

Ballast Hills Burial Ground (BHBG)

Volunteer Policy



Introduction

Volunteering means giving time and effort to support a cause valued by the individual, even if it lies outside usual social circles or skillsets. The BHBG Volunteer Policy, issued by Newcastle University, acknowledges volunteers' valuable contributions and sets guidelines for their involvement, respecting the voluntary nature of their service. Volunteering within the BHBG Project involves dedication to advancing the project's goals. This service is unpaid and carried out willingly. Volunteers come from all walks of life, including students.

The BHBG Project Manager, Dr Myra Giesen, or a designated delegate, oversees volunteer management and ensures the smooth implementation of the policy. This policy aligns with the volunteer policies of our partner organisations, which may oversee some project-specific volunteers. Consistency and cooperation ensure all volunteers experience unified and supportive engagement.

Volunteer Involvement

The BHBG Project identifies meaningful roles for volunteers that enhance the project's efforts. Volunteers contribute across various project activities that support, but do not replace, the work of paid staff. Comprehensive risk assessments are conducted for volunteer roles, and risk control strategies are implemented to ensure volunteer safety. The BHBG Project Manager, or a designated delegate, oversees this process to maintain consistency and volunteer safety.

Collaborative Volunteer Management

In line with Newcastle University's commitment to an inclusive and supportive volunteer environment, the BHBG Project fosters a collaborative approach to volunteer management through partnerships with other volunteer organisations. The BHBG Project Manager plays a key role in these collaborations, leveraging diverse skills, resources, and networks to strengthen the project's impact.

Structure of Collaboration

1. **Shared Responsibilities:** Newcastle University, through the BHBG Project, manages certain volunteers, referred to as NU BHBG volunteers, who engage in project-specific tasks. Other volunteers remain under the management of their respective organisations. References to "all volunteers" include both NU and non-NU BHBG volunteers. Partner organisations retain responsibility for training, oversight, and volunteer support. The BHBG Project Manager coordinates these responsibilities to ensure a seamless experience.

2. **Clear Communication:** Newcastle University will maintain regular, open communication with partner organisations to align expectations and ensure clarity on roles and objectives. The BHBG Project Manager is responsible for facilitating these communications.
3. **Integrated Efforts:** Newcastle University will collaborate with partner organisations to align volunteer activities with project goals. The BHBG Project Manager will lead joint planning sessions to help define how volunteers contribute and identify necessary support.
4. **Training and Support:** Primary training is provided by each volunteer's organisation, with additional resources such as orientation and safety briefings offered by the BHBG Project to ensure effective contribution. The BHBG Project Manager ensures that training meets project standards and volunteer needs.
5. **Induction and Supervision:** All volunteers will receive comprehensive information about their roles and responsibilities, supported by induction and training sessions. NU volunteers receive this from the BHBG Project Manager, while non-NU volunteers receive it from their respective organisations. The Project Manager or a designated delegate will oversee NU volunteers, while non-NU volunteers will be supported by their sponsoring organisations. Volunteers receive a welcome email detailing expectations, the volunteer agreement, and code of conduct.
6. **Settling In and Ongoing Support:** Volunteers have a settling-in period, during which additional support is provided. A review meeting between the volunteer and supervisor ensures satisfaction with the arrangement. Each volunteer is assigned a supervisor and an alternative contact for emergencies, ensuring day-to-day guidance. The BHBG Project Manager ensures that these processes are carried out consistently.

Recruitment and Selection

The BHBG Project, under Newcastle University's guidance, promotes volunteer opportunities widely, engaging interest, place, and descendant communities. Recruitment materials will be available in alternative formats on request and reflect community diversity. A fair and transparent selection process is used, including forms, references, and face-to-face discussions to assess suitability. Volunteers receive clear role descriptions and responsibilities. The BHBG Project Manager oversees the recruitment process to maintain fairness and transparency.

Expenses

Volunteer activities should not usually incur costs for participants. The project does not typically reimburse out-of-pocket expenses, such as travel. Volunteers expecting costs should seek pre-approval from the BHBG Project Manager or check with their non-NU sponsor.

Problem-Solving and Complaints

Newcastle University, through the BHBG Project, addresses volunteer issues promptly, encouraging open dialogue. Minor complaints are handled through regular support channels, while serious matters follow formal procedures. For significant offences, the process may bypass initial steps, leading to dismissal or police involvement where necessary. The BHBG Project Manager is available to guide volunteers through these procedures.

Communication and Feedback

Recognising the core role of volunteers, the BHBG Project communicates through bulletins, emails, social media, and monthly updates. Volunteer feedback is welcomed, including after they leave. Feedback gathered through registration, tracking, and experience surveys informs future improvements and support needs. The BHBG Project Manager ensures that volunteers are kept informed and engaged.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Volunteer information is handled according to data protection regulations, ensuring privacy and confidentiality. Volunteers adhere to the same confidentiality standards as paid staff, protecting sensitive information. The BHBG Project Manager oversees the proper handling of volunteer data, in collaboration with its volunteer partner organisations.

Intellectual Property Rights

1. **Ownership of Work:** Original work created by volunteers for the BHBG Project, such as reports, research, or artwork, is the property of Newcastle University, identified as project-specific and linked to the AHRC-funded project AH/Z505833/1.
2. **IP Rights Transfer:** Volunteering implies agreement to transfer IP rights to Newcastle University to manage and disseminate outputs in line with project goals.
3. **Recognition:** Volunteers are credited for their contributions in publications, presentations, or outputs.
4. **Permission for Personal Use:** Volunteers may seek permission to use their work for personal or academic purposes. Requests are reviewed by the BHBG Project Manager to ensure project integrity.
5. **Clarity on Policy:** The IP policy is communicated at the start, and questions are addressed by the BHBG Project Manager.
6. **Legal Compliance:** Newcastle University ensures IP practices comply with relevant laws.

Health and Safety

Newcastle University provides adequate facilities, equipment, and resources for volunteers. Activities are risk assessed, and public liability insurance covers authorised volunteer

activities. The BHBG Project Manager ensures that health and safety protocols are followed, while volunteer partner organisations will do the same.

In-Kind Support

Volunteers are encouraged to log their time to be recognised as in-kind support, contributing to match funding. The BHBG Project Manager provides simple recording methods and oversees the logging process.

Recognition and References

Newcastle University recognises volunteer contributions through events, certificates, and formal acknowledgements. Volunteers may request references for their service. The BHBG Project Manager ensures that recognition efforts are coordinated effectively.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular check-ins and feedback collection at different stages ensure volunteers receive the necessary support. Feedback highlights areas for improvement and informs programme adjustments. The BHBG Project Manager monitors these evaluations and ensures follow-up actions are taken.

Review

This policy, developed by Newcastle University, takes effect from 1 November 2024 and will be reviewed as needed, with a comprehensive review planned two years after its introduction. The BHBG Project Manager will facilitate the review process.

Supporting Documents

- Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct
- Volunteer Complaints Procedure
- Volunteer Role Descriptions and Volunteer Plan