

## Water of Leith Conservation Trust VOLUNTEERING POLICY



This policy sets out The Water of Leith Conservation Trust's (WOLCT) commitment to best practice in the recruitment, support and management of volunteers.

### **WOLCT Mission Statement:**

To conserve and enhance the Water of Leith river as a haven for wildlife and a recreational and educational resource for all.

### **The Trust's Key Aims are.**

- To raise awareness of the river as Edinburgh's key Environmental asset
- To provide a quality Lifelong Learning Service - offering environmental education teaching services, group visits, advice and information for all age groups
- To encourage the protection and enhancement of biodiversity along the river
- To promote the conservation of the Water of Leith, by fostering practical action
- To promote the Water of Leith Walkway for the enjoyment of the public
- To work in partnership with landowners and official bodies responsible for the river to promote the effective management of the river valley

### **Why does WOL involve volunteers?**

The Trust recognises that volunteers are the backbone of the WOLCT. They are essential to the achievement of our mission. They have an important and valuable contribution to make to the people who use the Visitor Centre and the river because:

- *The local community will be more engaged and knowledgeable about the river if they are able to help in its conservation and environmental protection as volunteers.*
- *The time, energy and ability offered by WOLCT volunteers' is vital to the Trust achieving its mission and objectives.*
- *The wide range of skills and expertise volunteers bring enables the Trust to carry out a greater amount of different conservation tasks on the river, its walkway and within the Visitor Centre. Skill sharing enables both volunteers sharing and the volunteers learning.*
- *The more eyes and ears on the river and manning the Visitor Centre results in quicker reaction times to issues that may occur on the river and its walkway. More wildlife sightings can be recorded both generally in our wildlife database and in species specific surveys.*
- *WOLCT is governed by a board of Trustees who are all volunteers*

The Trust is committed to a relationship between staff and volunteers that is based on mutual responsibility, respect and commitment. As the work that is carried out by the WOLCT is worthwhile and meaningful then the volunteers will get a sense of wellbeing from knowing they are a vital part of the Trust realising its key aims.

### **Principles underlying this policy**

#### **Diversity**

The Trust is committed to diversity which enriches the organisations work. The Trust aims to ensure that barriers to volunteer involvement are recognised and where possible removed. We promote equality and strive to create accessible volunteering opportunities. There is no selection procedure. Anyone can join as a volunteer if they register with us. A diverse group of volunteers makes our organisation more welcoming to and more representative of the local community. Involving people from differing backgrounds, ages, sexualities, cultures and genders and outlooks helps throw up new ideas and fresh approaches. The Trust aims to be as inclusive as possible and has a zero tolerance policy to any form of discrimination. The Trust has an Equal Opportunities Policy which further underpins this principle

#### **Valuing volunteers**

The Trust is committed to the continued involvement of volunteers within our organisation. We actively promote the importance of volunteering and attempt to increase the number and variety of volunteering opportunities available. The Trust will celebrate the achievements of volunteers and offering training and support to develop individuals.

### **The three R's (Recruit, Retain and Reward)**

When celebrating the work of the Trust we always thank the volunteers who contributed through our media channels. Our aim is to let the general public know how crucial volunteer input is for all areas of our work and how much we value it. This in itself helps with the recruitment of volunteers as the public can see how volunteer time is directly creating worthwhile outcomes to the Visitor Centre and the river. We believe that retention of individual volunteers comes from listening to volunteer needs and being flexible. Offering training and support as well as providing opportunities to be part of the whole volunteer community at the Trust. Providing a platform for volunteers to make friends within and between the different team through social activities and seasonal parties. Reward is achieved from offering thanks at the end of a shift, event or task in person. Achievements are celebrated through our media channels and where possible national awards for volunteering are entered to celebrate the volunteer's consistent effort.

### **Volunteers and staff**

The Trust expects staff at all levels to work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, involve them in their work. We will not use volunteers to replace paid staff.

### **Personal development**

The Trust recognises that volunteers require a satisfying experience with personal development to achieve enrichment and wellbeing through their volunteering. We aim to help volunteers meet these needs and provide training and support for them to be effective. We will set up and use appropriate channels for consulting with our volunteers on the issues and decisions that affect them in their contribution to WOLCT.

