Chiltern Rangers CIC Volunteer Policy

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BACKGROUND

Chiltern Rangers is a community interest company with a founding mission of:
Enhancing Chilterns habitats through education, conservation and community engagement.

The work of the organisation is varied and volunteers are an integral part of how Chiltern Rangers delivers its strategy and activities.

This policy outlines the vision and the principles on which the involvement of volunteers takes place within the work of the organisation. It explains why and how volunteers are involved with Chiltern Rangers, affirms our commitment to volunteers and what the organisation expects in return.

Volunteering is central to the identity and work of Chiltern Rangers and is one of the key assets that enables us to deliver our mission.

Volunteering is and will continue to be an integral and key part of our culture. All staff and board directors should consider how to attract new volunteers and how to manage and involve existing volunteers when planning, and developing services and projects. We aim to be a role model for innovative, creative and sustained volunteering. We actively seek to promote health & well-being through our volunteering activities and embrace and encourage volunteers in the Five Ways to Well-being (see policy).

OUR COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERING

Chiltern Rangers strives to ensure that volunteering should be a fun, inclusive, safe and welcoming experience.

We believe that:

- Volunteers help us to deliver our work and services, achieve our goals and increase the impact we make.
- Volunteering creates caring communities and a more worthwhile society, which in turn continues to deliver a connection to nature.
- Volunteers enable us to increase the range of skills and expertise available to the organisation.
- Volunteering provides a number of skills, experiences and attitudes back to the communities we work with.
- Volunteers from a diverse background bring different perspectives and fresh ideas to our work and help us understand volunteering issues.
- Volunteering is a matter of individual choice.
- Volunteering can provide a stepping stone into employment or training opportunities.
- Volunteering provides new challenges and enables people to develop new skills.

- Volunteering is an opportunity to be involved with rewarding, interesting and challenging activities.
- Volunteering improves the health and well-being of those who take part.

SCOPE OF VOLUNTEERING

(See volunteer strategy document)

Chiltern Rangers offers a range of roles to volunteers- skilled and unskilled, indoor and outdoors. These roles broadly fall into four categories:

- Practical volunteering e.g. conservation based
- Operational volunteering e.g. administrative
- Skills Based volunteering – e.g. media, project planning, branding, financial
- Ambassadorial – e.g. promoting us at events, fetes, presentations etc.

We provide opportunities to volunteer at different levels depending upon individual commitment and skills. We categorise these levels as: General, Key and Role specific (e.g. Volunteer Warden, Volunteer Marketing Assistant).

MEETING OUR COMMITMENTS

- Ensuring staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities.
- Provide supervision, support and training for staff and volunteers.
- To ensure that paid staff and directors are clear about the role of volunteers, and to create good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers.
- Maintain clear policies and procedures.
- It is envisaged that new roles will continually be developed to meet the goals and the changing needs of the organisation.

Responsibilities of the organisation towards volunteers

Chiltern Rangers will endeavour to ensure that:

- Volunteers are matched with roles which suit their interests, skills they wish to use and their available time;
- Volunteers will be welcomed, supported and trained appropriately, encouraged and helped to feel part of the team, have worthwhile tasks to perform and their contribution will be valued and recognised.

Responsibilities of volunteers

In return we expect volunteers to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions whilst volunteering;
- Co-operate with members of staff, to listen and to learn from what they have to say;
- Ask for support if they need it;
- Adhere to Chiltern Rangers' policies and procedures whilst volunteering;

- Treat their fellow volunteers and staff with courtesy and respect;
- Take part in training relevant to their role as a volunteer;

In addition, we expect Key and Role specific volunteers to:

- Respect the need for confidentiality whenever they have access to restricted company information;
- Carry out the agreed project/role;
- Aim for standards of efficiency, reliability and quality in all aspects of their contribution.
- Be reliable and tell us if they are not available or running late;

We have a Statement of Confidentiality in place that outlines the expectations of both Volunteers and Chiltern Rangers in terms of data protection and sensitive information. It is signed by Key and Role Specific volunteers.

Commitment to Diversity

Chiltern Rangers encourages, welcomes and supports volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds, ages and abilities. We are signatories to the disabled volunteer charter and make reasonable adaptations to be as inclusive as possible e.g. we have an adapted community minibus to help overcome barriers to inclusive volunteering and we have staff trained in Makaton signing. The depot is fully accessible for visitors e.g. wheelchair users via a ramp and we have a disabled toilet facility.

We monitor volunteer demographics (through volunteer contact form) to understand the base of our volunteers. We engage with organisations from all sectors of the community to ensure we are as inclusive as possible.

NB. It should be noted that, when a volunteer has specific support needs that could a) pose a risk to other volunteers or themselves, or b) require a level of personal supervision beyond that which we can reasonably provide, we reserve the right to insist that they are accompanied by a carer, support worker or approved responsible adult when they are on site or within our premises.

RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

Chiltern Rangers generally has a task led approach to volunteer recruitment – we first identify a piece of work or a role that needs doing and then we attempt to recruit a volunteer to undertake it.

Sometimes, however, volunteers approach us via email/website/social media or at events or are referred to us in a number of ways from a range of partner organisations including CIB, DWP, and we are able to be opportunistic, depending upon the skills they wish to offer.

