

**UPDATED VOLUNTEERS STRATEGY
AND VOLUNTEERS POLICY**

Presented by the Head of Human Resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval for the revised Volunteers' Policy and Volunteers Strategy that have been updated as part the Authority's policy review programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members Recommend to (1) the Volunteers Policy attached at Appendix A to Authority: this report; and

Members Recommend to (2) the Volunteers Strategy attached at Appendix B Authority: to this report.

BACKGROUND

- 1 The Authority has a register of policies that ensure the organisation works efficiently and consistently towards delivering its Business Strategy. These policies are reviewed to ensure they are relevant and up to date with legislation and best practice.
- 2 A Volunteers Strategy for the Authority was originally written and presented to Members in 2006 (Paper 3851). This document has directed the work of the volunteers' team and development of the volunteers' programme since that date. The initial strategy received a number of revisions and became two documents, a Policy and a Strategy, specifically for the application of Investors in Volunteers in 2007.
- 3 Since 2007 two documents, a strategy and a policy, have been in use for the volunteers team, volunteers and staff working with volunteers to work to and guide the activities with volunteers and the development of the volunteers programme for the Authority.
- 4 The volunteers strategy and policy were last reviewed and approved by

Members in 2018 (Paper A/4262/18).

VOLUNTEERS POLICY

- 5 The Volunteers Policy, which is attached at Appendix A to this report, sets out six objectives to ensure that the volunteers programme is fit for purpose and reaches the communities and partners we wish to work with. Each objective identifies actions that will deliver continuous improvements and enhancements to the service.
- 6 Volunteering plays a key part of the continued transformation of Lee Valley Regional Park and the dedication of our registered volunteers continues to grow year on year through a range of mutually beneficial volunteering opportunities and quality volunteer management.

VOLUNTEERS STRATEGY

- 7 The Volunteers Strategy is aligned to the Policy and has been a working document since it was initially written. It seeks to review and re-set targets and work activities to improve the volunteer experience and benefit to the Authority.
- 8 This Strategy will be reviewed again in one year, instead of the usual three years, as the Authority's Investing in Volunteers (IIV) Assessment is taking place at the end of 2021 and the new Leisure Services Contract (LSC) should be in place in April 2022, so a review at this point will be prudent.
- 9 The Strategy has also been altered to reflect changes that we have witnessed in volunteering as a result of the global pandemic and when we review it in 2022 we will be looking at how volunteering has changed due to the impact of this unprecedented global event.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 14 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 15 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

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PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

Authority	Paper 3851	Development of a Volunteer Programme	23 February 2006
Executive Committee	E/578/18	Volunteers Strategy and Volunteers Policy	20 September 2018
Authority	A/4262/18	Volunteers Strategy and Volunteers Policy	18 October 2018

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix A	Volunteers Policy
Appendix B	Volunteers Strategy

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IIV	Investing in Volunteers
LSC	Leisure Services Contract

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Volunteers Policy

March 2021

Reference: [Version 7]



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i Document Information

Title: **Volunteers Policy**

Status: Draft

Current Version: v7 (March 2021)

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Version History		
Version	Date	Description
1	16 th January 2013	Initial draft, circulated to Performance Team
2	15 th January 2014	Working draft published on web site
3	31 st July 2015	Revision and update
4	27 th October 2015	Revised consideration at SMT
5	09 th March 2018	Revision and update
6	20 th September 2018	Member approval at Executive Committee
7	22 nd March 2021	Revision and update

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1. Context

The Authority has adopted the National Council for Volunteering Organisations (NCVO) definition of volunteering as:

'..... any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.'

Volunteering plays a key part of the continued transformation of the Lee Valley Regional Park. The vision for the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority is to become a 'World Class Leisure Destination' and the dedication of our registered volunteers continues to grow year on year through a range of mutually beneficial volunteering opportunities and quality volunteer management.

2. Objectives

These objectives are derived directly from the Authority's aim for 'Community – a Park which will provide opportunities for wellbeing'; this includes a specific objective that recognises the importance of the 'provision of opportunities for volunteering'. Each objective identified below identifies actions that will deliver continuous improvements and enhancements to the service.

