



WOODLAND
TRUST

VOLUNTEERING



Welcome

Welcome to our volunteers' handbook.

The Woodland Trust believes that its volunteers deserve the support of a committed volunteering development team to ensure that the work they complete helps the Trust achieve its conservation objectives as well as being enjoyable. The purpose of this handbook is to set some practical guidelines for successful volunteering. This is to enable both volunteers and staff to be sure that all their hard work and effort is helping to conserve ancient woodland, restore native broadleaved woodland, increase biodiversity, and public enjoyment and understanding of woodland. We welcome all those who are helping us deliver our objectives.

We choose to work with volunteers as it's a great way of involving people in the work we do and you often bring to us new skills or the ability to do something budget limitations have previously restricted! We do hope to give back to you via informing and guiding, but also through expanding your horizons be that knowledge, skill or new contacts. Communication demands staff time and that is a precious resource for us, however the volunteering development team is an extra resource to aid our communication with you, please keep in touch.

This may be just the start of your involvement with the Trust or you may have known us for some time. Either way we hope you will enjoy your volunteering. By donating your skills and time you can help the Trust to benefit so many more woods and people than it would otherwise be able to. This applies to your donation of time and skills no matter whether you are assisting in the woods or helping with other business tasks. I would like to thank you.

Sue Holden
Chief Executive

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The Essentials

Volunteers' Charter

Responsibilities of volunteers

We would ask that as a volunteer you:

- Work with us to achieve our aims and objectives
- Be reliable
- Give commitment
- Air any problems/issues immediately to the appropriate person
- Respect confidentiality, equal opportunities and health and safety policies
- Attend relevant training
- Uphold the name of the Woodland Trust at all times
- Provide notice of your intention to stop volunteering for us, where possible
- Enjoy yourself!

Our responsibilities to you

As a volunteer you can expect:

- A clear volunteer support framework
- To be given tasks that you are capable of and that are of benefit to the Trust
- A clearly defined outline of the task we would like you to undertake
- To have a member of staff nominated as a key contact for the task involved
- To have expenses reimbursed, at the appropriate rates, where possible and pre-agreed
- That we strive to ensure equality of opportunity within the Woodland Trust
- Safe working conditions

We will also try to ensure that you

- Are kept informed of changes and developments affecting you
- Have the opportunity to be involved with decision making that affects you, where appropriate
- Are able to say no to inappropriate requests outside the task outline/volunteer charter
- Have access to a complaints and dissatisfaction procedure via an independent member of staff
- Feel your contribution is valued by paid staff, who are fully aware of the nature and purpose of volunteering
- Are able to see how your contribution fits into the broader objectives of the Trust

Please note that acceptance of this handbook will be deemed to be acknowledgement of and agreement with the principles outlined above. This agreement is binding only in honour and is not intended to be legally binding.

The Volunteering Development Team

Who we are

The team works within the Communications and Engagement section and at the time of writing consists of a volunteering development champion, volunteering development manager, volunteering development officer and the volunteering development coordinator.

What we do

We manage the involvement of volunteers within the Trust in much the same way that the personnel section manages the involvement of paid staff. We are responsible for the following activities in respect of volunteers:

- Providing support to staff who use or wish to engage volunteers
- Finding, selecting and engaging volunteers to undertake the requirements of the task outlines
- Carrying out communication forums for volunteers
- Supporting and monitoring volunteers and their involvement
- Recording the value of volunteer activity
- Maintaining volunteer records on our supporter database
- Ensuring all legislative regulations concerning volunteers and their work are adhered to
- Maintaining links and communicating with all volunteers

What the task manager does

Once a volunteer has been engaged on a task the task manager has responsibility for the following:

- Task specific training, monitoring and support
- Acting as the first point of contact for task based queries
- Ensuring health and safety procedures are adhered to

The Volunteering Development Team will provide support to the staff on these and other issues concerning your volunteer activity.

Engagement and Selection

Objective

To select and engage committed and enthusiastic volunteers who provide beneficial support to the staff and members of the Trust.

