

North West Kent Countryside Partnership



Volunteer Handbook

Contents

About Us

Page 3. Background and Aims of NWKCP

Page 4. Staff and Contact Information

Page 5. Location

- By road
- By train

Volunteering with NWKCP

Page 6. Volunteer Role

Page 7. Recruitment Process

- volunteer forms
- induction
- communication
- personal information and change of details
- volunteering whilst receiving benefits
- grievance procedure and general feedback

Page 8. Further Information

- volunteer task day (supervision and support)
- health and safety
- equipment and training
- risk assessment

Page 9. Policies and Procedures

- insurance
- emergency procedure and lone working
- child protection
- diversity
- expenses

About Us

Background

North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP) is a non-profit organisation first established in 1984. NWKCP operates within the boroughs of Bexley, Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks with the other areas of Kent being covered by our sister Countryside Partnerships. We work with a wide range of local communities, landowners, statutory bodies, schools and community organisations to conserve the area's countryside and green spaces along with engaging the public in nature and the outdoors.

We receive a core amount of our funding from Kent County Council, London Borough of Bexley and Sevenoaks District Council. The rest of our funding is brought in through individual project funding and occasional donations.



NWKCP area of operation in Kent

Aims of NWKCP

- Conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage and the biodiversity of North West Kent.
- Conserve and enhance the special landscape character of North West Kent.
- Support, work in partnership with, and assist communities and local groups to undertake projects and practical action that conserves their local environment, urban green space and countryside.
- Develop opportunities for all members of the public to explore the countryside of the partnership area that are sustainable and support the other aims of the partnership.
- Promote respect and understanding of the countryside and increase knowledge of the issues that affect rural areas and the countryside around towns.
- Promote and utilise the social and health benefits of the countryside and rural environment for both urban and rural communities.
- Develop sustainable tourism opportunities that support the rural economy and benefit the countryside.

Staff and Contact Information



Lyndsay Wayman-Rook – Partnership Manager

Lyndsay started with the partnership in February 2025. Starting her career with our sister partnership Medway Valley, she has also worked on to the Heritage Fund Project, Old Chalk New Downs and the Kent Plan Tree Project at KCC. Lyndsay has a BSc (hons) in Animal Conservation and Biodiversity and is a Level 3 Forest School practitioner.

Telephone Number: 03000 419956

Email: Lyndsay.wayman-rook@kent.gov.uk



Mark Gallant – Senior Partnership Officer

Mark started with the Partnership in February 2008. Mark was formerly the Conservation Officer with the Lea Rivers Trust, in East London. Mark has a BSc (Hons) in Science in the Environment, a City and Guilds in Horticulture, a Higher Level NVQ in Environmental Management and is also qualified in first aid , brushcutting, and herbicide treatment etc.

Telephone Number: 07740185228

Email: mark.gallant@kent.gov.uk



Stephanie Johnson- Partnership Officer

Stephanie started with the partnership in 2017. She has experience in habitat and volunteer management from working at Grosvenor and Hilbert country park. She runs our education offer at Lesnes Abbey along with our Natural Ways to Wellbeing project and Forest School. Stephanie has a BSc in Zoology and is qualified in first aid, brushcutting and is a level 3 Forest School practitioner.

Telephone Number: 07816128570

Email: Stephanie.Johnson@kent.gov.uk



Lucy Sawyer-Boyd – Partnership Officer

Lucy started with the partnership in August 2019. She has worked as a reserve warden for Essex Wildlife Trust and in several Country Parks. She completed an apprenticeship as a Countryside Ranger with West Sussex County Council and a Level 2 diploma in Environmental Conservation. Lucy is first aid trained and qualified in the use of chainsaws, brushcutters, pesticides and tractors.

