



## **BUCKMORE PARK CAVING COMPLEX RISK ASSESSMENT**

Caving is a wonderful opportunity for Scouts (of all age groups) to get really muddy and squirm around in tunnels and chambers with their pals. The Buckmore Park facility is purpose designed and built to offer a sense of the caving adventure in a convincing but ultimately safe environment. Designed by one of Britain's most famous cavers the entire facility is permanently circulated with fresh air and cavers are in fact never more than 2m underground except for in the main chamber, and frequently far less than 2m down. The facility is essentially an outer ring from which various tunnels can be accessed, each offering its own particular Caving Challenge. The age and confidence of visiting groups dictate which of the Challenges can be attempted.

The following paragraphs detail the safety measures in place at Buckmore Park which ensure that all age groups using the facility can be assured of their safety.

There is a formal management structure in place to administer users of the Caving facility during their visits.

### **Risk Control Measures (see attached Risk Matrix)**

#### **Responsibilities of Instructors:**

##### **Staffing**

- Ratio 1:12 maximum
- Instructors must have undertaken Buckmore Park cave leader induction: a minimum of 20 hours underground assisting a qualified leader with all age groups is required before an Instructor can be permitted to lead groups of Cavers.

##### **Preparation and Equipment**

- Instructions, sent out at the time of booking, detail what is appropriate clothing for the activity conditions. Long sleeves, trousers and sturdy footwear are essential; Cavers will be filthy afterwards.
- The container will be unlocked at the beginning of the session.
- Visitors have access to private changing areas, separate for gender.
- Participants will be issued with a correctly sized caving helmet with a working head torch.
- Instructors will assess the stress levels of participants immediately after equipment issue, and throughout the session. Those with higher anxiety will be positioned within the group to ensure they are surrounded with reassurance from either their friends; Group Leaders; the Cave Leader or the Assistant Cave Leader.
- Anybody who suffers from serious claustrophobia will not enter the underground complex: however it is recognised that whilst many prospective Cavers believe themselves to be claustrophobic beforehand very few prove to be so in fact and thoroughly enjoy themselves.
- Similarly obesity may prevent certain individuals from using the complex safely and in such cases the individual will not be allowed to enter the tunnels.



## Briefing

A safety brief will be given to visiting groups at the beginning of the caving session, which will cover the following points:

- Outline of the caving session
- All participants must wear helmets when inside the cave.
- Hazards and how to move around inside the facility
- Participants will be fully briefed about what to expect and reassured that they can leave the caves if they begin to panic.
- Evacuation and rescue procedures
- Welfare check/medical conditions
- Bumps, scrapes and grazes from cave walls and floors
- Participants instructed to move about the caves slowly and carefully.
- Being kicked by other participants; mitigate by leaving sufficient space between participants.

## Pre-existing conditions

- The instructor must make themselves aware of any participants suffering from Asthma, Epilepsy, severe allergies or any other relevant medical condition and ensure that prescribed medication is available if required. Medication is to be carried by the Assistant Leader at the back of the group with the individual in suitable proximity.

## Weather

- Buckmore Park facility is not significantly affected by weather conditions: it is a man-made complex.

## Ventilation

- Emergency entrance to main chamber doors will be opened to complete ventilation of the facility.



## Conduct of Session

- The instructor will check the age of the group and choose a route and Challenges: Beavers for example are not allowed to use ladders, whilst Explorers can attempt the Sump.
  - An Instructor will assess the confidence of the group and depending on this will lead the group to appropriate underground Challenges.
  - The group will enter the tunnel complex in a set order with the Cave Leader first in, and then according to confidence, medication, etc. If any participant is not coping at this stage they can be offered reassurance and given the opportunity to try again.
  - The Cave Leader will then lead the group on a short journey that ends up back at the main chamber via a suitably challenging route.
  - The Cave Leader should now have a good feel for the confidence levels in the group and will progress with the session to a level appropriate to this. The group can experience total darkness and complete a number of games and challenges.
  - Once underground it is possible to leave the tunnels quickly, usually via the main chamber, although from experience few choose to do so. However if for any reason someone has to leave early then the Assistant Leader will supervise participants leaving, it is only a matter of minutes from anywhere in the complex.
  - On completion the Cave Leader will ensure that responsibility for the safety of the group is handed back to their accompanying Leaders at the end of the session.
  - Equipment will be returned, including head torches, before groups can move to the washing area by the main field.
  - All equipment locked away.
- ### Planning & Reporting
- All incidents, accidents, near misses and hazards must be reported using appropriate forms.
  - Deflects and damages must be reported.
  - Any safety concerns arising from the session must be reviewed.
  - Any concerns relevant to the safe operation of the Caving complex must be communicated to the Service Crew.
  - Details of Caving Expedition noted in Cave Leaders log and Assistant Cave Leaders log



Situation	Risk	Mitigation	Risk after Mitigation
Unprepared for activity: personal Injury.	H	Follow booking routine. Arrive in good time for briefing. Listen to safety brief, collect equipment and use as directed. Groups separated according to ability. Follow trained Cave Leader. Use ladders as briefed with safety 'footing' Man-made facility; not possible to remain lost.	L
Panic due to environment, getting 'lost'	H	Pre-assessment by Instructor with advice from Group Leaders Discuss 'natural fears' beforehand Listen to safety Brief. Listen to Instructors guidance. Follow Instructors. Work as a Team.	M
Uneven, slippery environment and hard construction tunnels causing slips and trips.	H	Decent footwear, long sleeves, proper technique (crawling) Head torch and approved helmet Group Challenges according to age group. Use ladders as briefed with safety 'footing'	L
Hypothermia (Winter)	H	Short routes, sessions less than 1 hour. Fire at changing facility to warm up at, on completion. Bring change of clothes; Cavers will get very wet. Plenty of shelter with hot water for washing in washing areas.	M
Bad Air/Suffocation/toxic gas	H	Man-made facility, maintained by Service Crew. Purpose design to allow free air circulation at all times; cool breeze can be felt underground. Lift access covers and allow 20 minutes venting.	L
Disease from environment	M	Normal hygiene is sufficient in the Caving complex. Avoid rubbing eyes, or placing fingers in mouth. Wash properly on completion under supervision of group Leaders.	L
Bites, stings: Cave complex has multiple air vents allowing access to insects and spiders	L	Bites/stings very rare; far less than normal risk of wasp sting due to perpetual darkness of tunnels. Wear proper clothing and boots. Avoid provoking insects/spiders Anti-histamine in First Aid kits	L

