

Risk Assessment – How we manage and reduce risk on walks.

Use this risk assessment as a starting point to think about your specific walk. Make a note of any additional hazards. Review and share your plan with walkers on the day and make changes if you need to.

Date of plan	About the walk / Group	
1 June 2024 Onwards	Leisurely and Moderate Walks – Oxon Weekend Walkers	
What are the risks or hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we manage the risks.
Lack of confidence and/or skill.	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed. Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks.	• All new walk leaders complete introductory training and make the most of opportunities to develop their skills. • Peer support available from more experienced leaders. • Leaders only lead within their capabilities.
Too many people walking in the group.	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed. Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks.	• Leaders refer to recommended ratios and manage group size depending on the specific circumstances Identify additional helpers (e.g. walk assistant, co-leader or backmarker) for large groups. • Advertise any limits on group size (and booking information, if needed) in advance.
Walkers act recklessly.	Walkers put themselves and others at risk. Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed.	• Share information with walkers in advance to establish clear expectations and responsibilities. • Give a walk briefing before setting off, to share your plan and expectations. • Communicate with walkers throughout the walk.

What are the risks or hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we manage the risks.
Weather.	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, or wet	• Check the weather before the walk. • Let people know what to wear and what to bring. • Make contingency plans. • Set an appropriate pace and take breaks as needed. • Stay alert to changing conditions and adjust plans accordingly
Getting lost.	Walkers get lost. Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat or wet. Walkers run low on food/drink supplies.	• Where possible, recce the route a week or so in advance – or carefully plan with good local knowledge, guidebooks and/or maps. • Leaders are familiar with the route and contingency plans in case changes are needed. • Ensure appropriate navigation skills and aids in the group for the walk and possible conditions. • Know the hours of dusk and darkness, and plan accordingly.
Terrain.	Walkers trip or fall, resulting in injury.	• Check for muddy/slippy/steep sections when planning. • Advise walkers of terrain and suitable footwear in advance. • Make contingency plans, to draw on if needed in response to the group & conditions. • Zigzag up/down any steep sections – highlight benefits of walking poles. • Take adequate breaks. • Adjust plans on the walk if needed.
Unsafe/unstable geographic features or obstacles (e.g., water, rock fall, overhangs, and fallen trees).	Walkers trip or fall, resulting in injury.	• Follow any local warnings or signs and advise walkers to keep away from sheer drops/edges. • Check paths are suitable for a group to use safely and make changes if necessary. • Make contingency plans to deal with unexpected features and obstacles. • Avoid crossing any significant water features – use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.

What are the risks or hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we manage the risks.
Livestock.	Walkers are at risk of injury from livestock. Property is damaged. The wider public are at risk of injury from escaped livestock.	• Cross fields with livestock calmly and quietly, keeping the group together and any dogs on a short lead (releasing the dog if charged by cows). • Follow the Countryside Code. • Leave gates and property as you find them.
Roads (walking)	Walkers are at risk of road traffic accident. Other road users are at risk of accident.	• Maintain single file on any road sections without footpath/pavement. • Plan route to avoid busy roads where possible. • Check for suitable crossing places
Losing walkers.	Walkers could get left behind/lost	• Leader knows who is on the walk – asking for names and emergency contact details. • Regular headcounts and communication with the group. • Appoint a backmarker. • Communicate with group throughout the walk.
Accident or medical emergency.	Walkers require first aid or medical attention	• Ask walkers to complete and carry an In Case of Emergency (ICE) card. • Know how to contact the emergency services. • Ensure mobile phone is fully charged. • Carry a first aid kit to deal with minor injuries.
Dogs on walks.	Walkers may trip over dogs or leads.	• The walk leader can decide whether dogs are allowed on their walk. The walk description should indicate where dogs are not allowed (except for Registered Assistance dogs). • Where dogs are allowed the walk leader may request that dogs are kept on short leads.
Crossing golf courses.	Injury from golf balls.	• Advise walkers to pause and look for golfers when leaving wooded areas. • The leader should ensure that golfers are aware of the presence of the walking group as it traverses the golf course.