Telephone Number: 07809334071

Email: Lucy.Sawyer-Boyd@kent.gov.uk



Nina Skinner – Partnership Officer

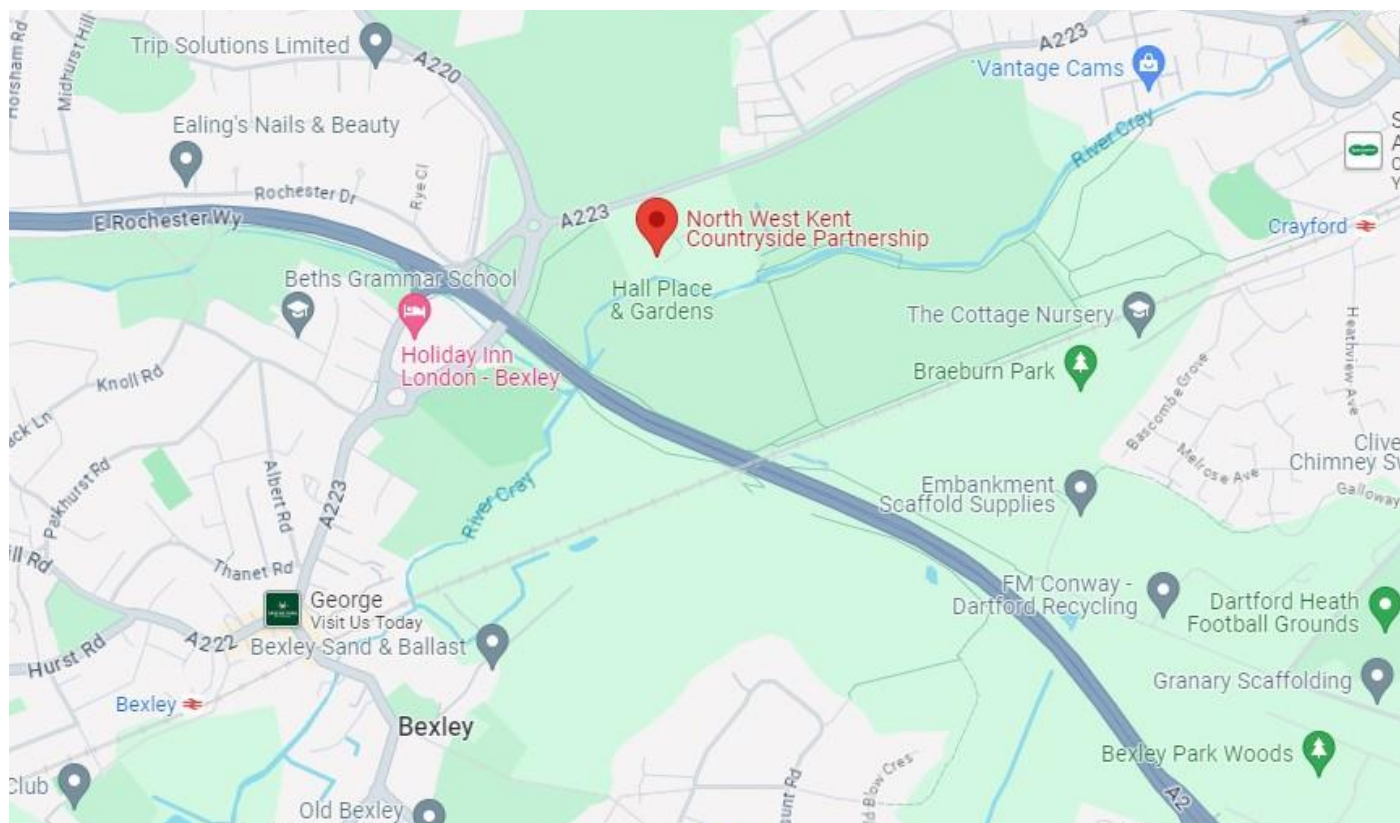
Nina joined the partnership as Assistant Partnership Officer in Spring of 2023 and was promoted to Partnership Officer in October 2023. She has previously worked as the Environmental Education and Community Events Intern at Bore Place and was a voluntary trainee for NWKCP and MVCP. She has a BSc in Natural Sciences and an MSc in Palaeobiology.

Telephone Number: 07816128553

Email: Nina.Skinner@kent.gov.uk

Location

NWKCP office and yard is based at Hall Place and Gardens, Bourne Road, Bexley, Kent, DA5 1PQ. This is where most of our volunteers decide to meet us at if not travelling directly to site.



By Road

Hall Place is located just off the A2 at the Black Prince interchange 5 miles from Junction 2 of the M25 towards London. There is free parking at Hall Place. The postcode for Satnavs is DA5 1PQ.

By Train

The nearest train station is Bexley train station although there is also a train station in Crayford. It is about a 15-20 minute walk from Bexley train station to Hall Place and there are also buses and taxis that can be caught from there.

Volunteering with NWKCP

Volunteer Role

Volunteers are people who give their time freely to help an organisation or individual who is not related to them. The North West Kent Countryside Partnership simply could not function without its fantastic volunteer team and we are extremely appreciative of the hard work and humour that you bring to the partnership.

Role title: NWKCP Conservation Volunteer

Purpose: To carry out practical conservation tasks as directed by the partnership officers on volunteer days.

Responsible to: When out on site, volunteers will be responsible to the partnership officer leading each particular task. We ask that you adhere carefully to their instructions, particularly as regards to health and safety and tool use.

The volunteer co-ordinator for NWKCP is Stephanie Johnson Stephanie.Johnson@kent.gov.uk and you should consider her as your first point of contact for any general questions or issues.

