



Becoming a trustee: Information for individuals considering becoming a trustee



"I never cease to be amazed at the quality and impact of the work BART does across the region, particularly in education, engagement, and partnership-building to improve our river and streams. It gives me a deep sense of pride to support this important work."

Our Vision

Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) is a charity which delivers education, land and river management advice and practical river restoration work throughout the Bristol Avon catchment.

BART aims to conserve and enhance the status of our waterbodies for current and future generations, plus seeks to re-connect communities to their local rivers and help them better appreciate them, plus to improve them for the benefit of people and wildlife.



How BART does this

Since it was set up in 2012 BART has succeeded by using the expert insight of its staff and the knowledge of its volunteers, and through partnerships with a wide range of interested parties (such as Wildlife Trusts, water companies, planning authorities and regulators, the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership and others). It has also actively engaged with land-owners, community groups and river users such as anglers and walkers. Essentially through adopting a data driven, collaborative, practical approach.

Recent deliverables include: Natural Flood Management solutions; re-wiggling rivers; action on weirs; farm visits and landowner education; schools work (eg Eels in the classroom); citizen science data gathering (Riverblitz, Riverfly) and creating a Fish Recovery Strategy. BART leads the country in relation to use of eDNA (novel fish sampling methodology) and establishing a comprehensive hub for river related data.

BART is focused on the Bristol Avon catchment, a unique and beautiful network of rivers, streams and lakes, with the Bristol Avon at its heart. Stretching 75 miles from its source in Wiltshire to its confluence with the River Severn near Bristol, the River Avon and its tributaries are the lifeblood of the area – but they are under constant threat, including from climate change and a growing population, with Bristol one of the fastest growing cities in the UK.

BART is part of the wider rivers trust movement and aligned with (though separate from) the national Rivers Trust organisation.

Further information is available via the BART website:
<https://bristolavonriverstrust.org>

BART People

A team of paid BART employees (including project managers and ecologists) works under a Chief Executive Officer. Oversight for BART is provided by the BART board of trustees. A large team of volunteers helps BART achieve its aims, coordinated by BART employees. For further information visit the BART website:

<https://bristolavonriverstrust.org/who-we-are/meet-the-team/>

BART Governance

BART is a registered charity plus operates as a private company limited by guarantee (incorporated 12th March 2012). Liability of members (i.e. the trustees) is limited to £1 each. The Articles of Association for BART articulate how it will regulate its operations and defines its purpose, laying out how tasks are to be accomplished within the organisation, including the process for appointing trustees and the handling of financial records. The Articles are available on request and are held on the BART trustees' SharePoint site. Further official details about BART, including filing status and directors are available via the BART entry on the Companies House website:

<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/07986475>

As good business practice and in line with Charity Commission guidance BART maintains a comprehensive risk framework which is subject to regular review by the board. A suite of BART policies, plus in places discrete specific controls, are operated with the BART management and board committed to learning from risk events and near-misses, so all controls are subject to continuous improvement and adverse outcomes are minimised.

BART Financials

BART has grown rapidly in recent years and is working to continue building the scale and impact of its work whilst operating in a dynamic and fast changing world. This, plus regulatory direction and long-term planning challenges, poses material strategic risks which BART is seeking to manage appropriately. BART seeks to secure funding from diverse sources to limit risk exposure and is now looking to grow its core funding. For further information of BART's financial performance visit the Charity Commission website:

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5040771/financial-history>

What BART requires from trustees

The governing body of Bristol Avon Rivers Trust is a board of trustees. Trustees play a vital role in all aspects of our work. Giving their time for free, like all our volunteers, our trustees bring the necessary skills and experience to oversee the strategic development and direction of the Trust. They take all decisions on matters of Trust policy. Trustees provide accountability regarding the organisation fulfilling its public purpose through achievement of its charitable goals. Trustees also have responsibilities as Directors of the Company.

When recruiting new trustees we look for individuals who are passionate about rivers/wetlands and who ideally will bring relevant experience to the board to strengthen oversight, strategic decision making and risk management.

Candidates with a background in or experience of the following areas are particularly sought:

- Planning/environmental law
- Sustainability, estate management
- Major donor and/or corporate fundraising
- Human Resources and Health & Safety
- Contract management & procurement

What BART requires from trustees, Cont.

Trustees are required to attend four board meetings per year, and sometimes other sub-committee meetings. Meetings are usually held electronically. Some additional time will also be required to study papers. Trustees may also take on specific responsibilities for the board and may occasionally attend events and/or undertake other fund-raising or representational activity.

It is strongly recommended that trustees and those interested in becoming a trustee take time to read the guidance provided by the Charity Commission for England and Wales, including becoming familiar with the **Essential Trustee** publication:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1171397/CC3_feb20.pdf

It is also very important that whilst operating in a challenging and open manner, the board of trustees consists of individuals who share a common purpose and who can work collaboratively as an effective team.

What you will get from the role

Along with a supportive and stimulating working environment, acting as a BART trustee offers the opportunity to gain new knowledge, skills and experience plus to do something you enjoy whilst making a positive, demonstrable difference for wildlife and communities.

As required under charity law, the post of BART trustee is unpaid.

"I really enjoy being a Trustee for BART. It's a privilege to be able to apply my skills and experience to support such a great organisation which is delivering so much for our rivers"

Peter Coleman-Smith, Trustee, BART

The recruitment process onto the board of trustees

1. Applicant reads and considers the BART on-line information plus supporting information (including looking at the Charity Commission guidance)
2. Applicant indicates interest to BART – through a phone call or email to: info@bristolavonriverstrust.org. At the same time, they submit a CV, short supporting statement (1 side of A4 maximum) and a completed **Information to be Disclosed & Declaration Form**
3. Interview – informal interview with Chair and CEO
4. BART board consider the applicant joining the board as a trustee – in light of the current make-up of the board and the challenges faced by BART, plus also the applicant’s CV, supporting statement and interview outcome
5. Where the board is supportive, the applicant will be asked to provide 2 references and may be asked for a satisfactory Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check *
6. Assuming these checks are met, a formal resolution will be tabled for approval by the board at the next board meeting. Once agreed, the appointee will then hold office as a trustee until the next AGM, at which time the board may reappoint the trustee – subject to both parties agreement

** DBS check costs will be covered by BART*