

Volunteer Cornwall

Sustainability, Climate and Ecological Emergency Policy 2024

Aims

Volunteer Cornwall aims to be an exemplar voluntary sector organisation in respect of its sustainability practice, contributing to building strong communities within the county whilst promoting a fair, inclusive society. This includes minimising the negative environmental (climate and ecological) and social impacts of its activities such as reducing carbon emissions, advocating for climate justice, and maximising its potential for positive environmental impact, such as increasing the biodiversity and habitat value of its office premises, and inspiring other VCSE organisations to engage in this agenda too. It is important to ensure the climate and social justice agendas are profoundly interconnected in all our actions as a leading VCSE organisation. The link between human and planetary health is clear and underpins all our actions.

Principles

Commitment

We recognise our responsibility to ensure sound, environmentally and socially responsible, operational practice in all our activities. We recognise that volunteering is in itself, a low carbon and pro-social activity and has many benefits for individuals, geographic communities, and communities of interest. We are committed to continually improve our environmental performance and role within the wider community on a cost-effective basis. We will take action to achieve these aims independently and in co-operation with others. This policy is now updated and informed by our Climate and Ecological Declaration and Plan, accepted by the Board of Trustees November 2019 and January 2020 respectively.

Responsibility

The Chief Executive and Board of Directors are designated with overall responsibility for the achievement of our aim to be climate and nature resilient and socially ethical. They are supported by a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency Lead who continues to identify and share best practice across the organisation. This combined term is used as "sustainability" on its own lacks the sense of urgency required and is often confused with other issues such as financial viability. As such we try to be clear about our actions which contribute to climate, nature, and social resilience.

Responsibility is shared by all our staff, volunteers, and partners, at every level and across all departments, and everyone should be encouraged to recognise their potential contribution to the achievement of a sustainably run organisation operating to navigate the twin emergencies.

Effective information, communication, and training

Progress towards the achievement of our aims is monitored and evaluated, using targets where appropriate, and built into our annual Business Plan.

We will provide information and incentives to enable staff and volunteers to minimise their personal environmental impact while at work. Climate and ecological emergency (CEE) awareness sessions will be available to employees to enable them to examine their own work

practices and make any necessary adjustments. Tools will be deployed to assist in this; where required, bespoke tools will be developed as part of Volunteer Cornwall's determination to take a leadership role. Access to information such as green and ethical purchasing, ethical banking and pensions, and options to engage in external training is included in this.

Green procurement and supply chain management

In procuring buildings and purchasing goods and services, we will take account of CEE criteria alongside price, quality, and delivery.

Transport

In all our operations, we will take due regard of the fact that our greatest potential impact upon the environment is through the transport generated either directly or indirectly by our activity and will take all necessary action to minimise that impact.

Legislative compliance

We will seek to implement developments in environmental and social-related legislation as soon as this is feasible.

Implementation

Our departments will work within this policy as appropriate to achieve these aims, including when we organise or attend conferences and events. A full list is now part of our Climate and Ecological Emergency Plan; some examples are:

People

- Exit interviews for leavers – find out why they are leaving & address issues to reduce staff turnover.
- Ethical hosts – be clear about organisations we will NOT work with
- Identify and highlight our role in inclusion & economic regeneration (our service is universal & free)
- Invest in staff health & well being through the Healthy Workplace scheme including subsidised gym membership for staff and actions to enable staff to better connect with our outdoor natural environment.
- Active engagement of staff in development, co-design, and implementation of our CEE Plan

Transport

- Explore alternatives to travel – video conferencing, email/phone, Skype.
- Encourage Cycle /Walk to Work schemes (an electric e-charger will be installed, and Volunteer Cornwall will enable free ebike charging where required; storage will be improved for cyclists.
- Encourage use of public transport, Park & Ride and/or car share
- Develop new and existing partnerships to further this.

Procurement

- We have a 'buy local' policy.
- We have a 'buy fair trade' policy.

- Consider reduce, re-use, recycle – Do we really need it, have we got a spare somewhere or something else that can do the job? If not, can it be bought second-hand?
- Make energy efficiency a factor in purchase decisions.
- Use recycled paper across the organisation.
- We include our banking in our procurement and commit to ethical banking policies.

Communication

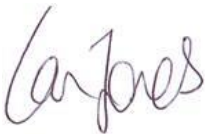
- Make electronic /phone the preferred medium of contact.
- Put all large documents on-line so they can be quickly updated and shared.
- Discourage people from printing out every email.
- Photocopy and print back-to-back as the rule, not the exception.
- Expand the use of social media and e-contact for customers.
- Raise awareness amongst staff & stakeholders of actions taken and progress achieved in making Volunteer Cornwall a cleaner, greener organisation.

Waste & Resources

- Use both sides of paper – e.g. turn used paper into scrap pads – then recycle.
- Re-use envelopes & use internal mail envelopes.
- Investigate lower impact options such as alternatives to paper towels.
- Use ‘real’ cutlery & crockery, not disposable ones.
- Minimise use of hazardous substances
- Organise event planning on a zero-waste basis, to match demand to provision, and include distribution of left-over food, plus avoidance of plastics and unnecessary packaging (recycling as a last resort after avoiding and reducing).

Energy

- Reduce consumption - ‘Turn it Off’ campaign.
- Use energy saving light bulbs wherever possible.
- Use existing funding to invest in lower carbon equipment where appropriate.
- Invest further in eg lighting to reduce carbon, and cost, using the good practice developed in 2021.
- Use rechargeable batteries wherever possible.
- Switch to a ‘green electricity’ provider and ensure all staff are aware of that photovoltaics panels are installed and generate ‘clean’ energy.
- Translate energy use into carbon consumption & set reduction target.



Signed:
Ian Jones
Chief Executive
On behalf of Volunteer Cornwall

Date: 17th April 2024

Review Date: April 2025