

## Volunteer Information Pack

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to support the SOS Puffin project. Volunteers are vital to the success of this project and your time is hugely appreciated.

Please read this pack carefully **before signing up to volunteer**. It's important that you understand what is involved in volunteering and what the risks are.

### About SOS Puffin

SOS Puffin began in 2007, working to tackle Tree Mallow (an invasive plant) on the islands of Craigleith, Fidra and the Lamb. If left uncontrolled, Tree Mallow spreads densely, transforming these important seabird habitats and threatening the population of nesting puffins. On Fidra, we work in partnership with **RSPB Scotland** and their brilliant team of volunteers to deliver this project. On the Lamb, we work in partnership with the **Lothian Sea Kayak Club** to monitor and control the tree mallow.

To find out more about SOS Puffin and the research that underpins the project, visit our [website](#).

### What does volunteering involve?

Volunteering with the project involves joining us on a trip out to one of the local islands (usually Craigleith or Fidra) to tackle the invasive Tree Mallow growing there. Trips are usually 4 -7 hours in length, with breaks throughout the day. This is a brilliant opportunity to do something positive for nature and enjoy the wildlife on these important islands.

However, please note that volunteering with this project requires:

- Traveling to the island using a Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB). This boat is not suitable for anyone who has injuries or sensitivities in their back, or for anyone who is pregnant.
- Disembarking from the boat onto the island. This involves stepping off the boat onto steep rocks or steps which may be slippery and wet. Provisions are in place to increase the safety of volunteers during landing, however good physical fitness, good balance, and appropriate footwear with good grip is required. Please keep in mind that the general public do not land on these islands, so there is no formal landing place or permanent safety infrastructure.
- Walking on slippery, loose, and uneven ground. There may be puffin and rabbit burrows present in some areas, which can be hazardous.
- Physical and repetitive (but satisfying!) work using sharp tools. Tasks involve regular bending, kneeling, and lifting.
- Spending time on a remote island without toilet or shelter facilities. In an emergency, help may take longer to arrive than in mainland locations.

Please note that these trips do not take place during seabird breeding season. Although we will be working to improve important habitats for puffins, it's unlikely that we'll encounter puffins while we're out on the islands.

## What you need to bring with you

- A fully charged mobile phone.
- Sufficient food and water, including lunch where necessary.
- Any medication you may need. Please let your group leader know about any relevant medical information or requirements by email ([conservationprojects@seabird.org](mailto:conservationprojects@seabird.org)) in advance of your trip.
- Appropriate clothing, including warm layers, waterproof trousers, and a waterproof coat. The weather can change rapidly and therefore it is important that you are prepared for both warm and cold conditions. Clothes worn on the islands will likely get dirty and may be damaged.
- Appropriate footwear with good grip.
- A sturdy bag with handles to carry your belongings in, which will securely zip closed.
- Sunscreen and a hat to protect yourself in warmer weather.

## What will be provided?

- Transport to and from the island.
- Guidance about how to stay safe and what to do while on the island.
- Tools and gloves.
- Your group leader is a trained first aider and will be carrying a first aid kit.
- A thorough risk assessment covering the trip (available on request).
- Insurance. Third party insurance cover is provided for volunteers by the Scottish Seabird Centre when on the island and by the boat operator when using the Centre's own rigid inflatable boat (RIB). If any other boat is used, insurance cover will be provided by the boat operator.

## Departure and Cancellations

This project is totally dependent on good sea conditions and suitable weather. The sea needs to be calm, with low wind and swell, for landing to be possible on the islands. This means that trips are often cancelled the day before they are due to take place. Weather forecasts are not always accurate and if the skipper is not happy with conditions then trips may also be cancelled on the day itself (although every effort is made to avoid last minute disappointment and inconvenience).



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## What is Craigleith like?

Craigleith is a small circular island (250m across) surrounded by rocky shores or cliffs. It is home to large numbers of nesting seabirds from April to August and is also used by grey seals for breeding in the late autumn. There is no formal landing place, so the boat lands volunteer groups on the rocky shore, which can be very slippery. A temporary rope 'handrail' is provided to help when disembarking on Craigleith. Walking on the island can be difficult due to the rough terrain and the presence of tall vegetation. Many puffin and rabbit burrows are present across the island, which can also be hazardous.

## What is Fidra like?

Fidra is a small island owned by the RSPB and managed as a nature reserve. The island is in two parts, with the main island and lighthouse to the north and the smaller Castle Tarbet to the south (which is cut off at high tide). It is surrounded by rocky shores and cliffs and is home to large numbers of nesting seabirds from April to August. There is a small jetty on the east side, so landing is straightforward in calm conditions. Walking on the island can be difficult due to the rough terrain, tall vegetation, and puffin burrows.

## Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this pack! If you'd still like to sign up to volunteer with us, please complete this [form](#). Please bare in mind that trips are now fairly few and far between, as we have made good progress on the tree mallow out on the islands. This means opportunities tend to be more 'one-off' than regular work parties.

If you have any additional questions about the project or the islands, or if you would prefer to receive a copy of the volunteer form by email, please don't hesitate to chat to someone from our conservation team. You can email: [conservationprojects@seabird.org](mailto:conservationprojects@seabird.org).



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