

***CHELTENHAM AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE NT CENTRE WALKING GROUP  
HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR ALL MEMBERS***

## **Leaders**

Our walk leaders are volunteers and as such are not trained. Their walk descriptions are published in the newsletter, on the website and sent out by email with additional information about the walk such as: many stiles, varied terrain, steep climb. It is essential that the walk leader has walked over the walk not too long before the date of the walk. Leaders will raise any issues at the start of the walk that were not in the information posted and sent.

## **Group walks.**

When walking the whole party shall follow the guidance of and accept the instructions of the walk leader and shall observe the Countryside Code. Any member or visitor taking part in any group activity does so at his or her own risk, and the Centre and the group and its leaders will not accept liability or responsibility for any injuries which may be received.

It is recommended that 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. If you wish to fall behind, be sure the backmarker knows you are doing so.

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. If it becomes apparent the walk will finish in the dark, leaders should walk at a suitable speed so that people can negotiate hazards safely.

## **Walking on Roads**

The route of all walks 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. In instances of poor visibility the leader and backmarker should consider wearing hi-visibility clothing or a reflective arm band.

## **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. Leaders should carry a map, compass and be prepared to shorten the walk and have an alternative/escape route planned should conditions deteriorate. Nominate a backmarker to prevent the party becoming split or to halt the group in an emergency - (ideally both the leader and

backmarker should carry a whistle and if possible a mobile phone). The walk description should advise if scrambling, or a head for heights is required. Shelter from the elements may be necessary particularly during rest breaks.

### **Adverse weather.**

In the event of adverse or extreme weather, the leader has the right to cancel a walk or curtail the route therefore walkers are advised to contact the leader before setting off. When considering whether to cancel or curtail a walk, the leader should bear in mind the weather forecast, the abilities of the group and suitability of clothing. If the walk goes ahead, be aware that there are added risks such as falling trees in high winds particularly on wooded/forest walks.

### **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. Sheltered areas are advisable for rest breaks and lunch stops.

### **Environment**

Be aware of your surroundings - the group offers a variety of walking opportunities, lowland, hill walking, moorland, woods & 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.

### **Slips, trips and falls**

Walking boots are considered appropriate for most walks and offer better traction in muddy or slippery conditions. Boots also support the ankles, lessening the chance and severity of sprains. Walking poles offer added support for those less confident or able. Carry a torch if there is any risk that the walk will be delayed into the dark.

### **Injuries requiring first aid**

Walk leaders are not trained to administer first aid; therefore several walkers should carry basic first aid kits and include additional items such as blister kits, insect repellent and mild pain killers (for personal use) such as paracetamol or aspirin. Ideally, leaders should have a mobile phone for use in emergencies. In the event of an emergency where there is no mobile phone reception, the leader may need to organise the summoning of help with someone else in the party.

## **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. The leader may refuse to allow a person to walk who is considered to be inappropriately dressed for the intended walk or who is clearly medically unfit.

## **Dogs and cattle**

Leaders may stipulate “no dogs” in their walk details. Where dogs are allowed they should be on a short lead unless it is safe to let them loose. Treat untethered bulls and loose dogs with caution. Back away slowly and report incident to the police if the situation is considered unlawful as well as dangerous. 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.

Ensure instructions are passed to the rear of the group to shut any gate that the group have opened.

Remember: A walk 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. If you join in, you take the risk upon yourself.

## **Risk Assessment**

We are now required by the Trust to undertake a risk assessment for each walk. Essentially this is no more than we do already walking over the route, but it now has to be documented on a simple form. I am happy to fill in this form if the walk leader can contact me after doing the walk-over, but if any leader is happy to do this themselves I would be even happier.

## **Applicable Country Code**

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 etc.

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