

Isle of Man Public Record Office Volunteer Policy

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1. Scope of the Isle of Man Public Record Office (IOMPRO) policy

The Isle of Man Public Record Office (IOMPRO) preserves the national archives of Isle of Man public bodies. Our role and activities are defined by statute - the Public Records Act 1999 and the Public Records Order 2015.

Our mission is to ensure records of Isle of Man public bodies that have historic or cultural significance are **identified**, **preserved** and **made accessible** for all who wish to use them, whilst ensuring compliance with the law in respect of sensitive or personal records.

We commit to preserving and making accessible records in all formats, both physical and digital, through active programmes of **selection and transfer of records, conservation and collections care, collections information, access and outreach**.

The work of the IOMPRO contributes to the Isle of Man Government's vision for a **vibrant, secure and sustainable Island nation**, as set out in 'Our Island Plan'.

We aim through our volunteer programme to contribute to the Island Plan's vision of **'outstanding lifelong learning and development opportunities for all'** and **'an island of health and wellbeing'**.

We aim to offer opportunities for work placements and volunteering that provide valuable learning outcomes and skills development for those who volunteer with us.

Volunteering can also contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing for those that volunteer. Our volunteer opportunities allow volunteers to get involved and contribute to the preservation of island's heritage and culture through a range of different projects. Volunteering also provides the opportunity to meet and connect with others using the archive service, helping to combat loneliness and social isolation.

Volunteering also provides benefits for the Public Record Office, We recognise the positive potential volunteers can bring to the delivery of our mission and strategic goals.

This policy aims to define and detail the relationship between the IOMPRO and its future volunteers.



2. Definition of volunteer with the IOMPRO

A volunteer is a person who freely agrees to gift their time and skills in order to support the delivery of the activities of the IOMPRO.

Volunteers will work within clearly defined project roles. These projects will be identified by IOMPRO staff and should be designed with the aim to complement, enhance and add value to the activities of the archive service, as well as providing an interesting and engaging activity for the volunteer.

3. Working with volunteers and the opportunities on offer

3.1 Reasons for working with volunteers:

Volunteer involvement with the IOMPRO is desirable as it aids in the delivery of its services and strategic goals. It also provides another avenue for engagement with our external stakeholders, potentially creating ambassadors for the service.

The IOMPRO's work with volunteers should be mutually beneficial to both parties and each project opportunity offered by the archive service should reflect this aim. What is on offer for volunteers?

- A well-defined, interesting volunteer project;
- Opportunities to develop existing skills and acquire new ones;
- Support in meeting a volunteer project, via informal training;
- The chance to share skills, knowledge and a love of the IOMPRO's collections;
- A friendly, positive environment where the contribution of volunteers is respected and valued.

What we expect from our volunteers:

- A commitment to attend volunteering session at a mutually agreed time;
- To undertake any informal training deemed to be necessary to the delivery of the volunteer project;
- To adhere to relevant policies and practices applicable to volunteering at the IOMPRO.



3.2 Nature of opportunities on offer

All volunteer roles will be well defined and unambiguous. They should benefit the service and its users. While not intended to be exhaustive, examples of volunteer roles include:

- Indexing specific collections or series of archival documents and associated tasks such as pagination;
- Supporting preservation tasks;
- Carrying out research using IOMPRO holdings to support our projects;
- Basic listing and/or transcription work to the item level.

4. Planning volunteer projects

Specific volunteer documentation will be prepared for each project role:

- The volunteer project initiation document should include:
 1. A description of the task(s) associated with the project
 2. An introduction to the collection(s) which form the focus of the project
 3. Details about the benefits of the project to both the volunteer and the archive service.
- Additionally, the project initiation document will outline the informal training which will be offered to aid the volunteer in undertaking the project. Where applicable training could include:
 1. Health and safety issues
 2. Best practice in manual handling
 3. Best practice in the handling of archival records
 4. Data protection and information security
- Where appropriate, the project initiation document will also include written instructions and workflows which explains to the volunteer how the project should be completed.