How we recruit volunteers for a task

When the outline of a task has been agreed with the relevant members of staff, an initial search of our existing database of potential volunteers will take place. Where appropriate more information may be sought to ensure we take into account a volunteer's stated preferences, skills and past involvement. If a successful match is made a member of the volunteering development team will contact the relevant volunteer/s and ascertain their interest in undertaking the task. If the volunteer/s wish to continue, they will be passed to the relevant task manager for training and completion of the task.

If there is more than one successful match, a discussion between the volunteering development officer and/or the task manager and each of the potential volunteers may be required to decide the best volunteer for the task.

The successful volunteer/s will be notified in setting out the terms of the task, specific contact details and any other arrangements that may be required.

If there are no suitable volunteers on the existing database, then at the volunteering development manager's discretion advertising for the role may be initiated. This could take the form of an appeal to members, supporters or existing volunteers, promotion on the Trust's website, national advertising via websites or other media, local advertising, specialist advertising, contacting Volunteer Bureaux or any other means suitable to the specific task.

Induction and Training

Objective

We aim to provide you (as either a new volunteer or one facing a new task) with the information required to ensure that you are able to maximise your contribution to the Trust. This will be done via induction, followed up by regular support and supervision. Training, where it is necessary for the safe and effective completion of a task, will be provided.

Induction

Your induction programme will ideally comprise of two elements; a general induction from a member of the volunteering development team (although sometimes we may have to do this by providing information in written format) and a task specific induction from your task manager. It may also take the form of a group event or a one-to-one meeting depending on individual circumstances.

Induction will usually be necessary before you can start your task. Once you have completed the general induction programme you will not need to take part in another prior to taking on other tasks, you will then only require task specific induction.

Whatever the format of your induction programme the content for all volunteers will remain the same and will include the following elements:

- Introduction to the Woodland Trust
- Woodland Trust background and current position
- This volunteer handbook

Further training

You may be eligible for training, other than the basic task specific induction, from the Woodland Trust when it is required for the effective completion of the task. Any training requirements will be subject to discussion with the task manager and the volunteering development team. Any training authorised will be arranged through the volunteering development team, wherever possible in-house training will be provided. We may also include some general training or refresher activities at communication events that you will be able to attend.

Support and Supervision

Objective

To provide adequate support and supervision for volunteers, to enable them to complete their task in a way that reflects the standing of the Trust and enables the volunteer to get the most from their contribution to the organisation

How we support you

Initial support will be provided by both the task manager and a member of the volunteering development team via the induction process.

The volunteering development officer will provide regular support in a number of ways, which may include:

- Contact as necessary to ensure your comfort/progress with the given task
- Communication events – including training and development, volunteer forums, which have a purpose but are also a sociable function
- A newsletter, website and online community <http://www.woodland-community.org.uk/volunteers>

Ongoing supervision relating to the task will be mainly carried out by the task manager and will consist of regular contact, in an appropriate place and manner, and at a level agreed with you prior to the task being allocated.

Supervision will mainly consist of ensuring that the task is being carried out appropriately and in accordance with the task outline agreed at the outset, identifying and dealing with any task related queries.

Diary of Activity

Trust requirements

The Trust asks that volunteers advise us of activity, which enables us to calculate the total value of the tasks undertaken by all our volunteers. It also helps ensure that the volunteer is working in accordance with the task outline as agreed with the task manager.

Please complete these records as accurately as possible as this provides us with the information we need to demonstrate the value of the tasks that you do. This assists us in obtaining both finance and staff to ensure we can involve volunteers.

Guidelines for the completion of diary of activity

- If you are involved in a long term or time limited task you should complete a **diary of activity** sheet on a regular basis as agreed with the task manager.
- If you are volunteering for specific one-off events/days you do not need to complete a form but a record of your activity will be made on the day by the person responsible for volunteers. Please ensure they have a record of the hours you have volunteered.
- If you are taking part in more than one task at a time or you are involved on a complex task please indicate the different elements (as agreed) for each task on your diary sheet.

The forms should be returned to the volunteering development team. These can be posted to your the Grantham office, or handed to a member of staff for transmission or e-mailed to us on volunteers@woodland-trust.org.uk

Finishing a Task

Finishing a time limited task

Once you have completed a task to the task manager's satisfaction, returned all equipment loaned to you and claimed all relevant expenses, your task will be considered to be finished.

You may contact your volunteering development officer to discuss any further activity you may wish to be involved with and to discuss the previous task.

