



# Constitution of The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers

## **Legal Relationship with CIC Articles of Association**

This Constitution operates alongside the Guild's Articles of Association, which are registered with Companies House under its status as a Community Interest Company (CIC). In the event of any inconsistency between this Constitution and the Articles of Association, the provisions of the Articles shall take precedence in matters of legal governance, while this Constitution shall guide the Guild's day-to-day operation, membership, and community values.

## **1. Name**

The organisation shall be called The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers (hereafter referred to as "The Guild"), and will operate under the legal structure of a Community Interest Company (CIC).

## **1A. Objects**

The company's objects are to promote the welfare, conservation, and responsible stewardship of birds of prey; to preserve and develop the heritage and practice of falconry in the United Kingdom; and to provide education, training, and community participation opportunities in support of these aims.

## **2. Mission Statement**

Embracing Heritage, Forging Inclusivity — A New Chapter Begins.

The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers is founded upon the rich traditions of the ancient guild system, re-imagined with a steadfast commitment to equality, diversity, and modern inclusivity. Our vision is to create a vibrant and welcoming community where the profound art and practice of falconry can be learned, shared, and perpetuated by individuals from all walks of life, backgrounds, and experiences. We honour the heritage of falconry while recognising that true membership is not defined solely by flying a bird at quarry. The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers is open to anyone who holds a genuine interest in the welfare, conservation, and responsible stewardship of birds of prey. Whether through active falconry, husbandry, education, or simple appreciation, all who share a passion for raptors have a place within our community.

Inspired by the historical guilds, we seek to foster a system of learning, mentorship, and progression — guiding aspiring falconers through stages of apprenticeship and continuing development. This structured approach will reflect a deep understanding of ethical husbandry, responsible practice, and the intricate bond between human and raptor.

Crucially, we break free from the historical limitations of exclusivity. The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers is open to everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical ability, or any other characteristic. We believe that the diverse perspectives and talents of a broad membership will enrich our collective knowledge, strengthen our community, and ensure the vibrant future of this living heritage.

Our commitment to inclusivity will be reflected in every aspect of the Guild — from accessible training programmes and equipment, to equitable opportunities in leadership, and a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination of any kind. We will actively remove barriers to entry and cultivate an environment where every member feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

Together, we respectfully revive the wisdom of the ancient guilds — not as a means of exclusion, but as a framework for fostering excellence, camaraderie, and a truly inclusive future for falconry. We invite all who share our passion and vision to become part of this exciting new chapter.

The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers will ensure that all activities are carried out in line with its legal status as a CIC, serving the community interest of falconry, raptor welfare, conservation, education, and heritage.

## **3. Ethos**

The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers is committed to safeguarding falconry as part of the living heritage of the United Kingdom, with the long-term goal of supporting recognition as an element of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

- Preserve and transmit the knowledge, skills, and values of falconry and raptor care to future generations.
- Promote inclusivity, ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to participate and contribute.
- Encourage respect for cultural traditions while embracing responsible, modern, and ethical practices.
- Actively foster education, research, and dialogue on the history, heritage, and contemporary practice of falconry.
- Collaborate with national and international organisations to protect falconry's status as a cultural practice rooted in care for birds of prey and their environment.

## **4. Aims and Objectives**

- Promote the welfare, conservation, and responsible stewardship of both captive and wild birds of prey.
- Provide an inclusive community for all people with an interest in raptors, regardless of whether they practise hunting, conservation, education, husbandry, or appreciation.
- Uphold and develop the heritage of falconry and raptor care, respecting tradition while embracing modern, ethical practice.
- Support and promote the lawful keeping, flying, and hunting of birds of prey in the UK, encouraging responsible practice that

- complies with national legislation and best standards of care.
- Actively participate in and contribute to the conservation of wild raptor species in the UK, working with other organisations and stakeholders where appropriate.
- Offer education, training, and mentorship for members through structured learning pathways.
- Foster equality, diversity, and inclusivity, ensuring accessible opportunities for all members.
- Build connections with other organisations that share the Guild's values of welfare, education, conservation, and responsible practice.

## 5. Membership

- Membership shall be open to anyone aged 18 and over who shares the Guild's aims and values, regardless of gender, ethnicity, background, or ability.
- Members do not need to hunt with a bird of prey to join. An interest in their welfare, conservation, or appreciation is sufficient.
- Membership categories may include:
  - Full Member – an individual aged 18 or over.
  - Family Membership – open to a household, with at least one named adult (18+) as the primary member. Adults within the household may share Guild benefits; children under 18 may take part in Guild activities under supervision but will not hold voting rights.
  - Associate Member – professional bodies, businesses, or organisations that support the Guild through sponsorship or membership fees. In return, they may be offered opportunities such as advertising on the Guild's website, acknowledgement at Guild events, and other promotional benefits as agreed by the Committee. Associate Members will not hold voting rights.
  - Honorary Member – awarded at the discretion of the Committee for exceptional contribution.
- Members must agree to uphold the Guild's code of conduct and zero-tolerance policy for discrimination.
- Accessibility: The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers will make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled members and attendees to access Guild activities, so far as is practicable.
- Safeguarding: No person under the age of 18 may attend Guild events unless accompanied by their parent or legal guardian. Responsibility for the welfare and supervision of under-18s remains solely with the parent or legal guardian at all times.

