VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

Shildon Railway Institute Limited

Supporting a Respectful, Welcoming and Inclusive Volunteering Community

Document Information

Item	Details
Document Title	Volunteer Code of Conduct
Document Owner	Management Committee
Status	Draft for Committee Consideration
Approved By	Management Committee (upon adoption)
Current Version	Version 2.0 (Draft)
First / Current version Adoption Date	11 June 2023 / *(tbc)*
Last Review	*(to be completed following adoption)*
Next Review	Sep 2027
Key Related Documents	Volunteer Agreement, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Site Security Policy, Disputes & Complaints Procedure and Governance Philosophy.

Table of Contents

1. Statement of Welcome and Stewardship 3
2. About the Society 3
3. Purpose 3
4. Our Volunteering Culture 4
5. Conduct Towards Fellow Volunteers 5
6. Conduct Towards Employees and Committee Members 6
7. Conduct Towards Members, Visitors and Other Users 7
8. Looking After the Institute and its Resources 8
9. Personal Conduct and Integrity 8
10. Safety, Wellbeing and Safeguarding 9
11. Confidentiality and Responsible Use of Information 10
12. Reliability, Communication and Asking for Help 11
13. Raising Concerns, Mistakes and Learning 12
14. How this Code is Applied 13
15. Related Documents 14
16. Document Review 15
18. My Commitment 16

1. Statement of Welcome and Stewardship

Volunteering at Shildon Railway Institute means becoming part of a community of people who freely contribute their time, knowledge, skills and enthusiasm towards something they believe is worth sustaining.

Every volunteer brings something different. The Society values those differences and seeks to create an environment in which people can find ways to contribute that reflect their interests and strengths, while supporting one another and sharing responsibility for the wellbeing, character and future of the Institute.

The Society has been sustained across generations by people choosing to give something of themselves for the benefit of others. Today's volunteers continue that tradition. Whether someone contributes regularly or occasionally, undertakes a specialist role or simply lends a hand when needed, their contribution forms part of that continuing story of voluntary endeavour.

This Code describes the standards of conduct through which we seek to sustain that culture. It is intended not simply to establish boundaries of acceptable behaviour, but to help create a welcoming, respectful and supportive environment in which people can contribute confidently, develop through their involvement and enjoy being part of the Society.

Volunteering brings responsibilities towards others, but it should also bring friendship, purpose, opportunity and the satisfaction of contributing to something worthwhile.

2. About the Society

Shildon Railway Institute Limited is a **Community Benefit Society**, registered under the **Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act**.

Throughout this document, and the wider governance framework adopted by the Institute, the terms **"the Society"** and **"Shildon Railway Institute"** refer to the same organisation.

The term **"the Society"** is used where these documents describe the Institute in its legal, constitutional or governance capacity. The term **"the Institute"** may be used where the document refers more generally to the organisation, its premises, activities or community role.

This distinction is intended solely to aid clarity and consistency and does not imply the existence of separate organisations.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to describe the standards of conduct through which volunteers help create and sustain a safe, welcoming, respectful and supportive environment at Shildon Railway Institute.

It applies to everyone undertaking a recognised voluntary role on behalf of the Society, whatever the nature, frequency or extent of their contribution.

The Code should be read alongside the Volunteer Agreement, which describes the mutual understanding between the Society and its volunteers, and other relevant Society policies and procedures.

This Code does not attempt to anticipate every situation that a volunteer may encounter or prescribe a rule for every circumstance. Volunteers are instead encouraged to exercise good judgement, seek guidance where they are uncertain and act in ways consistent with the Society's values and the principles described within this Code.

Everyone involved in the Society shares responsibility for helping create an environment in which these standards can be understood, demonstrated and sustained.

4. Our Volunteering Culture

Shildon Railway Institute is a volunteer-led Society. With the exception of those responsibilities undertaken by its employees, much of what the Institute achieves depends upon people choosing freely to contribute their time and abilities for the benefit of others.

Our volunteering culture is founded upon a simple principle:

Volunteers support volunteers.

No volunteer is expected to bring every skill, know every answer or contribute in exactly the same way as somebody else. People bring different experiences, abilities, interests, circumstances and levels of confidence. The Society is strongest when those differences are welcomed and people are encouraged to contribute what they can while learning from and supporting one another.

