

VINEY HILL CHRISTIAN ADVENTURE CENTRE

RISK ASSESSMENT AND SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

OFFSITE ACTIVITIES

CONTENTS

1.0	GENERAL PRINCIPLES	
2.0	MINIBUS DRIVING	
3.0	TRAILER LOADING	
4.0	CANOEING	[Location: Mallards Pike, Forest of Dean]
5.0	RAFT BUILDING	[Location: Mallards Pike, Forest of Dean]
6.0	ABSEILING	[Location: Stoney Green, Forest of Dean]
7.0	CAVING	[Location: Symonds Yat, Wye Valley]
8.0	GORGE WALKING	[Location: Cym Dyer, Wales]
9.0	BIKING	[Location: Woods to rear of site]
10.0	MOUNTAIN WALKING	[Location: UK areas]

DOCUMENT APPROVAL

Review	Reviewed By	Approved	Signature	Next review due
All Sections	Jon Holden Centre manager	Jun 2026		Jan 2027

1.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

ACTIVITY STANDARDS

	Required response
Local safety management	Use this as a local safety management document, not as a substitute for competent technical judgement. The planned educational value of the activity must never depend on tolerating avoidable risk. The activity must be stopped, moved, shortened or replaced if any critical control measure cannot be carried out.
Instructor responsibility	The instructor remains responsible for dynamic decisions on the day and must stop, move, shorten or replace the activity where controls cannot be maintained.
Competence and approval	Activities must remain within the instructor's qualification, current competence, first aid cover, VHCAC deployment approval, venue permission, licenses and insurance.
Authorised Location for activity	Mallards Pike is treated in this document as "Very Sheltered / Placid Water Only" where conditions remain benign, the group stays close to the bank, and the instructor can recover any participant promptly. Forestry England licence has been granted.
Participant suitability	Review age, behaviour, medical, SEND, communication, clothing, footwear and confidence before the session and adapt as needed.
Challenge and learning	Participant 'challenge' should be managed through progression, choice and supervision.
Instructor training and signoffs	All instructors and assistants must read and sign to confirm understanding of these sections before leading/supporting sessions. Senior Instructor/Centre Manager should observe at least one canoeing and one raft-building session annually, or more often for new staff.
Equipment	Use only VHCAC approved equipment. Conduct pre-use and post-use checks. Defective equipment is removed from use, labelled/reported and not reused until repaired or replaced.
Safeguarding	Staff and visiting adults follow VHCAC safeguarding policy, maintain appropriate supervision and never rely on members of the public for group supervision.
Minibus and Trailer Loading	Trailer/load-security practical sign-off should be treated separately from paddlesport competence. A competent instructor is not automatically an authorised driver/loader.
Review triggers	Review this document immediately after: a canoe capsize requiring rescue or immersion with cold injury symptoms, general entrapment, public complaint, load-security defect, load shift, road incident, trailer equipment change, venue change, or change in national or HSE/AALA guidance.
Records	Keep records of staff qualifications, first aid, in-house training, site inductions, trailer authorisations, equipment inspections, incidents and post-incident actions.

DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

Trigger	Required response
Stop / do not start IF	Thunder or lightning is forecast/observed; wind prevents reliable recovery to shore; water quality concern/algal bloom/dead fish/pollution warning; instructor is outside qualification/competence; required PPE/rescue/first aid/communication equipment is missing; participant cannot follow critical safety instructions; trailer/load cannot be secured using the approved method.
Pause and reassess IF	Participants become cold, anxious, ill or distressed; groups spread beyond control; public/dogs/other users obstruct launch; raft/canoe damage or loose lashings appear; weather changes; any near miss occurs.
Emergency escalation	Remove immediate danger, account for all participants, administer first aid, call 999 if required, contact Centre, preserve scene/equipment after serious incident, complete incident/near-miss review before re-use where relevant.

2.0 MINIBUS DRIVING

ACTIVITY STANDARDS

Item	Control standard
Operating basis	Minibus use must remain within VHCAC charitable purposes, Section 19 permit conditions, insurance, road traffic law and the VHCAC Minibus Safety Policy. No private hire, reward or unauthorised use.
Driver authorisation	No one may drive a Centre minibus unless authorised by VHCAC. Driver must hold a full current UK licence with D1 entitlement, satisfy insurer requirements, complete VHCAC driver assessment/approval, be medically fit and report changes affecting entitlement, fitness or insurance.
Trailer authorisation	No one may tow unless specifically authorised and holding D1+E entitlement, with practical towing/load-security sign-off. Towing competence is additional to activity instructor competence.
Passenger supervision	Use an escort/accompanying adult where group needs, age, behaviour, disability, medical needs or journey complexity require it. The escort supports supervision, behaviour, boarding/alighting, emergency response and reduces driver distraction.
Vehicle checks	Recorded pre-use check before every journey; weekly/periodic inspections and maintenance. Any safety/legal defect means the vehicle is not driven until reported and authorised.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	At risk	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Unauthorised, uninsured or incorrectly licensed driving	Driver passengers Public VHCAC	Legal, insurance and serious safety risk.	Driver must be on VHCAC authorised driver list, meet insurer conditions, hold full current UK licence with D1 entitlement for minibus and D1+E for towing, be using minibus for authorised charitable purpose only, and immediately report licence, medical, accident or conviction changes. Driver is checked before approval and periodically thereafter.	Low
Driver fatigue, illness, impairment, distraction or time pressure	Driver Passengers Public	Driving for work is a high-risk work activity.	Driver must not drive when tired, ill, impaired by alcohol/drugs/medication or under avoidable pressure. Journey planning includes time for checks, route, weather, supervision, rest breaks and realistic return times. Mobile phones must not be used while driving except legally/hands-free and only when safe.	Low/ Medium
Vehicle defect or poor roadworthiness	Driver Passengers Public	Mechanical failure or legal non-compliance.	Recorded pre-use check before every journey: tyres, lights, mirrors, windows, plates, leaks, fuel, seats, belts, doors, warning lights, brakes, steering, wipers/washers, horn, first aid/fire extinguisher where carried. Defects affecting safety/legality mean vehicle is taken out of service and reported.	Low
Passenger injury, poor supervision or seat belt non-compliance	Passengers Driver	Injury during journey or sudden braking; driver distracted.	No overloading beyond fitted seats; one person per seat; seat belts worn. Bags/equipment kept out of aisles/exits. Group leader/escort manages behaviour. Dangerous, disruptive or boisterous behaviour is stopped; driver pulls over safely if necessary.	Low
Unsafe boarding, alighting, handover or end-of-journey arrangements	Participants Staff Public	Pedestrian/traffic collision or missing child risk.	Use safe parking/collection points away from traffic where possible. Driver/escort controls doors, head counts, seat allocation, road crossings and handover. No participant exits until instructed. End-of-journey check confirms everyone and belongings/medication are accounted for.	Low
Collision, road traffic incident or breakdown	Driver Passengers; Public	Serious injury, trauma or safeguarding/e	Driver follows emergency procedure: stop safely, protect passengers, call emergency services/breakdown/insurance as needed, contact Centre, do not admit liability, record details/witnesses,	Low/ Medium

Hazard	At risk	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
		emergency complications.	complete accident/incident forms. Passengers moved to safe place only if safer than remaining in vehicle.	
Towing trailer with minibus	Driver Passengers Public	Changed handling, longer stopping distance and load security risk.	Driver must hold D1+E and towing authorisation. Complete additional trailer checks under Trailer Load & Security SOP. Drive at appropriate speeds, allow extra braking/turning distance, avoid tight reversing and do not tow if legality, load or roadworthiness is in doubt.	Low/ Medium
Safeguarding, medical or SEND needs during travel	Children Vulnerable passengers Staff	Distress, medical deterioration or unsafe behaviour.	Journey plan considers known medical, behavioural and access needs. Medication and emergency contacts accessible. Escort/adult support deployed where required. Driver not expected to manage behaviour or medical issues while driving.	Low

