Data Protection and Privacy Policy

Info@balcombeecologicalsociety.co.uk
www.balcombeecologicalsociety.co.uk
Adopted 13th October 2026

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1. Statement of Intent

The Balcombe Ecological Society (aka BES) is committed to protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and rights of our members, volunteers, and website visitors.

This policy outlines how we collect, store, handle, and protect personal data in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It applies to all personal information handled through our website, membership records, event sign-ups, and ecological survey activities.

Approved by the Balcombe Ecological Society Management Committee
Signed on behalf of BES by Ethan McLaughlan, **Chairman of Balcombe Ecological Society.**
Date: 13th October 2026
Review date: 13th October 2027

2. Data Control

2.1 Data Controller Details

For data protection legislation, the Data Controller is:

- **Organisation:** Balcombe Ecological Society (BES)
- **Operating Location:** Balcombe, West Sussex, United Kingdom.
- **Data Contact:** info@balcombeecologicalsociety.co.uk

3. Personal Data We Collect

3.1 Membership & Accounts

- Name
- Email Address
- Membership status and tier.
- **Source:** Google Forms (via website) or paper forms.

3.2 Volunteering & Surveys

- Volunteer name and contact details (email address & phone number).
- Emergency contact information (name & phone number).
- Survey participation logs.
- **Source:** volunteer onboarding forms and survey sign-up sheets.

3.3 Biological Records

- Observer name associated with ecological records.
- Survey dates.
- Grid references.
- **Source:** direct biological record submissions and data logs.

3.4 Website and Digital Usage

- IP Addresses.
- Browser types.
- Interaction logs.
- Essential session cookies.
- **Source:** automated website logs and cookies.

3.5 Financial & Payments

- Confirmation of membership/donation.
- Transaction dates.
- **Source:** BACS.

4. Lawful Bases for Processing

Under Article 6 of the GDPR, we rely on the following lawful bases:

4.1 Contractual Necessity

To manage society memberships, issue membership confirmations, and provide services associated with joining BES.

4.2 Legitimate Interests

To organise community surveys, coordinate conservation projects, maintain local biodiversity archives, administer Society governance, and ensure field safety for volunteers.

4.3 Consent

For sending marketing newsletters, optional event digests, or using identifiable photography on our website or social media. Consent may be withdrawn at any time.

4.4 Legal Obligation

For basic accounting, financial record-keeping, and incident/safety reporting where mandated by UK law.

5. Biological Recording Data (specific notice)

Biological recording is central to our mission. When you submit a wildlife sighting or participate in survey transects:

- The record details (species, location grid reference, date) form a permanent scientific record.
- Your name as ‘Observer’ is compiled as part of the biological record to verify data integrity and historical provenance.
- Verified non-sensitive biodiversity records may be shared with local and national biodiversity record centres in accordance with standard biological recording practices.
- Records of sensitive/protected species will have precise locations redacted in public reports where necessary to protect vulnerable wildlife.

6. Data Storage, Security, and Retention

6.1 Storage and Security

Digital records are stored securely in cloud-hosted workspaces and WordPress databases with strict role-based access controls, strong password requirements, and multi-factor authorisation enabled for all administrative accounts.

6.2 Third-Party Processors

We only use secure processors adhering to GDPR standards (e.g. web hosting & email mailing services). We do **not** sell or lease personal information to third parties.

6.3 Retention Schedule

- Membership Records: retained for the duration of an active membership plus 12 months following expiration or cancellation.
- Events & Volunteer Safety: retained for 12 months after the event/season concludes, unless required longer for insurance or incident documentation.
- Biological Observer Attribution: retained indefinitely alongside the specific record, unless an observer requests anonymisation.
- Mailing Lists: retained until an individual opts out or unsubscribes.

7. Individual Rights

7.1 Right of Access

Request a copy of the personal information BES holds about you (Subject Access Request).

7.2 Right to Rectification

Request corrections to any inaccurate or incomplete personal records.

7.3 Right to Erasure

Also known as the “Right to be Forgotten”. Request deletion of your personal data where there is no compelling legal or operational reason for its retention.

7.4 Right to Restrict Processing

Limit how we process your personal data under certain conditions.

7.5 Right to Object

Object to data processing based on legitimate interests or direct marketing communications.

7.6 Right to Withdraw Consent

Where processing is based on consent, you may withdraw it at any time without penalty.

To exercise any of these rights, contact the Society at info@balcombeecologicalsociety.co.uk. Requests are addressed within one calendar month.

8. Cookies and Tracking

We do not use non-essential advertising, profiling, or third-party tracking cookies. Our website only uses strictly necessary session cookies required for core site operations (such as administrator and member logins and security protection). As these are strictly necessary for site function, prior consent is not required under UK PECR regulations.

9. Complaints and Supervisory Authority

If you have concerns about how BES handles your personal information, please contact our Committee first so we can resolve the issue. Please contact the Committee at ethan@balcombeecologicalsociety.co.uk.
You also have the right to lodge a formal complaint with the UK data protection supervisory authority:

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
- Website: ico.org.uk
- Helpline: 0303 123 1113