



Mammal
SOCIETY

Local Mammal Groups Handbook

Local Mammal Groups Handbook



Thank you for taking an interest in our local groups network.

The Mammal Society currently has around 30 local mammal groups. We are actively working to increase this number and are fundraising to support the development of new groups, particularly in urban areas. We would love to hear from anyone interested in starting a local mammal group – reach out to us on localgroups@themammalsociety.org and we'd be happy to support you.

This handbook exists to provide suggestions and inspiration for managing and organising your group. Feel free to adopt or adapt any ideas as you see fit!

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Useful contacts:

Local groups enquiries - localgroups@themammalsociety.org

Local groups committee chair - localmammalgroups@themammalsociety.org

Training/education enquiries – fiona@mammal.org.uk / training@themammalsociety.org

Communications support – info@themammalsociety.org

Data and research projects – ross@mammal.org.uk / science@themammalsociety.org

What is a Local Mammal Group?

Local mammal groups bring together those with a shared enthusiasm for the local environment and the mammals within it. They work to share knowledge, raise awareness, survey, and monitor local mammals. They also provide local expertise and training in field skills, hold talks and events, and support the work of the Mammal Society.

Local Mammal Groups can vary in size and focus, depending on the interests and strengths of its members. For example, a group may be made up entirely of students and/or staff at a particular university or school and could be focused on engaging the student community and carrying out monitoring and biodiversity improvement projects on their campus. Alternatively, it may be a large community of people of all ages and backgrounds coordinating a range of activities and projects to benefit mammals across an entire county.

Given the potential for different approaches, it may be that several Local Mammal Groups can operate in one area, working on different projects that complement each other, and they might occasionally collaborate on certain initiatives such as a presence at a county show or a programme of local public engagement events and communications in National Mammal Week.

How do local groups link to the Mammal Society?

We aim to galvanise interest in mammals and mammal recording across the United Kingdom to build a community of mammal enthusiasts equipped to play a key role in protecting and restoring mammal populations locally and nationally.

The Mammal Society can support Local Mammal Groups by providing expert knowledge to inform activities and interpret findings, guidance and practical support for surveying, and support in identifying and delivering local projects that benefit mammals. The Mammal Society can also provide advice, support and training for fundraising, campaigning, event management, communications, and press engagement.

Local Mammal Groups are the eyes and ears on the ground that can help the Mammal Society identify and address priority issues in mammal conservation. Local efforts have a nationwide impact and ensure that the insight into local mammal populations and habitats is available to support informed research findings and conservation practices. All Local Mammal Groups are invited to send a representative to the quarterly Local Mammal Group Forum meetings, to receive an update on Mammal Society activities and projects, hear about any guidance and opportunities for local groups, and feed into key decisions around Mammal society priorities and plans.

Local Mammal Groups also play a key role in bringing key information and messages about the importance of mammals and the issues that threaten their survival to wider and more diverse audiences, strengthening the Mammal Society's ability to influence policy and practice in pursuit of a brighter future for mammals across the British Isles. The outreach and engagement activities of Local Mammal Groups can boost awareness, financial support, and membership for the Mammal Society, which in turn can help the Mammal Society resource and support the activities of Local Mammal Groups.

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Benefits of being an affiliated Local Mammal Group

- Official Local Mammal Group logo
- Listing on Mammal Society website
- Free training in mammal survey techniques, fieldcraft and other mammal conservation skills
- Subsidised rate for all courses and workshops on Mammal Society training programme for all members
- Mammal Society insurance cover for Local Mammal Group activities
- Access to Mammal Society experts for advice, information and insight
- Access to free hire equipment
- A place on the Local Mammal Group Committee
- Updates on mammals and research via our member's magazine Mammal News
- Quarterly Local Groups e-bulletin to keep you up-to-date on news and other groups as well as Mammal Society updates
- Access to knowledge of ongoing mammal projects in your area and ones at a national level

Conditions

These conditions are planned to come in by 2025, and are not currently in place.

- Terms of Reference signed by main contact
- Local Mammal Group membership fee - £150 paid annually (this fee is waived in year 1 of membership)
- Key contact / coordinator should be a Mammal Society member
- Annual report on activities via simple pro forma

How to register your local group

Once you are ready to register your local group please complete this [form](#). This gathers all the information we require. On completion of the form a member of our staff team will reach out to support the setup of your local group.

