



## **Earth Trust Volunteer Feedback Summary 2025–26**

Thank you to everyone who took part in this year’s volunteer survey. Your voices help shape how we grow, improve, and celebrate the passionate & dedicated community that keeps Earth Trust thriving. This report summarises the themes that came through most strongly — in your own words and experiences.

### **What motivates you to volunteer?**

Across the survey, volunteers consistently shared that they get involved because they want to:

#### **Make a positive difference**

Helping nature, wildlife, climate and the local environment came through again and again. Many volunteers described Earth Trust as a meaningful way to “take action for the environment” and “support the community”.

#### **Enjoy the outdoors**

Wittenham Clumps, our woodlands, meadows, wetlands and community reserves hold a special place in many hearts. Volunteers love being active, learning about the land whilst witnessing the seasons change.

#### **Be part of a friendly community**

The sense of connection — with staff, rangers, and fellow volunteers — is hugely important. Words like *friendship*, *camaraderie*, *welcome* and *support* appear throughout the survey. Many people said volunteering has given them a new social network.

#### **Learn new skills**

From hedgelaying to biodiversity surveying, running events, using tools, supporting education sessions and discovering local heritage — volunteers value gaining knowledge and confidence.

### **What’s going well?**

#### **You feel appreciated and part of something meaningful**

Many volunteers spoke about feeling valued, supported, included and proud to contribute. Staff were frequently mentioned as friendly, knowledgeable and encouraging.



### **A wide variety of roles**

Land management, events, education, creative hub, office and gardening roles all received positive feedback. Volunteers appreciated the flexibility to choose roles that fit their interests and availability.

### **Community spirit**

You enjoy meeting like-minded people and working together on tasks that make a visible difference. Several volunteers highlighted the joy of sharing skills and passing them on to newer volunteers.

### **Learning and training**

Training in skills like hedge laying, mammal surveys, biodiversity monitoring and tool use was a highlight. Volunteers enjoyed discovering new reserves, learning from rangers, and gaining deeper understanding of land management.

### **The impact volunteering has on you**

Volunteers shared how being part of Earth Trust has:

- Grown their skills and environmental knowledge
- Improved physical health and fitness
- Increased confidence
- Created new friendships
- Given a sense of purpose and contribution
- Supported wellbeing and time outdoors

These impacts were some of the strongest and most consistent themes across the whole survey.

### **What you've learned (that others should know!)**

Volunteers said:

- **“Take the first step, even if you feel nervous — everyone is welcoming.”**
- **“Ask rangers questions — they love sharing knowledge.”**
- **“You don't have to volunteer every week to make a difference.”**



- **“Bring waterproofs... and snacks!”**
- **“Tasks vary — some are physical, some are gentle, all are worthwhile.”**
- **“It’s flexible. Do what works for you.”**

People repeatedly emphasised that **there’s something for everyone**, regardless of confidence, fitness or experience.

We plan to use this advice in our volunteer onboarding process for new volunteers.

### **Challenges you highlighted**

While experiences were overwhelmingly positive, some volunteers mentioned:

#### **Weather & physicality**

Rain, mud, brambles, steep slopes and heavy manual tasks can be demanding — especially in winter.

#### **Tools & equipment**

A few groups felt tools or weather-proof kit were limited at times. Warm branded clothing was mentioned several times.

#### **Communication**

Mostly excellent, but occasionally:

- Mixed messages at events
- Wanting more advance notice for dates
- Desiring more updates on “middle-stage” project progress

#### **Coordination during large events**

Some volunteers noted it can be busy or unclear when multiple things happen simultaneously.

#### **Accessibility & confidence**

A few new volunteers felt unsure about keeping up physically or fitting in — but nearly all said these worries eased quickly.



## **Suggestions from volunteers**

Your constructive ideas include:

- More weather-proof / warm volunteer clothing
- Extra power tools or improved kit where appropriate
- More coordinated event planning
- Occasional volunteer skill-sharing sessions
- More advance notice of volunteering dates
- Opportunities outside core hours for people who work
- Regular quick updates on project progress
- Extra toilet access during big events
- More structured inductions for new volunteers

All of these suggestions have been noted and will help shape future improvements.

## **Overall experience and likelihood to recommend**

The vast majority of volunteers rated 8–10/10 in likelihood to recommend volunteering with Earth Trust. Many scored *10* and described ET as:

- “Flexible”
- “Fun”
- “Rewarding”
- “Supportive”
- “The best volunteering I’ve ever done”

The generosity, enthusiasm and positivity in the responses shine through.