Cessation of Voluntary Commitment

Objective

The Trust's commitment to an effective and well-managed volunteer policy extends to the end of a volunteer's time with us, and we would, as far as possible, wish any volunteer who ceases to volunteer for us, leave with the feeling that they have added some benefit to the Woodland Trust and achieved something worth while personally.

Practice

Your commitment as a volunteer can be halted, without prejudice, by either yourself or the Trust at any time during your involvement with us. We ask that either party give as much notice as is reasonably possible in the circumstances, especially where a task has not been completed. In all situations volunteers will be requested to return all equipment issued to them for the completion of any task.

Exit at the volunteers request

If you wish to cease your voluntary commitment with the Trust, please notify either your task manager or a member of the volunteering development team as soon as possible. If you would like to give us feedback so we can improve how we support volunteers please contact a member of the volunteering development team.

Exit at the request of a member of the Woodland Trust's staff

We reserve the right to halt a volunteer's commitment as a last resort if we feel that the task or their performance is not benefiting the Trust or there has been an irresolvable complaint. This will normally only happen when the complaints and improvements procedures detailed later in this handbook have been applied. We will inform the volunteer personally and in confidence of our decision.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Policy

We will provide a facility for all agreed expenses to be reimbursed to volunteers. We will encourage all volunteers to claim expenses as this enables us to include all sectors of society, build a complete picture of the costs of each activity and to allow accurate budgeting for future activities. This also allows us to assess the value of volunteers' work accurately.

Why pay expenses?

Volunteering should be open to all; we do not want you as a volunteer to be out of pocket as a result of freely giving your time and effort. Where you prefer to bear the costs of any activities you take part in, we will provide the facility for you to donate some or all of the expenses incurred back to the Trust.

If you prefer to donate any part of your expenses back to the Trust you must complete an expense claim form each time and provided you are a UK taxpayer and have completed a gift aid form we are able to increase any donation made by 28%.

What will be paid?

Travel expenses will be available to all volunteers carrying out authorised activities. Other expenses incurred will be paid where they have been previously agreed with the task manager (it should be noted that some expenditure such as electricity charges are difficult to reimburse). Unexpected expenses that arise during the task must be discussed and agreed with the task manager before it is outlaid.

The volunteering development team reviews the expense policy at least annually, changes are publicised and will be in line with the rates available to paid staff. In respect of travelling, we ask that you use the most cost effective transport available, as an environmental organisation we encourage our volunteers (and our staff) to think about the environmental impact of their travel. We encourage the use of car sharing, alternative or public forms of transport wherever possible. We will pay the full cost of train or other public transport or a mileage rate that covers the cost of fuel and a contribution to the running costs of the car. A fuel only rate will be available for those volunteers who wish to use it. For certain tasks, such as voluntary speakers, where the services of our volunteers are requested by other organisations, we ask the volunteer to request that their travelling expenses be covered by the third party. On some occasions such as large volunteer events it may be necessary, due to budgetary constraints to offer a different level of expenses than usual, in this instance volunteers will be informed in advance.

Because expenses are a reimbursement of the actual costs, it is acceptable to the Inland Revenue and is therefore not subject to tax, unless you are making a profit. Please ask the volunteering development team for further information about this as appropriate.

How will they be paid?

Expenses will only be accepted on an official **expense claim form** submitted with all relevant receipts, bearing the relevant information. In the event of you working simultaneously on two tasks, expenses will need to be allocated to each activity and may need to be submitted separately.

Expenses should be submitted to the task manager and must be in accordance with those agreed in the task outlines. The frequency of claims will vary depending on the task (small claims are expensive for us to process!), and must be agreed in advance between the task manager and yourself. In certain circumstances, it may be more suitable for these to be paid centrally or in advance.

Expenses and welfare benefits

If you are in receipt of welfare benefits you can still volunteer and receive out-of-pocket expenses without affecting your claim, providing that you comply with the relevant regulations. You must inform the Benefits Agency that you are volunteering before you take part in any activity, especially if you are receiving Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) or Incapacity Benefit.

Please advise the Volunteering Development Team of any difficulties you encounter in claiming. We can help you with any problems with your claims that relate to your volunteering activity and can provide a letter detailing your activity if required.

