



National  
Trust

# Volunteering identity

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This guide is to help you develop your volunteering communications. It contains very specific advice and examples on the tone of voice and visual styles for volunteering.

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## Introduction

Volunteers have always played a huge part in our growth and success. It's in our DNA and we wouldn't be what we are without our volunteers.

We produce a large amount of communications for, with and about volunteers and volunteering, across print, broadcast and digital media. So we've developed this guidance specifically for those of you who create volunteering communications. You can use it on its own, but there's more guidance in Our Brand on the intranet. Your VCI and Marketing & Comms Consultants are here to advise and support you.

# Volunteering communications

Our volunteering communications should reflect the nature of our volunteer community. The words below describe this. At the heart of our approach to communications is the principle that we will use the words of volunteers themselves. It's amazing how powerful volunteers' words can be.

## Proposition

The overarching thought behind volunteering

All for the love of special places and the pleasure they bring

## Tone

How we speak

Warm and welcoming

Honest and authentic

Involving and inspiring

Alive and dynamic

## Key messages

That should be integrated into all our communications

### Collaboration

Part of a team, Meeting new people, Making friends, Having a laugh, Linking to local community

### Reward

Feeling useful, Making a contribution, Having an impact, Personal journeys, Breadth

### Inspiration

Storytelling, Sharing knowledge, Making people smile, Being inspired yourself

### Skills

Applying your expertise, Learning a new one, Teaching others, Growing in confidence, Broad opportunity

### Perspiration

Mucking in, Helping out, Can do, Doing it because you want to do it

## Foundation

What we are all about

From its beginnings to its current success volunteers have been at the heart of the Trust

# Five key messages

As we've seen, there are five key benefits of volunteering that we'd like to work into our communications where relevant:

- Collaboration
- Reward
- Inspiration
- Skills
- Perspiration

# Bringing volunteering alive

The 'Quotes' approach shines the light on the volunteers; their work, their skills and what it means to them to be a National Trust volunteer.

It lets their experiences and thoughts speak to fellow or prospective volunteers, breaking down the barriers to get the most honest and ultimately inspiring communications.

This is done through their own words and the choice of 'full bleed' (i.e. full page) images that, while sometimes have part or hints of a group of people, always have the focus on one person and the work they are doing.

## Visualising quotes



# Quotes

## Examples of volunteers' words

When you reflect on things you've seen and heard, what stands out as truly memorable? Chances are it's things that sound genuine, and that you can tell where they come from. The essence of our approach to volunteering communications is personal testimony; wherever possible, using real quotes to convey the benefits of volunteering.

Here are some quotes from our volunteers to show how their words can bring volunteering to life.

### Collaboration

Being part of a team, meeting people and making friends creates a happy atmosphere that people pick up on.

### Example quotes

'It's about the experiences. We all work as a team. It's an opportunity to work with other people, share knowledge.'

'I just enjoy it and it's just a really good crowd here, and we have a really good laugh ... it's sort of special.'

'Well we are all like one family really, aren't we? We are all volunteers and we all enjoy doing what we do.'

'It's really lovely to interact with other people, rather than just study at my desk all day.'

### Reward

Volunteering for a good cause is one of the most rewarding things you can do. Whether it's seeing the public's enjoyment or understanding the scale of difference you make.

### Example quotes

'It's a great sense of achievement, you feel you've achieved something at the end of it and there is a great sense of satisfaction when you deliver something that is useful to the Trust.'

'You get to know the place; you get to feel like you are doing something useful.'

'..... you've looked after it, you're keeping it clean or whatever. You hear visitors' little comments and that, it is, it's a lovely feeling.'

'I've always wanted to give something back and the way to give something back, to me, was to do some volunteering. I've actually got the bonus that I actually enjoy doing it so I am very lucky.'

## Inspiration

We have many inspiring places and our volunteers bring them to life. Their knowledge and enthusiasm is inspiring and infectious.

## Example quotes

'It's so difficult to put into words, and just tell you how... it really really has changed me coming here.'

'I just wish I had a penny for everybody who comes down here and said 'woah, what a stunning view!'

'To show people around and look after it for others to see, it's special.'

## Skills

Learning new skills, sharing your skills or pursuing existing interests are all the more rewarding when it's for a good cause.

## Example quotes

'I'd never been a photographer. I had no skills. I've developed now to taking pretty professional quality photos for the inventory team.'

'You find what's right for you and what you enjoy doing. It can lead to other things; I work in the garden and I get involved in all things recipe and knitting-related here.'

'I was an accountant for forty years, now the managers here ask my advice about things quite often.'

'Volunteering's given me a real opportunity to develop a hobby into practical skills and experience.'

