

# POLICY COMPENDIUM

The Meadow Orchard Project

issued by: Trustee board

Version: 171025-1



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## Introduction

### Purpose of the Policy Compendium

- This compendium brings together the key governance, conduct, and operational policies that guide the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) under [clause 26 of the constitution](#).
- It exists to ensure that our community acts lawfully, transparently, and in line with our ethos of earth care, people care, and fair share.
- Each policy sets out the expectations, responsibilities, and procedures that help trustees, members, and volunteers work safely, respectfully, and effectively together.
- Together they form MOP's internal framework for sound decision-making, accountability, and community wellbeing.

### Scope and Application

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- All trustees, members, volunteers, contractors, and visitors are expected to follow these policies when engaging with MOP's activities, site, or communications.
- Trustees hold ultimate responsibility for ensuring that policies are implemented, reviewed, and consistent with current law and the MOP Constitution.
- Where appropriate, policies also apply to partners, event organisers, and hirers using the site or facilities under MOP's authority.

## Legal and Governance Framework

### The compendium supports compliance with:

- The Meadow Orchard Constitution, which defines our charitable purposes and trustee duties;
- Relevant UK laws including the Charities Act 2011, Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR), Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Safeguarding and Fire Safety legislation;
- Charity Commission guidance on governance, conflicts of interest, public benefit, and protecting people from harm.
- These policies are designed to meet the standard of prudence and good faith expected of trustees under charity law, while remaining practical and proportionate for a small, volunteer-run organisation.

### Each policy includes:

- Its purpose and scope;
- The legal duties or governance standards it supports;
- Expectations and responsibilities for trustees, members, and volunteers;
- Practical procedures; and
- Oversight and review arrangements.

All policies should be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if law, Charity Commission guidance, or operational needs change.

Amendments and approval dates are recorded alongside the policy in this document.

Members are notified of any substantial changes and can access the latest version of this compendium via the trustees.



## Decision-Making and Meetings Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

This policy explains how the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) makes decisions in line with its Constitution and sociocratic practice. It applies to all decision-making forums - General Meetings, Trustee Meetings, Subgroups, and Working or Project Groups - whenever decisions are made in MOP's name.

It ensures decisions are:

- Legally valid under charity law and the Constitution;
- Inclusive and participatory;
- Transparent and accountable; and
- Consistent across all forums.
- This policy bridges MOP's constitutional framework with its sociocratic principles, ensuring that shared leadership operates within charity law.

### 2. Legal and Governance Context

This policy implements and clarifies constitutional provisions, including:

Area	Relevant Clauses	Reflected Here
Member decisions	Clauses 10 & 11	Resolutions, reasoned objections, quorum, voting
Trustee decisions	Clauses 12, 17 & 19	Collective duty, majority rule, written resolutions
Delegation to subgroups	Clause 18	Delegated powers, reporting, oversight

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Record keeping	Clause 24	Minutes, reasons, and attendance
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## 3. Decision-Making Pathways

When proposing a change to how something is run, a new initiative, a policy update, or a collective decision - it should come in the form of a resolution and brought to the appropriate decision-making forum.

### 3.1 Principles

- All decision-making forums must be inclusive, participatory, safe, and accessible.
- Proposals should be shared early, discussed collaboratively, and shaped into resolutions adhering to the Resolution Structure and Content Policy.
- All decisions must be recorded, time-bound, and within delegated authority.

### 3.2 Decision-Making Forums

Each forum has distinct powers and responsibilities under the Constitution. When bringing a resolution, match it to a forum with the appropriate level of authority.

#### a) General Meetings (Members)

- For constitutional or strategic decisions, elections, and reports.
- Requires at least 10% of members to co-sign a resolution (Clause 10(3)(d)).
- Tip: Use this route for major proposals that affect everyone.

#### b) Trustee Meetings

- For governance, finance, compliance, and oversight.
- Trustees may consider member resolutions at their discretion.
- Tip: Submit here if your proposal spans multiple subgroups or has legal implications.

#### c) Subgroups

- For operational decisions within delegated powers (Clause 18).
- Must record decisions and share with trustees.
- New or altered subgroups require trustee approval.
- Escalate any significant, financial, or reputational matters.

#### d) Working or Project Groups

- For focused initiatives under a subgroup.
- Informal but accountable.
- Major proposals return to the parent subgroup for consent.

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## e) Written Resolutions

- For urgent, time-sensitive matters between meetings (Clauses 10(3) & 17).
- Member written resolutions require 10% support to circulate.
- Use only for clear, time-bound matters, not as a substitute for discussion.

### 3.3 Notice periods

Forum	Minimum Notice	Circulated By
General Meeting	21 days	Trustees / Secretary
Trustee Meeting	Set by trustees	Chair / Secretary
Subgroup	Set by subgroup	Subgroup lead
Written Resolution	28 days limit	Trustees or members

## 4. Decision-Making Process

### 4.1 Sociocratic Consent

- Decisions move forward when there are no reasoned objections that would prevent them from safely advancing MOP's aims.
- Consent seeks a workable, safe-to-try outcome, not perfection.
- Everyone is responsible for raising valid objections and supporting decisions once made.
- Guiding values: permaculture ethics (i.e. earth care, people care, fair share), inclusion, transparency, equivalence of voice, accountability, and learning

### 4.2 The Sociocratic Cycle

- All forums follow these stages:
  - Stage 1: Agenda Setting: announce items in advance.
  - Stage 2: Proposal & Questions: present the intent and invite short clarifying questions.
  - Stage 3: Consent Round: each participant is asked if they consent, have any objections/"reasoned objections." Silence does not equal consent - explicit confirmation is expected.
  - Stage 4: Integration: If objections arise, the proposal is adapted until concerns are resolved or reasonably narrowed. Consent is confirmed by vote.
  - Stage 5: Recording: note the final resolution, rationale, actions, responsibilities, and review point in the minutes.
- Whether decisions occur in person or online; consent and quorum apply equally.

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## 4.3 Reasoned Objections

Defined in Clause 10(5): a reasoned objection must relate directly to MOP's purposes, law, ethics, or safe functioning.

a) A reasoned objection is only valid if it:

- Relate to a specific resolution in discussion, which has not yet been decided;
- Directly relate to our aims, charitable purposes, legal obligations, ethical commitments, or the practical functioning of the charity;
- Be specific and actionable, clearly identifying a concern; and
- Propose a way the resolution could be improved to address that concern.

Invalid grounds: personal preference or dislike (unless tied to a concrete risk).

b) When a valid reasoned objection is raised:

- The facilitator pauses decision-making.
- The group works together to adjust or clarify the proposal to address the concern.
- If resolution isn't possible within the meeting, the item is postponed until reasonable efforts have been made to integrate feedback.

c) If reasoned objections remain unresolved

- If a valid reasoned objection cannot be reasonably resolved:
  - The decision may proceed to a higher-threshold vote of two-thirds majority of votes cast (Clause 10(5)(c)).
  - Any unresolved reasoned objections must be recorded alongside the final decision for transparency and learning.

## 5. Roles, Expectations, and Shared Responsibility

### 5.1 Key Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Key Duties
Facilitator / Chair	Guide consent rounds; integrate objections; ensure inclusion and respect.
Note-taker / Secretary	Record decisions and actions ("who does what, by when"); circulate and store minutes.
Trustees	Uphold constitutional compliance; oversee delegation; maintain records (Clauses 12, 18, 24).
Subgroup Leads	Keep within remit; report to trustees; maintain communication.

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Members &  
Volunteers

Participate respectfully; uphold sociocratic practice; support decisions once made.

## 5.2 Shared Responsibility and Expectations

- Whether you are a trustee, member, or volunteer, you share responsibility for maintaining process integrity, inclusion, and follow-through.
- Decision-making works best when everyone shares responsibility for a respectful and balanced discussion. If something feels unclear, ask; if a process feels rushed, name it.
- Respect facilitation and the sociocratic cycle. Speak plainly, listen actively, avoid interruption and stay on topic.
- Raise valid objections constructively and help integrate solutions. Support decisions once made, even if you held reservations.
- A decision only exists once agreed in the proper forum and recorded. It moves forward only when consent is clear and responsibility is shared.
- Whenever enacting a decision, stay within agreed boundaries and budgets, and avoid acting alone where possible. Leadership means facilitating shared energy - not ownership. Hand over openly if stepping back.

## 5.3 Oversight, Transparency, and Record-Keeping

- All minutes and formal decisions must be stored in the central digital repository and made available to members on request, subject to data-protection requirements.

# 6. Accountability and Oversight

## 6.1 What Constitutes a Breach

Examples include:

- Treating silence as approval.
- Taking unauthorised or unilateral actions.
- Expanding a project beyond its remit.
- Dominating or derailing meetings.
- Repeatedly raising obstructive objections.
- Failing to report decisions or minutes.

## 6.2 Responses

Responses will be proportionate and may include:

- Reminder or facilitated conversation.
- Coaching or mediation to restore process integrity.
- Referral to the Complaints or Disciplinary Policy for persistent or serious breaches.
- Facilitators may pause meetings to protect safety and process.

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## 7. Review of Policy

This policy shall be reviewed annually, or sooner if governance practice or sociocratic understanding evolves, to ensure continued alignment with the Constitution and Charity Commission guidance.

Change Log:

Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Resolution Structure and Content Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- Resolutions are how the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) turns ideas into, actionable decisions that can be lawfully implemented and tracked.
- This policy explains how Clause 10(6) of the Constitution applies in practice - clarifying what makes a resolution valid and lawful, and what does not. It applies to all resolutions brought to any MOP decision-making forum.
- Procedural guidance on how to raise, circulate, and consent to proposals is contained in the Decision-Making and Meetings Policy.

### 2. Structure & Content

#### 2.1 Guiding Principles

- Draft collectively: Sociocratic practice encourages co-creation. Involve others in the forum early to refine proposals and identify those who will help deliver them.
- Respect accessibility: Use plain language and explain any acronyms or technical terms.
- Use measurable language: Replace vague aims ("improve community links") with tangible actions ("host four open days per year").
- Be distinctive: Resolve one issue at a time and don't group several resolutions together into one.
- Plan integration: Consider how your proposal furthers MOP's charitable purposes and interacts with other policies or subgroups.
- Consider fallback options early: If objections arise, offer practical alternatives that maintain intent while addressing concerns.

#### 2.2 Where possible, resolutions should include:

- Title / ID: Short, descriptive (e.g. "Proposal - Compost Signs") or a unique ID.

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- Background, Purpose & Scope: Why the proposal matters, what it covers, and what it hopes to achieve.
- Implementation & Responsibility: Who will do what, by when.
- Resources & Budget: Money, materials, time, or people required (if applicable).
- Decision Text: The exact wording to be recorded in minutes - phrased as a clear action.

## 2.3 Supplementary Information Required Before Consideration

To ensure proposals are lawful, practical, and properly informed, trustees or facilitators may request additional information in writing before a resolution is accepted onto an agenda or put to consent.

This information helps confirm that:

- the proposal can be implemented lawfully and effectively if approved; and
- all relevant rules, byelaws, and policies are satisfied.

Requests for supplementary information must be reasonable and proportionate to the scale, complexity, and potential impact of the proposal.

Examples of information that may be requested in addition to section 2.2 include:

- A simple budget or itemised expense list, and confirmation of funding source (if applicable).
- A basic implementation plan or task breakdown, including any dependencies and reporting expectations.
- A brief timeline or project schedule
- A summary of risks, impacts, or dependencies
- Site use details for events or activities
- Draft subgroup terms of reference (constitutional requirement)
- Issue or concern details for any motion of no confidence (constitutional requirement)

Such information ensures decisions are grounded in clarity, feasibility, and accountability.