If you receive JSA you will need to fulfil the following requirements, to ensure your benefits are not affected:

- To be actively seeking employment, and have enough time to enable you to do this
- To be able to be contacted promptly if a job opportunity arises
- To be willing and able to attend an interview or take up employment within certain time constraints. This timescale may change due to likely legislation changes so please ask for guidance if unsure

Legal Details

Health and Safety

Policy

We aim to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and healthy conditions for staff and volunteers whilst carrying out their duties, by anticipating risks and removing or avoiding hazards. This also extends to ensuring the safety of any members of the public visiting any of our properties.

What does this mean for me?

You will be made aware of any significant risks relating to your task by your task manager and if necessary receive the appropriate training. We would ask you to ensure that you observe those risks and take the required measures to manage them.

When taking part in a task you should take into consideration the health and safety implications of the activity and take steps to ensure that no staff, volunteers or members of the public are put at risk.

Any incidents, however slight, should be reported as quickly as possible to your task manager or the volunteering development team, either in person or by telephone, who will set in motion the standard reporting process.

Please ensure that if you are at all in doubt about your health and safety that you ask a member of staff for information immediately.

Managing risks

You should be aware of the need for taking care whilst carrying out activities on behalf of the Trust, no matter how small the task is, and to understand the basics of good health and safety practice. You are expected to provide full co-operation and to give all possible assistance to the task manager and volunteering development officer, and to achieve this you must:

- Comply with all safety instructions and directions issued by the Trust and take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of other people who may be affected by your acts or omissions
- Co-operate in any investigation and report on all accidents and incidents
- Report any potential health and safety risk (including any perceived risk of serious and imminent danger) to the task manager or any member of the volunteering development team by reasonable means

Please ensure that you make your task manager and volunteering development officer aware of any factors that may affect the risks posed to you. This information will be kept confidential, and will only be released to other persons responsible for managing you or, in the case of medical information, where it may affect any treatment given, to any relevant first aiders, where present.

Home or site based tasks

You will be made aware of any significant risks related particularly to any task or site and any changes in those risks.

On-site volunteers should be aware of the risks posed by for example extreme weather conditions, and should ensure their personal safety by setting up a lone worker reporting/buddy system, we can provide guidance and support with this.

Home based tasks

Please also think pragmatically about the set up of your home before undertaking any tasks. Are children adequately supervised and safe from harm? Identify any potential hazards such as trailing cables or sharp objects and move them. Common sense is the order of the day.

Office based tasks

You will be made aware of the general office health and safety procedures applicable to all staff and volunteers, including first aid, fire and evacuation procedure, use of machinery or equipment including computers (if applicable).

Personal safety

For the comfort of all please remember that no policy or precautions can ensure the safety of any individual in every situation, always be aware of potential risks and take positive action to protect yourself.

Risk Assessments

Objective

All activities that volunteers are involved in require a risk assessment to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to reduce risk to an appropriate level.

Practice

Your task manager will be responsible for assessing your task and ensuring that you are aware of the necessary measures required to remove or reduce any risk, training will be provided if necessary. This process will be completed prior to you commencing your task. Any changes that may affect any acknowledged risk should be advised to your task manager or volunteering development officer as soon as possible.

On occasion it may be appropriate for a volunteer to be involved in producing a risk assessment for the task. In this situation training and support will be given to ensure proficiency in assessing risk.

Equipment and Clothing

Policy

We will ensure that all volunteers have access to the necessary equipment to enable them to safely and effectively carry out the task in which they are engaged.

What is provided?

We can only provide equipment or clothing where it is a requirement for the task, such as PC, tools or safety equipment; this is to avoid any possible tax implications for you. If you are provided with protective clothing and/or equipment it is a strict requirement, for reasons of health and safety, that you comply with any directions given by your task manager or volunteering development officer. Failure to observe such rules may result in the Trust regrettably ending your commitment.

Any equipment or clothing provided by the Trust must be acquired via the task manager and returned to them at the end of the task. You should safeguard any equipment provided by the Trust and ensure that it is kept in effective working condition.

We have no objection if you wish to provide your own equipment, in certain situations, but we must be able to ensure that the equipment is safe and suitable for the task involved.

Insurance

Policy

We will ensure that volunteers are covered by our public liability insurance whilst engaged on an activity authorised by the Trust.

