

Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures



Caves and Coastal

Standard Operating Procedures: Caves and Coastal Exploration

Definition and Scope of Activities

Exploration of sea caves and coastal environment from Victoria Park Arbroath to Usan.

The major activities covered within this section are as follows:

- Cave exploration at Carlinheugh Bay (bottom of Seaton Den)
- Coastal exploration at Arbroath Cliffs
- Coastal exploration at Eithe Haven and Usan

Precautions to Minimise Hazards

It is essential that the Standard Operating Procedures are followed and that personnel leading the Group fully brief the group to pay attention to hazard warning information, remain in control of the activity and follow accredited tuition and activity progression.

Seasonal Constraints

Coastal exploration can take place all year. However due to the exposed nature of coastal environment the weather / wind / tides will need to be assessed prior to trip.

Locational Constraints

The coastal environment from Victoria Park to Usan leads itself to exploration the leader should be familiar with the area to be visited.

The tides can have an impact on the routes and access to the caves. Tides should be checked before embarking on a trip. The information log has information on the tidal impact on the caves.

Tuition Ratios

The tuition ratios are:

- 1 Leader to 10 participants

Tuition Leader Qualifications

Minimum qualifications for leading groups at the caves are:

- Hold an outdoor leadership NGB Award such as ML / LLA / TCL, and hold a valid First Aid Certificate.
- The Leader must complete the in-house induction.

Equipment – Participants

All participants must have access to windproof/waterproof/protective clothing, appropriate to conditions, and suitable footwear.

Helmets must be worn by under 18s while in the caves.

Equipment – Group Safety

Staff must have access to a torch while in the caves.

Additional equipment to be considered depending on location / conditions:

- Safety rope (minimum spec. 20 metres 8.5mm)
- Watch
- First aid supplies
- OS map (1:50000 scale)
- Group shelter

Access / Environment

As locations are Coast based there may be access restrictions due to land use. Access permission should follow national access codes of practice – see below.

Coastal cliffs often provide an important habitat for nesting birds and species of moss/alpines not normally found at lower levels. Groups should exercise care to reduce unnecessary disturbance and damage from overuse of specific sites.

RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT REF NO: Coastal exp 2
**Activity: Coastal walks /
Exploration / Caves**
Location: Various
Assessor: DS, JL

Hazard	Who might be harmed?			Existing controls What makes the hazard less risky? What makes these controls effective?	Risk			Further actions Avoid Control at source Take advantage of technology Protect all Make what you have more effective	Target date dd-mm-yy	Responsibility	Completion Date	New Residual Risk
	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Hazardous surroundings / slip trip fall / disorientated	x	x		Staff should have good knowledge of the surrounding area give a sound safety brief and appropriate equipment	2	5	10	Use of appropriate footwear				
Walking into rocks in the dark caves	x	x		Staff should have access to a light source at all times	5	2	10	None				
Panic in a dark cave	x	x		All participants should be briefed on what to expect prior to trip staff have access to light	4	1	4	None				
Tidal changes / trapped by tide	x	x		Tidal charts to be checked observation of conditions	1	1	1	None				
Stuck in small caves	x	x		Check size of caves suits the participant clothing to be check for snag hazards	1	4	4	None				
Slip / trip / fall from height	x	x		Good route choice, robust safety brief	1	5	5	Spotting where appropriate				
Attack from nesting birds	x	x		Avoid nesting areas	1	3	3	None				
Rock fall / hold breaking /	x	x		Helmets to be worn, good route choice / robust safety brief. Caves to be checked during trips and any changes shared with the team	1	5	5	None				

Further actions approved by: Derek Napier
Signature: D Napier
Date: 9th April, 2026
Urgency of Action = (20> *Very High*) (16-20 *High*) (9-15 *Moderate*) (4-8 *Low*) (1-3 *Very Low*)

Severity = 1. Damage 2. Minor Injury 3. +3 Days/Hospitalised 4. Major Injury/Permanent Disability 5. Fatality

Probability = 1. Very Unlikely 2. Unlikely 3. Fairly Likely 4. Likely 5. Very Likely

Review Date: April 2027

Ancrum Outdoor Centre, 10 Ancrum Road, Dundee DD2 2HZ Tel: 01382 435911
Web: www.ancrum.com Email: ancrum.centre@leisureandculturaldundee.com

