

External Speakers and Presenters Policy and Procedures

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Contents

1. Purpose	4
2. Scope	4
3. Policy Statement.....	4
4. Responsibilities	5
Board of Trustees	5
Event Organiser.....	5
Designated Trustee or Senior Volunteer	5
5. Selection of Speakers	6
6. Due Diligence	6
Basic Checks	6
Enhanced Checks	6
7. Safeguarding.....	6
8. Risk Assessment.....	7
9. Conditions of Engagement	8
10. Political Activity	8
11. Freedom of Expression.....	8
12. Monitoring and Intervention	9
13. Record Keeping.....	9
14. Breaches of this Policy	9
Procedures for Engaging External Speakers	9
Step 1: Identify Proposed Speaker.....	9
Step 2: Initial Assessment	10
Step 3: Enhanced Review (if required)	10
Step 4: Approval	10
Step 5: Speaker Agreement	10
Step 6: Event Delivery	11
Step 7: Post-Event Review	11
External Speaker Risk Assessment Checklist - Example.....	12
Political Neutrality.....	12
What Is Permitted?.....	12
What Is Not Permitted?	13

During Election Periods	13
Trustee and Organiser Actions.....	14

1. Purpose

The Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust ("the Trust") is committed to providing safe, educational, inclusive and enjoyable events that support its charitable objectives.

This policy establishes the principles, responsibilities and procedures for inviting and managing external speakers, presenters, trainers, historians, entertainers and other guest contributors at Trust events.

The policy seeks to:

- Protect the reputation and charitable purposes of the Trust.
 - Ensure compliance with Charity Commission guidance and charity law.
 - Safeguard volunteers, staff, members, visitors and vulnerable individuals.
 - Promote lawful freedom of expression within appropriate limits.
 - Manage risks associated with external speakers and public events.
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2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Trust-organised events.
- Events held on Trust premises or property.
- Events delivered on behalf of the Trust.
- External speakers whether paid, unpaid or volunteering.
- Physical, virtual and hybrid events.

The term "speaker" includes any external individual or organisation invited to provide presentations, talks, lectures, demonstrations, training, workshops or public commentary.

3. Policy Statement

The Trust welcomes contributions from a wide range of speakers whose expertise and experience help advance the Trust's charitable objectives, including:

- Canal restoration and heritage.
- Environmental conservation.
- Engineering and construction.

- Community engagement.
- Education and local history.
- Waterway management and recreation.

The Trust will not knowingly provide a platform for individuals or organisations whose activities or statements:

- Are unlawful.
- Promote hatred, violence or discrimination.
- Encourage criminal activity.
- Conflict significantly with the Trust's charitable purposes.
- Create unacceptable reputational, safeguarding or security risks.

The Trust reserves the right to decline, cancel or terminate a speaking engagement where concerns arise.

4. Responsibilities

Board of Trustees

The Board shall:

- Approve and periodically review this policy.
- Ensure appropriate governance arrangements are in place.
- Support risk-based decision-making.

Event Organiser

The Event Organiser shall:

- Carry out appropriate checks.
- Complete any required risk assessment.
- Obtain approvals where required.
- Ensure speakers are briefed on Trust expectations.

Designated Trustee or Senior Volunteer

Where a speaker presents an elevated risk, the designated Trustee shall:

- Review the risk assessment.
- Decide whether conditions should be imposed.

- Approve or reject the engagement.

5. Selection of Speakers

The Trust will consider:

- Relevance to the Trust's objectives.
- Expertise and credibility.
- Previous speaking experience.
- Reputation and public profile.
- Potential benefits to audiences.

Selection decisions should be fair, transparent and proportionate.

6. Due Diligence

Before confirming an engagement, organisers should undertake proportionate checks which may include:

Basic Checks

- Verification of identity.
- Speaker biography and credentials.
- Website and professional profile review.
- References where appropriate.

Enhanced Checks

Where risks are higher, checks may include:

- Publicly available media searches.
- Review of previous presentations or publications.
- Assessment of complaints or controversies.
- Consultation with Trustees.

The level of checking should be proportionate to the nature of the event and audience.

7. Safeguarding

Where children, young people or vulnerable adults may attend:

- The Trust's Safeguarding Policy applies.
- Appropriate supervision arrangements must be in place.
- Speakers must be informed of safeguarding expectations.
- Any required DBS checks shall be considered in accordance with Trust safeguarding procedures.

No speaker may have unsupervised responsibility for children or vulnerable adults unless authorised under relevant safeguarding requirements.

8. Risk Assessment

An event-specific risk assessment shall be undertaken where there is potential for:

- Reputational risk.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Security concerns.
- Potential public controversy.
- Significant media attention.

The assessment should consider:

Risk Area	Matters to Consider
Reputation	Alignment with Trust values and charitable aims
Safety	Physical safety of attendees
Safeguarding	Presence of children or vulnerable adults
Legal	Defamation, discrimination, copyright, data protection
Security	Protests, disruption or venue access concerns
Financial	Costs and cancellation implications

9. Conditions of Engagement

The Trust may impose reasonable conditions including:

- Agreement to follow Trust policies.
- Compliance with safeguarding requirements.
- Respectful conduct towards attendees.
- Restrictions on political campaigning.
- Restrictions on fundraising not approved by the Trust.
- Restrictions on distribution of unauthorised materials.

