

SOS Risk assessment form: Henfield area

Assessor: Val Bentley 07583 648794

Date of Assessment: 1/11/23

Location: Starting from Downslink car park in West End Lane just west of The Old Railway pub this walk will be along the Downslink bridleway and public footpaths through fields.

Brief description: The route on the day will be determined according to where birds have recently been seen and how flooded the fields are. Winter floods can hold good numbers of wildfowl and gulls, with Teal, Wigeon, Gadwall and Pintail usually present. If the walk is done in the spring, there should be birdsong in the bushes and trees lining the old railway line, skylarks singing over the fields, and hopefully Grey Herons nesting nearby.

Suggested clothing: In winter – waterproof clothing and winter boots and/or wellingtons.

In summer good footwear is recommended.

| Hazard | Comments | Evaluation of risk | Risk mitigation measures | |
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| Weather conditions | Be aware of forecast. Waterproof clothing if rain forecast, suncream/hat if spring/summer walk in hot sunshine | Low-medium | In extreme weather conditions walk will be cancelled by website announcement | |

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| Walking conditions | Mostly level walking, but can be muddy in places. | Low-Medium | Leader to walk route prior to outing (e.g. previous day) to assess conditions and adjust route as necessary | |
| Distance | Approx. three miles | Low. The terrain is level. | N/a though if anyone feels they cannot manage the distance they would be able to turn back and return to the car park by a safe route. | |
| Stiles or gates | Could be one stile along riverbank, or possibly kissing gates depending on the route taken. Steps to bridge depending on route taken | Medium Rather wonky temporary stile in 2023 along river to the north. One kissing gate often muddy underfoot leading from railway line to fields. | Avoid this stile if still in situ if this route is taken. Give members the option to stay on main track if entrance to field too muddy. | |
| Farm animals | Could be cows in fields in summer | Low, have never had any problem in the past. | Leader to check beforehand if cattle in fields, and adjust route if necessary (e.g. if one of the members is scared of cattle) | |

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| <p>Cyclists, dog walkers and (occasionally) horses which can be spooked by telescopes</p> | <p>The Downslink track can be very busy especially at a weekend.</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <p>Leader to make group aware of other users of the track, and ask members to keep an eye out particularly for cyclists approaching from behind. Advise group to stay to one side of the track when required. Advise members carrying telescopes to take them off if a horse approaches.</p> | |
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