



FOREST SCHOOL

Nurturing the well-being of families through sessions incorporating crafts, bushcraft, yoga & mindfulness

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Membership Policy

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| Written By (Name & Role): | Charlotte Berrow, Personnel Director | Next Review Date: | 09/02/2027 |
| Version: | MP001 | Reasons for update: | |

Revision History

| Revision No | Effective Date | Notes |
|-------------|----------------|-------|
| | | |

Associated Policies

| Policy Name | Association Type |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Aims & Ethos Document | 1 |
| Health & Safety Policy | 1 |
| Member Behaviour & Conduct Policy | 1 |
| Privacy Policy | 1 |

Notes

An associated policy is defined as meeting one or more of the following criteria:

1. It is referred to by this policy
2. It refers to this policy
3. It covers a specific topic referred to by this policy
4. It covers a topic/procedural area that may be relevant to aspects of this policy
5. It has aspects that overlap and/or should be considered in conjunction with a topic/procedural area covered by this policy

Each criterion that this policy satisfies is shown in the table above.

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1 - Introduction

HARE is a nature-centric community co-operative of nature-loving practitioners, who collaborate to bring their services to our local community. Our current members include artists, crafts tutors, wellness practitioners, art therapists, forest school leaders, land workers, teachers and mentors. We are open to any individual or organisation offering any service that is in line with HARE's aims and values. You can read about these in our Aims and Ethos document.

Based in Hazel Woods, near Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire, our purpose is to nurture the well-being of people in the Forest of Dean, through mindful connection with the natural world and creativity.

2 - Aims of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline how we run our membership scheme 'Friends of HARE', and its purpose. We aim to update our policies annually. Terms of membership will be reviewed and may be amended at this time. We are always open to feedback and ideas for development, and policies may be updated sooner if it is deemed necessary to update terms.

3 - Structure

We run as a co-operative, which means we are people-centred and are run by our members for our community. We are made up of:

Directors - those responsible for nurturing HARE as an organisation, for example organisation strategy, operations, finance and ensuring we comply with our legal responsibilities.

Members - those who apply to join Friends of HARE, as outlined in this policy.

Employees - those who are employed by HARE to carry out a certain role. This is normally fixed term work related to a tender or funded programme. For example, practitioners who work with children in our HAF Children's Workshops.

Volunteers - Those who join us to volunteer to maintain our site, our admin and finance volunteers, those who volunteer to support our workshops and anyone who volunteers with us in any other capacity. Our Directors also volunteer time to the organisation.

Directors and employees are also members, and therefore do not need to apply to become a member as outlined in this policy. We act together to build a better world and a sustainable organisation through co-operation. Putting equity, fairness, and social justice at the heart of everything we do. We use consensus decision making to reach agreement by all, rather than majority voting. This enables us to understand everyone's perspective and meet everyone's needs and not just the majority.

Our ethics align with Permaculture Principles - Earth Care, People Care, Fair Share. We believe that disconnection from nature, our creativity, community and our spirituality are huge driving factors in the mental health issues suffered throughout modern society. So all our offerings include these restorative elements and are structured around the seasons and sabbats of the wheel of the year.

4 - Friends of HARE

At HARE we understand that many self-employed creatives, wellness practitioners, land workers and small charitable organisations work alone in a siloed way, with limited resources, time and energy. Often feeling overwhelmed, isolated, unsupported and stretched too thin, having to run all aspects of a business or organisation alone.

Friends of HARE's purpose is to share our resources, reduce operational admin for members, enabling them to focus more of their time and energy on running their service, reduce isolation and stress and enable a better work/life balance. We work collaboratively, supporting each other, because we need nurture, so that we can nurture our community. We encourage members to open up any unused spaces on their offerings to other members free of charge or at a reduced rate, and to offer discounts in general to other members.

HARE is a Community Interest Company. This means that members can run commercial services paid for by participants, tender for work contracts, or apply for grant funding to run fully or partially subsidised services. Any individual or organisation can apply to be a member of HARE. Members use our organisational structure, which is already in place to run services for the local community. HARE also runs our own services alongside member services. There may often be opportunities to collaborate or for members to work within HARE's offerings, if they wish.

Some services which we have run previously at HARE:

- Children's Forest School Workshops - including fully subsidised places for children eligible for free school meals, funded by a tender with Gloucestershire County Council.
- Woodland Stay & Play for young children and carers.
- Woodland Well-being Walks for new parents.
- Gardening in local schools for children identified as in need of mental health support (funded by NHS, based in local schools rather than at our site).
- Family days & open days.
- Christmas Wreath Making Workshop.
- Women's yoga classes.
- Networking events for practitioners.
- Accessible Crafts - Heritage crafts workshops for neurodiverse children (funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund for the purpose of introducing heritage to people who may otherwise find it inaccessible).
- Landskills Days - volunteer days working at our site.
- Food and fire evenings for members.