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Control area	Mandatory procedure
1. Authorisation and booking	Confirm journey is for an authorised VHCAC purpose and within Section 19 permit/insurance scope. Allocate only an approved driver. Confirm D1 entitlement, and D1+E if towing.
2. Journey planning	Plan route, timings, weather/road conditions, rest breaks, supervision, medical/SEND/access needs, emergency contacts, safe drop-off/collection and return arrangements. Allow enough time for pre-use checks and loading.
3. Pre-use vehicle check	Complete and record check before every journey. Check tyres, lights, mirrors, windows, number plates, leaks, fuel, seats/seat belts, doors, warning lights, brakes, steering, wipers/washers and horn. Do not drive if safety or legality is in doubt.
4. Trailer check where towing	Apply Trailer Load & Security SOP: coupling, breakaway cable, lights, tyres, structure, load distribution, restraints, second-person/lone check and in-journey re-checks.
5. Passenger boarding	Park safely. Driver/escort supervises boarding, seat allocation and seat belts. Bags/equipment must not block aisles, exits or doors. Confirm head count and any medication before departure.
6. Driving standards	Drive within Highway Code, legal speed limits and conditions. Allow extra stopping distance for minibus/trailer, avoid harsh braking, do not drive distracted, and stop safely if behaviour or vehicle concerns arise.
7. Passenger supervision	Escort/group leader manages behaviour, noise, seat belts, sickness, medical needs and communication so the driver can focus on driving. Dangerous or distracting behaviour must be addressed before continuing.
8. Arrival and alighting	Choose safe stopping point. Participants remain seated until instructed. Control doors and road crossings. Count passengers off and confirm handover/meeting point before unloading kit.
9. End-of-journey checks	Check vehicle for passengers, belongings, medication and damage. Record mileage/log book as required. Report defects, incidents, near misses, passenger issues and any trailer/load concerns.
10. Removal from use	Vehicle/trailer must be removed from use if a defect, incident, licence/insurance concern, unsafe load or driver fitness issue could affect safety or legality.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop in the safest available place; switch on hazard lights; keep passengers calm and supervised; move passengers away from traffic only if safer; call 999 for injury, danger, fire or obstruction; call breakdown/insurance as appropriate; contact Centre Manager/office; follow safeguarding and medical plans; do not admit liability; exchange legally required details; record time, location, passengers, witnesses, photos if safe, and complete accident/incident/near-miss report before further use where relevant.

3.0 TRAILER LOADING

ACTIVITY STANDARD

No.	Load-security checklist item	Responsible
1	Vehicle/trailer licence and authorisation confirmed	Driver
2	Hitch locked, breakaway cable/secondary coupling fitted, jockey wheel secured	Driver
3	Tyres, lights, number plate and reflectors checked	Driver
4	Canoes/equipment loaded evenly and within trailer/vehicle limits	Driver
5	Approved restraints used; no damaged or wrong ropes/straps	Driver
6	Each canoe/stack restrained against forward/rearward/sideways/upward movement	Driver (+ buddy)
7	Loose paddles, ropes, helmets, buoyancy aids, barrels and spars contained/secured	Driver
8	No dangerous overhang; marker/lighting used if legally/operationally required	Driver
9	Second-person physical check completed OR authorised lone time-stamped record	Checker/Driver
10	Re-check completed after first short distance and before return journey	Driver

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Insecure canoe or equipment load falling from trailer	Staff Participant Public Road users	Potential fatal or serious road traffic incident; informed by the May 2026 canoe/trailer incident.	Only authorised D1+E drivers/towing staff may tow. Load must be stable before restraints are applied and secured to suitable anchor points/trailer frame. Each canoe/stack must be positively restrained against forward, rearward, sideways and upward movement using approved straps/rope systems. Wrong, damaged, improvised or insufficient restraints are a stop condition. Driver must complete recorded pre-departure check and second-person physical check wherever practicable.	Low/ Medium
Load shift during journey due to vibration, rough roads, braking or wind	Staff Public Road users	Load may loosen after initial departure.	Driver re-checks after first short distance, after any stop, rough road, emergency braking or before return journey. If load has moved, stop somewhere safe, re-secure and report as a near miss. Do not continue with a load that cannot be made secure.	Low/ Medium
Trailer or restraint equipment defect	Staff Public Road users	Hitch, tyres, lights, straps or ropes could fail.	Before use check hitch/lock, breakaway cable/secondary coupling, lights, number plate, reflectors, tyres, wheel nuts visually, trailer frame/rack, jockey wheel, load bed, anchor points and all straps/ropes. Defective equipment is tagged out and reported; trailer does not move until authorised as roadworthy.	Low
Incorrect coupling, trailer detachment or runaway trailer	Staff Public Road users	Serious road risk.	Driver confirms correct coupling, hitch locked, breakaway cable fitted to correct point, jockey wheel raised/secured, handbrake released before moving, trailer lights connected and functional. Use a pull-test/visual check before loading and before moving.	Low
Manual handling injuries while loading/unloading canoes, spars, barrels or kit	Staff Participants	Back, hand, foot and crush injuries.	Use planned team lifts, clear commands, adequate staff and suitable footwear. Participants only assist if assessed suitable and directly supervised. No one stands under, climbs on or reaches under unstable loads. Use exclusion zone around trailer and public paths.	Low
Reversing or manoeuvring trailer near	Staff Participants Public	Crush/strike injury, especially at	Avoid reversing where possible. Use banksman only where trained/briefed and visible. Establish pedestrian exclusion zone. Passengers/participants wait in a	Low

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
participants or public		busy Mallards Pike.	designated safe area. Driver stops immediately if visual contact is lost or pedestrians enter the area.	
Overloading, poor weight distribution or excessive nose weight	Driver; Passengers Public Road users	Loss of vehicle control or trailer instability.	Do not exceed vehicle, trailer, towbar, tyre, axle or licence limits. Load evenly and low where possible; heavier items low/central; secure loose kit inside vehicle or containers. Centre Manager/Senior Instructor to define approved trailer load plans for canoe and raft kit.	Low/ Medium
Post-incident re-use of trailer, restraints or canoe without review	Staff Public Charity	Repeat incident or evidence lost.	Any fallen load, significant shift, third-party report, collision, near miss or damaged restraint triggers immediate reporting, quarantine of relevant equipment/trailer/straps and manager review before re-use. Actions and learning must be recorded.	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Control area	Mandatory procedure
1. Driver authorisation	Driver must hold the correct licence category for the vehicle/trailer combination, be authorised by VHCAC, be familiar with the vehicle, trailer, route and reversing controls, and must not tow if tired, impaired or under time pressure that prevents checks.
2. Trailer roadworthiness	Before coupling: check tyres, wheel nuts visually, lights, number plate, hitch, breakaway cable/secondary coupling, jockey wheel, load bed/rack, reflectors, straps/ropes and security points. Defective trailer or restraint equipment is taken out of use.
3. Approved restraints	Use designated canoe straps/approved rope systems only. Restraints must be undamaged, suitable for the load and attached to proper anchor points/trailer frame, not to weak fixtures. Do not mix random ropes or rely on friction/weight. Ratchet straps must not crush canoes; use padding/blocks where needed.
4. Minimum securing method	Each load/stack must have independent restraint against forward, rearward, sideways and upward movement. As a default, use at least two separate restraints per canoe stack plus front/rear control where needed. No long loose rope tails. Canoes must not be able to slide out of restraints.
5. Buddy check	Where another staff member is available, a second-person check is mandatory before leaving site or lake. The checker physically tests movement and confirms straps/knots/anchors/lighting/number plate. Both names are recorded.
6. Lone check	Lone towing should be avoided after a load-security incident. Where unavoidable and authorised, driver must complete the written checklist and take a time-stamped photo/video of the final secured load before moving. This is a fallback control, not the normal standard.
7. In-journey re-check	Stop safely and re-check after the first short distance, after rough roads, after any emergency braking, and before leaving Mallards Pike for the return journey. If a load has shifted, do not continue until corrected safely.
8. Post-incident rule	If any canoe/equipment falls, shifts significantly, or is reported by a third party, stop the activity/transport process, inform Centre Manager, quarantine equipment/trailer/straps involved, complete incident/near-miss review and do not re-use until authorised.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop in the safest available place; switch on hazard lights; keep passengers calm and supervised; move passengers away from traffic only if safer; call 999 for injury, danger, fire or obstruction; call breakdown/insurance as appropriate; contact Centre Manager/office; follow safeguarding and medical plans; do not admit liability; exchange legally required details; record time, location, passengers, witnesses, photos if safe, and complete accident/incident/near-miss report before further use where relevant.

