

HISTORYLINKS

VOLUNTEER POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The mission of Historylinks is to preserve Dornoch's Heritage and make it accessible for all to enjoy. We do this by running an accredited museum, performing research, publishing books & films, running an after-school club and undertaking outreach projects with our local schools, care homes, etc..

1.2. In line with this mission, Historylinks seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Assist in the running of the Museum
- Provide them with opportunities to learn new skills
- Increase our contact with the communities we serve

1.3. The museum relies heavily on the enthusiasm and commitment of its volunteers and recognises the immeasurable value of their contribution to the existence of the organisation.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE MUSEUM

2.1 Dornoch Heritage Society (DHS) was founded in 1983 to preserve the artefacts and memories of the town and to provide a social focus for its members. Opening a museum was always an aspiration of the Society and with the help, support and encouragement received from Highland Council and other grant-awarding bodies Historylinks Museum was opened, initially with a temporary exhibition, in the summer of 1998. The display was based on the collection of the DHS members and staffed by volunteers from the Society. The ownership and management of Historylinks and the DHS collection was passed to the Dornoch Heritage SCIO to secure the long-term future and development of the collection and the museum. The Dornoch Heritage Society continues to organise lectures, outings, social and promotional events whilst raising funds to support Historylinks.

2.2 Opening hours

The Museum is open to the public from 10.30 am to 4 pm every day from April to October. Normal opening times are widely publicised and opening outside normal hours can be arranged by prior appointment.

2.3 Gifts & Publications

These are popular with visitors and provide a useful contribution towards the operating costs of the museum. Most items available for sale in the Museum can be ordered online via our website.

2.4 **Museum Activities**

Details of museum activities can be found in the Annual Report presented to the AGM, in newsletters published from time to time and on the Historylinks website (<http://www.historylinks.org.uk>).

2.5 **Guides for Volunteers**

Guides to help volunteers understand the requirements of different roles (e.g. front of house, archiving, finance, etc.) are available in the museum.

2.6 **Exhibition and display themes**

The museum focuses 100% on telling the story of Dornoch and the surrounding area (known as our 'collection area').

3. **VOLUNTEERING ROLES AT HISTORYLINKS**

3.1 **The museum requires volunteers to fill the following positions:**

- Front of house reception
- Museum keyholder
- Gardening and general maintenance
- Collection cataloguing
- Photography, scanning and document copying
- Production of video films and audio clips
- Assistance in collection auditing
- Project development
- Leaflet and poster distribution

3.2 **Reception**

This is the principal post for which the museum recruits volunteers. This post represents the first point of contact with our customers and as such is crucial to the organisation. The volunteer staff report to the Curator and/or the Museum Assistant and the responsibilities of this post are:

- Greeting and welcoming customers
- Handling museum admissions
- Selling merchandise
- Noting any suggestions or complaints and passing these comments to the staff.
- Taking telephone messages and dealing with simple enquiries.
- Giving basic information to interested visitors about the museum.
- Giving basic information about Dornoch.
- Helping maintain general tidiness in the Museum (inside & out).

The skills required are ease in meeting people, customer care, an interest in the organisation and the general area of Dornoch. An in-depth knowledge of the collection is not essential and can be gained over time.

3.3 **Keyholder**

This post involves opening and closing the museum, including setting the security alarm and cashing-up sales. Keyholders may also be required to

become a contact for alerting by the security system operator in the event of an out of hours alarm and undertake the necessary response.

3.4 Gardening and General Maintenance

Multiple volunteers are required for the spring and summer seasonal work of maintaining the museum lawn and garden area and the winter months general museum maintenance work.

3.5 Project Development

Education and museum activity projects demand preliminary planning and the preparation and submission of grant applications. Invariably the preliminary work is a team effort and multiple volunteers greatly assist this development work.

3.6 Collection Cataloguing

Volunteers for this work should have an eye for detail and be computer literate as collection records are held and maintained using a PC based cataloguing program. Protocols are available for the various processes of cataloguing, marking and care of objects. In addition to basic induction training, it is commonplace for volunteers for this post will work alongside members of the existing collection cataloguing team.

3.7 Photography, and document scanning

All objects acquired for the museum collection are photographed or scanned so that appropriate images can be attached to the museum catalogue and, in the case of documents, a working copy is readily available for research purposes. The cataloguing team is greatly assisted by volunteers undertaking this work.

3.8 Video films and Audio clips

The Museum archives and website increasingly rely on digital video and audio clips, which is crucial to enhancing the visitor experience. The in-house production of this media by volunteers allows us to react in a timely and cost-effective manner.

3.9 Assistance in collection auditing

There is an on-going collection audit process led by the Museum Manager. Volunteers to assist in this task will be trained in protocols concerning preservation measures.

