



Volunteer Policy

This policy outlines Surrey Wildlife Trust's (Surrey Wildlife Trust) commitment to volunteering and explains the Trust's approach to involving volunteers in its work.

Introduction

Surrey Wildlife Trust's vision is for a living landscape in Surrey that is rich in wildlife and valued by all.

The Trust recognises volunteers are fundamental to the future development of Surrey Wildlife Trust and that to achieve its aims the involvement of both Surrey Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers is essential. Founded by volunteers in 1959 the same ideals still remain at the core of the organisation today, with volunteers working alongside our staff in just about every aspect of the Trust.

Volunteers contribute their time and energy and bring varied expertise from a range of backgrounds. Ways in which volunteers are involved include: Board of Trustees, Voluntary Wardens/Voluntary Reserve Manager, Voluntary Conservation Trainees, practical conservation days, wildlife surveying, educators, sawmill operators, cattle checking, events and administration. It is therefore important that Surrey Wildlife Trust provides a clear statement of how the organisation involves volunteers in its work.

Surrey Wildlife Trust engages volunteers to:

- Increase contact with the community, especially near reserves and wildlife sites
- Provide new skills, knowledge and different perspectives
- Extend its influence and educate others
- Strengthen its values and beliefs
- Add to the quantity and quality of its achievements

Benefits of being a volunteer:

- Opportunity to develop and expand range of skills, experiences and interests
- Chance to meet new people and access new places
- Involvement in local projects and communities
- Enhance employment prospects
- Improve health and wellbeing

Principles:

Surrey Wildlife Trust aims to provide an inclusive and friendly approach that integrates volunteers into the organisation and will actively seek to involve volunteers wherever this is appropriate.

Surrey Wildlife Trust aims to ensure that volunteers are treated in a fair and equal manner.

Surrey Wildlife Trust endeavours to ensure that volunteers are supported as an integral part of the organisation and understands that safety is of foremost importance.

Surrey Wildlife Trust encourages volunteers and staff at all levels to work together positively and to motivate and support one another to gain results that could not be achieved working alone.

Surrey Wildlife Trust recognises that volunteering requires financial support in areas such as training, equipment and expenses.

Recruitment

Surrey Wildlife Trust operates an equal opportunities policy and believes in reducing the barriers to volunteering. Volunteers assigned to a particular role will be placed based on their ability and suitability to carry out the required tasks. If Surrey Wildlife Trust is unable to accommodate a volunteer, then some assistance will be given to find alternatives.

Every volunteer will be able to view the volunteering opportunities available and Surrey Wildlife Trust will endeavour to place volunteers in roles most suited to their preferences and skills. This may result from an informal chat or a formal interview, depending upon the role and the individual.

Where appropriate, volunteers will have clear role descriptions and a volunteer agreement will be drawn up.

Volunteers in eligible roles will be subject to a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check (further information available via www.gov.uk).

Volunteers are bound by the same guidelines regarding confidentiality as staff and may be required to sign a statement of compliance if handling sensitive information.

Management, support and communication

Volunteers will have at least one named person as their main point of contact (staff or volunteer) who will, in most cases, be in the capacity of supervisor.

Volunteers are welcome to pass views or discussion points (via the Volunteer Development team) to The Leadership Team within the Trust. Volunteers have the opportunity for regular reviews, the format and frequency of which depends on the specific roles undertaken. Each volunteer will be treated individually and fairly.

Surrey Wildlife Trust will ensure that all staff are made aware of their responsibilities in terms of working with volunteers and have the resources to meet those responsibilities. The Trust will endeavour to provide appropriate support for supervisors of volunteers, from their line managers, the volunteer development team and any other relevant volunteer or member of staff in matters of voluntary involvement.

Surrey Wildlife Trust aims to communicate effectively with its volunteers in various ways, depending on their role, position or team. For example:

- Voluntary Wardens/Voluntary Reserve Manager will be invited to an annual meeting and receive regular update emails
- Trainees/Interns will take part in quarterly catch up meetings with their line manager and a member of the Volunteer Development team to discuss their progress
- Up to date information on practical tasks, education tasks, learning opportunities and social events will be provided
- Volunteers who provide their email address will receive social invites, and any important information that might affect volunteering

Registration and induction

All volunteers are asked to register with the Trust by completing a registration form. Information will be stored on the volunteer database and used to enable Surrey Wildlife Trust to contact and support volunteers.