4.0 CANOEING [Location: Mallards Pike]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Minimum lead competence	Paddlesport Instructor Award or higher/appropriate current Paddle UK/BCAB qualification for the craft, environment and group; current first aid; VHCAC site induction and sign-off.
Assistant competence	FSRT/PSRC or equivalent rescue competence, current VHCAC in-house induction, and approval by Senior Instructor/Centre Manager. Assistants must understand emergency roles and group control boundaries.
Instructor Ratio	Default VHCAC maximum: 1 instructor to 10 participants plus responsible adult. Apply a stricter limit where required by craft, conditions, participant needs or instructor experience. For solo craft or mixed craft use lower ratios unless additional competent support is deployed.
PPE	Correctly fitted buoyancy aid for everyone afloat or at water edge. Helmets mandatory for under-18s; also for adults where collision/impact risk is increased. Suitable footwear required.
Emergency equipment	First aid kit, charged mobile in waterproof protection, throwline, spare paddle where practical, means of towing/rescue, dry bag for medication where needed, incident/late-back process.
Location of activity	Mallards Pike Lake, placid/very sheltered water, NGR approx. SO 638 093. Go Ape/Café/Barracks local contact points may be used where available
Minibus Driving	See section 2.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions
Trailer Loading	See section 3.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Capsize, immersion and drowning	Participants Staff	Severity high; likelihood reduced by placid venue and close supervision.	Participants must wear correctly fitted CE/UKCA buoyancy aids before going near the water edge or craft. Instructor briefs and rehearses capsize response: stay with boat unless told otherwise, listen for instructions, do not stand up in deep water, keep hold of paddle if safe. Instructor maintains clear boundaries, group spacing and head counts. Safety craft/rescue canoe available and instructor able to reach any craft quickly. Non-swimmers and weak swimmers identified in advance and paired/positioned appropriately. Participants are not to enter water intentionally except as part of a controlled rescue/capsize exercise approved by the instructor.	Low/ Medium
Cold water, wind chill, hypothermia or heat illness	Participants Staff	Cold water and weather can deteriorate quickly.	Instructor checks forecast, wind, rain, temperature, thunder risk and observed conditions. Session shortened, adapted or cancelled for unsuitable conditions. Clothing checked before launch: footwear secured, waterproof/warm layers as needed; sun protection and hydration in hot weather. Prolonged immersion avoided; wet participants removed from water promptly, assessed, warmed and changed. Spare warm layer/blanket/group shelter available where conditions justify it.	Low/ Medium
Wind causing craft to drift or group to spread	Participants Staff	Mallards Pike is sheltered but wind direction can still affect control.	Use only defined operating area within instructor line of sight and within easy rescue distance. No launch where wind exceeds instructor competence, prevents controlled return to shore, or pushes craft away from the normal landing area. Start upwind where practicable. Instructor positions to control the downwind side of the	Low

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
			group and uses simple gathering signals. Abort if group control becomes unreliable.	
Collision with other canoe, bank, trees, jetty, submerged object or rescue craft	Participants Staff Public	Impact injuries, finger trapping, panic.	Instructor briefs safe spacing, stopping, turning, paddle control, no ramming, no pushing off with hands between craft and bank. Launch and landing controlled one craft at a time where needed. Helmets worn by all under-18s and by adults where the dynamic assessment identifies collision/impact risk or where raft activity/close-quarter games are taking place. Activity games selected for age, ability and control.	Low
Manual handling of canoes, paddles and trailer equipment	Participants Staff	Back, hand and foot injuries.	Only trained staff direct loading/unloading. Use team lifts, clear commands and sufficient people. Participants only assist where suitable and supervised. Canoes are not carried above head height by young participants. Wear suitable footwear; keep fingers away from pinch points; no one under suspended/unstable loads. Staff avoid lone heavy lifts.	Low
Slips, trips and falls on bank, access path, wet decking or mud	Participants Staff Public	Common minor injury risk around lake edge.	Footwear with secure fastening and adequate grip required; no bare feet, flip-flops or loose sliders. Instructor identifies and controls launch/landing area. Running prohibited near water edge. Group waits in designated area away from trailer movements and public paths.	Low
Medical event: asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, allergy, panic, SEND/communication need	Participant	Could escalate on water.	Medical and consent information reviewed before session. Essential medication available on bank or carried as appropriate in dry bag. Instructor adapts seating, pairing, activity demands and briefing. Responsible adult/group leader confirms known triggers and support needs. Participants who cannot follow critical safety instructions require additional support or must not go afloat.	Low/ Medium
Water quality, algal bloom, contamination, Weil's disease/leptospirosis, cuts	Participants Staff	Open water has inherent infection risks.	Instructor visually checks water for obvious pollution, algal bloom, dead fish, unusual odour or warnings. Do not run if contamination is suspected or advised by site manager/landowner. Cover cuts/grazes before activity. Hand hygiene after session and before eating. Advise participants not to drink lake water and to report illness after open-water exposure.	Low
Public interface: walkers, dogs, cyclists, anglers, Forestry England/Go Ape users	Participants Staff Public	Shared site risks and safeguarding boundaries.	Respect shared site, keep equipment tidy and avoid blocking paths/access. Public are kept outside launch/landing and trailer areas. Participants do not approach or run from dogs. Staff remain within VHCAC safeguarding procedures and never rely on members of the public for supervision.	Low
Emergency response delayed or poor communication	Participants Staff	Off-site activity depends on good comms.	Centre knows session location, staff, participant numbers and expected return. Instructor carries charged mobile in waterproof case/dry bag and knows nearest access point. First aid kit and throwline available. Emergency action plan briefed to assistant/responsible adult. Late-back procedure used. Incident/near miss reported and reviewed.	Low
Wild boar	Participants Staff	Disruption and unsafe areas	Where the route/launch area involves woodland, brief participants not to approach wildlife including wild boar. Select a different route/launch or wait until area is safe.	Low
Forest operations	Participants Staff	Disruption and unsafe areas	Check for forestry works/signage before the session and avoid areas where operations are taking place	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and preparation	Confirm booking, group size, age, needs and swimming confidence. Check staff qualification/current competence, first aid, assistant availability and responsible adult role. Confirm venue permission and any Forestry England/Go Ape/site notifications. Review weather and water conditions before departure and again on arrival. Ensure Centre knows destination, staff, participant numbers, route and expected return.
2. Equipment preparation at Centre	Inspect canoes for damage, buoyancy/airbags if fitted, seats/thwarts, painters/tow lines, paddles and buoyancy aids. Check helmets for under-18s/adults where required. Pack first aid kit, mobile, throwline, spare paddle and any medication plan. Sign out equipment. Defects are tagged out and reported.
3. Trailer loading and road transport	Use the Canoe/Trailer Load Security SOP in section 6. No trailer leaves site until the driver has completed and signed/recorded the pre-departure check. If the approved restraint method cannot be achieved, do not move the trailer. On arrival, park to avoid reversing near participants/public where possible and establish a pedestrian exclusion zone during unloading.
4. Arrival and dynamic assessment	Instructor checks wind direction/strength, water appearance, launch area, public/dogs, bank condition and emergency access. Define operating area and no-go zones. Decide whether helmets are required for adults and whether ratio/support needs adjusting.
5. Participant briefing	Use simple, age-appropriate briefing: boundaries; buoyancy aid/helmet rules; how to hold paddle; how to get in/out; no ramming/splashing unless permitted; capsize drill; stop/gather signal; what to do if cold/ill/frightened; respect public and wildlife. Check understanding, not just listening. Buoyancy aid/helmet fitted; boundaries; stop/gather signal; no standing unless told; no ramming; what to do if capsized; keep hands clear of bank/other boats; tell staff if cold, unwell, worried or needs medication; respect public/wildlife.
6. Assistant or responsible adult briefing	Support behaviour and head counts; keep waiting group away from water/trailer/public path; do not enter rescue unless trained and instructed; know emergency contact number, meeting point and role if 999 called.
7. Launch and session delivery	Launch in controlled sequence. Keep group compact and within line of sight. Introduce skills progressively. Instructor remains able to reach any craft quickly and avoids becoming task-loaded with games/equipment. Responsible adult supports bank supervision and head counts but does not replace instructor judgement.
8. Rescue and incident management	Remove participant from water promptly, assess cold shock/distress/injury and decide whether they may continue. Any head impact, significant immersion, missing participant, load-security failure, near miss or public-risk event is reported under VHCAC incident procedures.
9. Recovery and departure	Land craft one at a time as needed. Count participants off the water. Move equipment clear of public path. Check all equipment, replace first aid items, clean/dry/store kit, report defects and complete post-session notes including dynamic decisions and incidents. Secure trailer for return journey

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Shout for help/stop activity; account for group; recover casualty; first aid/CPR if required; call 999 and state Mallards Pike Lake, Forest of Dean; ask someone to meet emergency services; call Centre; preserve equipment/scene after serious incident; record facts and witnesses.

