

2.1 Guidance for leaders of Friends of the South Downs walks & strolls

All individuals who walk with the Society are responsible for their own personal safety. However, there are some basic safety precautions that leaders should take which may help to avoid problems on walks.

Please note that Trustees have decided, for security and safety reasons, that any walk or stroll requires two additional participants to be present in addition to the leader.

Basic Safety Advice

- When compiling the brief walk description for the programme, mention features which some may find difficult, such as steep slopes and numerous stiles.
- Leaders are recommended to walk-out the route beforehand and make a note of any possible significant risks (see attached Checklist which may be used as a guide/record). On the day point out any potential risks, make a note you have done so, and file when you get home.
- Introduce the walk briefly e.g. distance, terrain, timing and interesting points.
- Advise walkers that they are responsible for their own safety particularly when crossing and walking along roads but endeavour to lead the walk in accordance with the Highway Code, which can be obtained from the Office or visit www.gov.uk/highway-code/contents and see Rules for Pedestrians.
- Carry a map and only use rights of way, permissive paths and access land.
- In larger groups have a back-marker ideally with route map and whistle/phone.
- In normal circumstances, avoid exceeding the given mileage by more than a mile.
- Be aware of the effect of extremes of weather.
- Carry a mobile phone or ask if another walker has one. You can include an 'ICE' (In Case of Emergency) contact on your phone. Always carry an information card with your name, emergency contact details, and any medical conditions as appropriate.
- When filling in for another leader at the last minute, point out that a walk-out has not been completed, so unsafe areas have not been identified.
- Make it clear that anyone who leaves the walk must inform you.
- Dogs may be accepted on a walk at the leader's discretion unless otherwise stated. Responsibility lies with the owners and dogs must be kept under strict control.
- Go at the pace of the slowest walker. Be vigilant where there are new or non-members. Look for any walker who is having particular difficulty.
- In exceptional circumstances, the leader may cancel a walk giving as much notice as is possible to the walks/strolls co-ordinator.
- Be prepared to be adaptable – accidents happen, pubs close, weather worsens.

General Suggestions

- Be at the start point in good time and welcome any new walkers. Ask if they have seen 'Guidance for Participants' and if not mention it is available on/from our website and office.
- Count the number walking – and check during the day.
- Follow the Countryside Code (available from the office or visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)
- Check pub lunch numbers and maybe ring pub. Lunch stop with a pub/cafe is usually around an hour. Potential shelter/seats for picnickers are a bonus if possible.
- Have rest stops as terrain and weather suggest. Also comfort breaks, with cover.
- Walkers may be offered a guiding hand over stiles or other hazards where appropriate
- At the end, check everyone gets away safely e.g. all cars, including yours, start OK.
- Report any path obstructions encountered on a walk or walk-out to the relevant highway authority (see appendix 3) and inform the office. Serious accidents are rare but experience has shown that awareness of some points may help to deal with such incidents quickly and safely.

If a leader finds that they are unable to lead a walk /stroll. In the first place they should try to find a substitute leader and update the relevant co-ordinator as to whether they have been successful in this or not. If the walk/stroll has to be cancelled then the co-ordinators, if available, will inform people who are on their information list. In addition, someone must go to the start point on the day to explain the cancellation in case anyone turns up. It is the leaders responsibility to ensure someone goes- either doing this him/ herself , enlisting another member to do this or seeing if the coordinator can arrange this.

In case of serious accident

- Dial 999 as soon as possible. (Alternatively, you can dial 112. See www.friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk go to: Health and Safety from the Quick Links at the bottom of the page for informative video).
- Be ready to give details of: the location, the grid reference, landmarks, nearest road and a suitable access point if calling for help also the casualty/ies medical condition.
- Take advice from the paramedics, especially about moving the patient.
- If the rest of the group continues walking, ensure appropriate leadership both for this group and for supervision of the patient's care. Keep in touch by phone.
- Report serious accidents to the office using the attached form at Appendix 2. Also copy to the walks/strolls co-ordinator. **Leaders should carry copies of the Serious Accident Report Form on their walk/stroll** to help them ensure accurate information is gathered at the time of the incident, or as soon as possible afterwards.

Where an accident is not considered to be serious you may wish to still use the form and keep this as a personal record should this information be required at a later time.

In case of an incident or problem

The duty of the leader is to provide - as far as they can - an enjoyable and safe walk, which causes no damage. If a landowner makes a complaint to a leader, in most cases, the leader should politely ask them to contact the office. The leader should be as helpful and polite as possible (e.g. by providing them with the telephone number and address), and after the walk, alert the office to the likely complaint, and include any useful information (e.g. an account of what happened, names and contact details of anyone who was involved). There would be some common-sense exceptions - e.g. where a member was causing criminal damage, then the leader should advise the member to stop!

Lastly

Tell the walks co-ordinator afterwards how many people, including leader(s), were on the walk.