Activities: We carry out a wide range of practical countryside tasks including pond digging, fencing, hedge planting, hedge laying, coppicing, aquatic planting, invasive species removal, river revetment and many more.

Location: Work takes place throughout the boroughs of Dartford, Bexley, Sevenoaks and Gravesham. Volunteers can either meet us at Hall Place or on-site according to convenience. Please notify us if you are intending to meet us on-site, in case plans change at the last minute.

Travel: NWKCP has vehicles which allow us to transport volunteers directly to and from the site. If requiring a lift we ask that you inform us first to ensure we have the space available. Volunteers can choose to travel directly to site instead which might suit if the location is closer to home or perhaps you need to leave early. We are able to reimburse volunteers' travel expenses to and from the project. For further details please speak to the partnership's volunteer co-ordinator.

Time commitment: Volunteer groups go out on a Wednesday and Thursday from approx. 9am – 4pm (depending on weather conditions and daylight). Volunteers can attend as frequently or infrequently as they choose. Occasionally we may request help on other days for special tasks.

Requirements: No formal qualifications or experience are required as on-the-job training will be provided. All that we require from you is that you are able to understand and carry out simple instructions. If you are unable to do this and your actions threaten health and safety on a job, you will be asked to stop doing that particular activity (and in extreme cases, this may be taken further).

Volunteers should come prepared with appropriate clothing for the weather and steel top cap boots if you have them. We do have Personal protective equipment such as gloves and waders for you to borrow and use.

Benefits: Volunteers will gain training and experience in use of tools, and in practical countryside management skills, which could help towards future employment. Occasionally we may offer additional training opportunities when available.

The social benefits of volunteering are many, with the opportunity to work as part of a team, make new friends, meet like-minded individuals in the wider community and to take part in our social events such as our summer picnic and Christmas meal. Other benefits include improved fitness and making a difference to communities and greenspaces.

Recruitment Process

Volunteer Forms

The first part of the recruitment process involves contacting our volunteer co-ordinator Stephanie Johnson either via email at Stephanie.Johnson@kent.gov.uk or through her mobile at 07816128570. They will then send across a copy of this handbook along with our volunteer application and agreement forms. The agreement form details our volunteer expectations along with what you can expect from us as an organisation. Both forms must be completed and returned to our volunteer co-ordinator before we can continue with your application process. Forms can be sent to you either electronically or in the post.

Induction

Upon completion of your forms and acceptance by NWKCP, you will then be invited for an induction. This will either be with the volunteer co-ordinator prior to starting volunteering or with another member of staff on your first volunteer task day. The induction is a chance to meet our staff, familiarise yourself with our office and yard at Hall Place along with being able to ask any questions you might have. The induction also gives us a chance to get to know you a little better along with lending any PPE you might need such as gloves and steel toe capped boots. Inductions on your first volunteer day would also include meeting your fellow volunteers, health and safety talks along with tool and skills training. Once inducted you will be free to join in on any volunteer task days that you like.

Communication

The volunteer co-ordinator and NWKCP team are available through their work mobile numbers or through email during office hours to answer any questions you might have. Each month's list of task days will be sent out to you either by email or post (as agreed with yourself), and it will also be displayed on our website at nwkcpc.org (under the *Volunteering With Us* section). Any changes or cancellations of task days, social event invites and training opportunities will also be sent out either via email, post or text message.

Personal Information and Changes of Details

All personal information about volunteers will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and GDPR. It will be held securely by the NWKCP team and only used in relation to your role as a volunteer. It will not be accessed by any other user or organisation. You can request access to your data and check that it is up to date or ask for it to be deleted should you decide to stop volunteering with us. Please update us about any changes to your personal details so that we can continue to keep you updated about NWKCP's news, events, and opportunities. It is also important that we are able to contact you or your designated person in case of emergency. Please also let us know if you decide to stop volunteering so that we can dispose of your data correctly.

Volunteering while receiving benefits

Generally speaking, those receiving benefits are entitled to volunteer and their benefits should not be affected by doing so, although we do advise any volunteer who is receiving benefits to inform their benefit office and/or their job centre about their commitment to volunteering. The Department of Work and Pensions has published a useful guide to this.

Grievance procedure and general feedback

In the event of any issues occurring for either the volunteer or for NWKCP these will be discussed between the relevant volunteer and partnership officer. This may lead to a subsequent meeting with the partnership manager. Every effort will be made to resolve problems that arise; where this is not possible, either because health and safety is being permanently compromised or because the team dynamics are being adversely affected, we may reluctantly agree to part ways.