5.0 RAFT BUILDING [Location: Mallards Pike]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Minimum lead competence	Paddlesport Instructor Award or equivalent higher/appropriate current Paddle UK/BCAB qualification for the craft, environment and group; current first aid; VHCAC raft-building in-house training and site sign-off.
Assistant competence	FSRT/PSRC or equivalent rescue competence where afloat/close-water support is provided; VHCAC induction; clear role in build area, launch control, rescue and group management.
Instructor Ratio	Default VHCAC maximum: 1 instructor to 10 participants plus responsible adult. Reduce ratio or add competent support for younger groups, poor behaviour, cold conditions, multiple rafts, SEND/medical needs, or where instructor cannot directly supervise both build and launch.
PPE	Correctly fitted buoyancy aid and helmet for all participants before raft approaches water; suitable footwear; clothing suitable for immersion/weather.
Emergency equipment	First aid kit, throwline, safety knife carried by instructor, rescue canoe/craft ready before launch, charged mobile in waterproof protection, dry bag for medication where needed.
Minibus Driving	See section 2.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions
Trailer Loading	See section 3.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Drowning, capsizes, immersion and panic	Participants; Staff	Rafts are deliberately unstable and participants may enter water.	All participants wear correctly fitted buoyancy aid and helmet before raft is moved to water. Instructor delivers capsizes and water-safety briefing before launch. Raft remains in defined shallow/near-bank operating zone unless instructor specifically permits otherwise. Safety canoe/rescue craft ready before launch, with throwline and knife accessible. Instructor maintains head counts and controls how many people are on each raft.	Low/ Medium
Entrapment between barrels, spars, ropes or raft frame	Participants	Highest raft-specific risk.	Instructor approves design before launch. No enclosed gaps that can trap head, limbs or buoyancy aid. Barrels securely lashed; loose ropes managed and ends tucked away. Participants briefed not to put arms/legs through frame or between barrels/spars. Instructor carries safety knife on person and can reach raft quickly. Designs that cannot be checked or made safe are not launched.	Low/ Medium
Rope burns, splinters, hand injuries and tool misuse	Participants	During build phase.	Build area defined on shore away from public paths. No participant knife use unless specifically planned, risk assessed and directly supervised under separate bushcraft/tool controls. Staff inspect barrels, spars, ropes and paddles for damage/sharp edges. Safe lifting, lashing and knot briefing given. Gloves considered for staff handling rough materials.	Low
Raft structural failure or sudden instability	Participants	Falls into water or impact with raft.	Instructor checks raft before launch and again after any major adjustment. Participant numbers limited according to raft size, buoyancy and group ability. Challenge elements introduced progressively; no standing/jumping unless specifically authorised by instructor. Remove raft from water if structure loosens or cannot be controlled.	Low/ Medium
Raft blown away from shore or into middle of lake	Participant; Staff	Wind can overpower participants.	Launch from windward/controlled side where possible. Tether/tow line available. Do not launch if wind prevents reliable recovery to shore. Instructor positions safety canoe downwind and keeps raft within rescue distance. Abort if raft drifts outside the agreed boundary.	Low

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Collision with bank, trees, other users, safety canoe or other raft	Participants Public	Impact, finger traps, head injuries.	Helmets worn. Boundaries, no-ramming rule and paddle control briefed. Only one raft launched at a time for younger/less able groups unless extra competent supervision is present. Clear landing area; hands kept clear of pinch points.	Low
Cold water, fatigue and prolonged immersion	Participants	Rafting often results in repeated wetting.	Clothing checked before session. Session length and challenge level adapted to conditions. Wet/cold participants removed promptly and warmed. Spare clothing plan agreed with visiting group. Hot weather plan includes sun protection and water breaks.	Low/ Medium
Manual handling of barrels, spars and rafts	Participants; Staff	Back, foot and hand injuries.	Team lift instructions; rafts lifted only on command from instructor. No dragging over feet. Clear route from build area to launch. Participants stand clear when raft is carried. Staff do not lift heavy rafts alone.	Low
Unsuitable participant behaviour or inability to follow instructions	Participants Staff Public	Behaviour can quickly escalate on water.	Instructor sets clear behavioural contract and stop signal. Responsible adults actively support behaviour. Participants removed from the activity if they deliberately capsize others, ignore boundaries, misuse ropes/paddles or cannot follow safety instructions. Dynamic ratio increased or activity changed for challenging groups.	Low/ Medium
Public interface, dogs, wildlife, forestry operations and shared-site users	Participants Staff Public	Distraction, conflict, animal encounter, obstruction or environmental hazard.	Participants are briefed not to approach dogs or wildlife including wild boar. Staff check for signage/forestry works and keep away from machinery or operational areas. Equipment, ropes and build materials are kept clear of public paths. Public are kept outside build, launch and landing areas	Low
Emergency response delayed or poor communication	Participants Staff	Off-site activity depends on good comms.	Centre knows session details and return time. Instructor has charged mobile in waterproof case, first aid kit, throwline, safety knife and rescue craft. Assistant/responsible adult knows emergency role: group control, call for help, meet emergency services, preserve scene after serious incident.	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and preparation	Confirm group, ability, behaviour considerations, medical/SEND needs and responsible adult support. Check staff competence for raft-building and rescue. Confirm weather/water conditions are suitable and Centre is aware of location, staffing, numbers and return time.
2. Equipment preparation and transport	Inspect barrels, spars, ropes, paddles, helmets and buoyancy aids. Remove damaged barrels, cracked spars, frayed ropes or sharp-edged equipment. Pack first aid kit, throwline, safety knife, mobile and rescue canoe/craft. Secure all equipment for transport; loose kit must be contained.
3. Trailer loading and road transport	Use the Canoe/Trailer Load Security SOP. No trailer leaves site until the driver has completed and signed/recorded the pre-departure check. If the approved restraint method cannot be achieved, do not move the trailer. On arrival, park to avoid reversing near participants/public where possible and establish a pedestrian exclusion zone during unloading.
4. Arrival and dynamic assessment	Instructor checks wind direction/strength, water appearance, launch area, public/dogs, bank condition and emergency access. Define operating area and no-go zones. Decide whether helmets are required for adults and whether ratio/support needs adjusting.
5. Site set-up	Create separate build area, launch/landing area and public exclusion/awareness zone. Keep ropes and spars tidy. Rescue canoe/craft and throwline must be available before launch. Identify wind direction and choose launch point that enables easy recovery.
6. Participant briefing and Build area	Explain safe lifting, carrying and lashing. No running with spars, no swinging paddles/wood, no ropes around neck/body, no climbing on raft on land, no participant knife use unless separately authorised. Demonstrate knots/lassing. Set a clear deadline for instructor safety inspection before water. Build area rules; safe lifting; rope safety; no limbs through raft gaps; helmets/buoyancy aids before launch; pre-launch inspection; no deliberate capsizing unless instructed; stay with raft only if told/safe; signal if cold, trapped, frightened or hurt.
6. Assistant or responsible adult briefing	Support behaviour and head counts; keep waiting group away from water/trailer/public path; do not enter rescue unless trained and instructed; know emergency contact number, meeting point and role if 999 called.
7. Pre-launch safety inspection	Instructor checks: buoyancy sufficient; barrels secured; no head/limb traps; no long loose rope ends; raft can be controlled; participant numbers appropriate; helmets and buoyancy aids fitted; participants understand capsize/drift instructions. Unsafe rafts are modified or not launched.
8. Launch and afloat management	Move raft only on instructor command. Keep hands clear of pinch points. Launch gradually. Instructor controls challenge level, number on raft and distance from shore. Safety craft positioned to recover downwind. No deliberate capsizing unless intentionally planned and controlled.
9. Rescue and extraction	If raft fails/capsizes, account for people first. Participants stay with raft only if safe and instructed. Instructor/assistant recovers participants promptly. Use safety knife only if entrapment/rope hazard requires immediate release. Remove cold/distressed participants and end or adapt session.
10. Dismantling and return	Dismantle in build area, not blocking public path. Count all barrels, spars, paddles, ropes, helmets and buoyancy aids. Check equipment for damage, clean/store kit, report defects. Secure trailer/vehicle for return, complete post-activity notes and incident/near-miss reporting.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Shout for help/stop activity; account for group; recover casualty; first aid/CPR if required; call 999 and state Mallards Pike Lake, Forest of Dean; ask someone to meet emergency services; call Centre; preserve equipment/scene after serious incident; record facts and witnesses.

