



Volunteer Handbook

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1. Introduction

This Handbook is designed to provide guidance to members who take part in activities organised by the Friends of Avon Meadows CIO (FoAM). Reference is made to the website with is at <http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>. FoAM is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

2. Aims of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Note that the italic text indicates quotes of the objectives as they appear in our Constitution. See the website for the full Constitution.

- 2.1. *To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Avon Meadows Community Wetland and Local Nature reserve, Pershore, Worcestershire by:*
 - 2.1.1. Carrying out and or arranging various maintenance and development activities with due regard to the safety of volunteers and the general public. Such maintenance may include activities required in the Management Plan approved by Natural England under the Higher Tier Stewardship scheme for the duration of this scheme.
 - 2.1.2. Continually inspecting Avon Meadows and report any problems to the owners that are beyond the scope of The Friends of Avon Meadows to put right.
 - 2.1.3. Working with the landowners to ensure that appropriate informative and warning signs are installed and maintained.
 - 2.1.4. Raising funds by seeking grants, subscriptions, donations and help in kind.
 - 2.1.5. Reporting to the appropriate authorities illegal or other undesirable acts that are perpetrated on Avon Meadows.
 - 2.1.6. Taking steps to ensure that the necessary equipment and facilities are available to volunteers in order to carry out tasks.

- 2.2. *To advance the education of members and the public in the principles and practices of conservation and promoting, encouraging and carrying out study and research for the advancement of knowledge in the natural sciences by:*
 - 2.2.1. Conducting surveys of the flora and fauna on Avon Meadows.
 - 2.2.2. Maintaining contact with the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre and other such bodies.

- 2.3. *To provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation of other leisure-time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age infirmity or disability, financial hardship of social circumstances or for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life by:*
 - 2.3.1. Providing help and training to members and the public to enhance their enjoyment of Avon Meadows.
 - 2.3.2. Providing and creating promotional material including Internet based material.

- 2.3.3. Continuing to develop means of access to the site for people with disabilities.

3. Opportunities for Volunteers

It is the intention that members should have a rewarding experience when using Avon Meadows. Generally, FoAM provides four types of opportunity for its members; work parties, survey groups, individual surveys and events. Any member may request to take part in any activity although certain activities may require particular training, knowledge or experience. Examples of each opportunity are:

- 3.1. **Work Parties:** Work parties involving physical work necessary to maintain and improve Avon Meadows and its habitats. These are usually held on Saturday mornings between 10h00 and 13h00.
- 3.1.1. Frequently there are additional work parties set up as necessary to carry out special or non-routine tasks.
- 3.1.2. The Work Party Coordinator holds a list of people who he can contact for work parties and they are normally all contacted before each work party. Members wishing to join any work party should make sure their names are on this list by contacting the Work Party Coordinator via the website.
- 3.2. **Survey Groups:** At present there are two survey groups in operation, birds and moths.
- 3.2.1. Bird Group: Meets every Thursday morning starting at 08h00 in summer and 09:00 in winter in front of Cherry Orchard House and runs for up to 3½ hours. Anyone can come along and no previous experience is necessary. A pair of binoculars will enhance your experience. Contact via the website.
- 3.2.2. Moth Group: Meets at fortnightly intervals throughout the summer months (Apr-Sep). It will normally run from sunset for 3½ hours. For safety reasons a minimum of 2 members should be present at all times during each session. Anyone can come along and no previous experience is necessary. Contact via the website.
- 3.3. **Individual Surveys:** As the name implies these surveys are carried out on an organised basis by individuals with particular skill. Joining in with these activities is by prior arrangement. At present we run butterfly and dragonfly transects through the summer months. However, we are restricted as to what surveys we can run by the expertise within the membership. We particularly welcome members with particular expertise in species groups not presently covered.
- 3.4. **Events:** We run a small number of events each year aimed both at members and the general public all of whom are welcome. Information is published on the website and in the newsletter. These are:
- 3.4.1. All-day Bird Watch: This event runs from first light until dusk and we count as many bird species as possible. Usually held at the end of April.
- 3.4.2. Bioblitz: This event runs from dawn until dusk and also involves local experts with the aim of identifying as many species on Avon Meadows as possible within a 24-hour period. This event is usually held in June but before the first hay cut. Again, all members and members of the public are welcome to come along.

4. Management Plan

The land comprising Avon Meadows is owned in part by Pershore Town Council (southern third) and Wychavon District Council (northern two thirds). Both have Higher Tier Stewardship schemes in operation which are administered by Natural England.

