



Meopham & District Footpaths Group

Risk Assessment for Group Walks and measures to be taken to help remove potential risks.

Introduction: Walking, as undertaken by M&DFG is a low risk activity. Consideration has, nevertheless, been given to the potential risks and action taken to remove or reduce these perceived risks. The approach has been to prevent accidents or injury and to provide assurance, without impacting upon the enjoyment and significant benefits emanating from the Group's activities.

A copy of this assessment has been provided and will be provided in future to leaders.

Risks identified are shown below in italics.

There may be an expectation that the Group is entirely responsible for the walkers.

Action taken – the Group states in writing that participants on a walk do so at their own risk. This statement is on the published walks programme and on the signing-on sheet for every walk. Responsibility for ensuring reasonable attention to the health and safety of walkers with the Group rests with the Walks Leaders, the Walks Secretary and all members of M&DFG Committee.

Walker does not know where they are to walk or how long the walk is and could join an unsuitable walk.

Action taken – Details of the route to be taken are described in the walks programme, together with the approximate length, and details on how to contact the walks leader for further information.

The walks may contain hazards unknown to the walk leader.

Action – no walks to be undertaken where hazardous situations are known which would contradict the health and safety of walkers. Whilst not compulsory the leader will be expected to have covered the walk beforehand.

Weather conditions may be very poor or may change during the course of the walk.

Action – the leader will use his/her personal knowledge and experience to judge whether the walk should go ahead. If necessary he may revise the walk if conditions require such action.

Slips and falls.

Action - Such risks can result from unsuitable equipment. Those joining the walk will be required to wear suitable footwear and clothing commensurate with the weather conditions. The leader will slow the walk if necessary to allow a more careful attention to footing if conditions so dictate.

Health condition of walkers

Action - Whilst there will be no requirement of a health condition statement anyone who is clearly unfit for the particular walk will be refused by the leader. It is advisable that members of the group carry "In Case Of Emergency" details, (ICE) Cards or keep details on unlocked mobile phones.

Road Walking

Action – 1. When planning a walk, the leader should endeavour to keep road walking to a minimum.
2. The leader should choose what he/she considers the safest place to cross, avoiding blind bends whenever possible.
3. On reaching a road after following a footpath, the leader should wait until the whole party has caught up so that the back marker can assist in managing the safety issues on the road.
4. When walking on a road where there is no pavement walkers should be advised to walk in single file on the right-hand side of the road. Where there is a sharp right-hand bend coming up cross well before so that oncoming traffic has a better chance of seeing you.
5. For road walking where there is no pavement, leaders and backmarkers are advised to wear High Visibility gilets.
6. N.B. walkers must accept responsibility for their own safety and be alert and cooperative with the leader and back marker.

The leader walks too fast and walkers cannot keep up.

Action - The leader will endeavour to walk at a pace which ensures the group as a whole does not string out, checking regularly that the back marker is in sight.

How will the leader and back-marker be identified to give assurance to the walkers

Action - The leaders are identified in the walks programme but in any event the leader will introduce himself/herself at the start of the walk; provide brief information on the route and introduce the back-marker. If the Group is particularly large there be provision for a additional mid-marker/s. The walks programme states, 'For your own safety, please stay behind the walk leader and in front of the back marker' This statement will be reinforced on the walk if it becomes necessary.

Dogs on a walk may trip or inconvenience walkers or cause problems regarding farm animals.

Action - Dogs are welcome unless otherwise specified in the programme, provided they are well controlled by their owners (please beware that many of our walks include stiles, some of which may not be accessible by large dogs – please check with the walk leader if unsure). They should normally be on a short lead when walking with the group: long leads are not allowed as these can cause a hazard for other walkers. Dogs may be let off the lead if the leader agrees but they reserve the right to request that they are put back on the lead if they cause any issues for the walkers. **If a dog is badly behaved on any walk, it will not be allowed to join future walks.** Please observe any signs on farm gates etc. Leads are legally required between 1 March and 31 July when walking in open country and registered common land to protect ground nesting birds. **For more guidance please view the [Dog Walking Code](#) developed by Natural England, National Farmers' Union, Ramblers, the Kennel Club and others.**

Unsafe or difficult to cross stiles, bridges or other obstruction

Action - When negotiating an awkward obstruction such as a dilapidated stile, a wide ditch or a stream without a bridge the leader should wait to give assistance or ensure suitable assistance is given to members of the group if required

Excessive vegetation may prevent access; cause inconvenience or minor injury to persons or their clothing.

Action - The leader may have already sought action by the Group, or KCC, to have such obstructions removed or have planned a suitable diversion.

Farm animals may be seen as a hazard.

Action - The leader will have regard to any potential danger and will take an alternative route if deemed in the interest of the walkers. Special care will be taken if there are cows and calves together in the field. The leader may ask members with dogs to separate from the group when walking through fields with cattle.

Despite all reasonable efforts to evaluate perceived risks that may harm people and controls being put in place, has the Group collectively or individually any safeguards.

Action - Circumstances and liability arising are impossible to predict, however, the Group has purchased insurance which provides protection within the limits of the policy cover. It relates primarily to Liability. No admission of liability must ever be given.

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