

Burghclere Parish Council

Burghclere Common Risk Assessment

Site	Burghclere Common – Parish Council-owned registered village green; open land with no buildings or structures.
Activities covered	Public use of the site; volunteer vegetation clearance and controlled burning of cut vegetation. Specialist work and work requiring machinery is undertaken by competent contractors.
Date approved:	12 th October 2026
Review due:	Annually, and following any significant change or incident.

Purpose and approach

This assessment records the significant foreseeable risks associated with Burghclere Common and the volunteer maintenance activities undertaken there. It is intended to be proportionate to the nature of the site and activities. Fire risk is included within this overall assessment.

Hazard	Risk	Existing controls / precautions
Uneven ground, roots, holes, slippery or overgrown areas Thorns, brambles and vegetation	Injury, cuts and stings	- Volunteers to remain alert to ground conditions. - Obvious or reported hazards to be assessed and dealt with proportionately. - Wear appropriate clothing to provide adequate coverage, protective gloves and sturdy footwear at all times. - Cuts & abrasions should be thoroughly cleaned as soon as possible.
Tools and equipment	Injury	- Only use suitable tools used for the task and check for defects before use. - Defective tools should be immediately taken out of use. - Volunteers should use hand tools only unless they are suitably trained and hold recognised Certification or are students under the supervision of trained instructors. - Work requiring specialist equipment should be undertaken by appropriately competent contractors. - Suitable PPE to be worn at all times.. - Volunteers to work within their competence and keep a safe distance from others.
Manual handling	Injury	- Assess the item before attempting to move it. - Do not attempt to lift anything heavy, bulky, unstable or awkward. - If in doubt, leave the item in place and seek assistance.
Trees, falling branches or unstable vegetation	Injury	Volunteers must not undertake specialist tree work, any such work is referred to competent contractors.
Members of the public entering an active work area	Injury	- Planned work to be publicised and signage displayed if appropriate. - Volunteers to remain aware of other users and pause work where necessary to allow safe passage. - Public should be kept clear of cutting activity and bonfires.

Weather conditions	Sunburn, heat stroke/exhaustion, cold-related illness	• Work should be postponed where high winds, extreme heat/cold, very dry conditions or other weather materially increase the risk. • Wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions. • Volunteers should have access to drinking water and stay hydrated.
Controlled burning / bonfires	Burns, spread of fire, smoke, sparks or embers	• Bonfires only as part of planned site maintenance and following the bonfire procedure at Appendix A. • Burning stopped if smoke creates a significant nuisance or visibility/safety hazard.
Wildfires	Burns, spread of fire, smoke, sparks or embers	• Regular flailing of heathland vegetation and work to widen paths helps to mitigate risk of wildfires. • No bonfires to take place during extreme dry conditions. • Raise public awareness of fire risk during dry conditions.
Biological hazards – animal faeces, wildlife etc	Stomach upset & disease	• Avoid contact. • Wear protective gloves and follow with thorough hand hygiene. • Deer ticks are present and known to carry Lyme Disease. Anyone visiting or working on the Common should check themselves for ticks and take appropriate action.
Lone working and anti-social behaviour	Injury, distress, nuisance, delayed response	• Always carry a mobile phone and ensure it is charged and switched on. • Ensure someone knows when and approximately where you are working and your expected return time. • If anti-social behaviour occurs, try not to engage, move away and call the police if necessary.

Fire arrangements

The principal foreseeable fire risk at Burghclere Common arises from the controlled burning of vegetation following clearance work. There are no buildings or structures on the site and no fuel or other combustible materials are routinely stored there. The Parish Council considers that the fire risk can be managed through the controls above and at Appendix A. If a bonfire spreads beyond the intended burn area and cannot immediately and safely be controlled, volunteers must withdraw to a safe place and call 999.

Volunteer arrangements

- Volunteers should undertake only work they are comfortable and competent to carry out.
- Appropriate information, instruction and supervision should be provided for the activities undertaken.
- Accidents, significant hazards and near misses should be reported to the Parish Clerk.
- Volunteers should stop work if circumstances change and they consider it unsafe to continue.
- Volunteer activities and insurance cover should be reviewed periodically by the Parish Council.
- Volunteers should seek appropriate first aid or medical attention in the event of injury.
- A basic first aid kit should be available during organised volunteer activities.

Contractors

- Competent and appropriately insured contractors to be used for specialist or machinery work.

- Contractors are responsible for their own risk assessment and safe system of work.
- Volunteers and public to keep clear of contractor work areas as appropriate.

Overall assessment: LOW RISK, provided the controls outlined above and at Appendix A are adhered to.

Appendix A

BURGHCLERE COMMON – BONFIRE PROCEDURE

This procedure applies when volunteers burn suitable vegetation arising from maintenance of Burghclere Common. It should be read alongside the Burghclere Common Risk Assessment.

Before lighting

- A responsible volunteer must oversee the burn.
- Check the weather and site conditions. Do not light a fire in strong winds or exceptionally hot, dry or otherwise high fire-risk conditions.
- Choose a safe location away from trees, standing/dry vegetation, boundaries, paths and members of the public.
- Clear loose combustible vegetation from immediately around the burn area where practicable.
- Have a suitable means of controlling and extinguishing the fire readily available.
- Check piled vegetation for wildlife before lighting, particularly if it has been left undisturbed.
- Only burn suitable vegetation arising from maintenance of the site. Do not add household rubbish or other inappropriate material.
- Follow any current legal or regulatory requirements applying to the burning of vegetation.
- Inform the Fire Service prior to any planned burn.

During the burn

- Keep the fire to a manageable size.
- The fire must always remain supervised.
- Keep members of the public at a safe distance.
- Monitor wind direction, smoke, sparks/embers and surrounding vegetation.
- Stop adding material and extinguish the fire if conditions deteriorate or smoke creates a significant nuisance or safety hazard.

Before leaving

- Do not leave the site until the bonfire is deemed to be in a safe condition, with no visible flames or risk of the fire restarting.
- Monitor the fire at regular intervals during the following days until it is cold.

EMERGENCY

If the fire spreads beyond the intended burn area and cannot immediately and safely be controlled, do not put volunteers at risk attempting to fight it. Move to a safe place and call 999.

Any fire-related incident or significant near miss must be reported to the Parish Clerk so that the risk assessment and procedure can be reviewed.