



## WATER OF LEITH CONSERVATION TRUST VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

This pack summarises the activities and opportunities available to our volunteers, both on the river and in the Water of Leith Visitor Centre. Volunteering is vital to the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. In 2019 our 200 volunteers gave over 10,000 hours, we simply could not operate without this massive contribution and are immensely grateful to all who help us.

### Who can volunteer with us?

Everyone interested is welcome; we have no restrictions concerning age or ability (though under 16's will need to be accompanied on patrols or clean-ups for safety). Simply complete the registration form at the end of this pack and return it to us to receive regular updates by email about our work on the river, volunteering opportunities and social activities. You will be contacted by the relevant member of staff about the volunteering you are interested in to talk about how we can get you involved.

### What can you expect from us?

We aim to make your volunteering experience with us enjoyable and hope you find the effort you put in is worthwhile. We appreciate there are many benefits to volunteering such as giving people a sense of purpose, being active and developing friendships with others. In addition to these we aim to provide regular training to develop your knowledge, social gatherings with other volunteers to develop our community and a friendly welcome from our staff members.

We are always keen to support volunteers to learn new skills and develop themselves, therefore we will always consider personal requests if there are goals you are keen to achieve whilst volunteering. In the past this has included supporting people to complete their Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir awards, gaining specific experience to help them gain employment and attending training courses.

### What do we expect from you if you do?

We hope for enthusiasm, an open mind and commitment from all our volunteers so you'll be able to get stuck into whatever opportunities you choose. This is as simple as turning up punctually for clean-ups and reception duties, being welcoming to customers and other volunteers or going out regularly on river patrol even when it might rain.

All registered volunteers are insured while acting for us and we give safety advice as the activity requires, which is the volunteers responsibility to adhere to.

### **COVID 19 UPDATE and additional measures**

**The health, safety and wellbeing of those volunteering has always been a priority and therefore only activities that have been assessed against our COVID 19 procedures and risk assessments and can be carried out safely will take place. Naturally, there is no expectation for anyone to volunteer with us or to take part in any activity which makes them feel uncomfortable or at risk. Individual circumstances will vary hugely, and some volunteers may wish to test out being involved before committing to a volunteering role. We will try our best to maintain our volunteering opportunities and take a flexible and supportive approach to volunteering. It is also essential that any volunteer or staff member who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or is concerned that they may have symptoms does not come to work and follows public health guidance. Staff will remind volunteers at every opportunity of the rules which are in place to protect them, other volunteers, their families and the general population.**

**To this end we have additional measures in place detailed in Appendix 1 & 2. It is very important that you read & sign the end of this form, to let us know that you understand these additional measures and will abide by the participation agreement.**

# Volunteer roles at the Visitor Centre

## INFORMATION DESK AND CAFE

The Water of Leith Visitor Centre has been open since May 2000, and is staffed by volunteers every day. It is a social hub and visitor attraction with school groups, walkers, community groups and visiting families. We need volunteers to staff the information desk and cafe, providing the first impression of the centre and the trust, welcoming visitors with a smile, giving help and advice and taking the money for cafe and sales. Other duties include making tea and coffee for the cafe and cashing up, overseeing the exhibition area, answering the phone and preparing materials for the education and group visits programme. Volunteers usually work a 3 hour shift (10.00am to 1.00pm or 1.00pm to 4.00pm). We need people who can commit to a particular shift once a week or fortnight, or act as occasional help in the standby team. The qualities needed for a good desk volunteer are friendliness and common sense. Unflappability is excellent (for example walking groups often come en masse for refreshments) but staff are always around to lend a hand. If you think 'desk volunteering' is for you, tick the box on the registration form, and Sandie will call you to arrange a training session.

