Ethical Policy

Who we work with, who we don’t, and how we work

Bee Lite — accessibility-first web studio

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1. About this policy

Bee Lite is a small web studio that designs and builds accessible websites for charities, community organisations and social enterprises. This policy sets out the principles that decide the work we take on, the work we turn down, and the standards we hold ourselves to while doing it.

It applies to everyone who works for or with Bee Lite: employees, contractors, freelancers and partner suppliers. It is a public document because we think the people who hire us are entitled to see the basis on which we make these judgements.

2. Who we work with

We specialise in the third sector because that is where our work does the most good. A charity's website is often the first place a person turns to when they need help, and the quality of that experience matters far beyond the organisation's own goals.

Alongside registered charities, we work with organisations that share our purpose and are pushing for positive social change, including:

- Community groups, voluntary organisations and grassroots campaigns
- Social enterprises, co-operatives and community interest companies (CICs)
- Not-for-profits, foundations, trusts and grant-makers
- Public sector bodies, schools, colleges and universities
- Tech for good and public interest technology projects
- Ethical, small and independent businesses whose work is compatible with the principles in this policy

We deliberately serve smaller organisations that larger agencies price out. Budget is not a reason for a charity to end up with an inaccessible website, and we structure our services so that it doesn't have to be.

3. Our values

Four values sit behind every decision we make about our work:

Accessible

Everyone should be able to use what we build. Accessibility is the starting point of a project, not a fix applied at the end of one.

Honest

We give clients a straight answer about scope, cost, timelines and what a website can realistically achieve. We would rather lose a project than win it on a promise we can't keep.

Considered

We build the lightest thing that does the job well. Less code, fewer dependencies, less to maintain and less for a small team to manage after we hand it over.

Fair

Fair to clients in what we charge, fair to the people we work with in how we treat them, and fair to the people who ultimately use what we build.

4. How we put our values into practice

- We weigh this policy when deciding which projects to pursue, quote for and accept.
- We are transparent about pricing and do not hide costs in change requests we could have foreseen.
- We build with open standards and open source, and we hand over full ownership of code, content and hosting credentials at the end of every project.
- We do not lock clients into proprietary systems, licences or hosting arrangements they cannot leave.
- We train client teams to maintain their own site, and publish guidance and resources free of charge where we can.
- We recognise the power imbalance between an agency and a small charity with limited digital expertise, and we do not exploit it.
- We ask for and act on feedback, and we say so plainly when we get something wrong.
- We offer reduced-rate and pro bono work to organisations that could not otherwise afford a decent website.
- We work cooperatively as a team and with the other suppliers our clients rely on.

5. Accessibility as an ethical commitment

Accessibility is the reason Bee Lite exists, so we treat it as an ethical obligation rather than a feature to be traded away under deadline pressure.

- Every site we build targets WCAG 2.2 Level AA as a minimum baseline, and we tell clients plainly where a requirement of theirs would fall short of it.
- We test with keyboard navigation and screen readers, not only with automated checkers, which catch only a fraction of real barriers.
- We involve disabled users in testing where a project's budget allows, and we advocate for that budget.
- We write and edit for plain language, because comprehension is an accessibility issue as much as contrast ratios are.

- We build for slow connections, older devices and low-cost hardware, since these are what many of our clients' service users have.
- We do not treat an accessibility overlay or widget as a substitute for an accessible site.
- We give clients the training and documentation they need to keep a site accessible after handover, and we say so when a request would undo that work.

6. Technology, data and honest marketing

The tools we choose on a client's behalf have consequences for the people who visit their site. We take responsibility for those choices.

- We collect the minimum data a project genuinely needs, and we build in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- We favour privacy-respecting analytics and avoid loading third-party trackers and advertising scripts by default.
- We do not build dark patterns: no manufactured urgency, no confusing consent flows, no donation forms designed to make opting out harder than opting in.
- We do not build tools whose purpose is surveillance, covert profiling or the manipulation of vulnerable people.
- Where we use AI tools in delivery, we tell the client, we check the output, and we take responsibility for it.
- We describe our own capacity and experience accurately in proposals, and we don't claim credit for work we didn't do.

