



Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

Volunteer Policy

Document Number P08

Date Reviewed and Approved by the Trustees – Nov 2020

Introduction

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust (RWT) was set up in 1993 as a charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a board of trustees, all local volunteers with a broad range of experience and expertise. In carrying out our aims and objectives we do four things:

- Provide Learning at the Lock, an education programme for primary schools
- Organise the annual Rickmansworth Festival
- Run an information centre at Batchworth Lock and provide visitor amenities including boat trips
- Preserve and present the historic working narrow boat *Roger*

In addition to the above we are also looking to expand our education work to include young adults, families and groups from the University of 3rd Age. The asset most valuable to the Trust in doing all these activities is our people, including our paid staff, volunteers and Trustees. RWT is committed to developing policies, systems and behaviours that support the culture of high standards and expectations, where people are valued, respected and know they matter, where diversity is celebrated and oppression is challenged. Whilst we set and maintain high standards and expect people to work to the best of their ability, we also aim to provide an enjoyable culture where being highly motivated also means having fun.

RWT is committed to fair, clearly stated and supportive relationships between its trustees, staff and volunteers. We aim to live our values, not only in the way we do our work, but also in the way we treat everyone who works for us.

Why we work with volunteers

RWT knows that its volunteers make a vital contribution to its work and objectives and that the Trust could not meet its charitable objectives without them. We also recognise that volunteering is an exchange and many of our volunteers live locally and want to give something back to their community. We value and benefit from the skills and knowledge that volunteers bring to the organisation. In return, we aim to ensure that volunteering with our organisation is a positive and rewarding experience.

This policy aims to:

- Clarify the role of volunteering within the Trust that recognises the value of volunteers to the organisation
- Champion the development of volunteering within the organisation, based on the needs of volunteers, volunteer managers and others involved in volunteering
- Promote best practice and ensure a consistent approach to volunteer management across the organisation

Reasons to involve volunteers include:

- To increase our day to day capacity for work
- To help add contingency capacity to cope with peaks and troughs in the workload, such as during the Festival
- To communicate our messages into the community
- To introduce new skills that we could not afford to employ
- To help keep us in touch with grassroots feelings and perceptions

Diversity

We are committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. Diversity will make our organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all our stakeholders.



Recruitment

Volunteers will be recruited using an “equal opportunities” approach and using a variety of different methods to make the broadest possible range of people aware of the volunteering opportunities offered by the Trust.

Our organisation recognises that it may be approached with offers of help from potential volunteers. In each case a representative of our organisation, most likely our General Manager, will talk to the potential volunteer to discuss ways in which they may be able to help, and where there is an opportunity for them to volunteer.

New volunteers are made to feel welcome and will be provided with the information, training and induction appropriate to their role. Volunteers may wish to develop their skills whilst helping us, and where appropriate are encouraged to take on new roles and/or become further involved. Access to training in some aspects of our operation, such as boating, may be offered.

We recognise that the progress and contribution of volunteers should be discussed regularly, and that this provides the opportunity for each volunteer and the Trust to establish whether the nature of the role, including the hours of involvement, should be adjusted.

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to introduce, orientate, and integrate volunteers to their role. The Education Programme Manager will assume those responsibilities for volunteers with roles within our education programmes.

Information

We will prepare and make available to all our volunteers a Handbook (such as the Learning at the Lock Handbook), which contains the main information required by volunteers in aspects of our work and shows where further information may be found. We will also include our volunteers in the distribution of our newsletter, Batchworth Telegraph, which we aim to issue twice each year.

Induction

Induction may include:

- The Trust's vision, mission, activities and strategic plan, to provide a context for the role
- An outline of the expected duties and responsibilities
- A tour of the Batchworth Lock area, including a visit to Roger, Pride of Batchworth and the Education Centre.
- The standards of work, attendance, and conduct expected of the volunteer
- Our workplace rules, safety and procedures
- A copy of any necessary Volunteer Handbook

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by RWT's insurance policy while they are on the premises or engaged in any work on our behalf. (Volunteers are encouraged to consult with their own insurance companies regarding the extension of their personal insurance to include community volunteer work.)

Risk Assessments

The Trust has made a number of risk assessments covering various areas and these will be shared with volunteers when relevant to the area they are volunteering in.



Health and Safety

Volunteers are covered by RWT's Health and Safety Policy, and should familiarise themselves with the Trust's Health and Safety Framework which shows the documents and risk assessments relevant to different areas of our operation.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff and any personal data shared with the Trust will be managed according to the Trust's Information Protection Policy.

Criminal Records Bureau Checks

Volunteers having contact with children or vulnerable adults will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service DBS CRB check – these are provided at no cost to volunteers.

Engaging with our volunteers

We hold regular training and communication sessions to pass on relevant information and to ensure that volunteers can raise questions they have about their role and the Trust's operations.

We record the competency of our volunteers in the different aspects of our education work as they are trained and gain proficiency. We have a full programme of training, both internal and external, for those responsible for skippering and crewing our boats.

We also hold regular social events to thank our volunteers for their hard work for the Trust and to allow volunteers from different parts of our operation to meet and exchange ideas and information. We also want to ensure that volunteering for the Trust should be an enjoyable experience and the social events help meet this objective.