

The Carbon Community (TCC) Volunteer Policy

Introduction

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practices by which we involve volunteers and is relevant to volunteers and trustees within the organisation. It aims to create a common understanding and to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure the highest standards are maintained in relation to the management of volunteers.

Our commitments

We recognise volunteers as an integral part of The Carbon Community. Their contribution is critical to our strategic aims to bring together trees, science and people. We aim to encourage and support volunteer involvement to ensure that volunteering benefits the organisation, stakeholders, our scientific research and the volunteers themselves.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure our Trustees, scientists involved in research at our site, and our Forestry partner are clear about the role of volunteers, and the importance of fostering good working relationships.

We are committed to offering a flexible range of opportunities and to encouraging a diversity of people to volunteer with us, including those from under-represented groups such as youth, people with a disability, older people and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

We recognise that there are costs associated with volunteer involvement and will seek to ensure adequate resources are available for the development and support of volunteering.

We recognise that people have a right to participate in the life of their communities through volunteering and can contribute in many ways.

We recognise our responsibility to organise volunteering efficiently and sensitively so that the valuable gift of the volunteer's time is best used to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Volunteers will not be used to replace paid staff. Note that The Carbon Community does not currently have paid staff.

Who is a volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals who undertake activity on behalf of The Carbon Community, unpaid and of their own free choice. Work experience placements and internships are not the same as volunteering.

Our Trustees are volunteers with responsibility for the governance and running of the organisation.

Volunteers may be involved on a one – off, short term or on a longer term, regular basis. They may be involved:

- in citizen science for our research programs
- in onsite activities at Glandwr Forest including hedge-laying, tree planting, scrub clearing, path maintenance etc
- in the direct delivery of our services
- on our board of management as trustees
- in community engagement to raise awareness of our work
- in one-off events and promotional activities
- at Glandwr Forest, our site in Wales, in community venues, or volunteering from home

Volunteers are valued for:

- making a direct contribution to our environmental research
- helping to enhance the habitat and experience at Glandwr Forest
- bringing additional skills and new perspectives to the organisation
- enabling us to be more responsive and flexible in our approach
- championing our cause within the wider community
- enhancing the quality of our work and the volunteer experience on site
- promoting the wellbeing of users of services, local communities and themselves.

Roles and responsibilities

The Trustees, as a group, have overall responsibility for the development and coordination of voluntary activities, with one Trustee playing a lead role, including volunteering policies and procedures, and the welfare of volunteers.

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. There is no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, for the volunteer to attend or to undertake particular tasks or for the organisation to provide continuing opportunities for voluntary involvement, provision of training or benefits. However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both of what the organisation expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the organisation.

The organisation expects volunteers:

- to be reliable and honest
- to uphold the organisation's values and comply with organisational policies
- to make the most of opportunities given, eg for training

- to contribute positively to the aims of the organisation and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute
- to carry out tasks within agreed guidelines

Volunteers can expect:

- to have clear information about what is and is not expected of them
- to receive adequate support and training, including health and safety guidance and required personal protective equipment (PPE)
- to be insured and to volunteer in a safe environment
- to be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner
- to have opportunities for personal development
- to be recognised and appreciated
- to be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable
- to know what to do if something goes wrong

Recruitment and selection

Equal opportunities principles will be adhered to in recruiting volunteers. Opportunities will be widely promoted to attract interest from different sectors of the community. Positive action to target recruitment may be used where appropriate.

Most of our volunteering activities are outdoors, supporting our Community Science Program and the upkeep of Glandwr Forest. Details for each event are made available via our Eventbrite platform, which will also be used to communicate any changes to planned activities.

Information will be made available to those enquiring about volunteering.

For other volunteer opportunities, including activities such as communication, fundraising, translation, mapping and analysis, information will be made available, including written role descriptions that set out the nature and purpose of the volunteering role, key tasks, required skills, and benefits.

Volunteer recruitment is role-dependent. For some roles, this could involve an informal interview, an application form and the taking of references. The process will be defined and consistent for any given role - for example, the recruitment process for trustees, regular volunteers and volunteers for one-off events will be tailored in each case and may differ from one another.

Induction and training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

Code of conduct

The Carbon Community wants volunteering to be a positive and enjoyable experience for everyone involved. Volunteers are expected to uphold our values and to behave in a way that is respectful, inclusive and consistent with our aims. In particular, we expect volunteers:

- to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and not to engage in any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination
- to follow reasonable instructions from the activity leader or designated supervisor
- to respect the natural environment and wildlife at Glandwr Forest and other sites
- not to attend activities under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or to bring illegal substances onto our sites or events
- to use social media responsibly when referring to The Carbon Community, and not to post content that could bring the organisation into disrepute.

