

Step Out at SWFC

The Wednesday Walk on Thursdays



Generic Risk Assessment

Every walk is different, but all our walks have some risks in common and some which cannot be anticipated in advance. This sheet lists all the common risks, with precautions / controls to mitigate the risk.

In addition, every walk plan has a list of specific risks and hazards which apply to that specific walk.

Walk plans with a map, description of the walk and specific risks are circulated to all walkers and leaders before the walk.

All walks have 'Walking for Health' trained and experienced walk leaders.

Generic Risks / Hazards

Hazards	Precautions
Traffic Do you need to cross or walk along a road? Are there any pavements? Is the road busy / fast / dangerous? Are there any pedestrian crossings?	Identify suitable / best crossing places and note in the plan
	Communicate clearly with the group on the day
	Use pavements or walk on the right on any road sections, as described in the highway code
	Identify cycle paths and bridleways and warn in the route plan. Watch out for cyclists and off road motorbikes.
Path surface and obstacles Are there hazards such as slippery paths, loose rocks, stiles, steps, steep drops? Any water courses or railway lines on the route?	Note hazards in the site plan. Remember paths can be muddy and slippery even in summer and can be icy in winter and spring. Wet grass can be slippery if you are wearing the wrong footwear. Warn walkers they are more likely to slip when going downhill.
	Provide assistance to walkers as needed, especially on stiles and rough ground.
	Advise walkers to bring suitable footwear for the expected conditions
	Avoid exposed water or advise walkers to keep clear of the edge. Be especially careful of trip hazards and walkers that are unsteady on their feet.

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	<p>Do not walk along railway lines or cross them except where there is a public right of way. Take great care and look and listen for trains before crossing. Beware of gaps and changes of level on level crossings.</p> <p>Do not set off unless you are sure it is safe.</p> <p>Do not walk along the middle of tram tracks and take special care when crossing roads with tram lines.</p>
<p>Animals Will you pass livestock? Is there any danger of ticks or bites/stings? Always watch out for excrement – especially dog.</p>	<p>Let walkers know to cross fields with livestock calmly and quietly, keeping the group together. If any walkers are scared of cows or horses, ensure they are with somebody competent and experienced.</p> <p>Always keep to footpaths, but go in front of large animals as they may kick out if they do not see you.</p> <p>Leave gates and property as you find them. Do not climb over gates unless there is no alternative. Report blocked footpaths to the Council.</p> <p>Advise walkers to check for ticks and remove promptly if found.</p> <p>Watch out for bees' nests, wasps and ant hills; avoid disturbing them.</p> <p>Know if any of your walkers are allergic to stings and their appropriate treatment.</p> <p>The front walker should look out for 'hazards' left by dogs, horses and cows and point them out to other walkers.</p> <p>Be careful with people with vision difficulties; they may be able to see a path but miss the dog dirt on it.</p>
<p>Communications Is there a chance you could get lost, lose touch with walkers, lose visibility or phone signal?</p>	<p>In many places, footpaths do not follow the route shown on the map or have become overgrown or impassable. Do not be afraid to turn round and head back the way you came till you find an alternative route.</p> <p>Always have a back marker and a list of phone numbers of all walkers.</p> <p>Be aware of areas without phone signals (eg Bradfield) and where possible, warn of this in the walk plan.</p> <p>If necessary, keep together as a group.</p> <p>Download any maps your GPS requires as much of the countryside no longer has 3G internet connection.</p>

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	Let somebody know your plans and the time you expect to be back.
	Check everybody has arrived safely!
Weather What is the expected weather? Is there any danger of extreme temperatures, heavy rainfall or other severe weather events?	Check the weather forecast and change the route if necessary
	Advise walkers to bring suitable clothing and items for the conditions
	Make a note of 'escape routes' (if appropriate) and shortcuts / safer routes. Be prepared for the Council closing roads and footpaths with no notice and ensure you can find a safe alternative.
	Be prepared for extreme weather events – floods can wash away paths and bridges, high winds make some paths dangerous, ice and snow can make paths impassable. Be alert and change routes if there is any risk. Remember downhill is slipperier than uphill.
Health	Follow any national or local Covid-19 restrictions
	Be aware of the health restrictions of your walkers, especially diabetes and asthma. Ensure all walkers are aware they can ask for help or take a rest when they need to. Check walkers have any medication (inhalers, Mars Bars, etc) they may need.
New Walkers	Ensure any new walkers are capable of completing the walk. Advise them how long the walk is and any risks / obstacles, and do not allow them to go on the walk if you do not think they can cope.
	Stress we do not provide active support; if a potential walker has physical or mental health issues they must come with a carer who will be responsible for them.
	No unaccompanied children (under 16). 16 to 18 year old must show parental permission.