



Participation and Incident Snapshot Survey 2026 INFORMATIONPACK



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*Helping to understand participation levels, incidents,
and contributory factors across the UK Outdoor
Adventure Activity Sector*

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OVERVIEW

In a UK-wide joint project, we are running a 12-month 'Participation and Incident Snapshot Survey' in 2026.

We are looking for participation from a wide range of organisations involved in the delivery of activities that could fall within the description of Outdoor Adventurous Activities.

You would be asked to submit your organisations relevant participation and incident data over six separate two-week blocks throughout 2026 (i.e. total of 12 weeks).

Our aim is for this to enable us to have a greater understanding of;

- Participation Levels, including across activities and client groups
- Residential and expedition overnight stays
- Incidents and their features, comparing them against participation levels

Closing Date for Participation
—19th December 2025

First two-week block to report
— 26th January to 8th February 2026

BACKGROUND

This survey is part of the wider 'Collective Knowledge' project, which began in 2023. Stemming out of the Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee (AAIAC), a working group was established to look at new ways of sharing safety lessons and knowledge across the sector. Through partnering with University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), and the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL), we have been able to access funding through Interface which has helped move the project to this point.

The intention of the project is to connect relevant information to individuals and providers in the sector to reduce incidents, improve quality of provision, and support individual / provider development by encouraging a greater understanding of safety and risk management.

The project has three overall objectives;

- Collection—awareness of current trends and themes across the sector
- Curation — information and knowledge stored in a useful and accessible format
- Communication—encourage and develop ways of sharing knowledge and information widely and effectively

With a rich history in safety and risk management, the UK outdoor adventure activity sector continues to face preventable incidents. There has been a perception over the past 30 years that the sector has had significant progression and improvement in safety and risk management. But with an increasingly diverse sector, fixed legislation, and a changing workforce, there is scope for improvement in our current frameworks. This drive for improvement and critical approach is also indicative of a professional sector and workforce.

Overall our aim is to ensure that safety knowledge and lessons from previous incidents are not forgotten and are retained to help support the workforce and organisations of tomorrow.

AIM OF THE SURVEY

To provide a snapshot of levels of participation and the number of incidents within the UK outdoor adventure activity sector.

Specifically;

- Gather participation levels, which includes the activity and client group.
- Gather data on the number of overnight stays in the same period, either residential or expedition.
- Gather data on incidents within the same timeframe, which includes generic information such as activity and location, along with thoughts on contributory factors.
- Analyse, present and distribute the findings of the survey, to better inform the sector.

We are describing the sector as 'Outdoor Adventure Activity'. This is attempting to be a broad term, that encompasses descriptions such as (but not limited to) outdoor learning, adventure education, adventure tourism, adventure activities, and outdoor education.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED

We are looking to recruit a minimum of 100 outdoor providers or organisations from across the UK.

The focus of the data collection is on activities and participation that are undertaken in a professional capacity, that occur as part of an organised management structure. This structure could be anything from a large multi-site organisation to a smaller sole-trader delivering their own activities, and it may include voluntary organisations. The 'participants' within the survey will be the organisation or provider who holds managed responsibility for the activity—they will be known as participating organisations.

The participating organisations will need to submit relevant participation and incident data over six separate two-week blocks throughout 2026. These will all be submitted online using a secure survey form that will be accessed directly by the research team.

The participation information we are looking to collect is;

- List of activities undertaken and number of individual participants
- Broken down by type of client group
- Total number of individuals on overnight stays

Examples of the incident information we are looking to collect is;

- Type of participation the incident was related to
- Activity and Location
- Incident Type, Nature, and Severity
- Contributory Factors

None of the incident details will be identifiable, with all options pre-coded. Only data recorded within the 2-week blocks will need to be submitted.

Whilst you can choose to opt out of the survey part-way through, we then won't be able to use your data as part of the final results. Therefore we would ask for you to try and complete the 12-month survey if possible.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN THIS?