Volunteers should therefore seek to:

- welcome new volunteers and help them feel that they belong;
- value different forms and levels of contribution;
- share knowledge, experience and practical help generously;
- encourage others without unnecessarily directing or controlling them;
- recognise and acknowledge the contribution of others;
- make space for people to develop confidence, try new things and discover where their interests and abilities might best contribute;
- ask for help when they need it and offer help when they reasonably can;
- communicate openly when difficulties arise rather than allowing uncertainty or frustration to grow unnecessarily;
- recognise that honest mistakes can happen and respond to them, wherever appropriate, with patience, learning and support;
- respect the time freely given by others and avoid placing unreasonable expectations upon fellow volunteers;
- contribute to an environment in which people feel safe to offer ideas, ask questions and acknowledge when they do not know something;

- remember that volunteering should strengthen both the Society and the people who choose to contribute to it.

Experience, responsibility or length of service should never be treated as giving one volunteer greater personal importance than another. Some volunteers will necessarily carry particular responsibilities or possess specialist knowledge, and those responsibilities and expertise should be respected, but the Society seeks to foster relationships founded upon mutual respect rather than unnecessary hierarchy.

Volunteers should be encouraged to grow through their involvement if they wish to do so. For some, volunteering may remain an occasional contribution to an activity they enjoy. Others may develop new interests, take on additional responsibilities or eventually consider serving on the Management Committee. Each is a valid and valued way of contributing.

Guiding Principle

The strength of our volunteering culture is not measured simply by how much volunteers do for the Society, but by how effectively we help one another to contribute, develop and know that what we bring is valued.

5. Conduct Towards Fellow Volunteers

Volunteering works best when people feel welcomed, respected and able to contribute as themselves. Every volunteer therefore shares responsibility for helping create positive relationships with the people alongside whom they volunteer.

Volunteers should:

- treat fellow volunteers with kindness, dignity, courtesy and respect;
- welcome different backgrounds, perspectives, abilities, experiences and ways of contributing;
- listen to others and communicate honestly and respectfully, including where opinions differ;
- share knowledge and experience generously rather than using them to establish status or exclude others;
- offer help and encouragement where they reasonably can and be willing to accept help themselves;
- recognise and acknowledge the efforts and achievements of others;
- avoid gossip, belittling, bullying, harassment, discrimination or behaviour intended to isolate or diminish another person;
- respect reasonable personal boundaries and recognise that friendships and relationships will naturally differ between individuals;
- address disagreements calmly and constructively, seeking help where difficulties cannot readily be resolved;
- avoid allowing personal disagreements to unnecessarily affect other volunteers or the wider work of the Society;
- show patience towards people who are learning, developing confidence or approaching a task differently from themselves;

- remember that everybody volunteering at the Institute has chosen to give something of themselves towards a shared purpose.

Volunteers do not need to become close friends in order to work well together. They should, however, be able to expect from one another the respect, consideration and goodwill necessary to make volunteering a positive experience.

Guiding Principle

Volunteers support volunteers: we contribute most effectively when we help create the conditions in which those around us can contribute too.

6. Conduct Towards Employees and Committee Members

Volunteers, employees and members of the Management Committee undertake different responsibilities within the Society, but all contribute towards its shared purpose.

Volunteers should treat employees and Committee Members with the same dignity, courtesy and respect expected in their relationships with fellow volunteers, while recognising and respecting the particular responsibilities entrusted to them.

Volunteers should:

- cooperate constructively with employees and Committee Members in carrying out the Society's work;
- respect reasonable instructions or guidance given by someone authorised to provide them;
- value the knowledge, experience and contribution of employees and Committee Members without assuming that responsibility or position makes any individual personally more important than another;
- raise questions where they are uncertain about an instruction, responsibility or way of working rather than remaining unsure or proceeding unsafely;
- respect appropriate boundaries between voluntary, employed and governance responsibilities;
- avoid placing employees or individual Committee Members in unnecessarily difficult positions by expecting them to make decisions outside their authority;
- communicate concerns, disagreements or suggestions respectfully and through appropriate channels;
- recognise that employees and Committee Members should themselves demonstrate the standards of conduct expected within the Society;
- contribute to a culture in which volunteers, employees and Committee Members regard themselves as different contributors to the same shared endeavour.

