

Surrey Countryside Partnerships



*Countryside
Management
in Action!*



Volunteer Policy

Our Countryside Needs You!

Volunteers play a vital role in assisting the Surrey Countryside Partnerships to manage, maintain and restore Surrey and South London's beautiful countryside for all to enjoy. Over 22,000 volunteer hours are put in each year to support our work, more hours are completed by volunteers than by our small staff team, so you are vital!

Countryside volunteering has proven health & wellbeing benefits, as well as offering opportunities to learn new skills, meet new people, work right at the heart of amazing landscapes or help look after conservation grazing livestock.

The Surrey Countryside Partnerships team (Lower Mole & Downlands Partnerships) offer practical countryside volunteering opportunities throughout the year, all across North and NE Surrey as well as in to neighbouring areas of Kingston, Sutton and Croydon. The Surrey Heathland Partnership organises occasional one off countryside volunteering opportunities on request.

Conservation volunteering with us

We have a great team of volunteers that help both Partnerships with practical countryside work, woodwork, species/site monitoring, stock checking and also providing administration support in the office, but new volunteers are always very welcome. Our practical volunteer task programmes can be viewed via our Lower Mole or Downlands Task programme pages on our website. We also offer occasional social events such as Christmas barbecues and volunteer trips, and offer discounted branded workwear to thank the volunteers for their help.

We can accommodate larger corporate, community and school groups by arrangement. Offering great opportunities for team or individual employee volunteering sessions, team building, sponsorship and environmental education days. Our Corporate Volunteering Brochure is available on our website.

What to expect as a countryside volunteer

Volunteers give their time for many reasons but all share a common goal - to make a difference to their local countryside.

- It can be fun, social and offers a great opportunity for healthy exercise
- It can give you a great sense of personal achievement and self-worth
- It gives you an opportunity to develop new skills

- It improves your employability by giving you valuable experience and demonstrates a 'can do' attitude

What kinds of tasks could I help with?

There are a wide range of tasks that you may be involved with as part of a volunteering team, some examples are:

- Woodland management, such as coppicing
- Invasive scrub management on grasslands
- Hedge-laying
- Pond clearance
- Step building
- Clearing invasive species from sites, such as ragwort and Himalayan balsam
- Pine-pulling on heathland
- Indoor carpentry work in workshops
- Surfacing on bridleways
- Helping out at shows and fairs

There are also opportunities to help look after livestock, which include cattle, sheep and goats. As well as to carry out species monitoring such as butterfly transects. Additional training is available if you are interested in these activities.

How much time do I need to give?

The general answer is as much as you are prepared to give. We always need help and will welcome you with a friendly face, many cups of tea and coffee, nice biscuits and support.

As a volunteer, you are entitled to:

- Be welcomed and feel valued
- Receive a relevant induction, including health and safety procedures
- Be shown how to use the equipment safely
- Have your role for the day clearly defined
- Be treated with equality, fairness and dignity and given the freedom to discuss matters openly with your task leader
- Only to be expected to work at your own pace
- Feel free to raise any concerns with your task leader at any time and ask any questions you may have
- Expect a trained first aider and kit to be on site at all times on task days
- Be provided with appropriate safety equipment such as gloves, goggles and safety helmets. Regular volunteers are provided with safety boots.
- Never feel that you are left alone to work without supervision
- Provision of Public liability and personal accident insurance

In return, you are expected to:

- Pay attention to your task leader and follow instructions
- Treat others with respect and thoughtfulness
- Take care of the health and safety of yourself and others
- Work at your own pace, within your own abilities, training and experience
- Make your task leader aware of any medical condition you may have
- Take care of any tools or equipment issued to you
- New volunteers are asked to complete a contact details form

- Ensure the task leader is aware of your arrival and departure to/from the worksite

Health Tips

We have a detailed health and safety leaflet available on our website, please ensure that you read this before starting work with us.

Practical tasks can be physically tiring, particularly if you don't undertake this type of work regularly. Always work at your own pace and stop whenever you need to for a rest, and keep hydrated. Accidents are more likely to happen at the end of a day, when people are getting tired.

It's likely your task will involve some sort of manual handling such as lifting, pulling, pushing and carrying a range of objects, often over uneven ground. Injuries may happen if poor technique is used. This should all be explained to you at the start of the day. Always seek help with carrying heavier loads.

