



## **Wash Wader Research Group**

### **Policy on Conflicts of Interest**

#### **Definition**

A 'conflict of interest' arises when the best interests of an individual trustee are, or could be, different from the best interests of the charity itself; trustees have a legal duty to put the best interests of the charity first and to safeguard the assets and reputation of the charity.

A conflict of interest exists even where there is the possibility that a trustee's personal or wider interests could influence the trustee's decision making; even the perception that there is a conflict of interest can damage the charity. A conflict of interest may be something that affects the trustee directly, or indirectly, through a family member or friend or business partner.

Examples of conflicts of interest include:

- A committee member who is related to a contractor who has been asked to tender for services
- A committee member who has a commercial interest in a business that may be awarded a contract to do work or provide services for the organisation
- A committee member who is also on the governing body of another organisation may have a conflict of loyalty where the charity is either in dispute the other organisation, or is competing with it for the same funding

#### **Statement of Intent**

The WWRG is committed to ensuring that its decisions and decision-making processes are, and are seen to be, free from personal bias and do not unfairly favour any individual connected with the charity.

#### **Policy**

It is the policy of the WWRG to:

- Ensure every trustee understands what constitutes a conflict of interest and that they have a responsibility to recognise and declare any conflicts that might arise for them
- Document any the conflicts and the action(s) taken to ensure that a conflict does not affect the decision making of the organisation

#### **Procedure**

When a trustee identifies that they have a potential conflict of interest they must:

- Declare it as soon as they become aware of it
- Ensure it is either minuted in the appropriate meeting papers (one-off conflicts) or entered in a conflict of interest register (ongoing conflicts)
- Not take part in any Trustee discussions relating to the matter
- Not take part in any decision making related to the matter
- Not be counted in the quorum for decision making related to the matter

In the interests of frank and open discussion, a trustee affected by a conflict of interest must leave the room while related discussion/ decision making is taking place, unless there is good reason for them to stay.

The minutes should state:

- The declared conflict
- That the trustee left the room, or the reason they were asked to stay
- That the trustee took no part in discussion or decision making on the matter
- That the meeting was quorate (not counting the affected trustee)
- Any other actions taken to manage the conflict

If a trustee is unsure what to declare, they should err on the side of caution and discuss the matter with the Chair for confidential guidance.

This policy is meant to supplement good judgement, and members of the Board of Trustees and other committees should respect its spirit as well as its wording.

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