



Stroud Valleys Project

Enriching lives, transforming places

Volunteer Handbook



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1. About Stroud Valleys Project

Stroud Valleys Project is an environmental charity with the objective of making the Stroud Valleys a better, healthier place for present and future generations. Our aim is to protect and enhance the local environment by working with local communities to embrace sustainability and enhance biodiversity.

We look after a number of sites around the Stroud Valleys and beyond, from nature reserves to allotments, ponds and canal-sides to walled kitchen gardens. We work with a diverse and dedicated team of staff and volunteers to enhance and protect these sites for the benefit of the communities in which they are situated and the wildlife that lives there. We help volunteers to get out into nature in their local communities, to learn new skills, meet new people and enjoy themselves!



We also run a programme of nature-themed events, from nature walks and talks to rural skills workshops, such as scything and hedge-laying. We work with local authorities, other charities, and landowners to enhance biodiversity and support nature and communities within our district.

We also run a Stroud town centre-based eco shop selling eco-friendly and wildlife supporting goods, including refills of cleaning and toiletry products.

All our activities are supported by our talented and dedicated band of volunteers who are an intrinsic and vital part of the work that we do.

You can find out about our current projects here:

<https://www.stroudvalleysproject.org/svp-projects/current-projects>

2. Types of Volunteering Opportunities

There are a variety of different opportunities that volunteers can take advantage of, including:

2.1 Outdoor Conservation

We run groups throughout the week working on sites such as allotments, public rights of way, private land, kitchen gardens, public amenities and wildlife and nature reserves. Tasks range from general gardening and clearance to hedge-laying and scything. Our volunteers also make and repair a variety of items that we then sell in our eco-shop, such as upcycled garden tools and bird boxes and tables. We regularly work at the following sites:

- Capel's Mill, Stroud
- The Beeches Kitchen Garden at Cainscross
- Bisley Allotments, Bisley
- Bisley Old Road Allotments, Stroud
- Stratford Park, Stroud
- Kingswood (Glos) Newt Ponds and Green Space
- Prinknash Abbey Monastery Garden
- Rackleaze Wetlands, Cam
- Sarah's Field, Berkeley

In addition, we run mobile groups in and around Stroud under our Wild Shed and Wild Work programmes. These groups work on a variety of sites, including the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields at Dudbridge and the Stroud to Nailsworth cycle path.



Volunteers for our outdoor conservation groups come from a wide range of backgrounds and have a variety of skills and experience prior to joining us. You do not necessarily need prior experience of outdoor conservation work, although of course we welcome those that have this. The essential things we require from our volunteers are

enthusiasm, a desire to work outdoors whatever the weather and an ability to commit to regular attendance at one of our groups.

If you aren't able to commit to being a regular volunteer, we also run occasional events where our regular volunteers are joined by those who cannot make such a frequent commitment, to carry out activities such as tree planting.

We also run occasional ecological surveys in the district and our volunteers help us to collect and process ecological data which can then be used to inform conservation management programmes.

2.2 Events and Fundraising

We run a number of events such as courses, talks and walks throughout the year, all of which require organisation, publicity, ticket sales administration as well as support during and after the events.



We also run occasional fundraising events. In the past these have included cycle rides, walks, music nights and stalls outside our shop selling tickets for our annual Christmas raffle.

Additionally, we are often involved in larger events, such as the National Trust's Marking Day or the Stroud Festival of Nature.

Volunteers are vital in helping us to run our events cost effectively and efficiently and in giving our

event attendees the best possible experience. We welcome fundraising and events volunteers with a wide range of skills and prior experience, including administration, events organisation, and fundraising, as well as those with specific conservation knowledge. Even if you have no prior experience in these areas, you might be able to help us out, so please do get in touch.

2.3 SVP eco shop and Office



Our shop and administration volunteers help us with a variety of important jobs, including volunteer administration, marketing, website maintenance and recycling-scheme handling. Shop and administration volunteers work in our town-centre location and are a vital part of our team.