1. Develop a volunteer programme in the Authority and encourage activities for all by:
 - (i) Improving awareness and increasing access to volunteering opportunities for both the Authority and its managed venues.
 - (ii) Seek to raise the current ratio of volunteers to staff.
 - (iii) Work with all departments within the Authority to constantly identify new opportunities to meet changing needs and business priorities.
 - (iv) Secure Investing in Volunteers (IIV) every three years at renewal.
 - a) By constantly refining all procedures and ensure they are 'best in class' in line with IIV standards.
 - b) Ensure we carry out our duty of care to volunteers by operating robust procedures in relation to safeguarding and mechanisms for dealing with complaints or disciplinary incidents involving volunteers.
2. Match the Authority's business needs with volunteer support through:
 - (i) Ensuring each department's capacity can support the volunteer programme by identifying gaps and matching these with existing skill sets of existing and new volunteers.
 - (ii) Reviewing our recruitment processes to ensure new volunteers have the right skill set where possible to serve our business needs.

3. Develop opportunities to promote diversity involving groups from hard-to-reach communities and the voluntary sector by:
 - (i) Promoting the Volunteer Strategy and programme to 'target groups'.

4. Resource additional support for volunteers by:
 - (i) Reviewing the operation and function of the existing staff team, to ensure there are no capacity issues.
 - (ii) Actively promote the involvement (including sponsorship of sites) of 'corporates' through presentations and visits. 'Corporates' represent a good opportunity for volunteering as part of their corporate 'social responsibility' programmes.
 - (iii) Seek to develop new options for companies to contribute to the Park through their CSR activities.
 - (iv) Maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of our existing volunteer base by ensuring individuals and groups are rewarded for their dedication, endeavour and contribution.
 - (v) Constantly review and examine our reward and recognition activities.

5. Encourage staff to pursue volunteering opportunities which support communities across the Region by:
 - (i) Actively creating volunteering opportunities and then promoting and encouraging staff to pursue those opportunities initially in their own free time, but potentially longer term as part of a CSR programme.

6. Actively seek opportunities for joint partner programmes for volunteer activities through:
 - (i) Identifying areas where further joint working can be identified and delivered. This should build on one or two partners that currently undertake projects with the organisation – for example Canal and River Trust and CHEXS, who already deliver joint projects across the Park.

3. Responsibilities

The Head of Human Resources is responsible for the delivery of the Policy and the Volunteers Officer is responsible for the overview, monitoring and evaluation of the Volunteer Policy.

4. Legal Considerations

1. There is no legislation in relation to working with volunteers (although there is case law which provides guidance). As an organisation using volunteers we have a duty to keep abreast of changes in good practice and ensure these are conveyed appropriately. Working with organisations such as National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), local volunteer centres and holder of the

Investing in Volunteers Award (IIV) the Authority is seen as maintaining the highest standards of Volunteer Management.

2. Set out below are some suggestions (derived from the case law) to reduce the risk for the Authority of creating a legally binding contract with volunteers. It may not be realistic to avoid all of the potential risk factors, but removing some of the indicators of a contractual relationship should be possible:
 - (i) Avoid making payments to volunteers that could be construed as wages. Payments to cover actual expenses should be clearly identified as such and ideally reimbursed against receipts.
 - (ii) Remove or, at least, minimise perks that could be seen as consideration.
 - (iii) Reduce obligations on the part of the volunteer. Giving a volunteer the ability to refuse tasks and choose when to work will point away from the existence of a binding contract.
 - (iv) Avoid using language that makes the arrangement sound contractual and adopt flexible language, such as "usual" and "suggested".
 - (v) Treat volunteers fairly by dealing with problems and grievances and good communication between the parties should reduce the likelihood of disputes with volunteers.

5. Relevant Policy & Procedures

There is a Volunteers Strategy that is directly linked to this policy and a Volunteers Handbook that supports the overall volunteers programme. The volunteers programme is managed through process and procedure that is part of the Quality Management System process and there are relevant procedures available to all staff working with volunteers via the Authority's Intranet (Compass) and the Authority's Corporate and Visit web sites. There is also support in the form of a guide for staff who manage volunteers and an e-learning module which is available to all staff.

6. Policy Implementation

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Volunteers Officer and staff who work with volunteers. The policy will be published on Compass for all staff and training will be provided for those working directly with volunteers. The policy will also be available on the Lee Valley Visit and Authority Corporate web sites.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

1. The effectiveness of this policy will be measured against the following targets:
 - Volunteer Hours
 - Active Volunteers
 - Monetary Value of Volunteering
 - Non-Riparian Volunteers percentage changes
 - Minority Volunteers percentage changes
 - Ratio of Volunteers to Staff

2. The following Performance Indicators are reported via the Authority Scorecard to the Members:
- Usage
 - Customer Satisfaction
 - Complaints
 - Compliments
 - Regionality
 - Health and Safety Audit

8. Review

The policy will be fully reviewed every 3 years or sooner if any legislation comes into place or changes.