It is a funding requirement that formal Management Plans are developed and jointly approved and Natural England monitors progress in line with these plans. FoAM work party efforts form a part of the work to be carried out under these plans but they also include funding for contractors to carry out heavier or more specialised work. The full Management Plan may be found on the website.

5. Administration

5.1. Meetings

- 5.1.1. A meeting to which all members will be invited shall be held at intervals not exceeding 12 months, designated the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- 5.1.2. General Meetings to which all members will be invited may be held in between AGM's as necessary and as decided by the Committee.
- 5.1.3. A minimum of 14 clear days' notice shall be given of all General Meetings (including the AGM).
- 5.1.4. A quorum for an AGM shall be; 1 officer (acting as Chairperson) and the lesser of 10 Full Members or 10% of the Full Membership.
- 5.1.5. The purpose of the AGM is;
 - To elect Officers for the following year.
 - To receive the Chairperson's Annual Report.
 - To receive and approve the Treasurer's Statement of Accounts.
- 5.1.6. Elections shall be by a simple majority of current Full Members present at the AGM (each Full Member is allowed one vote). In the event of a tied vote the Chairperson (or an appointed deputy) shall make the casting vote.
- 5.1.7. At least 4 Committee meetings shall be held throughout the year. Additional meetings will be set up as necessary the time and date of which must be notified to all Committee members giving at least one week's notice.

5.2. Election of Officers

- 5.2.1. The minimum requirement of officers shall be the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. All Officers shall be Trustees of the CIO. The total number of Trustees shall be between 3 and 9 persons.
- 5.2.2. In compliance with the Constitution, all Officers shall stand down for re-election at each Annual General Meeting.
- 5.2.3. Additionally, no less than one third of other Trustees and Committee Members should stand for re-election by rotation.

5.3. Membership

- 5.3.1. Membership is open to anyone who has an interest in promoting the objectives of FoAM and is willing to adhere to its rules.

- 5.3.2. There will be 2 classes of membership:
- **Full Members:** who will have voting rights at General Meetings.
To become a Full Member the member shall pay an annual subscription currently set at £5 per person before 30th September each year.
- **Associate Members:** who have no voting rights but otherwise are eligible to all benefits of membership.
- 5.3.3. Membership may be terminated with immediate effect if a member is found to be deliberately taking actions which are contrary to the Objectives of FoAM.

5.4. **Financial Administration & Expenses**

Further to the stipulations set out in the Constitution the following shall apply:

- 5.4.1. The Committee shall appoint no less than 3 and no more than 5 cheque signatories.
- 5.4.2. The bank account will be administered by the Treasurer who will issue cheques as necessary (signed by the appointed signatories).
- 5.4.3. Cheques payable to any cheque signatory shall be signed by the other signatories.
- 5.4.4. Payments may be made by internet banking by agreement of all three Officers on each occasion.
- 5.4.5. Minor expenses (up to £50) may be reimbursed to individual members provided they are for goods or services directly for use by FoAM and that have received prior approval by an Officer. Expenditure via bank transfer shall be approved by the Chairperson and Secretary to authorise the Treasurer to make the payment.
- 5.4.6. Reimbursement of expenses without prior approval are at the discretion of the Committee.
- 5.4.7. All major expenditure (over £50) shall be approved by the Committee in advance. FoAM does not undertake to underwrite any such expenditure without Committee approval. Normally such payments will be made by FoAM directly to the vendor.
- 5.4.8. The financial year shall end on 31st March.

5.5. **Trustees and Committee**

- 5.5.1. The Committee shall comprise the management Committee and the Trustee Board.
- 5.5.2. It shall be appointed to ensure the smooth running of the FoAM in the achievement of the objectives and other requirements as set out in the Constitution and interpreted in this document.
- 5.5.3. The Committee shall appoint officers as necessary but at a minimum will appoint a Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary all of whom shall have their positions confirmed by a vote at the Annual General Meeting.
- 5.5.4. The Committee shall comprise elected members plus land owners' representatives and Trustees which in total shall not exceed 15 people. Not all Committee members need to be Trustees.
- 5.5.5. The quorum for a Committee & Trustee meeting shall be a minimum of 1 Officer and 4 Committee members (at least one of whom must be a Trustee). Note that in the event of a vote **only** Trustees may vote.

