

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND GUIDANCE

The Society will take steps to protect, insofar as reasonably practicable, the health and well-being of its members and others taking part in or affected by activities sanctioned by the Society. Failure to meet its duty of care in this regard could result in the organisation being liable in the event of accident, injury or property damage. It is essential that we can show that the Society has considered properly the risks related to its walks and has encouraged its members to take full responsibility for their own safety and well-being, while also looking out for the well-being of others, when taking part in events organised by the Society. By keeping in mind this simple policy and the accompanying guidance, the Society and its members should be protected from legal actions or claims in the unlikely event of something going wrong.

The Society's commitment and the obligations on our members

The Society of Sussex Wealdmen is committed to protecting, insofar as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its members, guests and members of the public when engaged on activities managed or promoted by the Society. We will do all we reasonably can within our collective capabilities to keep our members and all others who may potentially be affected by our activities as safe as possible. We will keep a record of emergency contact details for any member who makes such a request.

We expect and require all our members to take all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and members of the public in all activities sponsored or promoted by the Society. All members of the Society will be made aware of this policy and guidance document by electronic means, personal delivery or post

Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for this policy and guidance document rests with the Committee of the Society.

Specific Responsibilities of Walk Leaders

To be aware of the contents of this policy and guidance document;

To be aware of and comply with the provisions of the Highway Code (see end of this document) as they affect groups and individuals walking in public highways;

To ensure that a basic risk assessment is carried out in preparation for all walks (note: guidance for leaders and a suggested list of potential hazards are given below, which leaders should adapt to the specific needs of their walks);

At the beginning of the walk, to make participants aware of the significant hazards identified in the course of their risk assessments as referred to above;

To endeavour to protect their own and others' health and safety at all times;

To be aware of the number of walkers in the group;

To set an inclusive walk pace that respects the capabilities of all participants and to check at appropriate intervals, e.g. at junctions or abrupt changes of direction, that all members of the group are accounted for;

To report any significant incidents to the Society's Secretary or, in the event of the Secretary's unavailability, the Chairman or another member of the Committee (i.e. "other appropriate Officer" as referred to below).

Specific responsibilities of all participants

To be aware of the contents of this policy and guidance document;

To be aware of and comply with the provisions of the Highway Code (see end of this document) as they affect groups and individuals walking in public highways;

To endeavour to protect their own and others' health and safety at all times;

To comply with the walk leader's instructions and health and safety relevant requests;

To look out for the well-being of others in the group, especially to be aware of those following so as to ensure they do not get left behind, and to notify the leader of any such concerns;

To conduct themselves in ways that do not affect adversely the safety of others (e.g. by carrying walking poles with their sharp ends pointing forward and downward, i.e. as one would carry a loaded rifle, and not swinging them back and forth with their points rearward so as to endanger those following):

The fitness and health of all those taking part in walks promoted by the Society are the responsibility of the individual. Information on factors such as length, type of terrain etc will be provided before the walk to any walker who asks the leader, and will be drawn to the attention of participants at the start of each walk.

Wearing of appropriate clothing and footwear and carrying water, food and other necessary items of equipment on walks are the responsibility of each individual.

Reportable accidents/incidents

As stated above, leaders should report to the Secretary or other appropriate Officer any incident where serious injury occurred. As required by law, the Society will undertake statutory reporting to the Health & Safety Executive.

First Aid

Leaders of walks are not expected to be First Aid qualified or to carry first aid equipment on walks, as this would not be a practical precaution, but it may be helpful for leaders to carry a basic first aid kit. Any walkers with specific medical requirements should ensure they are self-sufficient in necessary medication or equipment.

Approval of this document and future reviews

This "Health and Safety Policy and Guidance" document, which includes guidance that was, in the previous edition, incorporated by reference to a separate note, was approved by the Committee of the Society of Sussex Wealdmen on 14th February 2018.

The Health and Safety Policy and Guidance, its application and effectiveness will be reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently if legislation requires it, to ensure it remains appropriate to the activities of the Society.

Guidance for Leaders and all walkers

It is recommended strongly that leaders walk out their routes beforehand. When walking out a route, leaders are asked to note any possible significant risks or hazards and later to bring them to the attention of the group at the start of the walk.

Leaders may wish to use the list below as a guide. ONLY the significant risks need to be drawn to the attention of walkers. As an example, on many walks in the countryside walkers will encounter tree roots, so it is only exceptional/extensive areas of tree roots which need to be flagged up.

After each walk, leaders should keep a written note of the hazards they drew to the group's attention, date it and keep it at home. If there was a major incident on the walk which resulted in, or might have resulted in serious injury, leaders must alert the Secretary or other appropriate Officer as soon as possible and send a note of the hazards that were drawn to the group's attention.

Leaders should notify the Programme Secretary in good time if, following publication of the walks programme, the walk distance is found to be substantially (e.g. 10% or more) greater than published or the route has to be changed significantly.

Suggested list of significant risks

Extremely uneven ground
Very steep slopes
Numerous high/wobbly/obstructed stiles
Major tree roots
High risk of falling branches
Potentially troublesome cattle, horses or other farm animals
Toxic vegetation (eg blackthorn, hemlock)
Contagious diseases (Lyme disease, water-borne diseases)
Stings and bites
Weather exposure (e.g. sunburn)
Deep mud
Areas where barbed wire presents a significant risk
Areas where traffic presents a particular danger
Railway foot crossings
Any additional hazards specific to this activity

The Highway Code

The relevant chapter of the current edition of the Highway Code is available free of charge via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-pedestrians-1-to-35>

The document, as downloaded in February 2018, can also be emailed as a PDF to members on request to the Communications Secretary.

The entire Highway Code is relevant to us all, but the rules that are most relevant to the Society's activities are:

Rule 1	Pavements
Rule 2	If there is no pavement
Rule 3	Help other road users to see you
Rule 5	Organised walks