We recognise that participating in this survey will potentially require a reasonable amount of time commitment and we are extremely grateful to those who are willing to participate.

We believe that your organisation will benefit participating in this through a number of ways;

- By contributing to this we will be able to provide a more accurate picture of levels of participation across the sector which will help with policy and lobbying. Data such as this is useful to support arguments around funding and support. The more participating organisations we have recording
- the incident data, the more comprehensive picture we will be able to present in regard to trends and patterns. This will enable us to communicate aspects around safety across the sector and share our various experiences. By being prompted to answer the different incident questions, you
- or your team will be encouraged to think about your incidents in ways that perhaps are not always considered. This could be used as a good training and development opportunity for staff, particularly around the concepts of contributory factors and what constitutes a near miss.

Therefore please come and join us for this exciting project!

To find out more information please visit

<https://www.outdoor-learning.org/standards/safety/collective-knowledge-project/snapshot-survey-2026.html>

If you would like to participate in this survey, please complete the short online Consent Form and we will be in touch following this.

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/uhi/ck-survey26-consent-form>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who will need to fill this out within my organisation?

Both parts of the survey require different levels of knowledge, which could be held by the same person or may be done by two different individuals.

The Participation Data requires knowledge of group numbers and activities undertaken over a two-week period.

The Incident Report form requires someone to have a degree of first-hand knowledge of the incident. We are not asking for the staff member responsible during the incident to complete it, but it should be a senior staff member who has direct responsibility for the staff and operation of the organisation in that aspect. For example, it may be a Chief Instructor, a Centre Manager, or a Head of Operations. These are just titles that represent the type of role that someone should hold to be able to fill out the incident report form.

What are the outdoor / adventure activities that are included?

Whilst it is nearly impossible to label or specify every activity undertaken, through a comprehensive review we have created the list of activities (below) that we will use for categorisation in this survey.

Outdoor Adventure Activities Descriptions

Outdoor Adventure Activities are grouped into the following seven system level categories.

- Water
- Rock (natural)
- Rock (artificial)
- Rock / Water
- Artificial Activity Structures
- Land
- Other

These list of activities are part of the basis of both the Participation and the Incident Report Form. On the survey they are listed alphabetically.

On-site / Off-site	Description
On-site	Represents locations which are defined by a permanent presence of an established provider (e.g. Outdoor Centre, College, School etc.)
Off-site	Represents locations which are not based around the permanent presence of an established provider (e.g. not limited to, but could include public places, or locations that require some form of travel)

