

Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures



Douglaswood Zipline



April 2026

Standard Operating Procedures: Zip line activity at Douglaswood Scout centre

Definition and Scope of Activities

Zipline installation at Douglaswood (DW) scout centre.

Consisting of a 100m zipline, starting at a platform 10m in a tree across grassland to a purpose built, woodchip covered, landing ramp.

The platform is accessed by a wire ladder with an ALF self belay system.

Crate stack consisting of overhead wire and tree anchor, with building platform on the ground.

*This document supplements the 'Adventure course construction' SOP document for DW Zipline.

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.

For Emergency Action plans please see DW EAP

The specific hazards identified are not exhaustive and additional hazards or combinations may arise during the course of an activity necessitating ongoing attention to minimise or control the risk(s) to a manageable level.

Seasonal Constraints

These activities can take place all year, however the course should not be used if there is snow/ice on the wire or in wind gusting higher than 30mph (Beaufort scale force 6).

Tuition Ratios

Because of the nature of these activities the ratio is not specified, an instructor will only be supervising those who are participating in the activity not while waiting.

Tuition Leader Qualifications

All staff operating the zipwire will be fully inducted by 'Adventure course construction' staff or appointed Ancrum staff.

There are two levels of competency for the zip wire activity

Level 1: Individuals can manage the safe running of the zip line session.

Level 2: Individuals who have additional skills who are able to perform a rescue from the ALF belay system.

There must be a level 2 person available on-site during zip line use.

Equipment - Participants

Minimum height for participants is 120cm

Maximum weight for participants is 120Kg.

Participants will be fitted with an appropriate sit harness or full body harness and where appropriate, chest harness.

Participants will be issued with a lanyard of suitable length to ensure participant land on an appropriate area of the landing ramp.

Participants will use Trilock carabiners as part of the safety system to connect to ALF and Zipline pulleys. Twistlocks may be used on the platform lanyard and platform Halo attachments.

Access / Environment

As working on the zip wire is defined as 'working at height', there must be a second adult on site who could alert emergency services if something were to happen to the lead instructor.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP'S)

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1. Course details

Date of course completion: April 23

Course Builder: Jon Sanders @ Adventure Course construction

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Aberfeldy

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Course details

A single 100m zip line with 10 metre platform and landing ramp.

It is recommended that this document be read in conjunction with EN15567 (parts 1 and 2) and training provided by Adventure course Construction

Individual safety system Category E

2. Accessing, inspection and maintenance

The following section details the inspection requirements required to operate the course. This should be read and understood by the operator before allowing the course to open to the public.

Before any inspections take place it should be noted that:

- Only staff who have received site specific training by an Adventure Course Construction approved trainer should access or carry out any inspections on the ropes course. Rope access techniques should only be used by qualified and appropriately trained members of staff.
- For the purposes of access, inspection and maintenance only the safety system designed and installed for this purpose should be used.
- It is the responsibility of the Employer to ensure that only appropriately trained and competent staff undertake this task. If staff have not been appropriately trained and are not competent then the safety checks cannot be deemed to have been completed.
- All safety checks, including items checked, any faults discovered or any practical work undertaken, must be recorded and where applicable, certified, dated and signed for at the time that the check is completed.
- The turnover of participants on the course should be recorded for annual assessment of wear and tear to the course.

Inspection schedule

1. Routine visual inspection see opening and closing daily check sheet
2. Operational inspection 1-3 months depending on footfall.
3. Annual inspection should be carried out every 12-15 months.
4. Arboreal inspection should be carried out every 12-15 months

Maintenance schedule

There is no specific requirement for parts of the course to be replaced within a certain time period. Through regular inspection wear and tear should be identified and parts replaced before they become a hazard. The blue straps are the part of the course which are likely to need to be replaced first.

PPE inspection

- Harnesses
- Lanyards
- Petzl carabiners
- Petzl trolleys
- Rescue bag

All of the above should have a pre use visual inspection before each session. All PPE should also have a monthly inspection by a suitably competent and experienced PPE inspector.

3. Periodical inspection

Periodical inspections shall be carried out at least each calendar year and with a maximum interval of 15 months by an Adventure Course Construction member of staff with applicable ropes course experience and operational knowledge.