## Perspiration

Mucking in and getting your hands dirty can be fun. The work our volunteers do is a vital part of the experience and vital to looking after special places for everyone to enjoy.

## Example quotes

‘We do what needs to be done, whether it’s moving furniture or driving visitors around the estate in the buggy.’

‘The day has just flown by; you don’t know where it’s gone.’

‘The garden is particularly good because there is always something to show at the end of the day that’s different from when you started.’

# Make it genuine

To be engaging and persuasive, quotes have to be genuine, so give careful thought to choosing the right one.

## Some tips:

1. Always use quotes that support one or more of the key benefits of volunteering: *Inspiration; Perspiration; Skills; Collaboration; Rewards*
2. Don't fake it. Note or record your conversations or interviews with volunteers so you've got it word for word; colloquial phrases will bring the most believable and interesting quotes. Don't be afraid of using the exact words a volunteer said.
3. Embrace regional sayings and slang – they reflect character and personality and bring places to life.
4. Details add richness to our volunteering stories. Avoid quotes that sound bland and generic. Try and pick out everything from people's names and roles to details about the techniques they learn and the places where they work – with their permission of course.



# Styling quotes

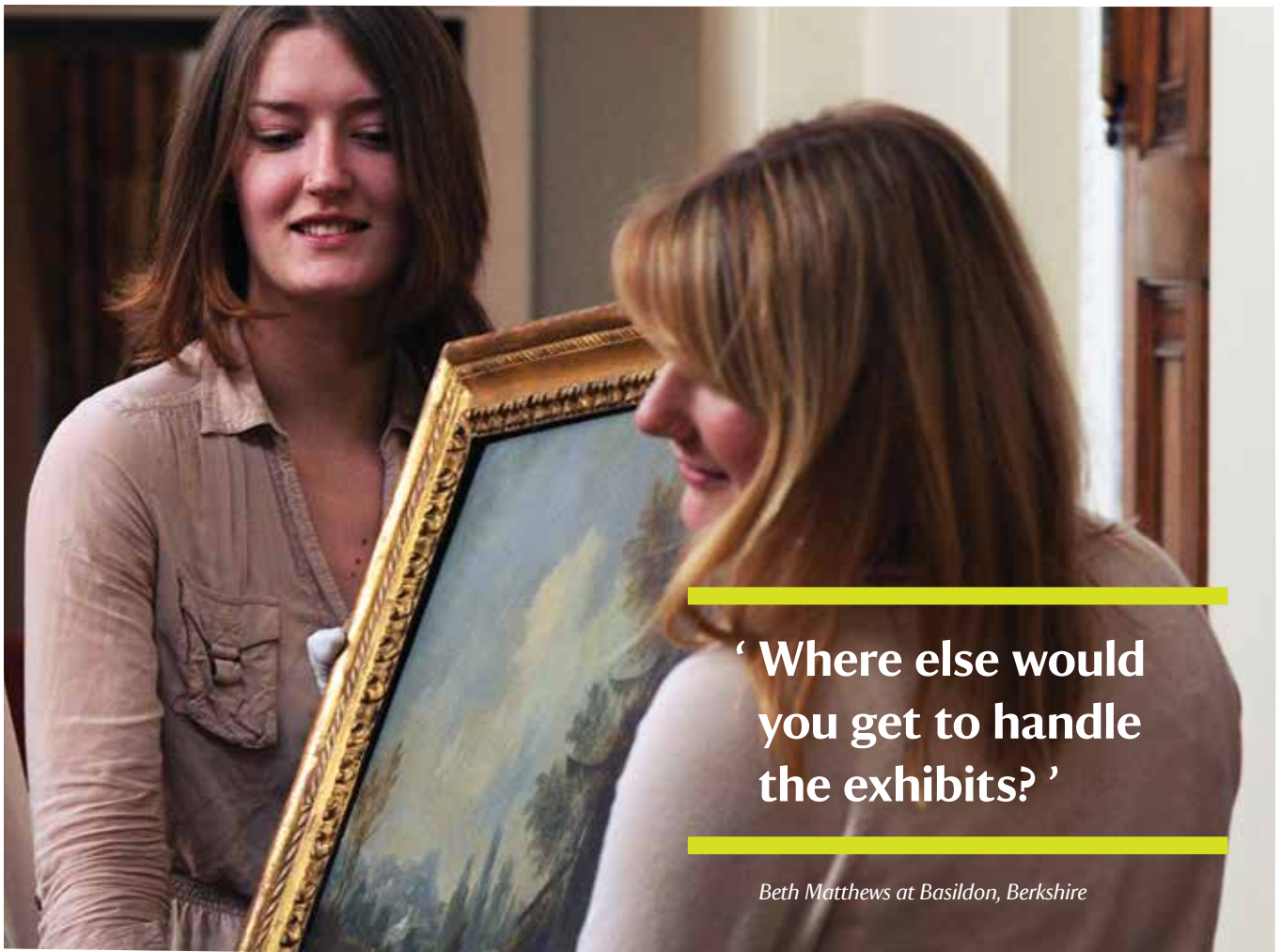
One of the key things that make volunteering communications stand out is the use of quotes to bring volunteering to life.

