

# The Big Rock Pool Challenge

## New Hub Info Pack



**Join the fastest-growing nationwide marine conservation movement**

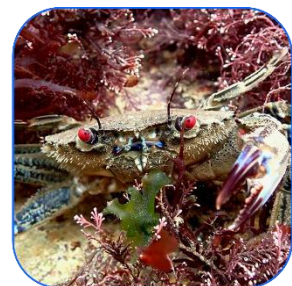
Thank you for your interest in becoming a Big Rock Pool Challenge hub! By joining us, you'll help build a vibrant network of community-led marine conservation groups across the UK – all united by a love of the coast and a shared mission to protect our incredible marine life.

Each hub is led by a passionate team of six local volunteers who run free monthly rock pooling BioBlitz Battle events for the local community. These events bring people together to explore, discover, and document marine biodiversity in fun, engaging, and meaningful ways.

This info pack will guide you through everything you need to know – from how the leadership team works, to the roles you'll take on, to the support and training we provide. If you have any further questions, just drop us a message at [info@therockpoolproject.co.uk](mailto:info@therockpoolproject.co.uk) – we can't wait to hear from you!

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## About The Rock Pool Project

We are a not-for-profit community interest company, passionate about connecting people of all ages and backgrounds to the incredible wildlife found around our coastline.

By engaging with local communities and promoting scientific exploration, we aim to create a sustainable network of healthy, well connected marine conservationists across the country.



### *The Big Rock Pool Challenge*

The Big Rock Pool Challenge is our flagship project that invites communities to explore marine biodiversity along the UK coastline. Funded by the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) and the [ScottishPower Foundation](#), and in partnership with the [Marine Biological Association](#), we host free monthly BioBlitz Battles in our hub locations across the UK. People of all ages can enjoy a fun, competitive way to explore rock pools and document marine life. The data collected will aid wildlife management and conservation efforts locally and globally.

We are expanding the Big Rock Pool Challenge across the UK in 2025, engaging more communities in this exciting initiative.

**Supported by:**



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## What is a Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub?

It's your chance to turn your local beach into a buzzing hub of marine discovery and community action!

A Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub is led by a core team of six enthusiastic Event Lead volunteers who organise and deliver monthly rock pooling events at the same coastal site. They're joined by a wider crew of friendly local volunteers who help out on the day – creating a welcoming, fun and well-supported experience for everyone involved.

Together, the hub team brings people of all ages together to explore wildlife, compete in exciting *BioBlitz Battles*, and contribute to real marine science.

You'll be part of a growing national network of coastal champions, all working to protect our incredible rock pool habitats – one crab, sea slug, and starfish at a time.

Love the ocean? Love your community? This is your chance to make waves!

### *Current Big Rock Pool Challenge Hubs*

Our first two Big Rock Pool Challenge Hubs are based in **Falmouth** and **Plymouth**, where our amazing volunteer teams have been running monthly events since **October 2024**.

We've worked closely with these teams to co-develop how hubs operate – shaping everything from volunteer roles to event structure – to make sure it's rewarding, fun, and manageable for everyone involved.

As we expand to new locations, we'll continue this collaborative approach, building a nationwide movement that's led *with* volunteers, not just *by* them. Your ideas and experiences will help shape the future of the Big Rock Pool Challenge!

**“Volunteering with The Rock Pool Project has opened up my world to many opportunities and helped me grow socially as a person. It is an amazing way to learn about the intertidal environment and gain new skills whilst being involved in nature.”** *Ruben – Falmouth volunteer*





### *Pilot hubs*

A **Pilot Hub** is a great way for new teams to dip their toes in before fully committing to becoming an official Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub. These groups run small-scale, 'in-house' BioBlitz Battles with friends, colleagues or community members to build experience, test out roles, and explore what works best for their site.

Pilot Hubs are often on the path toward becoming full Hubs, but without running monthly public events straight away. It's a low-commitment, flexible way to get involved, connect with our wider community, and develop your confidence as a team.

We welcome and support Pilot Hubs just as warmly – including adding them to our volunteer WhatsApp community and offering guidance as they grow. If you would like to start a pilot hub in your area, drop us a line via the contact form on the [Start a new hub page](#) of our website and we'll be straight back in touch to get you set up.

## **Why set up a Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub in your area?**

Because it's a brilliant way to:

- **Inspire people of all ages** to care about the coast
- **Build local pride and community spirit**
- **Take action for marine conservation** – one rock pool at a time
- **Join a supportive national network** of passionate coastal champions

You don't need to be a marine biologist – just someone who loves the ocean and wants to make a difference where they live.



## What support does a Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub receive?

You won't be doing this alone – we'll be with you every step of the way!

