

Annual Report 2023



**Biodiversity & Environmental
Education Society**



Report of the trustees for the year ending 31 December 2023

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**Biodiversity & Environmental
Education Society**

Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES)
Registered charity in England and Wales - no. 1187828
10 Redshank Close, Haverhill CB9 0PB, Suffolk, UK
www.beeanatureguide.org.uk

Letter from the Chair

Raising biodiversity and environmental awareness to protect our natural heritage, is what we do at Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES). We launched our first nature guide training course in 2021 and we carried on our work with our first cohort of participants in Norfolk and Suffolk in 2023. This year again our participants had the opportunity to develop their teaching and leadership skills during our second leadership skills session in Knettishall Heath in Suffolk. The presence of one of our teachers, David Horsley, and Nick Acheson, a renowned naturalist and group tour leader, on the day to provide feedback and suggestions to our participants was a great help and made it a wonderful day.

In spring and early summer 2023, six of our participants made us proud and presented their very first guided walk as part of our assessment to become nature guides. I had the pleasure to attend them all and was amazed by the effort, passion and didactic manner they all led their group in a reserve they were keen to share.



It was another busy year for the team and assessors as well to finalise all our online quizzes, review and assess the Dream Route walks and guides. The quality of all these, reflects our commitment to delivering an exceptional learning experience for our participants.

As Chair of the organisation, I would like to thank David Horsley, our ornithology teacher for his help during the sessions but also behind the scenes, and Laura Benstead for joining our Trustee team. It is thanks to volunteers like them that our team can carry on the incredible work they are doing to make BEES a success.

I would also like to thank all our participants for attending and enjoying our sessions, and to those who led their very first guided walk to obtain their BEE a Nature Guide certificate. It is their contribution and enthusiasm that give sense to BEES and our mission to create a network of nature guides and ambassadors for nature to raise biodiversity and environmental awareness.

Anneloes Martinsen

Our Ethos

Our Values

Accessibility

Our course is accessible to all members of the public over the age of 18 regardless of background. Existing knowledge or experience is not necessary, only enthusiasm, interest in the natural world and the willingness to learn. We provide a course programme that is financially accessible.

Sustainability

We manage our resources effectively and efficiently whilst delivering value to the public. We are a charity that is socially, ethically and environmentally responsible. We value creativity and diversity.

Quality

We provide a high-quality learning experience based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence and information. We welcome feedback and continuously endeavour to improve the content of our programme and maintain a high educational standard.

Network and Partnership

We promote trust and bring people and communities together to create a strong network of nature guides and ambassadors for nature. We endeavour to cultivate partnerships and connect with other charities, organisations, community groups, and individuals involved in, and promoting, wildlife and environmental protection, education, and public interest to create an integrated and multidisciplinary network in line with our mission and vision.

Passion

We are all passionate about nature and are committed to inspiring others to share our passion.

Our Vision

Our vision is for all people to live in harmony with, and with respect to, all natural environments and the life forms which inhabit them.

We want a world where people are curious about nature and are able to enjoy it, where people are excited to obtain new knowledge, and where all have the opportunity to develop skills to better safeguard nature regardless of circumstance or background.

Our Mission

To educate the public about all aspects of nature, to raise nature awareness and environmental issues, to give them tools to better protect our natural heritage.





Reference and administrative details

Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES) is a registered charity in England and Wales (registration number: 1187828) since 7th February 2020. It is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), whose only voting members are its charity trustees – ‘Foundation’ model constitution.

Address: 10 Redshank Close, Haverhill CB9 OPB, Suffolk, UK

Trustee names at the end of 2023:

- Anneloes Martinsen, PhD (Chair)
- Lee Norman Fletcher, PhD
- David Cammaerts, MSc
- Laura Benstead, who was appointed for a two-year term in the course of 2023

Website: <https://www.beeanatureguide.org.uk>

Email: contact@beeandnatureguide.org.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BEE.a.nature.guide>



Anneloes Martinsen



Lee Fletcher



David Cammaerts



Laura Benstead



Structure, governance, and management

The CIO's governing document was first approved on 7th February 2020 and last amended on 2nd October 2020.

Since February 2023, BEES is governed by four passionate and dedicated trustees and during the course of 2023, BEES could rely on the help of a small team of volunteers. Trustees were selected based on affinity, skills and experience, and passion for our cause. The chair holds a long-term friendship with one of the other trustees sharing the same passion and desire to create a network of nature guides throughout the UK. The relationship between trustees and volunteers within the organisation is genuine, friendly, and positive.