What is covered?

The Woodland Trust public liability insurance covers the authorised activities of all our volunteers subject to the current provisions imposed by our insurers, more details of the policy are included in the appendix of documents supplied with this handbook. Please do not hesitate to contact your task manager or volunteering development officer if you have any queries.

Two important points to note are that:

- Your personal property is not covered by Trust insurance; volunteers are advised to ensure their possessions are covered by their own insurance.
- You may use your own car for Trust activities, but should ensure that you have informed your insurance company before carrying out any activities and if necessary arranged for 'business use' to be added.

Equal Opportunities

Policy

As with employed staff, the Woodland Trust strives to create equal opportunities for all volunteers. We aim to select, engage and train our volunteers on the basis of merit, ability and performance. We are committed to creating an environment where volunteers are free from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, religious/political beliefs, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or marital status.

Age of volunteers

We do not have an upper age limit for our volunteers, but request that a volunteer should not continue beyond a point that could cause a problem to themselves or others whilst carrying out their voluntary activities.

What you can do

In order to comply with this policy we expect you to treat everyone – other volunteers, staff and members of the public - fairly and without bias. You should:

- Focus on what others can do, rather than what they cannot
- Ensure that no other volunteer or member of staff is being excluded or isolated from the task or project
- Not to stereotype or generalise about groups of people
- Listen to and respect everyone's views regardless of their background status or experience

We expect all staff and volunteers to comply with this policy at all times, failure to do so will result in the appropriate action being taken.

If you have a complaint

We will investigate any claims of discrimination by either a volunteer or a member of staff.

To make a complaint we will require the following information

- Details of what, where and when the occurrence took place and if previously reported, to whom.
- Any witness statements or names.
- Any names of others who have been treated in a similar way (if known).
- A preference for a solution to the incident.

Complainants should keep the matter confidential; any notes made will remain confidentially within the HR or Volunteering Development Teams. The anonymity of the complainant will be protected as far as possible. Please refer to the [complaints procedure](#) (P19) for further guidance.

Complaints by volunteers

If the complaint is against the task manager or another member of staff, this should be directed to the Volunteering Development Team, who may refer the matter to the next tier of management, if appropriate.

If the complaint is against another volunteer the normal volunteer's [complaints procedure](#) (P19) should be used.

Complaints by staff about volunteers

These will be directed to the Volunteering Development Team, who may refer the matter to the volunteer's task manager or other senior member of staff if appropriate.

Anyone who is found guilty of discrimination will be asked to desist immediately, and will be dealt with via the appropriate policy, [managing improvements procedure](#).(P19) for volunteers.

References and Police Checks

Objective

To ensure the integrity of our operations and to maintain the goodwill of our members and supporters, we must strive to ensure that all our volunteers are beyond reproach, certain tasks will require consent to us undertaking the appropriate checks where this is deemed necessary by the Volunteering Development Team due to the nature of the task. It is also policy that we require our volunteers, when a check is required by us, to provide us with evidence of identity (e.g. a Driving Licence or Passport).

What will happen?

As an existing volunteer you may be asked to provide an additional referee and agree to undergoing appropriate checks before you are able to be involved with any activity that includes any involvement with significant sums of money, unaccompanied children or vulnerable adults.

Any information obtained from these checks will be held by the volunteering development manager as confidential information until a decision has been reached by the volunteering development manager or a deputy and the volunteering development officer as to your suitability for the task in question. Information received from these checks will be shredded before disposal.

As with staff, you are required to disclose any criminal convictions obtained during the course of your activity with the Trust. It is expected that you have given all the correct details. Should the Trust discover that you have provided any false information, the Trust reserves the right to halt your commitment immediately.

Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults

Objective

To extend our duty of care and to act responsibly to all sectors of the community and in particular to ensure that we respect legal requirements when dealing with vulnerable people.

When are checks required?

If you are involved with any task that will include regular contact with children or adults who are deemed as being in a vulnerable position, either as volunteers or as beneficiaries of our work, we require in all cases, relevant checks eg Criminal Records Bureau and additional reference checks which must be deemed satisfactory by the volunteering development manager and the volunteering development officer **prior** to your beginning any activity.