Water	Description
Bell Boating	Watersport that involves a team (usually up to 12) paddle a twin-hulled, catamaran-like boat called a bell boat. They use single bladed paddles and are steered by a single oar by the helm.
Canoeing	Watersport that involves using a single-bladed paddle, usually in an open-topped craft. Typically associated with Open Canoeing and could include being rafted together.
Dragon Boating	Watersport that involves the use of a large craft, often accommodating between 10-20 people. It is paddled using single-blades, and steered by a single stern steering oar.
Kayaking	Watersport that involves using a double-bladed paddle, in a closed-top craft. Typically associated with general purpose, river, or touring kayaks. Participants may choose to use a spray-deck.
Kite surfing	Watersport where an individual stands on a board and is propelled across the water using a kite. Also known as kiteboarding.
Powerboating	Water-based activity that involves the use of engine-powered boats, usually for speed and exploring waterways. It could be conducted in a variety of boat types, both planing and displacement.
Raft Building / Improvised	A team activity that takes place on the water, and involves the construction of a floating structure that is then able to be paddled by the group. It typically uses materials such as barrels, lengths of wood/poles, and rope.
Rowing	Watersport that involves the use of oars (rather than paddles) to propel the craft through the water. The craft may be in a range of lengths and crew sizes.
Sailing (Dinghy)	Watersport that uses small open sailboats, which are generally light-weight, easily rigged and launched, and can be sailed in a variety of locations. This includes single-handers and double-handers, and they do not have a fixed keel.
Sailing (Multihull)	Watersport that uses sailboats which have two or three hulls. This includes single or double handers, and they will require slightly different sailing techniques compared to single hull craft.
Sailing (Keelboat)	Watersport that uses small sailing boats which are designed to be sailed by two or more people. Usually larger than dinghies or multihulls, they will have a weighted keel under the hull (sometimes this will be retractable). It often bridges the gap between dinghy sailing and yachting.
Sea Kayaking	Watersport that involves using a double-bladed paddle, in a closed-top craft which is specifically designed for the open sea or large bodies of water. They are generally longer, thinner, and have options for storage of equipment.
Sit-on-Top Kayaking	Watersport that involves using a double-bladed paddle, on an open-decked craft. Often known for good stability and suitability for beginner paddlers.
Snorkelling	Watersport that involves swimming, using a diving mask, snorkel and usually swim fins. It allows the participants to explore under the water's surface without diving deeply.
Stand-Up Paddleboarding	Watersport that involves using a single-bladed paddle, on a board that they are able to stand on. These may vary in size and stability, and can be either inflatable or hardboards. They may choose to not stand whilst paddling, due to skill and stability.
Surfing	Watersport where an individual uses a board to travel along a wave, back towards shore. This may be standing, kneeling, or lying down.
Swimming (planned)	This is a planned/organised activity, where it is part of the activity programme.
Whitewater Rafting	Watersport that uses an inflatable raft to carry a group of participants down a river. It usually follows sections of rapids, using the river features to create a thrill for the group.
Wind surfing	Watersport that requires an individual to stand on a board and use a sail to harness the power of the wind, to travel across the water.
Winging	Also known as wing surfing, it is a wind propelled water sport that incorporates elements of kitesurfing and windsurfing. Whilst standing or kneeling on a board, individuals hold a wing-shaped sail that they use to move them across the water.
Yachting	Watersport that involves the use of larger vessels which have at least one sleeping cabin, that could use a combination of sail-power and motor-power to travel.

Rock (natural)	Description
Abseiling (natural surfaces)	Specifically focused only on abseiling outside on natural surfaces. If it occurs within a wider climbing session, then selecting Rock Climbing (natural) would be more appropriate.
Bouldering (natural surfaces)	Un-roped movement on rock surfaces outside. Whilst this may take place as part of a structured rock climbing session, this should only be selected if it was the named activity taking place. This would normally mean that crash pads are used/provided.
Caving / Mining	Navigating and exploring underground cave systems, which can be naturally occurring or man-made (e.g. Mines). It can involve walking, crawling, climbing, swimming, and using ropes or ladders to navigate various features. If the activity is taking place in a purpose-built cave system, then please select Caving (artificial).
Rock Climbing (natural surfaces)	Rock climbing outside on natural surfaces. This may include activities such as bottom roping, top roping, abseiling or lead climbing. If the incident occurred whilst bouldering, but part of a wider rock climbing session, then please select this activity. This would not be considered within the mountain environment.
Rock Hopping / Weaselling	Above ground activity that incorporates scrambling, climbing, and cave-type squeezes. Often undertaken around boulder fields.
Sea-level Traversing	Rock based activity that involves moving along coastal cliffs and the intertidal zone, sometimes using ropes, harnesses and other safety equipment.
Summer Mountaineering	Mountaineering activities, when no snow or ice is present. This may include, but not limited to, multi-pitch rock climbing, scrambling, short roping or short pitching. It will require a level of technical skill, judgement and decision making beyond Walking (Hill, Moorland, Mountain).
Via-Ferrata	A climbing/hiking route that has permanent fixings to facilitate the journey and increase safety. This often consists of a metallic wire anchored to the rock through specific pitons, ladders, bridges and hooks. The group need to use specific personal equipment such as harness and via ferrata kit to undertake the activity.
Winter Mountaineering	Mountaineering activities, when winter conditions such as snow and ice are found in the UK. This may include, but not limited to, winter mountaineering, snow, and ice climbing. It will require a level of technical skill, judgement and decision making beyond Winter Walking (Hill, Moorland, Mountain).