Because the charity is still in its infancy, day-to-day administration, financial planning and reporting were done by the trustees and working meetings were organised on a regular basis to keep track of progress and tasks to perform and deliver our objectives. Decisions during trustees' meetings were made by the quorum (per our governing document, the quorum is two charity trustees, or the number nearest to one third of the total number of charity trustees, whichever is greater, or such larger number as the charity trustees may decide from time to time).



Objectives and activities in the year

Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES) is a small charity aiming to grow national awareness and knowledge of nature and environmental issues through adult education: training and supporting all who love and are interested in nature to become skilled nature guides and go on to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with their friends, families, colleagues, and communities.

The objective of BEES is: “For the public benefit, to advance the education of the public in all the aspects of nature and environmental protection” (BEES Governing document).

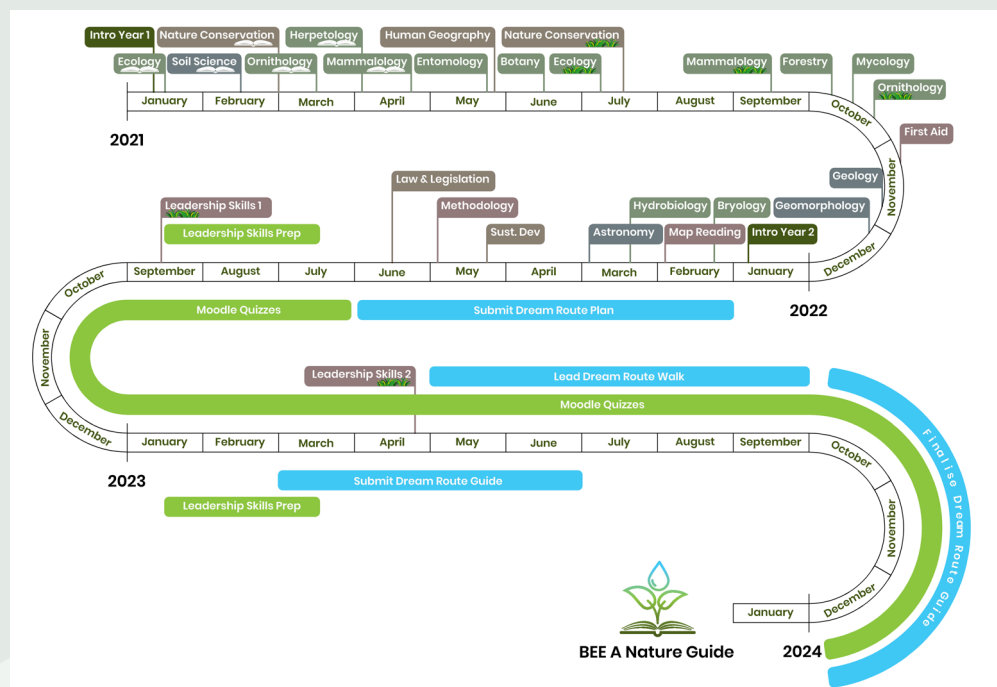
To do so, we have developed the first low-cost nature guide training course programme in the UK, starting in Suffolk and Norfolk.

The course programme runs over 3 years:

- a first year and a half of theory and practical courses covering in breadth and depth the many facets of the Natural Sciences — from Ecology to Astronomy, Mycology to Earth Sciences, and practical skills in leadership, nature guide methodology, first aid, and navigation (see all of our subjects on the following page)
- a second and third year to practice the participant’s newfound knowledge to foster confidence and leadership skills to lead their own guided walks

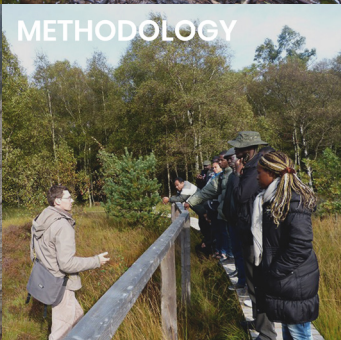
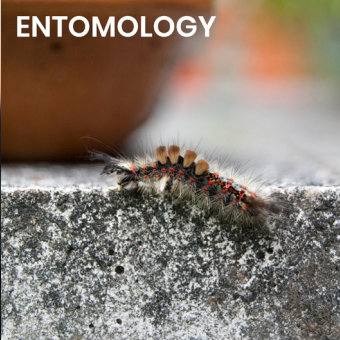
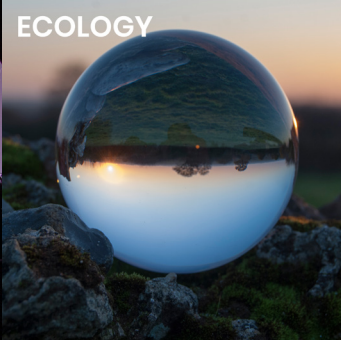
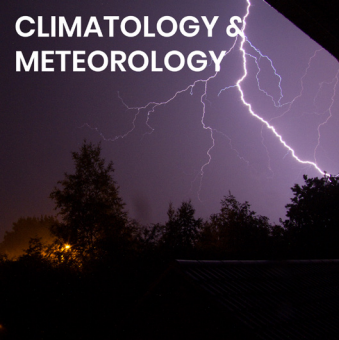
Further details about the course programme are available on our website <https://www.beeanatureguide.org.uk/the-course>.