Volunteers should feel able to ask questions, offer ideas and respectfully challenge something they believe may be mistaken. Respect for responsibility does not require unquestioning agreement.

Guiding Principle

Different responsibilities require different forms of authority and expertise, but every person contributing to the Society deserves the same fundamental respect.

7. Conduct Towards Members, Visitors and Other Users

Members, visitors and other users of Shildon Railway Institute should experience the Society as a welcoming, respectful and inclusive place.

Volunteers often contribute directly to that experience. Their conduct may influence how someone perceives not only the individual volunteer, but the Institute as a whole.

Volunteers should:

- welcome members, visitors and other users with courtesy, friendliness and respect;
- treat people fairly and without inappropriate discrimination or favouritism;
- be patient and helpful where someone requires information, assistance or reassurance;
- respect people's privacy, dignity and personal boundaries;
- communicate calmly and respectfully, including when responding to questions, criticism or frustration;
- avoid making assumptions about people based upon their background, appearance, circumstances or familiarity with the Institute;
- seek assistance where a request or situation falls beyond their knowledge, responsibility or confidence rather than feeling obliged to resolve everything themselves;
- avoid making commitments or representations on behalf of the Society unless authorised to do so;
- respond appropriately to concerns about safety, safeguarding, behaviour or wellbeing and refer them through the appropriate Society arrangements;
- remember that even brief interactions can influence whether someone feels comfortable, valued and inclined to return.

Volunteers are not expected to tolerate abusive, threatening or otherwise unacceptable behaviour from members, visitors or other users. Where such situations arise, they should seek appropriate support rather than feeling that their voluntary role requires them to manage the situation alone.

Guiding Principle

Every interaction is an opportunity to help someone feel that they are welcome at the Institute.

8. Looking After the Institute and its Resources

Shildon Railway Institute, its building, collections, equipment and other resources exist because successive generations have created, acquired, maintained and cared for them. Today's volunteers share in the responsibility of looking after those resources so that they can continue to benefit the people who use the Institute now and those who will follow.

Stewardship does not mean that every volunteer is responsible for everything. It means taking reasonable care of the things we use, respecting the responsibilities of those entrusted with their management and drawing attention to problems when we notice them.

Volunteers should:

- treat the Institute's building, furnishings, equipment, collections and other property with reasonable care and respect;
- use equipment and resources only for appropriate purposes and in accordance with any relevant instructions, training or restrictions;
- avoid undertaking tasks involving equipment, materials or areas of the building for which they do not have appropriate knowledge, permission or confidence;
- take particular care when working with historic objects, documents, photographs, books and other material entrusted to the Society's collections;
- report damage, deterioration, faults, hazards or other concerns when they become aware of them rather than assuming somebody else will do so;
- use supplies, utilities and other Society resources thoughtfully and avoid unnecessary waste;
- respect areas, equipment, records or materials to which access is restricted;
- return equipment, tools, documents and other resources appropriately after use so that they remain available to others;
- take reasonable care of keys, access devices, passwords or other means of accessing Society premises, systems or resources entrusted to them;
- not remove, borrow, lend, dispose of or make personal use of Society property without appropriate permission;
- handle Society money or financial resources only where authorised to do so and in accordance with the appropriate arrangements;
- seek advice before taking action where they are uncertain about the appropriate care, use, movement or disposal of something belonging to or held by the Society;
- recognise that caring for the Institute also means helping to keep its spaces welcoming, safe and ready for the people who use them.

Volunteers are encouraged to take pride in the Institute and to notice the things around them. Looking after the Society is often expressed through small acts: putting something back where it belongs, reporting a leaking tap, noticing deterioration in an old photograph, switching something off when it is no longer needed, or helping prepare a room for whoever will use it next.

No volunteer should feel expected to repair, move, clean, operate or otherwise deal with something that they believe may be unsafe or beyond their knowledge or ability. Identifying a problem and bringing it to the attention of an appropriate person is itself a valuable act of stewardship.

