



# The British Pteridological Society

## Code of Conduct

January 2025 – Version 3.0: Approved

The Code of conduct contains three parts:

Part A relates to behaviour expected from members, part B relates to behaviour in the field with regards plants, and part C to the website and social media use.

### Part A – Code of Conduct

The British Pteridological Society is committed to maintaining high standards of conduct, based on the principles of public life and good charity governance. This code ensures that all volunteers and members act ethically and responsibly.

#### 1. Scope

This code applies to all Society members, volunteers, Officers, Trustees and Society event participants.

#### 2. Governance and Collaboration

The Society aims to create an inclusive environment, where all voices are heard and respected, regardless of background, gender, race, sexual orientation, age or ability. Members and Trustees are expected to work collaboratively and support each other in achieving the Society's goals.

#### 3. Principles and Expected Behaviour

Members should treat all people as individuals and with respect. Members and volunteers are expected to uphold the following principles:

- **Selflessness:** Act in the best interest of the Society, putting its mission and beneficiaries first.
- **Integrity:** Avoid conflicts of interest and personal gain; maintaining honesty and transparency in all dealings.
- **Objectivity:** Make decisions impartially, based upon evidence and the Society's goals and constitution.
- **Accountability:** Be responsible for your actions and decisions, and willing to explain and justify them to members, beneficiaries, public and Charities Commission of England and Wales as appropriate.

- Openness: Be transparent in Society activities, promoting openness where possible and respecting confidentiality (e.g., financial records, personal data) where necessary.
- Honesty: Ensure respectfulness and honesty in communication, financial dealings, and decision-making processes.
- Leadership: Promote and demonstrate these principles through personal example, fostering a culture of respect and upholding ethical conduct. This includes encouraging diverse perspectives during discussions.

#### **4. Unacceptable Behaviour**

The Society is an organisation of generally like-minded individuals. It is not acceptable to be rude in emails, messages or conversations. This includes online, via social media and in-person interactions (e.g., at events or meetings).

Any form of bullying, harassment, or discrimination is strictly prohibited. These are covered in detail in the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Members and Trustees should declare any conflicts of interest: misusing Society resources or engaging in activities that conflict with the Society's interests will not be tolerated and may be subject to further action. Trustees in particular have legal duties, and must always act in the best interests of the BPS.

Ignoring Society rules, regulations, or engaging in unethical behaviour undermines our mission and will be addressed by Committee.

#### **5. Conflict Resolution**

Members are encouraged to address concerns through open and respectful dialogue. Where conflicts cannot be resolved informally, they may be referred to any elected Society Trustee or Vice-president for impartial review and escalation to the Committee or Executive as appropriate. Where ever possible, Trustees with no connection to the complaint, or if necessary external independent individuals will be called upon to help resolve conflicts or decide upon an appropriate course of action.

#### **6. Accountability and Consequences**

Violations of the code may lead to actions including verbal warnings, removal from events, or suspension of membership.

The Society will ensure fair, transparent processes for addressing complaints and concerns, with clear communication and record of decisions made.

#### **7. Commitment to Improvement**

This code will be reviewed regularly to reflect best practices in charity governance, adapting as necessary.

The Society values feedback from its members and will seek input for continuous improvement. Proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct can be made to the General Secretary at any time for discussions at the next Committee meeting.

## **Part B - Code of Conduct for the Conservation and Enjoyment of Wild Plants**

The code was originally published by the Botanical Society of the British Isles and subsequently adopted by the Society. Additional points relating to pteridophytes are included. Members are urged to follow these guidelines. Although the information provided here relates only to the UK and Northern Ireland, similar legislation exists abroad. Members are urged to follow the same standards abroad as they do at home and always to act within local legislation.

### **Legal protection**

All wild plants are protected by law in the United Kingdom. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is illegal to uproot any plant without permission from the landowner or occupier. Similar protection is given to plants in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order, 1985. Furthermore, many nature reserves, including National Trust land, have bylaws in force making it illegal to pick, uproot or remove plants. Several of our rarest plants are specifically protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act against intentional picking, uprooting and destruction, unless damage is a result of a licensed lawful activity and could not reasonably have been avoided.

