

Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association



Recording Veteran Trees and Tree Warden Activities Health & Safety Policy

Introduction

This Policy has been prepared with the advice of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), an organisation which has, for over 50 years, maintained an excellent record of ensuring that volunteers can carry out a wide range of practical, conservation work, enjoyably, effectively and safely.

Recording Veteran Trees and participating in Tree Warden activities are normally very low risk, but as with any undertaking, there is always a possibility of something going wrong. The guidance in this Policy should help you keep this risk as low as is reasonably practicable. Most of the information it contains is common sense.

When you're out recording, always keep your safety, and that of those around you, at the forefront of your thoughts, and consider the likelihood of anyone being injured, or any property damaged, before you do anything. If you are ever unsure that you can record a Veteran Tree safely, then stop what you're doing and try to get into a situation you feel safe in. Your safety and the safety and well-being of others are the most important things you should consider when out recording Veteran Trees.

At the end of this Policy is a sheet which you must complete to confirm that you've read and understood the information provided in it and that you will do your best to follow the guidance it offers. Please return this to the Chairman. This will help to ensure that you are covered by TCV's Public & Personal Liability Insurance paid for by Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association, when out recording trees and that you'll be safe and comfortable when doing so.

At any time if you have any questions or concerns regarding your health and safety relating to recording Veteran Trees or this policy, please contact your Town or Parish Coordinator.

Health & Safety Precautions

If you're feeling unwell or suffering from any medical conditions that might affect your ability to record Veteran Trees safely, then don't. If you start to feel affected by either of these issues when you're out recording, then stop.

Always let someone know where you're going and at what time you expect to return. Always let him/her know when you've returned safely. If you're going to be late, try to contact this person and let him/her know. Make it clear to this person that if you haven't returned by the time you expected to, he/she should attempt to contact you or consider reporting that you haven't come back.

If you can, take someone with you when you're out recording. As well as making the activity more sociable and the recording easier to do, it will reduce the likelihood of your getting into difficulty and being alone. If you take someone who is under 16, consider if you will be able to ensure this person's welfare, as this Policy does not specifically cover this situation.

Try to avoid taking a dog with you when you're out recording. If you wish to do so, consider if you'll be able to ensure that the dog is under your control at all times, as this Policy does not specifically cover this situation. Taking a dog may also reduce the number of locations you're able to record in.

Always carry some Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association leaflets with you, to demonstrate to people who you are and that you're acting on behalf of the WDVTA.

Always ask a landowner's permission before entering private property and let them know when you leave their property.

Always ask the landowner if he/she is aware of any specific risks to your safety whilst on their property; these might relate to animals or the local terrain.

Veteran Trees are old and may have dead or dying branches and limbs high up in the canopy. Trees on private property are less likely to be inspected regularly for such dangers than those on public land. Don't record in windy conditions, to reduce the likelihood of injury from falling material.

You may wish to reach Veteran Trees that you can only record by passing close to dogs or livestock. Never enter such an area unless you're certain you'll be safe from attack or accidental injury from the animals. People out walking dogs that aren't on a lead should always be considered; don't approach any dogs unless you're sure it's safe to do so.

Never enter any locations where there are warning signs regarding animals or other risks, unless you're certain they pose no risk to you.

Watch out for rats! They are very unlikely to harm you but can startle the unwary if they're disturbed as they run for cover.

Members of the public may be curious if they see you recording. They might approach you without warning to take a closer look at what you're doing, or to ask questions. This is a great opportunity to encourage new people to become recorders and to give them a WDVTA leaflet and tell them about the Survey. However, always be aware that someone may talk to you as an excuse to see if you've any valuables on you or as a prelude to an assault. Take particular care if you're approached when alone or in an isolated location.

When recording, keep valuables hidden when not in use, including mobile phones and GPS units.

People occasionally act in an aggressive manner. Don't get into conversations about controversial subjects with anyone; try to limit your discussions to the recording you're carrying out. If you do find yourself in a difficult situation, don't act in an aggressive manner yourself but try to end the conversation politely and get to a place of safety.

Before entering any location with restricted access, take a note of any escape routes.

Don't give out personal information to strangers, even if the reason for doing so seems sensible. Refer any enquiries about the Survey to your local co-ordinator.

Consider carrying a personal attack alarm.

