

Ethical Fundraising Policy Statement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Canal and River Trust (“the Trust”) is committed to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and business practices. We view this as a responsibility to our donors, to our organisation and to our cause. At the heart of fundraising ethics is the intent to protect our mission, our sense of personal and organisational integrity, and above all the trust of the donor. We treat everyone we work with – starting with our donors – with respect.
- 1.2 We do not tolerate fraud, bribery, harassment, corruption or any illegal behaviour. We expect our people, including staff, volunteers and contractors, to act honestly and with integrity. They must look after the resources in their care and act appropriately towards any donors who may be vulnerable.
- 1.3 This Policy Statement sets out the core principles and values that inform all our fundraising. It also sets out ethical guidelines that will inform our decision-making about accepting or refusing donations.

2. Our Supporter Promise

- 2.1 We are regulated by the Fundraising Regulator and fully commit to observing the Code of Fundraising Practice (“the Code”). This includes the standards for overall fundraising as well as those for specific fundraising areas. This applies to our communications, solicitation statements, and fundraising materials, and to face-to-face or telephone fundraising.
- 2.2 [Our Supporter Promise](#) is that we will:
 - be honest and transparent about where donors’ money goes;
 - treat donors with courtesy and respect;
 - keep donors’ personal information safe; and
 - work to the highest fundraising standards.

3. Accepting and Rejecting Donations

- 3.1 A donation can be money, land, goods or other property of any kind freely given to the Trust.
- 3.2 The Charity Commission’s starting point is that charities should normally accept donations and use them to further their purposes. Rejecting a donation is always a difficult decision as it takes resources away from delivering to purpose.



3.3 However, the Trust **will** reject donations:

- a) Which are from illegal sources – for example, where the gift comprises the proceeds of crime – or come with illegal conditions;
- b) Where we know or have good reason to believe a supporter lacks capacity to make a decision to donate or is in a vulnerable circumstance, which means they may not be able to make an informed decision;
- c) Where the offer of support is dependent on conditions placed on it, the fulfilment of which would require the Trust to take any action which is unlawful;
- d) Where the donation cannot be legally given to the Trust – for example the donor does not own the property they are donating; or
- e) Where we have reason to believe that the donation may be an attempt to influence a procurement decision.

3.4 The Trust **is likely to** reject a donation where it:

- a) Is for purposes that fall outside the Trust's purposes;
- b) Would result in a valid legal claim or risk of claim against the Trust if it was accepted or kept;
- c) Has features or conditions that may undermine the Trust's independence;
- d) Would bring unacceptable burdens that outweigh its benefit to the Trust (for example, a gift of property that is too expensive to insure);
- e) May involve unacceptable private benefit to an individual/organisation.

In such cases the Trust will consider whether it is possible to work with the donor to change the terms of the donation so that it may be accepted/kept. The Trust will only accept a donation with legal conditions or restrictions if it is able to follow them and demonstrate that it has done so.

3.5 The Trust **may** reject a donation where, on balance, its acceptance would be contrary to the Trust's best interests. We call these 'contentious donations'. Any anticipated detriment must be set against the benefit of having the funds from the donor, which would enable the Trust to pursue its purposes. The Trust will follow the Charity Commission's [trustee decision-making principles](#) and its general trustees duties when making such decisions, ensuring that decisions are reasonable, supported by clear evidence, and unaffected by personal motives or interests. Short and long-term impacts (including the impact on supporters, funders, stakeholders and colleagues) will be considered.

