

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR ALL MEMBERS

1. Leaders

Our walk leaders are volunteers and as such are not trained. Their walk descriptions are published in the club programme with additional information about the walk such as: how many stiles, varied terrain, steep climb or not walked over etc. Leaders will raise any issues that were not in the programme at the start of the walk.

2. Club Rambles

When rambling, the whole party shall follow the guidance of and accept the instructions of the ramble leader and shall observe the Countryside Code (**Club rule #11**). Any member or visitor taking part in any club activity does so at his or her own risk, and the Club and its leaders will not accept liability or responsibility for any injuries which may be received (**Club rule #12**). Should a rambler decide to leave a walk before the end they should inform the leader.

It is recommended that no fewer than 3 people should be on any walk. You should only tackle distances and terrain that you are confident in completing. If you are inadequately equipped for the walk the leader can refuse to take you. Gates that need to be opened by the group must be closed when the group has passed through. Whilst walking, always maintain visual contact with those in front and those behind. Avoid falling behind the backmarker. However, if you need to drop back temporarily, ensure that the backmarker knows. Do not walk more than a few metres in front of the leader. Apart from being inconsiderate, there may be a change in direction or even a hidden danger.

3. Walking on Roads

The route of all rambles should be off-road where reasonably practicable. Where road walking is necessary, use pavements and safe crossing points. Where there is no pavement walk in single file on the right, facing oncoming traffic. Cross to the other side before sharp right-hand bends when instructed by the walk leader to do so.

4. Equipment, footwear and clothing

Dress for the sort of weather and terrain you are likely to encounter. It is advisable to carry waterproofs due to the changeability of British weather. Jeans are not considered to be suitable for rambling.

5. High Level Walking

Be prepared for more challenging weather, especially in winter. Ensure you have warm and waterproof clothing. It is a good idea to carry high energy rations such as mint cake, chocolate or dried fruit. The walk description should advise if scrambling, rock climbing or a head for heights is required. Shelter from the elements may be necessary particularly during rest breaks and lunch stops.

6. Cold, Adverse or Extreme Weather

Heavy rain, snow and wind chill can seriously deplete a walker's energy leading to exposure and/or hypothermia. All walkers should ensure they have enough warm clothing, food and plenty of water. It is a good idea to carry a hot drink in a thermos flask. Walkers should be able to recognise the signs of hypothermia and how to respond. Consider using pubs, cafes and tea rooms where available for rest breaks or lunch stops. In the event of adverse weather there are additional risks, such as falling trees in high winds. The leader may cancel a walk or modify its route, so walkers are advised to contact the leader before setting off.

7. Warm Weather

Sun hats, sun cream and water will prevent sunburn, windburn and dehydration. More water will be required if walking strenuously and/or in hot weather. Some people find Insect repellent and hay fever relief products useful in hot weather. Sheltered areas are advisable for rest breaks and lunch stops.

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8. Environment

Be aware of your surroundings – the club offers a variety of walking opportunities, lowland, hill walking, moorland, woods and forest. They can all offer different challenges. Walking at height or in misty/foggy conditions can be disorientating. Obstacles such as poorly maintained stiles and fences can become a hazard and wooden bridges and stiles can become slippery when wet.

9. Slips, trips and falls

Walking boots are considered appropriate for most walks and offer better traction in muddy/slippery conditions. Boots also support the ankles, lessening the chance and severity of sprains. Many walkers find walking poles provide added confidence and stability on slippery or uneven ground. If doing so, ensure that if they are not being used they are carried with the points downwards and facing forwards, as they can be a danger to anyone following you, particularly on stiles. Carry a basic first aid kit – do not rely on someone else in your party to have one! (Carry a torch if there is any risk that the walk will be delayed into the dark.)

10. Injuries requiring first aid

Walk leaders are not trained to administer first aid; therefore all ramblers should carry a basic first aid kit and include additional items such as blister kits, insect bite relief cream and mild pain killers (for personal use) such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Members with medical conditions managed by medication should carry relevant medication with them on walks.

11. Dogs and cattle

Leaders may stipulate 'no dogs' in their walk details. Where this is not stipulated members wishing to bring a dog to a club event should check with the walk leader at least a day before the event takes place. Dogs must be kept on a short lead and under control at all times. Treat untethered bulls and loose dogs with caution. Back away slowly and report the incident to the police if the situation is considered unlawful as well as dangerous. Do not walk between a cow and her calf. Dogs should be let off leads should cattle become threatening. Livestock following too closely can be deterred by turning to face them with both arms raised. Ensure instructions are passed to the rear of the group to shut any gate that the group have opened.

12. Emergency Contact Details

It is recommended that walkers should carry easily accessible details of an emergency contact. This could for example be on their phone lockscreen or written on a card kept in a purse.

13. Safeguarding

The club is committed to providing a safe and trusted environment for members to take part in club activities. As such, the club aims to promote a fair and positive culture and ensure all involved feel able to report any concerns or allegations, confident that they will be heard and responded to. Any member who has a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to the Chair, or if the member does not feel comfortable reporting to the Chair they should report to any other appropriate committee member. Confidentiality will be maintained while appropriate action is decided upon.

Remember: A ramble is like a group of friends going out together. The leader has planned the route. Each person is responsible for his or her own safety at all times. Sometimes there may be a risk of serious injury or death. If you join in, you take the risk upon yourself.

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Applicable Country Code

- ❖ Those at the front must inform those at the back whether a gate is to be left open or closed, and close all gates that you and the group found closed
- ❖ Leave no litter – this includes fruit peel, tea bags etc.
- ❖ Feed no animals or birds
- ❖ Keep to the footpath where there is one
- ❖ Respect property – use stiles, do not climb fences, walls, gates etc.