

BRENT ISLAND TRUST

Risk Assessment policy – January 03 2016

Brent Island is a natural environment with natural hazards. It is subject to an Access Agreement with Dartmoor National Park Authority which means it is open to all to visit at any time, subject to the DNPA byelaws. In dealing with public safety the Brent Island Trust adopts the following policy:

- The primary responsibility for the safety of visitors rests with the visitors themselves. It is their duty to act responsibly and to take care when in the vicinity of any of the hazards which exist.
- Hazards include the River Avon which encompasses The Island, the weir and the leat. At times water can be fast flowing and deep, and it is incumbent upon visitors to keep themselves at a safe distance from the water, and from areas where the river is channelled by stone walls, which present a possibility of visitors falling over the edge and dropping some distance into the water. In the first 20 years of the Trust's ownership of The Island no such events have been reported, nor any other water-related safety incidents. The area known as 'the beach', where the Meadow slopes fairly gently into the water, is popular with teenagers and families with young children for paddling and swimming during the summer months. It is not possible to supervise or prevent such activities, and safety in the water must remain the responsibility of those persons taking part in such activity. A similar situation exists at many other locations on Dartmoor to which the public have access, including Lydia Bridge and Shipley Bridge, both upstream on the River Avon. In addition the surface of the weir can be slippery and present a risk of falling. Once again it is impossible to supervise this and visitors must exercise natural caution
- Other natural hazards include the numerous trees on the land, which might fall in times of rough weather, and the uneven surface of The Meadow. At times the risk of injury on The Meadow has been increased by dogs which have been allowed to dig holes in the ground, which should be discouraged.
- The Brent Island Trust will fulfil its responsibility for public safety by carrying out regular inspections of The Island, and taking remedial action where necessary. Inspections should be at no less than six-monthly intervals and recorded at the time, with notes made of any action needed. Particular attention will be paid to the following: the entrance gate; the surfaced path to the bridge; the bank of the leat; the ground surface of the meadow, which will be mown at regular intervals; stone walls which channel the river, and man-made structures – the bridge, the weir and the linhay. A qualified tree surgeon will inspect the trees once a year to identify any which need attention to prevent a risk to the public. The public need to exercise natural caution in times of bad weather, when the risk of injury from trees or the river is increased.
- It is felt to be inappropriate to display warning signs to the public around The Island: by the nature of the risks these would be large in number, subject to vandalism and detract from the natural environment which visitors come to enjoy.
- Volunteer Working Parties. A Risk Assessment form is available to leaders of Working Parties which should be used at each Working Party event. It should be noted in particular that powered machinery (eg brushcutters) should be used with extreme caution and chainsaws should only be used by trained and qualified operators.

