



Policy for working with Volunteers

Introduction

The good management of volunteers is of necessity more about good practice than meeting legal obligations. The reason for this is that there is no legislation that specifically covers volunteer workers. In law there is no definition of what constitutes a volunteer worker, or what differentiates a volunteer worker from a paid employee.

The work of Tir Coed is dependant upon volunteer input in many guises, from Trustees directing the work of Tir Coed through to volunteer workers within our conservation and education programmes. For that reason we wish to be clear about the support and management that Tir Coed volunteers can expect. What follows is the voluntary commitment of minimum standards that Tir Coed will follow.

Selection and recruitment of volunteers

- **Engaging Volunteers**

Volunteers will be engaged in Tir Coed projects by a number of means

Word of Mouth

The best possible advertisement for Tir Coed is through positive recommendation by happy and fulfilled volunteers

Public Spaces

Tir Coed will place posters in libraries and other buildings with public access to promote the benefits of volunteering to conservation and the satisfaction that can be gained from volunteering

Umbrella Organisations

Local Voluntary Councils, volunteer bureau and youth organisations will be updated on volunteering opportunities within Tir Coed on a regular basis.

• Selection

Tir Coed staff managing volunteers will try to match volunteers with jobs that suit their skills and their aspirations, Tir Coed will gain this information from an informal discussion with the volunteer. Each Volunteer will be asked to complete a Tir Coed Volunteer info form with contact details, medical requirements, parental consent (if necessary) and what they hope to achieve through the volunteering programme

Police Checks

Where volunteers are working with vulnerable people (children, elderly people or people with mental health problems) Tir Coed should carry out a DBS check.

Tir Coed will request an Enhanced Disclosure form from the CRU on behalf of the Volunteer and will check and countersign the form. A DBS check will not take place until Tir Coed is satisfied that the volunteer is satisfactory in other respects, this implies that they will have been successfully interviewed concerning the work they are to undertake. DBS checking of Volunteers is free of charge.

The results of the DBS check are presented to the applicant and to Tir Coed.

The following points are important in terms of ensuring that Tir Coed does not infringe the civil liberties of the volunteer

- **A DBS check should not take place before a satisfactory meeting.**
- **The privacy of the volunteer must be protected**

- **DBS Disclosure information must only be seen by those who absolutely need to see it for operational reasons**
- **Records must be kept securely and then destroyed after use**

Should offences be disclosed, the applicant may be allowed to volunteer at the discretion of the management of Tir Coed, if the offences are of a type that does not affect the work considered and pose no threat to vulnerable people.

Insurance Cover

It is Tir Coed's responsibility to ensure that the volunteer is adequately covered by insurance for all activities that they undertake. Any unusual activity that may not be covered should be reported to a Tir Coed Project Officer, who will ensure that adequate cover has been provided, or is sought.

NOTE

The issue of selection is a difficult one within a voluntary organisation. A volunteer provides their time freely, and there is a school of thought that suggests that selection and the detailed processes above are over kill.

It cannot be stressed enough that the responsibility remains with Tir Coed for what takes place within the organisation's work plan and which volunteers partake. This is in every way similar to the responsibility that Tir Coed has to its employees. While the law may not offer employment protection in the same way, Tir Coed is open to civil action and a heinous disregard of responsibilities may also be considered a criminal infringement. Thus having minimum standards of application procedure protects Tir Coed.

- **Managing Volunteers**

Induction, Training and Supervision

Induction

Tir Coed is committed to making volunteers feel that they are an important part of the organisation.

Tir Coed will run introductory sessions for new volunteers as a group. This should cover issues such as the role of Tir Coed, its work programmes, its key conservation objectives and policies, how Tir Coed works with volunteers, who they can complain to if they have a problem, and Tir Coed's policy on expenses.

Specific task related induction will be delivered for each job to be undertaken.

Training

It is not unusual for volunteers (particularly in this sector) to volunteer out of a personal motivation to gain more skills in this area of work.

Where the volunteer is undertaking tasks using machines or tools, specific training will be given under the Health and Safety Codes of Practice. The Volunteer Leader will consider carefully what tasks can be safely undertaken by volunteers.

Supervision

The principle that should guide Tir Coed in terms of its supervision of volunteers is that, ultimately, Tir Coed may be held responsible for anything that the volunteer does.

It follows that volunteers must be supervised by the Volunteer Leader at all times. The Volunteer Leader can observe, train on the job, spot areas for future training, set goals and ensure that the volunteer is involved and appropriately busy.

Volunteers should be listened to; their perspective may be valuable and Leaders should respect their contribution.

Volunteers do not have the same disciplinary grievance processes as employed staff. Tir Coed does however recognise that, from time to time, volunteers may feel that they have been dealt with unfairly. In such circumstances, the volunteer should have access to a Tir Coed Project Officer who can listen to their

concerns. This cannot be laid down as disciplinary or grievance procedure, but it should be transparent, impartial and straightforward. It is important that Tir Coed is seen to be behaving appropriately, especially in the area of discrimination. Apart from being good practice this also may offer some protection to Tir Coed should a relationship with a volunteer go spectacularly wrong.

In theory, Tir Coed may ask an unsatisfactory volunteer to leave without fear of court action for unfair dismissal. In practice staff should always consider the moral issues of the volunteer body when dealing with volunteer difficulties.

Volunteer Status

While in law volunteers have very few rights, they can be an important part of how an organisation achieves its ambitions and work plan.

To ensure that Tir Coed does all that it can to preserve volunteer status Tir Coed will adopt the following as policy:

- All written or verbal communication with volunteers will avoid describing the relationship between Tir Coed and its volunteers in terms of binding obligations;
- Volunteers will be supervised at all times;
- Tir Coed will differentiate between paid staff and volunteers in all of the relevant processes that might be used to manage them. Thus where Tir Coed may develop a grievance process for volunteers it will be simpler than for paid staff and will be presented as a problem solving process rather than the more legally orientated policy for paid staff.
- In practice none of the above should mean that volunteers feel any less respected and valued than paid staff.

Volunteer Expenses

Volunteer expenses will be reimbursed against actual expenditure and ideally against receipts. A simple form for expenses will be created and given to all volunteers.

What constitutes a legitimate expense is at the discretion of Tir Coed; however, the following will normally fall into the category of legitimate expenses:

- Travel to and from the place of volunteering
- Travel in the course of volunteering
- Meals taken during the course of volunteering (up to a set value.)
- Protective clothing or other essential equipment

Promotion of the policy:

All Board members, staff and volunteers will receive a copy of this policy and be aware of its contents and requirements.

Monitoring:

Tir Coed will demonstrate its continuing commitment to the implementation of this policy by monitoring and reviewing every six months. The responsibility for this will lie with the Board of Directors.

Last Reviewed

25/09/15  R Leake