6.0 ABSEILING [Location: Stoney Green]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Activity and venue	Off-site abseiling at Stoney Green Quarry (NGR approx. SO 645 086). Use only agreed, inspected and suitable single-pitch abseil locations within VHCAC approval, landowner/access permissions, insurance and current technical adviser sign-off.
Minimum lead competence	Rock Climbing Instructor / Single Pitch Award or higher, current competence for abseiling at this venue, current first aid, VHCAC site-specific induction and approval. Instructor must work within the remit of the qualification and the limitations of the site.
Assistant competence	Assistant must have relevant in-house training/RCI/CWI support competence as approved by Senior Instructor/Centre Manager, understand edge management, group control, helmet zones, emergency roles and when not to intervene.
Instructor Ratio	Default VHCAC maximum 1 instructor to 10 participants plus responsible adult. Apply stricter ratio for younger groups, SEND/medical needs, difficult behaviour, poor weather, complex access, multi-station set-up or where the instructor cannot safely supervise the edge and group.
PPE and technical equipment	CE/UKCA helmets, harnesses, ropes, connectors, belay/descender devices, anchors, slings, edge protection, safety rope/back-up system, first aid kit, mobile phone, group shelter/spare clothing where needed. Equipment inspected before use and recorded under VHCAC procedures.
Stop/no-go	Do not start or continue if anchors, rope systems, edge management, weather, participant behaviour, public interface, instructor competence or emergency communication cannot be controlled.
Minibus Driving	See section 2.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Fall from height at cliff/quarry edge	Participants Staff Assistants Public	Potential fatal injury.	Participants remain outside the perimeter/safe waiting area until called forward by the instructor. Instructor controls edge access. Use clear edge exclusion zone, safety line/secure attachment where needed, one participant at the edge at a time unless a competent assistant is specifically deployed. No one approaches edge without helmet and instruction. Systems rigged so participant is always protected before exposure.	Low/ Medium
Incorrect rigging, anchor failure, wrong attachment or equipment misuse	Participants Staff	Potential fatal/major injury.	Instructor selects sound anchors, uses suitable rope systems, edge protection and releasable/escapable systems where appropriate. Instructor completes independent visual/tactile checks of anchors, knots, connectors, harnesses, buckles and safety rope before each descent. Equipment must be within inspection regime; damaged/uncertain kit removed from use.	Low
Participant panic, freezing, refusal or loss of control on descent	Participants Instructor	Distress, suspension, uncontrolled movement or delayed rescue.	Pre-brief gives choice and no-pressure challenge. Instructor uses suitable progression, simple commands and a back-up/safety rope for novices. Descent route chosen to match group. Rescue/lower/raise/assisted recovery plan ready before first descent. Session adapted/stopped if participant cannot follow instructions.	Low/ Medium
Pen at bottom of cliff	Participants	fall zone / bottom group management	Where appropriate, establish a clearly defined bottom waiting area/pen outside the fall zone	Low

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Hair, clothing, jewellery, fingers or skin caught in descender/rope	Participants Staff	Entrapment, burns, cuts.	Long hair tied back and tucked away; jewellery/watches removed or secured; loose clothing managed. Demonstrate hand positions and keep hands away from device. Instructor controls descent and safety rope. Knife/rescue kit accessible to instructor.	Low
Rock, loose objects or dropped equipment falling	Participants Staff Public	Head injury or impact.	All participants and staff wear CE/UKCA helmets from entering the rock/quarry risk area until clear. Instructor inspects site for loose rock/objects and positions group outside fall zone. Equipment clipped/managed; no throwing ropes/equipment where people are below. Bottom group kept in safe waiting area/pen.	Low/ Medium
Slips, trips and falls on rough track, muddy approach or quarry floor	Participants Staff Public	Common injury risk, increased in wet weather.	Suitable footwear with good tread required. Walk in controlled group. Instructor dynamically assesses approach and rigs handline/assisted handline where appropriate. Avoid running and carrying excessive kit by participants. Stop/change venue if access is unsuitable.	Low
Adverse weather: wind, rain, cold, heat, thunder/lightning	Participants Staff	Reduced grip, cold injury, heat illness, tree/branch risk, lightning exposure.	Check forecast and on-site conditions. Do not operate in thunder/lightning, high winds, heavy rain, poor visibility or conditions outside competence. Clothing, waterproofs, warm layers, sun protection and hydration checked. Session shortened or abandoned where necessary.	Low
Medical event, SEND/communication need or safeguarding issue off-site	Participants Staff	Delayed response away from Centre.	Medical/consent information reviewed. Essential medication accessible. Responsible adult supports known needs. Instructor adapts briefing and participation. Centre knows location, route, group and return time. Mobile phone and first aid kit carried; emergency plan briefed to assistant/responsible adult.	Low/ Medium
Roadside parking/walking near roads	Participants Staff Public	Traffic collision.	Use agreed parking/drop-off. Walk single file where roads used, face oncoming traffic where appropriate, high visibility/torches where conditions require. Control group during loading/unloading and road crossings.	Low
Public interface, dogs, wildlife, forestry operations and shared-site users	Participants Staff Public	Distraction, conflict, animal encounter, obstruction or environmental hazard.	Participants are briefed not to approach dogs or wildlife including wild boar. Staff check for signage/forestry works and keep away from machinery or operational areas. Equipment, ropes and build materials are kept clear of public paths. Public are kept outside build, launch and landing areas	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and preparation	Confirm venue approval, landowner/access permissions, instructor qualification/current competence, first aid, assistant/responsible adult role, group size, age, needs, medical/SEND information and Centre late-back arrangements. Check forecast and daylight.
2. Equipment preparation	Select and inspect ropes, harnesses, helmets, slings, connectors, descenders/belay devices, edge protection, first aid kit, mobile phone, group shelter/spare kit as needed. Tag out defects. Pack so technical equipment is protected and not dropped/dragged.
3. Travel and arrival	Use Minibus Driving and/or Trailer Load & Security SOP where relevant. Park safely without blocking access. Brief group before leaving vehicle. Walk to site under control with helmets worn once in falling-object/rock risk area.
4. Dynamic site assessment	Check anchors, edge, loose rock, quarry floor, approach, public/other users, weather, emergency access and mobile signal. Confirm safe waiting area at top and bottom, fall zones and operating boundary. Stop or move if controls cannot be achieved.
5. Rigging and safety system	Instructor rigs anchors and abseil/safety system within qualification and current practice. Use edge protection where needed. Keep ropes tidy and protected. Instructor checks system before first use and monitors throughout. No participant is clipped in or exposed to edge until the system and supervision are ready.
6. Participant briefing	Explain helmet/harness rules, waiting area, edge rules, one-at-a-time process, commands, descent position, hand safety, hair/jewellery, choice to opt out, what to do if frightened or stuck, and respect for public/other users. Check understanding.
7. Pre-descent checks	Instructor checks each participant: harness fitted and doubled back/secured, helmet fitted, hair/clothing/jewellery managed, attachment/connector locked and oriented correctly, safety rope attached, participant understands commands and is emotionally ready.
8. Descent management	Instructor maintains direct control of participant and safety rope. Responsible adult/assistant manages waiting group. Bottom area kept clear of fall zone. Descent stopped/assisted if participant panics, moves incorrectly or conditions change.
9. Emergency/rescue	Instructor prepared to lower, hold, assist, retrieve or convert system as appropriate. Group controlled by assistant/responsible adult. Call 999 for injury, stuck participant requiring external rescue, serious fall, head injury or medical emergency.
10. De-rig, return and review	Account for all participants and equipment. De-rig safely, check ropes/kit for damage, clean/store, report defects. Centre informed of return. Complete incident/near-miss records and technical review if any unusual event occurred.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop all descents; make the scene safe; secure any participant on rope; account for group; administer first aid; call 999 and state Stoney Green Quarry with grid reference/nearest access point; ask a responsible adult to meet emergency services if safe; contact Centre; keep group warm/supervised away from edge/fall zone; preserve equipment/rigging after serious incident unless movement is needed for rescue; record facts, timings and witnesses.