All components of the course (structural, environmental and operational) must be inspected. As a minimum EN15567-2 recommends the following be carried out by the inspector:

- Routine visual check.
- Operational inspection.
- Functional test (a practical test of elements to ensure that they are fit for purpose).
- Assessment of worn components and requirements for their replacement.
- Verification that all manufacturers/suppliers instructions for maintenance have been carried out.
- Verification that plastic covered wire ropes have been tested in accordance with EN 15567-1, section 4.2.4. (Not applicable)
- Confirm the course has a current arboreal assessment to ensure that all the trees used as a support system have been judged safe to use.
- Verify that a PPE inspection report exists.

In addition, specific consideration shall be given to the potential effects of fatigue on wire ropes used in a critical application.

Typical checks will include the effects of the weather on the course, any evidence of rotting or corrosion and any change in the level of the safety equipment as a result of repairs or any components that have been added and/or replaced since the last inspection.

All inspections should be recorded, they should be signed and dated with a date the next inspection is due.

Any maintenance should be recorded, the person carrying out the maintenance should sign and date the log with a detailed description about what has been carried out.

4. Arboreal inspection

Arboreal inspections shall be carried out at least each calendar year and with a maximum interval of 15 months by a competent and suitably trained inspector who ideally has applicable ropes course experience and an operational understanding. An arboreal inspection is only required where trees are directly used for the course or indirectly where trees are located close to a course and any failure of a tree would have an effect on the integrity of course or the safety of a person on or next to the course.

As a minimum EN15567-2 recommends the following be carried out by the inspector with a report detailing any findings given to the client for their records:

- Identification of the issuing body.
- Place(s) and date(s) of the inspection.
- Identification of the item(s) inspected.
- Name, address and signature of the inspector.
- A statement of conformity (if applicable).
- A record of all defects found. Any safety defects which are found should be resolved to the satisfaction of the inspection body before the course is used.
- Information on what has been omitted from the original scope of the inspection.
- A statement that the inspection report should not be reproduced, except in full.

All inspection reports shall be included in the operational documents of the ropes course.

5. Instructor ratios

- 1 instructor to 10 customers
- 1 instructor is able to run the Zip by themselves, however there must be a second member of staff available who is able to respond to an emergency
- At least one rescue trained instructor shall be available at all times.

Supervision levels

Currently Ancrum will operate at Level 1, however if you wish to go to Level 2 then the procedure must comply with EN15567 Part 2 and UK ropes course guide

Level 1 supervision – Where an instructor can physically intervene to prevent a misuse of the individual safety system that would otherwise lead to a significant risk of serious injury or death.

Level 2 supervision – Where an instructor is able to see the participant and intervene verbally.

Level 3 supervision – Where a participant is in a position to alert an instructor of their need for assistance, who is able to respond promptly to the alert and provide adequate assistance

6. Guest size and weight limits

- Minimum age 8. Age is a guide, they must be over the minimum height and fit correctly into a harness
- Minimum height 120cm
- Max weight 120KG

Course restrictions

Zip line – 1 person for normal use. 2 persons for purpose of rescue

Platforms – Maximum 3 people (in line with max weight on the zip line is 120Kg). Max load on platform for Must not exceed 380kg.

7. Guest Clothing

- Guests are expected to wear clothes that cover their legs, this is to protect them from splinters whilst using the zip wire landing ramps.
- Long hair shall be tied back to avoid becoming caught.
- Large jewellery shall be removed where possible. If it is not possible to remove jewellery then the guest shall be advised about the added risk.
- Well fitted shoes must be worn, e.g. trainers or walking boots. Open toed sandals or flip flops are not permitted.

8. Fitting harnesses

- Customers must only use the harnesses approved by Adventure Course construction or Ancrum technical advisor. Guests are not permitted to use their own equipment on the course.
- Harnesses shall always be fitted over guest clothing as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Once customers are fitted into their harness they are not permitted to smoke. If they wish to smoke then the harness must be removed, then rechecked by an instructor.
- Customers shall be told not to adjust or tamper with the harness.

