Conservation work party FAQ

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What conservation work can I volunteer for?

We run scheduled conservation work parties between March and October each year. Additionally, ad hoc work takes place every month at Glenlude, which you may get involved with. Check the current work party schedule to see what’s happening when and where. For more information, contact our conservation volunteer co-ordinator Sandy Maxwell (see below).

How do I book a place?

Email our conservation volunteer co-ordinator, Sandy Maxwell, or call him on 0141 576 6663 or 07766 380663. Remember to state which work party you’re interested in.

Sandy will book your place and send you an acknowledgement. He’ll try to answer any specific questions that you have.

Around six or seven weeks before the work party, Sandy will email out further details. This includes a list of attendees with contact emails in case you want to arrange to car share.
The details will include the meeting point for the first day (usually at 9am). He may also suggest appropriate wild camping sites or other accommodation in the area.

**What happens if I can’t make it?**
You are free to pull out at any stage. Please give as much notice as you can so we can plan the work and bring the right number of tools. Most locations for the work parties have little or no mobile coverage. If you’re not at the advertised starting place at the arranged time, we assume you will not be joining the work party.

**How old do I have to be?**
A parent or guardian must be with you if you are under 18.

**Can I bring a group?**
Most people come on their own, as a couple, or with a small group of friends. We discourage groups of more than five or six from any one organisation or company. The John Muir Trust can organise corporate work parties. Please get in touch with the fundraising department in Edinburgh about corporate support.

**How do I get there and where do I stay?**
You arrange your own accommodation and travel. Around half of our volunteers opt for wild camping and half for local B&Bs, hotels or hostels if they can’t go home each night.

The exception is Li & Coire Dhorrcail on Knoydart where wild camping is the only option. For information on wild camping in Scotland see SNH’s wild camping guide – download pdf here http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A342214.pdf

Some locations support camping close to your car and camper vans. Most of the sites are not close to regular campsites with amenities. Ben Nevis is the one exception.

Social events are not arranged in the evening, but campfires and tea breaks are good opportunities to get to know people.

**How does an average day run?**
We tend to work from 9am to 5pm depending on the weather, daylight and how far away the actual work site is.

We try to vary the work so that you can experience a range of tasks and learn about different types of conservation management.

**How fit do I need to be?**
Fitness requirements vary but you will need a reasonable level of hill walking fitness for most work parties.

The work is often quite physical, although tasks ranging from hard graft to those needing a sensitive touch. There is usually something for everyone.

Repairing a path may involve moving large boulders, which is hard work. But we also need to landscape the surrounding vegetation, which is easier.
Work at Ben Nevis usually requires a climb to the summit before starting work. Beach cleaning activities are often more relaxed. If you’re unsure, please get in touch.

Who comes along?
Most people are John Muir Trust members. You don’t have to be a member but we hope that you’ll join, and we do ask for a donation from non-members.

We welcome people of all ages (but you must have an adult with you if you’re under 18). Most people are walkers or climbers keen to give something back for the enjoyment that they have had from wild places.

Do you ever cancel due to bad weather?
Weather in Scotland is unpredictable. It can also be very localised. We rarely cancel a work party in advance. In the event of bad weather, we may cut the work party short. Participants can leave at any point as long as they inform the work party supervisor of their plans.

What clothing and equipment should I bring?
We supply tools and safety equipment like work gloves. You should bring clothing for all weathers (often on the same day!). Like any trip out into the wild, it is worth checking the weather to help you plan what you bring. Look at sites such as the Mountain Weather Information service.

The work is physical and can have an impact on your clothing. While you need good outdoor gear it is worth bringing old gear you don’t mind getting muddy and torn. This is particularly true if you’re doing something like old fence removal.

Walking boots are fine but wellingtons are often useful once we have reached the work site. Bring your own first aid kit, although there will Trust staff trained in first aid and carry group kits.

Ticks and insects
Midges are present for large parts of the year and you should bring midge nets and/or repellent. You should also ensure your tetanus injection is up to date.

Remember to check for ticks during and after your time on a work party. Read advice about Lyme disease and how to remove ticks on the BADA website - http://www.bada-uk.org/top-tips - (page active until 31 December 2015)

Can I use a work party as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Gold residential?
Our work parties do not meet the criteria for the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award residential section. You can use a work party for some of the challenges in the John Muir Award.

Our partners, the Outward Bound Trust and the YHA, offer Duke of Edinburgh Gold residential opportunities.

Can you send me updates on work parties throughout the year?
If you’re interested in receiving updates about our Conservation Work Parties, please email Sandy Maxwell or call him on 0141 576 6663 or 07766 380 663. You can contact him by mail at Top Right, 69 Hyndland Street, Glasgow G11 5PS.
Sandy also maintains a list of people interested in receiving emails about extra work parties at Glenlude. Liz Auty, East Schiehallion manager, maintains a list of people interested in extra work at East Schiehallion. Email Liz

How can I find out about previous Trust work parties?
If you have not been along before have a look at the pictures on the Volunteer page of our website. You may also read reports from previous years to get a flavour of work parties.

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