Please feel free to offer feedback and suggestions to us, should they occur.

Further Information

Volunteer Task Day (Supervision and Support)

Joining a new group can be a daunting prospect so on your first day we will ensure you meet all the volunteers and are 'buddied' up with one of our more experienced ones. Along with our staff, your volunteer buddy will be able to guide you and help with any questions you might have. Our staff will be on site to supervise, along with providing a health and safety talk and tool demonstrations and training. They will also be happy to answer any questions you have. Each member of staff is qualified and has the necessary experience to lead the task and provide support to volunteers on issues such as correct use of tools, health and safety issues. They are also qualified in First Aid.

Volunteer task days usually start at 9am at Hall Place and involve loading up the vehicle and possibly trailer with tools and equipment needed. We then usually meet everyone on site around 10am to begin work. The day usually finishes around 3:30-4pm with two breaks provided. We bring along biscuits and hot water for tea and coffee. Any other drinks, snacks or lunch should be brought along by yourself. Along with wearing your gloves and steel toe capped boots, we recommend bringing waterproofs for the unpredictable British weather and wearing clothes that you don't mind potentially getting dirty, wet, muddy or ripped.

Health and Safety

NWKCP adheres to the health and safety policies and guidelines of Kent County Council. If you would like to see copies of any of our health and safety policies, just ask. We take health and safety extremely seriously and have taken numerous precautions to ensure that our volunteers' time with us is as safe as possible.

- We adhere to Kent County Council health and safety policies
- We complete ongoing risk assessments
- Staff undergo regular training on all aspects of health and safety
- Volunteers receive a refresher health and safety talk on every task day
- Careful tools training is given to volunteers

Equipment and training

NWKCP will provide all tools necessary to carry out each conservation task. We will also provide ongoing on-the-job training on how to use them, and a health & safety talk on the morning of each task day. We ask that you help us to keep the tools in good condition by cleaning mud off them at the end of each day, and by using them *only* in the way that you are directed by the partnership officer.

We will also provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hard hats, goggles, gloves, high-visibility jackets, waders etc. where necessary. You must wear steel-toe-capped boots whenever you attend. We can lend pairs of steel-toe capped boots out to volunteers who do not own their own. Volunteers may not use power tools such as brush cutters and chainsaws; this type of work will be carried out by qualified partnership officers or volunteers who have undergone the correct training and are qualified.

Any equipment or clothing lent out to you during your time volunteering with us, must be returned if you should decide to stop volunteering with us.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment is written by the relevant partnership officer for every single conservation task that takes place, and these are available for you to view on each task day or on request at other times. Additional generic risk assessments have also been written by NWKCP for every-day aspects of work such as manual handling.

Policies and Procedures

Insurance

As a NWKCP volunteer, you are covered through Kent County Council's public liability & personal accident insurance whilst taking part in volunteering activities. Please note, however, that certain restrictions apply under the personal accident insurance where the volunteer is over 75 years of age. Please contact the volunteer co-ordinator if you would like more details.

Volunteers must notify their motor insurers if their vehicle will be used for volunteering activities (excepting transport to and from the project centre or to site).

Emergency Procedure and Lone Working

Should an accident occur, the partnership officer will deal with the situation and direct you accordingly. Each vehicle carries a first aid kit and each partnership officer is trained in first aid and carries their own first aid kit. The partnership officer will call for the emergency services if necessary and they will always have to hand the address or grid reference of where you are working as part of their risk assessment.

If the partnership officer is injured or unable to act, dial 999 if the severity of the situation calls for it.

As part of the NWKCP volunteer group you will not be working alone. However, a small number of our volunteers take on extra roles (such as surveys) which can require the volunteer to work alone. In this case, the volunteer will be trained and briefed accordingly, provided with additional risk assessments and reflective jackets, and trained on lone working protocol.

Child Protection

NWKCP works according to Kent County Council's child protection policy and procedures (copies available on request) and as such each member of staff is subject to DBS checking. Volunteers do not undergo DBS checking (except for certain roles) and as such we request that when we are working in school grounds you do *not* move around the school on your own – bathroom breaks should be taken with the DBS checked member of staff. This places you above any risk of suspicion and is for your own protection.

Diversity

The North West Kent Countryside Partnership is an inclusive organisation and as such we expect all staff and volunteers to respect others accordingly. Anyone acting outside of these values maybe asked to leave the organisation.

Expenses

NWKCP can reimburse your travel expenses to and from the office on your task days at a rate of:

40p per mile for cars

24p per mile for motorbikes

20p per mile for bicycles

The maximum distance you can claim for per day is 10 miles. Please contact the volunteer co-ordinator if you would like to claim expenses.