



Volunteer policy

Introduction

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity, formed in 1962, which aims to protect and conserve the wildlife and wild places of Herefordshire. The Trust creates wildlife havens, owns and manages nature reserves and encourages others to manage their land for wildlife. It fosters sustainable living and inspires people by encouraging communities and people of all ages to take action for wildlife and it acts as a wildlife champion tirelessly campaigning for better environmental protection.

Delivery of the Trust's work is through the combined efforts of paid staff and its many volunteers.

Volunteers

Volunteers are people who commit their time, experience, knowledge, skills and energy for the benefit of others. They do so freely, through personal choice, and without expectation of financial reward, to support a cause or purpose they believe in.

For the Trust to succeed in its vision and objectives, it relies profoundly on the skills, knowledge and commitment of its volunteers. Without their dedication, the growth and success of the Trust would not be possible. The Trust recognises the significant and valuable role that all its volunteers play in supporting it across a range of vital activities including nature reserve management and monitoring, talks and walks, children's activities, administration and through committees and as trustees, and values the gift of their time.

Aims and objectives

Through this policy the Trust aims to:

- make any volunteering experience a valuable, worthwhile and rewarding one;
- demonstrate its commitment to both developing its volunteering opportunities and to supporting its individual volunteers;
- establish a framework and basic procedures to enable effective and consistent engagement with volunteers;
- ensure fairness and consistency in the way that its diverse range of volunteers are dealt with;
- ensure all staff and volunteers understand their respective roles within the Trust;
- ensure all volunteers are aware of and maintain good health and safety working practices within their roles.

The policy

Recruitment

The Trust will use appropriate means to advertise for volunteers locally that will take into account the principles of its Equal Opportunities Policy. Applicants will be required to complete an application form, but help can be given with this if necessary. Wherever appropriate and possible, prospective volunteers will be invited to meet their intended volunteer manager for a 2-way discussion of the proposed role, its requirements, and each other's needs and expectations. This meeting is for both the support officer and prospective volunteer to assess whether the volunteering opportunity is suitable.

Depending on the volunteer role, the Trust may require satisfactory references and, if a volunteer will be in contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults, the Trust will also require a

satisfactory disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau, the cost of which will be met by the Trust.

Having a criminal record will not be a bar to volunteering with the Trust unless the Chief Executive considers that conviction means the applicant is unsuitable for the proposed role.

Induction and Training

Each new volunteer will receive an induction prepared and delivered by an appropriate person. This may include information on:

- The role of the volunteer
- A list of all staff members
- A copy of this Volunteer Policy
- How to access other relevant Trust policies such as Confidentiality, Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities
- Information about all relevant Codes of Practice
- Other information as appropriate

To give the Trust and the volunteer time to discover if they are suited to each other there will be a trial period agreed with the individual, during which time they will be assigned a buddy or buddies who will work with them. A review will be made midway through the trial period and also at the end.

The Trust will provide essential training appropriate and relevant to the tasks and duties that the volunteer undertakes. In return the Trust asks that trained volunteers put their training into practice to benefit the Trust's aims. Further training may be provided during a volunteer's tenure with the Trust in order to improve, extend or maintain his or her role to the Trust's benefit.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Different roles will carry different responsibilities; these are outlined in the role descriptions for each opportunity. In addition all volunteers should be aware that the Trust will ask volunteers to:

- a. Meet the general commitments necessary to carry out their role.
- b. Make sure they are aware of and abide by the Trust's policies and guidelines that are relevant to their role.
- c. Be mindful of their status as a Trust ambassador in their community.
- d. Respect confidentiality of information of which they may become aware whilst volunteering for the Trust.
- e. Inform the Trust if they do not feel confident they have received the guidelines and information necessary to carry out their role.
- f. Ensure that no illegal or criminal misuse of Trust assets takes place.
- g. Undertake safe working practices.
- h. Respect and understand other individuals' needs and treat others fairly - both staff and other volunteers.
- i. Keep the Trust informed of any changes to contact details or availability.

Support

All volunteers will be supported by at least one named person who will act as their main point of contact. This may be a member of staff or another volunteer. All volunteers will be given the opportunity to feed back on progress, discuss future development, work programmes and or objectives, and air any problems. If it becomes apparent that a volunteer needs support that we are unable to offer as an organisation, then they can be sign posted to services more appropriate.

The Volunteer's Voice

All volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the Trust and its work. The formal mechanisms available for this are:

- Correspondence or meetings with the volunteer’s main point of contact.
- Correspondence with the Trust’s various decision making or advisory bodies e.g. Board of Trustees
- By election or co-option onto the Trust’s decision-making or advisory bodies.

The Trust welcomes feedback from all our volunteers on any aspect of the Trust’s work and is happy to receive it in any form that volunteers are comfortable with.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are bound by the same guidelines regarding confidentiality as staff, not to disclose any confidential information relating or belonging to the Trust or which a volunteer might reasonably expect the Trust would regard as confidential.

Health and Safety

All volunteers will be made aware of and must abide by the Trust’s Health and Safety Policy. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action. All volunteers will be made aware of the health and safety issues outlined to them when undertaking any task and of their collective responsibility to each other when working.

