

WALKING AND BIRDWATCHING GROUPS HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR ALL MEMBERS

Date applied: 22 March 2024

1. Leaders - Our walk leaders are volunteers and as such are not trained. Their walk descriptions are sent to you by email with additional information about the walk, such as length of walk, how many stiles, varied terrain, steep climb etc. Leaders will raise any issues, that were not in the email, at the start of the walk.
2. Outdoor events - Any member or visitor taking part in any group activity does so at his or her own risk, and the group and its leader will not accept liability or responsibility for any injuries which may be received. If you decide to leave a walk before the end let the leader know. You should only tackle distances and terrain that you are confident in completing. Whilst walking, always maintain visual contact with those in front and those behind.
3. Walking on Roads - The route of most walks will be off-road. Where road walking is necessary, use pavements and safe crossing points.
4. Equipment, footwear, and clothing - Dress for the sort of weather and terrain you are likely to encounter: walking boots, thermal layers, hats and gloves, waterproofs. Birdwatching involves longer periods of standing, sometimes in exposed coastal conditions so extra layers are often called for.
5. Adverse weather - In the event of adverse weather, the leader may cancel a walk or change its location, so you are advised to read your emails before setting off. Cold and rainy weather can seriously deplete your energy. It is a good idea to carry a hot drink in a thermos, as well as snacks and water. In hot weather sun hats, sun cream and water can be packed. Insect repellent and long trousers are advised for preventing tick bites in long grass.
6. Slips, trips, and falls- Walking boots are needed for most walks. They give better grip and support the ankles, lessening the chance of sprains. Walking poles give added stability on uneven ground.
7. Injuries requiring first aid or medical attention - Walk leaders are not trained to administer first aid. All members should carry a basic first aid kit and any medication they need. It is a good idea to keep an ICE (in case of emergency) number on your person, either on your phone home page or on a card in your bag.
8. Dogs and cattle - Treat untethered bulls and loose dogs with caution. Do not walk between a cow and her calf. Livestock following too closely can be deterred by turning to face them with both arms raised.

Remember: A walk is like a group of friends going out together. The leader has planned the route but each person is responsible for his or her own safety at all times. If you join in, you take the risk upon yourself.

Applicable Country Code

- ❖ Those at the front must inform those at the back whether a gate is to be left open or closed.
- ❖ Leave no litter – this includes fruit peel, tea bags etc.
- ❖ Feed no animals or birds

- ❖ Close all gates that you and the group found closed
- ❖ Keep to the footpath where there is one
- ❖ Respect property – use stiles do not climb fences, walls, gates