

# **Volunteer Management Policy**

## **Bat Conservation Ireland**



## **About Bat Conservation Ireland**

Bat Conservation Ireland is a non-profit, charitable organisation which has been established to promote the education of conservation of bats in Ireland. As a charity registered with the Charities Regulator, we are committed to working within the framework of the Governance Code to achieve our charitable purpose.

The main objects of Bat Conservation Ireland are:

‘the advancement of education and the promotion of the conservation and study of bats on the island of Ireland and elsewhere in the world’. Bat Conservation Ireland fulfils this mandate through the following 5 objectives:

1. Disseminating education materials
2. Giving talks and leading bat walks;
3. Carrying out nationwide surveys and monitoring of bats;
4. Acting as an umbrella group for local bat groups;
5. Providing a central repository for bat records.

## **Scope**

Bat Conservation Ireland depends on volunteers to carry out its work, both in the operation of the Management Council, and in the carrying out of education and conservation activities. Irrespective of how a volunteer chooses to engage with Bat Conservation Ireland, it is essential that he/she is consistently treated with respect and fairness, and in a friendly and supportive environment. This Volunteer Management Policy sets out the principles by which volunteering activity in the group will be managed.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

Volunteering opportunities exist with respect to:

- Participation in a County Bat Group, including key roles within those groups;
- Running educational activities, such as bat walks/bat talks;
- Running or assisting with the running of organised public events, such as information stands, information days, wildlife/conservation activities that help promote education of and conservation of bat species;
- Engaging in conservation research projects;
- Participating in one or more of the All Ireland Bat Monitoring Programmes;
- Participating in additional skills training such as roost identification and bat detection;
- Participating in roost counts, where appropriate;
- Participating in bat box schemes and box checks, run on an annual basis;
- Liaising with other conservation/community groups engaged in activities which conserve bats and bat populations;
- Organising/participating in major environmental/conservation events such as Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week;

- Participating in/Organising fundraising and funding activities for either Bat Conservation Ireland or a County Bat Group;
- Participating in activity specific projects

Volunteers are not employees and no volunteer is paid for the time and effort that they contribute to the group.

The Council is ultimately responsible for the participation of all volunteers within Bat Conservation Ireland. They may also engage with volunteers in other capacities, such as in County Bat Groups or on other conservation activities run by the organisation. It is important to draw a distinction between a Council Members role on the governing Council of Bat Conservation Ireland and their role within the organisation in relation to other activities. Volunteers should be aware that Council members are ultimately responsible for the governance of the organisation and are required to act in the best interests of the overall organisation.

Staff work with volunteers in different capacities, such as the All Ireland Bat Monitoring Programme and providing support to County Bat Groups in order to carry out its remit. The organisational chart of Bat Conservation Ireland is available in Appendix 1.

### **Eligibility**

Generally, Bat Conservation Ireland will consider involving anyone who wishes to volunteer with us. However, prospective volunteers must demonstrate a commitment to the aims of Bat Conservation Ireland and their availability as volunteers must align with the needs of Bat Conservation Ireland.

We provide a volunteer recruitment process, which is free from any unlawful discrimination.

For some volunteer roles, specific selection criteria may apply to determine the suitability of a volunteer candidate to a particular role. In addition, selection criteria may become relevant where there are more applicants for a particular volunteer role than positions available. Selection criteria are based on the relevant skills, qualifications, geographical location and experience of volunteer candidates.

### **Volunteer Recruitment**

The Management Council welcomes volunteer participation from across the community. We are an organisation committed to equality and diversity and we particularly welcome volunteers from diverse backgrounds, as we all have an important part to play in the future of our community and environment. Processes for recruitment of volunteers on different projects vary, as follows:

#### **All Ireland Bat Monitoring Programme**

Those interested in volunteering on the All Ireland Bat Monitoring Programme are requested to fill in an application form on our website, available here: [Volunteer Your Time - Bat Conservation Ireland](#). Alternatively, they will contact the Project Managers directly who will assess their suitability for the different schemes. The Project Managers from the IBM Programme follow up with applicants and are responsible for the recruitment, training and management of these volunteers. For insurance purposes these volunteers become temporary members of Bat Conservation Ireland, while they are volunteering with Bat Conservation Ireland (usually a set amount of time over the bat monitoring season). This does not entitle them to the benefits of membership of Bat Conservation Ireland, such as insurance cover for activities unrelated to the IBM programme, membership of a county bat group, or voting rights at the AGM.