9. Opening the course

- Carry out a routine visual check from the ground.
- One member of staff shall complete the zip to ensure that the zipwire remains fit for purpose with no damage or deformity.
- One member of trained staff shall carry out the opening of the course. In the unlikely event of an instructor having an accident whilst opening the Zip a responsible adult shall be available to raise the alarm.
- Make sure that the wood chip on the landing ramps is raked level.

10. Routine visual inspection

At the start of each day instructors are expected to carry out a routine visual inspection, this should consist of a visual inspection around the entire course

- Check the trees still standing with no visible damage or deformity, if there has been a period of extreme weather it is recommended an independent person inspect the trees and anchors before the course is opened.
- Check for fallen branches that may cause a trip hazard.
- Visual inspection of the elements for fallen branches or deformity.
- Visual inspection of the wooden platforms.
- Carry out visual inspection of all zip wire connectors, paying particular attention to the split pin on the bow shackle.
- Check all wire connectors for obvious damage.
- Check all connectors and done up tight.
- Visual inspection of the landing ramp, check for any foreign objects that could cause harm.

If any damage is found during any inspection or there are any doubts as to the integral strength or general safety of the course and/or equipment, the course must not be used and Adventure Course Construction should be contacted at the earliest opportunity. The equipment cannot be used until it has been confirmed safe to use by a representative of Adventure Course Construction.

11. Safety and emergency planning

It is required under EN 15567-2 that the operator prepare a safety and emergency plan that is appropriate to the size of the ropes course and the number of participants it can accommodate. The operator, with the assistance of their technical advisor should prepare a document that meets this requirement prior to the course opening to the public.

As a minimum it should include the following:

- Access for the emergency services
- Include the name and address of the site
- Include the names of rescue trained staff.
- Detail the means of communication to be used during an emergency.
- Detailed list of emergency equipment.
- Provide a method statement detailing the methods for evacuating the following:
 - A person injured or unable to continue on the zip park.
 - All participants on the zip park in the event of a fire or adverse weather conditions.

12. Risk assessment

The operator is also required to prepare and maintain a current risk assessment, which shall be created prior to opening the ropes course the public.

The document should be written by the course operator upon completion of the site-specific training. It should be considered as a "live" document which is updated on a regular basis as new risks develop or old risks are mitigated and should be reviewed annually regardless of any updates.

13. Staff Qualifications

All instructors and staff will need to have attended and passed a training and assessment course from an Adventure Course construction approved ropes course trainer.

It is recommended that all instructors receive ongoing training and audits, the frequency of this training will be dependent on course turn over and frequency of employment. Basic training (Level 1) may be provided in house with permission from Jon Sanders at Adventure Course construction.

Rescue training (level 2) shall be provided by Adventure Course Construction or a suitable technical advisor.

14. Technical Advice

We recommend that when the activity falls beyond the experience or competence of management it will be necessary to get advice from one or more appropriately experienced and qualified person(s). It is important to consider the technical requirements of your particular course and then marry them with an appropriate technical advisor who has the required knowledge and experience to suit your needs.

To be clear, an appropriate qualification is being a European Ropes Course Association (ERCA) trainer, or a currently active Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI) or above with significant and appropriate ropes course experience. Technical advisors need to take their role seriously and they must be able to demonstrate relevant competence, which will include being up to date with current and best industry practice.

15. Emergency equipment

In addition to the specific ropes course equipment, we would recommend that the operator maintain the following items when the course is in operation.

- First aid kit that has been risk assessed for the specific site under the Health and Safety Executive guidance and that is appropriate to the location and the potential people who may have to use it.
- A mobile phone if signal is suitable or a radio that links to a person who does have reliable mobile signal.
- Provision for rescue on site at all times.

16. Rescue of stuck or injured customers

Rescue Plan

There is no evidence of any zipwire using the Petzl tandem speed pulleys ever jamming or failing. It is still possible to items of clothing or hair to become jammed. For this reason, all participants must have all long hair tied back, and loose-fitting clothing must be secure.

Ladder rescue

- Use the Petzl Jag and ID rescue system only.
- Attach the non-ID end of the Jag to the Zip wire anchor stop with the tail facing towards you.
- Attach the Rescuesender to the 'Live' side of the Alf belay rope.
- Remove any excess slack through the ID.
- Take in on the Jag until the Alf has released.
- Carefully lower back to the ground.
- If the 'Alf' reengages whilst descending. Pay out slack through the Jag, take in slack through the ID, then take in on the Jag again to allow you to continue lowering.