## 6. Governance and Structure

- The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers shall be managed by a Committee consisting of up to ten members, elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- The Committee roles shall be:
  - Chair – represents the Guild.
  - Co-Chair – supports the Chair and shares leadership responsibilities. In the event of two Chairs being elected, they shall act as Co-Chairs jointly and equally, with neither holding a casting vote.
  - Secretary – manages records, correspondence, and meeting minutes.
  - Treasurer – manages finances and accounts.
  - Membership Secretary – oversees applications, renewals, and member communication.
  - Proven Falconer – ensures that traditional falconry knowledge and best practice are upheld.
  - Events Officer – oversees Guild activities, events, and gatherings.
  - Hawk Board Representative – acts as the Guild's link to the Hawk Board, ensuring alignment and representation at national level.
  - Ordinary Committee Member – provides general support, assisting other officers as required.
  - Social Media & IT Officer – manages digital communication, online presence, and supports the Guild's use of technology.
- While each officer shall be responsible for their designated role, the Committee will work collectively. Members are expected to support and assist one another to ensure the smooth running of the Guild.
- Committee members shall serve a term of one year and may be re-elected. However, no individual may hold the same office for more than three consecutive years.
- The Committee may also recruit members or sub-groups to assist with specific organisational tasks, events, or projects as needed. These appointed helpers will not form part of the elected Committee but will work under its direction.
- Nominations: Members who wish to be considered for Committee roles must submit a written nomination to the Secretary at least one month before the AGM. The Secretary will acknowledge receipt and publish the list of candidates to all members via the Guild's official communication channels (for example, email to registered members, the official website, or another channel approved by the Committee).
- Casual Vacancies: If a Committee post becomes vacant between AGMs, the vacancy shall be announced to the membership within six weeks of the vacancy arising, via the Guild's official communication channels, inviting expressions of interest or nominations. The Committee may make an interim appointment (co-option) to ensure continuity; any such appointment shall be reported to the membership and will stand until the next AGM unless otherwise determined by a by-election.

### 6A. Founding Year Arrangements

- During the first year following the establishment of the Guild, the set-up and running of the organisation shall be undertaken collaboratively by the ten founding members. These members will share all roles and responsibilities as and when necessary to ensure the smooth running and successful establishment of the Guild.
- At the first Annual General Meeting (AGM), formal roles (Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Proven Falconer, Events Officer, Hawk Board Representative, Ordinary Committee Member, and Social Media & IT Officer) will be elected in accordance with this constitution.
- The position of Treasurer, however, shall remain with the Treasurer appointed during the founding year, in order to provide continuity and stability in financial management.

## 7. Finance

- a) The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers shall be funded through membership subscriptions, donations, grants, associate memberships, sponsorship agreements, and fundraising activities.
- b) The Treasurer shall keep accurate financial records and present accounts annually at the AGM.
- c) All funds shall be used solely for the benefit of the Guild and its aims.
- d) All bank accounts shall require at least two authorised signatories.

## 8. Meetings

- a) An Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be held once a year (By Date).
- b) General Meetings may be called by the Committee or at the request of at least 10% of members.
- c) Committee meetings shall be held regularly to manage the affairs of the Guild.
- d) Decisions at Committee meetings will normally be made by consensus. If a unanimous decision cannot be reached, the matter will be decided by secret ballot.
- e) Where votes are tied, no casting vote will be exercised by the Chair or Co-Chair(s); instead, the matter will be deferred to a full secret ballot of the Committee to ensure fairness.

## 9. Code of Conduct

- a) Members shall always prioritise the welfare of birds of prey.
- b) Discrimination, bullying, or harassment will not be tolerated.
- c) Members shall represent the Guild positively and with respect for others.
- d) Equality & Anti-Discrimination. The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers complies with the Equality Act 2010. No member, volunteer, attendee or applicant shall be discriminated against, harassed, or victimised on the grounds of any protected characteristic, namely: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins); religion or belief (including lack of belief); sex; sexual orientation.

## 10. Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at the AGM or an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) by a two-thirds majority of members present.

### 11A. Legal Structure

- a) The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers shall be incorporated as a Community Interest Company (CIC) to provide legal status, accountability, and protection for its members and committee.
- b) The CIC structure ensures that the Guild exists in law, with its assets and activities dedicated to community benefit.
- c) The Committee shall ensure compliance with all CIC regulatory requirements, including reporting and financial accountability.
- d) Legal responsibility for governance will rest with the CIC directors, who shall normally be the elected officers of the Guild.