## 3. Resolutions on Policy and Constitutional Changes

Resolutions introducing a new policy, changing an existing policy, or amending the Constitution require full written wording in advance, so members and trustees know exactly what they are voting on.

### 3.1 Policy Proposals

a) A resolution to adopt a new policy, or amend an existing policy, is lawful only if it contains the complete text of the policy or any amendments.

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b) A resolution to amend an existing policy should reference affected clauses, and use the following layout for clarity:

- Additions shown in **bold underline**
- Deletions shown in ~~strike through~~

c) To satisfy Clause 10(6), a valid policy proposal must demonstrate:

- Clear objectives and purpose: Why the policy exists and what it is intended to achieve.
- Defined scope: Who and what the policy applies to, setting its boundaries and authority.
- Realistic and achievable measures: The policy must be practical to implement and not impose unmanageable demands.
- Enforceability: The policy should indicate how compliance will be monitored and what consequences apply if it is not followed.
- Plain, accessible language: It must be clear enough for any member to understand and apply.

Resolutions that only instruct that a policy be “developed”, “reviewed”, or “considered” are not valid resolutions under Clause 10(6). Such motions lack immediate effect and cannot be lawfully passed.

## 3.2 Constitutional Amendments

Constitutional amendments must be drafted with precision, as they alter our legal framework.

a) For a resolution to alter the constitution to be considered, the exact wording of the amendment must be presented in full, referencing the affected clauses - using the following format:

- Additions shown in **bold underline**
- Deletions shown in ~~strike through~~

b) Amendments must remain within MOP’s legal powers and not conflict with the Charities Act 2011 or Charity Commission requirements.

c) The process for making changes to the constitution must adhere to clause [28] (“Amendment of constitution”): circulated to members with the General Meeting Notice (at least 21 days before the meeting), and passed by a 75% majority of votes cast.

## 4. Legal and Governance Foundation

Clause 10(6) of the Constitution provides that a resolution is valid only if it is clear, lawful, and capable of being implemented.

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## 4.1 A resolution is lawful only if it:

- Is stated with sufficient clarity for immediate implementation;
- Can be lawfully given effect within MOP's charitable purposes and powers;
- Is made in good faith, not frivolous, vexatious, or defamatory; and
- Does not breach the Constitution, restrict trustee duties, or expose MOP to undue legal, financial, or reputational risk.

## 4.2 A resolution cannot lawfully be passed if it would:

- Breach charity law or the Constitution;
- Restrict trustees from carrying out their duties under Clause 12 (collective, prudent, and lawful decision-making);
- Commit MOP to an unlawful or discriminatory act;
- Exceed delegated authority;
- Direct trustees or staff to act contrary to their legal or regulatory duties;
- Require delegation of trustee powers beyond what Clause 18 permits;
- Override safeguarding, equality, or data-protection requirements; or
- Expose the Charity to undue risk or liability.

4.3 If trustees determine that a resolution is unlawful or ultra vires (beyond powers), they should invite the proposer(s) to revise and resubmit, with explanation.

## 5. Examples

The following examples illustrate how clarity and legality determine a resolution's validity.

Weak resolution:

- "Improve the signage around the site."

Strong resolution:

- Title: Compost and Entrance Signage Improvement
- Background: Visitors and new volunteers report confusion about facilities.
- Purpose: Enhance accessibility and safety by clearly marking key areas.
- Scope: Install four new weatherproof signs at the main gate, compost toilet, tool shed, and fire pit.
- Resources: £200 from events budget; volunteer installation.
- Implementation: Design by March; install by May. Lead: Events Subgroup.
- Decision Text: Resolved that up to £200 be allocated for design and installation of four signage boards as listed, to be completed by May 2025.
- Risks: Weather damage - use durable materials; confirm placement with Site Subgroup.
- Review: Gather visitor feedback after one month.

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- Links: Health & Safety Policy, Equalities Policy.

Examples of unlawful or invalid resolutions include (not exhaustive):

- A policy instructing that no external audits be permitted.
- A proposal directing trustees to act outside their duties (e.g. ignoring safeguarding or financial obligations).
- Repeated or trivial motions to revisit settled decisions.
- Proposals that single out individuals or include defamatory statements (e.g. “that [named person] be censured for incompetence”).
- Resolutions that require trustees to surrender decision-making authority contrary to Clause 12 and 18.

## 6. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees ensure all adopted resolutions are lawful, prudent, and consistent with MOP's charitable purposes.
- Facilitators ensure that only decision-ready proposals reach the meeting floor.
- Subgroups must record resolutions and report them to trustees in line with Clause 18(5).
- Minutes must include the full resolution text, rationale, and any objections under Clause 24.
- This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if governance practice or charity law changes, to ensure continued compliance with the Constitution and Charity Commission guidance.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Conflict of Interest Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) relies on trust, transparency, and fairness.
- Conflicts of interest can arise when personal interests or loyalties could - or could be seen to - influence decisions made on behalf of the charity. Left unmanaged, they risk damaging trust, undermining decisions, or breaching charity law.
- **Outcome:** To ensure decisions are made solely in MOP's best interests, and that any conflicts are declared, recorded, and managed openly and fairly.
- This policy applies to trustees, members, volunteers, subgroup leads, contractors, partners, and hirers involved in MOP's activities.

### 2. Legal and Governance Framework

This policy is grounded in:

- MOP Constitution - Clause 7 ("Conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalty") and Clause 9(3) ("Duty of members").
- Charity Commission guidance CC29 - trustees must declare and manage conflicts of interest.
- Trustees' fiduciary duties under charity law - to act only in MOP's best interests and avoid situations where personal interests conflict with those of the charity.
- Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy - governs how declarations and registers are securely stored.
- Conflicts of interest are not inherently wrong, but must be identified, declared, and managed transparently.

### 3. Guiding Principles

- Transparency: Declare all potential conflicts early, even if unsure.
- Fairness: Decisions must be free from bias or undue influence.

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- Integrity: No individual should benefit personally from their role beyond legitimate reimbursement or approved purposes.
- Proportionality: Minor or incidental overlaps of interest are managed proportionately, recognising MOP's collaborative, community context.

## 4. Responsibilities

### 4.1 All Trustees, Members, and Volunteers Must:

- Declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflict as soon as it arises.
- Complete an annual declaration of interests and update it as circumstances change.
- Step back from discussions or decisions where a conflict exists.
- Avoid creating or entering into situations where personal, financial, or organisational gain could arise from MOP's activities.

### 4.2 Trustees Must:

- Maintain a register of interests, updated annually and when new interests arise.
- Ensure conflicts are considered at each meeting where decisions are made.
- Record all declarations and actions taken in the minutes (see Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy).
- Where all trustees are conflicted, seek advice from an independent advisor or the Charity Commission before proceeding.

## 5. How It Works in Practice

### 5.1 Identifying and Declaring Conflicts

- A conflict may exist where personal, professional, or organisational interests could influence - or appear to influence - your judgment or actions for MOP.

### 5.2 Common examples include:

- Using MOP's resources (space, materials, volunteer time) for an activity from which you personally earn income.
- Having privileged access to facilities or resources not available to others.
- Being involved in an organisation seeking MOP support, space, or funding.
- Selling, hiring, or lending personal items to MOP.
- Promoting a business or professional service through MOP events.
- Using MOP information for personal or external organisational gain.
- Assessing or awarding contracts, grants, or roles where you or a connected person are applicants.
- Taking part in recruitment or decision-making involving a close friend, family member, or partner.



## 5.3 Declaring and managing conflicts

- Step 1: Declare the conflict as soon as it arises - ideally before discussion begins.
- Step 2: Record the declaration in the meeting minutes and/or register of interests.
- Step 3: Withdraw from the discussion and decision-making on that item.
  - If information is needed from the conflicted person, they may provide it before stepping aside.
- Step 4: The group or trustees assess the severity of the conflict:
  - Minor/manageable: record and proceed with safeguards.
  - Significant: the person withdraws fully.
- Step 5: In all financial or contractual matters, conflicted individuals must withdraw completely from discussion and vote.
- Step 6: The chair or minute-taker ensures actions are properly recorded for audit purposes.

## 5.4 Examples that are not conflicts

- Volunteering time, skills, or labour without payment.
- Using shared site resources under the same conditions as all members.
- Decisions that affect all members equally.
- Raising safety or governance concerns in good faith.
- Reimbursement for legitimate out-of-pocket expenses under the Expense Policy.
- If unsure whether something constitutes a conflict, declare it anyway - the trustees or group will decide whether it requires action.

## 6. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

- All declarations and the register of interests are maintained securely under the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Registers may be reviewed by trustees and made available to members for transparency where appropriate.
- Sensitive information (e.g. medical or personal details) is kept confidential and only shared where necessary for governance purposes.

## 7. Breaches and Non-Compliance

- Failure to declare a known conflict or to comply with this policy may constitute misconduct and be addressed under the Disciplinary Policy.
- Trustees will investigate any such breach and record the outcome in the minutes.
- Where serious, breaches may be reported to the Charity Commission.

## 8. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees hold collective responsibility for ensuring conflicts are declared, managed, and recorded.

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- Members and volunteers must proactively declare their own interests.
- The register of interests is reviewed annually by trustees.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Expense Authorisation Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) is committed to ensuring that all charitable funds are used responsibly, transparently, and solely in pursuit of its charitable purposes.
- This policy sets out how expenses are authorised, recorded, and reimbursed.
- Outcome: to ensure that every expenditure is prudent, accountable, and compliant with MOP's charitable objects and legal duties.
- This policy applies to trustees, members, volunteers, subgroup leads, contractors, partners, and hirers who incur or seek reimbursement of costs on behalf of MOP.
- It should be read alongside the Financial Procedures, Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy, and Disciplinary Policy.

### 2. Legal and Governance Framework

This policy is based on:

- MOP Constitution - trustees must safeguard the Charity's assets and act in its best interests.
- Charities Act 2011 - funds must be used only for charitable purposes.
- Charity Commission Guidance CC8 (Internal Financial Controls for Charities) - calls for clear authorisation and documentation processes.
- Trustees' fiduciary duties - to act prudently, avoid conflicts of interest, and prevent misuse of charitable assets.

### 3. Guiding Principles

- No expenditure may be made without prior approval.
- All spending must further MOP's charitable purposes.
- Transparency, accountability, and documentation are essential safeguards.

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- Trustees authorise all spending, unless specific written delegation has been agreed and recorded in minutes.
- Volunteers should not be out of pocket for agreed project-related costs.

## 4. Definitions

An expense is any cost incurred in carrying out legitimate MOP activities - such as materials, tools, venue hire, publicity, insurance, professional fees, or approved travel.

Expenses may only be reimbursed if they are:

- Pre-approved by trustees or delegated authority;
- Supported by receipts or invoices; and
- Within the boundaries of MOP's charitable purposes.

## 5. Expectations and Responsibilities

### 5.1 Approval and Delegation

- Pre-approval is required for all expenditure - either at a trustee meeting, via email circulation, or under a recorded delegation.
- Delegations (e.g. to subgroup leads or event coordinators) must specify:
  - The person(s) authorised;
  - The spending limit (e.g. "up to £50 per event"); and
  - The duration or scope of that authority.
- Low-value pre-agreed expenses (normally under £15) may be verbally approved by authorised persons and confirmed later by email or in the minutes.
- Trustees review and ratify delegated spending at their next meeting.

