

ELLISFIELD VOLUNTEER GROUP

LOWER COMMON INSTRUCTIONS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

If in doubt - ASK!

This document combines scope of what is required to keep Lower Common in good order, together with details of what is required to minimise the level of risk to all volunteers (and public).

The contents might seem, at first glance, to be “over the top” for what essentially are tasks that many of us regularly perform in our own gardens. However, consider how many thousands of injuries happen in private gardens across the country when there is just one person working alone and in totally familiar territory. At Lower Common, there can be up to four or five volunteers who are unused to working together, some perhaps who have never worked at Lower Common before. There is also the extra risk of other residents and/or visitors appearing without warning, possibly without understanding the dangers of approaching someone strimming or mowing.

Please read this document thoroughly before you start work. For further information talk it through with the EVG Area Contact.

See EVG website for further details – www.ellisfield.org.uk/evg.html

INSTRUCTION SUMMARY:

Lower Common is at the junction of Green Lane and Furzen Lane (Grid Reference 635449). There is a **ditch** along the Green Lane and Furzen Lane boundary and a **wildflower strip** along the eastern side. In the south eastern corner there is a double **children's swing** (with special “soft landing” flooring surface) and a **children's play area consisting of wooden structures**. There are also two **children's goalposts** in the middle of the Common.

There are two entrances. One is on Furzen Lane by the swing - this is a wooden bridge wide enough for the push mower and the ride-on mower. The other entrance, for pedestrian access only, is on Green Lane at the most northern point.

Two separate tasks are required, as follows:

Mowing The main Common area, including the goalpost areas
 Around the children's swing and play area
 Along the Furzen Lane verge

Mowing the goalpost areas can be done in two ways:

- 1. Using a strimmer or shears to cut the grass around the posts*
- 2. Alternatively, the goalposts themselves can be lifted by two people and moved to one side and the push mower used to cut carefully around the post area. **On no account should the ride-on mower be used to cut the grass around the posts since the protruding collars will damage the under-carriage of the mower.***

IMPORTANT: Take great care when mowing alongside the ditch, keep a safe distance (1 metre) away from the ditch to avoid the mower (and/or yourself!) from slipping into the ditch. If the mower does start to slip into the ditch, do NOT take any risks - let go of the mower to avoid injury.

RIDE-ON MOWER: All users of the ride-on mower must be fully trained by a member of the committee.

Strimming Around the ditch perimeter
 Around the swing and children’s play area
 Around the goal posts

*Strimming should only be done where a mower cannot reach. This would usually be the area within 1 metre of the ditch.
 When strimming around the swing and children's play area, sweep away any cuttings.*

Please note that this document covers the two regular tasks of keeping the length of grass to a manageable height and the control of grass/weed growth along the ditch. Ad hoc tasks (such as ditch clearance, verge cutting, wildflower strip cutting, etc.) are the subject of other Risk Assessments.

SITE SPECIFIC HAZARDS:

“Hazard likelihood” multiplied by “Hazard result” equals RISK LEVEL (where 1 to 6 = Low)

Hazard	Risk	Risk Level	Site Precautions
Working in or near the ditch	Slipping/falling resulting in sprains, broken bones, etc.	2 x 2 = 4 (Low) Where likelihood is “Possible” and result is “Major Injury”	Being aware of danger. Avoid tiredness. Stop work if condition of slope to ditch is considered dangerous e.g. wet Vigilance and care.
Ride-On mower falling into ditch	That the mower-user will lose control with the result that the mower falls, or is driven, into the ditch.	2 x 2 = 4 (Low) Where likelihood is “Possible” and result is “Major Injury”	Being aware of danger. Avoid tiredness. Ensure that the equipment is never used within 1 metre of the ditch and the perimeter of the mowing area. Use push mower to cut the 1 metre strip up to the ditch Vigilance and care.
Ride-on mower “grounding” on approach to site	That the blade will scalp the verge as it is moved onto the site	1 x 2 = 2 (very low) Where likelihood is “Unlikely” and result is “Major Injury”	Ensure that blade bed is in the disengaged position. There is a white mark on the ride-on mower blade controller. The cutting level should never be set below this mark
Traffic accidents whilst Ride-on mower is being moved to and from Lower Common	Collision with traffic resulting in injury	2 x 2 = 4 (Low) Where likelihood is “Possible” and result is “Major Injury”	Being aware of danger. Avoid tiredness. Ask 2 nd volunteer to act as a lookout for traffic hazards whilst transporting mower to and from Lower Common Vigilance and care.

BASIC RULES

1. No work to start prior to reassessment of objectives and safety discussion.
2. The following items **MUST** be on-site and placed out before any work commence: “Keep Out” sign(s) (see “4” below) and First Aid box (see “5” below)
3. It is recommended that volunteers always carry a mobile phone for emergencies.
4. The “**Keep Out**” sign(s) must be placed at the two entrances to the site (the wooden bridge by the swing and the slope at the north of the site).