7.0 CAVING [Location: Symonds Yat]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Activity and venue	Introductory horizontal caving at approved local caves only, currently Symonds Yat area (Pinnacle Cave, C2 and C3 main chamber only) and other specifically approved sites within the instructor remit. Route choice must remain within the leader's award, competence, local knowledge and site-specific induction.
Minimum lead competence	BCA Local Cave and Mine Leader Award / Local Cave Leader Level 1 or equivalent current competence for the cave, group and conditions; current first aid; VHCAC sign-off and knowledge of the selected cave and approach.
Assistant competence	Relevant VHCAC in-house training, clear role allocation, cave approach awareness, emergency role briefing, and approval by Senior Instructor/Centre Manager. Assistants must not independently lead underground unless qualified and authorised.
Instructor ratio	Default VHCAC maximum: 1 instructor to 11 participants plus responsible adult. Reduce numbers or add competent support for younger groups, anxiety/claustrophobia, SEND/medical needs, difficult approaches, poor weather, or any cave/route with additional hazards.
PPE	CE/UKCA approved caving/climbing helmet for all participants and staff from the approach where rockfall/overhead hazards exist until clear of the site. Suitable footwear with grip; robust clothing/oversuit where appropriate; long hair tied back; jewellery removed where it may catch.
Equipment	First aid kit, charged mobile in waterproof/protective case, spare lights/torches, group emergency shelter/bothy where appropriate, route/venue information, watch/timekeeping, and any rescue/rope equipment required by the route and leader remit.
Stop / do not start if	Water levels, weather, rockfall, group behaviour, access, forestry works, equipment defects, leader competence, lighting or emergency communication are not satisfactory; participant cannot follow critical instructions; or route requires skills/equipment outside the leader's remit.
Minibus Driving	See section 2.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Rockfall or objects falling on approach or near cliff/cave entrance	Participants Staff Public	Head injury or serious injury from loose rock, climbers above, dropped equipment or unstable ground.	Use approved approach route. Helmets worn before entering rockfall zone. Instructor makes a dynamic visual inspection and avoids areas below active climbers or loose rock. Group is kept close, quiet and moving efficiently through exposed areas. Do not touch climbers' ropes/equipment. Abort or reroute if rockfall risk is unacceptable.	Low/ Medium
Slips, trips and falls on muddy, wet or uneven approach and cave floor	Participants Staff	Common injury risk; potential sprains, cuts or falls onto rock.	Footwear with good tread and secure fastening required. Pace and route chosen for the least able participant. Instructor briefs three points of contact where useful, avoids rushing, uses spotting/handline only where within remit, and keeps group away from steep drops/unstable ground.	Low
Group splitting up, getting lost or delayed underground	Participants; Staff	Delay, distress, poor supervision and difficult rescue.	Instructor gives simple route briefing, uses head counts before entry, during route and on exit, maintains line of sight/voice contact, appoints front/rear positions, and keeps participants between staff/assistants. No one enters side passages without explicit instruction. Centre is aware of venue, route and expected return time.	Low

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Individual stuck, panics, claustrophobia or refuses to continue	Participant Group	Distress and possible rescue requirement.	Medical/SEND/communication information reviewed before activity. Participant choice respected and alternative arrangements considered. Route is tailored to the largest/least confident participant. Instructor uses calm coaching, does not force confined sections, can reverse route or stop activity.	Low/ Medium
Light failure or darkness	Participants Staff	Trips, panic, separation and delayed evacuation.	All caving lights checked before entry. Instructor carries spare lights; group briefed to stop if light fails. Session does not proceed if lighting provision is insufficient. Avoid unnecessary darkness games unless specifically planned and controlled.	Low
Cold, wet conditions, hypothermia or heat/cold stress on approach	Participants Staff	Condition can deteriorate quickly, especially if group is delayed.	Check forecast and recent weather. Clothing matched to conditions and cave environment. Keep session length appropriate. Carry emergency shelter/spare warm layer where conditions require it. Monitor participants for cold, fatigue or distress and exit early if needed.	Low/ Medium
Medical event: asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, allergy, injury or anxiety	Participants	May escalate underground or on approach.	Review medical information before departure. Essential medication available and protected from wet. Instructor/adult knows individual support needs. Participant who cannot safely access/exit the cave is offered an alternative activity or additional support.	Low/ Medium
Environmental damage, litter or disturbance	Cave environment; Landowner relationship; Charity	Damage to fragile environment and reputational impact.	Follow conservation principles: take nothing, leave nothing, avoid unnecessary contact with formations/walls, keep to approved routes, remove litter, and comply with access permissions and local cave conservation requirements.	Low
Other site users, public, dogs, forestry works or wild boar on route	Participants Staff Public	Collision, distraction, animal encounter or entering unsafe work area.	Check signage/known forestry operations before use. Keep away from machinery/work areas. Brief group not to approach dogs or wildlife including wild boar. Step aside respectfully for other users where safe.	Low
Emergency response delayed due to off-site location	Participants Staff	Delay in first aid/rescue and poor information to emergency services.	Centre has venue/route/expected return. Instructor has charged mobile, first aid and emergency plan. Know nearest access/meeting point and what3words/grid reference where possible. Use late-back procedure. Serious incidents preserve scene/equipment and complete incident review.	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and preparation	Confirm cave, route, access permission, group size, age, medical/SEND needs, staff qualification, assistant role and responsible adult support. Check weather/recent rainfall, venue hazards and whether any forestry/site works affect access. Centre must know venue, route, staff, numbers and expected return.
2. Equipment preparation	Check helmets, lights, spare lights, first aid kit, mobile, emergency shelter and any route-specific kit. Defective helmets/lights are removed from use. Medication plan agreed with group leader.
3. Arrival and dynamic assessment	Instructor checks approach, rockfall risk, other users/climbers, ground conditions, entrance, weather and group readiness. Confirm that activity remains within remit and that a safe exit remains available.
4. Participant briefing	Explain helmet rule, staying together, route boundaries, no running, no throwing stones, no touching climbers' gear, what to do if light fails, how to move on rock, and how to say if worried, stuck, cold, hurt or needing medication.
5. Underground management	Use head counts, clear front/rear control, regular stops and simple instructions. Keep group together and within voice/visual supervision. Adapt route for confidence, size, fitness and behaviour. Exit early if control, weather, light, medical or welfare concerns arise.
6. Exit and return	Count everyone out of the cave and clear of the rockfall zone. Check for injuries, cold, missing items and equipment damage. Inform Centre if timing changes. Clean/dry/store kit and report defects/incidents.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop group and make area safe; account for everyone; give first aid; evacuate by safest route if able; call 999 and request Police/Cave Rescue if underground help may be needed; give cave name/access point/grid reference/what3words, casualty details and group numbers; contact Centre; preserve equipment after serious incident and complete review.

8.0 GORGE WALKING [Location: Cwm Dwyr, Wales]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Activity and venue	Gorge walking at Clydach Gorge / Cwm Dwyr or other specifically approved venue only. Activity may include walking in/near moving water, scrambling, simple climbs/hoists and managed challenge within the leader's technical remit.
Minimum lead competence	SPA/RCI or equivalent technical competence for the venue and ropework, plus site induction, current first aid and VHCAC approval. New instructors must shadow and be observed before independent delivery.
Assistant competence	Relevant in-house induction, clear role in group control, road/approach supervision, emergency support and approval by Senior Instructor/Centre Manager. Assistant must not manage rope systems unless competent and authorised.
Instructor ratio	Default VHCAC maximum: 1 instructor to 11 participants including a responsible adult. Reduce ratio/add support for high water, cold conditions, younger groups, challenging behaviour, SEND/medical needs, or more technical ropework.
PPE	Approved helmet for all participants and staff throughout gorge/rockfall areas. Harnesses/ropes/hardware where ropework is used. Suitable footwear with secure fastening and good tread; clothing appropriate for wet/cold conditions; long hair tied back and jewellery removed where relevant.
Equipment	First aid kit in waterproof container, charged mobile/protected comms, group shelter/bothy where appropriate, ropes/harnesses/hardware as required, knife, torch, spare warm layer/blanket as needed, and route/venue emergency information.
Stop / do not start if	Water levels, recent rainfall, forecast, thunder/lightning, temperature, participant behaviour, kit, staff competence or emergency access make the session unsafe. Instructor must be willing to move, shorten or cancel.
Minibus Driving	See section 2.0 for compliance, risk assessment, operating procedures and emergency actions

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Sudden rise in water level, strong flow or deep water	Participants Staff	Drowning, impact, entrapment or loss of group control.	Check forecast, recent rainfall and water levels before departure and on arrival. Do not enter if water is above venue safe limits, rising, discoloured, unusually fast, or if thunder/heavy rain is forecast. Use conservative route choices and avoid deep/fast water unless specifically within remit and supervised.	Low/ Medium
Slips, trips and falls on wet rock, mud, banks and approach	Participants Staff	Common cause of injury: sprains, cuts, head impacts and falls into water.	Mandatory suitable footwear with grip; helmets worn; pace controlled; buddying/spotting used where appropriate; instructor demonstrates safe movement; avoid rushing and adjust route to weakest participant.	Low
Rockfall, falling branches or objects from above	Participants Staff	Head injuries or serious trauma.	Helmets worn in gorge/approach where overhead hazard exists. Instructor makes visual inspection; avoids loose/unstable sections and keeps group out of fall lines. Do not allow stone throwing or climbing on unstable banks.	Low/ Medium

