Become a trustee

THE ROCK POOL TRUST | TRUSTEE INFORMATION PACK

Supporting The Rock Pool Project and the Big Rock Pool Challenge

Who we are



The Rock Pool Project connects people with coastal wildlife through hands-on marine education, community engagement and citizen science. The Rock Pool Trust is the newly registered charity (no. 1220217) supporting this work, providing charitable governance and a sustainable foundation for its future. The Rock Pool Project remains our main public-facing name.

Our story



The Rock Pool Project began in 2017 with a conversation on a Cornish rocky shore between two friends: marine biologist Ben Holt and primary school teacher Alan Smith. They shared a simple idea: what if they could bring marine science and education together to help more people get outside, discover the extraordinary wildlife on their doorstep and develop a lasting connection with the natural world?

That conversation became The Rock Pool Project. Working with an enthusiastic early team of volunteers, they began experimenting with different approaches to building a sustainable not-for-profit organisation focused on connecting people with their local marine wildlife. Through activities with schools, families and communities, the Project gradually developed its distinctive approach to hands-on marine education and public engagement.

Over the following years, the organisation evolved considerably, supported by the dedication and expertise of its directors, staff, volunteers and partners. What began as a local initiative in Cornwall has grown into a nationwide, volunteer-led community science programme.

Today, our flagship grant funded project the Big Rock Pool Challenge brings communities together across the UK to explore and record coastal wildlife through regular BioBlitz events, supported by volunteer training, educational resources and digital technology.

The establishment of The Rock Pool Trust as a registered charity in October 2026 marks the next chapter. The Trust supports the continued development and long-term sustainability of The Rock Pool Project and it's nationwide network of volunteer hubs. The Rock Pool Project remains

our main public-facing identity, as we continue to connect people with marine wildlife through discovery, learning and shared experiences.

The Big Rock Pool Challenge

Our flagship programme represents our major strategic focus both currently and into the future. The project brings communities across the UK together to discover, identify and record marine wildlife on local rocky shores. Volunteer-supported coastal hubs run community BioBlitz events, where participants explore shore life and contribute observations through iNaturalist.

The programme combines accessible outdoor learning with genuine biodiversity recording. Our digital app celebrates discoveries, encourages participation and supports a growing network of local teams and volunteers.



Why it matters

- **Engagement and education:** Makes marine science accessible, using the excitement of BioBlitz Battles to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to discover and learn about coastal wildlife.
- **Volunteers and communities:** Empowers local volunteers to lead activities, develop skills and build lasting connections between people and their coastal environments.
- **Science and conservation:** Generates openly accessible biodiversity data, supporting the monitoring of marine wildlife and non-native species, and contributing to research, conservation and environmental decision-making.

Scientific partnerships and the value of our data





A central aim of the Big Rock Pool Challenge is to ensure that the biodiversity records generated by our participants contribute to marine research, conservation and environmental monitoring.

All observations are made freely available through **iNaturalist** as soon as they are submitted. We also work directly with Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and NatureScot, providing monthly reports of marine non-native species records to support national monitoring efforts.

Our partnership with the Marine Biological Association's DASSH team is helping us develop the scientific value of these data. Beyond our own programme, The Rock Pool Project is a founding Steering Group member of the Marine Citizen Science Network, working alongside organisations including Natural England, DASSH, Cefas and the Natural History Museum to strengthen marine citizen science across the UK.

Funding

The Big Rock Pool Challenge has grown through a combination of grant funding, delivery partnerships and the commitment of local volunteers. Major support has included the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the ScottishPower Foundation, with the Marine Biological Association an important programme partner. This investment has helped establish and support coastal hubs, deliver community events, develop volunteer capacity and build our digital recording and reporting tools.

Our funding is currently largely project-based, with grants supporting specific activities and delivery periods. This funding has enabled significant growth, establishing a strong foundation for the Big Rock Pool Challenge. We are now focused on building a more diverse and sustainable funding model to support our existing network and create opportunities for further development.

Building a sustainable future

Our priority is to move towards a more resilient mix of income while continuing to seek grants for programme development and delivery. We are developing corporate sponsorship and partnerships, community and individual giving, and other appropriate fundraising opportunities. Recent crowdfunding activity has also helped us test ways for supporters to contribute directly to the programme.

