

Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

People & Places Volunteering Placement Report: Richard Sander

Good Work Foundation, Hazyview, Mpumalanga, South Africa - 23/6 - 23/7/20

Preparation:

The build up to my placement was somewhat away from the ordinary.

I was originally intending to travel to Cambodia in January of this year. All the admin for that placement was in place, but then had to be put on hold at short notice.

Note from *people and places* – this was due to Richard's personal circumstances not a problem with the placement in Cambodia

I instead travelled to South Africa to join a different conservation project in February, before moving on to a further project in March.

Mid way through March, the COVID 19 lockdown came into effect meaning I was constrained in South Africa for the foreseeable future.

In June, ready for a change, I contacted P&P to see what was available at short notice given the benefit of already being in country...

The GWF placement came up and I was able to join within 3 weeks of enquiry.

The response and turnaround from the P&P team was very good.

Given that I was already on the ground, little orientation and preparation was needed.

The exact content of the placement was fluid given the effects of the lockdown. GWF were hoping that the timing was ideal given that they were hoping to be able to open and ramp up their operations in parallel to the lockdown being eased...

Note from *people and places* – at this time international travel had come to a halt and all borders were closed, so we were delighted to find a potential volunteer already in-country, and GWF facilitated arrangements for moving between provinces. GWF had been closed since the lockdown in March and was just beginning to reopen so inevitably plans had to be a little flexible.

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Feedback on Definition and Matching:

I have two main observations about the P&P project information and matching:

The description on the website of the skills required and opportunity to deploy them comes across as being more substantial than my experience of the project.

Whilst I was able to cover a number of the items, I had to look for those opportunities while I was there.

The professional skills element was within a new digital platform that was just being trialled. I'm not aware of what was there previously.

Although there is a "Conservation Academy", and I was involved in Field Guide lessons, there was no conservation content... From the project to P&P pre-discussions, that seemed to be a key part of what the receiving host was expecting me to get engaged with.

I certainly don't think that any one or two of the elements would be sufficient to fill a placement on their own.

I'm not sure that the wider social situation was that much of a factor.

So I think more depth of "live" skills requirements and detailed matching with volunteer capacity could be beneficial.

However, I do fully appreciate that I asked for a quick placement and knew the wider operating conditions at the time!

Note from people and places – GWF is a dynamic and fast-growing organisation with changing and developing needs. Richard's skills were matched to project needs in the normal way. However it was not possible to ask for updated and detailed documentation in the normal way due to the unique circumstances caused by the pandemic.

Experience & Work:

The whole team at GWF were very welcoming, friendly, and engaging!

The placement evolved as I was there and after a number of conversations with members of the teaching team.

We gradually worked out what elements of the syllabus I could get involved with and be most useful in supporting.

That was:

- Assisting (and later leading) careers guidance sessions with school leavers and bridging students.
- Preparing presentation material and leading the professional skills sessions - primarily email and written skills development. That also exposed a need for English grammar support.
- Preparing lesson packs to support FGASA training.
- Preparing a presentation pack on the Environment and Climate Change as an introduction that can be used with the students at a later date.

All those items were fairly stand alone - I don't think there will be much scope for continuation unless the Environment subject gains traction and wants to be taken further...

The lesson packs for the remaining FGASA modules will need to be prepared by the local facilitator to complete the course time this year.

In more normal circumstances, I would expect more clarity and preparedness for the volunteer coming in to know in more detail what they will be doing and be able to contribute to.

Note from people and places – fair comment – in the circumstances we were unable to provide Richard with as detailed a placement outline as is our normal practice.



Richard under the Digital Tree of Knowledge at Hazyview DLC

Successes & Disappointments:

The careers guidance activities were particularly rewarding for me - and matched closely to a process I'm personally going through now as I pursue a new direction.

I was able to add my own experience and appreciation to the process as someone who has 20 plus years of working experience behind them.

It is a forward thinking process and much more valuable than what I had available at school - definitely a good opportunity for the students.

Being able to share some professional skills - all be it light ones in email writing etc was also a high point. A number of the students expressed thanks for what they learnt in this area - it is directly relevant to them applying for jobs in the coming months and years.

On the downside, I spent far more time on a computer than I would have liked, but again I think partly a factor of the wider situation.

I feel strongly that I could have contributed much more to the project than I was able to do in the situation as it was.

Would you recommend volunteering to other people or not?

I would recommend volunteering to other people. But you need to be aware of your expectations for how much difference you can make in a short period of time.

GWF was the third project I volunteered on whilst in South Africa.

They were all different in their active field, operation and scale.

GWF was definitely the most valuable of the three.

How did you spend your leisure time?

This is an area that people need to be aware of.

I found it very quiet in Hazyview during the weeks that I was there.

There is no town to speak of. The lockdown meant that the few restaurants/bars that are available were closed.

I hired a car early on so at least I had the freedom to get out and about to explore the countryside and Kruger Park. It was also very useful for getting shopping.

I think without that and needing to rely on the (very willing) campus host for mobility would be hard as well...

Kate and family were very attentive in socialising with me which was greatly appreciated!

Note from people and places – we do recommend that volunteers hire a car if possible. Hazyview is a small town in a rural area but the sociability of GWF staff means that volunteers never feel lonely for long!

How was your accommodation?

The accommodation was of a high standard, clean and comfortable.

However, it is shielded by trees. This will be great in the summer, but during the winter time that I was there, it was very cold - so make sure you have layers available if volunteering at this time of year.

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Thank you.