We provide a combination of **online theory** and **outdoor practical sessions**, led by our team of talented teachers, all recruited based on their skills and experience in their relevant fields — these span various backgrounds including academics and researchers, school teachers, naturalist society leaders, professionals, and other community experts.



We have developed an **online learning platform** using Moodle, a well-known educational course management system (CMS). Our Moodle learning environment is designed not only for online teaching sessions but also for self-training, including continuous access to session recordings, digital recreations of our written handbooks and other learning material, for interacting with participants and teachers through our BEEHive forum, and with the ultimate objective to develop a network of ambassadors for nature. During 2022 and 2023, we worked on the creation of quizzes for each of our course topics for our participants to test their knowledge and skills, and made them available for most of our subjects.

BEE A Nature Guide - Subjects



During our outdoor activities, we visit various natural sites across the East of England — these may for example be sites looked after by the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB or Country Parks. Each outdoor session offers the opportunity for participants to learn more about the topics covered during the theoretical stages of learning and for our teachers to illustrate those theoretical concepts with observations made in natural environments.

A third major component of our course is to provide our participants with a **handbook for each subject**. The handbooks are written and edited by our trustees and volunteers, with help from the Cercles des Naturalistes de Belgique and our expert teachers. We design and publish a printed book for each participant, hand curated by our charity trustees and volunteers and printed using an eco-printer to limit our footprint. We also digitally transform the handbooks so they can be also accessible online through our Moodle learning environment.



Sample of our BEES handbooks

We believe that financial circumstance should not be a barrier to environmental education and try to ensure the course is kept as financially accessible as possible. As such, the fee to enrol on the course (currently £320), does not cover the full operating costs of running the programme. The charity relies on fundraising and donations to make up the remainder. No additional charity funds are made from running the course and the fee offers substantial value for money given its breadth and depth, and combination of theoretical and practical training. Our vision is for the course to be able to be delivered free to those of financial hardship so anybody, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances, may learn.

We also share knowledge with members of the public by providing articles on some relevant topics about nature on our website and facebook pages so that everyone can be informed.

Statement by the charity trustees:

At the end of 2023, the charity did meet its objectives and complied with its duty to have due regard to guidance on public benefit as published by the Charity Commission.

The charity enjoys collaborative links with fellow charitable organisations, the British Naturalist's Association and Cercles des Naturalistes de Belgique.



**BRITISH
NATURALIST'S
ASSOCIATION**

Founded 1905



CNB
Cercles des Naturalistes
de Belgique

Although new to the UK, our training model has been successfully pioneered by our partners in Belgium, the Cercles des Naturalistes de Belgique (CNB) registered charity in Belgium. They have trained about 10,000 ambassadors for nature since 1975. We are excited to bring this training method to the UK and help to develop and support a growing community of nature guides. Our course programme also receives the recommendation and support of the British Naturalist's Association (BNA), a registered charity in the UK since 1905. They are the national body for naturalists in the UK and have instituted graded membership to formally recognise specific levels of knowledge and achievement in the field of natural history to those who study and gain field skills both professionally and recreationally.



Our achievements and performance in 2023

In 2023, we were still running our first course programme with our very first cohort of participants in both Suffolk and Norfolk. As part of our course programme, we organise two leadership skills sessions where participants can practice leading a short stop on a predefined route. It is a great opportunity for them to deliver some of their knowledge in a familiar and friendly environment, receiving feedback from the other participants, from the trustees and teachers present. In 2023, we organised our second leadership skills session. David Horsley, our ornithology teacher, and Nick Acheson, a renowned naturalist and group tour leader, were there to help our participants, providing constructive feedback and suggestions to improve themselves.



River dipping led by one of our participants during our second leadership skills session at Knettishall Heath, Suffolk.

We really saw the impact and importance of our leadership skills sessions we organised in 2022 and 2023 in building up the confidence of our participants in leading a guided walk.