Speakers may be asked to provide presentation materials in advance where appropriate.

10. Political Activity

The Trust is politically neutral.

Speakers must not use Trust events to:

- Endorse political parties.
- Promote election candidates.
- Conduct party-political campaigning.

Discussion of public policy related to waterways, heritage, environment or local communities is permitted where relevant and balanced.

11. Freedom of Expression

The Trust supports lawful freedom of expression and open discussion.

However, freedom of expression does not extend to:

- Illegal speech.
- Hate speech.
- Harassment.
- Discrimination.
- Incitement to violence.

The Trust may intervene, suspend or terminate an event where these standards are breached.

12. Monitoring and Intervention

During the event, organisers or designated representatives may:

- Monitor the presentation.
- Address concerns raised by attendees.
- Pause or stop the event if necessary.
- Remove individuals causing disruption.

Any significant incident shall be documented and reported to the Board or Police if required.

13. Record Keeping

The Trust shall retain appropriate records including:

- Speaker invitation and correspondence.
- Risk assessments.
- Approval decisions.
- Relevant safeguarding documentation.
- Incident reports.

Records shall be retained in accordance with the Trust's document retention arrangements and privacy requirements.

14. Breaches of this Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- Withdrawal of invitation.
- Immediate termination of the engagement.
- Exclusion from future Trust events.
- Referral to relevant authorities where required.

Procedures for Engaging External Speakers

Step 1: Identify Proposed Speaker

Event organiser submits:

- Speaker name.

- Organisation (if applicable).
- Event title.
- Topic.
- Audience type.
- Proposed date.

Step 2: Initial Assessment

The organiser completes an assessment covering:

- Relevance to charitable objectives.
- Audience suitability.
- Safeguarding implications.
- Known reputational issues.

Low-risk speakers proceed directly to Step 4.

Step 3: Enhanced Review (if required)

Enhanced review shall be undertaken where:

- The subject matter is controversial.
- Large public audiences are expected.
- Children or vulnerable adults are attending.
- Previous concerns have been identified.

The review is submitted to the designated Trustee for approval.

Step 4: Approval

Low Risk

Approved by Event Organiser.

Medium or High Risk

Approved by designated Trustee or Board representative.

Approval shall be recorded.

Step 5: Speaker Agreement

Provide the speaker with:

- Event details.
- Trust expectations.

- Safeguarding requirements.
- Code of conduct.
- Any conditions of engagement.

Obtain written acceptance which can be by return email highlighting the above.

Step 6: Event Delivery

The organiser shall ensure:

- Appropriate event supervision.
- Emergency procedures are known.
- Safeguarding contacts are available.
- Any issues are recorded.

Step 7: Post-Event Review

Where appropriate:

- Gather feedback.
- Record incidents.
- Note lessons learned.
- Update future risk assessments.

External Speaker Risk Assessment Checklist - Example

Tick as applicable:

Speaker

- ☐ Identity verified
- ☐ Qualifications checked
- ☐ Relevant expertise confirmed

Safeguarding

- ☐ Children attending
- ☐ Vulnerable adults attending
- ☐ Additional controls required

Reputation

- ☐ No concerns identified
- ☐ Concerns identified and assessed
- ☐ Trustee approval obtained

Event Management

- ☐ Venue suitable
- ☐ Security considerations reviewed
- ☐ Emergency procedures confirmed

Approval

- ☐ Approved by organiser
- ☐ Approved by Trustee (if required)

Political Neutrality

Principle

The Trust is an independent charity and must remain politically neutral. The Trust's resources, events and platforms must not be used to support, oppose or promote any political party, candidate or elected representative.

Trustees, volunteers and speakers may hold personal political views, but these must not be presented as the views of the Trust.

What Is Permitted?

The Trust may host speakers who discuss:

- Waterway, environmental, heritage or conservation policy.
- Government legislation affecting canals, navigation or charities.

- Local authority planning matters affecting the canal corridor.
- Funding opportunities arising from government programmes.
- Historical political events relevant to canal history.

The discussion must be:

- Relevant to the Trust's charitable objectives.
- Balanced and evidence based.
- Educational rather than campaigning.
- Conducted in a respectful manner.

For example, a speaker may explain how different planning policies affect canal restoration projects.

What Is Not Permitted?

A speaker must not:

- Encourage attendees to vote for or against a political party.
- Promote or oppose a political candidate.
- Solicit support for a political campaign.
- Distribute political campaign literature.
- Use Trust events as a platform for electioneering.
- Claim political endorsement by the Trust.

For example, a speaker must not state:

"You should vote for Party X because it supports waterways."

or

"The Trust supports Candidate Y."

During Election Periods

Particular care must be taken during:

- Local elections.
- Parliamentary elections.
- Referendums.

Where a topic could be politically contentious, organisers should ensure:

- The charitable purpose of the event is clear.

- Different viewpoints are represented where practical.
- The event is not timed or presented so as to benefit a particular political party or candidate.

Trustee and Organiser Actions

If a speaker begins engaging in party-political campaigning, the event organiser may:

1. Remind the speaker of the agreed conditions.
2. Request that the speaker return to the relevant topic.
3. Pause or stop the presentation if necessary.
4. Record the incident and report it to the trustees.