If you have any questions or queries, or would like more support to set up your group please contact localgroups@themammalsociety.org.

Hosting events

Please keep us up to date with your events schedule – for an event to be covered by our insurance you are required to send us and Event plan* ([Mammal Society event details form.docx](#)).

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National Mammal Week

Every year we celebrate national mammal week – to raise the profile of native mammals, and mammal recording in the British Isles. This is an important part of our work that our local groups support by hosting events, sharing campaigns, and posting on social media.

2024 date – 22nd – 27th April 2024



Group Models (Local Group Set Up)

Consider the group model that best aligns with your objectives, needs, and legal requirements.

Local mammal groups do not have to be brand new set ups, any local wildlife group or similar organisation can register as a local mammal group.

Here are three common group model options to consider:

A. Society:

A society embodies a structured group of individuals united by a shared purpose. Societies typically adhere to formal structures and may establish roles such as president, treasurer, and secretary. They often adopt bylaws or a constitution outlining their goals, rules, and decision-making processes.

B. Constituted Group:

A constituted group is a formally recognised entity, meeting legal requirements and regulations. This model could include registered nonprofits, charities, or community-based organizations (CBOs). Constituted groups operate within a legal framework, maintaining governance structures, financial accountability, and compliance with regulatory obligations. With the ability to enter contracts, apply for funding, and own assets, constituted groups offer credibility and stability.

C. Network:

Networks represent a diverse array of stakeholders united by shared interests or relationships. In our context, a network may comprise NGOs, governmental agencies, academic institutions, local communities, and businesses. Networks facilitate knowledge exchange, resource pooling, and collective action to amplify conservation impact. Whether through formal partnerships or informal collaborations, networks leverage expertise, resources, and influence to achieve common goals.

Selecting the appropriate group model depends on factors such as structure, legal considerations, and desired levels of collaboration and engagement. By understanding these options, local community groups can choose the model best suited to their needs and aspirations, enhancing their effectiveness in conservation efforts.

Roles

Defining roles and responsibilities of committee members is important to help manage tasks. Depending on the scale or formality of your group you may have some of these roles represented – they are not mandatory.

The below descriptors give an overview of roles you may wish to consider having on your committee, this is here to guide but it is not prescriptive. Role descriptors should be there to establish what that person is required to do – they shouldn't be off putting!

Chair:

- The Chairperson serves as the leader and facilitator of the group, responsible for guiding meetings, setting agendas, and ensuring effective communication among members.
- The chairperson should foster a positive and inclusive atmosphere and promoting collaboration and teamwork.
- The Chairperson represents the group in external interactions, liaising with stakeholders, partners, and the broader community to advance the group's objectives.
- Additionally, the Chairperson may provide strategic direction, support the development of initiatives, and serve as a spokesperson for the group when necessary.

Secretary:

- The Secretary plays a crucial role in maintaining accurate records and documentation for the group.
- Responsibilities include recording meeting minutes, distributing agendas and relevant materials, and maintaining an organised archive of group documents.
- The Secretary also handles correspondence, communication with members, and administrative tasks to ensure smooth functioning of the group.
- Additionally, the Secretary may assist the Chairperson in drafting official correspondence, preparing reports, and managing membership records.

Treasurer:

- The Treasurer plays a pivotal role in managing the financial affairs of the group, ensuring transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of funds.
- Responsibilities include maintaining accurate financial records, tracking income and expenditures, and preparing financial reports for presentation to the group's leadership and members.
- The Treasurer oversees budget development and monitoring, working closely with the group's leadership.
- Additionally, the Treasurer manages banking transactions, deposits, and withdrawals, and ensures compliance with financial policies, procedures, and regulatory requirements.
- As a trusted steward of the group's finances, the Treasurer upholds the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality, and ethical conduct in all financial matters, fostering trust and confidence among members, donors, and stakeholders.

