



Volunteer Policy

Purpose

Volunteering is defined as *'the voluntary commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, without payment, undertaken freely and by choice'*. The Steeple Woodland Project relies entirely upon Volunteers, each of whom is a valued member of the Project team. Volunteer work primarily entails helping to maintain the Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve.

This Volunteer Policy recognises the contribution made by Volunteers and provides a framework for Volunteer management, whilst recognising the voluntary nature of the arrangement. All those who contribute to the Steeple Woodland Project, including the Officers, the Committee and the Work Party Team Leads are Volunteers. As a Constituted Community Group, the Steeple Woodland Project is a 'not for profit' organisation and does not operate for private profit; any funds generated are used to grow and develop its aims.

Steeple Woodland Project strives to provide a volunteering experience where Volunteers feel safe, valued and supported. The Project recognises that volunteering opens opportunities for people to develop their skills, experience and social interactions which can increase confidence, self-esteem and well-being whilst reducing isolation.

Value Statement

Steeple Woodland Project values the involvement of Volunteers in its work. Volunteers reflect the interests and needs of the Project, and contribute their individual perspectives. The Project recognises Volunteers as central to its aims, where volunteering is mutually beneficial. The Project benefits from the skills, experience, and enthusiasm of Volunteers, and Volunteers gain personally from the experience. The Project is committed to managing Volunteers in a way that ensures that the needs of both the Project and the Volunteers are met. Steeple Woodland Project strives to create a diverse and inclusive organisation which is committed to ensuring equality of access to Volunteer opportunities and equality of treatment for Volunteers in all the Project's policies and practices.

Organisational Structure of Steeple Woodland Project

Steeple Woodland Project aims to manage the Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve through a Management Agreement with Cornwall Council and according to a Management Plan. The Project is run by the Steeple Woodland Project Group, a constituted community group, which holds responsibility for the environmental management of the site in association with Cornwall Council. The Project's Management Plan and Constitution are available on the Steeple Woodland Nature Reserve website (www.steeplewoods.org). The Steeple Woodland Project Group or "Committee" meets quarterly. Volunteers are actively encouraged to attend and contribute to meetings and are welcome to join the Group, subject to approval by existing Group members. Only Group members may vote at meetings.

Volunteer Involvement

Steeple Woodland Project identifies roles for Volunteers which contribute to the work of the Project. An assessment of potential risk to Volunteers is carried out when designing Volunteer roles, and



strategies are put in place to minimise the risks. Volunteers are fully protected by the Project's public liability and personal accident insurance. This excludes the use of Volunteers' cars in connection with their voluntary work, when Volunteers are responsible for ensuring they have adequate and continued personal cover.

Steeple Woodland Project reimburses Volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses provided they are agreed beforehand with a Project Lead and when accompanied by proof of expenditure. Steeple Woodland Project endeavours to provide adequate and appropriate facilities, equipment and resources to enable Volunteers to fulfil their roles.

Volunteer Work Party Lead

Each Work Party event has a designated Work Party Team Lead who is responsible for the overall management of Volunteer activity. The Lead oversees the implementation of this Policy and deals with any complaints or difficult situations relating to volunteers. The Lead provides support and supervision and has experience in managing, supervising and supporting volunteers.

Training & Support

Volunteers are briefed by the Work Party Team Lead about the task(s) to be undertaken at each Work Party and are given the necessary information and training to enable them to perform them safely and with confidence.

Volunteer feedback

Steeple Woodland Project recognises the positive impact of volunteering for the Volunteers themselves and for those with whom they work. The Project recognises the importance of Volunteers' ideas and opinions, and encourages communication with and between Volunteers in appropriate ways, including a WhatsApp group available for all Volunteers to join, regular e-mail updates, social media platforms, quarterly meetings at which Volunteer attendance is encouraged, and weekly Work Parties which are followed by tea and cake. Feedback from Volunteers, whether positive or negative, verbal or formal (by e-mail to the Project Chairperson or an Officer), is welcomed and encouraged.

