

Health & Safety Policy



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1. Statement of Intent

Balcombe Ecological Society (BES) is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and healthy environment for all volunteers, members, and members of the public participating in our conservation activities, wildlife surveys, and public events.

While the society takes all reasonably practical steps to identify and mitigate risks, all volunteers have a duty of care to look after their own health and safety, as well as that of the others around them.

Signed: Ethan McLaughlan, **Chairman of Balcombe Ecological Society.**

Date: 10th July 2026

Review date: 10th July 2027

2.Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Committee and Event Leaders

- Risk Assessment: A site-specific Risk Assessment (RA) **must** be completed by a designated leader before any practical task, survey, or public event. A physical copy of the Risk Assessment **must** be brought to every outing.
- Safety briefings: The Event Leader must deliver a verbal safety briefing to all participants at the start of every activity, highlighting specific site hazards and control measures.
- Emergency equipment: The Event Leader must ensure a fully stocked first aid kit is present on-site and that a reliable mobile phone is available to contact the emergency services.
- Authority: The Event Leader has the absolute authority to halt any activity, dismiss a volunteer who refuses to follow safety rules, or cancel an event due to adverse weather or safety concerns.

2.2 Volunteers and Participants

- Compliance: Volunteers must follow all instructions given by the Event Leader and adhere to the control measures outlined in the Risk Assessment and in the safety briefing.
- Personal limits: Volunteers must work within their own physical capabilities and comfort levels. No one is required or expected to undertake any task they feel unsafe doing.
- Reporting: Volunteers must immediately report any new hazards, accidents, or near-misses to the Event Leader.
- Tools and Equipment: Volunteers must not use any tools or equipment unless they have been briefed on their safe use and feel confident doing so.

3. Practical Fieldwork and Survey Protocols

3.1 Roadside Working

- High Visibility: High-visibility jackets, vests, or trousers (Class two minimum) must be worn by **all** volunteers when working within five metres of an active road.
- Traffic priority: Pedestrians must never assume a driver has seen them. Volunteers must never step into traffic lanes to undertake work unless there is a completely clear and/or safe gap to do so.
- Night working: Torches or headlamps must be used during low-light or night activities. Cyclists' flashing red lights or rear-facing lights on jackets are highly recommended for added visibility.
- Under 16s: Anyone under the age of sixteen must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or designated adult at all times during roadside activities, with a strict 1-to-1 supervision ratio near active roads.

3.2 Working near water

This includes ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams.

- The Buddy System: No volunteer may work alone when within three metres of a water body. A minimum of two people must remain together.
- Bank Stability: Banks must be checked to ensure they are stable and do not feature slippery mud before approaching the water's edge.
- Wading: Entering water bodies is **strictly prohibited** unless explicitly approved in the Risk Assessment, and then only if wearing chest/thigh waders with a dedicated spotter on dry land. Additional PPE may be required, such as a Life Buoyancy Aid.

3.3 Remote and Lone Working

- Check-in Procedure: If an ecological survey requires a volunteer to work alone, they must log their start time, precise location, and expected finish time with a designated Committee member before setting out.
- Check-out Procedure: The volunteer must text or call the designated contact immediately upon finishing and safely exiting the site. If the volunteer is overdue by thirty minutes and cannot be reached by phone, the contact person will initiate emergency response procedures.

3.4 Adverse Weather

- Activities must be modified or cancelled in the event of extreme weather, including but not limited to: lightning storms, high winds in or near a woodland, extreme heat (+30c), or heavy ice making footing unsafe.

4. Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

4.1 Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers are expected to arrive at events wearing appropriate outdoor clothing:

- Sturdy, closed-toe footwear with good grip. Sandals, flip-flops, or canvas shoes are prohibited during practical tasks.
- Long trousers and long sleeves to protect against brambles, stinging nettles, ticks, and sun exposure. Long sleeves are not required but are recommended.

4.2 Society Responsibilities

Balcombe Ecological Society will provide the following Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for tasks that require it:

- Heavy-duty gardening gloves for scrub clearance and handling rough materials.
- High-visibility vests for roadside or public space activities.
- Nitrile or latex gloves for handling specific wildlife where biosecurity or personal protection is required.

5. Incident, Accident, and Emergency Procedures

5.1 First Aid

- A standard, fully stocked first aid kit will be kept in the society's primary kit bag and brought to **every** event.
- First aid provided on-site will be limited to minor immediate treatment. For serious injuries, the emergency services must be contacted immediately.

5.2 Accident and Near-Miss Recording

- All accidents, injuries, and notable near-misses must be recorded in the Accident Form within twenty-four (24) hours of the event.
- The log **must** include: date, time, location, name of the injured party, details of the injury/incident, action taken, and names and contact details of any witnesses.
- The Committee will review the log before every meeting to determine if policy or risk assessment updates are required to prevent future occurrences.

5.3 Emergency Logistics

- Before starting an event, the Event Leader must identify the exact access coordinates for emergency vehicles.
- In the event of a serious emergency, the Event Leader will call 999, provide these exact coordinates, and station a volunteer at the nearest main road junction to flag down and guide the emergency vehicle to the casualty.