### 5.2 Requests for Expenditure

- Requests must be submitted in writing, usually via the Expense and Purchase Form.
- Include purpose, estimated cost, and justification for how it furthers MOP's charitable aims.
- Trustees (or delegated approver) confirm in writing or via email.

### 5.3 Documentation and Evidence

- All claims must be supported by receipts, invoices, or written cost confirmations.
- Digital copies are acceptable.
- Expenses without valid documentation or prior approval will not normally be reimbursed.
- Records are stored securely under the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.

### 5.4 Reimbursement

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- Claims should be submitted within 60 days of expenditure.
- Trustees aim to process valid claims within 30 days of receiving full documentation.
- Payments are made via bank transfer; cash reimbursements are not permitted.
- Claims exceeding the agreed budget or incurred without prior approval may be declined.
- Volunteers are advised to avoid personally covering large costs unless formally approved in advance.

## 6. How It Works in Practice

- A volunteer proposes to buy tools for a workshop. They email trustees with details and estimated costs. Approval is granted by email and recorded in the minutes. The volunteer submits receipts and is reimbursed by bank transfer.
- A trustee proposes to pay a venue hire invoice. The invoice is circulated for approval; trustees agree, and payment is logged and reported in the next financial summary.
- A member buys materials without approval and later seeks reimbursement. The trustees decline, as the expenditure was unauthorised.

## 7. Breaches and Misuse

### 7.1 Breaches include:

- Spending without prior approval;
- Submitting false or unsupported claims;
- Using funds for non-charitable or personal purposes; or
- Failing to keep receipts or provide documentation.

### 7.2 Consequences may include:

- Refusal of reimbursement;
- Disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy; or
- Referral to relevant authorities for serious misconduct or fraud.

## 8. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees authorise all expenditure and ensure each decision is properly documented.
- The Treasurer or Finance Lead maintains accurate records of all payments and reports them in management accounts and the Annual Report.
- All expense documentation is stored securely under the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Members and volunteers must follow this policy and avoid incurring costs without prior authorisation.
- Trustees review this policy annually, alongside the Financial Procedures and annual accounts.

# POLICY COMPENDIUM



The Meadow Orchard Project

issued by: Trustee board

Version: 171025-1

- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- Accurate, secure, and transparent record keeping is essential for the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP).
- Good records help us stay accountable, comply with law, protect members and volunteers, and ensure decisions are transparent and traceable.
- Outcome: to ensure MOP's records are accurate, retrievable, and compliant with legal, regulatory, and ethical standards.
- This policy sets out:
  - What records we keep;
  - How long we keep them;
  - How they are stored and disposed of; and
  - How personal data are handled in line with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- It applies to trustees, members, volunteers, subgroup leads, partners, and anyone handling information on behalf of MOP.

### 2. Legal and Governance Framework

Record keeping and data protection are guided by:

- Charities Act 2011 - trustees must keep accurate accounting records and minutes.
- Companies Act 2006 (if applicable) - minimum retention for company records.
- HMRC requirements - financial and tax records must be kept for at least six years.
- UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018 - personal data must be accurate, secure, and not kept longer than necessary.
- MOP Constitution - trustees must act prudently and ensure proper management of resources.
- ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) best-practice guidance.

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## 3. Guiding Principles

- Accuracy: records must be complete, reliable, and up to date.
- Security: records must be stored safely with access limited to those who need it.
- Retention: records are kept only as long as required, then securely deleted or destroyed.
- Transparency: governance records should be accessible to members where appropriate.
- Confidentiality: personal and sensitive data must be handled with care and respect for privacy.
- Accountability: trustees are responsible for compliance, and breaches are handled under the Data Security Policy.

## 4. Responsibilities

- Trustees ensure statutory records (accounts, minutes, registers) are maintained, stored, and retained.
- Subgroups record subgroup decisions and pass them promptly to trustees.
- Members and volunteers pass any records they create (sign-in sheets, incident forms) to trustees for secure storage.
- Note-takers ensure minutes are accurate and uploaded to the secure shared drive.
- A designated trustee oversees compliance and monitors the retention schedule.
- Serious or repeated non-compliance may lead to disciplinary action.

## 5. Record Types and Retention Schedule

Type of Record	Retention Period	Storage	Disposal Method
Trustee meeting minutes	Permanent	Secure cloud & paper archive	Never destroyed
General meeting minutes	Permanent	Secure cloud & paper archive	Never destroyed
Subgroup minutes	Permanent	Secure cloud & paper archive	Never destroyed
Annual accounts & reports	Permanent	Secure cloud & paper archive	Never destroyed
Financial records (invoices, receipts, bank statements)	6 years	Secure cloud & paper	Shred / delete securely
Membership records	Current + 2 years	Secure cloud	Delete securely

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Volunteer sign-in sheets	2 years	Locked cabinet / secure cloud	Shred / delete securely
Safeguarding records & incident reports	6 years after last contact (longer if law requires)	Locked cabinet / secure cloud	Redact / shred securely
Special-category data (equality, health, or safeguarding-related information recorded for governance, inclusion, or disciplinary purposes)	As long as necessary for governance, safeguarding, or legal accountability (normally up to 6 years after case closure)	Encrypted and access-restricted secure cloud; locked cabinet if in paper form	Redact, shred, or delete securely; retain minimal record of outcome only (e.g. "Equality considerations reviewed")
Complaint records	As long as relevant, max 6 years	Locked cabinet / secure cloud	Redact / shred securely
Health & safety records (accident books, risk assessments)	3 years (6 if serious)	Locked cabinet / secure cloud	Redact / shred securely
Data protection consents & privacy notices	Duration of consent + 1 year	Secure cloud	Delete securely
Contracts & agreements	Life of contract + 6 years	Secure cloud & paper	Shred / delete securely
Emails	As long as relevant, max 2 years	Secure email	Delete securely

Back-ups of digital records are encrypted and automatically backed up daily within the secure cloud system.

## 6. Practical Examples

- Volunteer sign-in sheets are stored in a locked cabinet and shredded after two years.
- Trustee minutes and annual accounts are kept permanently in both cloud and paper formats.
- Incident and safeguarding reports are retained for six years after closure, then redacted to anonymise data or destroyed securely.
- Old emails are deleted after two years.



## 7. Privacy and Data Protection Notice

### 7.1 What Personal Data We Collect

- Contact details (name, email, phone) for members, volunteers, visitors.
- Membership records, attendance lists, participation forms.
- Correspondence relating to governance, complaints, or safeguarding.
- Photos or videos taken at public events (with consent where required).
- Information from feedback or consultation exercises.
- MOP does not sell or share data for marketing.

### 7.2 How We Use Personal Data

Personal data are used only for purposes necessary to MOP's work, including:

- Managing membership and volunteering.
- Coordinating events and communications.
- Handling complaints, safeguarding, and dispute resolution.
- Maintaining organisational records and accountability.
- Complying with legal and contractual obligations.

### 7.3 Lawful Bases

Our lawful bases under UK GDPR are:

- Article 6(1)(b): Contractual necessity (membership or volunteering).
- Article 6(1)(c): Legal obligation (safeguarding, statutory reporting).
- Article 6(1)(f): Legitimate interests (governance, safety, site management).
- When using legitimate interests, MOP ensures necessity, proportionality, and limited access, and reviews retention regularly.

### 7.4 Data Sharing

Data may be shared only where necessary and lawful, such as with:

- NHS Trust or landholder (compliance / safeguarding).
- Insurers, auditors, or legal advisers.
- Law-enforcement or regulatory bodies.
- Trusted IT and email providers under confidentiality agreements.
- No other third-party sharing occurs without explicit consent.

### 7.5 Safeguarding, Complaints, and Confidentiality

- Data in complaints or safeguarding cases are processed under legitimate interests.
- Under Article 14(5)(b) and DPA 2018 Schedule 2, Part 3, Paragraph 16, notification may be delayed or limited to protect confidentiality, investigation integrity, or others' rights.

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- Where possible, individuals are informed once it is fair and safe to do so.

## 7.6 Security

- All records are stored securely with password protection and limited access.
- Paper records are locked in secure cabinets.
- Digital files use encrypted cloud storage with two-factor authentication.
- Data breaches are managed under the Data Security Policy and reported promptly to trustees.

## 7.7 Individual Rights

- Under the UK GDPR, individuals have the right to:
  - Access their personal data (Subject Access Request);
  - Request correction or deletion of inaccurate data;
  - Object to processing based on legitimate interests;
  - Request restriction of processing;
  - Complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) via [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) or 0303 123 1113.
- Requests can be made to [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com).

## 7.8 Retention and Review

- Data is retained according to the schedule above.
- Records are reviewed annually to confirm accuracy and necessity.
- When no longer required, data are securely deleted or destroyed.
- Redaction is used to anonymise data where suitable for long-term transparency.

## 7.9 Accountability

- Trustees are jointly responsible for compliance.
- A designated trustee oversees record-keeping and data protection, ensures reviews are completed, and reports breaches to the committee.
- Serious or repeated non-compliance may result in action under the Disciplinary Policy.

## 8. Policy Review

- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if laws or operational needs change.
- Updated versions are made available to members and published with other governance documents.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board
  - 05/11/25 Special-category data added to retention schedule

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## Data Security Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) is committed to protecting the information it holds and ensuring that all personal and organisational data are kept safe from loss, misuse, unauthorised access, or disclosure.
- This policy explains how data security is maintained in daily practice.
- It applies to trustees, members, volunteers, subgroup leads, contractors, partners, and anyone handling data on behalf of MOP.
- It should be read alongside the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy, which sets out the legal framework, retention schedule, and privacy notice.

### 2. Objectives

- To maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information held by MOP.
- To ensure all users handle data securely and responsibly.
- To respond quickly to any data breach or security concern.
- To build a culture of trust and accountability around data handling.

### 3. Guiding Principles

- Security is everyone's responsibility.
- Access is granted only where necessary for legitimate MOP purposes.
- Data are stored and shared securely using approved systems.
- Breaches are reported promptly and handled under the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Simplicity and proportionality guide all controls - appropriate for a volunteer-run community project.

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## 4. Responsibilities

- Trustees are data controllers and hold overall accountability for information security.
- A Designated Trustee (Data Protection Lead) oversees implementation, risk assessment, and breach response.
- Members, volunteers, and subgroup leads must follow this policy whenever handling personal or organisational data.
- Contractors and partners must handle data in accordance with MOP's privacy and confidentiality standards.
- Serious or repeated non-compliance may result in disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy.

## 5. Operational Controls

### 5.1 Access Control

- Access to shared systems (Google Drive, email, cloud storage, mailing lists) is granted only to authorised individuals.
- Access is reviewed annually and withdrawn immediately when a role ends.
- Personal data must not be downloaded to private devices unless essential for MOP duties.
- Devices used for MOP work must be password-protected and locked when unattended.

### 5.2 Passwords and Authentication

- Strong passwords (minimum 12 characters with letters, numbers, and symbols) are required for all MOP accounts.
- Passwords are stored and shared through a secure password manager, never on paper or in chat groups.
- Two-factor authentication (2FA) is enabled for shared systems.
- Passwords are changed when someone leaves a role or a breach is suspected.

### 5.3 Digital Storage

- Core documents (minutes, membership lists, financial records) are stored only in the approved secure cloud folder managed by trustees.
- Files are automatically backed up and protected by 2FA.
- Sensitive records (safeguarding, incidents, complaints) are stored in restricted-access folders visible only to trustees or designated leads.
- Personal devices holding MOP data must have device encryption or PIN lock enabled.