Rock (artificial)	Description
Abseiling (artificial / purpose-built)	Specifically focused on abseiling on surfaces or structures that are not a rock crag. This may be indoors or outdoors. If it occurred as part of a wider climbing session, then please select the relevant climbing activity.
Bouldering (artificial / purpose-built)	Un-roped movement on climbing surfaces that are not a rock crag. This may be indoors or outdoors, and the use of crash pads would normally be present. Only select this if bouldering was the named activity taking place - if it was part of the overall climbing session then please select the relevant climbing activity.
Climbing (artificial / purpose-built)	Climbing on surfaces that are not a rock crag. This will usually be roped, and could be indoors (Climbing Wall) or outdoors (Climbing Tower). It may include other activities such as tree climbing, and if bouldering was part of the climbing session then please select this.

Rock / Water	Description
Canyoning	Descending a canyon or gorge, navigating the various features along the way. This will normally include getting wet, and may include abseiling, swimming, sliding, jumping and scrambling.
Coasteering	A mixed activity that involves journeying along a coastline at sea level. It includes activities such as swimming, climbing, jumping and scrambling over rocks. As it occurs at the point where the sea meets the land, the conditions can be variable and challenging.
Gorge / Ghyll Walking	Ascending a river or stream that is narrow, navigating the various features along the way. This will normally include getting wet, and may include climbing, swimming, squeezing, jumping and scrambling.

Artificial Activity Structures	Description
Caving (artificial / purpose-built)	Navigating and exploring enclosed cave systems, which will be purpose built for the activity.
Freefall Descent Device	Activity that allows participants to experience a free fall safely and efficiently. Examples of this may be Powerfan or Quick Flight.
Ropes Course (assisted belay system)	A ropes course activity that requires the use of an assisted belay system to maintain participant safety. Examples of this may be Crate Stack or Jacobs Ladder.
Ropes Course (individual safety system)	A ropes course activity that uses an individual safety system to maintain participant safety. Examples of this may be a continuous belay system, a smart belay system, or a cows-tail course.
Ropes Course (low ropes)	A ropes course activity that does not require the use of a rope or technical safety system to maintain participant safety. Spotting and group management may still be important. Examples of this may be Low Ropes, Adventure Course, or Challenge Course.
Ropes Course (other)	Any other ropes course element/activity that doesn't fit into the previous categories.
Zip Line / Aerial Runway	A ropes course type activity that involves the attachment of individuals to a cable/wire, where gravity is used to enable them to travel down the cable from a higher point to a lower point. If this is part of a wider ropes course type system, then please select the appropriate Ropes Course activity.