When you use quotes in volunteering communications they work best when used with imagery.

The quotes are shown in large bold copy contained by two coloured bars. Bars should always appear above and below a quote.

All coloured quote bars should be horizontal and straight for simplicity.

See page 17 for more detail.



**‘ Where else would  
you get to handle  
the exhibits? ’**

*Beth Matthews at Basildon, Berkshire*

# Imagery

Imagery should follow our brand guidance in style and approach, but always showing the volunteering experience. Images should be close-cropped and focused on a detail. This shows the sense of care and intimacy between volunteers and the role they play.

The quotes concept works best when the quotes themselves are accompanied by an image, working in partnership to communicate the message. All images should have a strong focus and a tight crop on a specific action or activity that the volunteer is connected to, rather than wider shots. This tighter crop shows attention to detail, the sense of care they take and the importance of what they do.

Volunteering images are large and 'full bleed' (i.e full page) where possible. If full bleed isn't achievable for a certain item, use a coloured irregular shaped background.

Where a coloured background is used the quote should overlap the image to connect it to the person and give it clear ownership.

## Image examples



**Original image**



**Cropped image**

## Image examples



**Original image**



**Cropped image**



## Image examples



Original image



Cropped image

## Image examples



**Original image**



**Cropped image**

## Image examples



**Original image**



**Cropped image**



## Image examples



**Original image**



**Cropped image**



## Colour

Volunteering communications should use these two colours.



**Pantone® 3125**

C: 88 M: 0 Y: 21 K: 0

R: 0 G: 170 B: 180

Hex: #00aab4



**Pantone® 389**

C: 20 M: 0 Y: 100 K: 0

R: 212 G: 255 B: 24

Hex: #d4ff18

Both colour combinations are taken from the Trust's colour palette. They have been chosen as bright and positive combinations reflecting the energy of the volunteers.

## Shapes and lines

The use of the Trust's shapes is essential to helping volunteering communications remain consistent with our organisational identity.

To complement those shapes, use of strong bars that overlap or complement titles enforces the consistent look-and-feel of volunteering communications.



# Tone of voice

Writing about volunteering and to volunteers means using our tone of voice. The National Trust tone of voice is based on our values and behaviours: *Love places, Inspire people, Think long term*, and *Share our common purpose*, and is always the same, regardless of our audience. It's about sounding natural and human and letting our passion shine through.

What we want people to say about us

Welcoming  
Inspiring  
Engaging  
Inclusive  
Enthusiastic

What people say when we don't get it right

Dictating  
Out of touch  
Exclusive  
Boring  
Superior

We need to make sure we get it right, so our tone of voice is:

- Warm and welcoming
- Honest and authentic
- Involving and inspiring
- Alive and dynamic

# In practice

It's all about communicating in a way that's friendly, genuine and clear.

The following shows how we can bring to life the National Trust tone of voice for volunteering.



Warm and  
welcoming

- We're open to people's views and suggestions, not bossy or excluding
- We want to **inspire people** and give them ideas to take back into their own lives.

## From this:

You are now a very special part of this spirit and you will help us to realise our strategy to go local, to celebrate the unique significance of each of our places and promote them for everyone to enjoy.

## To this:

You're now part of the team and we need all your energy and enthusiasm to help us keep the coastline, countryside, houses, castles and gardens you love open and inspiring for everyone to enjoy.

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## What's changed?

'You're now part of the team' is more natural and authentic than 'you are now a very special part of this spirit'. Try and write the way you would speak to a friend. 'Energy and enthusiasm' points to the key benefits of Inspiration and Perspiration. Where possible, try not to refer generically to 'special places'. Being more specific will help bring these places to life and reinforce the message that we do more than look after stately homes. Talking about our 'strategy to go local' sounds like internal language – it could be confusing. Please don't use the term 'our places'. We look after places for everyone to enjoy.

## Writing tip:

Write the way you would speak and it will sound friendlier and more natural. A good way to check if your writing sounds like one person talking to another is by reading it aloud.

## Honest and authentic

- **We love places** and we're all ambassadors for the work we do. We need to be believable and specific when describing a place or experience
- Likewise, we shouldn't shy away from difficult issues

### From this:

Whilst we always want to make volunteering as rewarding an experience as possible, it's also important to keep in mind the organisational priorities.