9. Glossary of Terms

Some of the terminology used in this document may be unfamiliar so this glossary has been attached to clarify some new terminology.

- **Private and Commercial Sector Groups (Corporate Tasks)** – Groups of volunteers who are attached to a company or organisation undertaking a single day of volunteering activity. Normally funded by the company and undertaken on a normal working day. Used also as team building days or also called community days.
- **Diversity** – In this context means the variety of people that you have within your volunteering force and will include ethnic diversity, age diversity, gender diversity, disability diversity and community diversity. The essence is not to discriminate against any level of diversity within an organisation.
- **Hard-to-Reach / Minority** - ('target groups') current terminology used by the government and volunteering organisations to describe any person or group who may not have access to general information due to language or technical barriers. This includes many ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities or young or old sections of the community.

10. Appendices

There are a several companion documents to this policy:

- Volunteer Strategy Document
- Volunteers Handbook
- Staff Guide to working with Volunteers



Volunteers Strategy

March 2021

Reference: [Version 7]



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I Document Information

Title: Volunteers Strategy

Status: Live

Current Version: v7 (March 2021)

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7	5 th March 2021	Revision and update

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1. Context

- 1.1. Volunteering increasingly forms an important and distinct element in the delivery of services by many private and public sector organisations. At an intrinsic level volunteering demonstrates a strong commitment to human values of support and empathy which provides stimulus and reward, 'the 'economics of well-being'. On a practical level it can ensure that jobs can be completed in a more effective way due the additional resource volunteers provide.
- 1.2. Volunteering plays a key part of the continued transformation of the [Lee Valley Regional Park](#) and its vision to be 'a world class leisure destination'. The Authority's adopted strategic aims include 'Increase the attractiveness and use of the Parkland and venues to support the health and wellbeing of visitors from all communities', with volunteering recognised as an activity which reinforces this aim.
- 1.3. The dedication of the Authority's registered volunteers continues to grow year on year through a range of mutually beneficial volunteering opportunities, quality volunteer management activities and reward and recognition initiatives.
- 1.4. In line with the Authority's corporate approach to strategy development the current strategy has been reviewed and revised to account for changes which have occurred in the environment externally to the Authority.
- 1.5. The strategy outlines how the aims of the Volunteer Policy are to be delivered.

2. Background

- 2.1. In 2020 across the Authority's parklands and venues over 1,200 volunteers contributed over 11,000 hours (around 60% less hours than in 2019) which was a huge achievement during a global pandemic. Volunteering was carried out to support Fisheries, Rangers Service (Livestock checkers, Litter pickers, Conservation, Honorary Wardens), Biodiversity, Myddelton House Gardens and Holyfield Hall Farm. Pre-Covid-19 volunteers also supported our externally managed venues. Additionally, there are a number of joint 'volunteer' programmes some of which are not yet fully developed. They represent partnership working with Major Event organisers, National Governing Bodies and smaller voluntary groups or partners to facilitate Lee Valley Park volunteer involvement.

3. Strategy Vision, Aims and Objectives

- 3.1. This Strategy outlines how the Authority will seek to improve its volunteer programme.
- 3.2. Officers from the Authority consider that the strategy requires a clear vision to drive forward the strategy and to ensure that we can grow and develop our volunteer's network.

The Authority aims to be an exemplar of how It attracts, involves and supports its volunteers in the delivery of its vision.

The successful delivery of this requires integration of a range of service areas to ensure a clear and consistent approach.

3.3. The service areas include the following:

- (i) Human resources – there are two elements to this.
 - a) Firstly, although not directly employed by the Authority the use of volunteers raises many of the same issues that the employment of staff raises in terms of their 'recruitment', training and support. If all else fails, this may involve corrective action. We will ensure that the appointment of volunteers is delivered to the same standards to those which underpin our directly employed staff.
 - b) Secondly, the Authority's human resources policies allow 'flexible' working which allows all staff the freedom to become volunteers themselves.
- (ii) The Authority owns only 43% of the area of the Regional Park. Only through working with partners such as the Canal and River Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and event providers working with volunteers can this vision be realised. In working with its partners we will ensure that our high standards of support and interest can be maintained through the negotiation of 'local' agreements with partners.

