



Policy on Volunteering

Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in The Community Farm (TCF) and forms the foundation for volunteering management practice. Its purpose is to ensure fairness, consistency and legal compliance in the management and support for volunteers.

1. Relevance and accessibility

1.1 This policy is of relevance to all current and potential volunteers, as well as to every member of staff concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers or promoting voluntary activity within TCF.

1.2 The content of this policy is made readily accessible to current and potential volunteers electronically through the volunteering pages of TCF website with printed copies also available at each volunteer day

1.3 All new CF staff are informed about this policy as part of their induction process and made aware of the vital importance of volunteers to the organisation.

2. Values and commitment

3.1 The voluntary and membership principles on which TCF was founded is one of its greatest strengths and our commitment to people and places will continue to be expressed through active partnerships with individuals, local groups and communities. We aim to provide positive and fulfilling volunteering opportunities that seek to satisfy individuals' motivations, aspirations and fulfilment. The shared objective is to widen understanding of and encourage active participation in organic food production.

3. Defining volunteers and The Community Farm's relationship with them

3.1 A volunteer is someone who, without any expectation of financial compensation willingly gives their time, skills and/or experience to perform a task at the request of and on behalf of TCF. In line with relevant legislation and case law, TCF distinguishes volunteering from employment, and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect to complement the work of paid staff.

3.2 The importance of maintaining a balanced, effective and mutually beneficial staff/volunteer partnership is essential. It is based on the principle that TCF staff provide the structure, organisation, direction and day-to-day management together with appropriate levels of accountability, while volunteers add value to our work by performing a wide range of roles, contributing their time, flexibility, experience and specialist skills.

3.3 The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, will be imposed on volunteers to attend, give a minimum amount of time or carry out the tasks provided. Likewise TCF cannot be compelled to provide regular work, payment or any other benefit for any activity undertaken.

3.4 Although volunteers offer time freely, willingly and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both what TCF expects from volunteers and what volunteers expect from the Farm - as well as maintaining the high standards on which TCF reputation depends.

4. Range of Volunteering opportunities

On the growing site itself TCF broadly offers two types of volunteering opportunities.

4.1 One off volunteer days - these will be advertised in advance around a specific task on farm (for instance harvesting squashes, laying hedges, pruning). On these days food will normally be provided and a voluntary contribution requested. Volunteers are expected to bring their own boots and wet weather gear, and any tools that might be useful (though the farm does have some tools if people do not have any). The aim of these

days is partly work related and partly social, with an opportunity to meet other members and find out about TCF.

4.2 Regular volunteering – this opportunity is aimed at people who can commit to work on the farm during the week. This might be weekly, fortnightly or monthly or less frequently. They will be provided with tools, but expected to bring boots and wet weather gear. The work done on these days will fit it with them demands of the farm, but is likely to include a degree of harvesting and weeding. While TCF can be flexible about timing it is essential that these days are arranged in advance with TCF; TCF is not able to consider volunteers arriving without prior planning.

4.3 In addition to working on the farm there are a number of volunteering opportunities for people who have specific skills and would like to offer their services to the farm. Examples of this might be; IT, marketing, engineering/ machinery, conservation. There are also opportunities to volunteer in the warehouse. These opportunities should be discussed with the volunteer managers.

5 Guidance and Support

At each volunteering day there will be a member of TCF staff present to guide and advise volunteers in their tasks.

6. Commitment to diversity and equality (See Equal Opportunities policy)

6.1 TCF recognises the importance of encouraging diversity and achieving equality among volunteers, as well as employees, members and visitors. Volunteers are actively encouraged from a wide cross-section of backgrounds and experiences.

6.2 TCF values and respects the individual by providing equal opportunities to all for active involvement within the scope of the organisation's needs and resources. TCF is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all - regardless of age (subject to 6.4 and 6.5), race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender, marital or parental status, religion, political beliefs or socio-economic background.

Acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role will be made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out the specified task(s) subject to the needs and restrictions of the location. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for a volunteer with a disability.

6.3 All staff, volunteers, contractors and partner organisations are expected actively to support TCF's commitment to diversity and equality.

6.4 There is no minimum age requirement for volunteers provided they are undertaking suitable tasks for which there is no legal minimum, they are supervised and not left alone and a parent or guardian is present with anyone under the age of 18.

6.5 TCF does not specify a general volunteer upper age limit and recognises the contribution made by older volunteers in terms of valuable knowledge and experience. However, TCF would be irresponsible if it permitted volunteers to continue beyond a point where volunteering is detrimental to their own or other people's health and safety.

7. Volunteer recruitment and selection

7.1 TCF has a fair and consistent process for recruiting and selecting volunteers that is relevant and appropriate to each role.

7.2 TCF recruits volunteers on a needs-led but mutually beneficial basis to match desirable projects and activities with volunteers' skills, knowledge, experience and motivation. The underlying principle to recruitment is the opportunity for a needed task to be undertaken in ways which will provide identifiable benefits to motivate the potential volunteer. The volunteer manager will also discuss individual volunteer requirements to ensure volunteers feel happy and properly supported in their role throughout their time as a volunteer.