### To this:

'The important thing is to be flexible and appreciate both what the Trust and the volunteer needs - together we can make things happen.'

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### What's changed?

By turning this sentence into a quote, it makes it feel more personal to the reader. It inspires the reader and makes them feel part of the Trust, creating a sense of pride. The reference to 'organisational priorities' has been changed to actually say what we mean. We aren't hiding behind fancy phrases. 'Together we can make things happen' points to the key benefit of Collaboration, and the overall tone conveys the benefit of 'Inspiration'.

### Writing tip:

If you're gathering quotes to use in your writing, ask people to speak their thoughts (rather than write them down). It will sound much more natural.

## Involving and inspiring

- We have a vast amount of knowledge and expertise at the Trust but we need to avoid jargon and bring the knowledge we have to life so people can engage with their surroundings and **share our common purpose**

### From this:

One of our most important property targets or KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) is our Volunteer Recommendation score. This is why the Volunteer Survey results (like our NT Staff Survey) is so important to us. Aside from the centrally driven targets – we do hold the importance of our volunteers' happiness as essential to our work at the property and want to evolve and develop the way we work together as a team.

### To this:

One of the most important factors in our success as a property is whether or not you'd be happy to get your friends involved in volunteering for the Trust. A team of inspired, collaborative, hard-working and well rewarded volunteers means a great experience for our visitors. So our Volunteer Survey isn't just a box-ticking exercise – it's a really useful tool for finding out how you're feeling and what we can improve. And if there is something bothering you – or you have a suggestion – you don't have to wait for the survey, we're always here to help.

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## What's changed?

Property targets and KPIs aren't very inspiring, and they can be confusing in what they're actually trying to say. By simplifying the language and making it directly relevant to the volunteer, we start to help them to understand why certain measures are important. It helps them feel part of the team and shows them how they feedback to make their experience better. This in turn brings alive the Collaboration message.

### Writing tip:

Use active not passive verbs (for example 'we're rebuilding these walls' not 'the walls are being rebuilt'). This will make your writing more dynamic.

## Alive and dynamic

- Our places are not museums: they're living buildings, dynamic coastlines, working farms and open parklands
- We **think long term** so it's important to tell people what we're doing with imagination and energy

### From this:

Our volunteers work tirelessly to help look after special places.

### To this:

'It's bloody hard work some days but that's alright – I like seeing the changes you help make and people enjoying them.'

John on restoring the Scotney walled garden

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### What's changed?

By telling it as it is, we are bringing to life what it's actually like to be a volunteer. We are no longer being passive about volunteering. We are showing what volunteers can bring to the Trust, and that whilst it's not a walk in the park it is definitely worth it. It's showing the Perspiration behind volunteering, whilst also highlighting the Reward that people get from playing a part in the Trust's upkeep.

### Writing tip:

Keep your writing punchy. Don't try to say everything. Keep sentences reasonably short. If you find you have to use a semicolon, your sentence is probably already too long.



## Further examples

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## Example 1: Talking about volunteers

### From this:

Steve is a full time volunteer, working as a Ranger in South East Cornwall. Working with the team, he's learning what it is to be a Ranger – with the goal of eventually working in this area.

### To this:

Meet Steve, a full time Volunteer Ranger with our South East Cornwall team. He's out and about in all weather learning the skills he needs to start a career in conservation.

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### What's changed?

The way we introduce Steve now makes it feel like more of a community. He's one of us. The phrase 'learning what it is to be a Ranger' sounds a bit formal. The addition of 'out and about in all weather' hints at the perspiration benefit. It's hard work but working in the outdoors appeals hugely to some people. We've been more specific about his desire to start a career in conservation as opposed to just saying 'working in this area'. Being specific helps people understand the skills they can learn and brings our volunteers' work to life.



## Example 2: Volunteer updates (e.g. newsletters)

### From this:

During the past few months, our Volunteering Action Plans are starting to be implemented and I am delighted that we have our portfolio Volunteer Steering Group established to keep us developing the volunteering experience which we offer.

### To this:

Over the last few months I've been really pleased to see our Volunteer Steering Group starting to meet. This is just one of the ways the whole team at ##### are sharing ideas on how to make volunteering an even better experience.

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### What's changed?

- The first example is a very long sentence making it quite difficult to understand.
- It's also not clear what the benefits of these initiatives are to the volunteer.
- In the second example the key volunteering benefits have been woven in.
- The language has also been simplified (words like 'implemented' have been removed) so the whole piece sounds more natural – particularly important as it is in the first person.



