



Template Risk Assessment Waterfall Country Gorges (Mellte and Sychryd)

This 'template' risk assessment has been compiled by SWOAPG to meet the requirement of clause 4.2.7 of the *Memorandum of Understanding between NRW and SWOAPG (informally referred to as 'the Waterfall Country Activity Concordat')* dated 1 Jan 2025. It reflects the NRW Waterfalls area risk assessment dated 20 Nov 2024, taking into account inherent site features and other users; and is intended for incorporation as appropriate by all SWOAPG members using the gorges in their own risk assessments. NB this template is for guidance only and it is incumbent on each provider to have their own bespoke risk assessment based on the nature of their use and the advice of their own Technical Advisor.

Risk / Hazard	Control Measures
Providers' operating procedures put instructors and clients at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must hold at least £5 million of public liability insurance covering their activities in the gorges. Providers using the Sychryd and Lower Mellte gorges should operate in accordance with recognised good practise – including a requirement that all instructors are appropriately trained and qualified. <u>Providers delivering gorge walking in the Upper Mellte must hold a current AALA License covering gorge walking at this site, hold an equivalent inspection scheme license, such as Adventuremark, or be assured through the Visit Wales Adventure Activity Assurance Scheme (VWAAAS)¹</u> using the Upper Mellte gorge must either hold an AALA licence for gorge walking or provide to SWOAPG evidence from an appropriately qualified Technical Advisor of their safe delivery of canyoning and/or gorge walking activity at the site – including a requirement that all instructors are appropriately trained and qualified.
Providers' operating procedures cause environmental damage or upset local residents or other users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers operating in the gorges must undertake – and ensure that all their instructors leading groups in the gorges undertake – training on the Waterfall Country Gorge Walking Codes of Conduct as provided by SWOAPG from time-to-time; AND must operate within the terms of these Codes of Conduct.
Difficulty of emergency evacuation from remote areas of Mellte gorge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should consider requiring their group leaders to carry a copy of the <i>Upper Mellte Evacuation Map</i>.
Rockfalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should ensure that all participants wear helmets when operating in the gorges. Providers should encourage instructors to inspect visually all areas for rockfalls before use – particularly any 'high risk' areas that have been notified by SWOAPG 'alerts' – and report any rockfalls to the SWOAPG Coordinator. SWOAPG Coordinator will send 'alerts' to NRW and gorge users as they are advised.

¹ [Adventure Activity Assurance Scheme | Industry Visit Wales](#)

Risk / Hazard	Control Measures
Failure of fixed anchors (currently installed only at 'bad step' on path above Sychryd 'ivy pool')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should encourage instructors to inspect visually fixed anchors before use and report any failures to the SWOAPG Coordinator. SWOAPG Coordinator will send 'alerts' to NRW and gorge users as they are advised.
Falls from height on steep, unguarded drops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers to reflect this hazard in their own risk assessments and adopt appropriate safe operating procedures.
Injury resulting from old industrial debris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers to reflect this hazard in their own risk assessments and adopt appropriate safe operating procedures. Providers should report to the SWOAPG Coordinator any issues concerning old industrial debris. SWOAPG Coordinator will send 'alerts' to NRW and gorge users as they are advised.
Slippery surfaces and recirculating water features at man-made weir on Mellte near Pontneddfechan (Grid Ref SN 9148 0816)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers to ensure their instructors know that entering the water at the weir is STRICTLY OUT-OF-BOUNDS.
Fallen trees causing obstructions on path or in the watercourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers to reflect this hazard in their own risk assessments and adopt appropriate safe operating procedures. Providers should report to the SWOAPG Coordinator any issues with fallen trees. SWOAPG Coordinator will send 'alerts' to NRW and gorge users as they are advised.
Drowning (including entrapment and being swept away), cold-water shock or hypothermia in cold, fast-flowing water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers to reflect this hazard in their own risk assessments and adopt appropriate safe operating procedures.
Forest operations by NRW (e.g. tree and path works)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWOAPG Coordinator will send 'alerts' to gorge users as they are advised.
Water borne infections and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers should report to the SWOAPG Coordinator any issues with water pollution. SWOAPG Coordinator will send 'alerts' to NRW and gorge users as they are advised.
<u>Transfer of invasive non-native species, pests and diseases to and from Waterfall Country²</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Providers to reflect this hazard in their own risk assessments and adopt appropriate biosecurity control measures e.g. Check-Clean-Dry; as a minimum to arrive with clean footwear and clothing and to clean footwear and clothing either on site or at home premises before visiting another woodland or water catchment</u> <u>Providers to consider destroying Himalayan Balsam plants wherever found within the gorges, if confident to do so</u>

² NRW Woodland Biosecurity Overarching Statement: The threat to our forests and woodlands has never been greater. Trees and plants in Britain are now vulnerable to a range of new pests and diseases as a result of a combination of climate change and the increased movement of goods around the world. Activities on the NRW Estate can increase chance of spreading a pest or disease. Everyone who visits or works on NRW's Managed Estate can make a difference. For all activities, an assessment of the risks should be carried out prior to permission being granted. The actions to minimise the risk should be proportionate and reasonable. The assessment should consider if the site where activities occur is a high-risk site and the risk of a pest or disease being moved to another site. NRW staff can advise on the presence of known pests or diseases and possible actions to mitigate the risks. In certain circumstances, NRW may impose specific biosecurity conditions based on the risk assessment. NRW may suspend permissions or change conditions in the event of new information for pests or diseases. The minimum level of biosecurity in all cases is to arrive with clean footwear and clothing and clean footwear and clothing either on site or at home before visiting another woodland. "Leave the Forest in Forest". Greater level of biosecurity will be determined by the Assessment.