Six of our participants went for it and presented their very first guided walk in 2023 in a nature reserve they were familiar with and keen to share with us and other members of the public. They all did a great job and we received amazing feedback from the assessors who were invited to join the walk and assess our participants' performance.

Here is one of our assessor's comment: "I co-assessed with Anneloes her student Mark on his guided walk. He was very good, so much so that I assumed he must regularly do it in his role as a volunteer warden for the Wildlife Trust. But no, turned out he had shown people the Nightingales once, but had not led a natural history walk before, so credit to him, & to her BEES course & its tutors." Roger Tabor, President, BNA



Snapshots of our participants leading their very first nature guided walk. We went to Thorndon Country Park in Southwest Essex, to Fingringhoe Wick Nature Discovery Park in Essex, to Hickling Broad Nature Reserve in Norfolk, to Cockaynes Reserve in Essex, to Mill Green and Writtle Forest in Essex, and finally to Cavenham Heath in Suffolk.

In 2023, we also finalised our online quizzes for our participants to test their knowledge as part of our assessment to obtain their BEE a Nature Guide certificate.

2023 was not just about learning, it was also another fantastic opportunity to meet with our participants and some of our teachers, and to foster and build strong and friendly relationships with everyone. We are working towards the development of our network of ambassadors for nature, and future nature guides that will lead nature walks to raise nature and environmental awareness. The effect of any forms of communication from the BEES ambassadors for nature and nature guides through guided walks, conversations with family and friends or at work, is exponential, and training them can have positive long-term impacts on biodiversity. The more we learn about nature, the better we can protect it.

All trustees, volunteers and teachers worked hard during 2023 to ensure the charity could keep on delivering a course programme of high standards and quality.

We put all our energy and efforts into the course programme in 2023. We therefore did not have the time to apply for grants in 2023. We will look at diversifying our fundraising strategy in the coming years to generate a more stable base of resources to support the charity.

We however applied for and got nominated for a Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards 2023, in the Groups category, organised by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership. We did not win on this occasion but it was a great opportunity for people to get to know BEES and for us to be part of such an event which was held at Norwich Castle Museum on 21st June 2023.



Logo of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership who runs the Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards, and which were sponsored in 2023 by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Gressenhall Environment Hub, ZSEA, Banham Zoological Gardens, Pensthorpe and Lanpro.

Because of the size of the charity and despite having looked for more volunteers to help us run the charity and its activities, we were not able to start a second cohort of participants in Suffolk and Norfolk whilst carrying on with our first cohort in both counties. The interest in our BEE a Nature Guide Course programme is however still growing. Since we launched our first training programme (and after the closing date of our first course programme), 80 members of the public have registered their interest in our next course programme, all waiting for further instructions regarding the opening of a second cohort. It shows the necessity and importance of having an accessible course programme about biodiversity and natural history, especially in these times of climate change and urgency of protecting our natural heritage for us and future generations.



