

Press Release

Embargo: immediate

Volunteering – is good for your mental health

According to research, people become happier over time after they start volunteering – so why not apply to join the Electra boat team, as they have vacancies for volunteers.

Electra is the all-electric community boat, based on the Grand Union Canal, run by a dedicated team of volunteers from the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust. Demand for cruises has increased substantially since the boat was launched, and so they are looking to recruit more volunteers, to add to their existing team of about 40.

Volunteer Chair, Denise Taylor, said “Electra volunteers work as one big team, to create and deliver a range of enjoyable cruises on the Grand Union Canal. Some people crew the boat, others work behind the scenes to get everything ready, and some people do a bit of both!”

Volunteer skipper, Simon Page, said “I really enjoy being on the canal, being outside, enabling people to experience Electra; particularly disabled and less able people. It is great working with such a lovely group of volunteers is brilliant.”

Volunteer Cabin Host, Christine Straughan, agreed, “It is a wonderful way to spend a few hours surrounded by lovely people and beautiful scenery.”

There are currently shore-based volunteering vacancies in Customer Liaison, Social Media, Admin Assistant, Marketing, Outreach, Fundraising and Project Management. The shore-based roles can work from home, or the new Welcome Centre at Campbell Wharf.

Milton Keynes claims to have a higher number of volunteers per head of population than any other UK city, with 84,500 citizens regularly volunteering across the city.

Anyone interested in volunteering is invited to visit Electra’s website <https://www.bmkwaterway.org/electra/volunteering/> or email Denise on denise.taylor@bmkwaterway.org for further details.

ENDS



Caption: One of Electra's volunteer skippers, Simon Page. Credit: Denise Taylor



Caption: Cabin Host, Christine Straughan. Credit: Denise Taylor

Volunteer Shore Crew Roles

Based in the New Electra Welcome Centre
Welcome Centre Hosts – To staff the EWC on a rota basis
Assistant Stock Controller – To assist the Controller, managing the stock required to run our boat trips

Help with Cruises
Guest Liaison – To answer general queries from guests
Custom Charter Organiser – To liaise with the hirer in the planning of a specific cruise
Sponsored Cruises Organiser – To seek and liaise with groups in the planning of sponsored cruises
Santa Cruises Team Members – To assist the Santa Cruise Organiser in setting up and running cruises and the Grotto

Working with the Community / Publicity
Community Events Organiser – To liaise with external groups in setting up new events
Outreach / Community Engagement Role – To research, communicate and liaise with communities along the cruising routes
Website Administration Assistant – to assist the webmaster in keeping the website up to date
Copywriter – To produce and check publicity materials prior to release
Fundraiser – To research and seek funding sources for a range of projects
Social Media Assistant – To assist in the production of social media content and monitoring its effectiveness
Publicity – To increase awareness of Electra in the local communities

Volunteer Boat Crew Roles

Based on Electra
Skippers – experienced boaters to helm Electra (full training given)
Cabin Hosts – must be good with people (full training given)

Notes to editors

Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust www.bmkwaterway.org

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Research in the *[Journal of Happiness Studies](#)*

Electra can carry up to 12 guests; it includes lavatory provision and access lift for users of standard size wheelchairs. Cruises are run in line with public health guidance. The boat is well ventilated and is sanitised before each cruise.

The boat was launched in May 2021 and is the first all-electric trip boat to be built by Warwickshire-based boatbuilders Colecraft Engineering, run by Gary Cole along with a team of 20 supporting steelwork, carpentry, engineering and sales staff. The boat uses an all-electric propulsion unit from Fischer Panda. The electric propulsion batteries are charged from both mains power and on-board solar panels.

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust has funded the construction of the boat, with generous contributions from Crest Nicholson, via Milton Keynes Council s106 funding for the Campbell Wharf development, the Milton Keynes Community Foundation, and donations from Trust members. Kitting out of the boat was funded by a number of local Councils and other organisations.

Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust was established in 1995 to promote a new 16-mile Waterway Park, incorporating a new broad canal linking the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes with the River Great Ouse in Bedford.

Running trip boats is a key activity for the Trust, raising funds and awareness. The Trust's cruises let thousands of local people enjoy being on their local waterway in Bedford or Milton Keynes, demonstrating the value that Waterway Parks can bring.

The route of the proposed new Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park is protected by local authority policies and included in the Local Plans of the three authorities along the route. The Trust is currently lobbying for its inclusion in plans for local water resource management and as part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc infrastructure. The Trust works with a range of partners to ensure opportunities to integrate the Waterway into development and thereby maximise delivery of local benefits. The Trust is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.