



Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (BFOC) - Activity Policy 2024

Authors: Mark Sinclair / Charlotte Russell (March 2024)

Introduction

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (BFOC) recognise and accept its duties for providing a fair and supportive workplace and comply with all statutory obligations as a minimum standard. If you have any queries about these policies, or their content, you can contact us at info@blacklandfarm.org.

The Operating Company (Op Co) of Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre is 4th Dimension Ltd (registered company in England and Wales 04617597).

Purpose

This Activity Policy establishes clear principles to ensure that participation in activities at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (otherwise known for the remainder of this document as BFOC) is a safe and enjoyable experience for all.

Scope

This policy applies to all persons who are legally classed as employees, and extends where applicable to contracted persons, volunteers, and customers.

CONTENTS

No	Content	Last Reviewed
01	Quality Assurances and Licensing	01 st April 2024
02	Policy Statement	01 st April 2024
03	Introduction & Policy Statement	01 st April 2024
04	Standard Operating Procedures	01 st April 2024
05	Qualifications	01 st April 2024
06	Training	01 st April 2024
07	Group Management	01 st April 2024
08	PPE Inspection and Maintenance	01 st April 2024
09	Structure Inspections and Maintenance	01 st April 2024
10	Technical Experts (TAs / TEs)	01 st April 2024
11	Self-Led Activities	01 st April 2024
12	Severe Weather	01 st April 2024

01: Quality Assurances and Licencing

We pride ourselves on providing safe, professional experiences for our customers. We are inspected annually by several industry governing bodies and hold a number of quality badges and licences as a result. These are as follows:

AAALA, The Adventurous Activities Licencing Authority issues us with a licence after a successful annual inspection. They pay particular attention to the safety management systems of a variety of our activities with young people. Commercial providers of outdoor activities are required to hold an AAALA licence by law. Our licence shows we comply with nationally accepted standards of good practice in delivering a selection of our adventure activities with young people.

The **Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge** is a national award, which indicates we demonstrate good educational provision as well as effective risk management. The quality badge provides assurances for teachers, parents and LEA's, making trip planning easier for group leaders.

Adventuremark is a non-statutory safety scheme devised by the AAIAC (Adventure Activity Industry Advisory Committee) for providers of adventurous activities. The Adventuremark allows us to demonstrate the safety management systems and quality of our activity provision meets national good practice standards.

As an **Approved Activity Provider** for the **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme**, we bring years of experience to every expedition and are able to expertly manage every element of your Bronze, Silver or Gold expedition and/or Gold Residential.

Activity Industry Mutual (AIM) is a specialist cooperative insurance company who deal specifically with providers of adventurous activities.

As a **British Canoeing Delivery Partner (now Paddle UK)**, we are engaged and are committed to providing our clients with a first class paddling experience that embraces learning and development; delivering fun, engaging and safe activities that are aligned with your requirements.



02. Policy Statement

All Instructors will be trained and assessed to a high standard to ensure that safety and enjoyment is paramount to the guest experience. All activity staff, no matter of their contract, will be subject to regular observations by the Centre Leadership Team (otherwise known for the remainder of this document as CLT) to ensure quality and safety is consistently maintained.

All equipment used for activities will be in line with industry safety standards and recommendations for use. Equipment will be stored and maintained according to the manufacturer's guidelines, so it remains fit for purpose. Regular equipment checks will take place and accurate records will be kept in line with industry recommendations.

Accurate records will be kept for all staff qualifications, equipment, and structures. These will all be subject to internal & external audits. We maintain our high standards by submitting our systems and processes to be audited by statutory bodies such as AALA, LOTC, and National Governing Bodies such as British Canoeing and Mountain Training. We review our policies, procedures, and risk assessments on an annual basis or more frequently, if circumstances require, e.g., change in NGB procedures, on recommendation of our Technical Advisor, following accident or incident, or following re-structure etc. to ensure that these policies maintain relevance.

This policy and the processes & procedures it outlines, will be managed, and reviewed annually by the Centre Leadership Team. It will then be endorsed by our Technical Advisor(s). The policy will also be available for all visitors and employees to refer to as required. A copy is issued to every activity instructor and the reading and understanding of the policy continues to form an integral part of activity instructor induction and training.

03. Instructors Requirements

Activity instructors are aged 18 years or over. Instructors will go through training and assessment for all activities they will be delivering outlined in further detail in qualification header.

All instructional staff will hold a minimum of an 8-hour Emergency / Activity First Aid Certificate or a certificate (generally 16-hour) which is appropriate to their NGB qualification. This will be in date and a copy kept on file.

Instructors are required to demonstrate an ability to work with participants of all ages and abilities as part of the interview and training process. This is solidified with a pre-deployment validation from the CLT following their training, and then regular observations, monitoring, and spot checks.

All instructors will be subject to session observations by members of the CLT to ensure the quality and safety of activity delivery is maintained to a high standard. Feedback will be given after each observation, and this will form part of their progression and development. Instructors will also be given the opportunity to observe peers if appropriate.

References will be obtained, and an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check undertaken for all instructors prior to employment commencing. Instructors who are on the DBS Update Service will be required to provide a copy of their original certificate.