7.3 Usually anyone being considered for a volunteer role will be invited for an informal interview with the manager to explore their skills, experience, interests and suitability, as well as their motivation. This is also done over the phone. Reasonable adjustments may be made to recruitment methods to suit the particular access requirements of applicants with disabilities.

8. Induction, training and development

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8.1 New volunteers will be made to feel welcome and provided with an informal induction. This will include a copy of the Volunteer Induction Pack, containing essential information for all volunteers, together with material relevant to the specific location, role or group.

8.2 At the end of a mutually suitable settling-in period, an informal discussion will be held between the volunteer and manager to share positive experiences as well as discuss any areas of concern.

8.3 Training and support for volunteers is a high priority for TCF in order to provide the necessary information and skills to carry out the role.

8.4 TCF recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and the opportunity for progression and personal development. Volunteers may want to develop new skills while helping TCF and, where appropriate, will be encouraged to take on new roles or assume greater involvement. There will also be regular opportunities to work together to help shape the volunteer programme of TCF.

8.5 A volunteer may act as a trainer, supervisor, leader or project manager, providing this is properly specified and it has been established that the volunteer has the necessary skills or potential.

9. Support and recognition

All staff and volunteers responsible for volunteer management are encouraged to ensure appropriate acknowledgment on a regular basis. This could range from a simple 'thank you' after every attendance, to a planned social event for volunteers.

10. Communication

10.1 It is recommended TCF practice that progress is discussed with volunteers on a regular basis. This will give the opportunity to monitor the contribution from the role, establish whether the volunteer would like to change their current contribution and ensure that they feel valued and satisfied with their volunteering.

10.2 TCF recognises that volunteers are free to end their involvement at any time. Managers are encouraged to hold an exit interview to find out why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether the volunteer may want to be involved again in the future.

11. Problem solving

11.1 TCF aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. Clear procedures are in place to deal with complaints by or about volunteers which comply with TCF employment policy (see appendix 1). The Engagement Leader is responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints. They will seek to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and will aim for a positive and amicable solution.

11.2 In the unlikely event that a problem is not felt to have been responded to volunteers can discuss the issue with the Managing Director of TCF.

12. Health and safety

TCF is committed to providing and maintaining a safe environment, without risks to health, for all its volunteers. TCF will provide appropriate instruction, training and supervision to ensure the health, safety and welfare of volunteers. TCF's Health and Safety policy and other relevant guidance is available at volunteer days and on the farm site.

13. Insurance

13.1 TCF insurance is in force to cover loss or damage to equipment, including vehicles, provided for the use of volunteers.

13.2 TCF liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them.

13.3 Personal accident insurance is in force for the benefit of volunteers in certain age categories and claims are made at the discretion of TCF.

13.4 TCF does not insure the personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage except for a limited amount of cover if the loss occurs from TCF vehicle.

13.5 If volunteers use their professional skills at TCF request for purposes on which they are qualified to advise, TCF will issue a letter on request releasing them from professional indemnity.

APPENDIX 1

From TCF Employment Policy Feb 2016

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DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Broadly TCF's disciplinary procedure consists of 4 steps. However, before invoking the procedure, TCF may speak to the volunteer informally and may tell the volunteer what it thinks should be done to eliminate the cause of TCF's concern. If the formal disciplinary process is started, it will involve the following steps:

1. TCF shall investigate the situation and will write to the volunteer about its concerns. The letter will set out in detail the reason why TCF is contemplating taking disciplinary action against the volunteer.
2. The volunteer will be invited to attend a disciplinary meeting to discuss the situation and must take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting. They may bring a friend, family member or work colleague to the meeting and will be given the opportunity to ask questions and set out their position.
3. After the meeting TCF will write to inform the volunteer of its decision and advise them of their right to appeal against the decision if they are not satisfied with it.
4. If the volunteer wishes to appeal they must advise TCF in writing within 5 working days of the original hearing. They will then be invited to attend a further meeting to allow them to put forward their case. Again they must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting and may be accompanied by a friend, family member or work colleague. As soon as possible after the meeting, TCF will write to inform the volunteer of its decision. The decision is final.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If a volunteer has a grievance relating to their employment they should raise the matter initially with their Line Manager and the matter will be discussed informally. If they are not satisfied with their discussion the formal grievance procedure to follow is:

1. The volunteer should set out the grievance in writing and send it to their Manager or other appropriate person. The statement should clearly state the basis for the grievance.
2. TCF will invite the volunteer to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance and will endeavour to hold the meeting as soon as possible after receiving the statement. The volunteer must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. They may bring a friend, family member or work colleague to the meeting.
3. After the meeting, TCF will write to inform the volunteer of its decision regarding the grievance. The volunteer will also be advised that they can appeal against the decision if they are unhappy with it and the letter will confirm to whom they should send the appeal. Where possible, TCF will arrange for the appeal to be heard by a more senior member of staff not involved in the original meeting.
4. If the volunteer wishes to appeal they must write to TCF within 5 working days telling us that they want to appeal. We will then ask them to attend a further meeting and again they must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. They may bring a friend, family member or work colleague to the meeting.
5. After the appeal, TCF will write to inform the volunteer of its decision. The decision is final.

Approved by PPP GHM July 30th 2017