

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – JOBS, ECONOMY AND
TRANSPORT**

9 July 2013

Report of the Acting Strategic Director – Environmental Services

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE
DRAFT VOLUNTEER POLICY 2013-2018 (JOBS, ECONOMY AND
TRANSPORT)**

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To seek approval for the publication of a draft Volunteer Policy for a six week, public consultation. A final version, incorporating an Equality Analysis and relevant comments arising from the consultation, will be presented to a future Cabinet meeting for adoption by the County Council.

(2) **Information and Analysis** Over the last three years (2010/11 – 2012/13), volunteering with the Countryside Service has generated an average of 4,090 volunteer days per year, with an equivalent value of £775,537 per year. The Countryside Service target for 2013/14 is 4,840 volunteer days.

The Countryside Service currently works with volunteers in two ways: firstly, with individuals volunteering directly with the Service and secondly, with community-based volunteer groups working for and on behalf of the Service. The draft Policy under consideration is given in Appendix 1. It sets out the proposed key principles and objectives for working with the first group and provides a framework for best practice. It is intended that the Policy is reviewed and updated as necessary, for example, to comply with changes in the law, and at least every 5 years, and will be underpinned by guidelines for volunteers and managers. Best practice guidance for working with community-based groups will be produced at a later date.

Volunteers are members of the public and, hence, will be managed in a different way to employees.

It is intended that the Council enters into an Agreement with individual volunteers. The purpose of the Agreement is to set out the role/duties the volunteer is being asked to undertake, the time the volunteer can offer, what the volunteer can expect from the Council and confirmation that this is a Volunteer Agreement. The volunteer will be expected to adhere to relevant Derbyshire County Council policies, which would include equality and diversity, health and

safety and policies relating to confidentiality and data protection. The Agreement will not be legally binding and is not intended to create an employment relationship: the volunteer has the opportunity to withdraw their services at any time. The Draft Volunteer Agreement is shown at Appendix 2.

The role of volunteers is not to replace paid staff, although volunteers may carry out tasks that a paid worker also does in order to expand their skills and experience. The Countryside Service engages with volunteers in recognition of the wide range of skills which they bring for the benefit of the community.

In preparing the document the Countryside Service has worked closely with the Director of Human Resources and the Director of Legal Services, as well as the two Local Access Forums for the County who have an advisory role in strategic access and outdoor recreation issues. Informal discussions have also taken place with some of the Countryside Service's key volunteers, and with partners with which the Council has Service Level Agreements (e.g. Peak District National Park Authority, Groundwork and The Conservation Volunteers).

Whilst there is no legal obligation to consult, it is intended to consult on the draft Policy over a 6 week period, from 29 July 2013 to 6 September 2013, by publishing the Policy on the County Council's website and distributing it to interested groups and organisations.

A final version of the Policy incorporating the comments received, where appropriate, will be presented to Cabinet for formal adoption in the autumn. Local Area Committees will be invited to discuss how volunteering opportunities could be developed in their areas as part of the delivery of the Policy.

Subsequent documents for volunteers and managers will provide detailed guidance.

(3) Financial Considerations National guidelines state that volunteers should not be out-of-pocket as a result of volunteering. This may be particularly important to those on a low income or benefits, who may otherwise be unable to volunteer.

Whilst it is not financially feasible to pay all travelling expenses to all volunteers, this Policy proposes to pay expenses incurred during volunteering duties, but not expenses incurred travelling to/from the volunteering base. Essentially, this formalises the current approach and, hence, would maintain the cost of expenses at current levels, approximately £1,100 per annum. Wherever possible, volunteers are transported in, and have access to, Countryside Service vehicles.

(4) Legal Considerations There would be no legal obligation on the volunteer to carry out any commitments, and the undertaking of a particular task would remain at the discretion of the volunteer. Volunteers should not be given

any expectation of remuneration and the "Volunteer Agreement" would set out the role the volunteer expressed a willingness to provide rather than create a legally binding relationship. In particular, it is not intended that this would constitute a contract of employment or acquire any rights as an employee.

(5) **Equality and Diversity Considerations** Volunteers from all backgrounds, including those from the protected characteristic groups defined in the 2010 Equality Act, will be treated with respect and encouraged to work within the County Council's equality and diversity policies.