3.4. The Volunteers Strategy has 6 aims which are in turn supported by a series of objectives which will:

- 1) Develop our volunteer programme at venues and the Authority's parklands for all by:**
 - (i) Improving awareness and increased access to volunteering opportunities to raise the current ratio of volunteers to staff.
 - (ii) Working with Authority departments to continuously identify new opportunities as business direction directs.
 - (iii) Maintain the Investing in Volunteers accreditation at successive renewals.
- 2) Match the Authority's business needs with volunteer support through:**
 - (iv) Continually reviewing the organisations capacity gaps and matching these with existing volunteer skill set.
 - (v) Regularly reviewing our recruitment processes to ensure new volunteers have the right skill set where possible to serve our business needs.
- 3) Develop specific opportunities to promote diversity involving hard-to-reach ethnic minority, disabled, private, diverse age ranges, community and voluntary sector groups:**
 - (i) Actively promote volunteering and programmes to specific 'target groups', through new and established links with local authorities,, external partnerships, volunteer centres, action groups and community groups

4) Attract additional support for volunteers by:

- (i) Actively promoting engagement of companies through presentations and visits. 'Corporates' represent a good opportunity for partnerships linked to volunteering as part of their corporate 'social responsibility'
- (ii) Rewarding dedication, endeavour and contribution.

5) Encourage staff to pursue volunteering opportunities to support communities across the Region.

The Authority recognises the importance of volunteering as a means for personal 'enrichment' and the achievement of new skills. These skills should not be denied to our staff.

This will be achieved through:

- (i) The Volunteers Team working closely with Human Resources to find a system to actively encourage opportunities for staff either within the Park or in other areas across the region to volunteer as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility activity for the Park Authority or external organisations.

6) Actively seek opportunities for joint partner programmes

- (i) The delivery of joint programmes and the shared use of a 'dedicated' pool of volunteers across the range of opportunities. The Regional Park represents a major extension to our current activity which is consistent with our corporate vision.

This will be sought through:

Identifying partners where jointly agreed volunteer or corporate programmes can be delivered.

4. Responsibilities

The Head of Human Resources is responsible for the delivery of the Volunteers Strategy.

The Volunteers Officer is responsible for the overview, monitoring and evaluation of the of the Volunteer's Strategy.

5. Legal Considerations

There is no legislation in relation to working with volunteers (although there is case law which provides guidance). As an organisation using volunteers we have a duty to keep abreast of changes in good practice and ensure that these are conveyed appropriately. Working with organisations such as National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), local volunteer centres and holder of the Investing in Volunteers Award (IIV) the Authority is seen as maintaining the highest standards of Volunteer Management.

6. Relevant Policy & Procedures

There is a Volunteers Policy that is directly linked to this strategy and a Volunteers Handbook that supports the overall volunteers programme.

7. Strategy Implementation

This strategy will be implemented through the series of objectives identified above in section 3 and forms the day to day running of the volunteer's programme, the responsibility of which is down to the Volunteers Team and staff.

8. Monitoring & Evaluation

The effectiveness of this strategy will be measured against the volunteer programme targets and Performance Indicators detailed on the Authority Scorecard.

Stretch Targets set until 2022

Current Position (2020)	By 2022 we will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,000 volunteer hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authority Venues = 420 (includes Lee Valley Park Farms = 190) - All other Authority = 10,050 - Partner organisations = 1,530 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase volunteer hours to a target of 12,500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authority Venues target* = 200 - All other Authority** = 11,000 - Farms who no longer belong to the Authority) - Partner organisations target** = 1,550
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,200 registered volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of registered volunteers to 1,300
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-riparian volunteers 303 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase to 320
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority Group Volunteers 122 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase to 150
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratio of volunteers currently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authority ratio 3.2:1 volunteers to FTE's - Venues ratio 0.1:1 volunteers to FTE's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authority** ratio 4:1 volunteers to FTE's - Venues* ratio 0.5:1 volunteers to FTE's

*excludes Lee Valley Park Farms as no longer belongs to the Authority

**takes into account decreased activity due to another year of Covid-19 restrictions in place

These figures will be monitored on an annual basis by the Volunteers Team.

9. Review

The strategy will be reviewed every 3 years in line with the re-assessment of Investing in Volunteers and rolled out via Compass and the internet for all staff via Volunteer Supervisor training for those working directly with volunteers.

10. Glossary of Terms

10.1. Some of the terminology used in this document may be unfamiliar so this glossary has been attached to clarify a number of new terminologies.

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- Guide to working with Volunteers

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