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

WOLCT believes that volunteer involvement within our organisation must be effectively managed. All volunteers are provided with a Volunteer Information Pack, when they register which contains more details about specific volunteer roles, this should be retained for future information. We recommend volunteers read and retain this Volunteering Policy. The Trusts relevant policy information can all be viewed on our website and it is suggested that volunteers review the relevant Policy document and Trust information at <http://www.waterofleith.org.uk/do/>

### **Measuring Volunteer Impact**

Volunteer hours are recorded on a daily basis. A spreadsheet entry is made after each task recording the task type, location, activity, the number of volunteers attending, the duration and any comment pertinent to the task. Patrol hours are recorded within the google forms spreadsheet and Centre hours noted daily – usually 10am to 4.30. This is used to measure and monitor the collective effort of all aspects of our work and can be compared with previous years. This information is shared as required with the stakeholders responsible for the river, the public and our major funders and is reported annually at our AGM and in our Annual Report. The financial contribution of this work is given a monetary value by calculating the volunteers hours times by Nation Living Wage *for example*  $2500 \text{ hours} \times \text{£}9.50 \text{ (NLW)} = \text{£}23,750$ .

### **Implementing this policy**

We will ensure that this volunteer policy is adopted throughout The Trust and helps to inform and support other WOLCT policies and strategies, while ensuring that they do not adversely affect our volunteers or the principles of this policy.

### **Reviewing this policy**

Volunteers will have the opportunity to review this policy and become involved in guiding its development. The monitoring the implementation and on-going review of this policy will be the responsibility of the Conservation and Volunteers Officer and the final policy will be approved by Trustees and reviewed every 3 years

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

The Trust recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is (and what is not) expected of them
- Have adequate support in their volunteering
- Receive appreciation

- Volunteer in a safe environment
- Be insured
- Know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- Receive relevant out-of-pocket expenses
- Receive appropriate training
- Be free from discrimination
- Be offered the opportunity for personal development

**The Trust expects volunteers to;**

- Be reliable and honest
- Respect confidentiality
- Make the most of training and support opportunities
- Carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of the organisation
- Carry out tasks within agreed guidelines
- Respect the work of the organisation and not bring it into disrepute
- Comply with the organisation's policies

This Policy will cover the following;

1. Recruitment
2. Equal Opportunity and Diversity
3. Support and Training
4. (The Volunteer's Voice)
5. Representing the Trust
6. Attendance
7. Health and Safety
8. Personal Protective Equipment
9. Personal Belongings
10. Expenses
11. Insurance
12. Grievance and disciplinary procedures
13. Lone Working
14. Privacy and Data Protection (GDPR)
15. Social Media and photographs
16. Environment
17. Child Protection and safeguarding
18. Bullying and Harassment
19. Trustee Volunteering
20. Endings
21. Policy review

## **1. Recruitment**

Our volunteer roles are advertised with Volunteer Centre Edinburgh, Volunteer Scotland website and on the WOLCT website. Anybody can volunteer, there is no selection process. References are not required. All people that are interested in volunteering just need to contact us for an information pack and registration form or preferably complete the online registration form on our website <https://www.waterofleith.org.uk/volunteer/>

The Volunteer Information Pack describes the WOLCT and the volunteer roles. To become a volunteer individuals must fill in and return a simple registration form. This will let us find out a bit about them, their skills, what role they would like to do and their availability.

Once we have received a volunteer registration a member of staff responsible for that role will be in contact to discuss that opportunity in more detail and make sure that volunteer job is the right fit for the volunteer and the Trust. Any information will be kept in strictest confidence. WOLCT has a legal obligation to ensure that all personal information held and processed complies with GDPR guidelines. Volunteers may see a copy of their own records upon request. If joining the Conservation Team volunteers will be asked to join our group on an app / website called Spond via a web link and code. This is where we float details of our upcoming tasks. Volunteers can confirm they will be attending tasks on Spond.

## **2. Equal Opportunity and Diversity - strive**

The WOLCT is firmly committed to equal opportunity and diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that we have much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives, and that diversity and equal opportunity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the Trusts aims and objectives. The Trust is therefore committed to equal opportunities at all stages of volunteer recruitment and selection without regard to protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. We will regularly evaluate and monitor our progress towards diversity by consulting with the volunteers themselves and relevant partner organisations that may be able to give more specific advice. The Trust strives to be as inclusive as possible and has a zero-tolerance policy to any form of discrimination. WOLCT has an Equal Opportunities policy for paid staff and volunteers. This is available upon request.

## **3. Support and Training**

Volunteer training varies depending on the volunteer role and will be provided by a member of staff. Here is a summary of training that is provided for each role.

