



## **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This document states the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited's policy on involving volunteers in its work across all departments.

It also defines how the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited will recruit and manage Volunteers, who are defined as people who spend unpaid time working on defined activities for the benefit of The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited. The purpose of developing a policy is to enable the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited to think about the value of its volunteers, and to achieve clear, workable principles to which volunteers and their supervisors can operate within.

The policy also recognises the value which Volunteers add to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited, and the commitment they give to the Trust. The policy aims to support Volunteers to achieve their full potential, and work towards building a good and successful relationship between volunteers and the people to engage with them.

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited sets out guidelines for the quality of opportunity, recruitment, training, support and development of volunteers within the service.

### **THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST LIMITED A BACKGROUND**

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited was established in 1967 to preserve and interpret the remains of the Industrial Revolution in the six square miles of the Ironbridge Gorge. It is an independent educational charity (Registered Number 503717-R), which by its entrepreneurial flair encourages visitors to be involved in and support its conservation work through admission charges, trading and associated commercial activities. Development costs are sought through grants and donations.

Responsible to a Board of Trustees, the Trust manages 35 historic sites within the World Heritage Site of the Ironbridge Gorge, ten of which are museums. The Trust's innovative methods and pioneering approach to managing museums have been widely copied and are now common practice in museums, whether public or privately funded. As well as ten museums, the sites also include a research library, a tourist information centre, two youth hostels, archaeological sites, historic woodlands, housing, two chapels, and two Quaker burial grounds.

Volunteers are enshrined in our core aims at Trust. For many museums across the UK, including Ironbridge, volunteers are a vital resource. They enable better access by providing support and their time to promote and aid the Museum. The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited Strategic Plan 2007-2010 states that one of our strategic objectives is;

'To develop our staff and our volunteers as Ironbridge's most precious resource, through an ongoing programme of training and development'

Volunteers are key to delivering a varied and successful service to visitors to Ironbridge. Volunteers add flexibility and improvement to Museum's product beyond what the Trust can afford.

Along with this, one of the key resources we have is;

'Developing new and exciting ways of involving volunteers in the work of the Trust, creating mutually beneficial opportunities for both volunteers and the organisation'

A new volunteer can be sure that they will benefit from the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited in the same way that the Trust benefits from having them on board. It is an exciting time for Ironbridge, with the opening of the new Blists Hill project, and the ever evolving face of the Museum, volunteers are part of an exciting and innovative organisation.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Requests for volunteers will be advertised in a variety of places, such as local news and the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited's website. Volunteer postings and contact information can also be obtained through various volunteer organisations.

Upon gaining first contact, the Museum team will send out a Volunteer Application Pack that includes an application form plus information to help the potential volunteer decide where they would like to volunteer and in which areas are of interest to them. The application form should be filled in and returned as soon as possible. The Equal Opportunities Policy will be adhered to when selecting and recruiting volunteers. Upon receiving a completed application form, the volunteer will be contacted to arrange an informal interview with the Volunteer Coordinator.

This interview will help the Volunteer Coordinator to match the volunteer a suitable role, answer any questions, and help them to understand what volunteering at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited involves.

If both the volunteer and the Volunteer Coordinator wish to continue, the volunteer will be introduced into their role. This will involve an introduction to their supervisor, provision of the relevant Health and Safety information and any appropriate training.

Volunteers will be subject to a trial period of one month taking effect from their agreed start date. After this period a follow-up interview will take place to ensure that the volunteer is satisfied with their post.

### **THE VOLUNTEER'S ROLE**

Volunteering opportunities will compliment, rather than replace, the work of paid staff at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited.

### **REFERENCE CHECKS**

Before interview, two references must be obtained for each applicant. This can be reduced to one referee in certain circumstances for example someone who has just left school, or has been retired for a long time. The referees should not be related to the applicant, and will be followed up before any post can commence.

### **EXPECTATIONS**

Volunteers can give as much or as little time as they feel is appropriate for them. Whatever commitment the volunteer can give is a great asset for the Trust. However we would ask that Volunteers do consider this as 'a commitment' and if unable to attend for one reason or another, a supervisor, or the Volunteer Coordinator should be informed. In the same way, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited considers the management of volunteers to have equal importance to that of managing paid staff. Therefore this will be carried out with the same level of professionalism. You can expect to be treated fairly, professionally and above all, as an equal to members of paid staff working along side you.

## **SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT**

The Volunteer Coordinator, supervisor and other volunteers will offer support to the volunteers. The Volunteer Coordinator will conduct regular meetings with the volunteer to discuss their role, and regular supervisory sessions will take place to provide a high level of support from the Trust.

If a volunteer feels they are not being adequately supervised, there is an issue with their post, or if the volunteer has any problems, they are encouraged to discuss this with their supervisor in the first instance or with the Volunteer Coordinator where this is not possible. Private meeting facilities are available at all times, and volunteers can bring a friend if they feel they would like extra support.

## **YOUR RIGHTS**

- To know what is expected and to be given clear information and instruction
- To have clearly specified lines of supervision
- To receive a level of support appropriate to the role
- To receive appropriate induction and training
- To be shown appreciation
- To know what to do if things go wrong
- To be a part of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited
- To have safe working conditions
- To be free of discrimination
- To have the right to say no, and to be able to withdraw from voluntary work.

## **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To fill in an applications form providing your details, and to let the Trust know of any changes
- To give two referees.
- To give a reasonable and sustainable level of commitment
- To be reliable and safe
- To be honest if there are problems
- To comply with existing policies and procedures (these available to view upon request)
- To take responsibility for your own Health and Safety

## **THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST LIMITED RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Enquiries and volunteering offers will be dealt with quickly and efficiently, and volunteer placements will match the volunteer's skills and interests.
- Each volunteer will have a Volunteer Agreement and receive a Volunteer Application Pack.
- Full training will be provided for every task allocated.

- Volunteers will be treated in line with the Trusts Equal Opportunities Policy
- Each volunteer will be managed by a nominated member of staff within the department where they will be working.

### **EXPENSES**

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that volunteering at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited is rewarding and enjoyable. To help with this, a £7.50 voucher for refreshments at Museum eateries will be issued for each visit of over 4 hours.

### **INSURANCE**

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited has an insurance policy to ensure you are protected whilst volunteering with us.

### **MONITORING**

The monitoring policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is still appropriate to the needs of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Limited and its volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to contribute to this review and any comments should be passed to the Volunteer Coordinator.