As a new Big Rock Pool Challenge hub, you'll receive full support from our experienced team to help you get off to a great start. This includes:

- ☑ **Training** – We'll provide engaging training sessions to help your Event Lead team feel confident in their roles, covering everything from event planning and marine ID to public speaking and safety protocols.
- ☑ **Equipment Kit** – Each new hub will receive a complete hub starter kit (worth over £3,000), with everything you need to run a fantastic event – including a branded gazebo, ID guides, beach flags, branded t shirts, first aid kits, and more.
- ☑ **On-the-ground support** – A member of our staff will join you in person for one of your first events to support your team, answer questions, and help everything run smoothly.
- ☑ **Ongoing guidance** – We're always just a message or a phone call away. Whether it's advice, encouragement, or help navigating challenges, we're here to support your hub's success.

## How many new hubs will there be in 2025?

Thanks to generous support from our funders, we'll be launching **three new Big Rock Pool Challenge hubs in the South West** and **three more across the rest of the UK** by the end of **2025**.

And this is just the beginning – we're actively seeking further funding to launch **even more hubs in 2026**, bringing the Big Rock Pool Challenge to new communities across the UK. We are committed to expanding the programme long-term and continuing to support our growing network of existing hubs.

## What is the application process?

Applying to become a Big Rock Pool Challenge hub is simple – and we're here to support you every step of the way.

- **Complete the Application Form**  
Fill out our [online application form](#). It helps us understand your location, your team, and how we can support you.
- **Deadline – 31st July 2025**
- **Successful Hubs Announced – 14th August 2025**

### Not selected this year? We'll still work with you.

If your hub isn't chosen in 2025, you'll be welcome to apply again in 2026.

Alternatively, we can support you to run a **crowdfunder** or explore other creative ways to get your hub up and running.



## What are the requirements for a Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub site?

Each Big Rock Pool Challenge hub runs **all its events at the same coastal site**, which helps build local familiarity, strengthens community connections, and makes life much easier for the volunteers organising the events.

That's why it's important to take the time to choose the best possible site in your area. Here's what we're looking for:



### Great Rock Pool Habitat

A site with a good variety of rock pools and intertidal life – the more biodiversity potential, the better! Ideally, the area should be safe to explore at low tide and offer plenty of opportunities to find marine species.

### Accessibility

- **Transport:** The site should be reasonably easy to get to by public transport or have nearby parking for those travelling by car.
- **Physical access:** Paths or access points should be suitable for families, including children and less mobile participants. We're looking for safe entry points to the shore without steep climbs or hazardous surfaces.

### Local Amenities

Toilets, a café, a shelter or indoor option nearby – these help make the event experience more comfortable and inclusive, especially in unpredictable weather!

### Local Support

Engaging local businesses can be a big help! Some might offer:

- **Storage space** for your kit
- **Help promoting your events** through posters, social media or newsletters  
Building these relationships can strengthen your hub's connection to the community and open creative new opportunities.

### Landowner Permission

Before you launch, your team will need to secure permission to run events from the local landowner (such as the council or private owner). We can support you through this process if needed.

Your chosen site doesn't need to be perfect – we're happy to help assess its suitability and work with you to adapt as needed. It's all about making marine exploration accessible, engaging, and safe for your community.

### Who can join a Big Rock Pool Challenge Hub Leadership team?

Anyone with **passion, commitment, and a love for the coast** is welcome!

You don't need to be a marine biologist to lead a hub – in fact, many of our most successful volunteers come from completely different backgrounds. While having some marine knowledge in the team is helpful, **experience in running community events, working with people, or just being super organised** can be just as valuable – if not more so.

What matters most is that your leadership team is:

- Passionate about protecting marine life
- Committed to running monthly events
- Friendly, reliable, and ready to work together as a team

Whether you're a scientist, teacher, parent, student, or community organiser – if you care about your coastline and want to make a difference, there's a place for you in the Big Rock Pool Challenge!





## How are volunteer teams structured?

### *Leadership group*

Each Big Rock Pool Challenge hub is led by a **core team of six Event Lead volunteers** who share responsibility for planning and running monthly events. This team works collaboratively, with an emphasis on **shared ownership and mutual support**.

Each hub has a **designated Hub Leader** – the main contact for submitting the application and liaising with Rock Pool Project staff. We also recommend having a **Deputy Hub Leader**, who can support the Hub Leader and act as the main point of contact if the Hub Leader is ever unavailable.

During events **tasks are shared** across the whole team and supported by a wider volunteer team. We encourage the leadership group to rotate responsibilities, support each other, and avoid placing too much pressure on any one individual.

Prior to each event, five key roles are assigned from within the leadership team – covering event direction, safety, species ID, data, and social media. These roles are flexible, and different volunteers can take on different roles each month (see our [Lead Volunteer Handbook](#) for full descriptions).

### *Other Hub volunteers*

Beyond the leadership group, hub team include a **wider group of on-the-day volunteers**, who help with tasks like team check-ins, setting up equipment, running activities, or supporting participants on the shore. All these volunteers will have roles supporting each of the leadership roles (see diagram below).

These extra hands make a big difference and help build a vibrant, local community around each hub. There is no minimum commitment level for general volunteers, some attend nearly every month while others are less frequent. All volunteers are registered to the hub via our **Spond activity management system**, making it easy for people to confirm attendance, volunteer for tasks, and stay connected with the team.