### **County Bat Groups**

Individuals can join their local County Bat Group, which exposes them to an array of bat conservation-related activities. In order to become a regular member of a county bat group, an individual must join Bat Conservation Ireland. Bat Group Chairs and/or Secretaries of the county bat group will give the individual further information about membership of a group. Responsibilities for members of county bat groups ultimately lies with the Chair of a bat group and they have the authority to ask a member to leave, if their behaviour or actions are contrary to any of Bat Conservation Ireland's policies or present a risk to another member of the group, staff member, Council Member, volunteer or puts the reputation of the organisation at risk.

### **Ad Hoc Volunteers**

Bat Conservation Ireland may require ad hoc volunteers from time to time to work on specific projects or a particular event or activity. Under these circumstances either a member of the Council or a staff member, will be responsible for management of the volunteer, including clearly outlining what their role is within the project or activity and what is required of the volunteer.

Any volunteer, whether temporary or long-term, who puts any other individual at risk while carrying out any activities on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland, engages in inappropriate or damaging behaviour towards another individual, group or the organisation or places undue risk on the organisation, may be asked to leave.

Depending on the role to be filled, our recruitment and selection process may include the following stages:

- Preparing a Volunteer Role Description;
- Preparing and placing a volunteer recruitment advertisement;
- Agreeing selection criteria;
- Meeting volunteer candidates, collectively or individually, to discuss the nature and expectations of the volunteer role;
- Shortlisting applicants against agreed selection criteria;
- Notifying interview candidates and unsuccessful applicants;
- Interviewing of candidate volunteers by a suitably briefed interview panel;

- Assessing candidates against agreed selection criteria;
- Offering a volunteer role to the successful candidate(s);
- Notifying unsuccessful candidates;
- Verifying relevant educational qualifications of successful candidate(s);
- Checking employment or other references with referees nominated by a successful volunteer candidate;
- Issuing a volunteer agreement for the volunteer's signature;
- Completion of Garda vetting (if applicable);
- Ratification of appointments by the board of charity trustee where required;
- Providing interview feedback to unsuccessful candidates who request it.

### **Reference Checks**

References checks and any verification of educational qualifications, which involves contact with third parties will only take place once Bat Conservation Ireland forms a clear view that it would like to recruit a volunteer candidate. Bat Conservation Ireland will always request the permission of the volunteer candidate in advance of checking references or qualifications. Reference checks for every volunteer candidate are carried out in the same way. It is the policy of Bat Conservation Ireland to seek 2 references, preferably from separate sources e.g. academic, employment, volunteering etc. for volunteer candidates to carry out specific work on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland.

### **Volunteering Conditions**

Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to ensuring that all volunteers operate in a safe volunteer environment. Volunteers are expected to behave in a respectful and dignified manner and treat all who they come in contact with in their role as a volunteer, with respect and dignity. A copy of Bat Conservation Ireland's Dignity and Respect Policy is available in Appendix 2. Volunteers are expected to participate fully in any training provided, as necessary to assist them in carrying out activities assigned to them. When volunteering on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland, volunteers are expected to take all necessary steps to ensure their own safety and that of members of the public with whom engage. Specific Health and Safety measures may be required, dependent on the activity and this will be discussed with the individual volunteer by the person managing their participation. Bat Conservation Ireland has an organisational Safety Statement, which is available in Appendix 3.

### **Training and Development**

Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to providing volunteers with an opportunity to learn and grow through their engagement with the organisation. Learning opportunities may arise from participating in tasks or activities that are new to a volunteer or through taking on Management Council or project management responsibilities. Each volunteer will receive an appropriate level of induction training (in keeping with his/her volunteering role).

Induction is carried out by BC Ireland staff or contractors and includes (but may not be limited to)

- Introduction to the relevant project/survey
- A detailed description of the method that the volunteer is expected to use if carrying out a survey or specific project
- Health and Safety procedures in order to ensure the volunteer is safe when carrying out Bat Conservation Ireland activities
- An opportunity for dialogue with BC Ireland staff/contractors to address any questions that have arisen
- Details in expenses payable and how to claim for them

Volunteers joining the organisation, as a result of participating in a work placement scheme, will also be facilitated in engaging in whatever training is deemed appropriate by the scheme supervisor.

## **Support and Guidance**

The Management Council will develop and agree on an annual work plan for the organisation, which will determine the activities involving volunteers to be carried out by the organisation. Volunteers will be made aware of how their specific role helps implement the work plan. As work-related questions may arise throughout the year, the group will designate a member of the organisation to liaise with volunteers and oversee their work as appropriate. The work of individual members of a county bat group will be overseen by the Chair of the bat group or other designated member. In this way, practical work-related issues that may arise can be dealt with in a timely fashion.

## **Recognition of Volunteers**

The Management Council is committed to recognising the invaluable contribution that volunteers make to both the group and the community it serves. To this end, volunteers will be thanked for their efforts privately and publicly when opportunities arise and volunteers will be encouraged to attend celebrations and events organised by the organisation. Whenever possible, the Management Council will include a wide range of volunteers in its publicity efforts and external communications efforts.