Land	Description
Archery	Activity that uses a bow to shoot arrows at a target.
Axe Throwing	Activity that involves an individual throwing an axe at a target, attempting to hit the bullseye as close as possible.
Biking	Activity that involves riding bicycles in a range of different environments. Generally this is using mountain bikes and can involve the navigation of technical features.
Bushcraft	Activity that is focused on the development of practical skills to survive and thrive in the natural environment. Can be associated with survival skills, it often focuses on the use of natural resources to have food, water, shelter, and fire.
Field Studies	Activities that are primarily focused on learning about nature. May be connected to curriculum subjects, and can also be called environmental education.
Forest School	Is a long-term activity, that takes place in woodland or natural environments, and uses learner-centred processes to help create a relationship and connectedness with the natural environment.
Orienteering	Activity that involves navigating a course, usually using a map and compass, often in challenging terrain. This may be in locations such as forests, grounds, parks or hill sides.
Pony Trekking / Horse Riding	Riding a horse or pony across varied terrain.
Snowsports (Dry Slope)	Any snowsport discipline undertaken on a dry slope or indoor snow slope.
Snowsports (Piste)	Any snowsport discipline undertaken on a marked ski run/piste.
Snowsports (Touring)	Any snowsport discipline that is undertaken outside of the Snowsport Resort boundaries, requiring additional technical skills, judgement and decision making.
Team / Challenge Activities	These are activities that are usually designed to help create opportunities to develop teamwork, communication, problem solving and trust amongst the group. They usually require a minimum level of technical skill for the instructor, and will vary in their use of equipment. This is an activity that is likely to have multiple names.
Walking (Hill and Moorland)	Walking in non-mountainous high or remote country, often known as upland, moor, bog, fell, hill or down. These areas of remoteness are usually easily escapable in a few hours, and don't involve areas where movement on steep or rocky terrain is required. Such areas may often be subject to hostile weather conditions and require an element of self-sufficiency.
Walking (Lowland or Countryside)	Walking in low-level countryside and woodland environments. Navigation would normally follow paths or tracks that are clearly marked and visible. Generally the group should be no more than 3km away from a key access point.
Walking (Mountain)	Walking in wild country which may contain unavoidable steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help. It does not include rock climbing or walking in winter conditions.
Winter Walking	Walking in high, remote, or mountainous country where the winter conditions of snow and/or ice are forecast. This must require the planned use of winter-specific tools and techniques. It is not dependent on a particular time of year, and should not be selected just because you went walking in February or that there was snow on the (for example) beach where you went walking. If it did not require the use of planned winter-specific tools and techniques then please select the appropriate Walking category.

Other	Description
Unstructured / Unsupervised Time	When the group are not meant to be supervised by provider staff. Could be considered free time, down time, or time that is not spent on/at an activity.

How will we record Participation data?

You will be asked to enter a total figure of Participant Activity Days (PAD) for each activity. This will be recorded on a weekly basis, so two figures will be required for the two-week block.

Most sessions will not be a whole day's worth of activity, so we have broken down the suggested length of time for each value.

0.25 PAD—1 to 2.5 hours

0.5 PAD—3 to 4 hours, for example 9am to 12.30pm

0.75 PAD—Greater than 4 hours, less than 6 hours, for example 10am to 3pm

1 PAD—6 to 8 hours, for example 9am to 5pm

The remaining time periods are built around a combination of the amounts above. If an activity occurs for less than an hour, then consider whether it can be included within a more general activity (for example, Team / Challenge Activities may incorporate a range of activities).

We have a simple spreadsheet that the participating organisation can use if they want to help work out their total PAD figure, based on the different length of sessions.

What dates are the 2-week blocks?

All participating organisations will be submitting data for the same time periods. You will be asked to submit the data for each two-week block separately, soon after the time period has finished.

2-Week Block	Week	Week Commencing	Week Concluding
1	1	26th January	1st February
	2	2nd February	8th February
2	3	23rd March	29th March
	4	30th March	5th April
3	5	25th May	31st May
	6	1st June	7th June
4	7	27th July	2nd August
	8	3rd August	9th August
5	9	21st September	27th September
	10	28th September	4th October
6	11	23rd November	29th November
	12	30th November	6th December

Will you be able to identify my organisation or specific incidents from the data?

No. Whilst the research team will have access to the organisations participating, this data will be stored securely in line with the UHI Research Data Management policy. The survey has been designed to ensure that there is limited opportunity to identify participants from the reports, particularly as there is no geographic data. The resulting data will be carefully analysed and presented to ensure that there is no potential for identification of participants before it is made public.

