

## **ASHRIDGE ESTATE**

### **VOLUNTEER RANGER - ROLE GUIDELINES**

This guidance has been produced to assist Volunteer Rangers as to the specific type of activities to undertake, the repairs and improvements which can be tackled, and what to do with issues. If in any doubt about any of these factors please contact Ed Bennett, or another member of the Ranger team ☎ 01442 841800 ✉ [Edward.Bennett@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Edward.Bennett@nationaltrust.org.uk)

The basic core of the role is set out in the Volunteer Ranger Role Description. Detailed notes on specific situations encountered in the course of the role are provided below.

### **WHAT SORT OF ESTATE CHECKS SHOULD THE VOLUNTEER RANGER DO?**

#### **A. TRAIL CONDITION**

Trailside vegetation – a key part of the role is to check and cut back trailside vegetation that is growing towards, or blocking, the paths. Paths need to be kept to a 'reasonable width', normally a minimum of 1.5 metres wide for footpaths and 2.5 metres wide for bridleways. Any small pieces of vegetation growing into the path should be cut back away from the path if it is safe to do so. Do not tackle large branches alone, and for high pruning (i.e. vegetation at head height or above) see comments below and do not proceed alone with this. If large sections of a path have become overgrown it may be quicker to report this to the Ranger team who can consider the use of machinery to cut back vegetation to clear the route.

Vegetation around waymarkers – light vegetation that is blocking the view of a waymarker should be cut back. The comments above about heavy or high pruning apply here too.

High pruning – in addition to keeping a reasonable path width we must also keep a suitable height clear. For footpaths this will normally be 2.5 metres high, and 3.5m high for bridleways. This work requires special equipment such as a hard hat and pruning pole – do not tackle this alone yourself! Report it to the Ranger team via the Volunteer Ranger Reporting Form.

Footpath condition – we have an obligation to maintain trails in suitable condition. This will vary depending on the nature of the route and the location. Routes used by mobility vehicles, buggies etc will have to be of a different nature to a remote area of footpath. Consider the path surface, blockages, potholes, rabbit holes etc. Please report problems to the Ranger team.

#### **TRAIL CONDITION ISSUES:**

1. Is the path wide enough? What is encroaching – bramble, tree branch etc?
2. Is the path clearance high enough? Nature and number of branches causing issue?
3. Trail surface – major holes, blockages etc.
4. Fallen tree over path? How big is the tree, trunk width and height?
5. How long is the length of path affected?

Please **send a photo** of the issue if possible, along with the Reporting Form

## **B. GATES & FENCES**

Gates – these should consist of solid gate posts, an easy to open handle or latch, and should swing closed under their own weight and be self-latching. This is absolutely crucial in areas where livestock is present on either side of the gate. There is a balance to be struck on bridlevays where the gate can swing shut and bash into the horses legs if the closure is too rapid. Please report any issues to the Ranger team via the Reporting Form.

Fences – please report any damaged fencing to the Ranger team giving detail on location and the nature and extent of damage e.g. is the damage to fence posts, rails, stock mesh, and how extensive.

### **GATES & FENCE ISSUES:**

1. Closure - does gate swing shut from both sides?
2. Gate damage - gate posts loose, rotten, damaged?
3. Fenceline damages – how serious is the issue? Large hole, or just a small issue?
4. Are there livestock on either side of the gate/fence?

***If there is an immediate risk of livestock escape – please call Estate office/Duty Ranger ASAP.***

## **C. WAYMARKING ISSUES**

Waymarkers are crucial to mark trails for all users and show the status of a path e.g. statutory path/bridleway, or permitted bridleway. The status of paths is shown in the Ashridge Yellow map which will be distributed to Volunteer Rangers. Please check for:

- Condition of waymarker posts
- Condition of signs (broken, cracked, faded, nails missing etc.)
- Adequacy of signs to direct users

All gates and paths are numbered and are shown on the detailed Estate Zones mapping.

## **D. CAR PARK ISSUES**

Report issues in car parks including:

- Fly-tipping / dumped vehicles
- Broken stud posts
- Other damage to car park e.g. signage etc.

## **REPORTING OF ISSUES**

Please report to the Ranger team by emailing all of the five Rangers below in a group email. We will assess the required work, prioritise this into our work plan and rectify issues.

*Please send a photo of the issue with the Reporting Form if possible.*

Surveys – surveys such as archaeology, bird or flowers are considered additional to the core Volunteer Ranger role, and will be coordinated separately through the Ranger team. Volunteer Rangers will have the opportunity to be involved in some survey work if they are keen to do so.

## **E. SPEAKING TO THE PUBLIC AND DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

Part of the Volunteer Ranger role is to be an advocate and face for the National Trust, and to speak to, and assist, visitors as appropriate. This can sometimes entail tackling troublesome situations. The first thing to always consider when deciding on the appropriate action is your own personal safety. Never put yourself at risk. The Volunteer Ranger Incident Guidelines document gives more details.

## **WHO TO CONTACT**

Emergency situations (e.g. deer poaching, theft, road traffic accidents, dangerous crimes etc) – call Emergency Services on 999 immediately.

Anti-social activity – If the law is being broken then contact 999 for emergencies and 101 for non-emergency police matters. If byelaws are being broken, or you are unsure how to proceed call the Estate Office on 01442 841800 or the Duty Ranger on 07771 974255 during normal office hours.

## **REPORTING ISSUES**

Use the Reporting Form plus send a photo of the issue if possible - email all of:

Edward.bennett@nationaltrust.org.uk

Emily.smith1@nationaltrust.org.uk

Matthew.bond@nationaltrust.org.uk

Christine.hardy@nationaltrust.org.uk

Caleb.newton@nationaltrust.org.uk