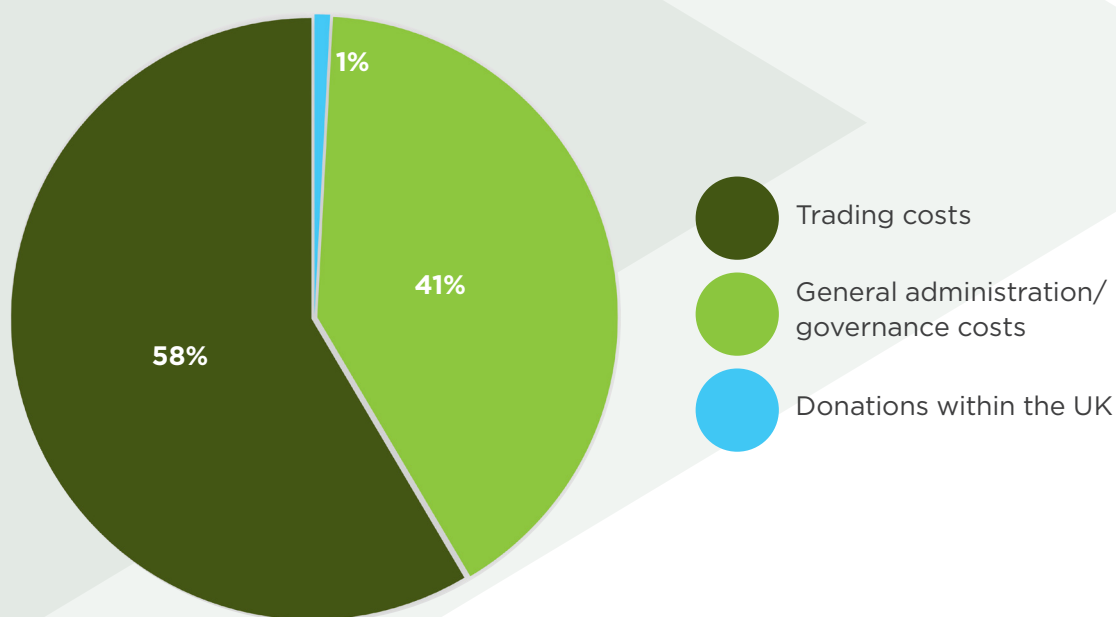
Financial Review

At the beginning of 2023, we had £2,363 as open balance, income earned mainly from the BEE a Nature Guide course fees in 2021. The charity earned £480 during 2023 thanks to donations from members of the public (see our BEES Receipts and Payments Accounts 2023).

100% of donations received go towards the operating costs of the course, including to help pay for the following:

- Production of course handbooks - these are designed, printed and bound in-house in order to keep costs, and our carbon footprint, as low as possible
- Cost of visiting wildlife sites - many of our outdoor practical sessions take place on land managed by other great organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts or RSPB. Making use of these fantastic sites for our course usually involves paying a fee or making a donation to those organisations
- Equipment costs - to ensure participants get the most out of our sessions we purchase additional resources, such as identification guides, pond dipping/surveying equipment, digital microscopes, binoculars and hand lenses

We used £1,812 to pay for our trading costs, costs in relation to the delivery of our charitable activities (course material and equipment, and travel expenses), and for our general administration and governance costs (insurance, professional services, office costs, and the operating costs of our website), and for site visits donation.



At the end of 2023, we had £1,031 left on the bank account. We are holding £1,000 as designated funds (for ongoing website server fees, insurance and professional services) and classed by us not as reserve funds. We have a Reserve Policy in place stating that no funds should be held in reserve until all costs relating to present charity activity (i.e. relating to the current course cohort) are paid. The charity is currently in its infancy and therefore has very little funds to go towards a reserve.

The chair and trustees will prioritise raising funds in 2024 through private donations, grants or exploring other revenue streams.

BEES Receipts and payments accounts 2023

For the Period from: 1/1/2023		To: 31/12/2023	
Receipts	Amount (to nearest £)	Payments	Amount (to nearest £)
Opening balance	£2,363	Trading costs	
Donations from members of the public	£480	Equipment	£488
		Travel	£571
		General administration/governance costs	
		Insurance	£180
		Office costs	£86
		Professional services	£320
		Website operating costs	£152
		Donations within the UK	
		Donation	£15
Total:	£2,843	Total:	£1,812
Closing balance:	£1,031		

Notes:

Our open balance (£2,363) differs slightly from our 2022 closing balance (£2,359) due to rounding figures up and down.



BEES in numbers in 2023



Running our **1st** nature guide training course in the UK



We operate our course programme in **2** counties – Suffolk and Norfolk



The charity is run by **4** passionate and dedicated trustees



8 volunteers gave up a bit (or more) of their time to help us raise environmental awareness during the course of 2023



The charity relies on **18** teachers to run the BEE a Nature Guide training course and pass on their knowledge to our participants



26 participants were registered on the course in Suffolk and Norfolk



80 members of the public registered their interest in the BEE a Nature Guide course since we launched our first training programme



By the end of 2023 we had **536** followers on facebook



We had **£2,843** in our bank account to deliver our charitable activities



Looking forward

Our main goal for the moment is to settle and establish the course programme in Suffolk and Norfolk. However, we have long-term aims to expand and cover the whole of the UK. We will work towards developing partnerships and collaborations with other organisations and individuals to create a pool of teachers, venues, and volunteers in other counties necessary to establish and make the course programme accessible to members of the public in other regions of the UK.

Short-term objectives for 2024 are mainly to carry on with delivering our nature guide training course to our first cohort of participants in Suffolk and Norfolk, to make the course programme a success from start to finish. Specifically, in 2024, we will be working on the following priorities:

- Reviewing and assessing our first participants' written guides as part of their final assessment to obtain their BEE a Nature Guide certificate.
- Organising a graduation event for our first participants.
- Reviewing learning outcomes for our first cohort, and improve where possible by further integrating andragogic principles.
- Asking for and receiving feedback from our participants and teachers to continuously improve ourselves and the course programme.
- Recruiting skilled volunteers to help the charity develop and meet its long- and short-term objectives. This also includes developing a proper volunteer management policy and selection process.
- Working on developing our social visibility and fundraising strategy.



Strumpshaw Fen nature reserve (RSPB, Norfolk)



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