Appendices

Checklist of Significant Risks – Appendix 1
Serious Accidents Report Form – Appendix 2
Reporting Path Obstructions – Appendix 3



2.2 Guidance for Leaders of Friends of the South Downs walks and strolls Appendix 1

CHECKLIST OF SIGNIFICANT RISKS

If walking-out a route, leaders are asked to make a note of any possible significant risks or hazards, and later to bring them to the attention of the group at the start of the walk. You may wish to use this checklist as a guide. It is **ONLY** the significant risks that need to be drawn to the attention of walkers. As an example - on nearly every walk in the countryside, walkers will encounter tree roots, so it is exceptional/extensive areas of tree roots which need to be flagged up. After each walk, keep a written note of any hazards you drew to the group's attention. Please sign and 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, please alert the office as soon as possible on 01798 875073, and send the note of any hazards to which you drew the group's attention to the office at 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL, enquiries@southdownssociety.org.uk.

Some examples of possible significant risks:

- Extremely uneven ground
- Very steep slopes

- Numerous/high/wobbly/obstructed stiles
- Weather exposure (e.g. sunburn)

- Major tree roots
- High risk of falling branches

- Frisky cattle, horses, dogs
- Toxic vegetation (e.g. blackthorn, hemlock)

- Contagious diseases (Lyme disease, water-borne diseases)
- Stings and bites

- Deep mud
- Barbed wire

- Areas where traffic presents a particular danger e.g. road and railway crossings

Additional hazards specific to this activity (please note in the space below)

Date of walk:

Signed:

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SERIOUS ACCIDENTS REPORT FORM To be carried by Leader on walks and events

Please report serious accidents as soon as possible by telephoning the office on 01798 875073. In addition, this form should be completed by the leader and sent to the Friends of the Downs at 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL, enquiries@southdownssociety.org.uk . Please aim to return it within 4 days of the incident.	
Title of walk/event/visit given in the programme:	
Date of walk/event/visit:	Leader:
Address:	
Landline:	Mobile:
Email address:	
Name of injured person:	
Address/tel of injured person, if known:	
South Downs Society member?	
Were there any injuries? If so, please list their nature:	
Was medical attention given by a paramedic?	
Was medical attention given by a fellow walker? If yes, what treatment was received and for how long, and who administered the treatment?	
Time of incident:	Emergency services called?
Grid reference:	Description of location:
What happened? Give as much information as possible - what action was taken, whether the casualty continued on the walk/went to hospital/other - use a continuation sheet if necessary	
Witness name:	Member?
Witness contact details:	
Names of others on the walk:	

2.4 Guidance for Leaders of Friends of the South Downs walks & strolls Appendix 3

Reporting Public Rights of Way Defects in Sussex and East Hampshire

Ensuring Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are open and easy to use is the responsibility of local Highway Authorities with one exception. Whilst they may carry out inspections periodically, problems can of course occur at any time. The Friends has its own network of Area Access Officers (AAOs) who keep an eye on most of the parishes in the South Downs National Park. It is vital for those who wish to enjoy being active in the South Downs countryside that PRoW defects we encounter are reported promptly by us all.

Please report defects to Highway Authorities by telephone, post or preferably by using the RoW section of their website as set out below:

Also, please send a copy to the office: enquiries@southdownssociety.org.uk or 2 Swan Court, Pulborough, RH20 1RL and inform the office of the final outcome to the problem when known.

1. Location

It is not necessary to know the RoW number to report a defect. Using the local 'Ordnance Survey Explorer Map', (or information from the Authority's websites below), note the six-figure grid reference identifying the location of the problem, and the names of the places at either end of the RoW. Also a prominent local land mark and the parish in which it is situated will be helpful. Include as much information as possible to describe the problem in detail.

Reporting

- 1 For problems with signage, waymarking, gates, stiles and minor surface issues on the **South Downs Way only**, in any Authority Area, please contact the South Downs Way Team website at: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way/contact-trail-team

Otherwise: Andy Gattiker Tel: 01273 625242 or Email: sdw@southdowns.gov.uk
Please note these arrangements are only to be used in respect of the South Downs Way trail. All obstructions and vegetation clearance issues, along with all other should be reported directly to the respective County Council as below.

- 2 For problems within **East Hampshire**
Preferably report a fault using website mapping tool which is very precise and can be found at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/row.htm>
Otherwise: Tel 0300 555 1391 or email.rightsofway@hants.gov.uk

- 3 For problems within **West Sussex**
On-line go to the Public Rights of Way imap at:
<http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/lvmaps/imap.html>, Otherwise: Tel: 01243 777620

- 4 For problems within **East Sussex**
On-line go to: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/rightsofway
Otherwise: Tel: 0345 60 80 193, email: rightsofway@eastsussex.gov.uk

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This document is available from www.friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk.
Go to ABOUT US | DOCUMENT LIBRARY

5 For problems within **Brighton & Hove**

Go to:

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/rights-way

and follow the link 'online form' Otherwise: Tel: 01273 292929

6 For problems within **CRoW Access Land Areas** and **not** associated with any PRow

Tim Squire

Rights of Way and Access Officer South Downs National Park Authority

Tel: 01730 819326 | Mobile: 07872 410458

Stanmer Park, Lewes Road, Brighton, BN1 9SE

Note: Although these details were correct at the time of writing, Web Masters do have the habit of "tweaking" where things are filed, so as time progresses be prepared for slight changes.