- 5.5.6. The Committee shall create and amend as necessary this Handbook for the guidance of all members in carrying out duties in compliance with the Constitution on behalf of the FoAM.
- 5.5.7. The Committee shall have the authority to appoint or co-opt other members to the Committee as deemed necessary. Trustees shall only be appointed following the provisions set out in the Section 11 of the Constitution.
- 5.5.8. All non-Trustee members of the Committee shall stand down but be eligible for re-election at each Annual General Meeting. (see also *Election of Officers* above)
- 5.5.9. If a Committee Member wishes to resign, they are expected to submit their resignation in writing in good time to allow a replacement to be appointed. Trustees shall only resign by fulfilling the requirements of Section 13 of the Constitution.
- 5.5.10. The purpose of the Committee Meeting is;
 - To appoint additional officers or subcommittee leaders as appropriate.
 - To receive brief reports including those from the Treasurer, Membership Secretary.
 - To review actions arising from the previous meeting and agree new actions.
 - To receive progress reports from leaders of various activities that have taken place since the previous meeting and agree new activities.
 - To approve activities and related estimated budgets for equipment and materials and any related expenditure.
 - The production of written minutes for each meeting.
- 5.5.11. When decisions are made by voting, each Trustee shall exercise one vote. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairperson shall have the casting vote as long as they are not a local authority or landfill operator representative, in which case the casting vote will pass to an independent member. Secret ballots may be used at the discretion of the Chairperson.

5.6. **Amendments**

- 5.6.1. Amendments to this Handbook may be recommended and approved by the Committee.
- 5.6.2. For an amendment to stand it must be approved by at least two thirds of the Committee present.

5.7. **Data Protection**

FoAM takes the privacy and security of your data seriously. We have set up a data protection policy (see Appendix 1) to ensure that members and third parties are informed about on what data we hold and how it is used. FoAM operates within the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which was introduced on 25 May 2018.

This Data Protection and Privacy Policy sets out how we collect and process any personal data that we collect from you, or that you provide to us, in connection with our website, our website services and any other pages from which we link to this Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

5.8. **Complaints Procedure**

Normally anyone with a complaint relevant to Avon Meadows should contact a FoAM Officer (Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer). If for some reason this is not appropriate or practical, then Wychavon District Council has a Wildlife Sites Project Officer who should be contacted. Contact details may be found in the Newsletter or on the website.

Whoever you contact will know how to take the matter further.

Once the matter has been investigated you will be given a response either verbally or by eMail as seems appropriate.

5.9. **Memorials**

Occasionally people (FoAM members or members of the public) ask for a relative or pet to be remembered on Avon Meadows. This will not be permitted. As Avon Meadows is a nature reserve it is not appropriate to plant trees or shrubs or erect plaques.

6. **Rules for Members**

All members shall:

- 6.1. Support the objectives of the FoAM.
- 6.2. Abide by the Countryside Code, that is;
 - be safe and follow signs
 - leave gates and property as you find them
 - protect plants and animals and take your litter home
 - keep dogs under control
 - consider other people
- 6.3. Do not disturb breeding birds (except for appropriately authorised research or recording).
- 6.4. Do not pick or collect any plant, insect or other animal except for genuine scientific purposes. (Note that in the case of moth trapping all moths should be released at the end of the session).
- 6.5. Report to a Committee Member or other responsible person damage to or misuse of the Avon Meadows.
- 6.6. Wilful transgression of the objectives of the FoAM may lead to a member's membership being terminated at the discretion of the committee. There will be no refund of subscription should such membership termination take place.
- 6.7. If you have a medical condition or are taking medication that may effect you during a work party it is your responsibility to notify the Work Party Leader accordingly.
- 6.8. Any payment proposed on behalf of FoAM should receive prior approval by an Officer or the Committee for the payee to be reimbursed. (see Section 5.4 above).

7. **Health and Safety**

- 7.1. Work Parties should only be organised under the supervision of a designated and trained Work Party Leader.
- 7.2. The Work Party Leader will ensure that there is appropriate personal protective equipment available for use by volunteers.