7. Our working culture

We want Bee Lite to be a decent place to work: small, calm, flexible and honest about what it can take on. People who are treated well do better work, and our clients feel the difference.

What we commit to

- Fair pay, benchmarked openly, with no unpaid trial work or unpaid internships.
- Flexible and remote working, with respect for time zones and for people's time outside working hours.
- Realistic scheduling: we would rather push a deadline than routinely work people into the night.
- A learning budget and paid time for training, including accessibility training for every role, not only developers.
- Sharing how the studio is performing with the whole team, so people can see how their work connects to it.
- Paying our own suppliers and freelancers on time.

Raising concerns

Anyone at Bee Lite can raise a concern about a client, a project or a colleague's conduct without fear of penalty, and can decline to work on something they believe breaches this policy. Concerns should go to the studio's policy owner, and will be answered.

8. Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to equality of opportunity and to building a team whose backgrounds and experiences differ from each other. This is not a box to tick: people who have encountered barriers themselves make better judgements about the barriers we are paid to remove.

- We recruit against skills and potential, advertise openly, and publish salary ranges on every role.
- We make our own recruitment process accessible and offer adjustments as standard, not on request.
- We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- We expect the same standards of the clients and partners we work alongside.

9. Environmental responsibility

A lighter website is a lower-carbon website, which is one of several reasons we build the way we do.

- We set performance and page-weight budgets on every project and design within them.
- We choose hosting providers running on renewable energy wherever there is a viable option.
- We build sites to last, because a rebuild every two years is a waste of a charity's money and of resources.
- We operate remotely, keep travel to a minimum and offset what we cannot avoid.
- We do not use animal products in our own operations and do not accept work that relies on the exploitation of animals.

10. Who we won't work with

Choosing the third sector already rules out most of what follows, but we do turn work down, and we would rather be clear about why in advance. The list below is not exhaustive; we apply judgement to cases it does not anticipate. As a matter of principle we will not work with organisations that:

10.1 Fail to protect human rights and equality

1. Manufacture or trade in arms, or supply components or services central to their production.
2. Advocate discrimination, or incite hatred against any group.
3. Are linked to, or act on behalf of, oppressive regimes.
4. Fail to implement basic labour rights as set out in the fundamental ILO conventions, including the use of child or forced labour, or that actively oppose workers' rights to organise and join a trade union.

10.2 Undermine economic and social development

1. Take an irresponsible approach to the payment of tax, in the UK or elsewhere.
2. Encourage excessive consumption of, reliance on, or addiction to alcohol, tobacco and vaping products, gambling, or high-cost short-term credit and payday lending.
3. Impede access to basic necessities such as safe drinking water, contraception, safe abortion or essential medicines.
4. Engage in irresponsible or predatory marketing, including marketing harmful products to children.

10.3 Harm the environment or animals

1. Have the extraction, production or promotion of fossil fuels as a core activity.
2. Manufacture chemicals that persist in the environment, accumulate in living organisms, or are linked to long-term health harm.
3. Harvest natural resources unsustainably, including timber and fish stocks.
4. Contribute significantly to the destruction of endangered species' habitats.
5. Test cosmetic or household products on animals, use intensive farming methods, or profit from blood sports or the fur trade.

10.4 Undermine democratic principles

1. Produce or promote disinformation, fabricated news or deliberate falsehoods for profit or political advantage.
2. Produce or promote hate speech, or dehumanise minority groups.
3. Promote social, financial, gender, sexual or racial inequality.
4. Build or operate surveillance technology that targets journalists, activists, migrants or other at-risk groups.

11. How we apply this policy

- We assess every enquiry against this policy before quoting, and we decline politely and without argument where it doesn't fit.
- Where a client's circumstances change mid-project, we raise it with them directly. If it cannot be resolved, we will end the engagement and hand over the work completed to date.
- Anyone at Bee Lite can flag a project as a concern, and no one is required to justify declining work they believe breaches this policy.
- If you believe we have fallen short of what is written here, tell us at [contact email] and we will respond.

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