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Sankey Canal Restoration Society

Working On or Near Water Policy

1. Statement Of Intent

The Society's policy:

- Is valid from the Issue Date until such time as an updated version is published.
- Will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by changes to the Society's activities, to legislation or to best practice guidance.
- Applies to all SCRS Members and Non-Members who are carrying out activities for, or on behalf of the Society, paid or unpaid. The Society does not currently employ any staff.

The Society's intention is to:

- Prevent accidents and injuries to Members, Non-Members and Others.
- Promote good health and wellbeing.
- Manage health, safety and environmental risks when carrying out the Society's activities.
- Provide instructions, information and training (where appropriate).
- Ensure that suitable clothing, footwear and personal protective equipment is worn when necessary.
- Provide, maintain and securely store any tools, equipment, substances and materials.
- Ensure that activities are carried out in a safe and healthy working environment and that arrangements are in place in case of an emergency.
- Consult with Members on matters affecting their health, safety and wellbeing.

2. Introduction

The Society is keen to promote the safe enjoyment of the Canal and the wider environment. The Sankey Valley provides people with tremendous health and wellbeing opportunities, by exploring the watercourses, ponds, natural environments and heritage assets along its approximately 16 miles of route.

The Society will promote water safety and work with Others to raise awareness of the risks presented by waterways.

The Society occasionally undertakes inspection, vegetation clearance or minor maintenance activities on the water. Most of the Society's other activities are on land but can involve Members being near to water (within 2 metres of the water), for example litter picking, vegetation clearance and minor maintenance of structures.

3. Risks Associated When Working On or Near Water

- Slips, trips and falls on bridges, towpaths, lock gates, embankments and other structures causing injury or a loss of consciousness and / or causing a fall in to the water.
- Plants, weeds and soft banking that obscures the water's edge, causing people to slip or fall in.
- Deep water / steep sides can make it difficult for people to self-rescue or to be rescued by Others.
- Very cold water and under-currents can cause cramp, hypothermia, shock and heart attacks.

- Plants (including invasive species), vegetation, tree branches, discarded rubbish and hidden debris can cause eye injuries, cuts and skin infections.
- Illness can be caused by swallowing or being immersed in contaminated water or by being exposed to biological hazards from algal blooms or plant spores.
- Loose rubbish and debris, discarded materials or spillage of fluids can cause significant harm to people, pets and wildlife, or contamination of the environment or pollution of watercourses.

4. Precautions To Be Taken

Reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent people and materials from being injured and / or from falling in to the water:

- Prior to starting any activities the risks must be identified and assessed. All necessary precautions must be taken depending on the nature and location of the task, the depth and flow of water and the weather conditions. For example, provision of barrier protection, toe boards, storage trays for tools, personal protective equipment, access ladders, throw lines, life rings and rescue procedures.
- Activities on the tow path must still allow for the safe passage of pedestrians, horse riders, cyclists and vehicles (unless access is to be closed and a diversion put in place). Additional precautions might be required to protect vulnerable users such as children or disabled people.
- Be aware of changes in the environment that could cause a change in water levels, an inrush of water or a dry channel to fill up, for example from a sewer outfall pipe or an automatic sluice gate.
- Good personal hygiene practices should be followed; wash hands and forearms before eating, drinking or smoking and protect minor cuts and abrasions from contamination with waterproof plasters.

5. Deep Water

Any proposed activity in a deep channel, lock chamber, deep or fast flowing water and tidal waters introduces additional or more severe risks and therefore the activity must be planned and risk assessed by a suitably experienced and competent person(s).

An appropriate method of work must be agreed and the contingency / emergency arrangements must be put in place prior to any works starting on site. Consent must be obtained from the appropriate regulatory bodies and the property or land owner, for example the Environment Agency or navigation authority.

6. Boat Management

The Society does not currently own or operate any boats or water craft.

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