Fundraiser:

- The Fundraiser is responsible for devising and implementing strategies to secure financial support for the group's activities and initiatives.
- Responsibilities include identifying funding opportunities, cultivating relationships with donors and sponsors, and developing fundraising campaigns and events.
- The Fundraiser collaborates with the group's leadership and members to articulate funding needs, develop compelling proposals, and effectively communicate the group's impact and value to potential supporters.
- Additionally, the Fundraiser tracks fundraising efforts, maintains donor records, and evaluates the effectiveness of fundraising initiatives to optimise future strategies.

Communication Officer:

- The Communication Officer is tasked with enhancing the visibility, reach, and impact of the group through effective communication and outreach efforts.
- Responsibilities include managing the group's communication channels, such as social media platforms, website, newsletters, and press releases.
- The Communication Officer develops and disseminates engaging content, including articles, blog posts, photos, and videos, to raise awareness about wildlife conservation issues and promote the group's activities and achievements.
- Additionally, the Communication Officer fosters relationships with media outlets, partners, and stakeholders to amplify the group's message and engage the community in conservation efforts.

Events Officer:

- The Events Officer is responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing events and activities that support the mission and goals of the group.
- Responsibilities include conceptualising event ideas, securing venues, managing logistics, and coordinating volunteers and resources to ensure successful events.
- The Events Officer collaborates with other group members to develop event themes, agendas, and programming that engage and inspire participants.
- Additionally, the Events Officer evaluates event outcomes, solicits feedback from participants, and identifies opportunities for improvement and innovation in future events.

Template constitution / ToR

Some groups may chose to have a written constitution whereas others may just have a terms of reference. These are different for each group depending on scale and formality – a constitution is needed to operate as a constituted group (this is more formal)

Linked here are two examples which you can download and edit if desired.

Here is an example of a constitution - [Template Constitution .docx](#)

Here is an example of a (less formal) ToR - [Template ToR.docx](#)

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It is important to remember that a constitution exists to outline what your group does and how it operates. They don't need to be long documents – they just need to capture the key details in a way that you, us and your members can understand.

You may find it useful to discuss with another group similar to yours whether they have a constitution or a ToR and what is included in theirs. If you need any support, the Mammal Society team are here to help, don't hesitate to reach out.

Setting Objectives for Your Group

Setting objectives is crucial for guiding the direction and focus of a group's efforts however simply launching is perfectly fine as an initial objective. The main objective for all our local groups is just to have fun!

Once the group is established consider the long-term vision and strategic goals of the group when setting objectives. Aim for a balance between short-term and long-term objectives to maintain momentum and progress towards broader goals.

Maintain flexibility to adapt and adjust objectives as circumstances change, new opportunities arise, or unforeseen challenges emerge. Regularly review and revise objectives based on feedback, evaluation results, and evolving priorities.

Clearly communicate objectives to all stakeholders, including members, partners, donors, and the broader community. Ensure that everyone understands the rationale, scope, and expected outcomes of the objectives to foster alignment and support.

Use the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure that objectives are well-defined and actionable. This framework helps to ensure that objectives are realistic and attainable within a defined timeframe.

- **Specific:** Define clear and precise objectives that outline exactly what you want to achieve. Ensure objectives are well-defined and unambiguous, leaving no room for interpretation.
- **Measurable:** Establish concrete metrics or indicators to track progress and assess success. Quantify objectives whenever possible to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.
- **Achievable:** Set objectives that are realistic and attainable within the resources, capacity, and timeframe available to the group. Avoid setting objectives that are overly ambitious or unrealistic.
- **Relevant:** Ensure that objectives align with the group's mission, vision, and strategic priorities. Objectives should be relevant and meaningful to the group's stakeholders and contribute directly to its overall goals.
- **Time-bound:** Establish deadlines or target dates for achieving objectives to create a sense of urgency and accountability. Set specific timeframes for completion to maintain focus and momentum.

Don't forget to celebrate achievements and milestones along the way to maintain morale, motivation, and momentum. Recognize and acknowledge the contributions of individuals and teams in advancing the group's objectives.

Running meetings

Ground Rules for Local Groups Meetings

These guidelines can be adapted in collaboration with your members to ensure that everyone feels welcome, and comfortable contributing.