17. Closing the course

- Either zip down the wire or climb down the access ladder.
- Secure the bottom of the ladder to prevent access.
- Rake/turn over the zip wire landing ramp ready for the next session.
- 'Lock' the gate at the bottom of the access stairs.
- Ensure all equipment is returned to stores and put away correctly.

18. Booking Procedures

- It is recommended that Ancrum document the booking procedures in this section.

19. Who's decision

- It is recommended that Ancrum appoint a manager who is able to make the final decision about whether it is suitable to open the course
- In the event of a dispute about guests weight, age or suitability an appropriate senior member of staff shall be available to make the final decision.

20. Booking form/medical details

It is recommended that Ancrum use a booking form for each customer on the course, this should include name, age and address of guest. It should have an acknowledgement of risk and medical section. All booking forms must be signed and dated.

21. Weather conditions

High winds

Winds gust forecast 30mph or more then the course should not operate. There are a number of risks associated with high winds. The height of the wire is carefully planned in relation to the landing ramp, during high winds the tress will sway causing the wire to move up and down. If the wire is too high when a customer comes into land, they may not be able to land on the ramp which may lead to injury.

High winds may also cause debris/branches to fall from the trees leading to injury

The 30mph limit is a guideline, winds coming from different directions will affect the course in different ways. Through careful risk assessment and a detailed understanding of wind effect the operator may decide to change the operating wind speed.

To assess the effect of the wind on the course, a good rule of thumb is to use Beaufort 6. Beaufort 6 is described as a strong breeze. Large branches in motion, whistling heard in telegraph wires, umbrellas used with difficulty.

If Beaufort 6 or above is experienced then the course shall not be used.

Lightning 30/30 rule

Research shows that people struck by lightning are predominantly hit before and after the peak of the storm. This means that you should be thinking about the proximity of the lightning, not the occurrence of rain. The 30/30 rule provides a good way of ensuring one is sheltering during the riskiest parts of the storm. It proposes that if the flash to bang is 30 seconds in length or less you should seek shelter. Staying inside a shelter is advised until 30 minutes past the last clap of thunder. This ensures that any distant strikes at the beginning of the storm (lightning can travel up to 10 miles), or trailing storm clouds at the back of the storm do not take anyone by surprise.

Snow and ice

Snow. The greatest risk from snow is the additional loading on the tree branches. During periods of heavy snow, the course should not operate as a falling branch may cause injury or damage to the course.

Ice. The course must not operate if ice is present on the wires. The zip trolleys are designed to run on wire, if ice is present the trolleys will run too fast and may cause injury. If instructors are able to clear the wires from all ice then the course may be used.

During periods of snow and ice the final landing ramp may become frozen. Extra care should be taken to ensure the wood chip is turned over and remains fit for purpose. A frozen landing ramp will not provide a suitable surface.

Ancrum @ Douglaswood

Opening and Closing daily checks

Checks should only be carried out by a trained and competent instructor, if the daily checks are not recorded then they will be deemed not to have happened.

Course Opening procedure

Date	
Instructor names	

No	Opening procedure	Staff initial
1	Weather forecast has been checked, wind gusts below 30mph	
2	Trees appear to be safe and free from hanging branches or deformity	
3	Chain removed from stairs	
4	Wires free from obstructions	
5	All shackles have a tight nut and split pin	
6	Access ladder is secured	
7	'Alf' belay system has been function tested and the rope is free from damage.	
8	Back up 'halo' in place around landing turnscrew	
9	Platforms remain secure	
11	Wires show no signs of damage or deformity	
12	Final landing ramp is raked level and checked for foreign objects	

Closing Procedure

Date	
Instructor names	

No	Closing procedure	Staff initial
1	'Close' the stairs with the chain and hang No entry sign.	
2	Landing ramp raked level and checked for foreign objects	
3	All equipment returned to stores	
4	Any issues reported to a manager	

Approximately how many participants descended the wire today [number of participants x number of shots]

