

Welcome to volunteering

Volunteers play a vital part in making Cumbria Wildlife Trust a success. You help us to achieve our aims and we really value your commitment, support and hard work. It is fair to say that Cumbria Wildlife Trust was created by volunteers, is maintained by volunteers and will only be able to continue its work, thanks to its many volunteers. It really is that simple...so thank you for volunteering!

This guide is designed to help and support you. It contains information to help you settle quickly into your role as a Trust volunteer and covers a number of important issues. It also aims to clarify what you can expect from us, as one of our volunteers.

If you need any help or advice with regard to volunteering, there is plenty of useful information on our website at www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer-with-us . If your questions cannot be answered by the website, please contact the Trust's Senior Volunteer Officer on 01539 816300.

What you can expect from Cumbria Wildlife Trust

The Trust believes in investing in its volunteers – for the benefit of both parties. Whatever type of volunteer work you choose, we aim to ensure that you receive support, advice and where necessary, training, to match your needs and reflect the level of commitment you undertake.

We aim to ensure that you:

- receive an introduction to the Trust and are helped to fit in with the team
- are clear about the tasks to be done
- have safe working conditions and access to essential safety equipment and instruction
- are supported in your role and supervised where necessary
- receive and have the opportunity to attend training where appropriate and feasible
- have the opportunity to put your ideas forward about the work you are carrying out
- are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses
- have your records kept in confidence
- are thanked and valued for your contribution.

What we ask of you

As a volunteer you are an ambassador for the Trust and your personal recommendation is an invaluable way of recruiting more volunteers and promoting the work we do. As a representative of the Trust, we rely on you to reflect our values and aims. Wildlife conservation presents some surprisingly controversial issues at times, and it is possible to be drawn into debate with local communities, trust members and individuals over local and national topics ranging from land use and flood prevention to culling and wildlife crime. We understand that you will have your own point of view which may differ from the Trust's position, and if so, that it is important for us both to distinguish between them.

We therefore ask you to:

- show respect to others, regardless of their views, background and experience
- be reliable and inform your supervisor if you are unable to attend work or a session
- work within the Trust's policy guidelines
- ask for support if and whenever you need it
- take all necessary care to protect the health and safety of yourself and of others
- undertake training where it is mutually agreed to be necessary (eg first aid training)
- maintain confidentiality, if dealing with sensitive or personal information for CWT

The Trust runs training programmes from time to time and these are mentioned in **Involve**, our bi-monthly newsletter, and on the website.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Volunteer Policy

The Trust is committed to supporting the efforts of volunteers to the full and recognises them as a vital and valuable asset.

We aim to ensure that volunteers are integrated with our organisation to enable them to contribute effectively and that all our staff work positively with volunteers, involving them in their work wherever it is appropriate. Furthermore we aim to ensure all our volunteering opportunities are both satisfying and rewarding.

The overall responsibility for our volunteers rests with our Trust Director, whilst day-to-day management involves various members of staff, depending on the tasks concerned. The Volunteer Policy provides further information about the Trust's framework. Please ask for a copy if you wish.

Health and Safety

The Trust is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all our volunteers, to enable you to contribute positively to your own and colleagues' safety at work. Current legislation also places the responsibility on you, as a volunteer, as well as the Trust, to take all reasonable steps to make sure safe working practices are carried out at all times.

There are set Trust guidelines including risk assessments, tool use talks, provision of protective clothing & equipment and procedures in case of an accident. Your staff contact or group leader will explain these to you. However, if you ever feel at all uncomfortable with any particular task, then please stop and ask a member of staff for support.

Personal Health Issues

We occasionally work with volunteers who are recovering from, or managing an illness or injury. If you think your event leader needs to be aware of anything that might affect your fitness or ability to participate, please can you ensure that they are made aware, at the earliest opportunity.

There is well-documented evidence that volunteering to help others has positive effects on people's health and well-being. We want to ensure that this applies for all our volunteers,

and that no-one feels under pressure when volunteering with us, but we do rely on you acting to ensure we understand your personal circumstances, so that we can make suitable adjustments to support you properly.

Equal opportunities

The Trust is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all.

The Trust will take all reasonable steps to ensure that harassment and discrimination for any reason (for example, age, disability, race, gender & gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation) is not experienced by individuals or groups at sites and events managed by the Trust. If you have any queries regarding equal opportunities, please contact our Volunteering officer in the first instance.

