

Annual Report 2024



**Biodiversity & Environmental
Education Society**



Report of the trustees for the year ending 31 December 2024

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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

What a year it has been! Raising biodiversity and environmental awareness to protect our natural heritage is what we do at Biodiversity and Environmental Education Society (BEES). We are incredibly proud to have celebrated the successful conclusion of our first-ever 3-year nature guide training programme. In July 2024, our inaugural cohort of nature guides officially graduated, marking a significant achievement for our charity.

The graduation ceremony, which I had the pleasure of chairing, was a truly brilliant day. It was held in the beautiful setting of Shimpling Park Farm in Suffolk, where John and Alice Pawsey, farmers and owners of the site, welcomed our participants, teachers, and volunteers. It was a magnificent day that brought together our passionate participants, dedicated teachers, and invaluable volunteers. This gathering not only celebrated their hard work but also provided a unique opportunity to connect and deepen our understanding of sustainable and wildlife-friendly farming.



The BEE a Nature Guide course programme was born from a vision, and I could not be more delighted by the enthusiasm and commitment shown by everyone involved. I am immensely proud of our first graduated nature guides, who poured their passion into crafting insightful guided walks and written guides. They have not only mastered their subject but have also become powerful communicators, making vital knowledge about our natural world accessible and actionable for others.

By launching this network, we have successfully established a new generation of ambassadors for nature. This is a crucial step in raising biodiversity and environmental awareness, and I am excited to see our network and impact grow in the future.

On behalf of the charity, I want to extend a huge thank you to our teachers, volunteers, and trustees. Your commitment and expertise have been fundamental to this incredible project. Together, we have built the foundation for a greener future. Thank you for making BEES a success.

Anneloes Martensen

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 2024:

- 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
- Sam Rogers, who was appointed for a two-year term in the course of 2024

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



Sam Rogers



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 2024, BEES is governed by five passionate and dedicated trustees. During the course of 2024 BEES could also 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).

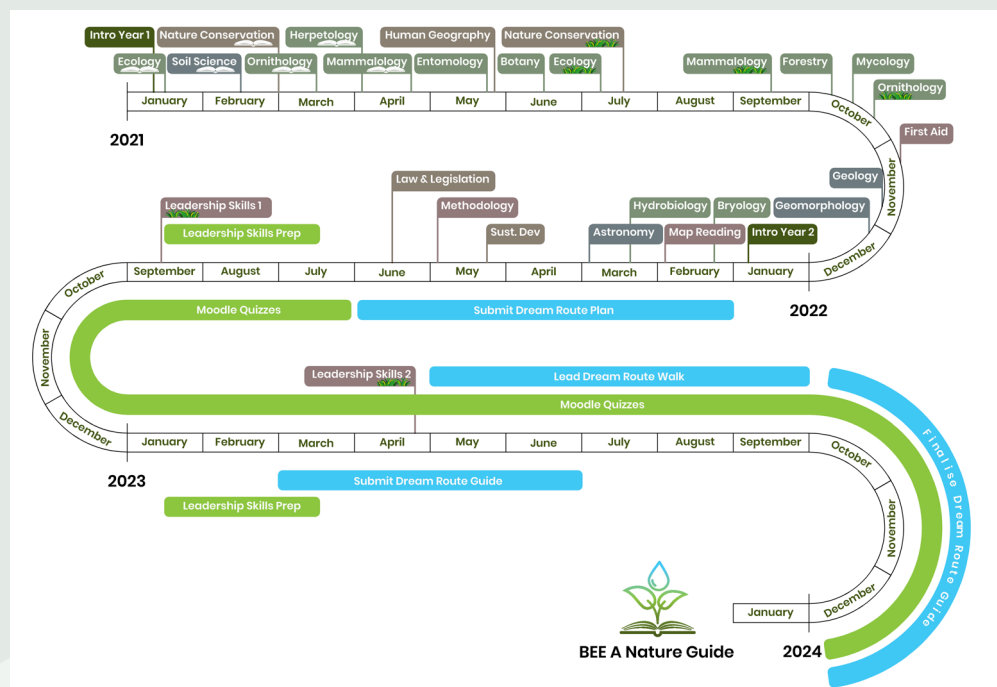
To do so, we have developed the first low-cost nature guide training course programme in the UK, starting in Suffolk and Norfolk.