We welcome volunteers with any skills or prior experience in retail, administration, or marketing. However, if you have no prior experience in these areas but would still like to

help us with our shop or office work, please do get in touch.

3. Becoming a Volunteer with Stroud Valleys Project

3.1 Registering your interest

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, you can register your interest and tell us about your skills and availability in a number of ways. You can visit us in our eco shop during normal shop opening hours and talk to a team member about the opportunities that are currently available. They will give you a form to complete and we will then add your details to our database.

You can express an interest in volunteering by visiting our website and completing a short form. Find details at



<https://www.stroudvalleysproject.org/volunteer-express-interest>

Alternatively, you can call us during normal office hours on (01453) 753358 or email us at info@stroudvalleysproject.org.

Depending on your requirements, availability and skills, a project officer will get in touch with you as and when we have a suitable vacancy that you might be able to help us with.

3.2 Induction

Once you have spoken with a project officer and agreed which project you would like to be involved in, we will get you to come along to an activity and will introduce you to the site and the other members of the team.

The project officer will go through all the things you need to know when you become an active volunteer with us. If you decide after your first few sessions that you would like to continue volunteering with us, you will need to complete a full volunteer registration form. Your project officer will provide you with this and will help you to complete it if necessary.

If you are going to be volunteering with us regularly, we will ensure that you have all the information you need to become an integral member of our team.

Irrespective of whether you will be a regular volunteer or not, when you volunteer with us, we will ensure that you have everything you need to be safe and comfortable whilst you are with us.

3.3 Training

The training that you receive will depend on the role that you are taking on. Each volunteer will be allocated a member of staff who will ensure that they have everything they need to do the job that they have chosen. Training is an ongoing process for our volunteers, with project officers offering an appropriate level of instruction as and when it is required.

If you are required to undertake specific training for your role, for example, safeguarding training, this will be discussed with you, and we will help you to successfully complete any courses that are needed.

4. Our Responsibilities

4.1 General

We commit to providing you with:

- A nominated project officer or team member who can act as your primary contact whilst you are volunteering with us
- A safe and secure working environment
- Equality of opportunity
- Your right to privacy and compliance with all relevant data protection legislation when dealing with your personal information
- A two-way working relationship where we provide support as needed for you to successfully enjoy your volunteering role with us
- Training and support to gain and maintain the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out your volunteering role successfully
- An opportunity to contribute toward making a real, tangible difference to the biodiversity and well-being of the Stroud district

4.2 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

We are committed to offering equal opportunities to all our volunteers and potential volunteers, irrespective of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion, belief, or any other factor unrelated to a person's ability to carry out their volunteer work.

We aim to treat everyone equally and fairly and will not tolerate discrimination of any description from any of our staff or volunteers. If you feel that you are the subject of discrimination from either a member of staff or another volunteer, please raise this immediately with your project officer, or through the CEO, Clare Mahdiyone.

4.3 Expenses

We want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement and therefore we can in some cases reimburse out-of-pocket expenses, including travel (e.g. mileage by car or bike, bus tickets, reasonable parking expenses). An expense form should be completed and accompanied by receipts where available. This should then be passed to the Operations Manager to reimburse as appropriate.

4.4 Complaints

Our aim is that all our volunteers enjoy their time with us and have a positive and enjoyable experience whilst they are with us. If, however, you are not happy with any aspect of your volunteering experience please do let us know as soon as possible. You should, in the first instance, speak with your project officer or allocated team member, so that we can try and work with you to resolve any issues you may be experiencing.

If you don't feel that you can discuss the issue with your project officer or allocated team member, or you don't think that your concerns are being adequately addressed, you can

Speak to our CEO, Clare Mahdiyone who will work with you and anyone else concerned to find a mutually satisfactory solution.

If you are still not happy that your concerns have been addressed, you can contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Whilst we do everything we can to try and make volunteering with us a positive and happy experience, we acknowledge that things can go wrong. We also realise that it can be hard to raise a complaint. However, it is important that you speak with us as soon as possible if you are not happy with anything relating to your volunteering. We welcome feedback or comments that can help us to improve and enhance your volunteering experience and believe that the ability to talk through any difficulties is a vital part of our working relationship with you.



