

Volunteering Working Group

11th May Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road

Present: Jonathan Willet (Highland Council), Mhairi Wylie (Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI)), Suzann Barr (Abriachan Forest Trust), Jon Hollingdale (Community Woodland Association), Rob Thomas (TCV), Alan Smith (CNPA), Stephen Wiseman (Scottish Waterways), Kirsty Ellen (Trees for Life (TfL)), Caroline Vawdrey (Highland Environmental Network), George Duff (Highland Council)

Apologies: Rob Dewar (NTS), Liz McLachlan (SNH)

Action:

	Action	Who
1	Write up an outline collaborative volunteering strategy. Align with Highland Biodiversity Action Plan, the Single Outcome Agreement with Scottish Government, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.	Jonathan Willet
2	Meet twice a year to plan volunteering calendar. Keep in touch by email in between meetings	All
3	Provide information to HTSI on: - volunteering opportunities and where - volunteering training opportunities and where	All HTSI to collate
4	Aim to agree a system of grading volunteering activity - blue/red/black or numbers of boots are examples.	All
5	Attend HTSI volunteer managers meetings as appropriate	All
6	Collate information on the benefits of volunteering - including health and employability. Ask Dan Jenkins if this has been done.	Jonathan Willet
7	Publicise volunteering outputs	All
8	Meet again at the mid September Highland Environment Forum. Caroline will circulate date.	All

Discussion

Existing opportunities for collaborative working

1. TfL works with other organisations to provide volunteering opportunities - for example taking volunteers to the RSPB reserve at Corrimony, holding joint volunteering days with NTS.
2. TfL, RSPB and TCV volunteers include people who volunteer for more than one of the organisations - so TfL tries to avoid date clashes.
3. TCV is happy to work with other organisations to share volunteers. TCV - mostly works with commissioning agencies e.g. NHS, Social services. Grant support from the landfill funds means that TCV work is expanding to Wick, Ullapool, Golspie, Grantown, Nairn, with an additional group in Inverness.
4. CNPA - works across 5 local authorities. Following on from their commissioned survey of volunteering taking place across the park, CNPA are developing a volunteering model based on community hubs. CNPA will support voluntary volunteer leaders, with training and advice.

5. HTSI hosts volunteers managers meetings (mostly staff) across their area CVS organisations. Some areas also carry out one-to-one interviews with potential volunteers.
6. HC rangers - have informal arrangements for working with volunteers. sometimes possible, sometimes not.
7. Abriachan Forest Trust work with vulnerable adults. There may be some on site volunteering with other groups. There is potential for Scottish Waterways and Abriachan Forest to link activities. One challenge for Abriachan Forest Trust is finding opportunities that their volunteers can move on to.

Supporting collaborative working

1. information on who can offer what and the cost would be helpful.
2. Develop a graded system for volunteers, in order for them to find appropriate activities.

Removing barriers to volunteering

1. Community Transport might be on offer through HTSI
2. Create volunteer job descriptions and contracts
3. Explore the potential of SRDP funding, as it is now directed towards outputs, which may mean that volunteers can be used, rather than work being put out to contractors.
4. Offer a graduated pathway
 - from pre-volunteering support through to moving on to new opportunities
 - to give long term volunteers training and qualifications
5. Volunteer leaders need more support in:
 - Biodiversity identification skills
 - First aid
 - leadership
 - Finance for qualification training
6. Community group development (FCS community funds can help) - TCV and TfL can provide training for leaders

Reaching new audiences? Making volunteering more desirable

1. Information tends to spread by word of mouth
2. Direct volunteers to opportunities through databases:
 - The Highland Biodiversity website has a directory of volunteer opportunities that could be expanded <http://www.highlandbiodiversity.com/volunteering.asp>
 - The Highland Environmental Network website lists volunteer and job opportunities <http://www.highlandenvironment.org.uk/page.asp?bioid=35664> This could also be expanded.
 - Organisations can contact HTSI, so that staff are aware of the opportunities on offer. HTSI can enter the information on to the Volunteer Scotland. Organisations can also input to Volunteer Scotland directly
3. Develop local volunteering opportunities
4. Carry out joint promotion/marketing
5. Run an environmental volunteering marketing campaign