### 5.4 Paper Records

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- Paper forms (sign-in sheets, incident reports, safeguarding records) are stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to trustees.
- Paper containing personal data is shredded or securely destroyed when no longer needed, as per the retention schedule in the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.

## 5.5 Communications and Email

- Bulk emails use BCC or mailing software to protect addresses.
- Project-related communications are sent via official MOP accounts, not personal email addresses.
- Sensitive information should not be included in subject lines or shared via unsecured channels.
- Emails containing personal data are deleted once no longer needed.

## 5.6 Messaging and Online Platforms

- Consent must be obtained before adding anyone to a group chat (e.g. WhatsApp, Signal).
- Group messages must not be screenshots, forwarded, or copied outside the group without consent.
- Personal data (e.g. phone numbers) shared in these spaces is protected under data protection law.

## 5.7 Media and Photos

- Obtain clear consent before taking or sharing identifiable photos or videos of members or visitors.
- Media files for MOP use must be stored in shared cloud folders, not on personal devices.
- Consent records are stored and managed in line with the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.

## 5.8 Portable Devices and USBs

- Avoid using USB sticks or portable drives for storing personal data.
- If unavoidable, the device must be encrypted and wiped after use.
- Personal data should never be stored on unencrypted or shared devices.

## 6. Data Breach Response

- A data breach includes any loss, theft, or unauthorised access to personal or confidential data.
- Anyone who suspects a breach must report it immediately to trustees via [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com).

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- The Data Protection Lead logs the incident, assesses severity, and acts under the procedure in the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Serious breaches are reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) within 72 hours, if required.
- Lessons learned are reviewed to strengthen security.

## 7. Training and Awareness

- All new members are briefed on this policy and the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy during induction, as appropriate to their role.
- Trustees review security risks annually and update practices as needed.
- Key roles (Data Protection Lead, subgroup leads) may receive additional data protection awareness training.

## 8. Accountability and Review

- Trustees collectively ensure that data security measures remain effective and proportionate.
- The Data Protection Lead oversees annual audits of access rights, passwords, and incident records.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if law, technology, or best practice changes.
- It forms part of MOP's governance framework, alongside the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy, Complaints and Grievances Policy, and Disciplinary Policy.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Equalities and Inclusion Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- We are committed to creating a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive environment that reflects our values of fairness, sustainability, and respect.
- Equality and inclusion are essential to our mission: enabling all people to benefit from nature, community participation, and sustainable living.
- This policy helps us act in line with our charitable purposes by reducing barriers to access and ensuring everyone can participate with dignity and respect.

### 2. Scope

- This policy applies to all members, volunteers, trustees, visitors, contractors, and partners working with or on behalf of the Meadow Orchard Project.
- It sets expectations for both personal and collective accountability in promoting equality, inclusion, and fair treatment throughout all our activities.

### 3. Commitment

- We value diversity as a strength and recognise the dignity and rights of every individual.
- We commit to preventing discrimination, harassment, and bullying; to fostering participation across all backgrounds and abilities; and to promoting inclusive practices in all our work.

### 4. This policy is guided by:

- The Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

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- The Meadow Orchard Project Constitution, which sets out our purpose to advance citizenship, community development, well-being, and inclusion.
- The duties of members and trustees to act in good faith to further the Charity's purposes and to avoid gross misconduct, including discriminatory behaviour.

## 5. Our Principles

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Actively reduce barriers to participation and engagement.
- Make reasonable adjustments to support accessibility.
- Promote awareness of rights and responsibilities under equality law.
- Encourage participation from underrepresented groups through outreach and partnerships.
- Work collaboratively with schools, health services, and community organisations to expand inclusion and access.

## 6. In Practice

We demonstrate our commitments by:

- Welcoming volunteers regardless of membership status.
- Adapting tasks and roles, where possible, to suit different abilities and needs.
- Providing accessible signage, communications across diverse platforms, and concessions or adjustments to reduce financial or practical barriers to participation.
- Advertising events widely to reach diverse communities.
- Encouraging participation in training, outreach, and awareness activities that promote understanding and inclusion.
- Seeking feedback to identify and remove barriers to access and participation.
- Working with partners to extend opportunities for engagement and representation.
- Participation in inclusion initiatives is encouraged but remains voluntary unless required by a specific role or responsibility.

## 7. Accountability and Oversight

- All members, volunteers, trustees, contractors, and partners are personally and collectively responsible for upholding inclusive behaviours and supporting equality in practice.
- Trustees are responsible for ensuring that this policy complies with the Equality Act 2010, remains aligned with the Constitution, and is reviewed at least annually or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.
- Breaches of this policy-such as discriminatory behaviour, harassment, or failure to respect reasonable adjustments-may result in complaints, investigation, and disciplinary action under the Charity's Grievance and Complaints Policy and Disciplinary Policy.

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- Trustees will monitor compliance through feedback, observations, and review of complaints, taking proportionate action where issues arise.

## 8. Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the trustees, with member input invited as part of that process.
- Revisions will ensure continued compliance with equality legislation, consistency with the Constitution, and responsiveness to the needs of our community.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Safeguarding Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- We are committed to protecting the welfare of children, young people, and adults at risk who come into contact with the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP).
- Safeguarding means preventing abuse or neglect and responding quickly and appropriately to any concerns.
- This policy reflects our ethos of earth care, people care, and fair share and ensures that everyone taking part in our activities can do so safely and with confidence.

### 2. Scope

- This policy applies to all members, volunteers, trustees, visitors, site users, contractors, and partner organisations working with or on behalf of MOP.
- Partners using the site or delivering joint projects must apply safeguarding standards equivalent to this policy.
- Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved with MOP has a duty of care to act if they believe a child, young person, or adult at risk may be harmed or unsafe.

### 3. Legal Framework and Duties

Our safeguarding responsibilities are grounded in:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004 - duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) - national statutory guidance.
- Care Act 2014 - safeguarding duties towards adults at risk.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 - supporting decision-making for people who may lack capacity.
- Human Rights Act 1998 - right to live free from abuse and neglect.
- Equality Act 2010 - equal protection for all, regardless of protected characteristics.



- The MOP Constitution, which commits us to relieving disadvantage, supporting well-being, and acting in good faith to protect others.

## 3.2 Guiding Principles

- Everyone has the right to feel safe and be protected from harm.
- Concerns must always be taken seriously.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- We act quickly, proportionately, and transparently when concerns arise.
- We respect privacy but will share information when someone may be at risk.

## 4. Expectations and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Everyone involved with MOP must:

- Treat children, young people, and adults at risk with respect and kindness.
- Never be alone with a child or vulnerable adult; activities must always be supervised by a parent, guardian, or responsible adult.
- Take extra care as MOP does not routinely carry out DBS checks. Safeguarding relies on awareness, caution, and clear boundaries.
- Trustees will assess, with partners, if DBS checks become necessary for specific roles or projects involving regular, direct contact with children or adults at risk.
- Report safeguarding concerns immediately (see below).
- Keep information confidential but never promise secrecy if someone may be at risk of harm.
- Follow guidance from the Safeguarding Lead or trustees and record incidents accurately.

### 4.2 How to Respond to a Safeguarding Concern

1. Act immediately - do not wait.
2. Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
  - **Name: [Insert name]**
  - **Phone: [Insert number]**
  - **Email: [Insert email]**
3. If the DSL is unavailable, report to a Trustee via: [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com)
  - If there is no current DSL, the trustees act collectively as the safeguarding body.
4. Record what happened:
  - Write it down: You can use the [Incidents, Complaints and Grievances Form](#).
  - Note what you **saw, heard**, or were **told** - stick to **facts**, avoid assumptions.
  - Date, sign, and submit your record securely.
  - If someone is in immediate danger - call 999.

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## 5. The DSL or trustee will:

- Decide next steps.
- Contact statutory services if required:
  - Children's Services Access Team (CSCT) - 020 7527 7400 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
  - Emergency Duty Team (Out of hours) - 020 7226 0992
  - Adult Social Services Access & Advice - 020 7527 2299 / [access.service@islington.gov.uk](mailto:access.service@islington.gov.uk)
  - Police (non-emergency) - 101
  - Emergency - 999
- Keep written records and ensure information is stored securely and shared only with those who need to know. The [Incident, Complaints and Grievances Form](#) is recommended.

## 5. Examples

- A volunteer notices bruising on a child: Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) the same day.
- A vulnerable adult discloses neglect: Listen calmly, do not promise secrecy, report immediately.
- A child is left without a parent present: Ensure they are safe, inform the parent or guardian, record the incident, do not take them off-site alone.

## 6. Breaches of This Policy

- Placing others at risk, unsafe behaviour, or failure to report concerns constitutes a serious breach of this policy.
- Breaches may lead to exclusion from the project, disciplinary action, or referral to statutory or regulatory authorities.

## 7. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL; who may or may not be a trustee).
- In the absence of a DSL, trustees act collectively as the safeguarding body.
- The DSL receives and records concerns, maintains secure safeguarding records, liaises with statutory agencies, and undertakes appropriate safeguarding training annually.
- All members, volunteers, and contractors are responsible for following this policy and reporting concerns.
- Partners and hirers using MOP premises or working under its name must comply with this policy or an equivalent safeguarding standard.

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## 8. Review

- This policy is reviewed annually by the trustees or sooner if legislation, guidance, or best practice changes.
- It links with the Equalities and Inclusion Policy, Grievance and Complaints Policy, and Disciplinary Policy.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Incident Response Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) is committed to protecting the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of everyone on site and within our community.
- This policy ensures that any incident-including accidents, near-misses, safeguarding concerns, misconduct, or events affecting reputation-is recorded, reported, and responded to quickly and fairly, so risks are managed and lessons learned.
- Outcome: incidents are managed consistently, proportionately, and transparently, supporting continual improvement.

### 2. Scope

- This policy applies to all trustees, members, volunteers, contractors, visitors, and partner organisations involved in MOP activities or using the site.
- It covers any incident that impacts:
  - People's safety, health, or wellbeing.
  - The security or condition of MOP property.
  - Governance, conduct, or reputation of the Charity.

### 3. Legal and Governance Basis

This policy is grounded in:

- MOP Constitution - trustees' duty to prevent misconduct and act in the Charity's best interests.
- Charity Commission guidance - requirement to report serious incidents that threaten beneficiaries, people, assets, or reputation.
- Health and Safety law - duty to report and record accidents and injuries (RIDDOR where applicable).

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- Safeguarding law and MOP Safeguarding Policy - duty to report concerns about children or adults at risk.
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) - requirement to handle incident records securely and share only with those who need to know.

## 4. Guiding Principles

- Prompt action: incidents are recorded and reviewed without delay.
- Clarity: everyone knows who to inform and how.
- Confidentiality: records are kept secure and shared only as necessary.
- Accountability: trustees take responsibility for response and reporting.
- Learning: every incident informs improvement.

## 5. Expectations and Responsibilities

- Anyone witnessing or involved in an incident must report it promptly to a site leader or trustee.
- Site leaders help complete the [Incident, Complaints and Grievances Form](#) and pass it to trustees.
- Trustees (or a designated officer, if appointed) review the report, take action, and make external notifications where required.
- All members and volunteers must cooperate with investigations and follow safety measures.
- Partners and hirers using MOP facilities must follow equivalent reporting procedures and cooperate fully with trustees.

