

Volunteers working in the environment in the parish of Great Baddow are of great value and contribute enormously to civic pride. There is a need to improve the level of co-ordination and management of volunteering activity on Council owned or managed land and these guidelines have been written to ensure that all volunteers and voluntary groups work effectively together in partnership with the Council to manage and maintain parks and open spaces in the most effective way.

The voluntary work will be supported by the Council, to ensure that each volunteer or voluntary group works in a safe manner and that we are all operating within relevant up to date legislation.

Volunteering is open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, ability or disability, sexual orientation and faith. Great Baddow Parish Council takes pride in being a council which values and respects its diversity and promotes good relations between all sections of the community.

This document is guidance produced by Great Baddow Parish Council.

Objective

The aim of this guide is to provide a clear framework for volunteers and voluntary groups working on Council owned or managed land within the Parish. Through this guide the Council wants to

- maximise the benefits to both the volunteers and the community of any volunteering activity
- make sure that everyone is working under health and safety guidelines
- make sure that members of the public are safeguarded and that the site itself and/or individual habitats and species are enhanced as a result of the work being carried out.

It is important that the Council is consulted and is in agreement with the work being carried out and that it is in accordance with any management plans already in place. The responsible body will offer advice and support as and when requested by the groups and individuals.

Planning and Consent

Before any work begins, please make sure that you have undertaken the following:

- Agreed the work programme
- Made a site visit to check that you understand the work and any risks
- Carried out a risk assessment/work activity form and sent a copy to the Council
- Agreed with the Clerk of the Council what will be done with any litter, cut wood etc., especially when large quantities are envisaged

It is important that:

- All parties agree on the work to be carried out beforehand and a copy of the work activity form/risk assessment is submitted to the Clerk of the Council. Advice on the possible risk involved in an activity can be sought from the Council
- Prior arrangements and provisions are made with the Council as to what action needs to be taken with species such as Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia Japonica*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens Glandulifera*) and advice should always be sought from the Clerk of the Council as to the correct time of year to control these plants as well as the method of how these species should be dealt with and eradicated.
- The work is in accordance with any strategies, management plans or biodiversity action plans for each specific site, to ensure any species involved are protected and enhanced and not affected by the work.

Failure to notify and gain consent from the Council could result in the group not being allowed to work on any Council-owned or managed land. Any work undertaken in this way may not be insured and may not comply with health and safety and other legal requirements. Such action could result in the group or individuals being personally liable for any loss or damage caused.

Health and Safety & Best Working Practices

In the interests of health and safety volunteers should not work alone

Insurance

- All persons and groups must have adequate insurance cover or be covered by the Council's policy to protect themselves and others against any losses arising out of the planned works in question. The insurance policy should cover the use of tools and/or machinery, members of the public and the site (personal and public liability insurance). For work on council-owned land, insurance is available from the Council free of charge providing these guidelines are met and a risk assessment and a site survey have been carried out beforehand.
- Use of power tools by volunteers is discouraged and will only be permitted by certificated operators acting with the Council's agreement.
- Groups that have their own insurance policy must provide a copy of the certificate for the Council's files. The group's insurance policy must include an indemnity to principals clause. Further advice can be obtained from the Council.
- All persons under the age of 16 need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian for insurance compliance, legal reasons and to comply with best practice in ensuring adequate child protection. There are specific laws and procedures relating to children and voluntary work. For further information please contact the Clerk of the Council.
- A register of persons working on a project along with an emergency contact number for each volunteer needs to be kept by the volunteer co-ordinating the project for health and safety reasons and insurance purposes, or in case of illness.

Tools and Equipment

- Volunteer co-ordinators should ensure that appropriate equipment for the task is made available to the volunteers. Advice regarding appropriate equipment can be given by the Council.

Leading Volunteers

- Projects should have an identified co-ordinator, who has attended a recommended training course for volunteer project leaders and can brief the group adequately and advise on safe working practices. It is recommended that the ratio of trained leaders to volunteers should not be less than 1:12. Further advice on project leadership can be obtained from the Council.

First Aid

- Any persons or group must have an appointed first-aider and adequate cover, which directly relates to the level of risk associated with the work. This is to comply with health and safety and other legal requirements. Advice on where to find courses can be sought through Richmond Environment Network.
- The volunteer co-ordinator must ensure that a properly equipped first aid box is available. Advice on content can be given by the Council.

Risk Assessment and Safety Briefing

- A brief of the task ahead as well as details from the risk assessment must be given to the volunteers and/or persons engaging in the work before work commences. All persons engaged in work must be made aware of the dangers involved. It is advised that this is done verbally at the start of the day with a health and safety talk. This must be done to comply with the insurance requirements.
- A suitably qualified person must brief the volunteers on the use of tools, as well as manual handling, and undertake a detailed assessment when strenuous, sustained or repetitive handling is unavoidable. This is a legal requirement under the Health and Safety at Work Act and must be adhered to.
- Provision of personal protective equipment such as gloves and hard hats for work above the shoulder height is a legal requirement and must be adhered to. If volunteers bring their own hard hats, these must be checked by the leader to ensure that they are in date and comply with the necessary Health and Safety regulations.

Safe working practices to protect members of the public and volunteers must be followed when work is being carried out that could endanger their presence, such as tree felling operations. Arrangements should be made to erect suitable warning signs for the safety of both volunteers and members of the public to notify them of the work being carried out and any dangers that might be involved.

If a regular activity is being undertaken, e.g. litter picking, and the risks identified on the assessment do not change, there will be no necessity for a new risk assessment to be undertaken for each planned activity.

Feedback

- The Parish Council asks volunteers and voluntary groups to complete a feedback form. It is hoped that the form will allow the groups to feedback

comments and suggestions to the Council. It will also allow more effective communication between the groups and the Council so that we can work towards sharing best practices and learning from experiences of the groups. Feedback will help to improve working with volunteers and encourage more volunteers and voluntary groups to be involved in the management of sites.

Training

- All leaders of groups and individuals working on Council-owned or managed land must have the relevant safety training to use hand held tools.
- Initial training in project leadership and first aid are highly recommended and actively encouraged

May 2014