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Ropework/climb fall, harness/knot or carabiner error	Participants Staff	Fall from height or suspension incident.	Ropework only within instructor competence. Systems selected for group ability and easy rescue. Instructor checks harness fit, buckles, knots, connectors and anchor arrangements before use. Participants kept away from edge/fall zones. Releasable/hauling options considered where appropriate.	Low
Participant freezes, panics or cannot continue	Participant Group	Distress, delay and rescue requirement.	Challenge by choice. Instructor briefs that participants can opt out before committing. Routes chosen with escape/retreat options. Calm coaching, assisted return or alternative route used. Do not pressure participants into climbs/jumps/sections beyond confidence or ability.	Low/ Medium
Cold water exposure, hypothermia or exhaustion	Participants Staff	Deterioration, poor decision-making and medical emergency.	Clothing suited to wet/cold conditions. Session length adjusted to temperature and group energy. Regular welfare checks. Remove cold/tired participants promptly, provide warm clothing/shelter and end session if needed.	Low/ Medium
Hair, jewellery, clothing or fingers caught in equipment/rocks	Participants	Entrapment, cuts or strangulation or catching hazard.	Long hair tied back/tucked away. Jewellery/watches removed before session. Brief keeping hands clear of moving rope/hardware and avoiding fingers in cracks/pinch points.	Low
Road walking and traffic during approach/return	Participants Staff Public	Collision with vehicle on rural roads.	Use pavement/paths where available. Group walks single file facing traffic where appropriate. High-vis/front/rear staff considered. Crossings controlled by instructor/adults. No headphones/phones while walking.	Low
Public, dogs, horse riders, cyclists, wildlife or forestry operations	Participants Staff Public	Distraction, conflict, bites/animal encounter, entering work area.	Brief group to respect other users and step aside if necessary. Do not approach or run from dogs/wildlife including wild boar. Check signage and avoid forestry operations/machinery.	Low
Emergency response delayed in gorge environment	Participants; Staff	Difficult evacuation or poor information for emergency services.	Centre knows route, venue and return time. Instructor carries charged phone, first aid, emergency kit and knows nearest access/escape points. Use late-back procedure. Call 999 for serious injury, water incident or entrapment.	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and preparation	Confirm approved venue, staff competence, ratio, responsible adult role, group ability, medical/SEND information and transport arrangements. Check weather, recent rainfall and water levels. Centre must know destination, staff, numbers, route and return time.
2. Equipment preparation	Inspect helmets, harnesses, ropes, hardware, first aid kit, mobile, emergency shelter, knife/torch and any spare warmth kit. Remove defective equipment and record defects.
3. Arrival and dynamic assessment	Check water level/flow, weather trend, approach, rockfall, exits, other users and group readiness. Decide if planned route is still suitable. Cancel/shorten if any critical control is missing.
4. Participant briefing	Explain boundaries, helmet rule, footwear, buddy system, moving on wet rock, no jumping unless explicitly instructed, no stone throwing, ropework rules, stop signal, cold/welfare reporting, and how to ask for help/opt out.
5. Session delivery	Keep group compact and supervised. Use progressive challenges. Position participants in safe waiting areas away from fall zones and deep/fast water. Instructor checks rope systems and PPE before each use. Maintain regular head counts and welfare checks.
6. Completion and return	Count participants, check injuries/cold, walk back under supervision, notify Centre of changes, clean/dry/store kit, replace first aid items and record incidents/near misses/dynamic decisions.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop activity; account for all; remove group from water/fall zone if safe; give first aid and prevent cold injury; call 999 for serious injury, water rescue or entrapment; give gorge name/access point/grid reference/what3words; send adult to meet emergency services if safe; contact Centre and complete incident review.

9.0 BIKING [Location: Forest of Dean woods to rear of site]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Activity and venue	Off-road biking on approved local tracks/paths only, including the woods to the rear of the campsite and other approved Forest of Dean routes. Routes must match the least able rider and remain within leader competence, venue permissions, insurance and any AALA/licensing scope where applicable.
Minimum lead competence	Appropriate trail/mountain bike leadership award or equivalent current competence (e.g. British Cycling Trail Leader/MTB Leader, MIAS, MBLA/OTC/CTC as accepted by VHCAC), route knowledge, current first aid and VHCAC approval. In-house-only delivery must be limited to clearly approved low-risk local routes and signed off by Centre Manager/Senior Instructor.
Assistant competence	Relevant in-house training, competent cyclist, understands front/rear marker system, emergency role, basic bike checks and group management. Approved by Senior Instructor/Centre Manager.
Instructor ratio	Default VHCAC maximum: 1 instructor to 10 participants plus responsible adult/rear marker. Use lower ratios or additional competent support for younger/less able groups, road sections, mixed abilities, poor weather, technical terrain or behaviour concerns.
PPE	Correctly fitted cycle helmet meeting a recognised standard, worn whenever mounted. Suitable closed-toe footwear, clothing not caught in chain/wheels, weather-appropriate layers and gloves/eye protection considered by dynamic assessment.
Equipment	Bikes suitable for participants and route; helmets; first aid kit; charged mobile; route map; repair kit including pump, spare tube/patches and basic tools; emergency contact details; group list/medical information.
Stop / do not start if	Leader is outside competence, route is unsuitable, bikes/helmets/brakes are defective, participant cannot brake/steer/follow critical instructions, weather/visibility is unsafe, forestry works block route, or road/traffic risk cannot be managed.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Falls from bike/loss of control	Participants	Fractures, head injury, cuts and sprains.	Route and pace matched to least able rider. Skills briefing and practice: braking, gears, cornering, spacing and dismounting. No riding beyond ability. Technical features avoided unless specifically planned and within leader remit. Helmets worn.	Low/ Medium
Head injury	Participants	Potential serious injury from fall or collision.	Approved helmets checked for fit and secure fastening before riding. Damaged helmets removed from use after impact or defect. Participants must not ride without helmet.	Low/ Medium
Collision with other riders, pedestrians, dogs, horses, trees or obstacles	Participants; Public	Impact injury and third-party harm.	Safe spacing rules, overtaking rules, speed control and stop signals briefed. Front/rear marker system used. Slow down/stop for pedestrians, horses, dogs and blind corners. No racing unless specifically planned and controlled in a safe area.	Low
Road crossings or riding near traffic	Participants; Staff; Public	Vehicle collision risk.	Avoid roads where possible. Where unavoidable, use Highway Code, leader-controlled crossings, single file where appropriate and clear front/rear supervision. Group stops well back from road until instructed. No road riding by participants unless route and group are suitable.	Low/ Medium
Mechanical failure: brakes, tyres, chain, steering or loose parts	Participants	Loss of control, crash or delay.	Pre-use bike check by staff/leader: brakes, tyres, wheels, steering, saddle, pedals and chain. Participant bike fit checked. Defective bikes quarantined. Repair kit carried and route adapted or ended if repairs cannot be made safely.	Low

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Slippery/muddy ground, roots, gravel, leaves, wet timber or steep gradients	Participants	Falls and loss of control.	Dynamic route assessment. Speed reduced, hazard sections walked if needed. Avoid unsafe gradients/surfaces. Brief riders to look ahead, brake early and keep appropriate spacing. Cancel/adapt route in poor conditions.	Low/ Medium
Group spread, participant lost or separated	Participants	Delay, anxiety and safeguarding concern.	Leader/rear marker system; head counts at junctions and regular regroup points; no one passes leader or falls behind rear marker. Route card/plan left with Centre. Lost/late-back procedure used.	Low
Medical event, fatigue, dehydration or behavioural issue	Participants	Deterioration on route or unsafe riding.	Medical/consent info reviewed. Medication accessible. Water/food/rest breaks planned. Participant removed from riding if unsafe, distressed, too tired or unable to follow instructions. Responsible adults support behaviour.	Low/ Medium
Public interface, forestry operations, dogs, wildlife/wild boar	Participants; Public; Staff	Collision, animal encounter or unsafe work area.	Check route and signage before riding. Keep away from machinery/forestry operations. Participants briefed not to approach dogs/wildlife and to slow/stop for other users. Respect shared paths and access restrictions.	Low
Poor weather, low light or visibility	Participants; Staff	Increased crash/lost risk and cold/heat illness.	Check forecast. Suitable clothing required. Avoid low light unless specifically planned with lights and night-riding competence. Cancel/adapt in high winds, thunder, ice, extreme heat or visibility concerns.	Low

