

# Volunteers Strategy

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## i Document Information

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1	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2013	Initial draft, circulated to Performance Team
2	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2014	Working draft published on web site
3	31 <sup>st</sup> July 2015	Revision and update
4	27 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	Revised consideration at SMT
5	09 <sup>th</sup> March 2018	Revision and update
6	20 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Member approval at Executive Committee
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8	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2021	Member approval at Executive Committee

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## 1. Context

- 1.1. Volunteering increasingly forms an important and distinct element in the delivery of services by many private and public sector organisations. At an intrinsic level volunteering demonstrates a strong commitment to human values of support and empathy which provides stimulus and reward, 'the 'economics of well-being'. On a practical level it can ensure that jobs can be completed in a more effective way due the additional resource volunteers provide.
- 1.2. Volunteering plays a key part of the continued transformation of the [Lee Valley Regional Park](#) and its vision to be 'a world class leisure destination'. The Authority's adopted strategic aims include 'Increase the attractiveness and use of the Parkland and venues to support the health and wellbeing of visitors from all communities', with volunteering recognised as an activity which reinforces this aim.
- 1.3. The dedication of the Authority's registered volunteers continues to grow year on year through a range of mutually beneficial volunteering opportunities, quality volunteer management activities and reward and recognition initiatives.
- 1.4. In line with the Authority's corporate approach to strategy development the current strategy has been reviewed and revised to account for changes which have occurred in the environment externally to the Authority.
- 1.5. The strategy outlines how the aims of the Volunteer Policy are to be delivered.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. In 2020 across the Authority's parklands and venues over 1,200 volunteers contributed over 11,000 hours (around 60% less hours than in 2019) which was a huge achievement during a global pandemic. Volunteering was carried out to support Fisheries, Rangers Service (Livestock checkers, Litter pickers, Conservation, Honorary Wardens), Biodiversity, Myddelton House Gardens and Holyfield Hall Farm. Pre-Covid-19 volunteers also supported our externally managed venues. Additionally, there are a number of joint 'volunteer' programmes some of which are not yet fully developed. They represent partnership working with Major Event organisers, National Governing Bodies and smaller voluntary groups or partners to facilitate Lee Valley Park volunteer involvement.

## 3. Strategy Vision, Aims and Objectives

- 3.1. This Strategy outlines how the Authority will seek to improve its volunteer programme.
- 3.2. Officers from the Authority consider that the strategy requires a clear vision to drive forward the strategy and to ensure that we can grow and develop our volunteer's network.

**The Authority aims to be an exemplar of how it attracts, involves and supports its volunteers in the delivery of its vision.**

The successful delivery of this requires integration of a range of service areas to ensure a clear and consistent approach.

3.3. The service areas include the following:

- (i) Human resources – there are three elements to this.
  - a) Firstly, although not directly employed by the Authority the use of volunteers raises many of the same issues that the employment of staff raises in terms of their ‘recruitment’, training and support. If all else fails, this may involve corrective action. We will ensure that the appointment of volunteers is delivered to the same standards to those which underpin our directly employed staff.
  - b) Secondly, the Authority’s human resources policies allow ‘flexible’ working which allows all staff the freedom to become volunteers themselves.
- (ii) The Authority owns only 43% of the area of the Regional Park. Only through working with partners such as the Canal and River Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and event providers working with volunteers can this vision be realised. In working with its partners we will ensure that our high standards of support and interest can be maintained through the negotiation of ‘local’ agreements with partners.

3.4. The Volunteers Strategy has 6 aims which are in turn supported by a series of objectives which will:

**1) Develop our volunteer programme at venues and the Authority’s parklands for all by:**

- (i) Improving awareness and increased access to volunteering opportunities to raise the current ratio of volunteers to staff.
- (ii) Working with Authority departments to continuously identify new opportunities as business direction directs.
- (iii) Maintain the Investing in Volunteers accreditation at successive renewals.

**2) Match the Authority’s business needs with volunteer support through:**

- (i) Continually reviewing the organisations capacity gaps and matching these with existing volunteer skill set.
- (ii) Regularly reviewing our recruitment processes to ensure new volunteers have the right skill set where possible to serve our business needs.

**3) Develop specific opportunities to promote diversity involving hard-to-reach ethnic minority, disabled, private, diverse age ranges, community and voluntary sector groups:**

- (i) Actively promote volunteering and programmes to specific ‘target groups’, through new and established links with local authorities,

external partnerships, volunteer centres, action groups and community groups

**4) Attract additional support for volunteers by:**

- (i) Actively promoting engagement of companies through presentations and visits. 'Corporates' represent a good opportunity for partnerships linked to volunteering as part of their corporate 'social responsibility'
- (ii) Rewarding dedication, endeavour and contribution.
- (iii) supporting with routes into employment within the Authority and beyond.