5. Volunteer Responsibilities

5.1 General Code of Conduct

When you volunteer with us, we ask that you:

- Are reliable and committed to the role that you have agreed to take on
- Treat all staff and fellow volunteers with respect and consideration
- Comply with all health and safety and environmental policies and procedures
- Raise any concerns or complaints as soon as they arise
- Follow our safeguarding policy (see below)
- Respect the right of others to confidentiality and comply with all relevant data protection legislation
- Follow the guidance and instructions of your project officer or allocated team member, where those requests are reasonable and within the scope of the volunteering role that you have agreed to



5.2 Health and Safety

We seek to provide a safe and secure working environment for all. Accidents and incidents however can happen. It is important that you understand your responsibilities in terms of promoting and maintaining our high standards of health and safety.

If you do have an accident or a near miss whilst you are working with us, it is important that you report this to your project officer or allocated team member so that the details can be recorded in the accident book and any remedial action to prevent future occurrences can be taken. Even what might seem to be minor or trivial injuries such as thorn scratches or insect bites can cause problems and it is therefore important that you report these.

In the event of an incident, for example a fire, it is important that you follow the instructions of your project officer or other team members calmly and carefully.

5.3 Safeguarding

5.3.1 What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is what we do to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals. It allows children, young people and adults to live free from abuse, harm or neglect.

As a volunteer it is important that you understand how to spot the signs of abuse or neglect and know how to report any concerns that you might have.

5.3.2 Who are we safeguarding?

A child or young person means anyone under the age of 18. An adult at risk is anyone over the age of 18 who has additional care or support needs or is at risk of abuse or neglect and,

as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

5.3.3 What are the types of abuse for children and young people?

There are 4 types of abuse that apply to children:

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional

Vulnerability to radicalisation is also considered a type of abuse that is covered by safeguarding guidelines.

There are 10 types of abuse for adults at risk:

- Physical
- Domestic
- Sexual
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect
- Psychological or emotional
- Financial or material
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory
- Organisational or institutional

5.3.4 Where might abuse take place?

Children, young people, and adults may be abused in any setting, and they may be abused by other adult/adults or another child or children.

Abuse, harassment, and harm can happen to anyone. It's not always obvious or visible and often is not spoken about. Remember, 'it could happen here'.

5.3.5 What should I do if I am concerned about a safeguarding issue?

If you are worried about a safeguarding issue, please speak to your project officer or allocated staff member as soon as you become concerned. If you do not wish to speak to your project officer or allocated staff member, or if you are concerned about the behaviour of that person, you should speak to the CEO, Clare Mahdiyone, who is the safeguarding lead for Stroud Valleys Project.

Once concerns have been raised, the project officer and/or the safeguarding lead will take control of what happens next.

5.4 Data Protection and Confidentiality

Data is everywhere! All organisations, including Stroud Valleys Project handle and process data relating to their staff, volunteers, contacts, and supporters. It is important that all personal data is handled appropriately and sensitively. Personal data can include things like names, addresses or other contact details, or it can relate to items such as medical information, financial details, or previous convictions.