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and route planning	Confirm approved route, leader competence, group ability, medical/SEND needs, ratio, responsible adult/rear marker and Centre notification. Choose route to suit least able rider and current conditions. Avoid roads/technical terrain unless specifically planned and controlled.
2. Bike and helmet preparation	Check bikes and helmets before issue. Complete M-check style inspection: wheels/tyres, brakes, steering, saddle, pedals, chain/gears and general condition. Adjust saddle/helmet fit. Tag out defective kit.
3. Arrival/start dynamic assessment	Check surface, weather, public use, forestry signage/works, route closures and group behaviour. Adjust route, ratio or activity if needed.
4. Participant briefing	Explain helmet rule, brakes/gears, safe spacing, no overtaking unless told, stop/gather signals, front/rear marker system, how to pass public/horses/dogs, road crossing rules, what to do if separated, and reporting injury/fatigue/medication needs.
5. Riding management	Leader rides at front or positions where most effective; competent adult/rear marker remains at back. Stop at junctions and regroup regularly. Control speed on descents/corners. Walk sections if conditions or ability require. No one rides alone.
6. Incident, repair and return	For injury/mechanical failure, stop group in safe place, make casualty safe, decide repair/evacuation/return. Inform Centre if timing changes. After session clean/check bikes, record defects, restock first aid/repair kit and complete incident/near-miss records.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop group in a safe off-path position; protect casualty and group from riders/traffic; give first aid; call 999 for serious injury, head injury symptoms or road collision; give location/access route/grid reference/what3words; contact Centre; keep group supervised and warm; quarantine damaged bike/helmet and complete review.

13.0 MOUNTAIN WALKING [Location: UK areas]

ACTIVITY STANDARD

Item	Control standard
Activity and venue	Mountain walking in approved UK mountain areas such as Brecon Beacons/Bannau Brycheiniog, North Wales, Dartmoor, Peak District and Lake District, in summer conditions only and within VHCAC approval, insurance and AALA/licensing scope where applicable.
Minimum lead competence	Mountain Leader Award/Summer Mountain Leader, or Walking Group Leader/Lowland Leader only where the route remains within the remit of that qualification. Leader must hold current first aid and be currently competent for the terrain, navigation, weather and group.
Assistant competence	Assistants should hold Lowland Leader or equivalent experience where supporting in hill/mountain terrain, or be specifically briefed and deployed within competence for supervision, back-marker, emergency and group welfare roles.
Instructor ratio	Default VHCAC maximum 1 leader to 11 participants plus responsible adult. Use lower ratio/add support for remote terrain, poor forecast, younger groups, SEND/medical needs, night/low visibility, complex navigation or expedition/overnight elements.
Route planning	Route card/plan prepared with objectives, alternatives, escape routes, timings, grid references, emergency access, nearest hospital/medical support and weather decision points. Centre must know route and expected return.
Leader equipment	Map, compass and navigation backup, first aid kit, group shelter/bothy, spare warm layer, spare food, mobile phone, whistle, torch/headtorch, emergency contacts, participant medical information. Camping equipment if overnight is specifically approved.
Participant kit	Waterproofs, warm layers, suitable walking boots/footwear, food and water, personal medication, spare clothing as appropriate, sun protection, hat/gloves depending on conditions. Kit checked before departure.
Stop/no-go	Do not start/continue if route is outside leader remit, winter conditions/snow/ice are present unless separately authorised, forecast/observed weather is unsafe, group kit is inadequate, communication/emergency arrangements are unsuitable, or participants cannot safely complete the route.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
Mountain weather: rapid deterioration, wind, rain, cold, heat, poor visibility or lightning	Participants Staff	Hypothermia, heat illness, navigation error, falls or lightning exposure.	Check mountain forecast before travel and on arrival. Carry group shelter/spare layers. Set decision points and escape routes. Avoid exposed/high ground in thunder/lightning. Turn back/alter route before conditions exceed leader/group ability.	Low/ Medium
Navigation error, group lost, route too ambitious or delayed return	Participants Staff; Centre	Exposure, anxiety, late return and emergency call-out.	Qualified/currently competent leader uses map/compass and route card. Timings monitored against plan. Centre holds route and late-back time. Use conservative route choices and escape options. Keep group together and adjust route early.	Low/ Medium
Slips, trips, falls on steep, rocky, wet or boggy terrain	Participants Staff	Sprains, fractures, head injury or fall from	Route chosen for group ability and conditions. Suitable footwear required. Brief foot placement, spacing and pace. Avoid scrambling/steep ground outside remit. Use	Low/ Medium

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk without controls	Mandatory controls	Residual risk
		steep ground.	alternative route if terrain is unstable, icy, flooded or beyond group ability.	
Hypothermia, exhaustion, dehydration, heat stroke or inadequate clothing/food	Participants	Medical deterioration and inability to continue.	Kit, food and water checked. Regular breaks, pacing and welfare checks. Participants encouraged to report cold/tired/unwell early. Leader carries group shelter, spare food/layer and adapts route or evacuates where needed.	Low/ Medium
River/stream crossings, bogs, waterlogged ground or flooding	Participants Staff	Drowning, slips, cold immersion or entrapment.	Avoid unnecessary water crossings. Check conditions and rainfall. Use bridges/safer alternatives. Do not cross flooded, fast or uncertain water. Turn back or reroute if crossing cannot be made safely.	Low
Medical event, asthma, diabetes, allergy, epilepsy, panic or SEND/communication need	Participants	Delayed response in remote setting.	Medical/consent information reviewed; medication accessible. Responsible adult confirms triggers/support needs. Leader adapts route/pace/communication. Emergency plan and nearest access points known.	Low/ Medium
Roadside walking, car parks, minibus drop-off or traffic near route	Participants Staff Public	Vehicle collision or unsafe boarding.	Use safe parking/drop-off. Control group during boarding/alighting and road crossings. Walk single file/face traffic where appropriate. High visibility/torches used in low light.	Low
Animals, livestock, dogs, wild horses or wildlife	Participants Staff	Kicks, bites, panic or route obstruction.	Give animals wide berth. Do not feed/touch. Follow countryside code, close gates, avoid separating adult animals from young. Dogs/public/livestock managed calmly; route adjusted if animals block path.	Low
Remote emergency, poor mobile signal or delayed rescue	Participants Staff	Delay to medical care or evacuation.	Leader carries first aid kit, shelter, map and phone; considers whistle/torch and backup communication. Route plan includes grid references/access points. Centre late-back procedure active. Group kept warm/supervised while help is sought.	Low/ Medium

SAFETY OPERATING PROCEDURES

Stage	Procedure
1. Authorisation and route planning	Confirm route is within leader qualification/remit, VHCAC approval, AALA/licensing/insurance scope and summer conditions. Prepare route card with timings, escape routes, emergency access points, nearest hospital and alternatives.
2. Pre-activity checks	Check mountain weather forecast, daylight, transport, participant medical/SEND needs, kit, footwear, food/water, staff ratio, emergency equipment and Centre late-back plan. Do not depart if critical kit/control is missing.
3. Centre notification	Leave route card/location, staff names, participant numbers, vehicle details, emergency contacts and expected return/late-back time with Centre. Update Centre promptly if route/venue changes.
4. Participant briefing	Explain route, pace, weather expectations, staying together, what to do if separated, environmental care, road/animal rules, hydration/food, toileting, emergency signal and telling staff early about cold, injury, fatigue or anxiety.
5. Leadership on route	Navigate actively, monitor timings and weather, keep group together, use front/back markers where appropriate and adapt to the slowest participant. Reassess at decision points and use escape routes early.
6. Emergency / incident management	Protect group from further harm, give first aid, use shelter/spare clothing, call 999/mountain rescue via Police where needed, provide grid reference/location and notify Centre. Maintain supervision of remaining group.
7. Post-activity	Confirm return to Centre, check welfare/injuries, clean/dry/store equipment, replace first aid items, record route changes, near misses and incidents, and review before future use.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Card	Content
Emergency actions	Stop in the safest available place; account for group; give first aid and shelter casualty/group from weather; call 999 and ask for Police then Mountain Rescue if required; give grid reference, route and access point; contact Centre; use late-back/emergency contact process; do not split group unless essential and then only with competent adult support; preserve factual notes after incident.