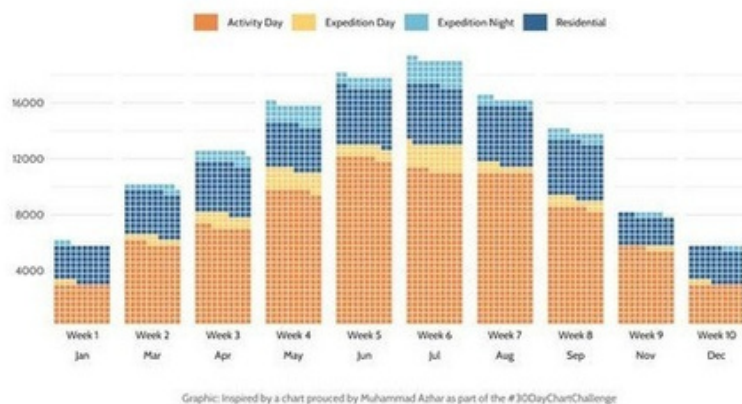
What will you do with the survey data?

The survey data will be compiled and analysed by the research team. This will be conducted with oversight of the AAIAAC Guidance and Curation Group. A report will be compiled and made public with the survey results. This will be used to inform specific projects, guidance and advice on safety throughout the sector.

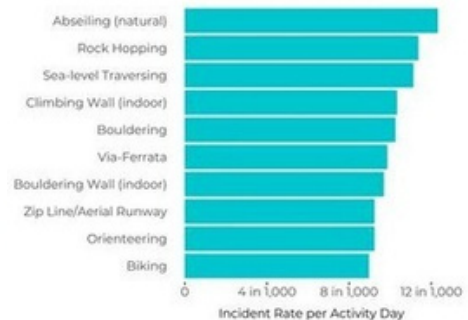
Below are some examples of ways of presenting the data. This is based on fake data.

In our sample, highest levels of participation were seen in July, and lowest levels in December.

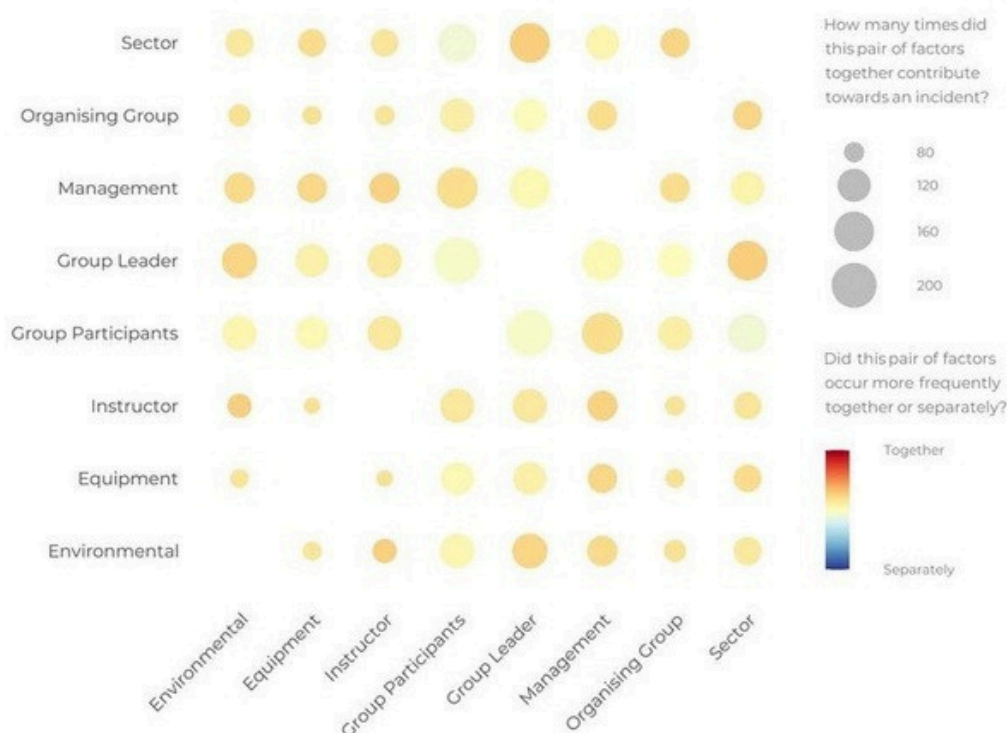
Activity day participation was 390% higher in July than in December.
Residential stays fluctuated less, with only an 170% increase between July and December



Which activities had highest incident rates?



