National Hedgelaying Society
Accreditation Risk Assessment
Hazard Sheet

			Those at risk			Before Control Measures				Residual Risk Rating		
Item	*Hazard Product/Activity/ Plant/Equipment*	*Risk/Consequence*	*Cutters*	*Assessors*	*Public*	*Likelihood*	*Severity)*	*Risk Rating*	*Control Measures*	*Likelihood*	*Severity*	*Risk Rating*
1	Using a slasher to clear brambles, nettles etc.	Impact injury, slice injury.	✓	✓		4	2	8	Training / experience of operator. Operate a safe working distance of at least two lengths of the slasher handle. Do not wear gloves with swinging tools.	1	2	2
2	Rabbit holes.	Twisted ankle, wrist, broken thumb.	✓	✓		3	3	9	Training. Communication. Mark rabbit holes with a stake/post/hazard-tape. Good observations maintained. Self-awareness,	2	3	6
3	Removing or handling barbed wire.	Skin lacerations.	✓			4	3	12	Training / experience of operator. Use gloves. Safe working distance of people if ripping out a fence with a vehicle / winch. Winch cable restrained / dampened with mat / heavy coats.	1	3	3
4	Using sharp hand-tools, billhooks, axe.	Impact injuries, cut skin.	✓			4	1	4	Training / experience. Keep the public away from hedge laying operators. Cut away from body / people. Do not wear gloves to hold axes or billhooks. Consider using loppers when breaking into a hedge.	1	1	1
5	Chainsaw operation, Pole Saw Operation (battery or petrol), Single handed chainsaws. Battery Powered Secateurs.	Death, impact injury, laceration cuts, eye injury, hearing loss, cuts, lacerations to hands. Numb hands from chainsaw vibration (White finger – Carpal tunnel)	✓	✓		5	5	25	Full chainsaw PPE. Operator to hold relevant chainsaw certificate. Hearing protection for trainees. Limit the time on chainsaw use. Hand Arm Vibration (HAV) Testing of Machinery. Safe working distance maintained. Use loppers, Long handled extending loppers / pruning saws , powered pruner (Chainsaw on a stick) to avoid reaching with a chainsaw. Goggles / Safety Glasses No Top Handled Chainsaws to be used. No Single handed chainsaw to be used. No powered secateurs to be used.	2	5	10
6	Felling hedgerow material.	Impact injury.	✓	✓	✓	4	3	12	Good observations maintained. Training / experience. Safe working distance maintained. Public to be a minimum of 2 shrub / hedgerow plant lengths away, marked by hazard- tape.	1	3	3
7	Hitting people when moving long hedge row material/ binders and other.	Eye lacerations / injury.	✓	✓	✓	4	2	8	Self-awareness. Training / experience. Safe working / observation distance maintained. Public to be a minimum of 2 binder-lengths away, marked by hazard-tape.	1	2	2
8	Lifting heavy items	Back-strain or slipped disk.	✓	✓	✓	5	4	20	Training / experience, communication. Teamwork.	1	4	4
9	Uneven ground, brambles, tools on the ground, wet slippery ground conditions,	Twisted ankle, sprained wrist, broken thumb, blinded by puncture wound to the eye.	✓	✓	✓	4	3	12	Good observations maintained. Remove trip hazards. Keep the site tidy. Wear boots with good grips. No walking about with hands in pockets.	2	3	6

