



How we manage risks on our walks

Introduction

Though walking is inherently one of the safest outdoor activities, no activity is completely without risk. As a public organisation, Ramblers are required to effectively manage the risks inherent in their activities and have therefore set out guidance which Groups must follow. This document describes how we (Evesham Group) manage our risks.

Notwithstanding the above, if you do join a walk, you remain responsible for your own safety and for not jeopardising other people's safety. Your obligations when attending a walk are set out in our 'Walking Etiquette' which can be viewed on our website.

Background

- We walk throughout the year, nominally twice a week. Group sizes are typically in the range 10 – 15, rarely above 20.
- Most of our walks are between 5 and 8 miles long and are on varying terrain – some flat, some quite hilly.
- All our walks are classified following the standard [Ramblers walk grading definitions](#). The great majority are suitable for persons of reasonable fitness who are used to 'normal' country walking.
- We use the Ramblers 'Walks Manager' system to input details of our planned walks
- All our planned walks are published on our ([Evesham Ramblers](#)) website. They can also be viewed on the Ramblers phone App and on the national Ramblers website
- We also have an Evesham Ramblers WhatsApp group which we use as a supplementary means for communicating information and advice about walks.

Risk Management

This is how we manage our risks

- We use Walk Leaders who are experienced country walkers ^(note 1)
- We require Walk Leaders to recce their walks, unless it is a route they already know well.
- Walk Leaders will not offer walks that they consider unsuitable for groups, either for safety or other reasons
- We compile and maintain a Generic Risk Assessment for Evesham Group walks ^(note 2)
- We include comments on any notable hazards likely to be encountered ^(note3) in the Walk Details
- We grade all our walks following [Ramblers standard definitions](#) - to indicate the difficulty/level of fitness required
- We expect Walk Leaders to brief their group at the start of a walk and, where appropriate, to alert their group to any particular hazards encountered
- We expect Walk Leaders, where appropriate, to appoint a Back Marker for their walks
- We request all walk participants to carry their emergency contact details with them.

Note 1 – we do not walk in a high risk (e.g., mountainous) area, so there is no need or requirement for our leaders to have any specific training or qualification in walk leadership. It should be remembered that all our leaders are volunteers.

Note 2 – compiled by the Walks Coordinator, reviewed and endorsed by the Walk Leaders.

Note 3 – as assessed by the Walk Leader

General Note

Compared to the UK as a whole, Evesham and the surrounding area (including the Cotswolds) is a relatively low hazard area for walking. There are no high fells or large expanses of moorland; there are no mountains or very high hills; there are no large areas of wilderness or bogs (although there are some small wetland areas); there are no high cliffs, or paths with significant exposure; there are few significantly rocky paths; there are no military training or other potentially dangerous areas.

Those hazards which are pertinent to the Evesham area are listed below.

Principal Hazards and Risks for Walks in the Evesham Area

- **Road traffic** – many walks include sections of road walking with the potential risk of injury by motor vehicles. In most cases walking will be on quiet minor roads but occasionally busy main roads (or in some cases, railway lines) need to be negotiated or crossed.
- **Livestock** – much of the area is farmland so livestock (sheep, cattle or horses) is likely to be encountered on many walks. There is a small risk that walkers could be injured by aggressive livestock. Cows with young calves are the most common cause of problems, particularly if walkers with dogs are present.
- **Steep /slippery descents** – a few walks include steep or slippery descents, which can increase the chance of injury as a result of slipping or falling.
- **Stiles** – are encountered on most walks and are always a potential hazard, especially if they are in poor condition. (The same applies to **foot bridges** and **steps**). An additional factor is that some walks may involve negotiating a particularly large number of stiles, which could be challenging for less agile walkers or those with dogs.
- **Narrow or Overgrown footpaths** – sometimes footpaths are encountered which are very narrow or have become heavily overgrown. Negotiating them can be tricky with an increased risk of injury caused by tripping up or by sustaining cuts and abrasion from the vegetation.
- **Rough footpaths** – on some walks rough paths may be encountered. These include: bridleways which have been badly cut up by horses; paths which are particularly stony or rocky; paths (especially in woods) that are criss-crossed by tree roots; paths which cross recently ploughed farmland. With such paths there is a greater risk of tripping or, in particular, sustaining a twisted ankle.
- **Obstructions / Blockages** – sometimes obstructions are encountered which may be tricky to get round and therefore pose a risk to walkers trying to negotiate them. Examples include fallen trees, farming or other debris; broken gates; collapsed fences etc. Occasionally a path may be completely blocked and require a deviation from the planned route.
- **Heavy mud** - much of the area is clay soil which often turns very muddy and sticky in winter. This makes walking more difficult and can increase the risk of injury as a result of slipping or falling.
- **Flooding** – the Vale of Evesham, particularly areas alongside the river Avon, is prone to winter flooding which can make some paths very boggy or even impassable and require an unexpected deviation from the planned route.