



Buckenhams Ancient Woodland Trust (BAWT) Risk Assessment

GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT	
Activity	General woodland work and manual handling by volunteers
Team	Buckenhams Ancient Woodland Trust - Practical Woodland Work Volunteers
Location	BAWT section of Buckenhams Wood
Other Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of Hand Tools Tree felling and brush / sapling pulling risk assessment. (Pending) Chainsaw use (Pending) Brush-cutter use (Pending)
General Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buckenhams Wood, being a natural environment, has potential tripping hazards due to its uneven terrain. At times the ground conditions can be muddy and slippery under foot. Even on established paths there are trip hazards such as tree roots. The wood has unstable edges to several sandy cliffs, and these should not be approached unless under guidance. Other hazards include animal burrows, concrete / rubble and fallen branches, so care should be taken when moving around the wood, particular when carrying tools or woodland vegetation. Formerly the wood, in places, was used as a rubbish tip. This can result in exposed broken glass and rusty metal etc. If any exposed rubbish, that may be of general concern, is found, it should not be touched, but reported to the Lead Volunteer. Dead and rotting trees are an important part of the woodland; however, care is taken to remove or make safe 'dangerous' trees near the footpaths. As a volunteer you may be required to work away from the footpaths where there is a chance of falling branches. Before work commences a visual check, above the work area, should be carried out to ascertain if a possible hazard from a falling branch or tree exists. If in doubt, check with the Lead Volunteer. Poisonous or irritant plants may be present in the wood including hemlock, nettles and brambles. Insect bites and stings can be a hazard in summer too, and it is recommended that volunteers wear long trousers and shirt sleeves whilst working, you may consider wearing insect repellent. Stout footwear and gloves are always recommended, and any personal protection equipment (PPE) must be worn if instructed to do so by the Lead Volunteer. A great deal of the volunteer work within the wood requires manual handling, such as lifting logs, pulling vegetation and carrying tools. <p>Persons with pre-existing medical conditions should be clear about the work they cannot carry out. Below sets out some simple suggestions for avoiding injury:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Approach the load in an upright manner (do not bend the back or lean forward from the hip) Get as close to the load as possible Keep your feet apart Lower the body by bending the legs (keep a straight back) Get a good grip, take a deep breath and straighten your legs Pull the load into the abdomen and keep your elbows at your side When lowering the load, bend the legs (keep a straight back) Work in pairs, particularly when carrying long or heavy logs. If in doubt, do not lift the load, do not lift if you are tired.
People at Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General public visiting Buckenhams Ancient Woodland BAWT Volunteers
Date of Assessment	2 nd September 2025
Assessed By	Robert Morgan

What are the hazards?	How could the hazard cause harm?	What are the actions required to reduce the possibility of harm and who should complete them?
Heavy/ awkward items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Back injury ▪ Strain ▪ Groin injury ▪ Foot injury 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If weight is excessive, use alternative lifting methods (i.e. levers, jacks, winches). ▪ If weight is within limit, use the correct lifting posture (see above) – do not twist body or over reach. ▪ Where possible place the item on a raised surface or support. ▪ Ask for help when necessary.
Irritant plants / stinging insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anaphylactic shock ▪ Skin rash or allergic reactions 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not cut or pull-up plants unless instructed to do so. ▪ When working near nettles and brambles stout gloves and eye protection must be worn. ▪ Be aware that the Buckenham wood contains irritant plants such as hemlock. Hornets or Common wasps may also be present. If a stinging insect nest is found, work must stop in that area and the Lead Volunteer informed. If a rash or allergic reaction occurs seek medical advice ASAP with details of the plant or insect.
Terrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Back injury ▪ Broken wrists/ankles 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess the route before starting work ▪ Carry any object in a manner that does not obstruct vision ▪ Wear suitable footwear with good grip ▪ Consider help, ask someone to guide you and look for potential trip hazards.
Working in a pair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Back injury ▪ Strain ▪ Groin injury ▪ Foot injury 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that they have the same physical ability ▪ Ensure good communication and agree procedure before commencing work
Disturbance or damage to wildlife and habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A 	<p>Although every effort is taken to avoid disturbance or damage to wildlife / habitats, and work is generally carried out to avoid the nesting and bluebell season, volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check bushes and scrub for nesting birds and other wildlife before cutting or removing. ▪ If, for example, a log is lifted and it contains an array of invertebrates, a small mammal nest, or fungus growth it should be left, and seek advice. ▪ When pulling sycamores etc. if bluebell bulbs are exposed, they should be replanted in that location. ▪ If unsure about the target species when removing vegetation, leave alone and seek advice.
General Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serious injury 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Never allow, dogs, children or the general public into the working area. ▪ Consider posting a 'banks-person' or look-out. ▪ Always stop work if approached by a member of the public. ▪ Do not allow a member of public to join a work party, or take part in any activity without authorisation and proper instruction from an authorised person / Lead Volunteer.
Working with or near machinery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serious injury 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only use power tools such as chainsaws and brush-cutters if qualified to do so, and only when instructed by the Lead Volunteer. ▪ If machinery is being used in the wood, volunteers should remain clear of the worksite, unless invited to enter the worksite by the contractor or Lead Volunteer. ▪ Always follow instructions from contractors, 'Look-out' or Lead Volunteer.

Tree fall – branch fall and use of pole-saw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crushed; internal injuries ▪ Broken limbs ▪ Death 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employ safe working distances and take note of all instructions given by Lead Volunteer. ▪ Not enter working area unless undertaking the work to make a tree / branch safe. ▪ Agree safe working method with others before starting work ▪ Any tree or branch made unsafe by felling operations must be made safe immediately ▪ Ensure all equipment required is accessible before starting work. ▪ Only use the pole-saw if qualified to do so, and PPE, including forestry hard-hats, must be worn by all involved in the work.
Use of tools and specialist equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Severe cuts/bleeding ▪ Loss of limbs /Death 	<p>Volunteers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer to Use of Hand Tools Risk Assessment. ▪ Only use tools they are instructed to do so. ▪ Ensure tools are stored safely when not in use ▪ Not operate / carry tools inappropriately or swing tools around. ▪ Ensure safe working distances.