

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COUNTRY PARKS

VOLUNTEERS HANDBOOK



2019



Country Park's Vision:

To provide and develop safe and attractive green spaces for the benefit of the wildlife, people and communities of Warwickshire and visitors from across the region and beyond.

Our Priorities

Focusing on four priorities will enable us to meet our vision and aim for the Country Parks Service.

We will continually seek out and implement:

- 1. New ways to reduce and minimise our expenditure;**
- 2. New ways to work more efficiently and build capacity within our teams;**
- 3. New opportunities to generate income from our resources;**
- 4. Effective operational and maintenance solutions to sustain our business.**

What is the Park's portfolio?

The parks portfolio is mature, with some sites having been managed by the Council for over 40 years. The sites are;

- Kingsbury Water Park
- Pooley Country Park (adjacent Polesworth, a former deep coal mine site that transferred into the parks portfolio in 2002)
- Hartshill Hayes Country Park
- Ryton Pools Country Park
- Burton Dassett Hills Country Park
- The Stratford Greenway
- The Kenilworth Greenway
- The Offchurch Greenway
- Ufton Fields Nature Reserve (leased to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)
- Draycote Water Country Park (leased to Seven Trent Water)

How are volunteers involved?

All of our directly managed sites welcome volunteers, while we also work with volunteers at some of the other sites on a more irregular basis.

What do volunteers do?

Practical conservation tasks including:

- Hedgelaying
- Installing/repairing bridges/boardwalks
- Installing gates
- Surfacing & drainage work
- Clearing vegetation
- Pond clearance/improvements
- Surveying
- Assisting with events
- Litter collection

Other options may include:

- Helping in shops/tea room
- Flora and fauna surveys
- Visitor surveys
- Assistance with events/public

In return we provide the following:

- Advice, assistance and information
- Free coaching/mentoring/skills development
- Practical training and other training as appropriate
- Promote the work of the volunteers through media
- Provide free uniform (long term volunteers)
- A volunteers 'thank you' lunch once a year
- Free refreshments
- Insurance cover - There are no age restrictions relating to our liability covers. For the personal accident cover to operate, the volunteers must be aged between 12 and 80 years inclusive
- References (on request)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Do I have to commit to a certain amount of days/hours?

- No, you can come along to any volunteer day, how much time you wish to commit is up to you. If you wish to leave part way through a task, then just let the volunteer supervisor know you are leaving.

What do I need to bring?

- Your enthusiasm, commitment and willingness to get 'stuck in'! In addition for practical tasks, old clothes are the best option. A

waterproof jacket and over trousers and long sturdy boots or Wellingtons would be good. You will usually need to bring your own lunch if you are staying with us all day.

What happens if the weather is bad?

- Generally work will continue despite the weather, however if the supervisor considers it unsafe to continue then the decision will be taken to stop work. Inside work is then often considered with tuition in the maintenance and sharpening of basic hand tools being one option.

Do I need previous experience?

- Previous experience is always useful, especially for practical work, but not essential.

Is there an age limit?

- If you are under 16 then parental consent will be required, and we require a parent or guardian to accompany you. Otherwise, if you are keen and physically fit and like being outdoors aged 12 -80 then you are covered by our insurance. (If you have any medical conditions, we need to be made aware of them for you and your fellow volunteers safety).

What tools will I use?

- Hand tools and any other tools/equipment as deemed appropriate/necessary by our parks staff and subject to satisfactory competency assessments as required. Use of certain vehicles and battery operated and power tools at the discretion of the supervisor. Note : certain powered equipment, including chainsaws are not permitted to be used by volunteers due to the public nature of our sites.

Are there any training opportunities?

- Yes, Training must be given to all new volunteers so that the County Council complies with legal requirements.

[E-learning](#) is available for volunteers - the purpose of this e-Learning is to give an overview of the key information volunteers will need to in their role as a volunteer for Warwickshire County Council. (Search for Volunteer Induction on Wilma).

Your supervisor may prefer to present to you as a group using the [volunteers induction slide set](#) and the [induction workbook for volunteers](#).

- There will be other opportunities for on-the-job training and development of skills and opportunities to learn new skills and use tools and equipment.

HEALTH & SAFETY

As an employer, WCC has a duty to its employees to ensure their health, safety and welfare so far as is reasonably practicable. It also has a duty to members of the public who may be affected by employees work activities. As volunteers WCC should not ask you to do anything that puts your health and safety at risk. You are required to read and sign the Country Parks Health & Safety Policy. This is a condensed version of the Corporate Health & Safety Policy appropriate to our work. Full policies can be found in the Induction Box for the site. Please ask a member of staff if you wish to look at this. You are covered under WCC insurance whilst working as a volunteer on any of our sites. If you behave in an irresponsible or dangerous manner, or are abusive, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs you may be asked to leave.

Volunteers need to be willing to:

- Help Country Parks achieve its aims and objectives
- Submit to health screening or physical assessments necessary to assess your suitability to undertake particular activities
- Attend any support, training or supervision sessions useful to the tasks being undertaken for your personal development or to meet health and safety requirements as required
- Fill in an accident/incident form if an accident occurs whilst working on behalf of WCC and report all accidents, incidents and near misses as soon as possible to a member of staff.
- Work as part of a team with other volunteers and staff under the overall guidance of a supervisor
- Tell the supervisor if you think there is a problem or if certain medical conditions may affect your ability to carry out a task that day
- Carry out agreed tasks and commit the time and energy required
- Dress appropriately for the conditions and where PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) if deemed appropriate by staff member for the task undertaken.
- Be courteous, respectful and helpful to staff, other volunteers and the public
- Follow volunteer guidelines and instructions from supervisors
- Agree to abide by risk assessments, health & safety policies and procedures, and codes of practice.