## 6. Incident Process

### Step 1: Recording

- Record the incident in writing as soon as possible. The [Incident, Complaints and Grievances Form](#) is recommended.
- Describe facts only - who, what, when, where.
- Submit the account to: [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com) or give it to a trustee.
- Trustees will acknowledge receipt within 7 days.

### Step 2: Immediate Response

- Site leaders or trustees act at once if urgent risks exist (e.g. call emergency services, make the area safe).
- Safeguarding concerns must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or if none is appointed, to the trustees.
- If a trustee is the subject of the concern, report to a different trustee, directly to the Chair or, if necessary, the Charity Commission.



## Step 3: Trustee Review

- Trustees review the report and decide next actions, which may include:
  - Addressing hazards or risks.
  - Supporting or signposting those involved.
  - Mediating conflicts or clarifying expectations.
  - Taking disciplinary action.
  - Referring to statutory authorities (e.g. police, local authority, Charity Commission).
- If appropriate, the Chair or Secretary will act as the Charity's reporting officer for external notifications.

## Step 4: Serious Incidents

- Trustees assess whether the incident meets the Charity Commission's Serious Incident Reporting criteria (harm to people, significant loss, fraud, or reputational damage).
- Where required, a formal report is submitted by the Chair or designated trustee, and the action recorded.

## Step 5: Follow-Up and Learning

- Trustees record actions taken and outcomes in the Incident Log.
- Patterns, causes, and lessons are reviewed at least annually.
- Policies or procedures are updated where learning identifies improvements.
- Records are stored securely for seven years (or longer if required for safeguarding) and then deleted in line with the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy

## 7. Examples of Incidents

- A child is found unsupervised in a restricted area.
- A volunteer is injured while using tools.
- A safeguarding concern is raised about behaviour towards a vulnerable adult.
- A fire is started without permission, creating a safety hazard.
- A serious conflict breaks out between members on site.
- MOP property is lost, stolen, or damaged.
- Repeated online harassment directed at members.

## 8. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees hold overall responsibility for incident management, record-keeping, and compliance with Charity Commission guidance.
- A designated incident officer may be appointed to lead on operational response, but trustees remain ultimately accountable.

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- If a complaint or incident involves one or more trustees, the remaining trustees (or an independent mediator) will handle the matter to maintain impartiality.
- Incident logs are reviewed annually to identify risks, trends, or training needs.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if law, practice, or guidance changes.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) is committed to maintaining a respectful, welcoming, and safe environment where everyone can contribute and participate fully.
- Bullying and harassment undermine our ethos of fairness, dignity, and collective care and prevent people from feeling safe or valued.
- The purpose of this policy is to prevent bullying and harassment, respond appropriately to any concerns, and promote a culture of mutual respect and accountability.

### 2. Scope

- This policy applies to all members, volunteers, trustees, site users, contractors, visitors, and partner organisations working with or on behalf of the Meadow Orchard Project.
- All individuals have a duty to act in good faith to further MOP's purposes and to avoid any conduct that may cause harm or distress to others.

### 3. Legal and Governance Framework

#### **3.1 Our responsibilities arise from:**

- Equality Act 2010 - harassment related to protected characteristics (e.g. race, sex, disability) is unlawful.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 - duty to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all involved in our activities.
- Charity Commission Guidance - trustees must protect people from harm, including bullying and harassment.

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- The MOP Constitution - members must act in good faith and trustees must maintain governance frameworks that prevent and address harmful behaviour.

## 3.2 Guiding Principles

- Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected.
- Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
- Concerns are taken seriously and handled promptly and fairly.
- We focus on resolution, accountability, and restoring trust wherever possible.
- Information shared will be kept confidential and used only by those handling the concern.

## 4. Expectations and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Everyone involved with MOP must:

- Treat others with dignity, patience, and respect at all times.
- Refrain from behaviour that could be experienced as bullying, harassment, or intimidation.
- Speak up if they witness bullying or harassment, and support those affected.
- Use respectful language in all settings, including meetings, events, and online forums.

### 4.2 MOP commits to:

- Taking all reports of bullying and harassment seriously.
- Acting promptly to investigate and resolve concerns - normally within 21 days of receiving a report.
- Providing clear, accessible channels for raising concerns.
- Ensuring decisions are fair, transparent, and consistent with the Constitution and related policies.
- Offering mediation or restorative dialogue where appropriate and where all parties agree voluntarily.

## 5. What Counts as Bullying or Harassment

### 5.1 Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Repeated verbal abuse, ridicule, or personal attacks.
- Deliberately excluding or isolating someone.
- Spreading rumours or undermining someone's reputation.
- Using threatening, intimidating, or aggressive behaviour.
- Making unwanted comments or conduct related to race, sex, disability, or other protected characteristics.



## 5.2 Not normally considered bullying or harassment:

- Respectful disagreement or differences of opinion.
- Honest, constructive feedback, even if critical.
- Decisions made through fair community processes (e.g. proposals, votes) where not everyone gets their preference.
- Setting reasonable boundaries or asking someone to follow agreed procedures.

## 6. Reporting Concerns

If you experience or witness bullying or harassment:

- If it is safe to do so, tell the person their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Record your concerns in writing. The [Incidents, Complaints and Grievances Form](#) is recommended.
- Email it to: [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com)
- Trustees will review the report and decide next steps, which may include:
  - Informal discussion or mediation.
  - Restorative dialogue facilitated by a neutral person.
  - Formal investigation and possible disciplinary action.
- Records will be stored securely and shared only with those directly involved in handling the concern.

## 7. Breaches of This Policy

- Engaging in bullying, harassment, or retaliation against someone who raises a concern in good faith is a serious breach of this policy.
  - This does not prevent reasonable actions taken by trustees in good faith to investigate a complaint or address misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy.
- Consequences for breaching this policy may include:
  - Removal from activities or meetings.
  - Suspension or termination of membership.
  - Formal disciplinary action in line with the Disciplinary Policy.
- Repeated or severe breaches will be treated as gross misconduct.

## 8. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees are responsible for reviewing and responding to reports received via [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com).
- They may delegate specific actions or investigations but remain accountable for outcomes.
- Members, volunteers, and contractors are responsible for upholding this policy and reporting unacceptable behaviour.
- Partners using the site or collaborating with MOP must adopt equivalent standards of conduct.

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- Review: This policy will be reviewed annually by trustees or sooner if legislation, guidance, or best practice changes.
- It is linked to the Equalities and Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Grievance and Complaints Policy, and Disciplinary Policy.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Online Chat Behaviours Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- Our digital spaces are part of the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP). They help us organise, share updates, and stay connected.
- Outcome: keep channels safe, respectful, and usable, so everyone can participate effectively.

### 2. Scope

- Applies to members, volunteers, trustees, site users, contractors, visitors, and partner organisations using MOP chats, mailing lists, or forums.
- Moderation is a shared responsibility: admins/moderators guide; everyone follows the standards below.

### 3. Legal & governance basis

- MOP Constitution (good-faith conduct; no misconduct).
- Equality Act 2010 (no harassment/discrimination).
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) (privacy by design).
- Charity Commission guidance (protect people from harm in digital spaces).
- Linked policies: Anti-Bullying & Harassment, Safeguarding, Equalities & Inclusion, Grievance & Complaints, Disciplinary.

### 4. Principles

- Be safe, supportive, and accessible.
- Make space for everyone, not just the fastest voices.
- Keep communication clear, relevant, and respectful.

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- Protect privacy and boundaries. Raise safeguarding risks immediately.

## 5. Expectations (all users)

### Be respectful and supportive

- Contribute constructively; avoid personal critiques and pile-ons.
- Don't try to "win" arguments in group chats; use meetings/processes for decisions.

### Communicate with patience and care

- Say it once, clearly; give others time to reply.
- Keep posts short and relevant; pause between messages.
- Ask clarifying questions once ("Can I check what you meant by...?").
- Prefer open questions ("what/how") over confrontational phrasing.

### Keep conversations balanced and on-topic

- Stay on the group/thread topic; don't derail or cross-post the same content.
- Notice if you're posting far more than others; slow down to make space.

### Respect privacy and boundaries

- Don't share others' messages or contact details without consent.
- Move 1-to-1 matters to direct messages.
- Respect project hours 09:00-21:00 unless urgent and agreed.
- Do not post private information, unverified allegations, or copyrighted material without permission.

### No abuse of platforms

- No spam, mass-tagging, trolling, brigading, or evading moderation.

## 6. What this looks like in practice

### 6.1 Acceptable

- One clear update, then wait for replies.
- "I didn't understand - could you explain?"
- "Let's bring this to the next meeting."
- Short update relevant to the group.
- Posting once in the most relevant group.

### 6.2 Not acceptable

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- Rapid stream of posts without pause.
- Reiterating the same question after it's been answered.
- Derailing with off-topic issues mid-thread.
- Large blocks of text/images without context.
- Cross-posting the same content to multiple groups.

## 7. Reporting concerns

- Contact the group admin/moderator; and/or
- Complete an [Incidents, Complaints & Grievances Form](#) and email [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com).
- If a post suggests risk of harm (to a child or adult at risk), inform the Safeguarding Lead or trustees immediately per the Safeguarding Policy.

## 8. Moderation & enforcement

- Who can act: group admins/moderators (appointed by trustees) and trustees.
- Tools they may use (proportionately): reminder, request to edit/delete, slow-mode, mute, lock/close thread, remove posts, temporary removal from group(s).
- Normal sequence:
  - 1. Reminder from moderator/admin (first breach).
  - 2. Formal warning under the Disciplinary Policy if issues continue.
  - 3. Serious or repeated breaches: removal from online groups and, if needed, exclusion from site activities; may be treated as gross misconduct.
- Timeframes & records: trustees acknowledge formal reports within 7 days and aim to resolve or update within 14 days. Minimal notes are kept securely, shared only on a need-to-know basis, and retained per MOP's data retention rules.
- Appeal: a moderated user may appeal to trustees in writing within 14 days of a sanction decision.

## 9. Accountability & oversight

- Trustees maintain safe online spaces, appoint admins/moderators, and review concerns and appeals.
- All users are responsible for their own behaviour and for helping keep channels usable.
- Reviewed annually, or sooner if law, technology, or best practice changes.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Complaints and Grievances Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) aims to maintain a safe, respectful, and collaborative environment.
- This policy sets out how grievances and complaints are raised and handled so that concerns are dealt with fairly, consistently, and transparently, supporting learning and trust.
- Outcome: to ensure all concerns are resolved promptly, respectfully, and with due regard for the wellbeing of everyone involved.

### 2. Scope

- This policy applies to all members, trustees, volunteers, contractors, visitors, partners, and hirers.
- For contractors or visitors, the policy applies insofar as concerns relate to their engagement with MOP. Where contractual, insurance, or legal routes are more appropriate, trustees may refer or escalate accordingly.
- It covers:
  - Grievances - interpersonal concerns or conflicts between individuals.
  - Complaints - formal concerns about conduct, decisions, services, or governance.
- External complaints about MOP will be handled through this process where possible and referred externally if necessary.

### 3. Legal and Governance Basis

This policy is grounded in:

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- MOP Constitution - trustees must act prudently, in good faith, and in the Charity's best interests.
- Charity Commission guidance - trustees must deal with complaints properly and maintain good governance.
- Equality Act 2010 - protects people from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, including when raising concerns.
- Employment law principles - fair and consistent handling of grievances (adapted for volunteers).
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) - requires confidential handling of records.