Volunteer Complaints

Steeple Woodland Project takes complaints about or by Volunteers seriously (see *Complaints Policy*). A complaints procedure is in place whereby minor complaints or issues about or by Volunteers or their work are managed informally in the first instance, through the support and supervision procedures outlined in the Complaints Policy. In the event of more serious issues, formal procedures will be followed. In the event of a serious complaint upheld against a Volunteer, subject to a decision by the Project Committee, the subject of the complaint may be asked to cease volunteering for the Project. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the matter will be handed over to the police.

Volunteer Recruitment

Steeple Woodland Project is committed to involving all sections of the community and implements a fair and open system for the recruitment of volunteers, promoting the opportunity to volunteer widely throughout Carbis Bay and neighbouring areas. As an organisation the Project is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to compliance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974,



recognising the contributions that can be made by individuals from diverse backgrounds (see *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*, and *Safeguarding Policy*).

Safeguarding As part of its duty of care and safeguarding arrangements, prospective Volunteers with Steeple Woodland Project will be asked about any unspent convictions. Whether or not a criminal conviction prevents an individual from becoming a Volunteer depends on the type of offence and its relevance to the volunteering role. Those with unspent convictions will be asked to provide details confidentially, either written and enclosed in a sealed envelope or verbally, to the designated safeguarding officer (DSO) or to a Work Party Lead/Committee member. All information will be dealt with according to the Project's *Safeguarding Policy*. Information will only be shared with others on a 'need to know' basis as part of the risk management process. Individuals will be informed beforehand if disclosure to others is necessary, giving them the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to continue with their application to volunteer with the Project.

It may be necessary to liaise with the relevant Probation Officer or Police Offender Manager to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to manage any specific risk issues; this is especially important where there are safeguarding concerns relating to access to children or other vulnerable individuals who may be on site. Failure to disclose unspent convictions (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) when required to do so, may result in an individual's dismissal from a volunteer role.

Volunteers are encouraged to remain vigilant when dealing with vulnerable adults and children, and to report any safeguarding concerns to the DSO or, if not available, to the Chairperson or an Officer. Photographs including children or vulnerable adults should only be taken if express permission has been granted by their responsible adult (see the *Safeguarding Policy* for further details).

Confidentiality

In the course of volunteering, sensitive or personal information may be learned about other individuals or the Project. It is expected that Volunteers will maintain confidentiality and not divulge such information to third parties, including other Volunteers and Project members, without the express permission of the person concerned. Where it is appropriate to divulge such information, for example when raising safeguarding concerns, this will be done on a "need to know" basis (see the *Data Protection Policy* for further details).

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves with courtesy, honesty and integrity and to act in good faith. Sensitive information disclosed by Volunteers during volunteer sessions will be treated confidentially. Social media should be used with due caution. Abusive comments made about other Volunteers or the Project, whether verbally or on social media, will not be tolerated.

All those who volunteer with the Steeple Woodland Project are expected to adhere to the **RESPECT Code of Conduct**, whereby Volunteers:

- **Respect** the environment and each other
- Understand that the **Environment** and its protection is at the core of the Project's mission and volunteers' work
- Are **Safe**, in the knowledge that the Project nurtures a team culture with safe working practices, and safety from intimidation, bullying or harassment



- Are assured of **Peace**, with no tolerance of verbal or physical anger or violence
- Are assured of **Equality**, with no discrimination according to age, race, sexual orientation or other characteristics
- **Care** for each other, through support, honesty and openness to others' needs, and for the Project's property, finances, images, messages and reputation, thereby assuring the well-being of both Project and Volunteers
- **Trust** fellow Volunteers and the Project Leads, in the knowledge that relevant, timely and appropriate support, resourcing and training will be provided when asked for or found to be necessary.

Volunteer training, duties and responsibilities

Work Parties are held regularly once each week and on one Sunday each month, at which Volunteers are given specific tasks by the Work Party Team Lead, which they are asked to perform to the best of their ability. The Steeple Woodland Project will do its best to provide Volunteers with initial training on-site, and any further ongoing training that may be considered necessary as required. If a Volunteer encounters problems with a given task, this should be raised by the Volunteer with the Work Party Team Lead, who will do their best to resolve them. The Steeple Woodland Project will provide Volunteers with training in Health and Safety matters relating to Volunteers' tasks. Volunteers are covered by the Steeple Woodland Project's limited liability insurance.

Further details of volunteering with the Project that may arise may be supplied on request by Project Leads, who will do their best to address any queries.