## FUNDRAISING, EDUCATION & EVENTS

Join our fundraising team who meet every six weeks to plan and run events that will raise money for the Trust. Events that have been run in the past include the Duck Race, Sponsored Walk, Themed Treasure Hunts, Family Fun Days and Plant Sales to mention just a few but we are always open to new ideas. We also run an extensive Outdoor Learning Programme for schools and a community based programme of events for the public and youth groups. We even run special environmentally themed Birthday Parties therefore we always need volunteers to support staff in the delivery of these activities. If you would like to be part of these teams, tick the appropriate box and Helen will contact you. Also, look out for meeting times in the volunteer's letter circulated every three months.

# Volunteer roles on the River

## CLEAN-UP AND CONSERVATION TASKS

**Midweek team** - Every week usually between 10.30am and 1pm, and on different midweek days we run a regular practical conservation group task somewhere on the walkway. This group tackles a wide variety of tasks other than clean-ups due to the experience developed through their time with us. This could be tree or wildflower planting, meadow cutting, bat or bird box erection, invasive plant species eradication, vegetation control, footpath maintenance and managing a number of garden sites along the river - so there are tasks for all with some needing brute strength and others a more delicate touch. These activities are arranged and organised through the 'SPOND' App. You will need to download this app and sign up to receive notifications of activities.

**Weekend Tasks** - Throughout the year we also organise a monthly weekend volunteer event, usually on a Sunday to keep on top of the litter entering the river and removing invasive species, we provide all the tools necessary such as litter pickers, gloves and waders to tackle a specific section of the walkway. These events normally happen between 10.30am until 1.00pm and all locations can be reached by foot, bike or public transport. In 2019 our own volunteers together with community, youth and corporate groups were able to run 110 river clean ups removing enough rubbish to fill five double decker buses. It's a mucky job but someone has to do it!

## RIVER PATROLLING

As guardians of Edinburgh's river we need your eyes and ears to keep watch on it to let us know what is happening along the 12 miles of walkway so we can take action to care for it. River patrollers adopt a one mile or so section of river and walkway and patrol it at a time and frequency that suits them, normally this is done individually. Whilst out patrolling we ask you to keep a note of what you see both positive things like the wildlife and also the negatives (often from human activity). We need to know promptly about anything which needs action. Pollution is the most urgent case, requiring an immediate call to SEPA (0800 807060) but this is very rare. Other issues we also need to know about include: fallen trees, broken fences and collapsed walls, accumulations of litter, fly tipping and dumping, vandalism, appearance of invasive plants, dog poo hot spots and any other threats to the status quo. We also want to know about the more positive things, such as the presence of birds and animals, the usage of the river and its walkway. In reporting wildlife, identification is everything, so distinguishing mink from otters, kingfishers from dippers and hogweed from knotweed is important. We do not expect you to be an instant naturalist so training in wildlife and plant ID is available throughout the year. The patrol team meets every three months for an informal meeting.

***If you would like to be part of any of these teams, tick the appropriate box and Charlotte or Johnny will contact you.***

**GENERAL ADVICE FOR VOLUNTEERING ON THE RIVER.**

- Wear sensible old clothes and footwear (wellies / walking boots are recommended).
- Gloves and tools are provided.
- Safety advice is given at the beginning of each activity and there is also a 'sign in' sheet or 'sign in with spond' which also has the safety information for you to read.
- A registered volunteer is insured under our policy but must adhere to safety advice.
- Make sure your tetanus is up to date & cover any cuts or open wounds First aid kits are always on site as is a trained first aider. Report any incidents to the leader.
- We often light fires, use boats and machinery such as strimmers. Only trained volunteers will be in charge of such operations
- Volunteers often wade and use ladders on clean-ups, this is not compulsory.