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

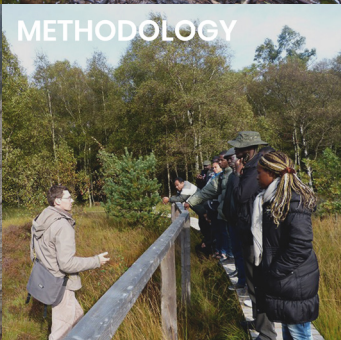
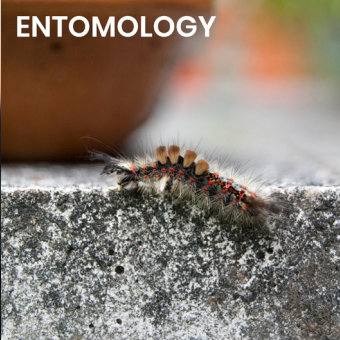
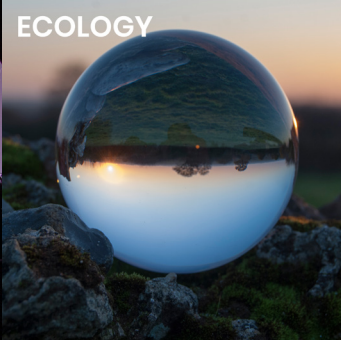
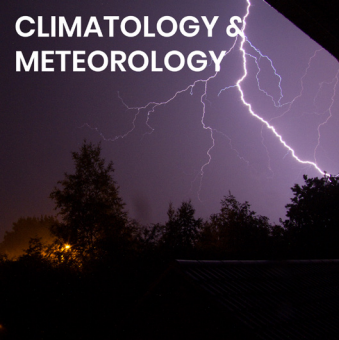
Further details about the course programme are available on our website <https://www.beeanatureguide.org.uk/the-course>.

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 (£320 in 2021), 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 2024, 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 2024

In 2024, we finished our training programme with our very first cohort of participants in both Suffolk and Norfolk. We reviewed their written guides early in the year and organised a graduation ceremony in July 2024, a major milestone for our charity. The graduation ceremony was a truly brilliant day. It was held in the beautiful setting of Shimpling Park Farm, in Suffolk, where John and Alice Pawsey welcomed our participants, teachers, and volunteers.



Presentation by Steven Rutherford FBNA, one of our teachers during the graduation ceremony at Shimpling Park Farm. Photo: BEES.

This event provided a wonderful opportunity for our participants, teachers, and volunteers to connect, share knowledge, and learn more about wildlife-friendly and sustainable farming practices. Our graduates have not only gained valuable knowledge but are now equipped to share their passion with their families, friends, and communities during their own guided walks.



Guided walk led by John Pawsey from Shimpling Park Farm on the graduation ceremony day. Photo: BEES.

Our first graduated nature guides dedicated their time and energy to creating guided walks and written reports that are filled with knowledge, passion, and a clear call to action to protect our natural world. Our trustees and teachers worked hard during 2024 to review their written guides and ensure they delivered them with high standards and quality.



Anneloes Martinsen, the Chair, receiving flowers from Laura Benstead on behalf of the charity during the graduation ceremony. Photo: BEES.

We now have successfully launched our network of nature guides and ambassadors for nature, a vital step in raising biodiversity and environmental awareness. We look forward to growing this network in the years to come.

We also successfully fundraise in 2024. We successfully obtained a £5,000 grant from a charitable trust in East Anglia who provides grants to registered charities with a particular focus on the natural environment. We also received a donation of £1,000 from Taylor Wimpey East Anglia. Finally, one of our participants also generously fundraised and ran for BEES at the Norwich Half Marathon on 24th November 2024 and raised £375.46 from members of the public.

We will still carry on looking at diversifying our fundraising strategy in the coming years to generate a more stable base of resources to support the charity.

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), 96 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.