Instructors will be given a full induction to the centre and work to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all activities.

All instructors will receive an allocation of uniform. This uniform must always be worn during work hours and must be clean and presentable.

BFOC is committed to Equal Opportunities and Instructors should demonstrate adherence to this with the public, other staff, peers, and superiors. Safeguarding, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training is provided to all instructors prior to activity delivery.

Training record documents will be created for each instructor, which will be signed by the instructor, trainer & assessor once training has been completed to a satisfactory standard. Instructor training records & qualifications (including driving licences) will be held on our business database, Cinolla.

Freelancers and volunteers will be required to provide a recent Enhanced DBS, if not on the Update Service, and hold the relevant NGBs for the activities they are running. They will also be required to provide a recent reference from a suitable employer. Freelancers will also attend a site-specific induction and have a session observation. They will also be asked to read & sign our Activity Policy, SOPs & Risk Assessments (RAs).

04: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) exist for each instructor-led and self-led activity, accompanied by a site-specific risk assessment. Each instructor will be trained to run each activity in line with the SOPs.

Each SOP will outline the following criteria:

- Instructor Qualification/ Experience.
- Activity Ratio.
- Equipment.
- Clothing requirements.
- Pre Session tasks.
- Activity set up information.
- Running the activity.
- Take down information.

SOPs are required to be signed by all instructors, including Freelancers, for the activities they will be delivering. These signatures will be held in each instructor training record.

The SOPs will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if circumstances require, in association with BFOC Technical Experts, to ensure that the centre is following current and up to date guidelines, procedures and practices.

05: Qualifications

Paddle Sport Activities

Canoeing, Kayaking, and Stand up Paddleboarding will be operated to British Canoeing (now Paddle UK) guidelines. Improvised Raft Building will be run in line with current SOPs. BFOC require that all instructors hold the minimum of British Canoeing (Paddle UK) Paddlesport Instructor (PSI).

Instructors will also hold a Statement of Competence (SoC), in addition to their Paddlesport Instructor, signed by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) to deliver craft specific Canoeing, Kayaking, Paddleboarding and Improvised Raft Building activities, and be deployed by a minimum of a Paddlesport Leader, BCU Level 2 Coach, UKCC Level 2, Core Coach or equivalent as per the local Operating Procedures.

All instructors will work within the remit of their British Canoeing (Paddle UK) qualification & will receive a site-specific induction before commencing any employment.

Paddlesport trainers will hold a minimum of Paddlesport Instructor and have at least 2 years' experience of instructing at Weirwood Reservoir and be overseen by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) holding a minimum of a Paddlesport Leader, BCU Level 2 Coach, UKCC Level 2 or Core Coach.

The statement of competence will be reviewed annually.

High Ropes and Climbing

For roped activities, instructors will either hold a relevant qualification or attend in-house training by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) within the CLT, with a minimum of 2 years' experience on those activities or be a current European Ropes Course Association (ERCA) Traditional High Ropes Instructor. Instructors will then be assessed for competence by an experienced External Assessor / Technical Expert, who is not the in-house trainer, and holds a Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI) Award or higher/equivalent OR a SQEP Internal Assessor who is deemed current and holds the minimum of the Mountain Training Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI) Award (or equivalent) with the addition of a European Ropes Course Association (ERCA) Conversion Course or Traditional High Ropes Instructor). If an Internal Assessor is used, they should not have been involved in the training. These assessments can also be completed by anyone deemed competent by an AALA Senior Inspector [Part 2 Section 4.5 - AALA Inspection Report dated 07.06.18];

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to receive validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and quality session delivery.

The in-house assessment pass will be reviewed annually.

Offsite Climbing and Abseil

Instructors operating offsite climbing and/or abseiling sessions will be qualified to the appropriate Mountain Training qualification and in line with the current SOPs and risk assessment policy.

Scrambling

Instructors will attend in house training by a suitable qualified and experienced (SQEP) within the CLT. Instructors will be signed off by a SQEP internal assessor who holds the minimum of the Climbing Wall instructor (CWI), with the addition of Lowland Leader or equivalent.

They will then be observed by a member of the CLT during their first solo session to gain validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and quality session delivery.

Walking Activities

Instructors operating in Lowland, Moorland or Mountain terrain will hold a relevant Mountain Training endorsed qualification (Lowland Leader, Hill and Moorland Leader or Mountain Leader) or equivalent, such as the Basic Expedition Leader (BEL) or the Countryside Leader Award (CLA), which allows them to operate in the appropriate remit. BFOC reserve the right to deem individuals competent through assessment via the CLT.

Archery

All instructors will be qualified to the minimum of the Archery GB Instructor Award and operate in line with all procedures and practices set out by Archery GB.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to receive validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and quality session delivery.

Bungees

Instructors will attend in-house training by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) within the CLT with a minimum of 2 years' experience.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to gain validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and quality session delivery.

Other In-House Activities including Self Led (Bushcraft, Team Building, Night Line, Tunnels, Low Ropes)

No formal qualifications for these activities are required, however full in-house training will be given to all instructors by a member of the CLT and in accordance with the activity SOP and RA, and a record of training retained.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to receive validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and quality session delivery.