We welcome volunteer involvement in the business from all sections of the community and do not discriminate against any volunteers in the selection procedure.

We do not have an upper age limit for volunteering and recognise the valuable contribution of older volunteers to our activities, in terms of their knowledge, experience and reliability. We encourage young volunteers to take part wherever possible; we value the enthusiasm and fresh perspectives that a young person can bring to the organisation and are keen to offer them the opportunity to gain skills, confidence and experience.

Individual volunteers under 18 must either have the written consent of a parent or guardian, OR have the written consent of their school and be undertaking suitable roles for which there is no legal minimum age. All young people under 18 will be protected in accordance with our safeguarding policy.

We regularly hold drop-in volunteering sessions where people are not required to undergo screening before taking part. These activities are closely supervised by Chiltern Rangers staff and Key volunteers. Under 16s are welcome especially in the school holidays but must be accompanied by an appropriate adult (parent/carer or guardian).

In addition we have groups of volunteers who belong to specific organisations that collaborate with us. Where the group contains people who are under 16, the group leader must accept responsibility for the group's behaviour.

For key volunteer roles, we may carry out a more thorough recruitment and selection process. More detail on this is contained within our volunteering strategy.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Several of the organisation's policies are relevant for our volunteers.
These are:
Health & Safety
Equal Opportunities
Safeguarding
Whistleblowing

Guidelines for adherence to these policies is contained in the staff handbook and it is our intention to review these and develop guidelines which are appropriate for our volunteers.

Communication and Feedback

Chiltern Rangers will ensure that all volunteers have the opportunity to give and receive information relevant to their role. It helps us improve as an organisation and ensures that we are able to provide the best experiences for our volunteers.

Methods of communication and feedback we use will be appropriate to the role, and whether it is for an individual or a group of volunteers. We welcome feedback on how things could be done better and how to improve our systems and our interaction with volunteers.

Settling Differences

We always aim to respond to concerns or complaints in a professional and accessible manner and wherever possible would encourage informal verbal discussions to try to resolve any issues. If a volunteer has a complaint about a member of Chiltern Rangers staff that they feel cannot be resolved informally the volunteer should contact one of the Directors: John Shaw, Tony Speight or Sarah Valentine.

If a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer that they feel cannot be resolved informally then they should discuss this in with their supervisor for that task.

Volunteers who do not adhere to the boundaries and procedures of Chiltern Rangers or who fail to perform their voluntary role satisfactorily (as described in the role description) may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

As part of this process, volunteers can expect:

- Supportive and constructive feedback
- Clear details of the inappropriate behaviour
- Suggestions regarding what and how to improve and an agreed period of time to demonstrate improvement after each stage;
- To be treated with dignity and respect.

A volunteer placement may be ended without warning if Chiltern Rangers believes that there is sufficient cause, i.e. where behaviour is inappropriate or harmful. Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- A breach of confidentiality
- Acts that bring Chiltern Rangers into disrepute
- Acts that contravene Chiltern Rangers policies or procedures
- Any verbal or physical act that contravenes Chiltern Rangers equal opportunities policy
- Physical and/or verbal abuse of members of staff, other volunteers and the public
- Theft from Chiltern Rangers, its staff or volunteers

Expenses

All volunteers are given the opportunity to claim previously agreed expenses, such as travelling expenses. All expenses must be authorised by the volunteer's supervisor and where appropriate, receipts must be provided together with a fully completed expenses form.

Recognition

Chiltern Rangers has a variety of ways to thank and recognise the contribution of its volunteers. We will continually look to develop new ways in which we can recognise and thank volunteers for their invaluable contribution to our work.

We hold an annual awards scheme, which recognises: Volunteer of the Season, Volunteer of the Year and Work Experience of the Year (under-18) and Work Placement of the Year (over-19). We will normally present these awards at our annual volunteer party.

We also have an Acorn loyalty scheme which rewards volunteers with 'Acorns' on a monthly basis which can be used to purchase Chiltern Rangers branded merchandise.

Health and Safety

Chiltern Rangers is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers, staff and visitors and to giving appropriate instruction, training and supervision for their welfare. Our written health and safety policy applies to our volunteers as well as our paid staff. All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner in line with Chiltern Rangers' safe working procedures. Volunteers should not act in a way that may put themselves or others at risk of injury.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Chiltern Rangers' Public Liability insurance policy for any official Chiltern Rangers volunteering. Specific details of our insurance policies are available from the Business Manager at the office in Fennels Road. A copy is also on display in the main entrance.

Copyright

Volunteers may be asked if they would donate to Chiltern Rangers the copyright to any original works they may produce whilst volunteering, e.g. photographs or original artworks, etc. For particular roles that specifically involve producing such work, volunteers may be asked to sign a copyright agreement. We will acknowledge the source of such material where appropriate.

Data Protection

Chiltern Rangers gathers a variety of information on volunteers in order to manage, support and recognise volunteers' contribution to the organisation. This personal information is stored and maintained, with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality, in secure files and on our CRM database. The CIC abides by all provisions of the Data Protection Act and recognises that volunteers' privacy is important to them.

Volunteers who collect or administer any personal data on individuals will also be required to comply with the provisions of the Act.

Approved by Board of Directors on 7 December 2016