Guiding Principle

We care for what has been entrusted to us so that others may continue to use, enjoy and build upon it.

9. Personal Conduct and Integrity

Volunteers are trusted to contribute to the Society in ways that may bring them into contact with its people, premises, information, resources and activities. That trust should be treated with care.

Integrity does not require perfection. It means seeking to act honestly, responsibly and in good faith; recognising the effect our actions can have upon others; and being willing to ask for guidance, acknowledge mistakes and put matters right where reasonably possible.

Volunteers should:
- act honestly, fairly and in good faith in matters relating to their voluntary role;
- behave in a way that respects the values, purposes and reputation of the Society;
- use the opportunities, access and information arising from their voluntary role for legitimate Society purposes rather than inappropriate personal advantage;
- be open about any personal interest, relationship or circumstance that could reasonably affect, or appear to affect, their judgement when volunteering;
- avoid seeking or accepting inappropriate personal benefits, favours, gifts or advantages arising from their voluntary role;
- respect appropriate personal and professional boundaries in their relationships with fellow volunteers, employees, members, visitors and others;
- avoid using their involvement with the Society to exercise inappropriate influence or authority over others;
- represent their own knowledge, experience and abilities honestly and avoid undertaking responsibilities for which particular competence, training or authorisation is required unless they possess it;
- distinguish between expressing a personal opinion and speaking on behalf of the Society;
- not make commitments, promises or representations on behalf of the Society unless authorised to do so;
- exercise care when referring publicly to the Society, including through social media, recognising that others may associate their conduct or comments with the Institute;
- be honest when they do not know something and seek advice rather than feeling obliged to provide an answer;
- acknowledge mistakes where they occur and take reasonable steps to correct them or seek assistance;
- respect the legitimate responsibilities and decisions of others while remaining willing to raise questions or concerns appropriately;
- conduct themselves in a way that justifies the confidence placed in them as a volunteer of the Society.

Volunteers should not be expected to anticipate every circumstance in which a question of personal conduct might arise. Where the right course of action is unclear, asking for advice is itself a responsible response.

Nor should an honest mistake or error of judgement automatically be regarded as a failure of integrity. What matters is how someone responds: whether they are open about what has happened, willing to listen and learn, and prepared to help put matters right where they reasonably can.

Guiding Principle

Integrity means seeking to do the right thing even when no rule tells us exactly what to do.

10. Safety, Wellbeing and Safeguarding

Everyone contributing to Shildon Railway Institute shares responsibility for helping create an environment in which people can participate safely and with dignity.

Volunteers should take reasonable care of their own health, safety and wellbeing and consider how their actions may affect others. They should also recognise that some situations require particular knowledge, responsibility or procedure and that asking for help or passing a concern to an appropriate person is often the correct response.

Volunteers should:

- follow the Society's health, safety and safeguarding policies, procedures and reasonable instructions;
- take reasonable care of themselves and others while undertaking voluntary activities;
- avoid undertaking a task they believe to be unsafe or for which they do not have the necessary knowledge, training, equipment or confidence;
- use equipment, materials and facilities safely and only where appropriately authorised or competent to do so;
- report accidents, near misses, hazards, unsafe conditions or other safety concerns through the appropriate arrangements;
- take concerns about the safety or wellbeing of another person seriously;
- treat children, adults at risk and others with appropriate dignity, respect and consideration;
- maintain appropriate boundaries in their relationships with people they encounter through volunteering;
- recognise that safeguarding concerns should be reported rather than personally investigated;
- share safeguarding information only with those who have a legitimate need to receive it;
- seek guidance promptly if they are uncertain how to respond to a safety, wellbeing or safeguarding concern;
- recognise their own reasonable limits and ask for assistance rather than feeling obliged to manage a difficult situation alone;
- cooperate with measures introduced by the Society to protect people's health, safety and wellbeing.

Where someone appears to be in immediate danger, volunteers should take reasonable steps to obtain appropriate assistance without placing themselves or others at unnecessary risk. Volunteers are encouraged to look out for one another. A supportive volunteering culture includes noticing when somebody may be struggling, offering reasonable help and creating an environment in which people feel able to say when they need support.