- 7.3. Many people have medical conditions that may have an effect on the type of work they can undertake during a work party or any essential action following an accident. It is the responsibility of the individual to notify the Work Party Leader of any such condition or medication.
- 7.4. All work parties and other events organised by FoAM shall include a minimum of 2 persons at all times.
- 7.5. A trained First Aider should be present on all work parties.
- 7.6. No persons under 18 years of age shall use powered equipment on Avon Meadows.
- 7.7. Mains electrical equipment, powered by one of the generators, must always have its electrical output connected through an earth leakage trip.
- 7.8. Check that all other people around are clear before connecting electrical equipment.
- 7.9. When working in waders great care should be taken recognising that the bottom of the pools may be very uneven and comprise soft mud.
 - 7.9.1. When anyone is working in water they must have a partner ashore and a throwing line must be available.
 - 7.9.2. Unless special provision is made nobody should work in water greater than 0.9 metres deep.
 - 7.9.3. Although not essential, it is recommended that when wading in water a stout probing stick should be carried to assess the nature of the bottom and to stabilise the person in the water.

8. Work Party Coordinators' Guidance

- 8.1. Work Party Leaders should be appropriately trained in supervising the work being undertaken.
- 8.2. Assess the nature of the work to be carried out and ensure that the volunteers are aware of the safe and effective way to carry out such work – including care of members of the public.
- 8.3. Make sure that all volunteers are issued with the necessary personal protective equipment.
- 8.4. A certificated First Aider should be present at all work parties.
- 8.5. A first aid kit should be taken and situated at a convenient central point near to the work areas.
- 8.6. Ensure that you have an emergency contact telephone number for all volunteers present.
- 8.7. Give volunteers the opportunity to give information about any relevant medical conditions (this may be done confidentially).
- 8.8. Note that personal information provided by volunteers who are taking part in a work party should not be divulged to third parties unless required as part of an emergency procedure (e.g. given to ambulance service staff).
- 8.9. Carry a mobile telephone in the work area and ensure that it has a signal.
- 8.10. Be prepared to give directions over the telephone to the emergency services in the event they are required.
- 8.11. All volunteers operating powered equipment should have received appropriate training and be over 18.
- 8.12. When carrying out activities such as brush cutting, tree felling or pollarding, particularly when close to a path, great care should be taken to keep all members of the public back

to avoid any danger. If safer, cease work until members of the public have passed by.
Note that noisy equipment may make animals nervous.

9. Ongoing recording programmes

There are a number of regular recording programmes that are undertaken by volunteers, some by individuals and some by small groups. (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3 above). Anyone wanting further information should contact FoAM through the website.

- 9.1. It is FoAM policy to encourage and assist any member in monitoring species groups that are not already monitored providing they have sufficient skill and time to carry out the task efficiently.
- 9.2. Members may also join existing survey groups. Survey work carried out by individuals on behalf of FoAM may be carried out by prior arrangement.
- 9.3. All survey results are passed to the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre and to the appropriate national authority.
- 9.4. FoAM keeps full records of sightings made which are available for inspection at any time.

10. Policy on Collecting and Photography

Generally collecting is not allowed and photography is provided it does not cause damage or disturbance to other species.

11. Species protected by law occurring on Avon Meadows

Legal position in respect of killing or harming wild birds

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

It is an offence under the Act to (see

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/wildbirdslaw/birdsandlaw/wca/index.asp>):

- intentionally kill any wild bird.
- intentionally take or damage the nest or eggs of a wild bird.
- be in possession of a wild bird, dead or alive.
- intentionally or recklessly disturb or damage the nest of any bird on Schedule 1 of the Act.

Penalties can be up to £5000 fine and 6 months in prison.

Exceptions

There are some exceptions to these offences:

- an authorised person (e.g. landowner or occupier) may kill using approved methods certain "pest species".
- if a nest is damaged by a lawful operation and such damage cannot be reasonable avoided.
- a bird, not on Schedule 1, may be killed if it can be shown that the action was necessary to protect crops, prevent the distribution of disease.

Action

Crimes should be reported to the RSPB on 01767 680 551 (lines open from 09h00 to 17h00). It is also important to inform the Wildlife Sites Project Officer

You should gather as much as possible including:

- Did you see the incident yourself?
- Has the incident already been reported to the police?
- When did the incident occur?
- Where did the incident occur?
- Description of the incident.
- What species of bird was involved?
- Is there any evidence?
- Who was responsible?
- Was there a vehicle involved?

11.1. Protected species that use Avon Meadows regularly:

11.1.1. Schedule 1: Species protected at all times.

- Fieldfare
- Kingfisher
- Barn Owl
- Peregrine Falcon
- Little Ringed Plover
- Redwing
- Cetti's Warbler

11.1.2. Schedule 2: Species protected during the close season,
21 February to 31 August.

- Coot
- Tufted Duck
- Canada Goose
- Greylag Goose
- Mallard
- Moorhen
- Teal

12. Appendices

Appendix 1: PRIVACY POLICY

This document sets out the Privacy Policy of the Friends of Avon Meadows CIO in compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.