3.6 The following non-exhaustive list provides examples of contentious donations:

- a) Where the proposed donation is from a business or body whose main activity is directly associated with a sector which, in the view of the Trust, poses a risk of reputational damage or considerable conflict with the Trust's charitable objects;
- b) Where the donation does not further the Trust's cause and/or align with planned priorities; or

- c) Where practical considerations associated with a proposed donation mean that its acceptance is not in the Trust's best interests.
- 3.7 An internal review process, detailed in our Accepting and Refusing Donations Standard, will be applied (with decisions documented) to proposed donations which are:
- a) Any donation which appears to fall under paragraphs 3.3 to 3.6 above
 - b) Over £20,000 (or where a proposed gift would cause a donor's total donations within a 12-month period to exceed £20,000); and
 - c) £20,000 or less in other circumstances at the discretion of the Head of Individual Giving or the Head of Philanthropy and Partnerships.

4. Returning Donations

- 4.1 The Trust will also return donations:
- a) If the law, or the terms and conditions of the gift, provide for it to be returned in particular circumstances;
 - b) If a donation has already been made and there are reasonable grounds for believing that the supporter lacked the capacity to make the decision (and the Trust receives evidence of this). In such situations, the donation must be returned as the original donation was invalid;
 - c) By way of an 'ex-gratia payment' (a payment made as a result of a compelling moral, but not legal obligation) in limited circumstances. This type of donation return will only be permitted where the Trust has received an order from the Charity Commission; or
 - d) If the donation was made by credit or debit card wholly or partly in error within the previous 15 days in response to an appeal by a professional fundraiser.

5. Restricted Donations

- 5.1 All restricted donations will be used as agreed with the donor wherever reasonably practicable. If, due to programme or organisational changes, amendments or alternative uses are necessary this will be discussed with the donor to identify a mutually acceptable outcome. If the donor is deceased or legally incompetent, and the Trust is unable to contact a legal designate despite reasonable effort, the donation will be used in a manner that is as consistent as possible with the donor's original intent.

6. Fundraising with People in Vulnerable Circumstances

- 6.1 The Trust takes seriously its responsibility to promote and protect the safety and welfare of vulnerable people. Our Safeguarding Policy Statement sets out our commitment to protect the safety and welfare of all individuals who come into contact with the Trust, and in particular, children and adults at risk. The Fundraising and People in Vulnerable Circumstances Standard sets out specifically how this is applied to fundraising activity.
- 6.2 The Trust does not seek to take or accept donations from people under the age of 18. Any donation offered by a person under 18 must only be accepted with the written consent of the individual's parent or legal guardian.

- 6.3 Anyone fundraising on the Trust's behalf must take all reasonable steps to treat a donor fairly, enabling them to make an informed decision about any donation. This must include taking into account the needs of any potential donor who may be in a vulnerable circumstance or require additional care and support to make an informed decision.

7. Transparency and Complaints


- 7.1 We commit to meeting the standards for openness and transparency required by the Fundraising Regulator both through our Annual Report and Accounts and in our handling of restricted donations.
- 7.2 We have a robust process for handling complaints about our fundraising, and regularly review any complaints we have received to learn how we can further improve the quality of fundraising and contact with supporters and the public.
- 7.3 We regularly review our Policy Statement and Standards to ensure that our donation handling (whether received directly, through our regional networks or through agencies contracted to handle appeals and correspondence) meets the Code's standards.

8. How we will ensure Ethical Fundraising

- 8.1 We expect all staff and volunteers who engage in fundraising on the Trust's behalf, as well as all agencies and third-party suppliers who fundraise on the Trust's behalf, to comply with the principles set out in this Policy Statement and with the requirements set out in our Standards.
- 8.2 All fundraising staff will receive training on this Policy Statement and our related Standards as part of their induction.
- 8.3 We expect all agencies and suppliers who fundraise on our behalf to have their own policy and processes for meeting the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Practice. In the event that such policies/processes are less stringent than the Trust's, we require the agency/supplier to comply with our Policy Statement and Standards.
- 8.4 Any suspected breaches of this Policy Statement will be investigated by the relevant head of department. Where a breach is found to have occurred appropriate action will be taken and lessons learned will be identified.



David Orr CBE
Chair to the Board of Trustees
July 2024



Richard Parry
Chief Executive