We also want to build on the national programme through improved volunteer training, educational resources and digital tools. These are ambitions for which we will seek further

funding, not commitments that are already fully financed. The new trustees will play an important strategic role in helping the Board assess opportunities, manage financial risks and make sustainable decisions about growth.

The Rock Pool Trust and its Board

Growing our Board

We are steadily developing the Board of The Rock Pool Trust, with the aim of bringing together approximately seven or eight trustees with complementary skills, experiences and backgrounds.

We want to build a diverse and effective Board that combines professional expertise with different perspectives and a shared commitment to our charitable aims. As the Trust develops, we will continue to identify opportunities to strengthen our collective expertise and support the long-term future of The Rock Pool Project.

Working with our staff team

Our staff team is led by CEO Dr Ben Holt and Deputy CEO Laura Coles, who oversee the day-to-day management and delivery of The Rock Pool Project and the Big Rock Pool Challenge.

Trustees work alongside the senior staff team, providing strategic guidance, constructive challenge and oversight rather than taking on operational responsibilities.

We aim to foster a supportive, collaborative Board where trustees can contribute their experience and expertise meaningfully, while keeping the time commitment proportionate and manageable.

What all trustees contribute

All trustees share responsibility for the effective governance of The Rock Pool Trust. This includes:

- Helping establish the charity's strategic direction and ensuring its activities advance its charitable purposes for public benefit.
- Overseeing the charity's financial position, performance and significant risks.
- Providing constructive challenge, independent judgement and informed advice.
- Supporting good governance, accountability and responsible decision-making.
- Acting as ambassadors for the Trust and its work where appropriate.

Individual trustees may also bring particular expertise to support specific aspects of the charity's development.

Time commitment and support

Trustees meet quarterly, primarily online, with meetings typically lasting approximately two hours, plus preparation time.

There may also be opportunities to contribute advice or expertise between meetings, depending on individual interests, experience and any particular responsibilities undertaken.

We aim to keep trustee commitments flexible and proportionate, recognising that trustees contribute their time voluntarily. Specific expectations will be discussed during recruitment and may vary between roles.

Trustees can be based anywhere in the UK. Opportunities to visit our coastal hubs, meet volunteers and participate in events are warmly encouraged but are not mandatory.

Trustee positions are voluntary, and reasonable expenses can be reimbursed.

Joining the Board

Who we hope to hear from

We welcome prospective trustees from a wide range of professional and personal backgrounds, bringing different experiences, skills and perspectives.

Above all, we value people who share our enthusiasm for The Rock Pool Project's mission and want to contribute to its continued success.

We look for trustees who can think strategically, exercise sound judgement, contribute constructively to discussions and work collaboratively with others.

Specific skills and experience requirements will depend on the needs of the Board and will be outlined in individual recruitment opportunities.

Previous trustee experience is welcome but not essential. You do not need a background in marine biology or an existing connection with The Rock Pool Project.

Application and selection

We aim to make our trustee recruitment process straightforward, transparent and welcoming.

Prospective trustees will be invited to submit a short written expression of interest explaining their motivation, relevant experience and what they could contribute to the Board. We also welcome informal conversations with prospective applicants before they apply. These provide an opportunity to learn more about the Trust and ask questions, but do not form part of the selection process.

Applications are assessed against the published selection criteria, with shortlisted candidates invited to an interview involving at least one existing trustee. The recruitment panel makes recommendations to the Board, which is responsible for appointment decisions in accordance with the Trust's governing document and recruitment procedures.

Details of how to apply, recruitment deadlines and interview arrangements will be provided with individual vacancies.

Appointment and induction

Trustees are normally appointed for a three-year term, with an initial two-way review after six months to consider how the role is working for both the trustee and the Trust.

New trustees receive an induction introducing them to the Trust's governing document, policies, finances, activities and strategic priorities, together with opportunities to meet the staff team and learn more about the Big Rock Pool Challenge.

We want every trustee to feel informed, supported and able to make a valuable contribution from the outset.

Find out more and stay connected

Website: www.therockpoolproject.co.uk

Social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn

Email updates: link

Our Charity Commission page:

https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/5278316

Applicants are welcome to explore our website and social channels to learn more about the people, activities and communities behind the Project. Applications and enquiries about these trustee vacancies should be made through Reach Volunteering.

We are looking for trustees who want to help build a resilient charity and enable more people to discover and understand the wildlife of our shores.