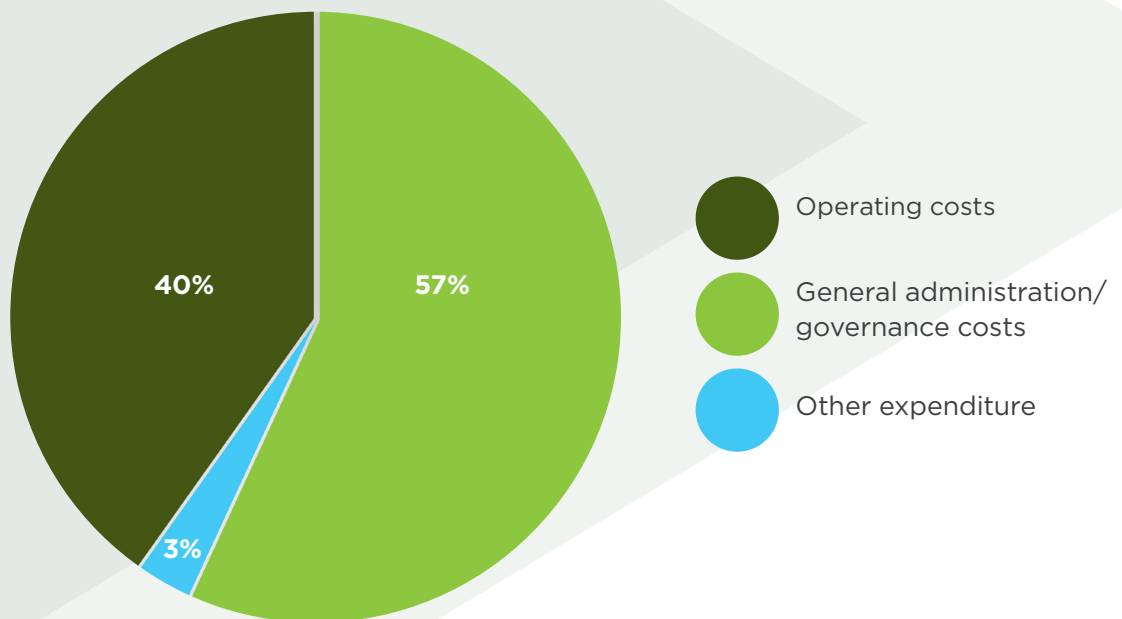
Financial Review

At the beginning of 2024, we had £1,034 as open balance, income earned mainly from the BEE a Nature Guide course fees in 2021. The charity earned £6,865 during 2024 thanks to donations from a Charitable Trust, a private donor, and members of the public (see our BEES Receipts and Payments Accounts 2024).

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
- Paying subject-expert teachers for their time holding lectures and teaching walks
- Cost of organising our graduation ceremony
- 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 £1,023 to pay for our operating 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).



At the end of 2024, we had £6,876 left on our bank account and PayPal account combined. 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 2025 through private donations, grants or exploring other revenue streams.

BEES Receipts and payments accounts 2024

For the Period from: 1/1/2024		To: 31/12/2024	
Receipts	Amount (to nearest £)	Payments	Amount (to nearest £)
Opening balance	£1,034	Operating costs	
Donations from members of the public	£865	Course material	£411
Donations from funding body	£5,000	General administration/governance costs	
Donations from private body	£1,000	Insurance	£180
		Professional services	£156
		Website operating costs	£246
		Other expenditure	
		Advertising and marketing	£30
Total:	£7,899	Total:	£1,023
Closing balance:	£6,876		

Notes:

Our open balance (£1,034) slightly differs from closing balance from 2023 (£1,031) due to rounding up and down figures.



BEES in numbers in 2024



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 **5** 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 2024



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



96 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 2024 we had **540** followers on facebook



At the end of 2024, we had **£6,876** 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 2025 are mainly to review our course programme, recruit volunteers and look at expanding our fundraising strategy to make the course programme for a second cohort a success from start to finish. Specifically, in 2025, we will be working on the following priorities:

- Reviewing and improving the course programme based on feedback from participants and teachers.
- 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.
- Starting a second cohort of participants.



Shimpling Park Farm, Suffolk, July 2024. Photo: BEES.



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