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10	Overhead power lines, if present.	Electrocution / death.	✓	✓	✓	4	5	20	Get power lines turned off before laying commences or do not lay the hedge if power lines within 2 tree lengths of the standing hedge.	1	5	5
11	Pricked by blackthorn.	Infected puncture wounds, potentially fatal.	✓	✓		5	5	25	Wear thick gloves when handling Blackthorn.	2	5	10
12	Sawdust, lichen dust.	Eye contamination / irritation.	✓	✓	✓	3	4	12	Wear safety goggles when close to wood being cut. Eyewash in first aid kit.	1	5	5
13	Pulling hedgerow stems & branches apart.	Twigs / thorns flicking into face, scratching eyes / face. Puncture wounds to eyes.	✓	✓		4	4	16	Wear safety-goggles / chainsaw helmet when close to twigs / thorns. Maintain safe working distance.	1	4	4
14	Beadle / mell / maul / sledge / lump hammer.	Bruised hands / fingers/ legs	✓			3	2	6	Correct grip. Training / experience. Check handle is sound & no splits. Head is not loose.	1	2	2
15	Stabbing feet with a fork, or iron bar.	Puncture wounds to feet.	✓			3	2	6	Strong stout boots, preferably with steel toecaps	1	2	2
16	Wet ground /ditch/ banks, slipping, falling.	Sprained ankle, back strain, wrist strain, broken thumb.	✓	✓	✓	4	3	12	Tread carefully, keep a tidy work site. Appropriate footwear with good grips. Do not hold training events on banks in wet windy weather. Good grips on stout footwear. Chain brake engaged on chainsaws when moving about.	2	2	4
17	Traffic on road.	Impact injuries, death	✓	✓	✓	5	5	25	Warning signs, good observations, traffic lights. Banks person. Wearing of high-vis jackets.	2	5	10
18	Petrol explosion / flash fire from attempting to refuel a hot chainsaw.	Face scald burns. Environment contamination from Petrol / oil Loss of reputation.	✓			3	4	12	Caution filling hot chainsaw. Let chainsaw cool down. Use funnel or specialist fuel can nozzle to reduce spillage. Start saw away from the refuelling site. Use of Plant Nappy, Self-sealing fuel can filler spouts. Use of funnel. Use of Bio Oil when near watercourses.	2	4	8
19	Horses & riders.	Broken bones / concussion to horse rider. Impact wounds, broken bones to observers.	✓	✓	✓	4	4	16	Good observations maintained. Self-awareness. Communication. Stand still. No sudden movements if horses are approaching / passing. Turn off chain saws. Do not start / operate chainsaws if horses are approaching / passing.	2	4	8
20	Wasp nests. Bee Hives.	Sting irritation, allergic reaction, anaphylactic shock.	✓	✓	✓	4	3	12	Mark nest with a stick / hazard-tape. Do not lay the cant affected until made safe. Anaphylactic shock, administer EpiPen if available. Call Ambulance – 999. Do not try to take to hospital, safer result for ambulance to attend.	2	3	6
21	Kneeling down, thorn / needle puncture wounds to hands & knees.	Puncture wounds to hands / knees. Wound contamination. HIV infection, Contamination from dog, sheep, cattle faeces.	✓			3	3	9	Use of knee pads & wearing of gloves when kneeling & getting up. Alternatively, no kneeling & all the cutting done from a standing position.	1	3	3

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22	Use of Pruning Saw (Silky Saw).	Skin cuts / lacerations. Cut Tendons.	✓			3	3	9	Spare hand kept away from the cutting blade. Wear a glove on spare hand to help prevent cuts to the back of fingers / hand.	1	1	1
23	Removing post & rail fences that have been nailed. Nails protruding from wooden planks.	Puncture wounds to feet. Infected wounds.	✓			4	3	12	Good observations maintained. Self-awareness. Steel toecap boots. Steel plate mid-sole in boots. Flatten protruding nails.	2	3	6
24	Wearing shorts.	Skin scratches, lacerations. Tick bites – Lyme's disease	✓	✓	✓	5	2	10	Wearing of long trousers. Immediate medical treatment for Tick bites.	1	2	2
25	Untrained, arrogant, ignorant, overconfident, incompetent people. People abusing their position of power / authority.	Physiological abuse. Physical abuse. Damage to personal reputation. Damage to the business's organisation's reputation.	✓	✓	✓	4	4	16	Adherence to rules, boundaries, limitations. Adherence to Code of Good Working Practice. Good communication. De-escalation Training. Time out. Recording of incidents. Compliments, Complaints & Feedback Policies. Taking disciplinary action.	1	4	4
26	Aggressive, nervous, protective dogs. Protective dog owners.	Dog bites / puncture wounds, fear. Infection from dog-bites.	✓	✓	✓	3	3	9	Do not invade the dog's space e.g., a car / the back of a truck. Issue the instruction to the dog to "SIT!" & "STAY" Good observations maintained. Self-awareness. Request all dogs to be kept on leads. Extreme caution when interacting with "travelling community" regarding "stray" – "Hunting dogs" & Lurchers.	2	3	6
27	Young people, novice / trainees. Inexperienced people. Tiredness, lack of concentration, Distraction from Mobile phone.	Getting injured, impact injuries / lacerations to skin.	✓	✓	✓	4	5	20	Supervisor. Training. Regular breaks. Mobile phone use kept to professional use in work-time.	1	5	5
28	Clearing brambles, nettles, long grass with a billhook / chainsaw by swiping horizontally at ground level.	Impact cuts to shins, cut legs / ankles	✓	✓		2	3	6	Safe working distance, 3m from other people. Good observations maintained. Self-awareness. Cut away from operator's legs. Do not wear gloves when holding swinging tools. Use a long-handled tool e.g., Slasher.	1	3	3
29	Alcohol consumption.	Increased risk of poor judgment / slow reactions / co-ordination. Increased risk of aggression.	✓	✓	✓	4	5	20	Maintain an alcohol-free site.	1	5	5
30	'Sharps' e.g., needles & syringes.	Infected puncture wounds, HIV infection.	✓			2	5	10	Mark the location of the sharps. Inform the site foreperson. Pick up the sharps with a litter picker and needle-proof gloves and store in a designated sharps container. Dispose of in an appropriate secure container / place. Bio Hazard Kit available.	1	5	5

