

Risk Assessment – How we manage and reduce risk on walks

Date of plan	About the walk / Group	
1 April 2024	Leisurely and Moderate Walks – Bicester & Kidlington Ramblers Group	
What are the risks and hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we reduce these risks
Inadequate experience/training	Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks.	• All new walk leaders complete introductory training • Walk Leaders' Handbook detailing advice and best practice. • Walk Leaders' checklist. • Training modules available. • Peer-to-peer support available from more experienced leaders. • Leaders only lead within their capabilities.
Large number of people walking in the group	Group may become split and walkers may go missing.	• The leader appoints a trusted additional helper(s) [as back marker / middle marker / co-leader] in order to manage the group safely. • Booking in advance can be used if leaders wish to limit the maximum number of walkers.
Weather	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, wet	Before the walk: • check the weather forecast and consider cancelling if temperatures are forecast greater than 30 degrees Centigrade, or if there are weather warnings for thunder/lightening/ heavy rain/wind/snow. • provide advice on Oxfordshire Ramblers website on suitable clothing and items for the conditions. At the start of the walk: • in hot weather confirm that walkers are confident that they have sufficient fluid for the walk. • advise walkers of the expected conditions and confirm that they are confident that they have adequate kit (boots, anorak etc) for the conditions. During the walk: • take adequate breaks during the walk. • be flexible and respond to changing conditions accordingly eg by shortening the walk.

What are the risks and hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we reduce these risks
Getting lost / Going missing	Walkers get lost / go missing.	- Where possible walks are reced a week or so in advance, or else carefully planned with good local knowledge, guidebooks and/or maps. - The leader counts the number of walkers at the start of the walk. At every junction, and after each break, the leader (or backmarker) checks that all of the group are present before continuing. - The leader has appropriate navigational aids for the walk. These may include: - an Ordnance Survey map; - mapping on a mobile phone + gps locator; - compass; - OS Locator App - to give grid reference for current location.
Physical conditions	Walkers slip, trip and/or fall, resulting in injury.	Before the walk: - adapt the route if necessary to take account of physical conditions; - ensure the walk description describes more challenging physical conditions eg hills, stiles. At the start of the walk: - warn walkers of any known hazards eg busy roads, slippery wooden stiles and bridges, barbed wire, electric fences..... During the walk: - Carry out a dynamic risk assessment throughout the walk, pointing out hazards to walkers. - Zig-zag up/down any steep slopes, where possible. - Take adequate breaks throughout the day.
Unsafe/unstable geographic features or obstacles (e.g. water, rock fall, overhangs, fallen trees)	Walkers slip, trip and/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. - The leader will have sufficient skills to re-route and navigate around unexpected features. - Avoid crossing any significant water features. - Walks should use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.
Livestock	Walkers are at risk of injury from 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.

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Roads (walking)	Walkers are at risk of road traffic accident. Other road users are at risk of accident.	- Choose a route to minimise walking along busy roads without pavements/footpaths. - When walking along road sections without footpath/pavement maintain single file. - Advise other walkers (by shouting) when a vehicle is approaching. - The leader identifies the safest place to cross busy roads. Leader asks the walkers to take responsibility for their own safe crossing of the roads
Injury/medical episode	May need to contact emergency services	- Leader has a First Aid kit to deal with minor injuries. - Leader provides In Case of Emergency (ICE) cards to walkers to keep in their rucksacks (some walkers will have this information stored in their mobile phones). - The group should have the means of contacting the emergency services: - mobile phone (ensure adequately charged before the start of the walk). - What3Words / OS Locator Apps can be used to give accurate location - In places of poor (or no) mobile signal: - use emergency text (mobile needs to be pre-registered) - send a pair of walkers to seek assistance; - use whistle - 6 blasts / wait for 1 minutes/ 6 blasts....repeat
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.