

19.0 Visitor risk management

There are several reasons for effective visitor risk management. First and foremost, we want visitors to the river to return home happy and satisfied with their experiences. We have a moral obligation to consider their safety and protect them from unnecessary or unreasonable risk.

Under Section three of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, we have a duty to ensure the safety of those not in our employment, so far as is reasonably practicable. We need to understand what 'reasonably practicable' means. In addition, as owners and managers of land and property, we owe our visitors (including trespassers) a duty of care to ensure they are reasonably safe.

Successful risk management demands a partnership between the manager, the visitor and other groups (such as governing bodies of sport), recognising that each carries a share of the responsibility for safety, dependent on the type of activity and location.

Visitors are frequently away from supervision by staff. This leads to poor reporting of accidents, incidents and near misses. Some visitors feel vulnerable, particularly on paths in urban areas. This is an issue that can be addressed through discussion with local police forces and community safety partnerships.

Different types of river user have widely differing expectations; from white water canoeists seeking adventure, difficulty and challenge, to parents looking for a place for their children to picnic and play without coming to harm.

We must take care to avoid implementing safety measures that conflict significantly with our access, recreation, landscape, heritage and environmental responsibilities. Nor should we take away people's sense of adventure and freedom.



Policy 30 - visitor health and safety

We will adopt a consistent approach to visitor risk management

Possible actions

- 1 carry out risk assessment and introduce risk control measures in accordance with the guiding principles established by the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group¹
- 2 gather information on accidents and near misses from user groups
- 3 work with police to achieve a safe river environment for visitors

We believe that it is possible to achieve acceptable levels of risk and enhance the environment and encourage public access. Safety, access and conservation need not be mutually exclusive.