## 4. Guiding Principles

- Accessibility: process must be clear, simple, and open to all.
- Fairness: complaints are considered impartially and without bias.
- Confidentiality: only those who need to know are involved.
- Proportionality: issues are addressed at the lowest effective level, escalating only when needed.
- Accountability: trustees ensure concerns are recorded, tracked, and responded to.
- Learning: outcomes are reviewed to improve practice and culture.

## 5. Expectations and Responsibilities

- All members and volunteers should raise concerns promptly and respectfully.
- Site leaders may support members in raising issues but do not decide the outcome.
- Trustees assess, investigate, and resolve complaints.
- Those raising concerns must provide accurate information and cooperate with the process.
- Concerns raised should be specific; not broad disagreements or several unrelated concerns combined into one submission.
- Complaints should not reassert points already clarified, unless new and relevant evidence is being presented.
- No one will be penalised for raising a grievance or complaint in good faith, even if it is not upheld.
- Complaints about trustees are handled by the remaining trustees (excluding anyone named), who may seek external advice or refer to the Charity Commission if necessary.

## 6. Grievance Process

### Step 1: Informal Resolution

- Members are encouraged to resolve grievances directly and respectfully.
- If not possible, raise with a site leader or trustee.

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## Step 2: Support and Mediation

- Trustees may offer informal resolution such as facilitated conversation or mediation.

## Step 3: Escalation

- If unresolved, the grievance can be escalated as a formal complaint under this policy.

# 7. Complaint Process

## Step 1: Submission

- Complaints must be submitted in writing (preferably using the [Incident, Complaints and Grievances Form](#)).
- Send to a trustee or email [meadoworchardproject@gmail.com](mailto:meadoworchardproject@gmail.com).
- Anonymous complaints are recorded and reviewed for risk but may not be fully investigated without sufficient detail.

## Step 2: Acknowledgement

- Trustees acknowledge receipt within 7 days.

## Step 3: Assessment

- Trustees assess whether the complaint is valid and within scope.
- If invalid, the reason is explained to the complainant.
- If valid, the complaint is categorised as:
  - Informal - can be resolved quickly.
  - Formal - requires investigation.
  - Serious - overlaps with safeguarding or incident response.
- Trustees assign investigating trustee(s), ensuring no conflict of interest.

## Step 4: Investigation

- Information is gathered, and all relevant parties have a chance to respond (if possible and appropriate).
- Investigations are impartial and normally concluded within 28 days (or longer with notice).
- Investigators may seek independent advice if necessary.

## Step 5: Decision

- The investigating trustee(s) decide the outcome and communicate it in writing.
- Possible outcomes:
  - Mediation or restorative dialogue.
  - Apology or corrective action.

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- Recommendation for policy or process improvement.
- Disciplinary action (if misconduct found).
- No action if the complaint is unfounded or not upheld.

## Step 6: Appeal

- Complainants may appeal in writing within 14 days of receiving the outcome, stating clear grounds for appeal.
- If trustees find the grounds for appeal insufficient, they should communicate this in writing.
- Appeals, if permitted, are reviewed by trustees not previously involved, and the decision is final.

## 8. Examples

- Grievance: A member feels continually shut down during meetings. A trustee facilitates a conversation, improving participation.
- Valid complaint: A volunteer alleges safety rules were not followed at an event; trustees investigate and take corrective action.
- Invalid complaint: A member resubmits a previously closed concern with no new evidence; trustees explain it will not be reopened.

## 9. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees are collectively responsible for managing grievances and complaints and may appoint a designated officer to coordinate responses.
- Logs of complaints, actions, and outcomes are maintained and reviewed annually to identify patterns and risks.
- Records are stored securely, accessible only to those handling the matter, and retained according to the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Where a complaint reveals safeguarding, disciplinary, or health and safety issues, trustees will refer to the relevant policy.
- This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if guidance or law changes.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Disciplinary Policy

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### 1. Purpose

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) seeks to maintain a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment.
- This policy sets out how breaches of conduct, policy, or safety are addressed fairly, transparently, and proportionately, ensuring that behaviour inconsistent with MOP's values is managed constructively and lawfully.
- Outcome: to resolve disciplinary matters in a way that protects people, reputation, and governance, while supporting learning and restoration where possible.

### 2. Scope

- This policy applies to all members, trustees, volunteers, contractors, visitors, partners, and hirers involved in MOP activities.
- A disciplinary matter is any alleged breach of conduct, policy, law, or duty that risks harm to people, property, reputation, or governance.

### 3. Legal and Governance Basis

This policy is grounded in:

- MOP Constitution - members must act in good faith, avoid misconduct, and uphold the Charity's purposes.
- Charity Commission guidance - trustees must prevent harm and act when behaviour endangers people or the organisation.
- Safeguarding and Health & Safety law - duty of care to protect people and the environment.
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 - protects whistleblowers raising concerns in good faith.

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- Equality Act 2010 - prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, including against those who raise concerns.
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) - requires confidential and proportionate record handling.

## 4. Guiding Principles

- Fairness: all parties are heard before decisions are made.
- Proportionality: actions are appropriate to the seriousness of the breach.
- Transparency: processes are clear and documented.
- Restorative approach: behaviour is corrected through dialogue and support wherever possible.
- Accountability: trustees hold final responsibility for disciplinary decisions and compliance with law and policy.

## 5. Expectations and Responsibilities

- All members and volunteers must comply with MOP policies, the Constitution, and UK law.
- Trustees are responsible for investigating breaches, deciding outcomes, and recording decisions.
- Site leaders and subgroup leads may raise concerns and assist with documentation, but cannot impose sanctions.
- Individuals under investigation must engage respectfully, provide accurate information, and comply with outcomes.
- Trustees will handle all matters impartially, excluding any trustee with a conflict of interest.
- Trustees may seek external mediation or advice if needed for fairness or legal compliance.
- No one will be penalised for raising a concern or whistleblowing in good faith.

## 6. Disciplinary Process

### Step 1: Identifying a Breach

a) Breaches may arise through grievances, complaints, incident reports, or direct observation.

b) Examples of breaches include (but are not limited to):

- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
- Breach of safeguarding responsibilities.
- Health & safety violations (e.g. unsafe tool use, unauthorised fires).
- Misuse of MOP resources for personal gain.
- Repeated neglect of role responsibilities.



- Breaches of policies, online or onsite codes of conduct.
- Persistent refusal to follow lawful and reasonable policies or trustee decisions.
- Disruptive behaviour that prevents the Charity from functioning effectively.
- Submitting malicious, knowingly false, or vexatious complaints. (This does not apply to genuine complaints raised in good faith, even if not substantiated.)
- Conduct that unlawfully, dishonestly, or materially undermines the Charity's reputation or governance.
- Other serious misconduct posing a risk to safety, integrity, or operation.

## Step 2: Recording

- Record concerns in writing. The [Incident, Complaints and Grievances Form](#) is recommended.
- Send to: meadoworchardproject@gmail.com, or directly to a trustee.
- Records are acknowledged within 7 days and handled confidentially.

## Step 3: Initial Review

a) Trustees will decide whether the matter requires:

- Informal resolution - conversation, mediation, or guidance;
- Formal disciplinary process - for serious or repeated breaches; or
- Immediate precautionary measures - temporary suspension or access restrictions to protect safety or governance integrity, without prejudice to the outcome.

b) All precautionary measures, informal resolutions and outcomes should be documented.

c) If a trustee is the subject of concern, the remaining trustees will manage the process or appoint an independent person to oversee it.

## Step 4: Formal Disciplinary Process

a) If the issue is serious, repeated, or cannot be resolved informally, trustees may initiate a formal disciplinary process.

b) Trustees will consider whether the alleged behaviour, if proven, constitutes:

- **Misconduct** - breaches of policy or community standards that are concerning but do not meet the threshold for gross misconduct; or
- **Gross Misconduct** - behaviour so serious that it renders continued membership incompatible with the Charity's purposes, values, or safety obligations. Gross misconduct includes, but is not limited to:
  - Theft, fraud, or deliberate misuse of Charity funds or property;
  - Physical violence or credible threats of violence;
  - Harassment, bullying, discrimination, or abusive conduct;
  - Indecent or inappropriate behaviour compromising dignity or safety;
  - Gross negligence or reckless disregard for safeguarding or safety procedures;

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- Serious insubordination or refusal to comply with lawful trustee decisions;
- Sabotage, deliberate damage, or interference with Charity property or operations;
- Dishonesty or deception in official dealings; or
- Conduct that seriously damages, or is likely to damage, the Charity's reputation, governance, or public confidence.

c) Minor or first-time issues may be managed informally with agreement from all parties.

d) Formal action should be reserved for serious or repeated breaches.

## Step 5: Investigation

a) Designated trustee(s) or an appointed officer will gather facts, interview relevant parties, and review evidence.

b) The member under investigation will receive written notice setting out:

- The concerns and summary of evidence;
- The potential consequences, including possible removal of membership if upheld; and
- A minimum of 21 days to respond in writing or request to meet with trustees.
- If no response is received within this period, trustees may proceed based on available evidence.

c) Investigations are conducted impartially and normally concluded within 28 days.

d) Trustees may seek independent or legal advice for complex or sensitive cases.

## Step 6: Decision

a) At a duly convened trustee meeting:

- Trustees consider the evidence and any response.
- The member (or their representative) may attend, present their case, and ask questions before a final decision is made, where applicable.
- Trustees may adjourn for further investigation or mediation if appropriate.
- Decisions are made collectively and recorded in the minutes, with reasons.

b) Possible outcomes for misconduct (if upheld):

- Informal or formal written warning;
- Mediation, training, or restorative dialogue;
- Temporary suspension from activities or online groups;
- Removal from subgroups or leadership roles; or
- Termination of membership for serious or repeated breaches under Clause 9(4)(a)(vi).

c) Termination of membership for misconduct

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- Before any removal under Clause 9(4)(a)(vi) for misconduct (this does not apply to gross misconduct):
  - Trustees must give the member at least 21 days' written notice of the meeting at which removal will be considered;
  - The notice must state the reasons for proposed removal and the member's right to make written or in-person representations; and
  - Trustees will consider all representations in good faith before making a final decision.

## d) Possible outcomes for gross misconduct (if upheld):

- Membership ends immediately under Clause 9(4)(a)(v).
- The decision, rationale, and evidence must be recorded in writing and communicated within 7 days.

## Step 7: Appeal

- The member may appeal in writing within 14 days of receiving the outcome, stating clear grounds (e.g. procedural unfairness, new evidence, or disproportionate outcome).
- If the trustees determine the grounds for appeal are insufficient, they will confirm this in writing.
- Appeals are reviewed by trustees not previously involved, or by an independent mediator if possible.
- The appeal decision is final.

## 7. Re-admission after termination of membership

- A person whose membership has been terminated for misconduct or gross misconduct may only be considered for re-admission at the discretion of the trustees.
- When reapplying, the individual must declare in writing that they were previously removed, and may be required to provide a written statement explaining the circumstances, what has changed since, and why they believe re-admission would now be in the Charity's best interests.
- Failure to disclose a prior removal, or providing misleading information during reapplication, will be treated as serious misconduct and may result in immediate termination of membership under Clause 9(4)(a)(v) (gross misconduct - dishonesty or deception in official dealings).
- Trustees will consider re-admission on a case-by-case basis, weighing the Charity's safety, reputation, and community wellbeing. They may refuse re-admission without stating detailed reasons if they consider it not in the Charity's best interests.
- A confidential record of removals will be retained solely for governance purposes and checked before new applications are approved.