So hopefully that has not scared you off practical tasks, which are great fun, rewarding, and tiring. We hope to see you 'IN' the river soon

**JOINING THE VOLUNTEER TEAM - To join in simply register as a volunteer using the form on the Volunteer page of our website and you will be sent details of upcoming tasks. You can also look at our news page on our website. <http://www.waterfleith.org.uk/blog/>**

**If in doubt please call us for more information 0131 455 7367**

# ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEER COVID MEASURES

## Hit Squad & Conservation Volunteering

### **Making sure staff/volunteers with symptoms, or who may have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to work/groups**

Keeping COVID-19 out of the WOLCT is the most effective way to minimize the risk of infection. Therefore, anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, or who lives in the same household as someone who has symptoms, should not come to work but follow current guidance on self-isolation. Anyone who starts to display symptoms while at work should go home immediately and self-isolate.

**Downloading the Protect Scotland App** – We recommend that all volunteers download the NHS Scotland's Protect Scotland app to their phones and have it running at least during volunteering if possible. The app will alert you if you have been in close contact with another app user who tests positive for coronavirus

### **Reduced Group Size**

The size of the group will be dependent on current government guidance. We will always aim for the minimum number of people needed to be on site to complete a task so that we can keep the walkway clear for other users and limit interactions between volunteers.

### **Maintaining physical (social) distancing and masks**

Reasonable measures will be taken to ensure there is social distancing on site wherever possible such as using "fixed teams or partnering", so each person works with only a few others in an allocated team on a specific section of the walkway/river. For activities where social distancing may not be possible an assessment will need to be completed to identify if the activity is necessary and can safely go ahead by taking additional precautions e.g. wearing masks. Examples of this scenario are the Leith basin boat clean up or removing a heavy object from the river.

The risk is heightened at key points in the day when people gather such as at the start / end of a session and at break times. To mitigate this we shall be promoting flexible start times to keep small groups apart over a thirty minute period for example 10am – 10.30am. It will be the responsibility of staff members to stay in a fixed spot and to provide the safety briefing and task outline during that period. If you arrive early please enjoy the river and don't join staff until your allocated time.

Staff will set a good example by greeting volunteers in a physically distant way, wearing a mask during the briefings and working a safe distance so they model the new behaviours to volunteers. The end time of the task will also be staggered.

Group tea breaks will be avoided but the WOLCT will continue to encourage people to take breaks as they are needed. We will no longer provide communal biscuits and drinks, so please remember to bring your own.

### **Signing Up for Tasks**

Where possible signing ups for tasks will be done through the Spond website to allow us to keep accurate records of the volunteers that attend projects. Each week staff will create the tasks on the site and volunteers will be able to sign up at their leisure. To be able to sign up for a task you must create an account and then join our group page at <https://group.spond.com/FBVVVV>

### **Reduced Travel**

So that volunteers can minimise their need to use public transport or travel far from home. We will try to aim to run a minimum of three regular volunteer sessions a week spread across the river. Our intention will be to increase the number of sessions gradually as lockdown eases.

- Downstream\_ Leith to Murrarfield
- Middle – Murrarfield to Colinton
- Upstream – Colinton to Balerno

### **Volunteer Bubbles**

In the short term, volunteers are encouraged to attend only one volunteering session per week. This will allow us to minimise the number of person to person interactions, reducing the impact on the organisation should a case of Covid occur.

### **Tools, PPE and hygiene**

We will be taking the following measures to minimise risk of cross infection:

- Staff will wear a mask during the Health and Safety briefing at the start of the task.
- Volunteers will be issued with their own gloves that they keep and use while volunteering with us and are encouraged to bag them after the task and leave for 72 hours.
- All volunteers are asked to wear a logoed high-viz vest. These will be gathered in by staff at the end of the task and quarantined for 72 hours and washed on a regular basis.

- Tools will be presumed to be dirty at the start of sessions and volunteers will be reminded to not touch them without gloves.
- Volunteers should not touch their faces during the tasks and should clean their hands when they take their gloves off.
- When the gloves come off (at the end of a task or during a personal refreshment break) volunteers should use wipes to clean hands followed by sanitizer to protect.