Age 'limits'

There is no upper age limit to volunteering. We recognise the value of experience and knowledge. We would not want anyone to volunteer beyond a point when tasks become too onerous, or possibly affect the health & safety of those concerned. Please contact our Volunteering officer if you would like to discuss this or any other area of volunteering. People under 16 cannot volunteer individually, but may participate in work experience and placements, or on group activities led by their own organisations, if accompanied by the appropriate number of responsible adults.

Insurance Cover

Public Liability Insurance: Any volunteer acting under the direction of any Cumbria Wildlife Trust employee is covered by our public liability insurance. This covers you for claims made against you of negligence or carelessness to others, including other volunteers. There is no age limit to this cover. CWT does not cover you or your personal property against accidental loss or damage.

Motor Vehicle Insurance: Any volunteer with a current Full UK driving licence to drive the relevant category of vehicle, can use the Trust's fleet vehicles and be protected by our policy, subject to the approval of our insurers and prior consent of the staff member you are volunteering with.

If you need to drive such a vehicle, you must sign a declaration form (available from our head office) and provide our Finance and Administration Office with your driving licence and a driving licence check code so that a full driving licence check can be carried out. This applies whether you are driving on or off-road and is irrespective of the type of vehicle being driven.

If you are using your own car for Trust business, for example carrying tools or volunteers, you must check with your own insurance company that you have adequate cover. This is usually a simple case of contacting your insurer in advance to check and should not normally incur any additional cost.

Travel Expenses

Volunteers may claim travel expenses at an agreed rate that will be reviewed regularly (20p/mile in 2017). Claims can only be made for activities that have been arranged with and approved by, the relevant member of staff managing the volunteering opportunity. To help reduce our impact on the environment, we encourage car sharing and use of public transport, wherever possible. Our Volunteering Officer can provide you with further information.

The Trust is not normally able to consider claims for other types of volunteer expenses except where the volunteer is involved in an activity, at the request of the Trust, and where it has been mutually agreed in advance with the relevant staff contact that such expenses can be claimed. Any expenses that are claimed must be verifiable, out of pocket expenses and not any kind of notional amount.

Volunteer Data

Volunteer details are held on the Trust's computer records. These are based upon the information supplied when you first volunteer. For example, we ask for contact details we could use to reach anyone for you, should you become unwell whilst volunteering or if we need to change plans at short notice, eg in the event of staff absence, extreme weather, road closures etc.

We retain your records to make sure that you are kept up to date about local activities and volunteering opportunities that could be of interest to you.

Please let us know of any changes so we can keep your records up to date. Your personal details will be treated as confidential and kept no longer than necessary. If you ever want to change the way we communicate with you, or feel that the information we send is no longer relevant for you, please call or email our office (01539 816300 or admin@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk) and we will update your records accordingly.

Safeguarding

We believe that safeguarding is "everyone's duty to protect individuals from harm and create a safe environment". Most safeguarding practices are an extension of everyday common sense based on having respect for others. We appreciate that everyone has different viewpoints and perceptions and trust our volunteers to act appropriately at all times when volunteering with the Trust.

As we work with others, the Trust wants to ensure our staff and volunteers are safeguarded as well as everyone that we meet in the course of our work and volunteering.

We work with local authorities and other agencies to ensure we follow and update best practice in this evolving area. We have a designated staff member responsible for safeguarding issues (at the time of writing - our Senior Education and Volunteering Officer). Please feel free to contact them if you have any concerns or queries regarding safeguarding issues.

Working with children and young people

If you wish to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults, for example, running one of our “Wildlife Watch” clubs, we will need to complete a DBS (formerly ‘CRB’) check via the national Disclosure and Barring Service. This will be arranged and paid for by the Trust and usually takes about a week to process.

We recognise that information released on DBS certificates can be extremely sensitive and personal – please be assured that we only see the results of any such check with your consent. We also have a code of practice to ensure that any information is handled fairly and properly. If this disclosure requires further discussion relating to a criminal record or barring list, we may not be able to offer you any voluntary work, particularly that which involves children and vulnerable adults.

We recommend discussing this confidentially with our Volunteering officer in the first instance, prior to submitting any DBS check.

Volunteering with others

The Trust aims to make all our volunteering experiences positive and enjoyable and to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. We encourage frequent two-way communication as a means of preventing problems before they arise.

