



VOLUNTEERING POLICY

1. Introduction

SWAAG is a group of enthusiasts who contribute to the knowledge-base of the history of the northernmost Yorkshire dales through a broad range of disciplines including the study of archaeology, geology, botany, and recorded history.

Our Objects are:

For the public benefit to advance the education of the public in general and more specifically the residents of, and visitors to, the county of North Yorkshire, particularly the area known as the Yorkshire Dales, in the subjects of archaeology, history, heritage, geology and the natural environment in order to promote a better understanding and management of that local heritage.

Volunteers make a vital contribution to our charitable objects from the Board of Trustees to participants in activities such as digs.

We recognise the added value that volunteers can bring to our organisation. They enhance our work by bringing valuable skills, experiences and energy as well as their gift of time. This policy sets out the broad principles for volunteering. It clarifies what SWAAG sets out to do for its volunteers and what the organisation expects in return. It is relevant to everyone concerned with the recruitment, support, development and co-ordination of volunteers as well as volunteers themselves.

2. Who is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is someone who contributes their time, energy and skills, and in many cases professional expertise, to support our work without expectation of financial compensation beyond reimbursement of expenses.

Within SWAAG volunteers are involved in the management and oversight of the Charity through its Board of Trustees, where they may work alongside member-appointed trustees as associate-trustees. Volunteers are also participants in activities open to the public in line with our Objectives such as when a dig is open to the public at no cost.

In line with relevant legislation and case law, the SWAAG distinguishes volunteering from employment. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise can be imposed on volunteers. Likewise, SWAAG does not guarantee to provide volunteering opportunities, payment (beyond out of pocket travel expenses) or other benefit for any activity undertaken.

3. Our commitment to Volunteers

SWAAG will endeavour at all times to:

- Ensure volunteers feel properly valued and thanked
- Ensure that volunteering opportunities will complement rather than replace the work of members
- Match the needs of the charity with the skills, knowledge, experience, time and motivation of the volunteer
- Ensure volunteers have a good understanding of our work and a clear idea of their responsibilities
- Ensure volunteers know who to talk to if there are any problems or difficulties
- Ensure the health, safety and welfare of all volunteers whilst undertaking their volunteering activities
- Comply with the Data Protection Act in the use of data held on all volunteers

In return, we ask volunteers to:

- Act in a professional way when representing SWAAG
- Aim for high standards of efficiency, reliability and quality in all aspects of their contribution
- Adhere to SWAAG policies and procedures whilst volunteering
- Accept that ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the charity rests with the charity's Board of Trustees who are themselves volunteers
- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions whilst volunteering
- Ask for guidance or support if they need it

4. Recruitment of Volunteers

We encourage involvement from all sections of the community and will not discriminate against any volunteers in the selection procedure. SWAAG will adhere to its Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy when recruiting and selecting volunteers. We do not have an upper age limit for volunteering (though insurance cover may require a limit) and recognise the valuable contribution made by older volunteers in terms of knowledge and experience.

Young volunteers in particular can bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to the charity whilst also gaining valuable skills and experience. Volunteers under 18 must have the written consent of a parent or guardian, be accompanied by a nominated adult and be undertaking suitable roles for which there is no legal minimum age. All young people under 18 will be protected in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

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 role(s) subject to the needs and restrictions of the location.

Depending on the type of volunteering role proposed volunteers may be asked to provide details of two referees whom SWAAG can approach for references.

5. Management of Volunteers

Once placed, we will expect volunteers to comply with existing policies and procedures. To help ensure this, all volunteers will have an induction to their volunteering which will involve an overview of the relevant policies and procedures.

Following induction, associate trustee volunteers will have regular support and supervision meetings with a named member trustee to identify areas for development, or to discuss any issues.

Where associate trustee volunteers have holidays or other commitments which means that they cannot attend their normal volunteering, they should advise the member trustees to ensure that alternative cover can be arranged. If they require a longer break from their volunteering, they should discuss this with the member trustees.

All volunteers will be asked to complete a standard volunteering application form. A central register of volunteers will be maintained in order to assist with supporting and managing volunteers. This information is stored and maintained, with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality. The charity abides by all provisions of the Data Protection Act and recognises that volunteers' privacy is important to them. Volunteers may ask to have their information removed at any time.

All volunteers are covered under SWAAG's Public Liability Insurance.

6. Health and Safety

SWAAG is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers, staff and visitors and to giving appropriate instruction, training and supervision for their welfare. Our written Health, Safety and Welfare Policy applies to our volunteers as well as our paid staff.

All volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner in line with the organisations safe working procedures. Volunteers should not act in a way that may put themselves or others at risk of injury.

Risk assessments are routinely undertaken for tasks. Volunteers may be asked to participate in these risks assessments.

7. Expenses

All volunteers are given the opportunity to claim previously agreed expenses in compliance with our Expenses Policy.

8. When Things Aren't Right

SWAAG has complaints procedures incorporated in their Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy. Although we always aim to undertake activities in an accessible and professional manner we recognise that there might be times when volunteers may feel this has not been the case. These procedures give volunteers the opportunity to

express their concerns and provide the organisation with feedback to improve our performance where necessary.

If a volunteer has a complaint about a member or another volunteer that they feel cannot be resolved informally then the volunteer should contact the activity supervisor, or if this is not appropriate, the SWAAG Secretary or Chair.

Volunteers who do not adhere to our policies or procedures or who fail to perform their voluntary role satisfactorily may be asked to leave and cease volunteering. This should only be the case after supportive and constructive feedback has been provided and fails to achieve the required change.

9. Insurance

All volunteers are covered by the SWAAG insurance cover for any official volunteering. Specific details of our insurance cover are available from the SWAAG Secretary.

10. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy lies with the SWAAG trustees. Implementation and adherence to this policy is the responsibility of all members and volunteers within the organisation.

SWAAG Board of Trustees

16 April 2024