During the induction process, it will be made clear to the volunteer that they should treat all employees, clients, other volunteers and members of the public with respect, regardless of their backgrounds and beliefs and that volunteers should expect the same in return.

(6) **Environmental, Health and Transport Considerations** The involvement of volunteers in the work of the Countryside Service has benefits not only for the sites and rights of way that the Council manages, but also for individuals and communities. This includes improved life satisfaction and self-esteem, and health benefits through increased activity.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: human resources, prevention of crime and disorder and property considerations.

(7) **Key Decision** No.

(8) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(9) **Background Papers** None. Officer contact details – Steve Cresswell, extension 39660.

(10) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That the Cabinet Member:

10.1 Approves the draft Policy as a draft for public consultation.

10.2 Requests that Local Area Committees be invited to discuss how volunteering opportunities could be developed in their areas as part of its delivery.

10.3 Following the results of the consultation, the final Policy and associated Equality Analysis be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting for adoption.

Mike Ashworth
Acting Strategic Director – Environmental Services

Derbyshire County Council

Countryside Service Draft Volunteer Policy

2013 - 2018



Introduction

The Countryside Service is responsible for the management and promotion of Derbyshire County Council's countryside sites and facilities. This includes country parks and other recreational facilities, Greenways, public rights of way and a wide variety of conservation and environmental projects and initiatives.

There are many volunteering opportunities within the Countryside Service and the Council recognises that volunteers make a significant and valuable contribution to the work of the Service: volunteers bring with them a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experiences.

The County Council is committed to increasing the variety of volunteering opportunities available and to ensuring that volunteering is a worthwhile and rewarding experience for all involved. It firmly believes that volunteering is an important aspect of a democratic society and wants to make sure that opportunities to volunteer are open to all.

This Policy sets out the Council's key principles and objectives for the involvement of volunteers with the Countryside Service and provides a framework for best practice. It will be reviewed and updated as necessary, for example, to comply with changes in the law, and at least every 5 years.

What is a volunteer?

Volunteers are individuals or groups who offer their time, experience, knowledge and skills without financial gain, helping the Service to achieve its objectives and provide a benefit to the community.

Certain types of unpaid work for the Council are not regarded as volunteering, for example, student placements and work experience.

Countryside Service Volunteers will be managed in a different way to employees. It is a flexible arrangement and the Council will only have an expectation of a preferred schedule of time commitments. Unlike an employee, volunteers do not have a contract of employment with the Council or have the same responsibilities and obligations as employees.

Community-based volunteering

There are many community groups that want to help manage Derbyshire's Countryside Sites, Greenways and public rights of way network. These include 'Friends of...' groups, Rambler's groups and Parish Path groups. The Council will facilitate the creation of such groups and, by providing technical support and assistance, enable them to achieve mutual goals.

As these groups are working independently and are not an integral part of the Countryside Service, they are not covered by this Policy. However, they would be expected to operate to the Council's standards when working for and on behalf of the Service.

Guiding principles

Derbyshire County Council has signed up to the Derbyshire Compact, which recognises four principles fundamental to volunteering. These are choice, diversity, mutual benefit and recognition. In addition, the following principles will guide work with volunteers and the Council will:

- work with volunteers within existing policies and practices around equality and diversity;
- provide a Volunteer Agreement to all volunteers;
- reimburse eligible out of pocket expenses incurred during the course of volunteering duties;
- advise volunteers of their rights and duties under data protection legislation;
- provide appropriate insurance cover for all volunteers whilst engaged in volunteering activity;
- involve volunteers in roles that add value to the work of the Countryside Service. They will not be substitutes for employees, nor will they be expected to take on inappropriate responsibilities;
- consult and involve volunteers on issues concerning their volunteering activities;
- offer suitable induction, training and support for volunteers;
- provide suitable training and management for employees that support volunteers;
- expect a high level of good behaviour and conduct in both the Council's management of volunteers and from volunteers themselves;
- make relevant policies available to volunteers during the induction process and at other times as required;
- ensure the safe working of volunteers and provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment to volunteers when required.

These guiding principles may be reviewed from time-to-time to ensure that the needs of both the Countryside Service and volunteers continue to be met.