**5) Encourage staff to pursue volunteering opportunities to support communities across the Region.**

The Authority recognises the importance of volunteering as a means for personal 'enrichment' and the achievement of new skills. These skills should not be denied to our staff.

This will be achieved through:

- (i) The Volunteers Team working closely with Human Resources to find a system to actively encourage opportunities for staff either within the Park or in other areas across the region to volunteer as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility activity for the Park Authority or external organisations.

**6) Actively seek opportunities for joint partner programmes**

- (i) The delivery of joint programmes and the shared use of a 'dedicated' pool of volunteers across the range of opportunities. The Regional Park represents a major extension to our current activity which is consistent with our corporate vision.

This will be sought through:

Identifying partners where jointly agreed volunteer or corporate programmes can be delivered.

**4. Responsibilities**

The Head of Human Resources is responsible for the delivery of the Volunteers Strategy.

The Volunteers Officer is responsible for the overview, monitoring and evaluation of the of the Volunteer's Strategy.

**5. Legal Considerations**

There is no legislation in relation to working with volunteers (although there is case law which provides guidance). As an organisation using volunteers we have a duty

to keep abreast of changes in good practice and ensure that these are conveyed appropriately. Working with organisations such as National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), local volunteer centres and holder of the Investing in Volunteers Award (iV) the Authority is seen as maintaining the highest standards of Volunteer Management.

## 6. Relevant Policy & Procedures

There is a Volunteers Policy that is directly linked to this strategy and a Volunteers Handbook that supports the overall volunteers programme.

## 7. Strategy Implementation

This strategy will be implemented through the series of objectives identified above in section 3 and forms the day to day running of the volunteer's programme, the responsibility of which is down to the Volunteers Team and staff.

## 8. Monitoring & Evaluation

The effectiveness of this strategy will be measured against the volunteer programme targets and Performance Indicators detailed on the Authority Scorecard.

### Stretch Targets set until 2022

Current Position (2020)	By 2022 we will
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12,000 volunteer hours               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority Venues = 420 (includes Lee Valley Park Farms = 190)</li> <li>- All other Authority = 10,050</li> <li>- Partner organisations = 1,530</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase volunteer hours to a target of 12,500               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority Venues target* = 200</li> <li>- All other Authority** = 11,000</li> <li>- Farms who no longer belong to the Authority)</li> <li>- Partner organisations target** = 1,550</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,200 registered volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number of registered volunteers to 1,300</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-riparian volunteers 303</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase to 320</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minority Group Volunteers 122</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase to 150</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratio of volunteers currently               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority ratio 3.2:1 volunteers to FTE's</li> <li>- Venues ratio 0.1:1 volunteers to FTE's</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority** ratio 4:1 volunteers to FTE's</li> <li>- Venues* ratio 0.5:1 volunteers to FTE's</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\*excludes Lee Valley Park Farms as no longer belongs to the Authority

\*\*takes into account decreased activity due to another year of Covid-19 restrictions in place

These figures will be monitored on an annual basis by the Volunteers Team.

## 9. Review

The strategy will be reviewed every 3 years in line with the re-assessment of Investing in Volunteers and rolled out via Compass and the internet for all staff via Volunteer Supervisor training for those working directly with volunteers.

## 10. Glossary of Terms

10.1. Some of the terminology used in this document may be unfamiliar so this glossary has been attached to clarify a number of new terminologies.

- **Private and Commercial Sector Groups (Corporate Tasks)** – Groups of volunteers who are attached to a company or organisation undertaking a single day of volunteering activity. Normally funded by the company and undertaken on a normal working day. Used also as team building days or also called community days.
- **Diversity** – In this context means the variety of people within your volunteering force and will include ethnic diversity, age diversity, gender diversity, disability diversity and community diversity. The essence is not to discriminate against any level of diversity within an organisation.
- **Hard-to-Reach / Minority** – (referred to as ‘target groups’) current terminology used by the government and volunteering organisations to describe any person or group who may not have access to general information due to language or technical barriers. This includes many ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities or young or old sections of the community.

## 11. Appendices

There are three companion documents to this strategy:

- Volunteers Policy
- Volunteers Handbook
- Guide to working with Volunteers