- **Welcome** all who wish to participate, regardless of their background and level of knowledge/experience about mammals
- **Show respect** for all members and perspectives, however different from our own, and ensuring we use no exclusionary language
- **Practice active listening** – allowing each contributor to make their point in full and without interruption, and considering their contribution before responding
- **Hold ideas lightly** and don't take it personally if an idea you contribute is not taken forward because of overall group priorities
- **Show empathy** for others, considering how the tone or content of your contribution could affect others
- **Participate fully** to ensure you and others make the most of the meeting
- **Give space** for all attendees to contribute – including those who may be less confident speaking out – by prioritising when you contribute if you are aware of dominating the floor

Having an agenda is helpful to ensure that meetings stay on track – try to circulate the agenda before the meeting so that members are suitably prepared.

Template Agenda:

- Opening: Welcome and Introductions
- Review of Previous Meeting Minutes
- Updates and Reports:
- Chairperson's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Committee Reports (if applicable)
- Old Business: Follow-up on Action Items from Previous Meetings
- New Business: Discussion of Current Issues or Projects
- Decision-Making on Proposed Actions or Initiatives
- Announcements and Next Steps
- Closing: Summary and Adjournment

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We want local groups to be safe spaces where everyone feels included. Have a read of these **principles of participatory and inclusive practice** so that you ensure every member feels welcome, supported and valued.

- **Encourage Open Dialogue:** Create a supportive environment where all members feel comfortable expressing their views, ideas, and concerns.
- **Active Listening:** Foster active listening among participants by encouraging them to listen attentively to each other, ask clarifying questions, and seek understanding.
- **Respect and Civility:** Emphasise the importance of mutual respect, civility, and professionalism in all interactions and discussions.
- **Inclusivity:** Ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to participate in discussions and decision-making processes, regardless of background, experience, or status.
- **Facilitated Discussions:** Use facilitation techniques, such as round-robin, brainstorming, or small group discussions, to promote engagement, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.
- **Time Management:** Manage time effectively by setting clear agendas, establishing time limits for agenda items, and prioritising key discussion points to maximize productivity and efficiency.
- **Consensus Building:** Strive to achieve consensus whenever possible by seeking common ground, exploring alternatives, and finding solutions that accommodate diverse perspectives and interests.
- **Action-Oriented:** Focus discussions on identifying actionable steps, assigning responsibilities, and setting deadlines to ensure follow-through and accountability.
- **Reflection and Evaluation:** Encourage reflection and evaluation of meeting processes and outcomes to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and lessons learned for future meetings.

By incorporating these elements into your meetings, you can promote effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making within group, fostering a culture of transparency, inclusivity, and shared ownership in achieving your collective goals.

Recruitment

Recruiting members for your group is essential for expanding your reach, fostering community engagement, and achieving your conservation goals.

Here are some effective recruitment strategies to consider:

- **Local Press:**

Utilise local newspapers, magazines, and community newsletters to advertise your group, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities.

Submit press releases, event announcements, and feature articles highlighting your group's activities, achievements, and impact in the community.

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- **Networks:**

Tap into existing networks and partnerships with other conservation organisations, environmental groups, nature clubs, and community associations.

Attend networking events, workshops, and conferences to connect with like-minded individuals and organisations interested in wildlife conservation and environmental stewardship.

- **Flyers/Posters in Local Shops and Community Spaces:**

Design eye-catching flyers, posters, and brochures promoting your group's mission, activities, and upcoming events.

Distribute promotional materials in high-traffic areas such as local shops, community centres, libraries, schools, and recreational facilities frequented by residents.

- **Organisations and Institutions:**

Collaborate with schools, colleges, universities, and educational institutions to engage students, faculty, and staff in wildlife conservation initiatives.

Partner with local businesses, civic groups, religious organisations, and professional associations to reach diverse segments of the community and expand your volunteer base.

- **Online Platforms and Social Media:**

Leverage digital channels such as your group's website, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and online forums to raise awareness and recruit new members.

Create engaging content, share updates, and interact with followers to build a supportive online community passionate about wildlife conservation.

- **Community Events and Outreach Activities:**

Host informational sessions, open houses, and recruitment events to introduce community members to your group and its initiatives.