Evening activities such as Wide game and Camp fire.

No formal qualifications for these activities are required, however full in-house training will be given to all instructors by a member of the CLT and in accordance with the activity SOP and RA, and a record of training retained.

06: Training

A training program is held at the start of each season to familiarise Instructors with the techniques and methods to be used on sessions, together with basic session content. This also provides the opportunity to meet fellow staff and learn about BFOC as an organisation and to get an insight into how the centre operates. Any training required for staff to meet Health and Safety requirements as set out in the BFOC H&S policy will be provided during work time; further training will be arranged for those Instructors who may benefit. Minimum requirements are COSHH, manual handling, PPE use & maintenance, work at height, fire & emergency response, risk assessments, accident & incident reporting (RIDDOR), & training for maintaining a workplace, Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, maintaining a clean living & working environment.

Instructors must be revalidated by CLT following any 3-month period of absence from Centre.

07: Group Management

All groups will be accompanied by a group leader, teacher, or responsible adult. They hold responsibility for pastoral care for the group. The instructor is responsible for the safe running of the activities, the safety of the group and themselves. The pastoral carer is responsible for:

- Maintaining group control
- Providing relevant information about members of the group including medical information
- Ensuring that the instructor is never alone with a child whilst on session.

There may be certain circumstances when multiple groups are able to be accompanied by a single responsible adult due to the activities being undertaken in the same open location. In addition, there may be times when groups are formed with no pastoral care such as after school clubs or holiday clubs. In this instance, there must be 2 members of BFOC staff, or appropriately qualified/trained volunteers present at all times.

08: PPE Inspection and Maintenance

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre will have at least one named person who has attended a RoSPA certified PPE Competent Person Inspection Course. This will ensure that the centre has an appropriately qualified person to perform required inspections of equipment, pass on knowledge to instructors, and have the knowledge to maintain equipment, and to highlight defects throughout the season.

PPE will be subject to a thorough inspection procedure by the competent person before its first use, and thereafter at intervals not exceeding six months, or less if specified by the manufacturer, and subject to more frequent occurrence considering on-going inspection and maintenance findings or exceptional circumstances.

All activity PPE will be appropriately labelled and recorded on GearLog to ensure that equipment is in date and fit for purpose.

Instructors are asked to complete dynamic visual PPE inspections at the start of each session. Instructors receive in-house training by the SQEP to ensure that they are competent to do so.

If a piece of equipment is found to be broken, faulty or deemed unsafe, it will be put into a quarantine area and a short sentence will be attached explaining the issue. The equipment will then be checked by the SQEP, either repairing and returning to service or discarding in the appropriate manner (destroyed beyond further use and recording the destruction accordingly).

09: Structure Inspections and Maintenance

BFOC will have at least one named person who has attended, as a minimum, an approved 5-day operational inspection course by an approved Type A, B, or C inspection body.

BFOC will ensure that one periodical inspection is carried out by an external company annually, typically within the first quarter of the year.

All structures will be inspected on a 3-month basis, in-between the periodical inspections by a competent person.

The maintenance of the rope courses will be carried out by a Suitable Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP). When this maintenance requires leaving the ground, this person must have received training in Access and Rescue. They must also be accompanied by a Suitable Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP). This maintenance should be recorded along with any certificates of conformity for structural elements such as chains, poles, and wires.

10: Technical Advisor / Expert (TA / TE)

BFOC will appoint a Technical Advisor / Expert(s) for both Land and High Roped activities that will cover Climbing, Walking, and Mountaineering activities, and for water sports activities to include Kayaking, Canoeing, Rafted Canoeing, Paddleboarding and Improvised Raft Building.

The role of the Technical Advisor / Expert is to ensure that the process of risk management is appropriate for the purposes of best practice and that instructors are trained and assessed to an acceptable standard. The Technical Advisor / Expert will provide advice relating to our policies, procedures, and operating standards to ensure that the centre is current and compliant with industry standards, and that they will support us to deliver training and assessments or advise on other appropriately qualified professionals to do so.

Technical Advisors / Experts will be subject to an annual review to ensure that qualifications and professional indemnity insurance is in date and in line with the requirements of BFOC.

11: Self-Led Activities

All self-led activities are subject to Standard Operating Procedures & Risk Assessments.

Groups using self-led activities must sign to say they have read and understood the centre Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Risk Assessments (RAs).

12: Severe Weather

Throughout the day, the CLT will monitor weather conditions, and will advise groups and instructors regarding notable changes in the weather. Sessions may be changed, or cancelled, considering changing environmental conditions, or if there is an increased risk of harm.

If thunder and/or lightning presents, the activity must be stopped, and the 30/30 rule must be followed (*If the flash to bang is 30 seconds in length (or less), you should seek shelter. Staying inside this shelter is advised until 30 minutes have passed since the last clap of thunder.*

Outside activities will be cancelled if winds exceed a constant 25 miles per hour - If during the day, wind speeds fluctuate around 25 miles per hour, the activity will be assessed at the discretion of the CLT.

END