Volunteering with the Countryside Service

The Council wants to make volunteering easy to access for everyone, regardless of their personal situation. Volunteering roles will be published through Countryside Service publications and the County Council's website. When required, the Countryside Service will engage with potential volunteers through specific, targeted campaigns. Volunteer opportunities may also be made available in local volunteer centres.

The Council's procedures will be robust and thorough, whilst remaining informal and adaptable, in order to reflect the needs of volunteers, as well as the needs of the Countryside Service.

Where a volunteer may have sole or substantial access to children, young people or vulnerable adults, an enhanced check for regulated activity will be requested through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) prior to the volunteer taking up their role. An enhanced check will also be required for volunteers with access to information about children and vulnerable adults.

Volunteers in roles involving vulnerable adults or children may need particular support, advice and training. Managers should make volunteers aware of the special requirements of the role and of behaviour that is not acceptable.

For some volunteer roles, character references may also be required.

Derbyshire Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers will be asked to abide by the Volunteer Agreement, which will clearly set out the Council's expectations of volunteers and what volunteers can expect in return. This will be phrased in terms of hopes and expectations rather than obligations. The Volunteer Agreement is not a legally binding contract of employment between the County Council and the volunteer. It may be withdrawn from at any time at the discretion of either party, although whilst the parties are working together, the principles are expected to apply. Neither party commits to any employment relationship being created either now or at any time in the future.

The role description

A role description will be provided for all volunteer roles. This gives a clear overview of the activities volunteers can expect to be involved in whilst volunteering and helps to prevent confusion or misunderstanding. The role description will identify the activities to be carried out by the volunteer and the skills or experience needed. It will also identify what the volunteer can expect to get out of the role and the time commitment expected.

Induction, support and training

Derbyshire County Council recognises that whilst volunteering can be satisfying and enjoyable, it can also place demands and responsibilities on individuals that may require certain personal qualities and additional skills. The aim is to ensure that all volunteers receive appropriate support and training by providing a comprehensive induction programme. Attendance at further training courses is voluntary.

Volunteers with the Countryside Service can expect support from a nominated employee, who will address their needs for advice, guidance and training. The nature of support will vary depending on the volunteering role. A full-time volunteer may have different requirements to a volunteer attending a weekly or monthly, supervised task. Employees that support volunteers will receive relevant training where appropriate.

Volunteers are expected to abide by Derbyshire County Council policies and procedures whilst on County Council premises, or undertaking any of their volunteering duties. They may be perceived by the public as representing the Council and should act accordingly. The induction programme will include an explanation of these policies and procedures.

There will be a review with the volunteer initially after three months and then annually for regular volunteers, to confirm their suitability to continue as a volunteer

and to provide the opportunity for mutual feedback. Written review records will be kept.

Confidentiality and data protection

Some aspects of the volunteer's role may be confidential. Issues around confidentiality will be discussed with the volunteer during the induction process. The volunteer will also be made aware of the Council's policies on confidentiality and data protection and will be expected to comply with them.

Personal information about volunteers will be maintained in line with Derbyshire County Council's data protection procedures and confidentiality guidelines.

Insurance

Volunteers registered with and supervised by Derbyshire County Council's Countryside Service are insured for personal injury and are covered by professional and public liability insurance, in the same way as employees. However, the insurance will not cover unauthorised actions, or actions outside the volunteer's role description.

Friends groups, access groups and other volunteer groups working without charge and at the request of the Countryside Service are also covered by the Council's insurance.

Reimbursement of volunteer expenses

Derbyshire County Council recognises that volunteers should not lose out financially because of their volunteering activities. The Council will provide a clear procedure for the reimbursement of eligible out of pocket expenses. Eligible expenses incurred during the course of volunteering duties and training will be reimbursed but only in exceptional circumstances will the cost of travel from home to the volunteering base be reimbursed.

Equality and diversity

Derbyshire County Council intends to draw on as wide a pool of volunteers as possible. Volunteers from all backgrounds, including those from the protected characteristic groups defined in the 2010 Equality Act, will be treated with respect and encouraged to work within the County Council's equality and diversity policies.

During the induction process, it will be made clear to the volunteer that they should treat all employees, clients, other volunteers and members of the public with respect, regardless of their backgrounds and beliefs, and that volunteers should expect the same in return.

Volunteers will be expected to accept and adhere to the Equality and Diversity policies in terms of their treatment of people they come into contact with as a result of their volunteer role.