Participate in local festivals, fairs, markets, and environmental fairs to showcase your work, engage with the public, and recruit volunteers and supporters.

- **Word of Mouth and Referrals:**

Encourage existing members, volunteers, and supporters to spread the word about your group and encourage their friends, family members, and colleagues to get involved.

Foster a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that inspires individuals to become active participants and advocates for wildlife conservation in their community.

Activity and Project Ideas

First activities:

Below are some thoughts on first activities for your group – most importantly ensure this activity is something that you/your committee feel prepared to deliver.

Introduction to UK Mammals Session:

- Host an educational session or workshop that introduces participants to the diverse range of mammal species found in the UK.

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- Include presentations, interactive activities, and guided discussions led by knowledgeable experts or wildlife enthusiasts.
- Explore topics such as mammal identification, behaviour, habitats, conservation status, and the importance of biodiversity conservation.
- Provide opportunities for hands-on learning through wildlife tracking, footprint identification, and other field-based activities.

Drop-in Mammal Info Event:

- Organize a drop-in event or open house where community members can learn more about local mammal species and conservation efforts.
- Set up interactive displays, exhibits, and informational booths featuring photographs, videos, specimens, and educational materials related to UK mammals.
- Invite local wildlife organizations, conservation groups, and experts to share insights, answer questions, and provide resources on mammal conservation and wildlife-friendly practices.
- Offer engaging activities for children and families, such as games, quizzes, and nature crafts focused on mammal-themed topics.

Sharing Forum for Local Projects and Volunteering Opportunities:

- Facilitate a community forum or networking event where individuals and organizations can share information about ongoing projects, initiatives, and volunteering opportunities in the local area.
- Provide a platform for participants to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas on how to support and contribute to mammal conservation efforts.
- Showcase success stories, case studies, and best practices from local conservation projects, highlighting the impact of collective action and community involvement.
- Encourage attendees to explore potential partnerships, collaborations, and volunteer roles that align with their interests, skills, and availability.

Sharing of Encounters and Experiences with Mammals Locally:

- Host a storytelling or sharing session where community members can recount their personal encounters, experiences, and observations of mammals in their local environment.
- Invite participants to share anecdotes, photographs, videos, and recordings of memorable mammal encounters, sightings, and interactions.
- Create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where individuals of all ages and backgrounds feel comfortable sharing their stories and learning from each other.
- Foster a sense of connection to nature and appreciation for the diversity and beauty of wildlife within the local community.

Project Suggestions:

Once your group is established you may wish to have a think about some of these activity and project suggestions.

Biological Surveys and Monitoring Programs:

- Establish citizen science initiatives focused on conducting biological surveys and monitoring programs to track mammal populations and distribution patterns in the local area.
- Engage community members in data collection, monitoring protocols, and scientific research activities to contribute valuable information to conservation efforts.
- Mammals are under recorded due to their elusive nature. Your local group may wish to set up monitoring projects such as regular tracks and signs walks, camera trapping or footprint tunnel surveys.

Mammal Society Projects:

Harvest Mouse Survey:

The harvest mouse is classified as Near Threatened in Britain. This means that they are at risk of becoming threatened with extinction in the near future. Unfortunately, we do not have good estimates of how many harvest mice there are in the wild, so we really have no idea how bad their situation is or what sort of conservation actions should be put in place.

This is why we've launched the National Harvest Mouse Survey across the United Kingdom. We're looking for people across the UK who can get outside and look for harvest mice nests! Surveys do not take long, and no prior experience or specialist equipment is required to carry them out – find out more [here](#).

Owl pellet analysis:

Owls and birds regurgitate the undigestible fur and bone of their prey into neat pellets, and through pellet dissections, we can tell exactly what has been eaten. This could include the non-native Greater White Toothed shrew!

We need your help to analyse owl pellets to help us along in our search for the GWT shrew – find out more [here](#).

Mountain Hare Survey:

NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage), the Mammal Society, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust are collaborating on a project aiming to collect information of Mountain Hare populations.

You can turn any walk in Scotland into a Rambling Survey of mountain hares using the Mammal Mapper App. If you would be willing to contribute further, please consider carrying out mountain hare Square Surveys. These also use the Mammal Mapper App, but rather than recording wildlife for the duration of your upland walk, you'll carry out focused surveys in specific 1 km squares.