Some of the art and crafts which have been taught previously at HARE as part of our workshops:

- Willow weaving
- Felting
- Bushcraft - whittling, fire lighting, den building
- Pastels, natural dyes and paints
- Elder bead jewellery making
- Clay and ceramics
- Happa-zome (plant dye printing)
- Foraging and making wild foods
- Cooking on the fire

There is huge scope to offer other woodland-based services. These could be one-off events or ongoing groups or courses. We consider applications from anyone wishing to offer community services which are in line with our Aims & Ethos (See Aims & Ethos document). HARE encourages collaboration between members to co-create ideas and co-run services,

where members' visions align. There is also the opportunity to work with other members for admin support or if you need hands-on support at your event.

5 - What to Expect from Membership

Friends of HARE provides the operational structures that you need to bring your vital services to your local community:

- A licence to use Hazel Woods for educational purposes.
- A website to create bookings for your event, workshop, group, course or performance.
- Social media platforms with a following to advertise your service.
- Three years of serving the local community and building trust in our name and services.
- Public Liability and Employers Liability insurance for outdoor events.
- Risk assessment templates and examples (and training/support if needed) and health & safety briefing guidance.
- Policies and Procedures and due diligence already in place.
- Session plan templates, budget templates and proposal templates.
- A shared calendar to manage site bookings.
- Ability to choose your own hourly rate and how you run your service, within our framework.
- Admin support and in-house training, as needed, with getting your service bookable and advertised.
- Flow chart 'how to' to support you with turning your idea into a community service.
- Community and collaboration with other members. Friends of HARE aims to meet regularly in our woodland for 'Food & Fire' evenings, giving members the opportunity to relax, socialise, chat about their ideas and support each other.
- Agreed use of field centre car park for participants. Staff parking next to the woodland.
- Possibility of using the flat, grassed recreation field next door (with consent from the field centre).
- St Anthony's Well 10-15 mins walk from the site.
- Local Forest use for walks, with consent from Forestry England.

Friends of HARE's purpose is to share these resources with local organisations and practitioners who wish to use them to run services for the local community, thus benefiting more people.

6 - What HARE Expect from Members

Annual membership of Friends of HARE is £20 for individuals, or £50 for organisations, payable through our website, at the point of joining. This is to cover some of our admin costs for processing and approving your membership application.

Prior to running a new service, members submit a short proposal and event budget to directors. This is so directors can ensure the proposal meets our legal responsibilities and all due diligence is in place. Including notifying the field centre, who allow us to use their car park and access our site through their recreation field. Our admin and finance team are happy to support you to create this if needed. We understand that admin is a barrier for some, and we want to ensure that anyone who wishes to run a service is supported to do so. Once directors have approved the proposal, members may advertise their service.

When creating your budget you will need to consider costs. Use of our woodland is £50 per day or £25 per half day. This goes towards our site rent and other costs. If your offering is commercial, HARE collects a 25% on the profit over and above your costs. This goes towards covering our insurance, website hosting and admin support. If your service is charitable i.e you are working voluntarily and will not make a profit, this is not charged.

If you require additional admin support, this cost will be agreed in advance with a director so you can factor it into your budget. Our website charges fees, which we suggest you add to your costing when deciding what to charge for your service. HARE is a not-for-profit organisation. The above costs are to ensure HARE can cover our operational costs. We do not have shareholders. Any profit made by HARE after paying our costs is put into running services for our local community.

| Cost Description | Amount |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Site use per day | £50 (£25 per half day) |
| Percentage to cover HARE's costs | 25% of profit |
| Website fees per transaction | 2.1% + £0.20 GBP |

After you have run your service, HARE's finance team will BACS monies owed to you at the next payment cycle at the end of the month. If you are an organisation or self-employed you can invoice HARE. If not, HARE can add you to our payroll system and pay you through PAYE.

All members are required to adhere to HARE [policies and procedures](#). When hosting members of the public at our site, you need to make them aware of policy and health and safety considerations, to ensure their safety, and that of other participants and members. We suggest this is done in an initial opening circle at basecamp, then at any point as needed during the workshop.

We need to meet from time to time, to make decisions on new member applications or other structural changes that affect members. We aim to have as few meetings as possible. Whilst meetings are voluntary, we need a quorum of members to make balanced and equitable decisions. So there is an expectation that members join meetings where possible.

HARE runs monthly Land Stewardship Volunteer Days, to care for and maintain our site, resources and equipment. Dates are on the [Land Stewardship](#) page of our website. We ask that you share this, and social posts with your contacts. Members are expected to attend these days where possible. This is to ensure that:

- We have enough people to complete meaningful site work, maintain the site effectively and ensure it is safe to host the public.
- People who regularly use the site have an input into developments.
- All members feel a sense of ownership, responsibility and care towards the site.
- Members have an opportunity to meet members of the public who are volunteering, and talk to them about upcoming offerings that may interest them.