## **Expenses**

Out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed to volunteers, subject to the agreement of the Management Council and within the terms agreed in advance by the Management Council. A completed and signed Expenses Claim Form, with original receipts must be submitted to

the Administrative Manager within one month of being accrued for costs being reimbursed. Reimbursement will be by bank transfer, except in exceptional circumstances.

## **Insurance**

Bat Conservation Ireland members and temporary volunteer members are fully insured for designated activities carried out on behalf of the organisation. Details of all volunteer activities whether arranged through a bat group or by an individual volunteer, need to be reported in advance to the Administrative Manager of Bat Conservation Ireland by e-mailing: [admin@batconservationireland.org](mailto:admin@batconservationireland.org). An exception to this is volunteers who are carrying out activities as part of the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme. In these instances, the Project Manager for the programme is responsible for ensuring that volunteers on these schemes are aware of what activities are covered by insurance and maintains a records of which volunteers are carrying appropriately covered activities. Any activities which fall outside of approved regular activities need approval from the insurance company and the Health and Safety Officer. In some cases, approval may be needed by the Management Council. If a bat group or individual volunteer wants to run an activity on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland and is unsure if it is an approved designated activity, they should in the first instance contact the Health and Safety Officer, who is responsible for management of the insurance cover for further information.

Any volunteer engaging in any activity where they have not informed Bat Conservation Ireland of that activity or that falls outside of designated activities, will not be covered by the organisation's insurance and places the organisation at huge risk. Should this situation occur the Management Council of Bat Conservation Ireland will decide on appropriate disciplinary measures.

The group does not provide motor insurance or breakdown assistance for volunteers using their personal motor vehicles. If a volunteer is using their own personal vehicle for Bat Conservation Ireland activities, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure that they have appropriate motor insurance cover.

## **Managing Difficulties**

The Management Council recognises that difficulties may arise between volunteers and the organisation from time to time. Whenever possible, any such difficulties will be dealt with informally and in a timely fashion.

### ***Disciplinary Matters***

Should the behaviour or activities of a volunteer pose difficulties to the operations or reputation of the organisation, then an appropriate disciplinary procedure will be followed by the Management Council. The disciplinary procedure will provide volunteers with an

opportunity to explain their case fully and fairly. Where the Management Council has reason to complain about the behaviour or activities of a volunteer assigned to the organisation through a work placement scheme, the designated committee liaison will immediately contact the scheme supervisor to discuss the matter. The scheme supervisor will then determine the appropriate course of action to be followed in each individual case.

### ***Grievance Matters***

Should the behaviour or work demands of Management Council members pose difficulties for a volunteer, then an appropriate grievance procedure will be followed by the Management Council. The grievance procedure will provide volunteers with a fair and supportive opportunity to state their issue(s) so that they can be resolved in an amicable fashion. Where a volunteer has been assigned to the organisation through a work placement scheme, the volunteer will be encouraged to contact their scheme supervisor. The scheme supervisor will then contact the designated Management Council liaison to agree the appropriate course of action to take in the case.

### **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

In the course of their activities on behalf of the group, volunteers may have access to information that is not intended for dissemination publicly. Volunteers are required to keep this information confidential. It is the responsibility of the Management Council, to determine the appropriate time at which confidential information will be released to the public, subject to adherence to any relevant legislative requirements.

Bat Conservation Ireland respects the right to privacy and confidentiality of our volunteers and prospective volunteers.

Bat Conservation Ireland may from time to time in the course of administering its business, and exercising its legal rights and performing its legal obligations in connection with the recruitment of volunteers, need to process both personal data and special categories of personal data (including, for example, information relating to health). Bat Conservation Ireland will process such data in accordance with the applicable data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation and implementing legislation. Further details in relation to what personal data is collected in relation to volunteers or prospective volunteers, and the purposes for which such data may be used are set out in Bat Conservation Ireland's data protection policy, (which may be amended or updated from time to time).

### **Communications and Social Media**

Volunteers with Bat Conservation Ireland should ensure that any communications within the organisation or with external stakeholders, should be carried out in a respectful and dignified manner.



Any volunteers posting on social media sites in relation to anything to do with Bat Conservation Ireland or our work or projects, is requested to familiarise themselves with our ICT Policy, which sets out how people who are representing Bat Conservation Ireland should post on social media. Volunteers are always reminded that when they are representing Bat Conservation Ireland they should do so in a way that does not expose the organisation or bring it into disrepute in any way.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Bat Conservation Ireland monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements.

# Appendix 1