This does not mean that we cannot involve these vulnerable groups at all, but we must be aware that in any activity that may include these groups we should ensure that no unaccompanied persons will be accepted, and that they should only attend with a responsible adult (if necessary we will impose a ratio of adults per group). Please contact a member of the Volunteering Development Team for clarification of the regulations or to discuss the implications on your activities.

The Trust has a set of guidelines for staff and volunteers dealing with vulnerable people. These guidelines must be adhered to, they also help to protect you from a potential spurious claim.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Objective

We seek to ensure, under the Data Protection Act, that our records are kept in accordance with the Act and that staff and volunteers abide by it.

Data Protection - Your details

All necessary volunteer details will be held on the Trust's volunteer database and will be accessible only to designated members of staff. This information will only be passed in strict confidence to the task manager, if deemed necessary. You may on completion of the correct procedures and payment of any fee have sight of all the records held under your name.

The volunteering development team will check regularly, in writing, with you to confirm whether you wish to remain on the volunteer database. Please help us to keep our information up to date by passing on any change of details to a member of the Volunteering Development Team.

Confidentiality

You must not disclose any information you are given in confidence to any person. If you have information of a confidential nature that you wish to pass on to the Trust, you should speak directly to the volunteering development manager, who will assess the sensitivity of the information and act accordingly.

You must not pass on the contact details of staff or other volunteers without their prior consent.

Please also note that the principle of confidentiality remains after you have completed a task or are no longer a volunteer for the Trust and you should not disclose sensitive information obtained whilst a volunteer under any circumstance.

As a volunteer

Volunteers must comply with the Data Protection Act and the Woodland Trust's internal procedures where any task you are active in involves access to the personal details of staff, members, supporters, other volunteers or any other person that you may deal with on behalf of the Trust. You must not keep records on personal systems, manual or otherwise, that the Trust does not have access to, without permission.

If you are involved in a task that requires you to deal directly with sensitive information we will ask you to sign a declaration confirming that you will abide with the Trust's policy on data protection and confidentiality. Please ask a member of the volunteering development team if you would like a copy in advance

Copyright and Property Rights

Policy

We will ask you to assign to the Woodland Trust the rights to any materials produced by yourself on behalf of the Trust.

Practice

We will ask you to sign an agreement which assigns to the Woodland Trust the copyright of any original text, illustrations, photographs, computer program or other materials created by you whilst engaging on any voluntary activity for the Trust. The materials may need to be available for future use. This can be agreed to various different levels, please ask for further information.

Protecting the Trust's Interests and Maintaining its Reputation

Objective

The Trust wishes to maintain its positive reputation within the wider community and therefore asks that its staff and volunteers portray the Trust in a suitable manner at all times.

Practice

As a volunteer you may often be representing the Trust in many different situations and should do so with a responsible, positive and professional attitude. Your task manager will ensure you are able to refer any difficult enquiries or situations to a member of staff.

You are asked to uphold the same standards as staff and should be provided with the information and facilities, wherever possible, to enable you to do so, especially where an element of your task involves interacting with members and supporters, the general public or other organisations.

Areas where you should help to protect the Trust's interests are:

- Having regard for the welfare of other volunteers, members of staff and the public
- Upholding the Trust's reputation as a responsible landowner and employer
- Caring for the Trust's physical assets, eg woods, equipment and vehicles
- Safeguarding the Trust against inappropriate use of its name, logo and unauthorised reproduction of its publications
- Guarding against the inappropriate use of Trust resources
- Referring any press/media enquiries to the PR section, unless it is a defined part of your task.

We acknowledge that you have the right to speak out against serious malpractice without recrimination. If you feel that we are not working to the highest levels of operating standards, in the first instance you should bring the matter to the attention of your task manager or a member of the Volunteering Development Team. Any matter that you report will be taken seriously and treated appropriately. The Trust will ensure that anyone who reports any concern in good faith will be treated with respect, regardless of whether or not the concern is ultimately proven. If you believe that you are not being treated as you would wish by someone within the Trust (either volunteer or staff) as a result of reporting a concern or assisting the Trust in any investigation, you should inform the volunteering development manager immediately.

Conflict of Interest

Objective

We aim to operate at all times with the highest professionalism and seek to avoid any conflict of interest for a volunteer or the Woodland Trust.