Equal Opportunities

The Trust has an Equal Opportunities Policy and is committed to the equal treatment of all employees, trainees, volunteers, work scheme participants and job applicants and requires all employees, trainees, volunteers and work scheme participants, of whatever position or authority, to adhere to this general principle.

Resolving Problems

The relationship between the Trust and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. It is therefore important that volunteers and staff work together in a safe, respectful and accountable manner to ensure that volunteers enjoy making their contribution to the Trust. However, the Trust recognises that incidents may occur whereby grievance or disciplinary procedures need to be followed so that all parties are treated fairly.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your work you should:

1. Initially explain your dissatisfaction to your support officer.
2. If that does not resolve the concern then a meeting with your support officer’s line manager should be convened
3. If that does not resolve the issue then a formal meeting with the Chief Executive of the Trust should follow.
4. If after this your dissatisfaction remains unresolved and the Trust is unable to resolve your grievance, then it may be inappropriate for you to continue to be a volunteer.

At all times you will be freely able to state your case and can have a friend to accompany you.

If your role as a volunteer does not meet with the organisation’s standards, it will be dealt with:

1. Initially with a meeting with your support officer who will explain the concerns.
2. If this does not resolve the concern, then a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Trust will be convened.
3. If your work still does not meet with our standards, then the Trust will have to stop using your services.

At all times you will be able to freely state your case and can have a friend to accompany you.

Insurance

All volunteers, whether they are members of the Trust or not, are covered by the Trust's Public Liability Insurance, Employer's Liability Insurance and Professional Indemnity Insurance whilst they are engaged in any agreed work that furthers the aims of the Trust

- Public/Product Liability Insurance cover provides indemnity if the Trust is legally liable for property damage or bodily injury caused to a third party.
- Employer's Liability Insurance cover provides an indemnity for circumstances where the Trust is legally liable for bodily injury to a volunteer/employee caused by the Trust's negligence.
- Professional Indemnity Insurance cover provides indemnity where the Trust is legally liable after having given advice, design or specification for a fee.

Insurance cover in all these instances has no age restriction.

The Trust also holds Personal Accident Insurance. Personal Accident Insurance provides volunteers with cover for accidental injury or death when engaged on Trust business regardless of who is responsible. However, in this instance the Insurers apply an age restriction, and only volunteers up to the age of 80 are covered.

Personal Accident Insurance cover for volunteers aged 80+ can be provided by the Trust's Insurers, but can only be decided by them on a case-by-case basis. In order to make their decision the Insurers would require submission of a doctor's note confirming fitness to undertake the proposed volunteer role or roles. The cost of providing such doctor's notes will be met by the Trust.

In the event that the Trust's Insurers decline cover, or a volunteer did not wish to participate in the above process, the volunteer may still continue to volunteer with the Trust but must be aware that to do so ***would be at the volunteer's own risk***. Volunteers also have the option to make their own Personal Accident Insurance arrangements but in this instance the Trust would not be in a position to make any reimbursement of those insurance costs.

It is for the above reasons all volunteers are asked to provide their date of birth when commencing volunteering with the Trust.

Volunteers are also covered by the Trust's vehicle insurance, provided they are registered with the Trust as an "Authorised User".

Some volunteers, however, may use their private vehicles during the course of their volunteering activities. It is important to note that whilst many insurance companies view this use as being covered under "social, domestic and pleasure", some class it as "business use", and in the event of an accident or other incident should anyone not have the appropriate cover in place this may invalidate their insurance.

"Use" in this context is generally interpreted by insurers as travel to and from home to sites, tasks and events, the transportation of tools, materials or people, and any travel and transportation required during volunteering sessions.

The responsibility to insure private vehicles rests with volunteers. It is therefore important volunteers ensure that they have the appropriate level of cover in place, and that their vehicle is only used within the limitations of that level of cover. Volunteers will not be expected to upgrade their private vehicle insurance to cover business use and/or incur any cost as the Trust cannot fund upgrades without prior agreement.

Expenses

In principle the Trust aims to cover a volunteer's out of pocket expenses. However, the ability to reimburse reasonable out-of-pocket expenses will be dependent on resources being available. In order to claim expenses, an expenses form must be completed and given to your support officer. The Trust will always inform volunteers whether expenses are available before the volunteer starts work. The standard travel expenses paid for car travel for volunteers is 45p per mile.

Ending Involvement

If a volunteer wishes to stop volunteering, the Trust believes that this should not be an embarrassing experience. The Trust would appreciate being advised of the decision to stop volunteering either by telephone to their support officer or by writing to the Trust whichever is most appropriate.

On occasions it may be necessary for the Trust to end a volunteer's involvement. This may be because the role undertaken is no longer needed, because the volunteer is no longer able to satisfactorily carry out a particular role, or because of some other business reason. When this happens, the Trust will endeavour to give due notice to the volunteer, try to find an acceptable alternative role and, in all cases, will treat the volunteer fairly and with dignity and respect.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on a 2-year cycle. The next review will be December 2025.