However, we realise that difficult situations occasionally arise, e.g. a volunteer may have a complaint regarding their experience, or about a volunteer or member of staff.

In such instances, the following course of action is recommended:

- Try to speak with the person in question, ensuring that your main staff contact is involved, to try and resolve the situation swiftly and amicably.
- If this fails to resolve the situation, then volunteers can raise their concerns to the Senior Education and Volunteering Officer who will try to resolve the situation and deal with the concerns raised.
- In the absence of the Senior Education and Volunteering officer or if it is felt that the Senior Education and Volunteer Officer has not resolved the situation satisfactorily, the Trust’s Finance and Administration Manager should be contacted for guidance without delay.

Confidentiality

Whilst volunteering, you may become aware of or handle confidential or sensitive information about the Trust, which is not public knowledge. We trust in your full co-operation to ensure that any such information remains confidential. Some volunteering tasks may require you to work on our computer network. In this case we may need to obtain personal character/employer references (with your consent) to ascertain your suitability for such roles and ensure best safeguarding practice is used. We may also require that you sign a confidentiality agreement with the Trust.

If you'd like to know more about the way Cumbria Wildlife Trust is organised, read on...

Who we are and what we do

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is an independent countywide registered charity, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts - a national partnership of 47 wildlife trusts covering the UK. We have our head office in Kendal and branch offices at our Gosling Sike nature reserve (Carlisle) and South Walney nature reserve (Barrow).

Cumbria Wildlife Trust is the only voluntary sector organisation solely devoted to wildlife conservation in Cumbria. As well as hundreds of volunteers, the Trust is supported by over 15,000 members, who make regular donations to support our work. We also work in partnership with landowners, local authorities, businesses and other conservation organisations.

The Trust is led by a board of elected trustees, who volunteer their time and expertise to direct and check our plans and work. Our policies are maintained by a combination of trustees and further volunteers who form our Conservation Group and Development Group, as well as our Investment (Audit & Risk) Committee and Health & Safety Committee. Our work is guided by a five year plan – please ask our volunteering officer for a copy of the latest version, if you would like to know more.

Our staff

We employ around 50 staff, many on part-time and/or short-term, funding-dependent contracts, to provide the structure and organisation of our day-to-day work and planning, but rely on over 500 registered volunteers for a wide range of important roles, general support and specialist skills. This overlap can lead to a lack of clarity about what 'volunteering' is and how it differs from 'work'.

The Trust defines volunteering as being rooted in a **"gift relationship"**. Our volunteers are not obliged to attend; provide a fixed amount of their time; or carry out all the tasks requested – likewise, we cannot be compelled to provide regular work, payment or benefits for any volunteering activity. Our arrangements are based on trust and mutual understanding and are in no way intended to create a legally binding contract.

Many of our staff have volunteered before and during their career and/or volunteer in their private lives. They understand what it means for themselves and to our organisation and thank you for your gift of volunteering for the Trust.

Our staff is organised in teams, as follows:

Conservation – includes:

- **Nature reserves:** managing our Cumbrian reserves, supervising relationships with contractors, neighbouring landowners and the public, and hosting volunteering opportunities relating to the reserves
- **Wider Countryside:** covers areas outside our reserves and incorporates the majority of our fixed-term projects, such as habitat restoration and surveying work. They represent the Trust on regional and national initiatives, such as the Wildlife Trusts 'Living Seas' marine conservation campaigns.
- **Education & Training:** working with schools, colleges and groups, hosting placements and work experience, supporting our projects and other areas of our work
- **Volunteering:** this area is co-ordinated by volunteers who support our staff in publicising opportunities, sourcing volunteers for projects and recording the tasks carried out.

Development – includes:

- **Fundraising:** manage funding applications, donations, legacies, corporate members etc
- **Membership:** recruitment and support of local groups, individual and family members
- **Social media:** manage our online presence, from our remote webcams to campaigns
- **Publications & Press:** produce our magazines, publicity materials and press releases

Administration & Finance – includes:

- **Facilities:** our IT, equipment and building maintenance
- **Finance:** our accounting, payroll, compliance and financial reporting
- **Administration:** supporting all our staff and serving as the Trust's initial point of contact
- **Health & Safety:** provides our varied work with constant scrutiny and support
- **Personnel:** development and implementation of policies and procedures relating to the effective use of personnel within the Trust