In return volunteers can expect from WCC:

- Equal opportunities to undertake meaningful and enjoyable tasks of real value within clear and appropriate programmes of work
- Appropriate and safe working conditions with the right training and tools for the tasks assigned

- Tasks that match the needs of WCC with the skills, knowledge, experience and interest of the volunteer
- Personal development through social interaction, training and guidance

All volunteers will be provided with relevant personal protective equipment (PPE) as required, this may include hard hats, gloves, eye protection or ear defenders as appropriate to the task in hand and the risk assessment for that task.

Regular volunteers will be provided with a uniform of sweatshirt and polo shirt.

Volunteers must keep a safe distance when working near each other – check with your supervisor if unsure.

Volunteers will be allocated tasks by experience and will not be asked to use any tool they are unfamiliar with or do not wish to use. Give yourself regular breaks throughout the day to avoid over fatigue and take water with you to prevent dehydration.

Volunteers will not be allowed to use anything other than hand tools unless they have attended a specific training course or have been authorised and cleared to use other equipment by a member of WCC staff.

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Code of Conduct

Please ensure you have read and understood the Code of Conduct for Volunteers (CR2). If you are unsure of anything, please speak to a member of staff.

Risk Assessments

All work activities have been risk assessed and safe working practices developed from these assessments. They are written down and are available for you to look at. You are required to abide by these risk assessments. Your supervisor should make you aware of the risk assessment for the activity you are doing before starting the task. We need to record your acceptance of the working practices for health and safety.

How your information may be used

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We will only use the personal data provided by you in connection with your volunteering role with Warwickshire Country Parks. Your data will not be shared, other than in the event of an emergency.

Please let us know when any of your contact details change. You have the right to know what information we hold about you and we try to make sure it is correct.

If you would like further information, visit our website:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/privacy or contact our Customer Service Centre

at: Warwickshire County Council, Shire hall, Warwick CV34 4RR

Telephone: 01926 410410

- **Volunteers –**

- **Common Standards Framework for WCC Managers (not including schools' employees)**

- This is a basic framework for the County Council to ensure uniformity of process and good practice across all departments when working with volunteers and to achieve a positive working relationship for both parties
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- Volunteers have been involved in working with the County Council in various ways over many years but there is an increased focus on voluntary effort as some communities take on more responsibility for delivering local services. Support from volunteers is welcomed to enhance council services and volunteers can benefit from the experience and opportunities available
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- **These are the Common Standards which all managers must apply when recruiting all volunteers:**
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Checklist	Tick box
<p>Safeguarding All volunteers whose work may involve unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults must undergo a criminal records check <u>before</u> undertaking any such work, and thereafter be subject to regular 're-checks' at intervals of no less than three years (or one year where the work involves unsupervised access to 'children in need'). Where such checks reveal a positive result a decision to allow that person to start, or continue, undertaking voluntary work must be taken by the relevant manager, in consultation with the HR Advisory Service.</p>	

<p>Recruitment and Selection</p> <p>The County Council welcomes volunteers of all ages and backgrounds but also reserves the right to decline to accept offers from people wishing to undertake voluntary work in service areas for which it is responsible and to terminate such arrangements.</p>	
<p>Supervision</p> <p>Volunteers will be appropriately supervised at all times. In the event that volunteers have any complaint they shall be provided with the opportunity to raise the issue(s) concerned with an appropriate manager or supervisor.</p>	
<p>Health & Safety</p> <p>The County Council will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of those undertaking voluntary work, including the provision of training where appropriate, making volunteers aware of relevant risk assessments and providing any relevant equipment or materials. Volunteers should comply with all related health and safety obligations, local safety rules and codes of safe working practices. Volunteers must disclose any information which pertains to their own health and safety and take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others.</p>	
<p>Liability</p> <p>Volunteers will be indemnified against third party claims under the County Council's Public Liability Policy while carrying out their duties. Volunteers using their own transport for fulfilling their role should ensure they are fit to drive and have the appropriate motor insurance which covers use of the vehicle for volunteering purposes</p>	
<p>Training</p> <p>Volunteers will be provided with any necessary training required to undertake their work competently and safely</p>	
<p>Equality & Diversity</p> <p>Volunteers will be treated at all times within the County Council's Equality & Diversity policy and are required to follow that policy in undertaking their work. Details of this policy will be drawn to the attention of all volunteers</p>	

<p>Personal data Volunteers are required to provide such personal data about themselves as are necessary to maintain contact, including name, address and relevant contact details, and other data necessary to meet safeguarding requirements and other reasonable requirements of the County Council. Such data will be stored confidentially within required time limits and within relevant GDPR legislation.</p>	
<p>Confidentiality Volunteers are required to treat data and information that they come into contact in the course of their work with confidentiality and within relevant data protection legislation</p>	
<p>Reimbursement of expenses – if managers agree to reimburse any expenses to volunteers such claims must be supported by receipts and processed in the same way as for County Council employees. Any mileage or other allowance must be the same as allowances paid to WCC employees.</p>	
<p>References If a volunteer requests a reference in pursuit of paid or unpaid employment we will meet all such reasonable requests.</p>	

- **Manager's signature**.....**Date**.....
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- **Volunteer's signature**.....**Date**.....

Appendices:

- Personal Info Form**
- Exit Questionnaire**
- WCC Vols Policy**
- H&S Codes of Practice**