

# Toolbox Talk

## Organising a Work Party



### Steps to preparing your work party:

#### Step 1: Decide what you want to do and where you want to do it;

Tasks could include lock painting, vegetation clearance, path laying and much more. Let IWA Head Office know about your plans and keep them updated with any progress.

#### Step 2: Contact the navigation authority;

You will need to contact the relevant navigation authority with details of your proposed work party to gain the right permissions and learn of any restrictions or requirements. Also ask if the navigation authority can help at all, for example Canal & River Trust often supports volunteer work parties by supplying risk assessments and equipment.

If you need access through or want to work on any land not owned by the navigation authority seek permission from the landowner.

#### Step 3: Choose a date and make a plan;

Once you have the relevant permissions in place set a date and make a plan. The plan should include planned tasks, equipment needed, access arrangements and welfare arrangements. Do not forget to consider how you will publicise your event, possibly through local papers or on social media. Know what you need to organise, what you can delegate to others and what the navigation authority will do. Keep track of completed and outstanding tasks.

#### Step 4: Create a risk assessment and method statement for the work party;

These documents should be in place so that the event can be run safely and IWA's insurers would expect a risk assessment to be in place.

##### Writing a risk assessment:

- Identify the hazards.
- Decide who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions.
- Record your findings and implement them.
- Review your assessment and update if necessary.

##### Here are five hazards common to many work parties:

- Working on or near water.
- Working on un-even surfaces.
- Open wounds.
- Weather conditions.
- Hazards to the environment.

Remember to list who may be at risk from each hazard.

A risk rating should be calculated for each risk so that you can decide whether a hazard is low, medium or high risk. Next, decide and record what precautions will be taken to lower each risk. More information on risk ratings and assessments in general is available on the IWA website.

#### Step 5: On the day;

Once everyone has arrived and before starting any work have a welcome talk that thanks everyone for coming and goes over the plan for the day. Include any "rules" (for example, no lone working) and emergency procedures. Make sure everyone signs in, provides emergency contact details and has any necessary Personal Protective Equipment before starting work.

Throughout the day, make sure everyone is working safely (refer to your method statement) and enjoying themselves.

If an incident or near miss occurs during the work party, follow the procedures outlined in the method statement, notify IWA Head Office as soon as possible and complete an accident/incident report form, also to be sent to Head Office.

At the end of the day, make sure the site is left safe and tidy. Thank everyone for their hard work and start thinking about writing a report to publicise the volunteers' great work!