The pteridophytes listed on Schedule 8 (including in subsequent alterations) are *Cystopteris dickieana*, *Equisetum ramosissimum*, *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*, *Trichomanes speciosum* (including both sporophyte and gametophytic form), *Woodsia alpina* and *W. ilvensis*. In Northern Ireland *Gymnocarpium dryopteris*, *Lycopodiella inundata*, *Pilularia globulifera*, *Polystichum lonchitis* and *Trichomanes speciosum* are similarly protected. In the Republic of Ireland the following pteridophytes are specifically listed: *Asplenium obovatum*, *A. septentrionale*, *Cryptogramma crispa*, *Gymnocarpium robertianum*, *Pilularia globulifera* and *Trichomanes speciosum*.

### **Responsible conduct**

Collecting small amounts of plant material for private study, research or as voucher specimens is usually acceptable, except in the case of protected and rare species. In any circumstance, no collecting of any plant material should be undertaken on a nature reserve or protected site without first obtaining permission. Local laws and bylaws should of course always be adhered to.

When meetings are held in countries outside the UK it is important to note that local laws and regulations on picking and collecting can be very different. The BPS abides by the provisions of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). Therefore plant material can only be collected and imported with the correct permissions and authorisations from both the visited country and the UK. This includes any relevant phytosanitary certification. It is your responsibility to

ensure you are acting in accordance with relevant laws. It is important to note that 'plant material' includes spores and that 'wild' and 'cultivated' plants are not differentiated under the CBD, and the same provisions apply.

The Nagoya Protocol is a related component of the CBD that ensures the benefit sharing with the country of origin of any developmental improvements or profits obtained from plants. Genetic material collected from the wild since 12<sup>th</sup> October 2014 is covered by the Nagoya Protocol, which is legally binding in the UK. For material from signatory countries, unless there is written consent from the country of origin, 'utilization' is not permitted. This includes the selection and development of new named cultivars and hybrids as well as production of new drugs and other products. Cultivation, privately or commercially, is permitted.

### **Habitat conservation**

Rare plants are often rare because they require specific conditions, and unintentional damage to their habitats can easily occur. A particular threat is soil compaction. Should you visit a rare plant then please avoid doing anything which will alter the site conditions, such as disturbing the surrounding vegetation for photographic purposes, or excessive trampling of surrounding vegetation.

### **Introducing plants to the wild**

Under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act it is an offence to introduce certain plant species into the wild or otherwise cause them grow, this includes the ferns *Azolla filiculoides* and *Salvinia molesta*. Non-native plants should never be introduced into the wild, and footwear should be carefully cleaned at sites where either (or other non-natives) occur.

### **Part C – Code of Conduct for the Society Website and Social Media**

We want all visitors and contributors to the BPS website to have a safe, interesting and friendly experience. Use of the Society website means that you accept and agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.

If you reasonably believe that anything on this website contravenes this Code of Conduct, in the first instance please notify us by emailing our Website co-ordinator.

Contributions to the website are encouraged, they must have:

- relevance to Pteridology
- be your own original work, unless you have the express permission of the copyright holder
- must not contain anything that is unlawful, objectionable, offensive, abusive, harassing, threatening, defamatory, obscene, hateful, inflammatory, profane, racially or sexually or religiously offensive.

## **Breach of the website Code of Conduct**

It will be the decision of the Website co-ordinator as to whether material is to be included on the website. We have the right to edit, refuse to post, or to remove any contribution in whole or in part that we deem to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.

If you feel that the Website co-ordinator is mistaken, you may appeal to the President of the Society, who's decision will be final.

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## **Additional information and Policies**

Society documents and policies are available via the Society website or by emailing the General Secretary.

The Society's **Constitution** and **Privacy Policy** are available on the Society website.

A **Bullying and Harassment Policy** was adopted by the Society in Oct 2024.

### **Version history**

V1 – Draft (David Hill, Alison Evans)

V2 – Draft taken to Committee – two minor work changes

V3 – This version. Approved by Committee 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Includes print and web elements of the code of conduct.

Next update due: January 2026 Committee meeting

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Sources**

The Principles and Behaviour are based upon the Nolan Principles– the seven principles of public life: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

Good Governance Steering Group (2017) Charity Governance Code for smaller charities (accessed 2024) <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org>