Try to minimise your contact with under 16s and other vulnerable people. If you're unsure of someone's age, assume he/she is under 16. Never go onto private property at the request of a child or vulnerable adult, or go anywhere with either alone. Always ask permission before taking photographs of anyone but written permission must be obtained from a parent or guardian for photographs of anyone who may be under 16.

Don't record at night. If it gets dark when you're out recording, stop.

Watch the roads and any tracks and paths for traffic whenever you're out recording. If working close to traffic, consider wearing hi-visibility clothing.

Watch for horse riders. If you're approached by any be aware that you could startle their horses if you make any sudden noise or movements.

Don't rush or run when recording.

Keep warm but don't over exert yourself.

If it's hot drink plenty of fluids, ideally water. If you get hot, take a break out of the sun.

Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking. If you do fall ill over the next month, let your doctor know that you've been carrying out this work.

If you have any open cuts, cover them with plasters.

Don't drink any alcohol before or during recording. As well as possibly invalidating TCV's insurance cover for you, doing so will make it more likely that you'll not do the recording accurately and will increase the chance of you injuring yourself or others.

Minimise the amount of bending you do. If you have to bend down, bend your knees and keep your back straight and don't try to move anything too heavy.

Take special care if you're moving anything heavy, awkwardly shaped or with spines or sharp edges. If you need assistance to do something, get help to do it or don't do it.

When walking around, kneeling or sitting down, keep a very careful eye out for objects hidden in the undergrowth or soil, especially around the base of trees or sticking out of their trunks. These might include old bits of wood with nails sticking out of them, broken glass, sharp and/or rusty metal, the remains of old fences, syringes, bits of asbestos and dog faeces. If you come across any of these items or anything else you think might be dangerous or especially unpleasant, you should not attempt to deal with it yourself.

Watch out for objects that might trip you up as you walk around, especially around the base of trees. These may include hidden logs and branches, roots, holes, uneven ground, damaged paving stones or tarmac, brambles, old fences, the remains of tree guards or grilles around the base of street trees, or other discarded or unwanted materials.

Watch out for thorny plants and twigs to prevent these from scratching you or poking you in the eye, especially if you're bending down or working in and around hedges and the base of trees. Try not to get stung by stinging nettles!

Don't hang any tools in bushes or branches, or prop them up against anything. When you need to put a tool down please leave it flat on the ground, where it can be easily seen, so it can't fall on anything or get lost, trodden on or tripped over.

Try not to lose any tools or equipment. It's very easy to put even large items down and to forget about them, or for them to get lost in the undergrowth, leaves or soil. When you've finished recording a Veteran Tree, check you have everything with you before leaving the location.

If you use any of your own tools or equipment, please ensure they're in good condition and that you know how to use them properly.

Check the tools and equipment you're using from time to time. You should check everything you take with you is in good condition before you start, but during the day this situation may change as they get used. If you have any concerns regarding the condition or use of any tool or piece of equipment, don't continue to use it.

Report all incidents, damage to property, aggressive situations and 'near misses' using the Incident Reporting Form.

If you feel you cannot follow any of the information provided in this Policy, consider requesting some training to enable you to do so.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment form has been created by the Association and is reviewed annually by the committee, coordinators and tree wardens. It must be used by all surveyors as part of this policy document and as a checklist for prevention and minimisation of the risks associated with tree surveying.

Tree Warden Activities

Tree warden activities are very varied and often involve cooperation with other groups or organisations and members of the public (including children) who are not WDVTA members. All tree warden activities that are organised and run by the Wokingham Tree Warden Network (WTWN) part of the Association must have specific risk assessments completed for each activity. The Tree Warden Coordinator and the Secretary must be notified at the planning stage of all such activities. At the start of the activity the leader must brief all participants on health, safety and risk minimisation.



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Paper Form - Please complete the details below and return this sheet to the Chairman but retain the rest of this Policy for reference.

Electronic Form – alternatively, please copy and paste the words below into an email, complete the name, address and date details and send the email to chair@wdvta.org.uk

I agree to follow the guidance provided in the Recording Veteran Trees and Tree Warden Activities Health & Safety Policy when out recording Veteran Trees or participating in any tree warden activities on behalf of the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Survey, Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association or the Wokingham Tree Warden Network.

Name:

Address:

Date:

Signed: