



Visitor Safety Group

Constitution

Prior to March 2019 the group was called the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group (VSCG).

Throughout the document 'Group' or 'VSG' is used to denote the Visitor Safety Group, or VSCG as it was before.

The principle focus of the VSG is visitor risk management in the countryside and in the historic built environment in the UK and Ireland

Countryside definition

For the purposes of this Group and its members, 'countryside' is taken to include all areas where public access is invited and where activities are largely unsupervised. These include:

- moors, mountains and open countryside
- footpaths and way marked trails
- forests, country parks and nature reserves
- waterways and coastlines
- urban green space
- visitor centres

It is not taken to include theme parks, open farm attractions and other well managed places where more detailed standards already exist.

Historic built environment definition

For the purposes of this Group and its members, 'historic built environment' is defined as buildings, monuments, archaeological remains, other man-made structures and designed parks and gardens that are historic places of significance.

Aims

VSG aims to further the interests of those with responsibilities for visitor risk management in the countryside and in the historic built environment in the UK and Ireland by:

- encouraging consistency of approach.
- producing sound interpretation of legislative requirements and the implications of case law decisions.
- identifying and sharing good practice.
- encouraging a balanced and pragmatic approach to the many, often varied and conflicting, factors bearing on visitor risk management.

VSG aims to assist organisations to:

- achieve cost-effective visitor risk management.
- demonstrate risk control solutions which comply with statutory requirements.
- achieve a balance between safety, amenity, heritage and the environment.
- minimise losses, including those due to claims.
- meet moral obligations.
- promote access.

Objectives

VSG will meet these aims by:

1. Providing a focal point of knowledge, expertise and proven good practice for organisations and individuals with responsibilities for managing the safety of visitors in countryside environments.
2. Producing and publishing guidance and good practice applicable to a broad range of organisations.

3. Encouraging the dissemination of good practice and discussion of issues through the VSCG website, regular open meetings, and, when appropriate, conferences, seminars and publications.
4. Seeking the engagement and support of regulatory and advisory bodies, principally the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Authority.

Membership criteria

VSG is open to organisations or individuals that:

have visitor risk management responsibilities in the countryside or historic built environment; **or** have a role in influencing broad strategic policy on visitor access to the countryside or historic built environment, as defined in this VSG constitution; **and** publicly endorse the VSG guiding principles, managing their sites in accordance with them; **and** offer and contribute expertise in relevant areas.

New members are admitted following application to the Management Board, demonstrating that they meet the above criteria and on payment of the appropriate membership fee.

Specialist participation from others (including the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Authority) may also be invited where members consider this would assist or further the work of the group.

Management structure

VSG is directed by a small Management Board elected by its members.

The management board will have a maximum of 8 member organisations elected by VSG members. At least 4 members of the management board must be present for the meeting to be able to make decisions on behalf of VSG as a whole. Any change to the constitution requires the approval of a majority of all members.

Member organisations are elected to the management board for a two year term but can stand for re-election each time. Four positions on the management board will be elected in December each year.

The participating organisations recognise the aims of VSG and will use the group's output, as appropriate, in the formulation of their own policies and practices. As such, the principal affiliation of the VSG is to its member organisations.

Funding

VSG's work is funded in three ways:

1. Membership funds used to cover the costs of meeting facilitation, for the editing of source documents and material provided by members, and for other costs agreed by the VSG in furtherance of its aims.
2. Provision by member organisations of meeting facilities, professional staff time, and associated clerical support and sundry expenses.
3. Recovery of publications and seminar costs sought principally from sales and delegate fees. Some publications may receive funding in whole or part from other sources.

Financial Control

- Members' contributions are held in a single fund run by one of our member organisations who handle the payment of bills from the fund on behalf of, and at no cost to, the group. This fund is subject to the normal audit process of the member organisation.
- A statement of income and expenditure is tabled at each of the Management Board meetings. This information is available to all members on request.
- VSG will issue reminders to all members when contributions are due and notify organisations when membership has lapsed and benefits have been withdrawn.

The Management Board will keep options for administering the finances of VSG under review, looking to achieve the best possible control at least cost to members.

Conduct of Business

- VSG holds approximately four main meetings per year, to be varied as agreed by the members. Ad hoc, or specialist meetings, seminars or workshops will be held as appropriate.
- The facilitator will provide an up to date list of agreed action points within two weeks of each main meeting.
- The Management Board will produce and maintain a programme for the completion of various items of work. The facilitator will maintain this programme and expedite actions as necessary between meetings.

Intellectual Property

The Group encourages free and open use of its published material provided that any such use clearly acknowledges VSG.

March 2019