**Patrolling** – 1 hour online group training session will be provided once a month for new patrollers. Additional training about specific species or surveys maybe carried out throughout the year such as; invasive plants species, bats, butterflies etc.

**Visitor Centre** - 1 hour group training at the Visitor Centre followed by a number of shifts where they will shadow existing volunteers.

**Conservation Tasks** – Group Training for a variety of tasks will be provided by staff throughout the year. Sometimes training will be provided by an outside instructor. Past training opportunities have included; fence construction, use of cutting tools, wading, path work, willow spiling. At the beginning of each 'Hit Squad' task and all Thursday and Sunday conservation tasks volunteers receive a compulsory health and safety and tool safety training session. A health and safety brief is also included in a Conservation Volunteer handout that is on the website. A link is emailed through to individuals upon registration.

**Survey team (various)** – Specific training always provided prior to survey either by staff or an expert from another conservation organisation eg; Bat – Lothian Bat Trust, Butterflies – Butterfly Conservation Trust

All volunteers will have a named member of staff as their main point of contact and depending on their volunteer role. This person will provide regular support, supervision and feedback regarding their role as a WOLCT Volunteer.

The Staff members responsible for each volunteer role are as follows;

- Centre Based Volunteer (Cafe and Admin) – Sandie - Visitor Centre and Admin Officer and Kat (Visitor Centre Assistant)
- Conservation Volunteer – Charlotte - Conservation & Volunteers Officer Johnny - Ranger
- Patrol Volunteer – Johnny - Ranger
- Survey Volunteer – Charlotte - Conservation and Volunteers Officer
- Trustee – Helen - Trust Manager
- Outdoor Learning – Ruth - Outdoor Learning Officer
- Fundraising and Event Volunteer – Helen - Trust Manager

## **4. The Volunteer's Voice**

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning WOLCT and its work. We strive to identify innovative, practical ways for this to happen, including the use of regular volunteer meetings by role. Towards the end of 2022 The Trust is planning to conduct a volunteer

review and feedback session for the 3 main types of volunteering; Visitor Centre, Conservation Tasks and Patrols. Where staff and volunteers can review and celebrate the year and brainstorm ideas for the next year. An online evaluation form will be piloted in 2022 for group volunteering work for Corporate Tasks and Youth Work Partnerships, Trust volunteers will have the opportunity to use these forms to provide feedback if they would rather not speak up in a meeting.

## **5. Representing the WOLCT.**

For all roles, volunteers are important ambassadors and should always represent the best interests of the Trust. For many members of the public volunteers are the “face” of the Trust and are expected to extend a warm welcome and treat members of the public with respect and courtesy.

## **6. Attendance**

To make sure projects operate smoothly, it's important to know in advance which volunteers plan to attend which projects or shifts. Where signed up to attend on a specific occasion, it is appreciated that individuals will make every effort to attend and arrive on time, but understand that unexpected events may on occasion prevent this from happening. If unable to attend on a certain day, please inform a member of staff as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Volunteers are expected to decline a spond event if they have accepted but can no longer attend. This way the next person on the waiting list will automatically be contacted.

## **7. Health and Safety**

Volunteers are covered by WOLCT's Health and Safety policy. Further information regarding this policy is available from The Trust Manager. All volunteer tasks both in the river and at the Visitor Centre have a risk assessment. These are available for volunteers to see on request. All tasks on the river for the conservation teams are preceded with a Health and Safety / Tool Use talk before the task starts.

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Trust is responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all employees, so far as reasonably practicable. The Trust recognises that it owes the same standards of care in health and safety to both volunteers and employees. At the same time, all volunteers and employees have a responsibility to ensure that they do not put themselves or anyone else at risk working in accordance with any instructions they have been given. If you do not understand any aspect of the activity procedure, risk assessment, safety talk or if you have any health and safety concerns, you must speak to your staff member responsible.

If an accident, incident or 'near miss' is experienced while volunteering with the Trust it is expected that volunteers inform the staff member responsible, who will ensure that this is recorded in line with the Trust's procedures. If a volunteer witness's something which could present a personal or risk to others, again please inform the volunteer manager or project leader.

## **8. Personal Protective Equipment**

It is the Trust's responsibility to provide volunteers with any essential Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). PPE may be issued for the day or for the duration of your volunteering. Training will be provided on its correct use - it is the responsibility of the volunteer to use PPE as instructed. As the Trust takes the welfare of its people seriously, a volunteer who does not use / misuses required PPE equipment may be asked to leave a work area or even terminate their volunteering.