Among water-based activities, **enviroment** and **equipment** was the most common pair of contributory factors



■ Who is collaborating on this project?

The survey is being overseen by the Collective Knowledge Working Group, which is part of AAIAC.

The research team is part of UHI North, West and Hebrides, which is an academic institution based in Scotland. The survey itself has had Ethics approval from the Institution, through Ethics ID ETH2425-1040

Over 2025 the Working Group have been having numerous discussions with a wide range of stakeholders across the UK. This has ranged from National Governing Bodies, professional member associations, and sector-representative bodies. The organisations below support the aims and objectives of the survey, and would encourage organisations to participate in this where possible. They do not have direct control over the survey implementation or collection of data, this resides with the Research Team overseen by the Working Group.

■ Who is the Collective Knowledge Working Group?

Pete White is based in Scotland and is the Primary Researcher for the survey. He currently works part-time for the University of the Highlands & Islands North, West and Hebrides as a Lecturer and Instructor. He has experience in managing residential outdoor education, instructor training programmes and commercial guiding. He continues to deliver practical sessions with a variety of groups, including a range of British Canoeing Awarding Body Qualifications.

Jo Barnett is the CEO of the Institute for Outdoor Learning. She began her career with teaching geography, before working in residential Outdoor Education and Field Studies Centres. She has managed a Local Authority Outdoor Education Service which included Outdoor Education advice and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. She has held voluntary chair roles for the IOL, and the Association of Heads of Outdoor Educations Centres. She is involved in this project as she believes in proactive safety management and ensuring that lessons learned are not lost with time.

Steve Woods is based in Dorset on the Isle of Purbeck and has been supporting Peter and Jo with the project work. He is the founder and co-owner of Vertex Instructor Training Ltd. He has been involved in the ropes course and zip line industry for 30 years and has experience of drafting standards, industry guidance and acting for the courts as an expert witness.

Acknowledgements

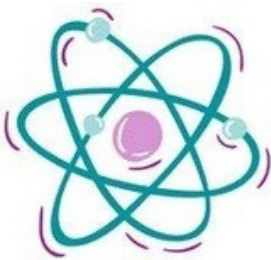
This project would not have been possible without the input and advice from a wide range of individuals across the UK and internationally. We are extremely grateful to all of them – thank you.

Do you want to promote safety?



Do we have an accurate view of incidents in the outdoors?

Are you keen on sharing lessons and experiences?



Help us with this by getting your organisation to participate in a **RESEARCH PROJECT** that is aiming to answer these questions and more!



In a UK-wide joint project, we are running a 12-month 'Participation and Incident Snapshot Survey' in 2026.



We are looking for participation from a wide range of organisations involved in the delivery of outdoor adventurous activities



You would be asked to submit your organisations relevant participation and incident data over six separate two-week blocks throughout 2026 (i.e. total of 12 weeks).

Consent to Participate Deadline
– 19th December 2025

First two-week block to report
– 26th January to
8th February 2026



Our aim is for this to enable us to have a greater understanding of;

- Participation Levels
- Overnight stays
- Incidents and the relationships between features

Primary researcher, Peter White: PETER.WHITE@uhi.ac.uk

For more information please visit:

<https://www.outdoor-learning.org/standards/safety/collective-knowledge-project/snapshot-survey-2026.html>



Ready to agree to Participate?

Scan the QR code to access the online [Consent Form](#)



Ethics Approval ETH2425-1040, from the University of the Highlands and Islands