### 11B. Guarantee (Committee Only)

Each member of the Committee undertakes to contribute a sum not exceeding £1 to the assets of the company in the event of it being wound up while they are a member of the Committee, or within one year after they cease to hold office. This guarantee shall only apply to members of the Committee and not to the general membership of the Guild.

### 11C. Non-Distribution of Profits

The income and property of the company shall be applied solely towards the promotion of its objects. No part of the company's income or property shall be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus, or otherwise to its members. Reasonable and proper remuneration may be paid to officers, employees, or members of the Committee in return for services rendered to the company.

## 11. Dissolution

- a) The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers may be dissolved by a resolution passed at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), provided that at least two-thirds of members present vote in favour.
- b) In the event of dissolution, the Committee shall settle any debts and liabilities of the Guild.
- c) Any remaining monies or assets shall not be distributed among members but shall be donated in full to the Hawk Board, in support of its work in representing and safeguarding the future of falconry and the welfare of birds of prey in the UK.

## Conservation & Law Statement

The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers is committed to the highest standards of care for birds of prey and to the protection of wild raptor populations in the UK. Our members share a responsibility to uphold the law, safeguard welfare, and contribute to conservation.

## Our Commitments

- Welfare First – The welfare of both captive and wild birds of prey is our top priority.
- Conservation in the Wild – We actively support and promote conservation efforts for wild raptors in the UK, working with trusted partners, charities, and conservation groups.
- Respect for the Law – All keeping, flying, breeding, and hunting of birds of prey must comply with UK legislation and recognised best practice.
- Responsible Practice – Members must fly and work with their birds responsibly, with respect for quarry species, the, and the traditions of falconry.
- Heritage & Future Generations – We value falconry and bird of prey husbandry as living heritage, and we are committed to passing on knowledge, skills, and respect for the law to future generations.

Zero Tolerance – The Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers will not tolerate illegal activity involving birds of prey. Any member found acting unlawfully, or in a way that harms wild populations or disrespects legal obligations, will be subject to disciplinary action and may lose membership.

## **Appendix A: CIC Governance and Delegation**

This appendix supports the Guild's Constitution by setting out how the **Directors** of the Community Interest Company (CIC) and the **elected Committee** of the Guild work together.

It ensures compliance with the *Model Articles for a Community Interest Company (Limited by Guarantee, Large Membership)* and reflects the Guild's ethos of inclusivity, cooperation, and transparency.

### **1. Role of the Directors**

1.1 The Directors are legally responsible for ensuring that the Guild of Falconers and Raptor Keepers CIC complies with the Companies Act 2006, the Community Interest Company Regulations 2005 (as amended), and any related legislation.

1.2 The Directors oversee financial management, regulatory reporting, safeguarding of assets, and the Guild's community interest obligations.

1.3 The Directors act collectively and in good faith, upholding the Guild's values and ensuring that all activity benefits its members and the wider community.

1.4 The Directors' powers are defined by the CIC's Articles of Association filed with Companies House.

### **2. Relationship Between the Directors and the Committee**

2.1 The **Committee**, elected by members of the Guild, is responsible for the day-to-day running of Guild activities, events, and membership matters.

2.2 The **Directors** provide oversight and ensure that the Committee's decisions and operations remain within the CIC's legal and ethical framework.

2.3 Both the Directors and Committee share information openly, working collaboratively in the spirit of trust and transparency.

2.4 Where joint matters arise (for example, involving finance, risk, or public representation), decisions will be made through consultation between both bodies.

### **3. Delegation**

3.1 The Directors may delegate certain powers or tasks to the Committee, individual officers, or working groups as they see fit, provided this supports the Guild's objectives and complies with CIC law.

3.2 Delegation must be clearly recorded and does not remove the Directors' overall responsibility for governance. The Directors must be satisfied that those delegated to are competent and accountable.

3.3 The Committee may, in turn, create sub-committees or working groups to deliver specific activities or projects. All such groups remain accountable to the Committee and, where relevant, the Directors.

### **4. Decision-Making and Transparency**

4.1 The Directors and Committee each meet as required and maintain proper records of decisions taken.

4.2 Urgent decisions may be made electronically (for example, by email or online vote), provided all members have opportunity to contribute and the decision is later recorded in meeting minutes.

4.3 Major decisions affecting finance, legal compliance, or public representation of the Guild must be shared with both the Directors and the Committee.

4.4 The Guild values open communication and will make summaries of key decisions available to members, respecting confidentiality and data protection requirements.

### **5. Alignment with the Constitution**

5.1 In the event of any conflict between this appendix and the Guild's main Constitution, the Constitution shall guide internal operation and membership matters, while the Articles of Association filed with Companies House shall take precedence in legal governance.

5.2 This appendix may be reviewed periodically by the Directors and Committee to ensure continued alignment with CIC regulations and the Guild's values.

*This appendix was adopted by resolution of the Guild Committee and Directors on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025.*