## **9. Personal Belongings**

The Trust cannot accept liability for any personal items damaged or lost at the centre or when out on volunteer tasks. The personal belongings of employees and volunteers are not insured by the Trust. Volunteers are therefore requested either to not to bring valuables to their place of volunteering or to keep them within sight at all times or locked away in a designated place advised by the staff member on duty. Volunteers should make sure their personal belongings should be covered under their own personal insurance policy

## **10. Expenses**

The Trust aims to provide a selection of our tasks throughout the city in different areas so that people can access them by foot, bike and public transport wherever possible. We pledge to help car shares with other volunteers if the task is in the Pentlands and not connected by public transport. The Trust endeavours to reimburse volunteers reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. The decision to reimburse expenses is made at the Trust Managers discretion and should be agreed in advance.

### **11. Insurance**

Volunteers are covered by WOLCT employers and public liability insurance whilst they are volunteering with the Trust both in the Visitor Centre and out on the river. Here are the details of our Insurance cover;

Public/Products Liability Insurers: Royal & Sun Alliance

SCVO Policy Number: RKK958436

Limit of Indemnity: £5,000,000

Renewal Date: 23/06/2022

### **12. Grievance and disciplinary procedures**

The Trust has a formal grievance and disciplinary procedure available on request. The purpose of the grievance procedure is to ensure that, as far as possible, grievances are dealt with and resolved informally through discussion between the aggrieved person and their supervisor. Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints raised by an employee, Trustee or Volunteer. Before using the grievance procedure it is expected that an employee or volunteer will try to resolve their complaint informally if at all possible. The formal stage of the procedure should only be used when the informal stage has failed to resolve the issue with a member of staff or Trustee or is not making progress at reasonable speed.

If a volunteer has acted in an inappropriate manner the Conservation and Volunteer Officer will discuss with the Trust Manager and then contact the individual directly to resolve any inappropriate behaviour. Such as;

- Offensive language
- Not following health and safety guidelines
- Use of drugs and alcohol during a task
- Bullying
- Any type of discrimination
- Any other criminal activity during the task

Should the inappropriate behaviour continue or escalate The Trust reserve the right to refuse the volunteer the right to attend task or shifts and they will be removed from the register of Volunteers.

### **13. Lone Working**

At the Centre - Volunteer cannot be alone in the Visitor Centre. If a member of staff is not present for any reason two volunteer must be in the building and trained in what to do in case of a fire alarm or emergency situation.

On Patrol - Volunteers can patrol or survey alone but they must not enter the river and they must tell someone where they are going and carry a mobile phone. Training will be given prior to commencing patrol work.

Conservation Tasks - During Conservation tasks it is asked that volunteers keep within eyesight of each other at all times. This is particularly relevant if wading in the river. High visibility vest should be issued to make this easier.

Self led tasks – on occasion volunteers conduct small task such as weeding, litter picking or INNS removal, this must be agreed with the Conservation and Volunteers Officer and a risk assessment completed.

Children under 16 years old must be accompanied while on the river by a responsible adult. Children under 16 cannot work alone behind the Visitor Centre reception but can work in the Visitor Centre provided there is a member of staff in the building.

### **14. Privacy and Data Protection (GDPR)**

The Trust has a Privacy Policy and Data Protection Policy available on request. During the course of your volunteer work with the Trust you may be party to personal or confidential information about the Trust activities that is not in the public domain. You are required to keep such information confidential and not to communicate it outside of the Trust. Some specific roles also require handling of personal data on a more regular basis, and in such cases, those volunteers will be required to sign and read

the data protection policy. Volunteers are required to assign copyright to The Trust of any work produced as a part of their volunteering role or activity. All GDPR protocol will be followed for holding of personal data, photographs etc. Volunteers are bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as employees.

### **15. Social Media and photographs**

Permission from individual volunteers must be gained during the registration process on the registration form and sort verbally during the task if they are going to have their photo taken or appear on a social media post. For children less than 16 years old permission from parents must be sort before pictures or social media posts are made. This must be achieved during the registration process and verbally on the day of the task.

### **16. Environment**

As a conservation charity it is important that all our volunteer activities are as environmentally friendly as possible. The Trust would like to limit environmental impact setting up and delivering its volunteer work as follows.