If a volunteer's behaviour causes serious concern or is inconsistent with this policy and our values, we may decide to end the volunteering arrangement. Wherever possible, we will discuss concerns with the volunteer and seek to resolve issues informally in the first instance, in line with the "Dealing with problems" section of this policy.

Health and safety

Most of our volunteering activities are outdoors and involve practical conservation tasks. The Carbon Community has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for volunteers and to manage health and safety risks in a sensible and proportionate way. A risk assessment is conducted for all volunteer events and roles. For events at Glandwr Forest, this risk assessment will be printed and available for review on request.

Volunteers receive a safety briefing before starting tasks. Where required, suitable tools, equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, safety glasses, waterproof trousers and hard hats, are provided, and volunteers will be shown how to use them safely.

There will be a trained First Aider on site for all volunteer events at Glandwr Forest.

Volunteers are expected to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions. This includes following the instructions of the



activity leader, using tools and equipment as directed, reporting any accidents, incidents or near-misses, and letting the activity leader know about any relevant health conditions that may affect participation in activities. The Carbon Community holds insurance that covers volunteers while they are carrying out agreed activities on behalf of the organisation.

The Carbon Community will ask all volunteers to sign a waiver prior to each event clarifying that they are aware of the risks involved and their responsibilities to let the supervisors know of any relevant medical conditions.

Safeguarding

The Carbon Community is committed to promoting the welfare and safety of everyone who takes part in our activities, including children, young people and adults at risk. All volunteers share a responsibility to help us maintain a safe environment at Glandwr Forest and at any other venues where we work. Volunteers will be made aware of our Safeguarding Policy and how to raise a concern. Any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, young person or adult at risk must be reported as soon as possible to the nominated safeguarding lead or, in their absence, to a Trustee. Where a volunteer role involves regulated activity with children or adults at risk, or otherwise requires a check, volunteers may be asked to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and to complete appropriate safeguarding training.

Where volunteers are under 18, we will require consent from a parent or carer, who must provide appropriate supervision during activities. We will make every effort to communicate clearly with parents and carers about the nature of the activities and any specific risks.

Support and supervision

At all volunteering events at Glandwr Forest there will be a minimum of two supervisors, including at least one Trustee and one Volunteer Supervisor. They will provide guidance, support and supervision.

Volunteers are not permitted to work alone on site.

For other roles, Volunteers will be offered support and supervision as appropriate, and these will be discussed during induction. Arrangements vary according to the volunteer and the role undertaken.

Recognition

Volunteers will be given the opportunity to share their views and opinions with the wider organisation, at events, meetings etc. Formal recognition of the contribution of volunteers is expressed through annual reports, website articles, social media, and during award celebrations.

Dealing with problems

The organisation aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. It seeks to ensure that volunteers' views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly. We will attempt to deal with any problems informally and at the earliest opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person to whom they can turn in the case of any difficulty. Volunteers will be made aware of the organisation's complaints policy and how to use it. They will also be made aware of how inappropriate behaviour by volunteers will be addressed by the organisation.

Expenses

The Carbon Community is not able to offer travel expenses, we are aware that this may limit who is able to volunteer with us, and we will keep this position under review as our funding situation develops. Where this is a specific limitation, The Carbon Community is open to discussing how to enable a volunteer to participate.

The Carbon Community will provide free coffee, tea, snacks and lunch for our events at Glandwr Forest. We also provide free parking and will offer to collect volunteers from the train station.

Where we are able to meet specific costs for a particular project or event (for example, providing refreshments on site or covering agreed travel costs), this will be clearly stated in advance and volunteers will be given simple information on what can be claimed and how to make a claim.

Feedback

After each volunteering or education event, volunteers and attendees are encouraged to



complete a questionnaire to gather their feedback. This feedback is highly valued by the Trustees to help improve the volunteer experience and the organisation.

Moving on

Depending on the role, when volunteers move on from volunteering with us they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit questionnaire. They will also be given the opportunity to discuss their responses to the questionnaire more fully. Volunteers who have remained with the organisation for at least 3 months will have the right to request a reference. Volunteers will be supported to move on to other options.

Data protection and confidentiality

We collect and use personal information about volunteers so that we can manage volunteering safely and effectively. This may include contact details, emergency contact information, relevant medical information and records of your volunteering with us. We will handle this information in line with our Privacy Policy and current data protection legislation, and will only share it where this is necessary for health and safety, safeguarding, or other legitimate organisational purposes.

Volunteers may, in the course of their activities, come across information about The Carbon Community, other volunteers, or members of the public which is not in the public domain. Volunteers are expected to treat such information as confidential and not to share it inappropriately, including on social media.

Other relevant documents

Information regarding the volunteering experience at Glandwr Forest can be found on our website.

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