HIGH WIND POLICY
Introduction

High winds can pose risks to forest school sessions and activities in a number of ways; primarily due to the nature of our being situated within woodland beneath trees that can be affected by wind-speed/force.

A number of factors should be considered when assessing the potential risk of forecasted or observed winds;

Site characteristics

Our Exeter, Exmouth and Okehampton sites have different risks associated with their ecological make-up and on-site facilities.

Exeter Forest School
• Comprised primarily of relatively young of Ash and Oak trees. As a result of their close proximity to each other, trees have grown tall and narrow, with little ‘branching out’ and the upper branches are thin and subject to snapping and falling in high winds. This risk is greater when winds are high enough to cause the upper canopy of individual trees to clap together.
• The soil conditions appear fairly stable, even after prolonged rainfall and the risk of whole trees falling or being uprooted is low.
• The shelter over the main fire-pit is a permanent wooden structure, and although the frame is stable and secure, there is a potential risk of the tarpaulin panels being torn from position in adverse conditions. This is of more concern when a fire is active beneath the shelter.
• The Kindergarten area should be viewed as part of the wider forest school, and although measures have been put in place to minimise risk of falling twigs and branches such as pollarding around the outdoor classroom, high winds should be considered with the same attention as any other session.
• Toilets are stable permanent structures.

Exmouth Forest School
• Comprised primarily of Norway Spruce in a plantation. Trees have been planted at standard two metre intervals and as a result have grown tall with minimal branching out in the mid/lower canopy. The risk of branches falling in high winds is fairly low due to their short length away from the trunk. The risk of seed-cones falling in excessive wind is high, particularly when wind is great enough to cause trees to clash together in the upper canopy. Although these cones are lightweight, there are associated risks to participants.
• The soil conditions are of some concern after heavy or prolonged rainfall. Being situated on the outskirts of a pebblebed heath, the soil is dense with pebbles; this combined with the nature of the plantation has meant that tree root systems are relatively short as they radiate away from the base of the tree, and relatively shallow in the ground. The risk of trees falling through being uprooted in high winds is characteristic of the Norway Spruce and should be considered.
• The shelter over the main fire-pit is a temporary tarpaulin shelter. It is anchored into the ground via pegged rope and support beams. These pegs can be pulled from the ground
(particularly after a period of rain) as wind gets under the shelter, and the support beams are then free to fall. This risk is of more concern when a fire is active beneath the shelter.

- Toilets are stable permanent structures.

**Okehampton Forest School**

- Situated on a slope along the side of a valley, comprised of mixed semi-ancient woodland with many large mature trees, particularly along the path that leads up to the main site. These trees are stable and healthy, though the sheer size of some of the larger branches means that the hazard is potentially of greater consequence than at our other sites.
- The soil conditions appear stable and the risk of whole trees falling or being uprooted is low. Key trees that appear to have rotted or become unstable have been felled to prevent further hazard.
- The edge of the site sits along the top of the valley slope, and the site is fairly exposed to wind coming from the top, and through the valley.
- The shelter over the main fire-pit is a temporary tarpaulin shelter. It is anchored into the ground via pegged rope and support beams. These pegs can be pulled from the ground (particularly after a period of rain) as wind gets under the shelter, and the support beams are then free to fall. This risk is of more concern when a fire is active beneath the shelter.
- The toilet is a stable and permanent structure.

**What should be considered a ‘high wind-speed’ and, when to act upon a forecast**

When assessing wind-speed forecasts, the leading member of staff for a given session should rely upon forecasts given by the **MET Office**. Other forecasters can be used to gain an idea of the spectrum of forecasted wind, but ultimately the MET Office forecast should determine any action that need be taken.