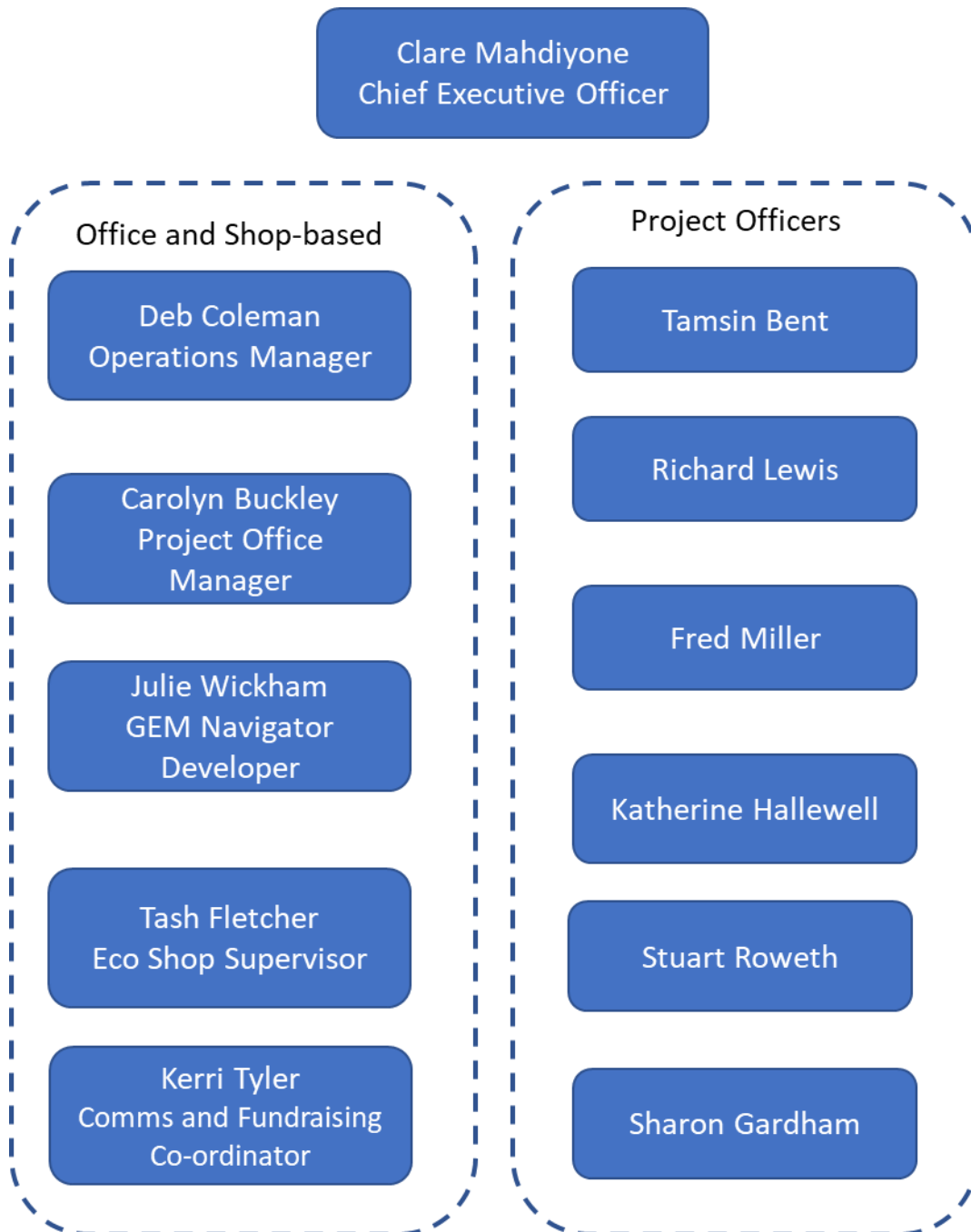
If you deal with any personal data as part of your role with Stroud Valleys Project, you must ensure that you fully comply with our data protection policy with regards to processing, disposal, consent, and access rights. If your role involves interacting with personal data, you will be fully briefed on our data protection policy and procedures. You may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement if appropriate for the task you are carrying out.

Even if your role doesn't involve directly interacting with personal data, it is important that the right to privacy and confidentiality of all volunteers, staff and members of the public is respected. For example, do not take and publish photographs of others without their permission (or in the case of children, their parents written consent), or otherwise publicize details of any others without their knowledge and consent.



6. Useful Information

6.1 Stroud Valleys Project Staff Who's Who



During office hours you can contact us on (01453) 753358, or you can email us at info@stroudvalleysproject.org. When you start volunteering with us, your project officer or allocated staff member will provide you with their full contact details.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Stroud Valleys Project. Your contribution to our work will be vital in helping us to Enrich Lives and Transform Places.

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