What should I do?

We ask that if you find that there is a conflict of interest either through your paid employment or other activities and any Woodland Trust activity, to make that information available to the volunteering development manager as soon as you become aware of it. The volunteering development manager will then take the necessary action, which may involve your redeployment to another task or alternative remedial action acceptable to the Trust and yourself, which will put neither party in a compromising situation.

When there is a problem...

Complaints

Policy

There may be times when a volunteer will feel that matters are not as they would wish. In order to maintain a good relationship we will try to deal quickly, objectively and sensitively with any complaint that arises from our volunteers.

How do I complain?

Any complaint voiced by a volunteer should follow the procedure below; this enables volunteers to raise any issues of concern.

Initially

You should, wherever possible, raise the matter objectively with the person concerned. If the matter is of a more organisational nature, it should be brought to the attention of either the task manager or the volunteering development officer, who will try to find an informal but satisfactory solution to the matter.

Then

If this does not provide a satisfactory solution, if you would prefer not to confront the person concerned, or if the matter concerns a volunteering development officer you should raise the matter with the volunteering development manager, who will try to resolve the matter informally.

More formally

If you wish to pursue the matter further, you should put your concerns in writing to the volunteering development manager within one month of the incident. They will investigate the matter formally, which may involve interviewing all parties concerned and having considered all the facts available will offer a resolution. Parties will be informed in writing within ten working days of receipt of the written notification if practicable. If a longer time period is required, parties will be informed in writing. A record of the complaint and its resolution will be held confidentially by the volunteering development manager.

Finally

Should this decision not be satisfactory to you then you may forward the matter within 2 weeks, in writing, to the chief executive, who will consider it. A decision will be made and communicated within ten working days and will represent the full and final decision of the Trust.

Managing Volunteer Performance

Although the following section reads very formally the likelihood of us having to utilise this policy is minimal and we would ask you not to be put off by it. It is simply to ensure that all our volunteers are clear about standards and so that our volunteers can be assured we have a fair process for dealing with inappropriate actions. Because of the serious nature of this part of the policy, it is written in appropriate terms but I would like to emphasise here that by adopting positive working relationships and working together as a team most incidents can be readily overcome with co-operation and tolerance from all concerned.

Volunteering Development Manager

Policy

We want to ensure that all volunteers have clearly understood guidelines regarding the levels of performance asked of them whilst carrying out an activity for the Trust, and that they have access to treatment that is fair and equal in cases of dispute.

Practice

Both you and the Woodland Trust staff should abide by the **volunteers' charter** (given at the front of this handbook), which sets out the expectations of both parties. As with paid staff, good performance and consideration of others is important in upholding the Trust's professional reputation.

This procedure may be used to assist you if you are required to change your behaviour and or performance, if you are in breach of the volunteers' charter.

Examples of serious breach of the volunteers' charter (this list is indicative not exhaustive)

- The use of abusive language or written remarks, when representing the Trust. These could be addressed to members of staff, other volunteers, supporters, members, suppliers or members of the public.
- Levels of performance are persistently below those agreed for the task even after support has been provided.
- The manner of performance, attitude or behaviour towards members of staff, other volunteers, supporters, members, suppliers or members of the public is not in accordance with the volunteers' charter and/or is likely to cause offence.
- There is an intentional or unintentional act of prejudice, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or behaviour that may be perceived as intimidating.
- The unauthorised use or misuse of Trust property or equipment at any time.
- A breach or non-observance of health and safety regulations or provisions.

Minor issues of indiscretion will be treated informally by either the Volunteering Development Team or your task manager, however repeated or more serious matters will be dealt with by the formal procedure, as detailed below.

Procedures

- i. At every stage of the procedure, you will be advised of the nature of the matter for concern, informed of all relevant evidence and will be given the opportunity to state your case before any decision is taken.
- ii. The Volunteering Development Team will be responsible for carrying out any investigation in conjunction with the task manager or other senior member of staff. The proceedings, statements and other records will be kept confidential at all times.
- iii. You will not be removed from your activity after the first instance, except where there has been a serious breach of the volunteers' charter.
- iv. In appropriate situations, such as poor performance, you will be supported and allowed time to improve, or if appropriate and available an alternative task may be found.
- v. You may be accompanied, by a person of your choice, at any discussion or at any stage of the procedure. The companion may be included in the discussion but should not answer questions on your behalf.

