



Avalon Marshes Landscape Partnership (AMLP) **Volunteer Policy**

Introduction

We recognise the valuable contribution that volunteers can make to the AMLP. Some of the partner organisations already have well established volunteer programmes, and it would simply not be possible to deliver our conservation and heritage aims without these dedicated people. Volunteers can bring a richness of skills and experience, often providing a bridge to community involvement that it is difficult for paid staff to achieve.

We appreciate that volunteers are motivated because it is their choice to volunteer and give their time freely. In return the AMLP aims to provide volunteers with more opportunities that will lead to new skills and experiences, with the longer term of further increasing the benefit to conservation and heritage in the local area.

Involving people from all generations and sectors of society is fundamental to the ethos of the AMLP. As well as providing opportunities for people to enjoy, enhance and promote the unique nature of the Avalon Marshes' landscape, volunteering helps make a positive contribution to quality of life, health and social networks.

Status of Volunteers

A volunteer is not an employee and will not have a contract of employment, and no employment relationship is intended within this policy, or any other AMLP volunteer-related document.

We will discuss the role with the volunteer and there will be an aspiration that the volunteer will meet the role's requirements,

We will discuss with volunteers the amount of time that they are willing to commit to volunteering, the frequency of their availability and how this will fit in with our needs.

Volunteers are encouraged to let us know as soon as possible if they are not available so that a substitute can be found or different arrangements made.

Volunteers may withdraw from their voluntary role at any time, but are asked to give their named contact as much notice as possible.

Recruitment

We will endeavour to recruit volunteers through a range of methods including, word of mouth, advertising via a range of media, talking to other agencies and making contact with other local volunteering organisations.

We will also endeavour to help any volunteer overcome barriers that may make it difficult for them to volunteer with the AMLP.

The Equality and Diversity Policy (issued by Somerset Wildlife Trust) will be adhered to at all times in relation to the recruitment and support of volunteers.

All regular AMLP volunteers will be asked to sign a Declaration form, which asks them to honour the operating principles of the AMLP. The referees proposed on the form will be contacted by a member of the AMLP Team to confirm the applicant's suitability for volunteering with the organisation.

CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks and references may be required for **some** volunteer roles, especially where regular contact with children or vulnerable adults is necessary. This requirement will be discussed with relevant volunteers before we apply for CRB checks. CRB checks are not a reflection of the individual, but a legal requirement in certain circumstances.

Health and Safety

AMLP has responsibility for the health and safety of its volunteers. Volunteers should at all times follow the Health and Safety policies and procedures. Volunteers have a duty to take care of themselves and others who might be affected by their actions. Volunteers should not act outside their authorised area of work. Volunteers should report all accidents to the appropriate person and should be recorded in the accident book.

We will provide volunteers with appropriate guidance on any health and safety issues that arise.

Insurance

Each of the partner organisations has its own arrangements for insurance depending on whether they are a registered charity (e.g. RSPB) or a public body (e.g. Natural England). Volunteering for AMLP-specific activities is covered by the Somerset Wildlife Trust, which provides insurance in respect of personal injury, professional and public liability insurance. The insurance will not cover actions that are unauthorised or outside the Volunteer Role Description.

Induction and Training

All volunteers will receive an induction to familiarise them with the work of the AMLP in general and their own particular area of work. Training will be offered where it helps to fulfil the role.

Support and Supervision

All volunteers will have a named person as their main contact and supervisor. They will be given regular feedback and encouragement, with an opportunity to discuss how things are going and air any problems.

Networking meetings, and an e-forum, for volunteers will be developed by the AMLP to encourage peer support and share experiences. A regular AMLP newsletter will also cover volunteering activities.

Expenses

Volunteers can be reimbursed for reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of AMLP as long as this has been approved in advance. Receipts will be required. Volunteers should keep clear records of journeys taken as volunteers, noting mileage, time/date and purpose of journey.

Conduct and Grievance

The relationship between the AMLP and its volunteers is entirely voluntary and it does not imply any contract. However, it is important that the AMLP maintains high standards and a good reputation, and it is important that volunteers should enjoy making their contribution to these aims.

In the unlikely event that a volunteer does not meet these standards, the matter would initially be addressed by the relevant supervisor. The Volunteer Development Officer (VDO) would be informed of all such incidents. If the situation remains unresolved the VDO or AMLP Scheme Manager would take responsibility in addressing the matter further with the volunteer concerned. The individual would only be advised that they can no longer participate in volunteering activities with the AMLP after a written warning had been issued.

Conversely, if a volunteer has any concerns regarding their treatment, this should initially be raised either with the supervisor or the VDO. If the volunteer remains dissatisfied with the situation, then the matter will be dealt with by the AMLP Scheme Manager, in consultation as necessary. Discipline procedures for AMLP staff are covered in the Somerset Wildlife Trust Staff Handbook.

Use Personal Information

Personal information will be stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act gives individuals the right to know what data is held on them, how it is used, with whom it is shared for it to be accurate. The volunteer data held is collected for administrative and insurance purposes, for reporting and statistical analysis and to allow the AMLP to contact volunteers with matters of interest. The AMLP or its appointed agents may use the name, address and other details on your application form to contact volunteers in connection with occasional customer research aimed at evaluating the AMLP service. If no suitable voluntary role is immediately available we will keep a potential volunteer's details on file for up to one year.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is accordance with best practice.

Date of last review: 1st November 2014