

Forest Schools on Public Open Space

Guidance for Forest School and Outdoor Learning activities on public open space

In terms of Outdoor Learning and Forest School activities on site, especially if use is frequent and involves fire or tools, we ask groups to work according to the following code of practice to minimise environmental impact and optimise health and safety requirements:

- Relevant permissions have been obtained from South Gloucestershire Council Open Spaces team: communityspacest@southglos.gov.uk Tel: 01454 868000 and site friends groups if applicable.
- Activities involving tool/fire use are led and organised by Level 3 qualified Forest School or bushcraft leaders or equivalent.
- The leader or group has relevant Public liability Insurance to cover the activities.
- The leader/group has appropriate policies and risk assessments in place including tool use, fire management, child protection and environmental impact.
- Litter is removed from site and a 'leave no trace' ethos applied.
- Depending on the site, some materials can be freely harvested e.g. laurel, but plant ID needs to be checked and permission sought to harvest materials correctly and at the right time of year to minimise ecological impact. At some sites we may ask for plants harvested for activities to be left in habitat piles, placed in areas which do not obstruct paths or present other hazards.
- For activities such as den building please use deadwood sticks found on site or poles/sticks brought in from off site and dismantle/remove all structures after sessions.
- Temporary notices put up on the day on site inform other site users about activities and help avoid unnecessary reporting of fire or other concerns by members of the public.
- In some contexts it can be helpful to leaflet local residents living adjacent to a site to inform them that your group will be using the site for specified purposes.
- Areas of ecological importance, e.g. Badger Setts, ponds with great crested newts need to be avoided re health and safety and impact on wildlife.
- Ponds: Permission needs to be obtained to undertake pond dipping or other activities adjacent to or in ponds as some of our ponds are not suitable for these

activities for health and safety reasons or impact on wildlife, particularly if great crested newts are present. All equipment needs to be cleaned prior and after use to prevent spread of infection or invasive species, according to site managers' instructions. Personal hygiene considerations are also essential when working in or near water and for some contexts an open water qualification may also be required.

- Tools must be stored and used under supervision of qualified personnel. Tools must be counted out and back in to ensure none left on site.
- Fire: Fire is only permitted on some open spaces, in accordance with the Community Spaces [fire management policy](#).