You may appeal against decisions made at any time in this process, by putting your concerns in writing to the chief executive, except where the decision has been made to terminate your activity with us following major breaches of the volunteers' charter.

Informal

Minor breaches of the volunteers' charter will result in a request for immediate change in behaviour/performance by either a member of the Volunteering Development Team or the task manager. A written record will be retained.

Formal

For more serious cases or persistent failure to improve, a written warning will be given, following the procedures outlined above. Further breaches may instigate a final written warning and/or a move to another activity/task or the discontinuance of activity. Warnings will remain on your record for the duration of your involvement with the Trust, however, they will be considered 'spent' once you have demonstrated sustained rectification of the issue.

Immediate discontinuance of activity

This will follow major breaches of the volunteers' charter or activity that will bring the Trust into disrepute. Examples of such activity are illustrated below (although this list is not exhaustive).

- Refusal to comply with a reasonable request
- Serious breach of safety rules
- Theft
- Fraud
- Being under the influence of drink or drugs whilst being engaged in a task activity
- Disclosure of confidential information
- Misuse of Trust equipment
- Assault, or threat of
- Deliberate damage to Trust property or that of employees or other volunteers
- Harassment, incitement or actual acts of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, religion, disability, colour or ethnic origin
- Falsification of expenses
- Bringing the Trust into disrepute

Discontinuance of activity

The authority to discontinue your activity with the Trust is vested in the volunteering development manager and members of the chief executive's team, the decision of anyone of the members of this panel is final.

Other Information

How you can help us

There are a number of things you can do that will help us to ensure that your volunteering activity with the Trust is used to best effect.

Change of contact details

Please inform us, as soon as possible, of changes in the following information

- Name
- Address
- Phone no
- E-mail address
- Medical details (if relevant)
- Any criminal convictions

Illness/absence/holidays

As a volunteer there is no formal requirement for you to inform us of any of these events, but we would hope that you would advise us as soon as possible of any dates you will be unavailable that may affect the completion of your task. This is so that we can ensure that suitable arrangements are made to cover your activities, if necessary.

Your input

We will welcome any of your ideas that will help the work that the Trust does. You will have a number of opportunities to express any ideas or concerns to the volunteering development team or your task manager. Please feel free to contact the volunteering development team at any time to pass on any information you feel may be of importance to us.

We are also keen to make links at a local level with other like-minded groups and organisations, if you feel able to make contact or already have links please let us know; we may be able to support you.

How we can help you

We want you to feel appreciated and supported as an important part of the work that the Trust does, we will therefore take the following steps to ensure that this is the case.

We will:

- Hold regular communication events
- Issue regular volunteers' newsletter
- Highlight outstanding volunteer activity in Broadleaf
- Hold an annual Volunteer of the Year Award
- Include details of volunteer activity in our Annual Report

Other formats

This handbook is available on cdrom and other alternative formats should you prefer, and all forms are available in electronic formats on request.

Whilst we do not currently have a welsh language version of the handbook and other documents relating to volunteering, we would be delighted to hear from Welsh speaking volunteers to support our three fluent Welsh speakers in Wales. More information on our work in Wales is available in the bilingual pages of our website. www.coedibawb.org.uk

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. Whilst it is fairly lengthy it attempts to answer most of the questions our volunteers have. The Volunteering Development Team is here to facilitate your activity with the Trust, so please contact us (details overleaf) if you have any queries.

Finally, thank you to all our volunteers. By working with us to achieve tasks (woodland or otherwise) you too are helping us to:

Protect ancient woodland

Establish new areas of native broadleaved woodland

Restore and improve the biodiversity of our woods

Increase people's awareness and enjoyment of woodland

Your willingness and enthusiasm to support us is greatly appreciated.

Volunteering Development Manager

Volunteering Development Team Contact Details

If you would like to get in touch with a member of the Volunteering Development Team please contact our Grantham office on 01476 581111 or e-mail volunteers@woodland-trust.org.uk to be put in touch with the relevant person.

Our postal address should you wish to use it is:

The Woodland Trust

Kempton Way

Grantham

Lincolnshire

NG31 6LL