No volunteer is expected to become a safety specialist or safeguarding investigator simply by volunteering. Their responsibility is to act sensibly, follow the Society's arrangements, recognise concerns within the limits of their knowledge and ensure that those concerns reach the people equipped to deal with them.

Guiding Principle

Looking after one another means taking safety and wellbeing seriously, recognising concerns and knowing when to seek help.

11. Confidentiality and Responsible Use of Information

Through their involvement with the Society, volunteers may sometimes have access to information about members, fellow volunteers, employees, visitors, activities or the Society itself that is personal, sensitive or confidential.

Being trusted with information brings a responsibility to handle it thoughtfully. Volunteers should respect people's privacy and recognise that information learned through volunteering should not automatically be treated as theirs to share.

Volunteers should:
- respect information identified as confidential or which they could reasonably understand to be private or sensitive;
- handle personal information about members, volunteers, employees, visitors and others with care;

- access records, documents, systems or information only where this is appropriate to their voluntary role;
- use information obtained through volunteering only for legitimate Society purposes;
- avoid discussing personal, sensitive or confidential matters with people who have no proper need to know about them;
- take reasonable care when handling paper records, electronic information, photographs, correspondence and other material containing personal or sensitive information;
- exercise particular care when discussing Society matters in public places, informal social settings, online or through social media;
- respect information entrusted to the Society by partner organisations and other third parties;
- avoid using information gained through volunteering for inappropriate personal benefit or advantage;
- return, store or dispose of records and information in accordance with the Society's arrangements;
- seek guidance where they are uncertain whether information can appropriately be shared;
- report the loss, accidental disclosure or inappropriate use of personal, sensitive or confidential information promptly so that appropriate action can be taken.

Confidentiality should not prevent a volunteer from raising a genuine concern about safety, safeguarding, wrongdoing or inappropriate behaviour. Such information should be shared through the appropriate Society arrangements rather than unnecessarily disclosed more widely.

Where a volunteer makes an honest mistake in handling information, they should report it rather than attempt to conceal it. Promptly acknowledging an error may allow its consequences to be reduced and enables the Society to learn from what has happened.

Guiding Principle

When someone entrusts us with information, we should treat it with the same care and respect that we would hope others would show towards information about us.

12. Reliability, Communication and Asking for Help

Volunteering is freely given, and the Society recognises that volunteers have lives, responsibilities and circumstances beyond the Institute. At the same time, volunteering often involves working alongside other people who may reasonably rely upon one another to fulfil things they have agreed to do.

Being a reliable volunteer does not mean never encountering difficulties or always being available. It means taking commitments seriously, communicating when circumstances change and asking for help when it is needed.

Volunteers should:
- take reasonable care to fulfil tasks, activities or responsibilities they have agreed to undertake;
- be realistic about the time, skills and commitment they are able to offer and avoid feeling pressured to take on more than they can reasonably manage;
- arrive at agreed times where their presence is important to an activity or to other people, or communicate as soon as reasonably possible if they are unable to do so;
- let an appropriate person know where circumstances mean that an agreed task or commitment cannot be completed as expected;
- provide reasonable notice when they wish to reduce, change or end a regular volunteering commitment where this is possible;
- ask questions when they are uncertain rather than feeling that they should already know the answer;

- seek guidance, training or practical help where a task is unfamiliar or beyond their present knowledge or confidence;
- be willing to say when they believe they have taken on too much or need additional support;
- communicate difficulties early enough, where reasonably possible, for others to help or make alternative arrangements;
- share relevant information with other volunteers, employees or Committee Members where this is necessary for people to work effectively together;
- avoid making commitments on behalf of other volunteers without their agreement;
- respect the time and commitments of others by providing information, completing agreed actions and responding to reasonable requests in a timely way;
- help create an environment in which asking for assistance is regarded as responsible behaviour rather than a sign of inadequacy.

The Society recognises that circumstances sometimes change unexpectedly. Illness, caring responsibilities, work, family life and other demands may affect someone's ability to volunteer. Volunteers should not feel guilty for circumstances beyond their reasonable control, but should communicate where others may be depending upon them.

