


RISK ASSESSMENT

LOCATION/ACTIVITY/ISSUE BEING ASSESSED:	Bushcraft and Wilderness Skills
SERVICE/TEAM:	Countryside Service
NAME OF ASSESSOR(s):	Mike Bennett
DATE OF ASSESSMENT:	01 December 2025
DATE FOR REVIEW:	December 2026
APPROVED BY:	Signature:  Date: 01/03/2026 Name: Gemma Wilford

SUMMARY (* delete as appropriate)	
Risk level without additional controls:	HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW
Additional control measures required:	YES / NO
Risk level with additional controls:	HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

What are the significant hazards?	What could go wrong? Who could be harmed and how?	What is being done to control the risks?	Amendment notes
Hot fire, embers, burning shelters, food or drinks.	Slips and trips causing falls onto fire Burns from thermally enhanced food Burns from flint & steel sparks Burns from heated fuel or fire-by-friction equipment	Training and induction by specific session trained staff. Suitable briefing at all stages. Walking at all times around area of fire. Designated fire areas to be used and fire to be in ember state and doused in water before leaving at the end of a session. Water supply and fire blanket to hand to extinguish any fires. First aid kit accessible. Fresh water available to treat any burns and for hand washing if cooking. Heat retardant glove for instructor to handle hot pots and pans and students who are cooking over the fire.	

		<p>Staff to brief students to wait for toasted marshmallow to cool before eating, and not to hold stick upright to prevent slipping onto hand. If marshmallow is on fire, don't panic and flick it into the air as it might hit someone else.</p> <p>Bushcraft – includes fire and blade activities. Close supervision of group with clear line of sight. 1:12 ratio. Min age 6 for fires, 12 for Knives.</p> <p>Wilderness skills – Fire/ Knife activities are not included in Wilderness Skills, 1:30 ratio, min age 4 with parental / teacher supervision.</p> <p>Shelters to be built reasonably far away from fire area to stop ignition of shelter building equipment</p> <p>Group shelter parachute to be suspended over fire only when staff are available and constantly tending fire</p> <p>manual handling procedures observed when handling all equipment and fuel.</p> <p>Careful checks of site before session for potential hazards</p> <p>Briefing to participants to include not removing sticks from the fire once placed in, to avoid burns and flaming sticks striking others if they get waved about or thrown.</p>	
<p>Tools including knives, saws and axes</p>	<p>Cuts Scrapes Risk of severing femoral artery Amputation</p> <p>Participants Staff Members of public</p>	<p>Only those ages 12+ to use knives, saws and axes and only after receiving training in their safe use and under close supervision</p> <p>Staff to lead safety briefing including 'blood bubble' (safety distance) and safe body position when using sharps. Blades always pointing away from body. Participant must be seated, using knife to side of leg with knees together or leaning forwards with knees apart and knife work occurring in front of knees (well away from inner thighs!).</p>	

		<p>When participants are using knives, they must be sat at least 2m apart.</p> <p>Knives must be sheathed whenever participant needs to stop using it.</p> <p>Hatchets to be used by trained staff only. Otherwise, to be kept out of reach of participants</p> <p>Knives and axes are stored in a locked box in the activities container when not in use on a session.</p> <p>First aid kit to include haemostatic agents and tourniquet</p> <p>Radio to be carried by Instructor, or mobile phone if operating further away from DAC (e.g. rangers area)</p>	
Shelter building ropes, guy lines on large group parachute shelter	<p>Strangulation</p> <p>Participants Staff Members of the public</p>	<p>Group briefed in safe shelter building techniques Supervision while shelter building is ongoing No running around shelters</p>	
Debris Shelter branches	<p>Injured by branches or logs. Injury to eye whilst walking amongst the trees. Hit whilst branch in transit (moving branches to make shelters), branch dropped on lower limbs or feet. Injury by shelter collapsing onto participants.</p> <p>Eye Injury Head Injury Manual handling</p> <p>Participants Staff Members of the public</p>	<p>When making debris shelters participants to be briefed of safe way to carry long branches to avoid colliding with other participants. Two people to carry larger branches.</p> <p>Staff to brief students on walking, not running in woodland areas, due to branches that could go into eyes and cause harm.</p> <p>Participants briefed to self-assess shelter for structural integrity before entering debris shelter. Staff to monitor participants during the building process and advise to make more stable if required.</p> <p>Helmets available and worn at discretion of instructor.</p>	<p>Discretion of instructor about the weight carrying capability of participants.</p>
Low level tree branch	<p>Eye injury and impalement</p>	<p>Safety briefing to include working in a woodland area and the importance of looking out for low branches pulling on</p>	