Find out more [here](#)

Educational Workshops and Training Sessions:

- Offer a series of educational workshops and training sessions covering topics such as wildlife tracking, camera trapping, mammal survey techniques, and ecological monitoring methods.
- Provide hands-on learning experiences and field-based training opportunities led by experienced biologists, ecologists, and naturalists.

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- If you're planning to engage with schools our Education Officer, Fiona, would love to hear from you (fiona@mammal.org.uk). We have template session plans and resources you may wish to use.

Public Outreach Events and Awareness Campaigns:

- Host public outreach events, wildlife festivals, and awareness campaigns to raise awareness about mammal conservation issues, threats, and challenges facing local wildlife populations.
- Use creative and engaging methods such as art exhibitions, film screenings, nature walks, and public talks to reach diverse audiences and inspire action for conservation.
- Your local group is well placed to help to change public behaviour or local council policies on local mammal issues in your area. For example, getting road signs on roadkill hotspots, issuing good practice dog owner guidance, or raising awareness of the need for hedgehog holes in fences, or wildlife-friendly gardening.

Fundraising ideas

Raising funds is essential for sustaining our local group's activities and initiatives. Here are some creative and effective fundraising ideas to consider:

Applying for Local Funding Pots:

Explore available local funding opportunities tailored to community organizations like yours. These can include municipal grants, community foundation grants, or regional development funds. Keep an eye out for application deadlines and eligibility criteria.

National Community Grant Schemes:

Research national-level grant schemes designed to support community projects and initiatives. These grants may cover various areas such as environmental conservation, arts and culture, youth development, and more.

Crowdfunding Campaigns:

Utilise online crowdfunding platforms to reach a wider audience and gather financial support for specific projects or campaigns. Craft compelling stories and visuals to engage potential donors and backers.

Ticketed Events:

Organise ticketed events such as concerts, workshops, or seminars related to our group's mission and interests. Offer value-added experiences or exclusive access to encourage ticket sales.

Raffle Drawings:

Hold raffle drawings with attractive prizes donated by local businesses or group members. Raffles can be conducted at events, online, or through community partnerships to maximize participation and fundraising potential.

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School Fete / Mufti Days:

Collaborate with local schools to organize fundraising events like school fetes or mufti days. These events can include games, food stalls, performances, and other engaging activities to involve students, families, and the wider community.

These fundraising ideas offer diverse opportunities to mobilize support and generate financial resources for our local group's endeavours. Remember to consider the resources, timelines, and audience preferences when planning fundraising activities.

GDPR

GDPR is a set of rules that help protect people's personal information. It's important because it ensures we handle members' data carefully, respecting their privacy and keeping it safe from misuse.

Here's a summary of key points:

- **Lawful Basis for Processing:** You must have a lawful basis for processing personal data. For local groups, this could be the necessity of processing to fulfil membership obligations or legitimate interests.
- **Consent:** If you rely on consent to process personal data, it must be freely given, specific, informed, and unambiguous. Members must actively opt-in, and they have the right to withdraw consent at any time.
- **Data Minimisation:** Only collect personal data that is necessary for your purposes. This might include names, contact information, and membership details.
- **Data Security:** Implement appropriate measures to ensure the security of personal data, including encryption, access controls, and regular security assessments.
- **Data Retention:** Personal data should not be kept for longer than necessary. Define clear retention periods for different types of data and regularly review and delete data that is no longer needed.
- **Data Subject Rights:** Individuals have certain rights regarding their personal data, including the right to access, rectify, erase, and restrict processing of their data. Be prepared to respond to requests from members exercising these rights.

Safeguarding/Child Protection

If your group is planning to carry out activities involving individuals under the age of 18, safeguarding and child protection become critical. It means taking extra care to ensure that all activities are safe and appropriate for young participants.

This includes conducting thorough risk assessments, obtaining parental consent where necessary, and ensuring that all volunteers and staff members are properly trained in safeguarding procedures.

For more information and support please reach out to Fiona our Education and Training Officer (fiona@mammal.org.uk)