

Data Protection Act

ICO registration

As a not-for-profit volunteer group we are exempt from registering (Self-assessment criteria) with the ICO (information commissioner's Office) but The Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort would be expected to adhere to the principles of the Data Protection Act.

1. What is Data Protection all about? Data Protection is about the way we collect and look after the personal data entrusted to us by individuals. The Data Protection Act 1998 (the "Act") seeks to protect the privacy of individuals by regulating the way their personal data is used by those who possess it. Data Protection is regulated in the UK by the Information Commissioner.
2. How does the Data Protection Act impact Local Groups? The Act applies to personal data that we hold about any living individual. The main activities of local groups which fall under the Act and we should be aware of are: (a) collecting personal data (of anyone – e.g. a new group member, someone signing up to receive our newsletter, someone setting up a standing order to give money to our group, or people signing up to attend one of our events, etc); (b) contacting anyone whose data we hold (i.e. members, supporters, or just people whose details we have because they once came to an event etc); (c) storing their information (The Act applies to electronic and paper files); and (d) disclosing their information to third parties and/or other organisations.
3. What is Personal Data? Any data that we hold about any individual will usually count as personal data. This will include biographical information such as name, postal & email addresses, employment details and date of birth, and financial information such as bank details. It also includes any written comments or opinions about an individual. Certain information such as an individual's sexual orientation, their racial or ethnic origin, criminal record, political opinions, and religious beliefs, are classified as Sensitive Personal Data and we should have the explicit consent of the individual in order to hold it or use it in any way.

4. What should we know about collecting Personal Data? When we collect personal data, typically contact information, it should be clear to the individual who we are and what we are going to use their information for. (E.g. that we are The Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort and that we are going to use their contact details to send them our group's monthly newsletters, tasks, events and to keep them informed of what the group is up to). We should then ensure that we only use the information for the purpose it was given to us. We only ask for the minimum information that we actually need to achieve our purpose.
5. We never disclose any personal data that we hold to other organisations except our partner Bedford Borough Council, unless the individual has given us specific consent to do so.
6. We do not retain personal data for longer than necessary so if we have no further need for it then it will be deleted.
7. People are entitled to know what data we hold about them provided they make a written request. We should disclose all the personal data that we hold about the individual including references to them within documents such as emails where possible.
8. We should take sensible precautions to guard against unnecessary risks to personal information.
9. How can we make sure our group is compliant?
 - (a) Is the way we are using this data consistent with the reason for which it was given?
 - (b) Would the person expect us to do this or do we need consent?
 - (c) Are we putting our own priorities above those of the individual?
 - (d) Are we taking good care of the data that has been entrusted to us?
 - (e) Would it make us feel uncomfortable if the individual concerned asked to see any of the information which we hold about them?
 - (f) Do we really need any or all of this information?