RISK ASSESSMENT

Activity: Zip Line- Douglaswood				Location: Douglaswood Sout Centre			Assessor: OLW - Jamie					
							Date: April 2026					
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 Score
	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Fall from height		x	x	Trained staff to manage zip line sessions Use of safety equipment when accessing launch platform and while descending zip line. Staff/ clients always clipped to rated safety system while at height.	1	5	10	Staff to constantly observe group/clients and double check each time clients are clipped into a safe system, especially before unclipping from previous safe system (e.g. From ALF on to platform lanyards OR Platform lanyards to Zip-line lanyard.)				
Weather/ conditions affecting the zipline - Wind affecting the zipline length as trees sway. - Ice forming on the line affecting the speed of the pulley and participant descent speed.		x		The operational limit of the zip line in 30mph winds (gust). The zip wire should not be used if there is snow or ice formed on the wire. The wire will be instected for branches/ debris before opening.	3	3	9					

RISK ASSESSMENT

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	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Branches or other objects being blown on to or hung up on the wire.												
Injury while descending the zipline. - hitting something while descending - Being hit by someone while descending - Injury when landing on ramp. - Long hair caught in pulleys. - Injury on landing ramp		x	x	Pre-opening check to be carried out, checking there's no obstructions on the wire and 'no-entry barriers' removed. Ensure landing ramp is clear from obstructions and hazards. Check woodchip depth prior to opening course and monitor depth during session (watch for channels appearing, which would indicate chip may not be deep enough, as participants drag through the chip on landing). Ensure there's a marked no-go zone in front of the zip line ramp and under mid-point of line.	1	5	5	Consider use of two-way radios if there is a second person helping participants unclip from the wire.				

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	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Splinters on landing ramp				Ensure clients leave the ramp by stairs rather than down ramp. Helmets are to be worn during the activity, along with tying hair back this should reduce the risk of hair being caught in the pulley. Clients will be asked to remove large and loose jewellery. Clients will receive instruction and coaching about how to slow down on the landing ramp. Clients must have their legs covered to avoid splinters or grazes from the woodchip on landing. Instructor will check zipline and landing ramps are clear before allowing participants to descend line.								

RISK ASSESSMENT

Activity: Zip Line- Douglaswood				Location: Douglaswood Sout Centre			Assessor: OLW - Jamie					
							Date: April 2026					
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 Score
	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Equipment failure/ Miss use of equipment	x	x	x	Pre-opening checks to be complete. PPE checks maintained Only trained staff to lead activities Monitor throughout session (especially harnesses as clients may fiddle with them or remove clothing which changes the fit). If there is doubt to the integrity of any equipment, the session should not go ahead or carry on until the situation is discuss with the technical advisor (or course inspectors	2	5	10	Harnesses dropping down from hips is fairly common as children fiddle with the buck or remove clothing they had, so watch for this. Consider the use of Chest harnesses where body shape dictates a sit harness may not fit. If damaged equipment is found it is important the session is halted. It may be that something peripheral to the noted damage is causing it (eg. Damage noted on the pulley, but caused by damage on the wire). Stop session immediately and seek advice if any equipment is damaged.				

RISK ASSESSMENT

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	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Being hit by a participant descending the zip-line	x	x	x	Where there is risk of other centre users entering the area in front of the landing ramps, there should be a marked no entry zone from the landing ramp to the road under the wire. Participants shall be briefed about safe waiting areas, particularly if someone is assisting to unclip participant pulleys from the end of the wire. If someone is helping unclip participants at ramp, they should wait at top of stairs. Instructors must check the landing area is clear before allowing the next participant to start. The instructor will ensure the 'platform' lanyard remains attached to the participant to avoid someone descending the zip wire unintentionally.	2	5	10	Douglas wood is a secure site with locked gates. It may be that the zip line is used at times when there is no risk of other users being under the zip line, in which case the safe zone from the ramp to the road may not need to be marked out.				

RISK ASSESSMENT

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	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Equipment or items dropped from the platform.		x	x	Participants shall wear helmets for zip lining activity and participants shall be asked to empty or zip up their pockets prior to accessing the platform.	3	3	9					

Further actions approved by:	Signature:	Date:
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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