### **First Aid**

If first aid is required and can be self administered this will be encouraged (for example putting on a plaster). If First Aid can't be carried out by the casualty, staff will ask if it is ok to approach them after using hand sanitizer, putting on medical gloves and a face mask. If the casualty is unconscious normal first aid procedure will be carried out using hand gel, wearing a mask and gloves. All First Aid Kits will be stocked with gel sanitizer, medical masks and medical gloves.

### **Devolving Responsibility for tasks**

There are many light tasks that can be done on the walkway without supervision from staff that can be devolved to volunteers. If you would like to volunteer out with our group sessions then please speak with us directly. Tasks that you could do locally are:

- Litter picking and using their home bin to dispose of it.
- Light pruning of overhanging branches and vegetation on the walkway.
- Raking and digging out of drainage channels on the walkway.

### **Risk/Benefit**

As mentioned at the start of this document it is not possible to wholly eliminate the risk of COVID-19 in our work. However we recognise the sense of purpose, companionship and enjoyment that volunteers get from being involved with WOLCT and if you are willing to work within our new conservation volunteering guidelines we look forward to seeing you soon.

### **Water of Leith Working Agreement**

At the WOLCT we commit to:

1. We will make our conservation sessions as safe as possible through selecting sites where there is space to social distance, stagger start times to prevent groupings and continue to risk assess activities.
2. We will offer a range of tasks at each session that are suitable for a variety of fitness levels and abilities
3. We will begin each session by describing the work and any hazards to you before work starts and will let you decide how much work you want to do.
4. We reserve the right to ask a volunteer to leave the group if they are displaying symptoms that could be related to COVID-19 or are putting others at risk by not following social distancing guidelines.

**Participant Agreement** - By taking part in the work, you are agreeing to the following:

1. I will not take part in the work if I'm in a shielding group; have been advised to reduce contact with others or should be self-isolating; have been overseas in the past 14 days; or am displaying symptoms that could be signs of COVID-19 (according to Scottish Government's guidance).
2. I will only work if I am fit enough, and it is up to me to assess if I can do the work safely.
3. If I have any concerns about my ability to participate in the work, I will talk to a staff member
4. I will keep at least 2 meters (or the distance advised by the government) away from other volunteers, staff and footpath users at all times (unless we are from the same household).
5. I will cover my nose and mouth if I need to cough or sneeze and will put used tissues in a bin.
6. I will try to avoid touching my face with my hands, and try to avoid touching gates, handrails or public benches during the work.
7. I will bring my own refreshments and take a break when I need it.
8. I will use hand sanitizer or wash my hands at the end of the session and if I stop for a break.
9. I reserve the right to wear a face covering if I'm concerned about maintaining a 2 meter distance from others and feel safer doing so.
10. I will be mindful of members of the public during the work and stand to the side to maintain physical distance and let them pass if necessary.
11. I will tell the group leader if I feel unwell while out on site.
12. I will tell the group leader if I am leaving the session before it has ended.
13. If I develop symptoms of COVID-19 following a session, I will notify WOLCT staff
14. I understand that I come on this volunteering at my own risk.

**Finally, as volunteers and staff we agree to respect each other.**

# Centre Volunteering

## **Making sure staff/volunteers with symptoms, or who may have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to work/groups**

Keeping COVID-19 out of the WOLCT is the most effective way to minimize the risk of infection. Therefore, anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, or who lives in the same household as someone who has symptoms, should not come to work but follow current guidance on self-isolation. Anyone who starts to have symptoms while at work should go home immediately and self-isolate. See our Infection Control Procedure for details.

## **Amount of volunteers in the Centre**

The amount of volunteers in the Centre will be dependent on current government guidance at the time, but to minimize risk we will try to ensure only two households working together. The member of staff on duty will count as the first household with a volunteer classified as the second. We will always aim for the minimum number of people needed to be on site to run the Visitor Centre.

