

Maintenance Equipment Policy by volunteers operating a Strimmer

1. Purpose

The following policy has been agreed by the Penfield Management Committee (PMC).

Grass cutting, weed control and maintenance of trees and other vegetation is carried out in accordance with policies and maintenance programmes determined by the PMC. When the grass cutting machinery does not adequately deal with vegetation, volunteers are permitted, within the terms of this policy, to carry out strimming.

Pre-Task

The areas to be strimmed must be agreed in advance with the PMC.

The period of the year during which strimming work can take place will be agreed in advance with the PMC. All lake must receive prior adequate warning that work will be taking place and be notified of any temporary closure, should this be necessary.

If strimming is carried out under Parish Council or PMC supervision, then the Parish Council or PMC is responsible for carrying out a risk assessment for the activity.

If strimming is being carried out by a licence holder, it is the responsibility of the licence holder to carry out a risk assessment and to ensure their insurance policy covers this activity and to confirm this in writing to the Parish Clerk prior to work being carried out.

A pre-work Risk Assessment of the site must be carried out to:

- a. Assess the type of vegetation that needs strimming to select the correct cutters.
- b. Look for obvious slip and trip issues and for hidden hazards.
- c. To plot out individual work areas. The work should be planned so that all other persons, volunteers or other visitors to the lake, should remain at least 50 feet (15 metres) from the operator, in order to minimise the risk from flying stones/twigs etc;
- d. To select a suitable refuelling site at a safe distance from where strimmers are started and operated, and away from the water to avoid contamination of the lake.

The Risk Assessment must be carried out prior to the work and recorded.

3. Selection of volunteers

Volunteers must be aged over 18 and under 75. Any volunteers outside this age bracket can only be considered if confirmation of insurance coverage specifically for these individuals is provided.

This task can only be performed by volunteers whom the Parish Council, PMC or licence holders have nominated as experienced and competent users of their own petrol driven strimmer. A list of such nominees must be supplied to the Parish Clerk and updated, as necessary.

A volunteer should never work alone at the lake. A banksman must always be present. The role of the banksman is to supervise the task and ensure the safety of both the strimmer operator(s) and any

members of the public present at the lake. The banksman must be in possession of a working mobile phone.

4. Personal Protective Equipment

The strimmer operator MUST wear

- a. Eye protection, either goggles, or a full-face shield. Spectacles are NOT sufficient protection.
- b. Solid boots, preferably steel toe capped.
- c. Trousers or overalls, preferably thick. Shorts are not permitted.
- d. A high visibility vest or jacket.

It is recommended that the strimmer operator wear:

- a. Ear protection, preferably full ear “muffs”.
- b. Gloves for grip.
- c. Full harness or shoulder strap, to avoid muscle strain.

Strimmer's

Strimmer's fitted with nylon cord or plastic blades may be used to tackle grass and weeds in accordance with the manufacturer specifications for each machine.

Under no circumstances should any strimmer be fitted with:

- a. non-standard cutters or cutters that do not conform with manufacturer specifications;
- b. solid metal blades. If the vegetation is too tough for a strimmer with a nylon cord or plastic blade then please refer to LMC for a solution as a contractor may be needed to undertake brush cutting with a solid metal blade.
- c. **metal chain links or similar flail types. Strimmer's or brush cutters with cutters made of metal chain links or flails must not be used by any volunteer or contractor as these are now banned for sale following various accidents, including fatalities.**

Volunteers must be experienced in the type of strimmer being used. If unsure of any aspect of use, refer to the Operator Manual before checking and using the strimmer.

Volunteers must carry out a full safety check on the strimmer prior to use and during work at convenient intervals. If faulty or damaged, the machine should be fully repaired or not used.

Safety checks should be in accordance with manufacturer instructions and should include:

- a. Cleaning the outside of the machine.
- b. Making sure the harness is not damaged.
- c. Cleaning the air filter and replacing if necessary.
- d. Checking that:
 1. the throttle trigger lock and the throttle function correctly and safely
 2. the stop switch functions correctly.
 3. the cutting head does not rotate when idle.

4. the guard is undamaged and not cracked and replacing the guard if it has been exposed to impact or is cracked.
5. all nuts and screws are in place and tightened.
6. the trimmer head guard is undamaged and not cracked and replacing the trimmer head guard if necessary.

6. Volunteers on the day

In addition to safety checks on the trimmer and donning PPE, the trimmer operator **MUST**:

- a. Not enter the water voluntarily under any circumstances
- b. Undertake their own visual Risk Assessment of their designated work area. Move or clearly mark slip or trip hazards and clear away any stones and twigs prior to undertaking work. If the designated work area is slippery, or too hazardous to access or work in for any other reason, the volunteer should not proceed.
- c. Work within their own restricted work area in which other volunteers or public are not allowed.
- d. Work in such a way that, as far as possible, any possible risk to themselves or others is minimised.
- e. Keep alert to possible dangers (i.e., look up regularly!).
- f. Avoid stepping back whilst trimming, always work sideways or forwards. Always be aware of the edge of the lake;
- g. Refuel only at the designated filling point and ensure that the petrol can is resealed after use. Machines must be switched off and left to cool before refuelling.
- h. Stop work immediately if the banksman or other volunteer issues a warning and/or if volunteers or public enter the “restricted” area. Only recommence trimming when any danger is passed.
- i. Take regular rest breaks to avoid the effects of vibration and fatigue.
- j. Follow any social distancing and hygiene requirements in force at the time.
- k. If a fire breaks out, do not try to tackle it themselves but retreat a safe distance and call 999.