguarding Policies and Procedures in place that must be adhered to at all times. All volunteers are required to complete a DBS check before they are able to join our volunteer team and must wear identification badges whilst volunteering.

If a volunteer has any safeguarding concerns, these must be immediately reported to the Volunteer Administrator and Designated Safeguarding Officer, Becky Baldock on [becky.baldock@boreplace.org](mailto:becky.baldock@boreplace.org)

## **14. COVID-19 procedures**

To protect both our volunteers and staff we have the following COVID-19 procedures in place for our task days which should be adhered to by all attending:

- All volunteers and staff will maintain 2m distance from one another during tasks. This may decrease to 1m only when necessary to complete the task and for the minimum amount of time.
- Currently we can have a maximum of 15 volunteers attending our task days. If you wish to attend, please either let the Task Leader or the member of staff leading the day know in advance. This allows us to bring enough tools for everyone along with keeping a record of attendance.
- Please wash hands regularly throughout the day either with soap and water or hand sanitiser. Hand sanitiser will be brought along to all tasks for everyone to use.
- Each volunteer will be given their own set of disinfected tools at the start of the task when tool numbers allow. Please do not share tools with the other volunteers.
- Each volunteer will be provided with their own pair of rigger gloves to keep for use during tasks unless you already have your own pair. Please bring these along to every task you attend and if possible, label with your name.
- Please do not attend a task if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms. If you begin to feel unwell on a volunteering day, please notify Bore Place staff immediately and go home straight away if you feel able to.
- Please bring your own cold drinks, snacks, and lunch as we will be unable to provide our usual biscuits.
- Please bring your own mug for hot drinks (we will provide the water and staff will prepare the drinks).
- Currently we are unable to transport volunteers directly to site and so ask that any volunteers attending make their own way to the task location.

## **15. Equipment and training**

Bore Place will provide all tools necessary to carry out each garden or conservation task. We will also provide ongoing on-the-job training in how to use them, and a health and safety talk on the morning of each task day. We ask that you help us to keep the tools in good condition by cleaning mud off them at the end of each day, and by using them *only* in the way that you are directed by the Task Leader.

We will also provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as hard hats, goggles, gloves, high-visibility jackets, waders etc. where necessary. You must wear appropriate footwear whenever you attend.

Volunteers may not use power tools such as brush cutters and chainsaws; this type of work will be carried out by qualified personnel.

## **16. Risk assessment**

A risk assessment is written by the relevant Task Leader for every single conservation task that takes place, and these are available for you to view on each task day or on request at other times.

Additional, generic, risk assessments have also been written by Bore Place for everyday aspects of work such as manual handling. Our risk assessments have also been updated to include our COVID-19 procedures.

## **17. Insurance**

As a Bore Place volunteer, you are covered by the Trust's Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance whilst taking part in volunteering activities.

Please note, however, that certain restrictions apply under the Personal Accident insurance where the volunteer is over 75 years of age. Please contact the Volunteer Administrator if you would like more details.

## **18. Emergency procedure and lone working**

Should an accident occur, the Task Leader will deal with the situation and direct you accordingly. The Task Leader will have a first aid kit available at all times and is trained in first aid.

The Task Leader will call for the emergency services if necessary and they will always have to hand the address or grid reference of where you are working as part of their risk assessment. If the Task Leader is injured or unable to act, dial 999 if the severity of the situation calls for it.

A small number of our volunteers may work independently of the Task Leader, once trained and briefed accordingly. This is at the Task Leader's discretion.

## **19. Diversity**

Bore Place is an inclusive organisation and as such we expect all staff and volunteers to respect others accordingly.

## **20. Useful contacts**

Bore Place main number: 01732 463255

Becky Baldock – Bore Place Volunteer Administrator  
01732 755287

[volunteering@boreplace.org](mailto:volunteering@boreplace.org) If you wish to contact another member of the team, the Volunteer Administrator will redirect your message.