Similarly, volunteers are not expected to continue indefinitely with a role that no longer suits them. Interests, circumstances and confidence change. Where possible, the Society would rather help someone find a different way to contribute than have them continue unhappily because they feel obliged to do so.

Asking for help is an important part of volunteering well. Nobody should feel that admitting uncertainty, lack of experience or difficulty will diminish the value of their contribution. Recognising when we need the knowledge, skills or support of somebody else is part of working effectively together.

Guiding Principle

Reliability does not mean always being available or never needing help; it means being considerate of those who rely upon us and communicating honestly when circumstances change.

13. Raising Concerns, Mistakes and Learning

A healthy volunteering culture depends upon people feeling able to speak openly when something concerns them, acknowledge when something has gone wrong and contribute to making things better.

Volunteers should be encouraged to raise genuine questions or concerns without fear of embarrassment, hostility or disadvantage. Concerns raised early can often prevent relatively small difficulties from becoming larger problems.

Volunteers should:
- raise concerns about behaviour, safety, safeguarding, working practices or other matters affecting the Society through an appropriate person or process;
- speak up where something does not seem right, even where they are uncertain whether it represents a serious problem;
- raise concerns honestly and responsibly, distinguishing as far as reasonably possible between matters they have observed themselves and information they have heard from others;
- treat someone who raises a concern with respect and avoid dismissing, ridiculing or disadvantaging them for having spoken up in good faith;
- listen constructively when somebody raises a concern about their own actions or behaviour;

- be willing to acknowledge mistakes and take reasonable steps to correct them where possible;
- apologise where their words or actions have unnecessarily hurt, inconvenienced or affected another person;
- share mistakes or problems where doing so may help prevent them recurring or enable others to learn;
- distinguish between an honest mistake, a difference of opinion and behaviour that may require more serious attention;
- seek help where a disagreement or difficulty cannot readily be resolved between those involved;
- cooperate honestly and respectfully where a concern needs to be considered through a more formal Society process;
- respect the privacy and dignity of everybody involved while a concern is being considered;
- recognise that serious concerns involving safeguarding, safety, unlawful activity or significant misconduct should be referred through the appropriate arrangements rather than dealt with informally where this would be inappropriate.

Where an ordinary disagreement or misunderstanding arises, volunteers should be encouraged, where they feel comfortable and it is appropriate to do so, to communicate respectfully with one another and seek an early resolution. Sometimes a conversation, clarification or apology is all that is needed to restore a positive working relationship.

Nobody is expected to get everything right. Volunteering frequently involves learning new things, trying unfamiliar tasks and working with people who may approach situations differently. Honest mistakes should therefore normally be approached with openness, proportionate response and a willingness to learn.

This does not mean that all behaviour should be excused as a mistake. Deliberate wrongdoing, serious misconduct, repeated unacceptable behaviour or situations in which somebody may be at risk require an appropriate response through the Society's relevant policies and procedures.

Volunteers who are uncertain about whether or how to raise a concern should be encouraged to ask for guidance. It is better to seek advice about something that ultimately proves not to require action than to remain silent about something that does.

Guiding Principle

When something goes wrong, our first priorities should be to understand what has happened, protect those affected, put things right where we can and learn for the future.

14. How this Code is Applied

This Code is intended primarily to help volunteers understand and contribute to the culture and standards of conduct expected within Shildon Railway Institute. Its purpose is to support positive volunteering relationships rather than to create a disciplinary system.

Where concerns arise about a volunteer's conduct, the Society should seek to respond fairly, proportionately and with regard to the circumstances of the situation and the wellbeing of those involved.

Where appropriate, relatively minor concerns, misunderstandings or isolated lapses in judgement should normally be approached through respectful discussion. Volunteers should be given reasonable opportunity to understand what has caused concern, explain their perspective and, where appropriate, reflect, learn and put matters right.

An honest mistake, difference of opinion or isolated lapse in judgement should not automatically be treated as misconduct.

Where concerns are more serious, persistent or cannot reasonably be resolved informally, they should be considered through the Society's appropriate policies and procedures. Volunteers should normally be informed of concerns relating to their conduct and given a reasonable opportunity to respond before decisions affecting their continued involvement are made.