An Equality Analysis has been carried out on the Volunteer Policy.

Problem solving

Derbyshire County Council aims to resolve any problems or difficulties that volunteers may have whilst placed within the organisation, fairly and quickly. Issues should be brought to the attention of the appropriate manager for resolution.

Health and safety

Derbyshire County Council's health and safety policies and guidance set the standards for a safe and healthy working environment and must be followed by volunteers at all times. Health and safety information will be made available during the volunteer's induction and for reference as required throughout the placement.

Derbyshire County Council is responsible for the health and safety of its volunteers.

A risk assessment will be undertaken for each volunteer role. Necessary Personal Protective Equipment will be made available, either on loan or provided without charge as appropriate.

Volunteer handbook

Volunteers will receive a *Volunteers' Handbook* providing all the information they need to commence volunteering with the Countryside Service. The handbook will be tailored with local area detail.

Further information

Contact Steve Cresswell, Countryside Officer, on 01629 539660.

Steve.cresswell@derbyshire.gov.uk

A "*Compact for Derbyshire*" is an agreement between voluntary and community groups, and statutory organisations which sets out a framework for how they will work together in partnership. See it at:

http://dnet/what_were_doing/partnerships/voluntarysector/derbyshirecompact/default.asp

Appendix 2

Countryside Service

Draft Volunteer Agreement

This Volunteer Agreement describes the arrangement between Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service and (name of volunteer)

We wish to assure you of our appreciation of your volunteering with us and will do the best we can to make your experience of volunteering with us enjoyable and rewarding. Your role as volunteer is (state the nature of the voluntary work)

and starts on (date) _____

Part 1: Derbyshire County Council

Derbyshire County Council commits itself to the following:

Induction and training

- To provide you with a thorough induction on the work of Derbyshire County Council and its staff, your volunteering role and training you need to meet the responsibilities of this role.

Supervision, support and flexibility

- To explain the standards we expect for our services and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain them.
- To provide a named person who will meet with you regularly to discuss your volunteering and any successes and problems.
- To do our best to help you develop your volunteering role with us.

Expenses

- Reimburse eligible out of pocket expenses incurred during the course of volunteering duties. Only in exceptional circumstances will the cost of travel from home to the volunteering base be reimbursed.
- Make sure you do not lose out financially as a result of your volunteering activities.

Health and safety

- To provide adequate training and feedback in support of our health and safety policies.
- Ensure the safe working of volunteers and provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment to volunteers when required

Insurance

- To provide appropriate insurance cover for volunteers whilst undertaking voluntary work approved and authorised by us.

Equality and diversity

- To ensure that all volunteers are dealt with in accordance with our equality and diversity policies.

Problems

- To try to resolve fairly any problems, grievances or difficulties you may have while you volunteer with us.
- In the event of an unresolved problem, to offer an opportunity to discuss the issues in accordance with our problem solving procedure.

Part 2: The Volunteer

Whilst volunteering with Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service in the role of (enter volunteer role)

I agree that there is a reasonable expectation that I will:

- Perform my volunteering role to the best of my ability.
- Follow Derbyshire County Council's procedures and standards, including those relating to health and safety and equal and diversity, in relation to its staff, volunteers and clients.
- Meet time commitments and standards agreed to, and, where necessary, give reasonable notice so that other arrangements can be made.
- Provide referees who may be contacted, if required for the volunteering role.
- Agree, should the volunteering role require it, to an enhanced check for regulated activity through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- represent the Service in a positive manner.
- Act with integrity and honesty when performing my volunteer role. The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from those that volunteer with Derbyshire County Council.
- Remember to be responsible to the community I serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial services to all service users, groups and individuals within that community, as set out in the Customer Service Charter and in line with the Council's vision of improving life for local people. These responsibilities apply equally to conduct with employees, contractors, other volunteers, and those on student/work experience placements with the Council.
- Recognise that confidentiality is an obligation for those that volunteer with Derbyshire County Council.

The Volunteer Agreement is not a legally binding contract of employment between the County Council and the volunteer. It may be withdrawn from at any time at the discretion of either party, although whilst the parties are working together, the principles are expected to apply. Neither party commits to any employment relationship being created either now or at any time in the future.