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31	Adverse Weather – Strong wind.	Falling branches, stems, Impact injuries/ Newly cut pleachers / hedge being damaged Damage to Marque / portable toilets.	✓	✓	✓	3	5	15	Stop/postpone event if extreme wind, 40 MPH + Change direction of "Lay" so the stems are laid with the wind. Instruct the cutters to place the brush so they are throwing it with the wind & not into the wind. Park cars facing the wind. (so car doors are not ripped open by the wind)	2	4	8
32	Adverse Weather – Hot weather.	Heat Stress / Exhaustion, fatigue, leading to poor judgement, causing further accidents with sharp hand tool & Chainsaws.	✓			3	5	15	Postpone the event to a time when the weather is cooler. Start early in the morning when it is Cooler. Insert a 30 min (or longer) rest break half way through the competition / event. Stewards to issue re hydration drinks. Extend the time available to the competitors / trainees.	2	5	10
33	Disinfectant	Skin, face, eye irritation. Poisoning, death. Environmental pollution	✓	✓	✓	3	5	15	Disinfection procedure supervised by competent, trained person. Spent disinfectant disposed of as per manufacturers recommendations.	1	5	5
34	Bio Security wheel wash & foot dip.	Disease transmission from farm to farm by vehicles, footwear, clothing. Environmental pollution	✓	✓	✓	3	3	9	Disinfection procedure supervised by competent, trained person. Spent disinfectant disposed of as per manufacturers recommendations.	1	3	3
35	Cold, wet weather, trainees stood around getting wet & inactive.	Hypothermia	✓			3	5	15	Warm, waterproof, windproof clothing. Hot drinks, Food, High energy bars, Physical exercises to warm up. Change out of wet clothes, use heat packs, move to a warm place if signs of numbness, confusion, instability.	1	5	5
36	Working from height – on banks, - Also when using "hop ups" or ladders.	Impact injuries, fractured / broken bones. Death.	✓			5	5	25	"Hop ups" & ladders inspected & records kept, used by trained personnel. Damaged equipment labelled & removed from use. No free climbing of trees. No use of chainsaws from ladders. Do not hold training events on banks in wet windy weather. Good grips on stout footwear. Chain brake engaged on chainsaws when moving about.	2	5	10
37	Working roadside. Low winter sun blinding car drivers / obscuring vision.	Impact injuries, death.	✓	✓	✓	5	5	25	Warning signs, Red lights, Hazard lights, good observations, traffic lights. Banks person. Wearing of high-vis jackets.	2	5	10