3.10 Marketing

Raising the profile and marketing is vital to keep visitor numbers up. This can be very expensive so we rely very much on volunteers to drop off leaflets at the start of the season and with hotels and visitor attractions to top up on a regular basis every few weeks. As well as Dornoch, the areas covered are Embo, Golspie, Brora, Tain, Lairg, Bonar and Strathpeffer.

4 WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

4.1 RECRUITMENT

The museum Curator will discuss with all prospective volunteers the responsibilities of museum posts, their personal skills and how best their potential might be reached.

The museum may request references but undertakes not to divulge any personal information to any third party. However, volunteers' name, address and telephone will be circulated amongst other volunteers for contact purposes in the compilation of duty rosters.

Volunteers commit whatever time they feel they can afford.

4.2 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Historylinks undertakes to offer volunteers induction and training in line with the personal skills required. We recognise voluntary staff have the right to the same degree of respect, working conditions and work satisfaction as paid staff. To this end all new volunteers will be offered induction training by the Museum Manager and a 'shadowing' opportunity as well if this is desired. They will learn every skill necessary to perform their job with confidence. Consolidation and refresher training will be offered on an on-going informal basis and, as opportunities arise, volunteers will be offered training courses organised by external agencies.

4.3 CONDUCT OF VOLUNTEERS

Historylinks expects an appropriate standard of conduct, which includes behaviour and attendance, from all its volunteers. These standards are set out in Historylinks Policies which can be viewed on request in the Museum.

If these expectations are not being met by a particular volunteer, the following procedure will be adopted with the intention of remedying the problem and to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all volunteers.

- Initial discussion with the Curator. The Curator will invite the volunteer to a meeting to outline the concerns, propose corrective action, seek the volunteer's view and attempt to resolve the difficulties amicably. The Curator will provide a brief written record of the discussion to both parties.
- If a way forward is not agreed at this stage and the volunteer wishes to continue their involvement with Historylinks then the Curator will involve the Chair of the Historylinks Committee and a further meeting with the volunteer will be convened in order to explore the difficulty and seek a way forward. The Chair will provide a written record for all parties to the meeting.
- If there is no agreement on how to resolve the matter of concern the volunteer will be asked to discontinue their volunteering with Historylinks.

Appeal:

If the volunteer feels they have been treated unfairly or inconsistently with regard to Historylinks policies, they can appeal in writing to the Chair of DHSCIO. The Chair's decision will be final and a written record will be provided for all parties.

Gross Misconduct:

If a volunteer commits a serious misdemeanour which is a serious breach of policy, is a possible criminal offence and makes a continued working relationship impossible, the volunteer will be suspended immediately.

The appeal procedure can be followed by the volunteer as above.

The following gives an indication of the kind of misconduct which will result in suspension.

- Fraud
- Theft
- Bullying and harassment
- Assault
- Wilful damage to Museum property

4.4 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES BY VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers have the right to raise a complaint or grievance about an issue that affects them as a volunteer. It is hoped that in most cases the issue can be discussed and resolved through constructive informal discussion, however it is recognised that a procedure is needed to deal with those issues which cannot be dealt with informally.

Volunteers wishing to raise matters in a formal manner may do so in accordance with the following procedure:

- Raise the matter orally with the Curator or Museum Manager who will attempt to resolve the issue within 7 days.
- If the matter is not resolved to the volunteer's satisfaction, they should request a meeting with the Chair of Historylinks Committee, giving details of the matter of concern.
- The Chair of Historylinks Committee will consider the situation, convene a face to face meeting with the volunteer and staff member and attempt to resolve the situation. A written record of the Chair's decision will be provided and that will mark the end of the grievance or complaint procedure.

All information supplied will be treated in confidence and in accordance with the Museum's data protection and GDPR policies.

4.4 HEALTH & SAFETY

All volunteers are covered by the museum's Health & Safety Policy, a copy of which is available in the Museum. The contents will be covered during induction. A First Aid Kit and Accident Report Book are at Reception.

4.5 INSURANCE

All volunteers, while they are on the premises, are covered by the museum's present Employer's Liability Insurance policy.

4.6 CHILD PROTECTION

The museum has a child protection policy and it is the responsibility of volunteers to follow the guidance provided in it. Volunteers working regularly with young people or vulnerable adults will be required to be registered with Disclosure Scotland (this will be done through our normal PVG contract management channel).

4.7 EXPENSES

The museum undertakes to reimburse travel costs by public transport when volunteers attend meetings or training on approved museum business. In the event that a volunteer elects to use their private car, reimbursement will be at the rate of their own return fare by public transport plus a return fare for each volunteer conveyed as a passenger.

Historylinks holds its Volunteers in high esteem; we welcome suggestions to improve and enhance this policy.

Adopted at Trustee meeting 7 th June 2011
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Revision 2 adopted