



Volunteer Role Description

Conservation Volunteer

What is the Kent High Weald Partnership?

The Kent High Weald Partnership is part of Kent Council's Environment & Waste (E&W) Directorate, in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Natural England.

We are part of seven Kent Countryside Management Partnerships. We work with individuals, community groups, schools, youth groups, landowners, local businesses and Parish Councils to 'link the local community and the countryside, by raising awareness and encouraging action'.

We are based at our Conservation Centre at Bedgebury Pinetum near Goudhurst, but we work throughout the Borough of Tunbridge Wells.

What is a Conservation Volunteer?

Every Wednesday sees the Kent High Weald Partnership out in the countryside, or local parks or school grounds carrying out practical conservation work. We wouldn't get much done on our own, so the success of these days is entirely down to the fantastic efforts of our volunteers.

Practical conservation projects range from coppicing, hedgelaying, tree planting and woodland management in the winter, to survey work, meadow management, fencing, step and boardwalk construction in the summer.

Conservation volunteers are involved in all aspects of the practical work, according to inclination and ability. No previous knowledge or experience is necessary, everyone of all ages and abilities who is capable of a little light work and enjoys a day out in the fresh air is welcome.

Volunteer projects take place in many locations across the Borough, from Tunbridge Wells across to Cranbrook. Locations range from Local Nature Reserves to Rights of Way work on farmed land, work in school grounds and other community based projects. All days run from 10am to 3pm, with a break for tea in the morning, and a half-hour break for lunch early afternoon. Hot drinks and biscuits are provided!

What can I expect from the role?

Full training in safe use of any tools and techniques is provided by our experienced staff, who are all qualified first aiders for your safety. Personal protective equipment such as gloves, hard hats etc are provided as necessary. As part of Kent County Council we also provide personal injury & public liability insurance cover for our volunteer activities. You will be working as part of a diverse group of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds, who come together to work towards improving the environment for the local community. We have a core of experienced and friendly volunteers who have often found their own niches in the team, and this provides a supportive atmosphere that gives us the opportunity to pay more attention to overall progress, and provide extra guidance to those needing greater input on the day. Expenses are available to support volunteer attendance.

You will not be expected to take the role of a member of staff, operate machinery, or carry out any task with which you feel uncomfortable.

Why volunteer?

People volunteer with us for many different reasons. Students on countryside management courses or those looking for a career change find it can be invaluable work experience and a way into a very competitive field.

A common denominator amongst our volunteers tends to be an interest in wildlife and the countryside, and practical conservation work can be a way of spending time with like-minded people, learning new skills and gaining a deeper understanding of the local environment. Many people find fresh air and gentle exercise in the natural environment a real tonic, and an escape from the pressures of life. Satisfaction in seeing a concrete result, a job well done at the end of the day, and the knowledge that you are supporting wildlife under pressure and improving the environment for local communities can also be very rewarding.

What am I expected to commit to?

Once you have been out and experienced a volunteer day with us, and feel that you would like to get involved, we would like you to commit to our volunteer agreement, which summarises what you should expect from us during your time as a volunteer and what we would like from you. (This can be found at our website, or a copy is available from staff)

We would also like you to fill out our volunteer information sheet. This lets us know of any health issues etc that are relevant to your participation, and gives us next of kin and contact details. All of this information is stored confidentially.

We do not expect our volunteers to commit to regular attendance. This approach means you can tailor your attendance according to your available free time, specific location and type of activity planned. Some people attend every week, some only once a year, and this variability means that a degree of flexibility is needed both for KHWP staff and volunteers, you could be part of a group of six or helping with an event for dozens of people!

As part of Kent County Council, we work to specific policies in areas such as Health & Safety, Diversity, Equality, Data Protection, Confidentiality, and Safeguarding. In plain English, we expect our volunteers to respect their own health and safety and that of others by following the guidelines and training given, to act in a respectful and non-discriminatory way to all participants and staff, and to report any unfair treatment to a member of staff. You may be asked to take part in formal or informal meetings to provide and receive feedback.

On a practical note, don't forget to bring something to eat for lunch, dress for the weather and wear a sturdy pair of boots!

What do I do now?

Feel free to contact us at the office if you need any further information.

An up to date list of events is available at our website or by post, as is our Volunteer Welcome pack. (www.khwp.org.uk/volunteering/join-us.)

You are welcome to attend any KHWP event on an informal basis, and to discuss the volunteer role with a member of staff.

For further information, do not hesitate to call 01580 212972 or e-mail info@khwp.org.uk

All of these arrangements are made in honour only and are not legally binding. Volunteering can be discontinued by either side at any time.