

VOLUNTEERING POLICY & PROCEDURE

Contact details

www.tircoed.org.uk/contact

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Tir Coed is committed to reviewing this policy every year, or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- any other significant change or event
- when the board of trustees deem it necessary

Original policy adopted by Trustees: 16 April 2009

Reviewed by the Trustees: 30 May 2022 (digitally), Signed off at trustee meeting 13 July 2022

This version incorporates and replaces the Volunteering Policy developed in 2009 and last reviewed in 2018.

Current review date: 30th May 2022		
On behalf of the Board of Trustees	Signed: Roger Thomas	Position: Trustee
	Signed: Hannah Wilcox Brook	Position: Trustee
Next scheduled review date: April 2023		

Our Policies are intended to supplement good judgement; their spirit should be respected as well as their wording.

POLICY STATEMENT

Acknowledgement

The integrity of our organisation can be judged by our actions and responses to the issues we face on a local, regional, national and global scale. As an environmental and social justice organisation we have a responsibility to do the right thing to protect the world we live in for, current and future human generations and especially our charitable beneficiaries.

The purpose of the policy:

- To share Tir Coed's commitment to recruiting, supporting, developing and recognising the achievements of volunteers
- To communicate clear and transparent information about the minimum support and management that Tir Coed volunteers can expect
- To provide a sound framework for recruiting, supporting, developing and recognising the achievements of volunteers.

We recognise that:

- The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out legal obligation for public bodies to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being in Wales

The policy applies to:

- All aspects of management, behaviour and policy which have an impact on the volunteer and volunteering
- All who work for, or volunteer with, Tir Coed. We expect sub-contracted individuals to adhere to their own up to date and rigorous policies and, where they do not have their own policies, to understand and respect Tir Coed's policies.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of senior management to ensure that the Volunteering Policy and associated procedures are adhered to.

Other related policies and procedures

- Recruitment Policy DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Guidance
- Health & Safety Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection (GDPR) Policy
- Travel and Expenses Guidelines

POLICY STATEMENT

Tir Coed is a charity that connects people with land (Tir) and woods (Coed), delivering learning and wellbeing programmes outdoors across rural counties in mid and west Wales.

Our Mission is to unlock the potential of land and woods to provide community facilities, educational and health activities, and to create job opportunities for disadvantaged individuals in rural Wales, whilst aiming to make a positive lasting change.

Definition

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and an essential component of democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain. Tir Coed will not ask volunteers to cover for staff roles or to replace staff positions.

The work of Tir Coed is dependent upon volunteer input in many guises, from Trustees directing the work of Tir Coed, through to volunteer workers within our conservation and education programmes. The input of volunteers benefits the environment, the communities in which we work and our organisation and as such are highly valued.

Recruitment & Selection of Volunteers

Recruitment

Tir Coed is committed to recruiting volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a range of needs. Volunteers will therefore, be engaged and recruited by a number of means, including:

- **Word of Mouth:** The best possible advertisement for Tir Coed is through positive recommendation by happy and fulfilled volunteers. Volunteers may also be engaged through Tir Coed's community events, group sessions and training courses
- **Social Media:** Using various social media platforms to promote the opportunities and benefits of volunteering with Tir Coed and to reach a broad spectrum of potential volunteers
- **Public Spaces:** Tir Coed may place posters in libraries, supermarkets, publicly accessible buildings and community noticeboards to promote the opportunities and benefits of volunteering with Tir Coed to conservation and the satisfaction that can be gained from volunteering.
- **Referral and Network Organisations:** Local Voluntary Associations, online directories and relevant referral organisations will be updated on volunteering opportunities within Tir Coed on a regular basis.

Selection

When prospective volunteers contact Tir Coed, the designated Volunteer Leader (who may be a staff member or freelance tutor) will have an initial discussion with the volunteer to consider the various volunteering roles available, read the role description and assess suitability for their preferred role. The Volunteer Leader will try to match volunteers with roles, which suit their skills and aspirations.

If the volunteer is not deemed suitable for a specific role for any reason, this should be made clear to them and they should be signposted to the local volunteer bureau.

When both parties are satisfied with regard to suitability, volunteers 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.

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

Where volunteers are supporting or working regularly with vulnerable people (e.g. children, elderly people or people with physical or learning disabilities or mental illness), Tir Coed will carry out a DBS check following our DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Guidance

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. The results of the DBS check are presented to the volunteer 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 permitted 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 Manager 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 otiose. But it cannot be stressed enough that the responsibility remains with Tir Coed for what takes place within the organisation's work plan and in 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.

Induction, Training and Supervision

Induction

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

Tir Coed runs introductory sessions for new volunteers as a group. These sessions 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 report to and can complain to if they have a problem, and Tir Coed's policy on expenses. At this stage, volunteers are told what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour: that respect should be shown towards all other volunteers, staff, members of the public and the environment at all times. 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 which tasks can be safely undertaken by volunteers.

Depending upon the role (and funding available), volunteers may be encouraged to follow external training to support their volunteering role or skills development.

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 a Volunteer Leader (who may themselves be a volunteer) at all times. The Volunteer Leader can observe, train on the job, identify areas for future training, set goals and ensure that the volunteer is involved and carrying out appropriate activities.

Volunteer Leaders should make clear to the volunteers what is expected of them in each and every session. Volunteers should be listened to; their perspective shall be valued and Leaders should respect their contribution.

Volunteers do not have the same disciplinary and 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 discuss this with the Volunteer Leader. If they are not satisfied, they should follow a 'Problem-solving Procedure' in which a Project Co-ordinator, their Manager or, ultimately, a Trustee or even mediation may be involved to help resolve the situation.

If disputes or differences arise between volunteers or between volunteers and the public or staff members, Tir Coed is committed to listening to the views of all relevant parties and settling disputes quickly and amicably.

In theory, Tir Coed may ask a volunteer whose attitude or behaviour is not appropriate to the task or group to change activity or group. They may ask a volunteer to leave without fear of court action for unfair dismissal, but only in the case of extreme behaviours or when alternatives have been discussed and tried. They should always treat a volunteer fairly and transparently. Volunteers may face a range of issues and volunteers should have the opportunity for further training/supervision, as this may alleviate the situation, or for following a 'problem solving' procedure above.

Volunteer Status

While in law volunteers have very few rights, they are an important part of how Tir Coed achieves our aims and objectives. To ensure that Tir Coed maintains best practice in volunteer management we have adopted 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. For example, the grievance process for volunteers is simpler than for paid staff and is a 'Problem-Solving' Procedure.
- Volunteers should never feel any less respected and valued than paid staff.

Recognition and Reward

How we recognise volunteers is specific to the individual as some people enjoy public thanks, celebrations or certificates, and others will find the role intrinsically rewarding, just needing to know that their efforts make a positive difference. Volunteers can be recognised through regular supervision and other meetings, by listening, recognising their contribution e.g. in newsletters etc, and by saying "thanks." Volunteers are encouraged to be part of national volunteer recognition schemes.

Settling Differences

If disputes or differences arise between volunteers or between volunteers and the public or staff members, Tir Coed is committed to listening to the views of all relevant parties and settling disputes quickly and amicably.

Volunteer Expenses

Volunteer expenses will be reimbursed against actual expenditure and ideally against receipts. A simple form for expenses is available for all volunteers and staff managing volunteers should refer to the guidance.

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 12 months. The responsibility for this will lie with the Board of Trustees.