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38	Vermin Traps	Impact injuries to fingers, limbs. Fractured bones. Zoonotic disease, Leptospirosis. (Weils disease)	✓	✓	✓	3	4	12	Identify their location. Issue instruction not to interfere, touch or poke the Vermin Trap.. Ensure any hedge material laid over the Vermin trap blocking its access is cut away & cleared so it does not interfere with the Game Keepers access to the trap. if you must handle a trap. Wear gloves. Set the trap off with a stout stick to make it safe. Put the trap somewhere safe. Wash your hands. Inform the Gamekeeper.	1	4	4
39	Vermin Traps	Poisoning from baited rat / mice traps.	✓			3	5	15	Do not touch unless authorised. Only use gloved hand. Wash hands before eating, drinking & smoking.	1	5	5
40	Male livestock, Bull, male cattle. Ram, male sheep. Boars – Male pigs.	Broken limbs, being rammed, trampled, gored.	✓	✓	✓	3	5	15	Signage, no entry / no access to livestock area. No lone working. Training, supervision.	2	5	10
41	Freshly calved cows with calves at foot. Freshly farrowed sows.	Being trampled. Broken bones, Death. Being bitten.	✓	✓	✓	3	5	15	No lone working with or near freshly calved cows or freshly farrowed sows.	2	5	10
42	Hedgelaying near the bird nesting season. Birds' nest inspections.	Eye injury, skin cuts, puncture wounds when removing old guards. Environment contamination. Loss of reputation.	✓	✓		1	2	2	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Monitor hedgelaying sites when near / in the bird nesting season. Record dates, times, locations, If active nests found stop hedgelaying activity. Wear hand / arm protection, eye protection when looking for nests.	1	1	1
43	Plastic tree guards, plastic string. Cable ties	Eye injury, skin cuts, puncture wounds when removing old guards. Environment contamination. Loss of reputation.	✓			1	2	2	Wear gloves, eye protection when removing old guards. Remove tree guards, plastic string, cable ties & collect, bag, recycle. Good Housekeeping.	1	1	1
44	Powered (Battery or Petrol) Hedge cutters.	Skin laceration cuts, finger removal. Death. Eye injury from flying debris, Hearing loss.	✓	✓		4	5	20	Wears Chainsaw PPE, Helmet / Gloves Safe Working Distance.	2	5	10

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Adequacy of Control Measures

In principle, the decision as to whether sufficient control measures are in place depends on balancing the risk against the difficulty/cost of implementing them. This balance must also consider the objective of the activity.

The matrix above must not be used in isolation but as part of the judgement as to whether the control measures identified are sufficient in all the circumstances.

Two criteria are used. The first is 'Likelihood' (which must not be confused with the frequency with which an activity takes place) and is a judgement on how likely the hazard is to be experienced. The second is 'Severity' and must be based on the most likely outcome not the worst-case scenario. The Risk Rating is achieved by multiplying the Likelihood score by the Severity score. The Risk Rating = Severity x Likelihood.

E.g., Risk no. 1 (Using a slasher) has a Risk Rating of 8 before control measures. This Risk Rating of 8 is calculated by multiplying the Likelihood score of 4 by the Severity score of 2.

Risk Matrix

			Likelihood				
			Very Likely	Likely	Moderate	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
			5	4	3	2	1
Severity	Fatal	5	25	20	15	10	5
	Major	4	20	16	12	8	4
	Serious	3	15	12	9	6	3
	Minor	2	10	8	6	4	2
	Negligible	1	5	4	3	2	1

Severity x Likelihood = Risk Rating

Measure of Likelihood

Score	Description	Guidance
5	Very Likely	The event will occur in most circumstances
4	Likely	The event could occur in most circumstances
3	Moderate	The event will occur at some time
2	Unlikely	The event could occur at some time
1	Very Unlikely	The event may occur only in exceptional circumstances

Measure of Severity

Score	Description	Guidance
5	Fatal	Single or multiple death(s)
4	Major	Permanent/life changing injury. High environmental impact. Major damage / financial loss / business interruption / loss of reputation
3	Serious	Medical treatment. Over 3 days lost time. Moderate damage (inc environment) / business interruption / loss of reputation
2	Minor	First aid treatment. Unable to continue activity for up to 3 days. Minimal damage
1	Negligible	Minimal first aid treatment. Minimal work interruption