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## 8. Examples

- A volunteer repeatedly disregards chat rules despite reminders: Formal warning and restricted group access.
- A member lights another unauthorised fire: Suspension from site access for a fixed period with conditions for return.
- A safeguarding concern arises: Referral to statutory services; the individual may be suspended pending investigation.
- A member refuses to comply with a disciplinary requirement: Escalation to suspension or termination of membership.

## 9. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees hold overall responsibility for disciplinary decisions and ensuring fairness, proportionality, and compliance.
- A designated disciplinary officer may be appointed to coordinate investigations, but trustees remain accountable.
- All disciplinary actions are logged and reviewed annually to monitor consistency and learning.
- Records are stored securely, shared only on a need-to-know basis, and retained according to the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Where a breach reveals safeguarding, health and safety, or governance risks, trustees will refer to the appropriate policy or statutory authority.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if law, Charity Commission guidance, or organisational needs change.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Donations & Use of Personal Property Onsite Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) values generosity and shared contribution.
- This policy sets out how donations and personal property brought onsite are managed to ensure safety, transparency, and good governance.
- Outcome: to safeguard trust, prevent disputes, and ensure all gifts, loans, and property use align with MOP's charitable purposes and the requirements of UK charity law.
- This policy applies to trustees, members, volunteers, contractors, partners, and visitors who donate or bring items onto the site.

### 2. Legal and Governance Framework

This policy is grounded in:

- MOP Constitution - charity assets must be used solely to further MOP's charitable purposes; no private benefit is permitted except where incidental and properly authorised.
- Charities Act 2011 - trustees must protect and properly apply charitable resources.
- Charity Commission guidance - donations and loans must be transparent, recorded, and free from conflicts of interest.
- Gift Aid and HMRC guidance - monetary donations may be eligible for Gift Aid (once the charity is registered), if offered freely without conditions.

### 3. Guiding Principles

- All donations and personal property use must support MOP's charitable purposes.
- Trustees oversee and record all donations, ensuring safety, transparency, and accountability.

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- Ownership and responsibilities must be clear at all times.
- No private benefit is permitted, except where incidental and explicitly approved by trustees.
- Safety first: items must be suitable, safe, and compliant with health and safety standards.

## 4. Donations

### 4.1 General Donations

- Donations of money, materials, equipment, plants, or services must be offered freely and without conditions, unless otherwise agreed in writing by trustees.
- Trustees may decline donations that are unsafe, unsuitable, or impractical to store or maintain.
- Once accepted, ownership transfers fully to MOP. Donors have no continuing rights over use, storage, or disposal.
- Trustees retain discretion to repurpose, recycle, rehome, or dispose of donated items in line with project needs and charity law.
- All accepted donations are recorded in a gift register or accounts.
- Donors may receive a written or email acknowledgement confirming the nature of the gift.

### 4.2 Restricted Donations

- Restricted donations (funds or materials intended for a specific purpose) are accepted only if:
  - The restriction supports MOP's charitable purposes; and
  - Trustees have approved the restriction in advance.
  - Trustees ensure restricted funds are tracked and applied only to that purpose.
- If the restriction cannot be fulfilled, trustees will contact the donor to agree how the funds should be used or refunded.

## 5. Personal Property Brought Onsite

### 5.1 Ownership and Risk

- Members and volunteers may bring personal tools, materials, or equipment for project activities, but do so entirely at their own risk.
- MOP accepts no liability for loss, theft, or damage to personal property.
- The charity's insurance generally does not cover privately owned items.

### 5.2 Storage and Identification

- Storage of personal items/property onsite must be:

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- Minimal, related to active projects;
- Safe and unobstructive; and
- Authorised by trustees where bulky or using shared storage.
- Personal items/property must be clearly labelled with the owner's name or stored in a designated container/area.
- Personal items/property must not become permanent or semi-permanent fixtures that could be mistaken for MOP property or create a dependency for the site's ongoing operation, unless explicitly agreed.

## 5.3 Trustee oversight

Trustees may request removal of any personal property/item within 21 days if it:

- Creates clutter, confusion, or hazard;
- Is no longer needed for activities; or
- Interferes with shared use of space.

## 5.4 Safety Requirements

- Items brought onsite must be in safe working condition.
- Electrical tools, ladders, or power equipment may be used only if approved by trustees or safety leads.
- Unsafe or untested items may be refused or removed under the Health & Safety Policy.

## 6. Long-Term Loans

- MOP does not normally accept long-term loans or "conditional donations" where ownership remains with the donor but the charity uses the item, as these arrangements may create confusion, liability, and governance risk.
- In exceptional cases, trustees may approve a temporary loan for a defined period, provided that:
  - The arrangement is recorded in writing (loan form or email confirmation);
  - Ownership, responsibilities, and return dates are clear; and
  - The item is safe, insured if necessary, and can be removed without disruption.
  - Items not reclaimed by the agreed date may be disposed of or treated as donations at trustees' discretion.

## 7. Disputes and Resolution

- Any dispute over ownership, use, or removal of property onsite will be reviewed by trustees.
- Trustees act in accordance with their constitutional duty to safeguard MOP's assets, maintain a safe site, and protect the charity from liability.



- If needed, trustees may seek independent advice or mediation to resolve disputes fairly.

## 8. How It Works in Practice

- Cash donation: A supporter donates £100. Trustees record it in the accounts and apply it to project costs.
- Restricted donation: A donor gives funds for garden activities. Trustees agree the restriction, record it, and use the money accordingly.
- Gift in kind: A member donates gardening tools. Trustees record the donation and ownership transfers to MOP.
- Transfer to charity: A member donates compost bins for permanent use. Trustees record the gift as MOP property.
- Short-term loan: A volunteer brings a drill for one workday. It remains their property, and MOP accepts no liability.
- Unacceptable loan: A member offers a greenhouse but wishes to retain ownership. Trustees decline, as long-term loans are not permitted.

## 9. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees oversee all donations, loans, and property transfers.
- All donations are recorded in MOP's financial records or the Gift Register, maintained in accordance with the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Trustees ensure:
  - Transparency and accurate record-keeping;
  - Avoidance of conflicts of interest; and
  - Compliance with charity and tax law.
- Members and volunteers must comply with this policy when donating, loaning, or storing items onsite.
- This policy is reviewed every two years, or sooner if legislation or Charity Commission guidance changes.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Onsite Produce and Resource Distribution Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) produces food, materials, and natural resources such as compost, soil, seeds, timber, clay, and items made or processed using site materials.
- This policy ensures these community assets are shared fairly, transparently, and lawfully, in keeping with MOP's ethos of earth care, people care, and fair share.
- Outcome: To protect MOP's charitable status, maintain fairness between members, and ensure all resources are used in ways that further MOP's charitable purposes.
- This policy applies to trustees, members, volunteers, site leads, event organisers, contractors, and visitors participating in or handling onsite produce and materials.

### 2. Legal and Governance Framework

This policy is grounded in:

- MOP Constitution (Clause 3) - all assets must be used solely to advance the Charity's objects, with no more than incidental private benefit.
- Charity Commission guidance - Charities and Public Benefit and Private Benefit Rules (CC3 & CC4).
- Charities Act 2011 - trustees must protect and properly apply charitable resources.

### 3. Guiding Principles

- All produce and resources are community assets.
- They may only be used in ways that advance MOP's charitable purposes.
- Any private benefit to individuals must be incidental, reasonable, and proportionate to their involvement.
- Transparency and fairness underpin all sharing and distribution decisions.
- Safety and hygiene standards must be followed at all times.



## 4. Practical Framework for Sharing

### 4.1 Primary Use - advancing charitable purposes

- Resources are first allocated to activities that directly advance MOP's objects as stated in the constitution (clause 3).
- These uses take priority over individual or take-home distribution.

### 4.2 Volunteer and Member Benefit - fair share principle

- Volunteers and members may receive a modest share of surplus produce or materials as an incidental benefit in recognition of their participation.
- "Fair share" means small, proportionate quantities relative to involvement (e.g. a bag of vegetables after a workday, a bucket of compost for home use).
- Allocation should be transparent, managed either by:
  - Shared harvest or collection days; or
  - A distribution list or log, maintained by a site lead.
- Trustees or site leads may adjust quantities depending on seasonal availability, yield, and volunteer turnout.
- Taking large or repeated quantities without agreement is not permitted.

### 4.3 Surplus Management - responsible community use

Where resources remain after MOP's own use and volunteer sharing, they may be:

- Donated to local community partners (e.g. schools, food banks, gardens).
- Preserved, stored, or processed for future community activities.
- Returned to the land (e.g. compost or soil improvement).
- All such decisions should be recorded or noted for transparency.

### 4.4 Prohibited Uses

- No produce or resources may be taken, sold, bartered, or exchanged by individuals for personal profit.
- Items made using MOP resources (e.g. crafts, cider, timber items) may not be removed from site or sold privately without trustee approval.
- No person may claim ownership of MOP-grown, -made, or -collected materials.

### 4.5 Any proposal to sell, trade, or externally distribute site products must:

- Be submitted to trustees for prior written approval;
- Demonstrate how the activity furthers MOP's charitable purposes;
- Show that any private benefit is necessary and incidental; and
- Ensure all profits are returned to the Charity.
- All trustee approvals must be recorded in meeting minutes.

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## 5. How It Works in Practice

### 5.1 Harvest day:

Produce is sorted into three baskets:

1. For community events;
2. For volunteers to share fairly;
3. For donation or composting of surplus.

### 5.2 Other examples:

- A volunteer takes home a small bag of vegetables after a workday - acceptable as an incidental benefit.
- A member takes several crates of produce or sells MOP-grown items privately - breach of policy.
- Compost is used first for site planting; surplus offered in small quantities to active volunteers.
- A clay workshop uses MOP clay for teaching; participants may take home a small piece for practice, but not sell finished items.
- A volunteer proposes to sell wood stools made from wood collected at MOP. This requires trustee approval and recorded justification.

## 6. Record Keeping

- Trustees and site leads maintain basic distribution records or logs where appropriate (especially for sales, donations, or structured distributions).
- Records are managed under the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- For any sale, donation, or external transfer, a brief written record (who, what, quantity, date) must be kept for audit and accountability.

## 7. Breaches

### 7.1 Breaches include:

- Harvesting or removing resources without permission.
- Taking more than a fair share.
- Selling, bartering, or privately profiting from MOP resources.
- Misrepresenting MOP materials as personal property.

### 7.2 Consequences:

- Loss of access to harvesting or distribution activities.
- Requirement to return or repay the value of misused resources.
- Disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy.

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- In serious cases, possible referral to authorities or exclusion from the site.

## 8. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees: approve any activity involving sale, structured distribution, or significant use of resources; ensure compliance with charity law and private benefit rules; record all decisions in minutes.
- Site leads / event organisers: oversee day-to-day allocation, maintain fairness, and report issues.
- Members and volunteers: uphold this policy, check before taking resources, and act transparently.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if Charity Commission or food law guidance changes.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Fire and Cooking Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- Fires and cooking are valued parts of community life at the Meadow Orchard Project (MOP). They bring people together, connect us with the land, and reflect our ethos of earth care, people care, and fair share.
- They also involve risks that must be managed carefully to protect people, property, and the environment.
- Outcome: To ensure all fire and cooking activities are carried out safely, legally, and in ways that uphold MOP's community values and charitable purposes.
- This policy applies to trustees, members, volunteers, event organisers, contractors, and visitors participating in any fire or cooking activity on the site.