There are three diseases to be aware of if you are involved in practical conservation work - Tetanus, Weil's and Lyme's Disease. However, don't panic, these are rarely encountered. The first two are easy to avoid with basic hygiene: wash your hands before eating and wash out any cut you get on site with plenty of water - we always have clean water and/or hand gel available for this on task days.

Tetanus is very painful and (if not diagnosed early) sometimes fatal. However, it is entirely preventable by making sure your immunisation is up to date. If in doubt, consult your doctor.

Weil's Disease is carried by rats and is associated with stagnant or still water. This can be avoided by covering any old or new cut or abrasion with a waterproof plaster before starting work on a pond, river or ditch. Consult your doctor if you get any flu like symptoms after working on one of these, and advise the doctor that you suspect Weil's disease, as many doctors may not have seen the disease before.

Lyme's Disease is carried by ticks, which are often found in long vegetation, especially bracken. Consult your doctor if a reddish spot, which increases in size, at the site of the bite is experienced, accompanied by flu like symptoms. Keeping exposed skin to a minimum and regular checking for ticks can help avoid getting bitten. If in doubt about any of these consult your doctor.

In addition, if you suffer from any illness, such as diabetes or epilepsy, that could affect your work, then please let the staff know. This information will be treated in complete confidence.

Insurance

It is important that when carrying out work, often in areas with public access, you are not exposing yourself, your organisation or Surrey County Council to risk from third party claims. All volunteers under our guidance are indemnified under the council's insurance policy against claims for injury or damage to property. Providing you follow this guidance and any other specific advice from the task leader on site, you will be covered by this policy.

Personal injury cover with full benefits is provided for volunteers aged from 12 to 75 years old. Reduced benefits are available for volunteers aged from 75 to 80 years, provided they are working with prior knowledge of Surrey County Council. Any information given to us will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the protection of members of society who may be more vulnerable due to age, illness, capacity or position in society. Surrey County Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

The Partnerships only accept volunteers aged 16 or over, unless accompanied by an adult aged 18 or over. We welcome vulnerable adults to volunteer with us via a third party organisation such as Surrey Choices, where a member of their staff will accompany the volunteer on site until its mutually agreed that the volunteer is able to join in unsupervised. We actively avoid any one to one situations between staff/volunteers and vulnerable volunteers. As we advertise for volunteers to join us in a variety of ways there is potential for an individual to turn up on site without any prior introduction, in that situation the member of staff on site would ask the volunteer to complete a contact details sheet on site. In most situations a volunteer would have been sent this form via email and have been asked to complete it in advance. The contact details form also notes that volunteers agree to have their photographs or video taken for publicity purposes unless they request otherwise.

The Council is committed to the fair treatment of its employees, potential employees, and volunteers, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background. The Council will treat all volunteers fairly, and will not discriminate unfairly against volunteers on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Volunteers' names and email addresses are added to our mailing list. They will receive a quarterly newsletter with links to the Volunteer Task Programmes, as well as other occasional emails regarding SCP matters and events of interest. Volunteers without email addresses will receive the quarterly Task Programmes by post.

If a volunteer has any issues they would like to raise their main points of contact are the Senior Partnership Officers at the Downlands and Lower Mole Partnerships. We also encourage each team to have a volunteer representative who can gather feedback from the volunteers to give to the staff and vice versa to relay messages to the volunteers.

Our volunteer promise and privacy policy can be found on our website.

Training Opportunities

The Partnerships are always looking to offer new opportunities to our volunteers. Many of our volunteers have received training in various skills over the years. The more skills that our volunteers possess, the more we can achieve on site. If you would like training in skills such as minibus driving, brushcutter use or in the operation of plant machinery such as dumper trucks and mini excavators, please let us know. When we have enough interest we will organise our own training courses. These courses are free to volunteers who regularly attend our tasks. Volunteers are required to sign to acknowledge this training as a record that they have received it.

Please refer to the [Surrey Countryside Partnerships Team](#) page for further information and links to:

SCP Health and Safety Guide for Volunteers (pdf)

Surrey Countryside Partnerships' Privacy Policy

Surrey County Council's Volunteer Promise (pdf)

Surrey County Council's Social Media Policy for Volunteers (pdf)

If you would like to contact us please email:

countrysidepartnershipsteam@surreycc.gov.uk