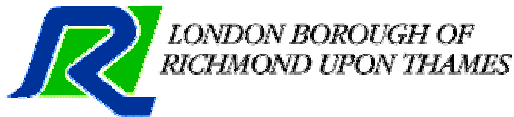


Guidelines for Volunteers and Voluntary Groups working in the Environment



Richmond Environment Network

Richmond's unique blend of landscape and historic buildings has attracted enormous interest from local groups and individuals. It is vital to maintain and increase support for volunteers and this document seeks to enhance your contribution through voluntary work on conservation areas, parks and open spaces.

Volunteers working in the environment in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames 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 us to manage and maintain conservation areas, parks and open spaces in the most effective way. It is anticipated any voluntary work will directly contribute to achieving goals within local strategies and action plans. The work will be supported by the Council and the Richmond Environment Network, 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.

Trevor Pugh, Director of Environment

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 Borough. Through this guide the Council with help from Richmond Environment Network want to maximise the benefits to both the volunteers and the community of any volunteering activity; make sure that we are working under health and safety guidelines; that members of the public are safeguarded and the site itself and individual habitats and species are enhanced as a result of the work being carried out. It is important that the Council or group managing the land on behalf of the Council is consulted and in agreement with work being carried out and that it is in accordance with any management plans already in place. The responsible body should offer advice and support as and when requested by the groups and individuals.

So what good practice are we adopting?

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 relevant Council department 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 relevant Council officer. Advice on the possible risk involved in an activity can be sought from either Richmond Environment Network or 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 relevant Council Officer 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.
- 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 via the Local Agenda 21 officer.
- 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 Richmond Environment Network.
- 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 or by the Richmond Environment Network .

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 Richmond Environment Network.

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 Richmond Environment Network.

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.
- It is the Council's policy that no fires take place on Council owned or managed land.
- 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

- Richmond Environment Network (REN) ask 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 REN and the Council. REN and the groups can also monitor the number of volunteers being directed to the groups through REN's referral service and media coverage. It will also allow more effective communication between the groups, REN 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.
- Richmond Environment Network is available to offer guidance on a range of suitable courses for volunteer co-ordinators, in partnership with the Council.
- Initial training in project leadership and first aid are highly recommended and actively encouraged
- Training courses will be free or have a minimal charge.

Further support

Richmond Environment Network

Richmond Environment Network is an umbrella organisation formed by the partnership of BTCV Richmond, the Environment Trust for Richmond and Thames Landscape Strategy as the Key Strategic Organisation for the Environment and Civic Pride. Funded by London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames through the Grants Direct programme administered by the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS).

The objective is to provide a one-stop-shop for support, information and guidance to organisations, groups and individuals working in, or interested in, the environment and civic pride sector within the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, with the overall vision of supporting and sustaining volunteers in the environment sector.

We can offer:

- Advice and support for groups requiring access to training and equipment
- Funding information and guidance on completing funding applications.
- Direction on where to seek advice with land management issues.
- Publicity for events / work days / volunteering activities through press releases and newsletters
- Advice for groups to help establish an annual work programme and management plan
- Advice on where to go in the Council for help with providing signage and guidance on where to borrow tools
- A website that includes a searchable database of groups operating in the borough, details of projects and initiatives that volunteer's can join, and a web-based forum for registered groups.
- A telephone information and referral service for those without Internet access.
- A timetable of forthcoming conservation projects in the borough from all the groups in the network. This will be available on the website and through local press where possible.
- Help establishing Friends of Groups, or similar groups
- A bi-annual forum for the 'friends of groups' to enable effective communication between the groups and the Council.

Useful Contacts

Richmond Environmental Network

020 8831 6150

Email: richenvironmentnet@btcv.org.uk

Website: www.richenvironmentnet.org.uk

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames;

Parks and Open Spaces 020 8831 6115

Local Agenda 21 Officer 020 8891 7806

Website: www.richmond.gov.uk and www.richmond.gov.uk/agenda21

Volunteering is open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, ability or disability, sexual orientation and faith. Richmond Environment Network and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames takes pride in being a borough which values and respects its diversity and promotes good relations between all sections of the community.

This document is joint guidance produced by Richmond Environment Network and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames working in partnership.

Nese keni veshtersi per te kuptuar kete botim, ju lutemi ejani ne receptionin ne adresen e shenuar me poshte ku ne mund te organizojme perkthime nepermjet telefonit.

Albanian

إذا كانت لديك صعوبة في فهم هذا المنشور، فنرجو زيارة الإستقبال في العنوان المعطى أدناه حيث بإمكاننا أن نرتب لخدمة ترجمة شفوية هاتفية.

Arabic

এই প্রকাশনার অর্থ বুঝতে পারায় যদি আপনার কোন সমস্যা হয়, নিচে দেওয়া ঠিকানায় রিসেপশন-এ চলে আসুন যেখানে আমরা আপনাকে টেলিফোনে দোভাষীর সেবা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করতে পারবো।

Bengali

اگر در فهمیدن این نشریه مشکل دارید، لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر رجوع فرمایید تا سرویس ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود.

Farsi

જો તમને આ પુસ્તિકાની વિગતો સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડતી હોય તો, કૃપયા નીચે જણાવેલ સ્થળના રિસેપ્શન પર આવો, જ્યાં અમે ટેલિફોન પર ગુજરાતીમાં ઇન્ટરપ્રિટીંગ સેવાની ગોઠવણ કરી આપીશું.

Gujarati

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਪੇਸ਼ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਪਤੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਰਿਸੈਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

Punjabi

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں کوئی مشکل ہے تو، براہ کرم نیچے دیئے ہوئے ایڈریس کے استقبالیے پر جا کر ملیئے، جہاں ہم آپ کیلئے ٹیلیفون انٹر پریٹنگ سروس (ٹیلیفون پر ترجمانی کی سروس) کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

Urdu

Please contact us if you need this in Braille, large print, audio tape or another language. (This sentence must be in Arial size 16) on 020 8891 7806

- Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BZ
- 42 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BW
- Regal House, London Road, Twickenham TW1 3QB
- Centre House, 68 Sheen Lane, East Sheen, London SW14 8LP
- Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue, Richmond, TW9 1TP
- or any borough library

Tel: 020 8891 7806

Textphone (Minicom):

- 020 8831 6001 (Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5.15pm and Friday 9am to 5pm)
- 020 8831 6482 (outside our office hours)