### 2. Fire Safety

#### 2.1 Legal and Governance Framework

This section is grounded in:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 - duty to assess and control fire risk.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 - duty to protect members, volunteers, and visitors from foreseeable harm.
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 and London air quality regulations - duty to prevent smoke nuisance and pollution.
- MOP Constitution - duty of members to act in good faith and avoid misconduct that endangers others.
- Insurance and land use obligations - requiring active fire risk management.

#### 2.3 Guiding Principles

- Fires are permitted only by prior authorisation.
- Community safety, air quality, and environmental care are paramount.
- Supervision and preparedness are required at all times.
- Only safe, sustainable materials are burned.
- Activities must minimise nuisance and pollution.

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## 2.4 Expectations and Responsibilities

### a) Permission and Supervision

- Fires may be lit only in designated areas (e.g. the fire pit, approved stoves, or barbecues) and only with prior permission from a trustee, site lead, or named event organiser (if approved in their Site Use & Event Agreement).
- Fires must be supervised by a responsible adult at all times and never left unattended.
- A burns kit and first aid provision must be present whenever a fire is lit.
- Trustees or event organisers may inspect or extinguish any fire immediately if safety concerns arise.

### b) Safety Measures

- Keep a bucket of water, sand, or an extinguisher within reach.
- Extinguish fires fully before leaving the site.
- Do not light fires during high winds, drought, or air-quality alerts.
- Maintain safe distances from trees, structures, and flammable materials.
- Tie back long hair; avoid loose clothing or synthetic fabrics.
- Children and vulnerable adults must be supervised by a parent/guardian or responsible adult.
- No person under the influence of alcohol or drugs may light or tend a fire.

### c) Only approved fuels may be used

- Only dry untreated wood, sustainable charcoal, or designated biomass fuels may be used.
- Never burn wet/green, painted, varnished, or chemically treated wood, plastics, or household waste.

### d) Risk Assessment

- Event organisers must include a fire risk assessment when submitting their Site Use & Event form.
- A named fire supervisor should be appointed for all planned events involving fires.

## 2.5 Breaches

Examples of breaches:

- Lighting unauthorised fires or using unapproved fuels.
- Leaving fires unattended.
- Ignoring weather warnings or safety instructions.
- Consuming alcohol while tending a fire.



- Consequences may include: Immediate extinguishing of the fire, removal from site, and/or disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy.

## 3. Cooking and Catering

### 3.1 Legal and Governance Framework

This section is based on:

- Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 - safe storage, preparation, and service of food.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 - duty to protect all participants.
- Licensing Act 2003 - regulates sale and provision of alcohol.
- MOP Constitution - duty to promote health, sustainability, and inclusion in community activities.

### 3.2 Guiding Principles

- Food must be handled safely and hygienically.
- Cooking should reflect MOP's permaculture and sustainability ethos.
- Inclusion and accessibility should guide all catering (dietary needs, allergens, affordability).
- Alcohol use must be pre-approved and remain lawful, moderate, and non-disruptive.
- All catering must be pre-approved to ensure safety and accountability.

### 3.3 Expectations and Responsibilities

#### a) Food Safety and Hygiene

- Wash hands before handling food and after touching raw ingredients.
- Use clean utensils and surfaces; separate raw and cooked foods.
- Cook food thoroughly and keep perishable items chilled until use.
- Clearly label and communicate allergens.
- Do not leave high-risk foods (e.g. dairy, meat, seafood) unrefrigerated.
- Provide vegetarian/vegan and gluten free options where appropriate to ensure inclusion.
- Dispose of food waste responsibly; compost where possible.

#### b) Catering Approvals

- All catering activities (including volunteer-led meals) must be pre-approved by trustees or an event organiser (if approved in their Site Use & Event Agreement).
- External caterers must provide evidence of food hygiene compliance (Level 2+ certificate or equivalent).
- Alcohol may only be supplied with written trustee consent, proper licensing, and strict supervision.

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- Alcohol consumption must not cause disorder, damage, or nuisance.

## c) Equipment and Facilities

- Use only approved cooking equipment (stoves, barbecues, ovens) in safe, stable positions.
- Keep flammable materials clear of heat sources.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and access to water.
- Keep a burns kit and first aid provision available at all times.

## 3.5 Breaches

Examples of breaches:

- Unsafe food handling or cross-contamination.
- Failing to declare allergens.
- Unauthorised alcohol use or disorderly conduct.
- Use of unapproved caterers or unsafe cooking setups.
- Consequences may include: Immediate intervention, removal from site and/or disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy.
- MOP accepts no liability for illness, injury, or claims arising from food provided by individuals or hirers outside approved activities.

## 4. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees approve external caterers, authorise fire and cooking activities, and ensure compliance with insurance and legal obligations.
- Event organisers and site leads are responsible for supervision, permissions, and safety documentation.
- Members and volunteers must follow safe practices and uphold this policy.
- Fire and cooking incidents are recorded under the Incident Response Policy.
- This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if fire safety, food safety, or environmental law changes
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board



## Venue Hire Policy

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### 1. Purpose and Scope

- The Meadow Orchard Project (MOP) makes its venue available for hire where this supports the Charity's purposes and community ethos.
- This policy ensures that all hire arrangements are lawful, safe, sustainable, and fair, with all income reinvested to further MOP's charitable aims.
- Outcome: To balance community access with prudent governance, ensuring all venue hire activity supports the Charity's public benefit and does not create undue private gain.
- This policy applies to all hire requests, whether from members, community groups, or external organisations.
- It must be read alongside the [Venue Hire Terms and Conditions](#) and [Site Use Agreement](#), which set out detailed booking, payment, and cancellation rules.

### 2. Legal and Governance Framework

This policy is grounded in:

- MOP Constitution - assets must be used solely for charitable purposes; no member or trustee may receive personal benefit except where incidental and properly authorised.
- Charities Act 2011 - trustees must protect, apply, and prudently manage charitable resources.
- Charity Commission guidance:
  - CC35: Trustees, trading and tax - hire income must be lawful and support charitable aims.
  - CC8: Internal Financial Controls for Charities - clear authorisation and accounting for income.

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- Serious Incident Reporting guidance - trustees must report hire-related risks or incidents threatening people, assets, or reputation.
- Health & Safety law - all venue users must comply with fire safety, first aid, and risk management duties.
- Safeguarding law and policy - protection of children and adults at risk during venue use.
- Licensing Act 2003 - events involving alcohol or regulated entertainment require the appropriate permissions.
- Environmental and sustainability obligations - responsible waste, noise, and energy management.

## 3. Guiding Principles

- Venue use must further or support MOP's charitable purposes, or at least not conflict with them.
- Any private benefit must be incidental and outweighed by the public benefit.
- Trustees retain absolute discretion to approve, refuse, or cancel hires where activities could harm MOP's people, property, or reputation.
- Safety, inclusion, and sustainability guide all venue use.
- Transparency and record-keeping are essential for all decisions and income.

## 4. Trustee Decision Criteria

Before approving hire, trustees (or a delegated hire officer) will consider whether:

- The event aligns with or supports MOP's charitable purposes.
- The event avoids reputational, legal, or safeguarding risk.
- The terms and fees are fair and proportionate to use, ensuring no subsidy of private benefit.
- Public benefit clearly outweighs private benefit (for example, through education, wellbeing, or community participation).
- The activity can be managed safely within MOP's policies and insurance cover.
- All decisions must be recorded in trustee minutes or appropriate log, including approvals, fees, and any conditions applied.

## 5. Expectations and Responsibilities

### 5.1 Trustees

- Approve suitable hire requests in line with this policy, the Site Use Agreement, and Venue Hire Terms and Conditions.
- Set fees that are cost-covering, fair, and not below market rate for any commercial use.
- Ensure all hire income is accounted for and reinvested into MOP's charitable purposes.



- Retain the right to refuse, modify, or cancel bookings that pose risk or breach this policy.
- Oversee annual review of hire income, risk, and compliance.

## 5.2 Hirers

- Must complete the official booking form and agree to the Venue Hire Terms and Conditions and Site Use Agreement.
- Must comply with all relevant MOP policies, including:
  - Safeguarding Policy
  - Fire & Cooking Policy
  - Equalities & Inclusion Policy
  - Data Protection and Record Keeping Policy
- Hirers must ensure a MOP-approved Site Leader is present throughout the hire.
- Hirers must provide:
  - A risk assessment covering fire, health, and safety;
  - Proof of insurance (public liability minimum £2m) if required;
  - Evidence of licences or permissions for regulated activities (e.g. alcohol, music, performance).
- Hirers are responsible for guest safety, conduct, and compliance with the law.
- Hirers must leave the venue clean, safe, and undamaged, removing all waste in line with sustainability principles.

## 6. How it works in practice

### 6.1 Eligibility

Priority is given to:

- Charities and voluntary/community groups.
- Events supporting wellbeing, sustainability, education, or inclusion.
- Private hire is permitted where consistent with MOP's purposes and where public benefit is clear (e.g. local family or community celebrations).
- Commercial hire is only permitted where:
  - Private gain is incidental;
  - Fees are fair and cover costs; and
  - The activity benefits or raises funds for MOP.

### 6.2 Shared Access

- MOP is a shared community space. Hire does not normally include exclusive site use. Members and volunteers may be present or working elsewhere onsite during hire periods.

### 6.3 Prohibited Uses

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- Events primarily for private commercial profit with no charitable link.
- Activities that exclude or disadvantage community groups without justification.
- Party-political campaigning or partisan events.
- Unsafe, illegal, or discriminatory practices.
- Activities inconsistent with MOP's sustainability ethos (e.g. single-use plastics, high waste, fossil fuel generators).

## 6.4 Insurance and Liability

- Hirers are fully responsible for the safety of their event and attendees.
- MOP accepts no liability for loss, injury, or damage arising from hire activities.
- Trustees may require proof of public liability insurance before confirmation.
- Accidents or near-misses must be reported immediately under the Incident Response Policy.

## 6.5 Sustainability

- Hirers must minimise waste, recycle where possible, and avoid non-recyclable or single-use items.
- Use of sustainable, local, and ethical suppliers is encouraged.
- Noise, lighting, and environmental impacts must be kept minimal and considerate.
- 6.6 Payments and Cancellations
- All bookings, payments, deposits, and cancellations follow the Venue Hire Terms and Conditions.
- Fees and deposits are reviewed annually by trustees.

## 7. Low-Risk Community Events

- For small, low-risk activities run by MOP members or partner organisations (e.g. a gardening workshop or open day):
- A simplified hire or booking process may be used.
- A trustee or site lead must still confirm in writing that the event is covered under MOP's policies and insurance.

## 8. Breaches and Non-Compliance

### 8.1 Breaches include:

- Misuse of the venue or breach of safety, safeguarding, or licensing law.
- Failure to comply with hire terms or damaging the site.
- Non-payment or unauthorised use of facilities.
- Permitting unlicensed activities (e.g. alcohol sales, amplified music, public performances).
- Approving an event that does not further our charitable purposes, creates undue private benefit, or breaches Charity Commission guidance.

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## 8.2 Consequences:

- Immediate cancellation or suspension of hire.
- Liability for costs, damage, or cleanup.
- Disciplinary action where members are involved.
- Possible reporting to authorities or insurers for serious incidents.

## 9. Accountability and Oversight

- Trustees oversee all hire approvals, fee setting, and compliance.
- All hire income is recorded in MOP's financial accounts under the Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy.
- Site leads or delegated hire officers maintain a Hire Log and ensure risk assessments and insurance are on file.
- Trustees review this policy annually, or sooner if law, Charity Commission guidance, or organisational needs change.
- Change Log:
  - Original approval date: 17/10/2025 by Trustee board