5. The **First Aid box** must be placed on the bench in the middle of the wildflower strip.
6. All mowing and strimming must **STOP IMMEDIATELY** if “visitors” (ie, non-Volunteers) enter the site or if a danger is spotted (such as someone being capable of being hit by a flying stone).
7. For the sake of safety, all volunteers must continuously act as “lookouts”, so that possible dangers can be spotted and avoided. If there are sufficient volunteers, one or more volunteers can be given this task as their sole job but this does not mean that the other volunteers should not keep alert to potential problems!
8. Refilling of mowers and strimmers should be performed in the open air outdoors at the storage location of the equipment near the garage prior to being used on Lower Common. Should refilling on site be required, the cans should be stored temporarily by the wooden bridge entrance from Furzen Lane.
9. All volunteers must be aware of changing weather conditions. The principal risks are:
 - a. Sunburn / sunstroke: Wear clothing that covers arms, body and legs. Wear a hat. Use sunscreen or suntan lotion to minimise the sun's effects.
 - b. Dehydration: Bring water or soft drinks with you.
 - c. Rain: Bring suitable clothing with you. If there is any danger of slipping or injury from tools, work must stop.
10. Mowing as Couples vs Lone Working. Two volunteers are allocated to each mowing session such that they are available to act as each other's safety person. Where couples elect to work with one partner remote from the work area, the remote partner shall still be responsible for acting as the safety person. Furthermore, the volunteer who is working “alone” shall be required to undertake an additional risk assessment in line with the Ellisfield Parish Council's Lone Working Policy. [Lone working.pdf \(ellisfield.gov.uk\)](#).

Transporting the Mowers to Lower Common

The Ride-On mower is stored away from Lower Common and requires the Ride-On mower to be driven on the road to Lower Common. Your Area Contact will be able to provide you with access to the storage location.

Ride-On Mower: The mower must be driven up Green Lane, turning right into Furzen Lane and over the bridge by the swings. The second volunteer should act as a lookout for traffic hazards whilst it is being moved to the Green.

Push Mower (where available) and Strimmer: The mower should be pushed / the strimmer carried up the Green Lane path, along Furzen Lane grass verge and over the bridge at the swings. Care should be taken to avoid pedestrians.

Ride-On Mower Insurance

The mower is taxed and insured for driving on the road between the storage location and Lower Common by any Volunteer holding a full driving licence and covers volunteers over 18 years of age. Your Area Contact can provide details.

Mowing

The primary hazard here are the rotating blades which can:

- a. Send stones and wood flying towards other people standing up to 20 to 30 feet away.
- b. Injury to fingers if you try to clear a blockage without switching the mower off.
- c. Injury to toes if they get in the way of the blades.

Mowing can only be performed by a volunteer who is experienced in using a petrol driven mower and who fully understands the operation of the particular mower in use.

USE OF THE RIDE-ON MOWER: all users of the ride-on mower must be fully trained by a member of the committee. Special care must be taken regarding the ditches and the mower must not, on any account be used within 1 metre of the ditch

The mower operator **MUST** wear solid boots, preferably steel toe capped. It is preferable to use ear protection and to wear gloves. The mower operator **MUST**:

- a. Undertake his/her own Risk Assessment of the site and clear away any stones and twigs prior to undertaking work.
- b. Be aware of other volunteers on site and keep alert to possible dangers (ie, look up regularly).
- c. Be experienced in the type of mower being used. If unsure of any aspect of use, refer to the Operator Manual before using the mower.
- d. Carry out a full safety check on the mower prior to use and during work at convenient intervals. If faulty or damaged, the machine should be fully repaired or not used.
- e. Work in such a way that, as far as possible, any possible risk to him or herself or others is minimised.
- f. Refill by bringing the petrol can to the mower, refill the mower, reseal the can and return it the designated storage point (by the entrance).
- g. Stop work **IMMEDIATELY** if the warning whistle is heard and/or if volunteers or public enter the "restricted" area. Only recommence mowing when any danger is passed.

Strimming

Strimming is a potentially hazardous activity eg from flying stones, especially when other volunteers are close by! This task can only be performed by those volunteers who have been formally trained with petrol driven trimmers and/or who are personally known to be experienced and competent with their own petrol driven trimmer.

The trimmer operator **MUST** wear eye protection and recommended to wear:

- a. Ear protection, preferably full ear "muffs".
- b. Solid boots, preferably steel toe capped.
- c. Gloves.
- d. Trousers or overalls, preferably thick.
- e. Full harness or shoulder strap, to avoid muscle strain.

The trimmer operator **MUST**:

- a. Undertake his/her own Risk Assessment of the site and clear away any stones and twigs prior to undertaking work.
- b. Assign a suitable restricted work area in which other volunteers or public are not allowed.
- c. Be experienced in the type of trimmer being used. If unsure of any aspect of use, refer to the Operator Manual before using the trimmer.
- d. Carry out a full safety check on the trimmer prior to use and during work at convenient intervals. If faulty or damaged, the machine should be fully repaired or not used.
- e. Work in such a way that, as far as possible, any possible risk to him or herself or others is minimised.
- f. Keep alert to possible dangers (ie, look up regularly!).
- g. Avoid stepping back whilst strimming, always work sideways or forwards.
- h. Refill only at the designated filling point and ensure that the petrol can is resealed after use.
- i. Stop work **IMMEDIATELY** if the warning whistle is heard and/or if volunteers or public enter the "restricted" area. Only recommence strimming when any danger is passed.
- j. **NOT** use a brush cutting blade at the Lower Common without prior discussion with the Task Leader.

Raking

Although not hazardous in its own right, stay vigilant and keep a watch for volunteers mowing nearby.

Barrowing

This involves taking grass cuttings and depositing them in the area behind the wildflower strip.

To avoid strains and back injury:

- a. Never overload the wheelbarrow.
- b. Maintain a straight back and push from the legs.
- c. Take care when tipping to ensure that you do not overbalance.
- d. If the wheelbarrow starts to topple do not try to save it. This can easily damage your back.
- e. **IMPORTANT:** Care must be taken when taking barrows down the slope behind the wildflower strip.