MET Office forecasts are issued in MPH (miles per hour). The MET Office will forecast an hourly average wind-speed as well as the highest gust in any given hour. Details can be found at [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk). These should be used in conjunction with the Beaufort scale to achieve insight into expected conditions in the woodland. The Beaufort scale is as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORCE</th>
<th>MPH</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>SPECIFICATION FOR USE ON LAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Calm; smoke rises vertically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>Light air</td>
<td>Direction of wind shown by smoke drift, but not by wind vanes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 to 7</td>
<td>Light breeze</td>
<td>Wind felt on face; leaves rustle, ordinary vanes moved by wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8 to 12</td>
<td>Gentle breeze</td>
<td>Leaves and small twigs in constant motion; wind extends a light flag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4  13 to 18  Moderate breeze  Raises dust and loose paper; small branches are moved.
5  19 to 24  Fresh breeze  Small trees in leaf begin to sway; crested wavelets form on inland waters.
6  25 to 31  Strong breeze  Large branches in motion; whistling heard in telegraph wires; umbrellas used with difficulty.
7  32 to 38  Near gale  Whole trees in motion; inconvenience felt when walking against the wind.
8  39 to 46  Gale  Breaks twigs off trees; generally impedes progress.
9  47 to 54  Severe gale  Slight structural damage occurs (chimney-pots and slates removed).
10  55 to 63  Storm  Seldom experienced inland; trees uprooted; considerable structural damage occurs.
11  66 to 72  Violent storm  Very rarely experienced; accompanied by wide-spread damage.
12  73 to 83  Hurricane  * * * *

Session Plans and Cancellation

Exeter Forest School Kindergarten
- Wind gusts forecast within Force 7: classroom area should be made available for use at the discretion of session leader, and should be used in preference to the bell tent if wind gusts are forecast to reach above 35mph.
- Wind gusts forecast within Force 8: classroom should be utilised and attendees should only venture outside when walking to and from the site and to use the toilet.
- Constant Force 8 winds forecast or above across duration of session: CANCEL
- Wind Gusts into Force 9: CANCEL

Exeter Forest School
- Wind gusts forecast within Force 7: be aware that session will be windy and prepare for the possibility that forecast will change for the worse.
- Wind gusts forecast within Force 8: classroom should be utilised where possible if winds are reaching high force 8 (42-46mph) with frequent gusts.
- Constant Force 8 winds forecast across duration of session: CANCEL
- Wind Gusts into Force 9: CANCEL
Exmouth Forest School
- **Wind gusts forecast within Force 7**: be aware that session will be windy and prepare for the possibility that forecast will change for the worse.
- **Constant winds forecast within Force 7**: if winds are forecast consistently above high force 7 (35-38mph) with gusts over 39mph across the whole session, consider session cancellation or use of the more mature woodland at the top of the site if the attendee age/ability/behaviour allows.
- **Wind gusts forecast Force 8**: Providing the gusts are not frequent across the forecast for the duration of the session, and are no higher than 39mph, continue as planned but prepare for a windy session. If however the gusts are above 39mph and frequent, and the hourly average falls within force 7 and 8 across the duration of session, **CANCEL**.
- **Constant Force 8 winds forecast across duration of session**: **CANCEL**

Okehampton Forest School
- **Wind gusts forecast within Force 7**: be aware that session will be windy and prepare for the possibility that forecast will change for the worse.
- **Constant winds forecast within Force 7**: if winds are forecast consistently above high force 7 (35-38mph) with gusts over 39mph across the whole session, **CANCEL**.
- **Wind gusts forecast Force 8**: Providing the gusts are not frequent across the forecast for the duration of the session, and are no higher than 39mph, continue as planned but prepare for a windy session. If however the gusts are above 39mph and frequent, and the hourly average falls within force 7 and 8 across the duration of session, **CANCEL**.
- **Constant Force 8 winds forecast across duration of session**: **CANCEL**

**Acting upon a decision to cancel**

If the decision has been made to cancel a given session, the attendee’s Parent/Carer should be contacted at the earliest reasonable convenience, preferably with at least 24 hours notice from the specified beginning time of the session. Should 24 hours notice not be possible due to reasons outside of our control (eg a forecast that changes for the worse) then the attendee’s Parent/Carer will be contacted as soon as the decision is made.

For information on whether or not the cancellation warrants issuing part or full refund, refer to the Payments Policy.

The above criteria can be difficult if at all possible to measure and judge on site for the time of observation. Much of the assessment of whether or not to run a session will be made (preferably 24 hours) prior to the session commencing with the information provided by the MET Office. **However**, leading staff are in a position of duty to cancel a session with regards to safety **at any point** and should use their experience and judgement to inform this decision at the time of cancellation, whether a given session has begun or not. Closure of any given session should imply closure of the whole site so co-ordination is necessary to ensure this happens.
Date created: 1st September 2017

Signature of Director or Company Secretary:

Name: Shevek Pring

Review date set: 1st September 2018

Reviewed by:

Amended / updated?yes / no

Brief explanation of changes:

Signature of Director or Company Secretary:

Name:

New Review date set:

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