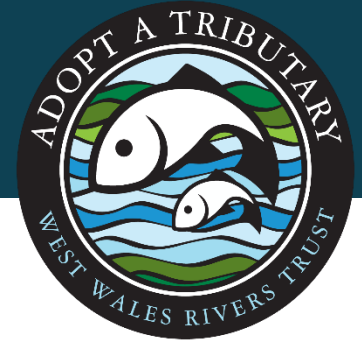




WEST WALES RIVERS TRUST

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1 INTRODUCTION

The guidelines included here have been extracted from Health and Safety guidelines provided to its employees by the Rivers Trust. The precise wording of some guidelines has been changed to make them more applicable to survey volunteers. Health and safety is the responsibility of the individual and volunteers are advised to consider these guidelines carefully as they are a good guide to identifying the main hazards that need to be considered. The many examples they contain provide the basis of risk assessment to minimise the risks of injury.

The Trust is aware of and will comply with its responsibilities, as far as is reasonably practicable, for the health and safety and welfare of its volunteers. It emphasises the need for volunteers to assess risks on a continual basis and, if concerned, not to proceed unless appropriate safety measures have been taken and/or the situation has been re-assessed and it is reasonably safe to proceed. The Trust encourages a safety-first approach at all times and without reservation.

If you have any health and safety concerns, you should refer them as soon as practicable to the Survey Group Coordinator or the Trust Secretary.

2 WORKING IN PAIRS

Working alone in isolated locations is not in itself hazardous. However, you are advised always to work in pairs and to ensure that your assistant is equally involved in all Health and Safety assessments made on site and as you approach and leave the site. It is wise to take some basic precautions to avoid a minor incident or prevent one from becoming a major disaster by adopting a safe system of working.

3 PLAN AND ASSESS

Before you leave ensure you have the correct equipment to carry out the tasks safely. If on arrival changes are necessary, consider the effect of those changes carefully and do not start a task with inadequate equipment. Never proceed with the task unless satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Communicate

Ensure that someone, not necessarily connected with your work, knows where you are working and when you expect to return. Always remember to tell them you have returned. Ensure that if you do not return, they will initiate a location routine. A mobile telephone may be helpful and the Trust recommends you carry one whilst travelling and on site. However, reception in river valleys can be poor, and it is unwise to rely on being able to use one at all times.

Travel

If you are required to use your vehicle to travel to and from site visits please drive carefully. Remember when using your car on the Trust's business you are an ambassador for the Trust,

so please drive courteously and observe the Highway Code. Park your vehicle with consideration to others.

Weather protection

Ensure that your clothing is appropriate for the weather. A combination of rain and wind can chill more than one expects. It is wise to check the weather forecast before leaving. Ensure that clothing is compatible with all safety requirements; in particular buoyancy should you approach deep water or powerful flows. Take adequate food and drink for the whole work period. In cold weather take a hot drink. In hot weather take plenty to drink. In strong sunshine beware of sunburn and refer to the usual guidelines on working in the sun. Make sure you take and use a hat, loose clothing that covers your skin and sun block.

Violence

It is important to recognise that potentially violent situations can arise, especially if the landowner perceives that you have a regulatory agenda which may threaten his livelihood or business. Try to avoid confrontation and move away or leave if feeling threatened. If some confrontation is unavoidable for any reason, do so in a setting and a manner that will calm rather than inflame an outcome. Always obtain permission from the landowner before entering a property explaining why you wish to enter the property and what you intend to do on the property. Emphasise the independent and confidentiality nature of your visit as appropriate.

4 WORKING ALONGSIDE INLAND WATERS

Personal fitness

Your life may depend upon being able to stay afloat and avoid exposure. Your ability to do so can be severely reduced by fatigue, alcohol or drugs or if you have a problem with your heart or blood circulation. Take appropriate precautions.

Wading

We do not advise wading in rivers as part of the surveying. There should be no need to enter the water. WWRT are happy to come along to any activities where in-stream work is needed.

5 VISITING FARMS

Farms are dangerous places! Always consult with the farmer where you may or may not go and where there are any areas that are inherently hazardous e.g. pesticide spraying of crops. When on the farm keep clear of agricultural vehicles and machinery. Reversing vehicles (and trailers) are frequent hazards and machinery can be unguarded. Slurry pits or lagoons can be unsigned or unfenced. Do not climb over or cross slurry pit walls or bunds. Do not enter a slurry pit. Stay clear of livestock to avoid being trampled, kicked or bitten. Consider wearing brighter colours or hi-viz clothing so that you can easily be seen by others working on the farm.

6 OVERHEAD POWER LINES

Electricity from high voltage power lines can arc across onto a conductor without contact being made. You are advised to avoid working near power lines and never to work closer than 15 metres from them.

7 HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES AND DISEASES

Substances

Anyone coming across empty containers of agricultural chemicals or poisons should not handle or try to dispose of them themselves. Poachers, particularly when disturbed, sometimes leave behind empty containers. If appropriate, consult the farmer or landowner on whose land the waste or substance is found in the first instance and/or contact the Environment Agency. Please note that the fire and rescue services have the skills and knowledge to deal with containers that may have contained hazardous chemicals.

Suppliers of hazardous substances are legally obliged to provide a Manufacturer's Health & Safety Data Sheet, and most are available via the Internet.

Faecal coli forms

Livestock faeces contain high bacterial loadings and can enter the body orally or through cuts and abrasions. Always wash your hands before eating, drinking, or smoking. Cover cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters. Symptoms generally resemble food poisoning i.e., fever, muscle and abdominal pain, nausea, and diarrhoea. If you believe that you may have been exposed to the disease, seek immediate medical advice.

Weil's disease (Leptospirosis)

Water in ditches, slow moving rivers and ponds may contain rat urine capable of causing the life-threatening disease. Infection arises through cuts, abrasions and through the eyes and the lining of the nose and mouth. Always wash your hands before eating, drinking, or smoking. Cover cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters. If you are working with parts of your body immersed in water wear waterproof clothing. Do not touch dead rodents with bare hands.

Weil's disease starts as a feverish illness with a high temperature and headache. At this stage it can easily be controlled by antibiotics, so contact your doctor immediately if you think you might be infected.

Lyme disease

This disease occurs when bitten by an infected tick. The first sign may be a faint ring-shaped rash. Often this goes unnoticed, and the sufferer develops intermittent flu-like symptoms. At this stage, the infection responds well to antibiotics but can become serious if untreated.

The best defence is to keep the skin covered, especially the legs. If sampling in moorland, areas of long grass, tussock or bracken grazed by sheep or deer, avoid sitting, kneeling or lying in vegetation where ticks may be located. Check your skin and clothing frequently. Carefully remove any ticks and place a small dressing over the bite. The sooner the ticks are removed the less likely you are to be infected. If you are worried about possible infection, please contact your doctor.

Tetanus

The organism causing tetanus is widespread and can enter the body through cuts, abrasions or puncture wounds made by splinters and thorns. It is potentially fatal and immunisation before

infection is the only certain way of dealing with the disease. Check with your doctor how often you need a booster.

8 FIRST AID

Field Work

Volunteers working in the field are advised always to carry a personal first aid kit. They are also advised to carry a mobile phone to call the emergency services in the event of an incident. If you are in possession of a GPS it will give an accurate grid reference for your location.

9 ACTIVE MONITORING

Health and safety guidelines and procedures need to be continually reviewed and upgraded. Should you have any comments, ideas or experience a potentially dangerous incident please contact the Survey group Coordinator or the Trust Secretary. Further information to help you work safely can be found at the Health and Safety Executive's website: www.hse.gov.uk