Paperless - Where possible we will use email, post on our website and social media to let people know what activities are happening. We will only send letters to individuals who do not have access to the internet.

Reduced emissions – Volunteers will be encouraged to walk, cycle, catch public transport and car share as much as possible.

Reuse and recycle – Litter gathered from clean-ups will be recycled or reused as much as possible.

Waste going to landfill can be reduced as follows;

- Stolen goods must be given to the Lothian and Borders Police
- Bikes can go to police or local bike initiatives for spare parts or re sale if not claimed
- Metal can be taken to scrap yards
- Cans, Paper, Card, Glass and clear plastic should be collected in clear bags so that the CEC know that this needs to be recycled when they are picking up litter at the end of a clean-up.

### **17. Child Protection and safeguarding**

The Trust is committed to ensuring that all children under 16, young people and vulnerable adults volunteers, participants and beneficiaries are safe and free from harm if volunteering with the Trust. Therefore if any volunteers become aware or suspect possible abuse or neglect during their role it is essential they report this to a staff member at the first opportunity.

The Trust has Child Protection Policy that aim to meet these commitments. The Trust is a City of Edinburgh Council “Approved Provider for Outdoor trips and Excursions”. All staff that work with groups of children under 16, young people and vulnerable adults attend CEC Child Protection as regularly as is required by law to keep up to date with changes in Child Protection issues and procedure within the City of Edinburgh local authority. As volunteers are usually never left in charge or alone with groups of children and/or vulnerable adults they are not required to undergo PVG checks. Should a volunteer role require supervision of young people without a group leader or parent present then they will be asked to complete a PVG. Volunteering at children’s events which are ‘drop off’ is the only circumstances when this is currently applicable. Applications will be made by Trust Manager via Volunteer Scotland and the Trusts procedures on this followed.

When groups of children, young people and vulnerable adults visit the Centre or volunteer as a group the partner organisation (school, youth group etc.) hold the personal information for the individuals in that group as individuals are not registered as WOL volunteers in this scenario. The staff leader does ask the group in advance if there is any issues they need to be aware of for the purposes of the trip / task.

### **18. Bullying and Harassment**

The Trust holds that all of its people should be treated with dignity and respect and should not be subject to bullying, harassment or any discriminatory treatment. It expects all employees and volunteers to honour and comply with this code of conduct and to behave accordingly

Bullying and harassment is behavior that makes someone feel intimidated or offended. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

Examples of bullying or harassing behaviour include:

Spreading malicious rumors

Unfair treatment

Picking on or regularly undermining someone

Denying someone's training or promotion opportunities

Bullying and harassment can happen: face-to-face, by letter, by email, by phone and by social media.

Should a situation arise where a volunteer feels that they have not been treated in a fitting manner, then that volunteer should in the first instance discuss this with the immediate staff member.

### **19. Trustee Volunteering**

The Trust relies on a board of volunteer Trustees to steer and govern the organisation. This group of Volunteers is subject to specific responsibilities as defined by OSCR (The Scottish Charity Regulator) and code of conduct. <https://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-a-charity/trustee-duties/>

Trustees are expected to attend all Committee meetings, 6 to 8 times per year, the AGM and any subcommittees on which they are members. The Trust has prepared an Induction Pack for new or prospective Trustees and this contains the following:

1. Background information on the Trust including brief history.
2. Mission and charitable aims and objectives
3. Business Plan 2020-23 Objectives and Future Activity Projects
4. Trustee & Key Staff Current Contact List
5. Quick Guide for Trustees
6. Role Descriptions
7. Board Review Process
8. Appendix and Useful Links

### **20. Endings**

Volunteers are free to cease volunteering with The Trust at any time, although, wherever possible for Centre Volunteers, an agreed period leading up to this point would be helpful in order to give The Trust time to make any alternative arrangements required. It is possible that there may also be times when The Trust will ask a volunteer to cease volunteering for various reasons. Wherever possible we will offer the volunteer the opportunity to feedback before leaving their role, and ensure they are appropriately thanked for their support. At the start of each calendar year all volunteers will be contacted and asked if they would like to continue volunteering.

### **21. Policy review**

This policy has been approved by meeting of the board of Trustees and Trust Manager on

Date...27<sup>th</sup> June 2022.....

The Conservation and Volunteers Officer will review the policy every three years unless there is a significant change in procedures or legislation. Any changes will need to be approved by the subsequent board of Trustees meeting