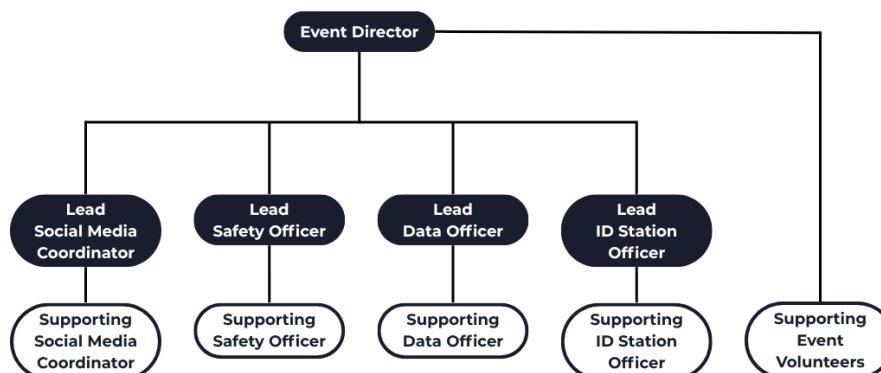


Figure 1 - On the day team structure for BioBlitz Battle events

## Leadership team commitment

Joining a Big Rock Pool Challenge leadership team is a **12-month commitment**. This helps build a strong, consistent team dynamic within each hub and ensures we can offer meaningful support and benefits to those taking on these important roles.

We ask that each Lead Volunteer aims to take part in a minimum of **eight monthly events** over the course of the year.

Hub leaders are expected to:

- ✓ **Take on leadership role at events** – Be willing to rotate between key event roles as needed to share responsibilities fairly.
- ✓ **Follow Agreed Safety & Event Protocols** – Ensure the event structure, safety procedures, and risk assessments are followed to keep events safe and enjoyable for all.
- ✓ **Participate in Leadership Training** – Attend training and co-development sessions.
- ✓ **Represent the Big Rock Pool Challenge** – Be a friendly ambassador for the project, helping to inspire new participants, engage with the community, and promote marine conservation.

We completely understand that life changes – and there may be times when a volunteer needs to step back. All we ask is that new team members **join with the intention and capacity** to meet the expectations outlined above, so the hub can run smoothly and the team feels supported.



## Benefits of Joining the Event Leadership Team

✓ **Exclusive access to our Big Rock Pool Challenge Event Leader community platform** – powered by MyMBA\*.

- Gain free access to a global network of marine science experts and enthusiasts through MyMBA's community spaces.



**Marine  
Biological  
Association**

✓ **Free Training & Skill Development** – Quarterly training on topics such as event leadership, public communication, biodiversity data management etc.



✓ **Complimentary, branded Big Rock Pool Challenge T-Shirts** – As a valued Event Leader, you'll receive a free official Big Rock Pool Challenge t-shirt, making it easy to stand out at events and feel part of the team!

✓ **Be Part of a UK-Wide Conservation Network** – Join a team of like-minded Event Leaders across our growing number of Big Rock Pool Challenge Hubs

✓ **Hands-on experience** in community engagement, conservation, and citizen science, helping you develop valuable skills for the future.

\*MyMBA is the online Membership platform for the Marine Biological Association.

\*\*Please note that these benefits are tied to these volunteer positions and will not continue should you decide to step down.

**"I've loved being on the Rock Pool Project Leadership team. Being a volunteer was so much fun, giving me a dedicated time to go rock pooling each month with a community of lots of lovely people! But the addition of the leadership position has allowed me to enhance my skills in many areas, from leadership itself to species ID, data processing and communication with the public."** *Sophie – Falmouth Hub*



## Next steps

Ready to take the plunge? Whether you're all set to apply or just starting to explore the idea, there's a way for you to get involved:

### Start as a Pilot Hub

Not quite ready to run public events yet? No problem! Start as a **Pilot Hub** by running small, in-house BioBlitz Battles with your team. Contact us via the form on the [Start a new hub page](#) to get started.

### Apply to Become a New Hub

If you're ready to go for it, fill out our short online **application form** (launching with this pack).

- **Deadline: 31st July 2025**
- **Successful applicants announced: 14th August 2025**
- **Training starts and kit delivered: September 2025**
- **Public events can begin from October 2025**

### Join the Annual National BioBlitz 2025

Our **Annual BioBlitz** event is open to individuals and groups across the UK – it's the perfect way to join the fun, contribute to citizen science, and connect with the wider community. This year our Annual BioBlitz is in Porthpean, Cornwall from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> September. It is free to attend and successful new hub applications will be offered travel and accommodation support for two of their lead volunteers. Follow our social media accounts for further updates.

### Contact Us

Have questions? Want to talk through your ideas? We'd love to hear from you. Email us at [info@therockpoolproject.co.uk](mailto:info@therockpoolproject.co.uk) or follow us on social media: [@therockpoolproject](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#)

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Let's inspire communities, protect marine life, and have fun exploring our amazing coastal habitats together!