The volunteer database will only be accessed by personnel given the authority to do so by the database manager (Membership Manager). Surrey Wildlife Trust databases are managed in compliance with Data Protection regulations.

All volunteers will be given an induction suitable to their role and responsibilities, to include:

- Copy of the Volunteer Handbook
- Familiarisation with work area and key staff and volunteers
- Health and safety procedures
- Action to be taken in the event of an emergency, e.g. fire or accident
- Information on expenses claims, learning opportunities (e.g. shadowing, in-house or external training), relevant Trust policies and procedures and social events, etc.

All volunteers are asked to provide an emergency contact and to inform the event leader of any medical condition that may affect an individual during an activity, and if necessary make aware the location of any medication that may be required.

Expenses

Travel expenses may be paid if agreed beforehand by the Volunteer Development team. All claimed must be in accordance with the Trust's Expenses Policy.

Surrey Wildlife Trust's ability to pay expenses is dependent on resources being available and volunteers will be informed immediately if the situation changes.

Training

Surrey Wildlife Trust will endeavour to provide training appropriate and relevant to a volunteer's tasks and duties, dependent on available resources, in order to enable them to fulfill their role for the benefit of the Trust. This may consist of both in-house and external training.

High levels of training may be provided for some volunteers. In these circumstances, volunteers are expected to demonstrate a certain level of commitment and an intention to use skills gained for the benefit of the Trust objectives.

Health and Safety

All volunteers must be made aware of and abide by health and safety requirements. They must be made aware of relevant health and safety issues when undertaking a task, both to themselves and to others.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided by the Trust where it is deemed necessary and according to Health & Safety practice notes. There may be restrictions placed on volunteers carrying out certain tasks.

A Surrey Wildlife Trust staff member will visit practical conservation groups to review and monitor health and safety practices and to assess whether further support or resources are needed.

To comply with Codes of Practice and for their safety, Surrey Wildlife Trust requires all young volunteers under 16 years of age to be accompanied by a parent or guardian (unless on formal work experience). A parent/guardian consent form must be submitted for volunteers aged between 16 and 18 and they must work as part of a group. A parent/guardian consent form must also be submitted for all work experience students under 18.

Insurance

Volunteers working with Surrey Wildlife Trust are covered by the Trust's insurance policies whilst on Surrey Wildlife Trust premises and/or actively engaged in Surrey Wildlife Trust business or activities, providing they follow Trust policies and procedures and any instructions or guidance provided by Surrey Wildlife Trust. This includes using equipment such as chainsaws, providing volunteers are competent to do so, have received appropriate training and obtained the relevant certification (or are undergoing such training and are adequately supervised). There is no set upper age limit to volunteering, but individuals must be fit and healthy to carry out tasks with the Trust.

Conduct

Surrey Wildlife Trust expects staff and volunteers to work together in a positive, respectful and accountable manner. Any issues of concern relating to volunteers and volunteering, from a volunteer or staff member, should be addressed to their supervisor or the Volunteer Development team.

Breaches of conduct e.g. unacceptable behaviour may lead to action being taken in accordance with the Problem Solving Procedure.

Recognition

Surrey Wildlife Trust aims to support its volunteers, recognise and celebrate their valuable contribution and will stay acquainted with legislation, best practice and opportunities relating to volunteering and implement these wherever possible.

Social events for volunteers will be organised where possible.

Assistance with personal and professional development may be given, e.g. with job-hunting, references and skills improvements for their tasks.

Abbreviations and definitions

The Trust – Surrey Wildlife Trust

Volunteer – A person who freely gives their time and energy for no financial gain to help with the work of Surrey Wildlife Trust

Staff – An employee of the Trust

Event leader – an appointed person who acts a main point of contact for a volunteer

This policy is to be reviewed every 2 years, with the chance for interim updates on application to the volunteer Development team or the Trust Leadership team.