In some circumstances, particularly where there may be an immediate concern relating to safety, safeguarding, serious misconduct or the wellbeing of others, the Society may need to restrict or suspend a person's voluntary activity while the matter is considered. Such action should be regarded as a protective measure rather than, in itself, a conclusion that wrongdoing has occurred.

Where difficulties cannot reasonably be resolved, or where conduct is fundamentally incompatible with the standards or responsibilities of the Society, the Society may ultimately decide that a volunteering arrangement should be changed or brought to an end.

Any such decision should be made through an appropriate and authorised process, taking account of the circumstances and treating the people involved with dignity and fairness.

Equally, a volunteer remains free to bring their own volunteering commitment to an end. Wherever possible, difficulties should be discussed before that point is reached, as a change of role, additional support or a different way of contributing may sometimes provide a better solution.

Nothing within this Code should prevent or discourage the appropriate reporting of safeguarding concerns, unsafe practices, unlawful activity, serious misconduct or other wrongdoing.

The application of this Code should itself demonstrate the standards it seeks to encourage: respect, fairness, openness, proportionality and good judgement.

Guiding Principle

When concerns arise, our aim should be to respond fairly and proportionately: supporting improvement where this is possible, protecting people where this is necessary, and recognising when a volunteering relationship can no longer reasonably continue.

15. Related Documents

This Code forms part of the Society's wider framework of governance, volunteering and organisational policies and should be read alongside other documents relevant to a volunteer's role and activities.

Key related documents include:
- the Society's Governance Philosophy;
- the Volunteer Agreement;
- the Management Committee Code of Conduct;
- the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy;
- the Safeguarding Policy;
- the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy;
- the Site Security Policy;
- the Disputes & Complaints Procedure; and

- any other policies, procedures or guidance relevant to the volunteer's particular activities or responsibilities.

Volunteers are not expected to memorise every Society policy or procedure. They should, however, be made aware of those relevant to their activities, know how to access them and feel able to ask for guidance when they are uncertain about what applies.

Where another Society policy or procedure establishes specific requirements for a particular situation, those requirements should be followed alongside the general standards of conduct described within this Code.

Guiding Principle

Good volunteering does not depend upon knowing every rule, but upon understanding the principles that guide us and knowing where to seek guidance when we need it.

16. Document Review

This Code should normally be reviewed in accordance with the Society's agreed governance review arrangements and sooner where changes in legislation, guidance, Society activities or experience indicate that revision may be necessary.

Review should consider not only whether the Code remains technically current, but whether it continues to describe clearly and usefully the volunteering culture and standards of conduct the Society wishes to sustain.

Feedback from volunteers, employees, Committee Members and experience arising from the practical application of the Code should inform its review.

Where experience identifies a difficulty, the purpose of review should not automatically be to create an additional rule. Consideration should first be given to whether greater clarity, better communication, improved support or appropriate guidance would provide a more effective response.

The Code should remain sufficiently clear to provide meaningful expectations while retaining enough flexibility to allow people to exercise reasonable judgement in circumstances that cannot all be anticipated in advance.

Guiding Principle

We review this Code not simply to keep it up to date, but to ensure that it continues to help people volunteer well together.

18. My Commitment

In choosing to volunteer with Shildon Railway Institute, I am choosing to become part of a community built upon voluntary contribution, mutual respect and shared care for something that matters.

I will treat the people I encounter through volunteering with dignity, kindness and respect.

I will value what others contribute and remember that different people bring different strengths, experiences and perspectives.

I will take seriously the things I agree to do, communicate honestly when circumstances change and ask for help when I need it.

I will care for the Institute, its people, its resources and the trust placed in me.

I will speak up when something concerns me and listen when others raise concerns with me.

I will not expect myself or others to be perfect. When I make an honest mistake, I will acknowledge it, seek to put things right where I can and learn from the experience.

I will respect the responsibilities entrusted to others while remembering that every person who contributes to the Society is deserving of equal dignity and respect.

I will help create space for others to contribute, develop confidence and find their own place within the Society.

Above all, I will remember that volunteers support volunteers, and I will seek through my own contribution to leave both the Institute and the people around me stronger for my having been part of it.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____