HARE usually has an annual Winter break between the Winter Solstice and Imbolc (1st February). We don't usually run anything during this time. This is not compulsory, however, we feel the Cailleach (Goddess of Winter) call us to surrender to rest during this season, to plant seeds, percolate ideas, find wisdom, strength, and transformation in the stillness, and come back refreshed.

Members are expected to treat all members, participants, resources, equipment and our site with care and respect. And to keep other people's information confidential. Please see our [Member Behaviour & Conduct Policy, and Privacy Policy](#).

Members meet with a director once a month for the first three months after joining, then every 12 weeks. This is to ensure each member has focused ongoing support to develop their service and are able to discuss and gain support to resolve any concerns or difficulties. It also enables the directors to have an overview of how members are feeling about their work and the organisation as a whole, and gain valuable feedback which informs our development. The meeting can be online or in person and the length will depend on the type of and amount of support required. However, if members need support more often, particularly with setting up their first offering, further support will be made available. Once a member feels established and requires less support, we hope these meetings can be carried out by another member as part of peer support mentoring. Please see section 8 for further expectations and considerations.

7 - How HARE Chooses new Members

Members decide which new members join, based on shared values and alignment in philosophy. We also consider current gaps in our skillset and what we are able to offer. However, if you see someone running something similar to what you wish to run, don't let that put you off. We all have individual styles of delivery, and there may be more call for that offering than one person has the capacity to run.

When a potential new member applies to join Friends of HARE, we will aim to make a decision within four weeks, and sooner if possible. Current members will be notified of the application and a meeting (online or in person) arranged to discuss the application. Members will have a minimum of one week's notice of the meeting to enable them to read and assimilate the information in the application. We will aim for a maximum of two weeks, to enable us to make decisions and respond to membership applications in a timely manner.

Members use consensus decision making to reach agreement on all aspects of running the organisation, including choosing new members. New members will be briefed on and supported with how consensus decision making works. We love new ideas and to improve, grow and streamline the way we do things. So we are always happy to listen to your inspiration and feedback.

8 - Due Diligence Considerations when Planning your Event

The safety and well-being of our members and participants is our highest priority. Therefore we follow due diligence to ensure the protection of everyone on site. Members need to consider health and safety, following our Health & Safety policy and adhere to any relevant conditions of our insurance and our site licence. Such as ensuring anyone using a chainsaw has a chainsaw licence and appropriate safety equipment.

Members need to consider parking spaces and the capacity of the space they wish to use on site, when deciding how many places to offer. Members are required to complete a written risk assessment (following our template and examples) of your activities and use of the site. The risk assessment should be made available to participants (or their parents) at the point of booking, by hosting it on the website or including it in the automated booking email (HARE admin can help with this if needed).

If you plan to have a fire lit while members of the public are on site, you (or someone working with you who will manage the fire) will need to have completed relevant training. Such as Level 3 Forest School Leader, Bushcraft or Outdoor Instructor, Fire Warden/Marshall, or complete our in-house fire management training and be able to demonstrate appropriate safety competency. You will also need to adhere to the relevant [policies](#). If you plan to cook or prepare food as part of your offering, the person handling food will also need to hold a Level 2 Food Hygiene certificate and adhere to our Food Hygiene Policy. You are welcome to collaborate with other members who may already hold some of these certifications.

If you plan to work with children you will need to provide references and an Enhanced DBS

disclosure. HARE can provide the DBS checking service, at your cost, or will accept a DBS which is on the DBS Update Service. You will need to consider appropriate adult to child ratios for the level of risk your activities carry. You will also need to have completed a paediatric first aid course and safeguarding training (HARE can help you book this).

9 - Future Plans

These are some of our current ideas for development of our site at Hazel wood and potential services we would like to offer. We would love to hear your ideas too.

- Creating a “Garden Theatre” in our glade area. To include an ‘amphitheatre’ with fire pit, stage and ‘backstage’ area and planters. To be used as an education space for talks and community groups as well as performances.
- Creating a second “basecamp” to enable us to run two services at one time. Including log seating, an outdoor kitchen, compost toilet and shelter.
- We would like to run children’s workshops in the 3 half terms per year, free to children eligible for free school meals and subsidised for others. We hope to make a profit on other services to enable us to cover the costs of this.
- An edible forest garden.
- Seed bank or seed and plant swaps.
- Coppicing and green woodwork.

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| This policy was adopted by HARE Forest School CIC board of Directors on date: | 09/02/2026 |
| Signed - Board Member(s) | C. Berrow, Director G. Chadwick, Director H. Mitchell, Director |
| To be reviewed: | 09/02/2027 |