## **Maintaining physical (social) distancing (2m)**

Reasonable measures will be taken to ensure there is social distancing (2m) at the Centre wherever possible. Gathering points will be identified (front desk / till, toilets, kitchen) and measures put in place to reduce this. Paperwork, and shared pens, could pose a cross-contamination risk. Measures will be put in place to reduce this. Training will be given.

## **Hygiene**

- Staff and volunteers will wear a facemask whilst serving at the Visitor Centre.
- Hands should be washed (min 20 seconds) before serving and throughout the day. Should you prefer to wear gloves, these will be provided at the Centre.
- Sanitizing gel should be used before and after each customer and volunteers should wash their hands every half an hour.
- Volunteers should not touch their faces during their shift
- If gloves are used, they should be removed at break times and at the end of the shift - using the 'donning' and 'doffing' method. Never reuse gloves that have been removed. Volunteers should wash their hands or use a gel sanitizer to cleanse before leaving the building.
- Please wear freshly laundered clothes on shift. Recommendations suggest re washing these clothes once you return home. Additional information on best practice hygiene procedures in the workplace will be available on your refresher training session.
- Training will be given on all the additional measures in place around the Centre

## **First Aid**

If first aid is required and can be self administered this will be encouraged (for example putting on a plaster). If First Aid can't be carried out by the casualty, staff will ask if it is ok to approach them after using hand sanitizer, putting on medical gloves and a face mask. If the casualty is unconscious normal first aid procedure will be carried out using hand gel, wearing a mask and gloves. All First Aid Kits will be stocked with gel, medical mask and medical gloves.

## **Risk/Benefit**

As mentioned at the start of this document it is not possible to reduce the risk of covid infection to zero, however we recognise the sense of purpose, companionship and enjoyment that volunteers get from being involved with WOLCT. Therefore if you are willing to accept the changes we are proposing to visitor centre volunteering, we look forward to seeing you soon.

## **Water of Leith Working Agreement**

At the WOLCT we commit to:

1. We will attempt to make volunteering sessions as safe as possible through selecting areas where we can allow space to social distance, stagger start times to prevent groupings and continue to risk assess activities to make our tasks and centre safe.
2. We reserve the right to ask a volunteer to leave if they are displaying symptoms that could be related to the Coronavirus or are putting others at risk by not following physical distancing guidelines.
3. Providing a safe and clean environment for all staff, volunteers and members of the public

**Participant Agreement** - By taking part in the work, you are agreeing to the following:

1. I won't take part in the work if I'm in a shielding group, have been advised to reduce contact with others or should be self-isolating, have been overseas in the past 14 days or am displaying symptoms that could be signs of the Coronavirus (according to Scottish Government's guidance).
2. I'll only work if I am fit enough, and it's up to me to assess if I can do the work safely.
3. If I have any concerns about my ability to participate in the work, I'll talk to a staff member
4. I'll keep at least 2 meters (Or the distance advised by the government) away from other volunteers, staff and users at all times (unless we are from the same household).
5. I'll cover my nose and mouth if I need to cough or sneeze and will put used tissues in a bin.

6. I'll try to avoid touching my face with my hands, and try to avoid touching unnecessary surfaces.
7. I will bring my own refreshments and will take a break when I need it.
8. I'll use hand gel or wash my hands at the end of the session and if I stop for a break.
9. I reserve the right to wear a face covering if I'm concerned about maintaining a 2 meter distance from others and feel safer doing so.
10. I'll be mindful of other members of the public during the work and stand to the side to maintain physical distance and let them pass if necessary.
11. I'll tell the group leader if I feel unwell while at the centre or if out on site.
12. I'll tell the group leader if I have to leave my shift before it is due to end.
13. If I develop Coronavirus symptoms following the work, I'll notify WOLCT staff & test and protect teams of my contact with the group.
14. I understand that I come on this volunteering at my own risk.

**Finally, as volunteers and staff we agree to respect each other.**