DEFINITIONS

The terms **Member** and **Membership** as used in this policy document shall refer to both Members and Associate Members of FoAM.

The term **FoAM** shall refer to the Friends of Avon Meadows CIO.

GDPR shall refer to the General Data Protection Regulations.

OBJECTIVES

It is the intention of FoAM to hold only sufficient data for the safe and efficient operation of the FoAM in full compliance with the GDPR.

Such information may be transferred between members of the Committee for the sole purpose of carrying out FoAM's business (see Clause 4 below) but otherwise only with the written permission of the owner of that personal data (see also Clause 7 below).

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

1. **Data Manager:** A Data Manager will be appointed who will hold and maintain, securely, the master data list. The Trustees will continue to be jointly responsible for data security.
2. **Data Manager's responsibilities:** The Data Manager shall carry out the following activities:
 - 2.1. To provide guidance to FoAM data holders in line with the GDPR and this Policy.
 - 2.2. In line with the GDPR and this Policy ensure that data used by FoAM is accurate, securely held, used in accordance with GDPR guidelines, retained and destroyed.
 - 2.3. Report any breaches to the appropriate authority.
 - 2.4. Ensure that the correct GDPR notices are included in all relevant communications.
 - 2.5. To manage any request by a Member to delete their data.
3. **Computer Security:** Computer files holding personal data will be protected by a strong password (i.e. more than 8 characters comprising alpha, numbers and symbols). For internal security reasons this password will only be held by the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary in addition to the Data Manager.
 - 3.1. Personal data shall **not** be transferred using memory sticks, discs or other removable devices.
 - 3.2. It is preferred not to provide printed paper reports listing members data.
 - 3.3. eMail address lists are regarded as secure provided the eMail account is protected by a strong password.
4. **Data held by FoAM:** Data held by FoAM shall be as follows:
 - 4.1. Associate Members: Full name and eMail address.
 - 4.2. Full Members: Full name, eMail address and postal address.

- 4.3. Work Party volunteers: Full name, personal telephone number and an emergency contact telephone number. Note that this information will be in addition to any information held under Clauses 3.1 and 3.2. Additionally, relevant medical information will be required (information about conditions, pharmaceutical treatments that would be essential in case of an emergency) for Work Party Volunteers.
- 4.4. It is a condition of membership that members shall provide the information as set out above.
5. **Data for Committee Members**: The Data Manager may provide personal data to Committee members for the purpose of carrying out FoAM business under the following conditions.
 - 5.1. Data will only be provided for specific FoAM requirements and such requirements will be recorded by the Data Manager.
 - 5.2. The Committee Member automatically undertakes not to divulge such information to third parties (whether on the Committee or not).
 - 5.3. The Data Manager will ensure that Members' data is updated as necessary.
 - 5.4. If a Member wishes his data to be removed the Data Manager will inform all Committee Members holding personal data to remove this data.
 - 5.5. Normally, membership data will be held by the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Work Party Coordinator, Data Manager and newsletter editor. Data held will be just sufficient for each to carry out their duties.
6. **Request for data held**: A member may ask to see all personal data held on them at any time. This will be freely provided to the member within 28 days from the date of the request.
7. **Request to delete data**: A member may request that their information may be wholly deleted from FoAM records. This will be carried out within 28 days of the request. Members should note that once their information is deleted they can no longer be members of FoAM.
8. **Requests for a Member's data**: All requests for members' information shall referred to the Data Manager. The Data Manager will contact the member concerned directly and ask them to contact the person requesting the information.
[For example: If Tom wants Helen's eMail address, he contacts the Data Manager. The data Manager contacts Helen and asks her to get in touch with Tom at her discretion. This is the extent of FoAM's action.]
9. **Retention Policy**: Generally, personal data, as described above will be held indefinitely. Exceptions to this will be subject to notification by a member or their relatives. Members' data will be deleted:
 - 9.1. If a Member dies.
 - 9.2. If a Member asks for his membership to be terminated.
 - 9.3. If a Member is expelled from the FoAM.
10. **Destruction Policy**: When data is no longer required as set out in Clauses 6 and 8, this data shall be carefully deleted by all parties holding the data.
 - 10.1. Paper copies (not preferred) shall be shredded.
 - 10.2. Digital copies shall be deleted of all devices holding such data, mainly personal computer hard discs and/or eMail address lists.