5. Recruiting volunteers: background and procedure

The IOMPRO is aware that facilitating volunteer opportunities requires additional draws on staff time and resources in order for the opportunity to be managed in a way that is meaningful to both parties.

The factors detailed above are key in determining the number of volunteers that can be effectively supervised by the IOMPRO at any one time.

All prospective volunteers should undergo an engagement process:

- Prospective volunteer contacts IOMPRO with an expression of interest;
- IOMPRO contact officer (i.e. team member who received the expression of interest) sets-up a team meeting to pool ideas for potential project(s);
- Once a potential project has been identified, the prospective volunteer should be invited for an informal meeting with the IOMPRO contact team member. This should include:
 - A discussion outlining the potential project(s) available, a discussion establishing the applicant's motivations for volunteering and a discussion with regards to their skills and background
 - A brief introduction the IOMPRO's mission and how the project fits within this
 - A brief introduction to the IOMPRO's main/frequently consulted collections (e.g. planning, courts, land valuation/rates records)
 - A tour of the IOMPRO facility
- Based on this meeting, and assuming the applicant wishes to proceed with the opportunity, a [project initiation document](#) should be drawn up to reflect what was agreed.



6. Recognition and reward for volunteers

It is of the utmost importance that all volunteers receive recognition for their work. While the spirit of volunteerism precludes monetary reimbursement there are other ways to offer recognition.

- Saying ‘thank you’ is a simple but effective gesture in recognising the value a volunteer’s contribution has given to the archive service.
- Volunteers’ contributions could also be acknowledged in the archivist note of the catalogue description. e.g. *‘item level description(s) created by xxxx, IOMPRO Volunteer, under supervision by x PRO Team member’*.
- Where relevant - letters of reference can be provided as another tangible way of recognising a volunteer’s contribution.

Note that references should only be provided for those who have completed the equivalent of 5 days’ full time volunteering, up to 3 years after their last volunteering session.

6. Expenses

The IOMPRO is not in a position to reimburse any expense incurred by volunteers, inclusive of travel costs.

7. Health and Safety of volunteers

Prior to the commencement of the volunteer project an organisational risk assessment should be completed.

There is a space in the project initiation document where risks and their associated mitigation responses can be tabulated.



8. Conduct of volunteers

All volunteers at the IOMPRO are ambassadors - this means that for the duration of any volunteering session all volunteer are asked to adhere to policies in place regarding smoking, consumption of alcohol and anti-social behaviour.

Volunteers are also asked to follow IOMPRO guidelines on the handling and cleaning of archive materials. Training and guidance will be provided.

If after training, poor practice that could result in damage to the archive collections or serious breaches of policies are evident, this will be discussed with the volunteer and further training provided if appropriate.

Where issues such as this cannot be resolved, it may be appropriate for the volunteer placement to be brought to an end. IOMPRO will aim to handle situations such as these with the utmost sensitivity, care and respect for the volunteer.

9. Saying goodbye to volunteers

Volunteer posts by their very nature mean no contractual obligations exist. However, we ask that any volunteer who no longer wishes to actively volunteer with us let us know by speaking to their IOMPRO Contact Officer or in their absence the Public Record Officer.

On occasion, it may be necessary for the IOMPRO to end a volunteer's involvement with the service due to a number of factors, such as:

- A change in the material circumstances of the IOMPRO (for instance, in terms of staffing or resourcing) which means the volunteer opportunity can no longer be facilitated effectively;
- The role is no longer needed (i.e. no suitable projects are available);
- The volunteer is no longer suitable for the role (see point 8).

In these circumstances the IOMPRO will treat the volunteer fairly and respectfully and be sure to give the volunteer timely notice of the end of their placement.



Review

Version 1 issued 31 May 2022.

We will review this policy every three years, and at interim dates where necessary.

Approval

Approved by: Edward Clague, Registrar General

Date: 31 May 2022.