		them or letting them swing to hit others. Spatial awareness of others.	
Trees and wood	Manual handling, lifting, Injury due to dropping Splinters Impalement Hit by falling tree limbs in extended hot weather or strong winds	Briefing to cover handling kindling and wood with care Briefing on dangers of weather conditions effect on trees. Instructors to choose appropriate location.	
Wildlife	Bites Stings Scares Ticks	Briefing to include the importance of hand sanitation. Anti-bacterial gel also available for hand snatiation before handling food. Awareness of working in an area where wildlife is vast and to respect and not touch or approach any animals. Participants reminded to check around ankles for ticks if they have been working and working in long grass as part of the activity.	
Remote Working	Endangered group if staff become incapacitated.	Instructor to have a radio when on site and a functioning and charged mobile phone	
Ingestion of unknow substance	Illness from poison ingested while eating/after contact.	Anti-bacterial hand gel to be used prior to food handling and consumption. No raw food preparation takes place, and only food edible when not cooked is heated up on the fire and consumed.	
Use of Kelly Kettles – Equipment Specific Risks	Staff & Participants Burns	Briefing to include not putting hands near kettle after fire has been lit. Especially on Water jacket or above exhaust port. No young people (13 and under) to lift kettle off base & pour when water has boiled. When boiled Handle at a right angle to body remove and set down on a flat surface.	

	Legionella Water borne disease	<p>Caution to be taken as water port will emit super-heated steam when water is boiling.</p> <p>Instructors should site kettle on firm level ground to avoid risk of fire & kettle tipping over.</p> <p>After use cool body of kettle in warm water to prevent warping, then finish in cold water.</p> <p>Cups should be placed on the ground for filling.</p> <p>Rince & Disinfect kettle every 3 months (logged on papertrail)</p> <p>Do not leave old water in kettles – allow to thoroughly air dry in storage.</p> <p>Place cap on spout to prevent bugs entering body of kettle.</p>	
Age-appropriate activities	Children who don't yet have the fine motor skills or capacity for responsibility could be harmed by taking part in activities that are unsuitable for their age.	<p>4+ no fire lighting or use of knives</p> <p>6+ Fire lighting with fire pan only. No use of knives.</p> <p>8+ Fire lighting with fire pan only. No hot water. Possible use of knives</p> <p>12+ Fire lighting includes use of Kelly Kettles & knife skills.</p>	

REVIEWS AND REVISIONS					
Review date	Name of Assessor	Is assessment still valid?	If not, list adjustments with details of who will action and by when	Approved by Manager	Date of next review
Feb 2020	Nicola Dennis	Yes	Burns for molten marshmallows added, but already considered. Major bleed added as a risk, in association with knife work – previously not considered in terms of mitigation, but simply treatment of injury. All bush craft trained staff to be updated about knife work procedures before April. Debris from shelter building has been added as a risk. Mitigations already being used but wasn't documented. Ticks added as a harm of being in the outdoors and working with wildlife around you.	Tanya Lee	Feb 2021
March 2021	Sophie Wooldridge	Yes	Updated COP Reference	Jack Walling	Feb 2022
February 2022	Jack Walling	Yes		Jack Walling	Feb 2023
Feb 2023	Isabel R.S.	Yes	Updated "First aid kit to include burn gel." More effective for minor burns and less wastage than infused swabs – completed Updated Wilderness Skills to not include knife skills. Updated Trees and wood section "Instructors to choose appropriate location."	Richard Ashwell	March 2024
Dec 2023	Mike Bennett	Yes	Hazard updated to hot fires, embers etc instead of burns as burns are the outcome.	Richard Ashwell	March 2025
Dec 2024	Mike Bennett	Yes	Added age ranges section to mirror Ops.	Mike Bennett	Dec 25