

## Field Meetings Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessments

The following policy was agreed at the LNHS Council meeting held on 11 February 2021 and will be reviewed in February 2025.

Field meetings are a great opportunity for participants to meet other members, including experts, and learn from them. Each field meeting will be different, but every leader needs to be familiar with health and safety. This is usually a matter of following simple common sense. A reconnoitring visit is needed if the leader does not know the site well or has not visited for a while.

### **A leader needs to be able to show that the risks have been considered.**

For most meetings this will be straightforward. If the hazards are those found on an everyday walk in the city or country, a short **Generic Risk Assessment Form** is enough (see p.2).

If additional or unusual hazards are present, a formal **Field Meeting Full Risk Assessment Form** is available and should be completed (see pp. 3-5) This takes each hazard, assesses the risk, and plans control measures to ensure that the proposed meeting will be safe. If something does go wrong, our insurers will want to audit that we are following best practice and to see the evidence.

Members (and non-members) attend all field meetings and workshops at their own risk. However, the leader needs to assess the risks (and their likelihood and severity) and plan how to avoid them.

If a parent brings a young person to a meeting, the leader must consider any additional risks that they may encounter because of their age, and notify the parent of these. Parents have full responsibility for any young person attending a meeting.

Details of the meeting on the calendar or in any printed listing should include the leader's name and note any particular clothing, footwear or other items required for that meeting.

Dogs are not normally allowed on field meetings. Registered guide dogs are exempt, unless they are prohibited by the landowners.

Leaders need to be there to meet participants whatever the weather unless this has been agreed beforehand. In certain conditions, the event may need to be modified or cancelled.

### **There should always be a short safety briefing at the start of a field meeting which highlights any hazards identified and explains what individuals should do to minimise the risks.**

Leaders have the right to exclude participants on safety grounds for example if they are not adequately shod or clothed, whilst participants should make the leader aware of any relevant medical conditions. The briefing can also be used to share the planned route, including lunch arrangements.

Groups should follow the Countryside Code, avoiding damage to property and ensuring that livestock does not escape. On roads they should follow the Highway Code. By water, the guidance in Safety on our Waterways from the Canal and River Trust should be considered. The leader should stop any unsafe behaviour seen during the day. Any collecting should be done in line with the relevant Code of Conduct.

People should inform the leader if they are leaving the meeting early. The leader should check at the end of the day that everyone has returned. If in a tick-infested area, people should also be reminded before dispersing to check for ticks as soon as possible and remove them.

If something does go wrong - an accident to a person causing an injury, an incident in which equipment or vehicles are damaged, or a near miss, these should be reported to the LNHS Secretary on the **Incident Form** (see p.6).

**Field Meeting Generic Risk Assessment Form**

The activities being conducted during the meeting are assessed as being broadly comparable to those that might occur during an everyday walk in the city or country. No additional hazards capable of causing more than minor injury are reasonably likely to be encountered by any member of the party.

Those attending will be advised to wear appropriate footwear and clothing, to bring sufficient water, food, sun-block, insect repellent or other essentials etc.

This generic assessment will be reviewed in the light of conditions on the day, and the abilities of individual members of the party.

<b>Date of assessment</b>
<b>Date of trip</b>
<b>Location</b>
<b>Leader's name</b>
<b>Leader's signature</b>

### Field Meeting Full Risk Assessment Form

Only required if additional or unusual hazards are present.

<b>Date of risk assessment</b>		
<b>Date of meeting</b>		
<b>Location</b>		
<b>Leader's name</b>		
<b>Leader's signature</b>		
<b>Location of nearest emergency hospital</b>		
<i>First aid should only be given by someone with current first aid training. Pain killers should not be given.</i>		
<b>Identify significant hazards</b>	<b>Likelihood Yes or No:</b>	<b>Measures to reduce risk</b>
<b>Slips, trips and falls:</b>  <b>Steep ground / banks</b>  <b>Rough / Uneven ground</b>  <b>Slippery ground</b>		<p>In the description of the meeting, state whether the day will be easy, moderate or strenuous and the nature of the terrain, whether it is rough or steep. Also include guidance on suitable footwear.</p> <p><b>In the safety briefing</b> remind participants that the most frequent cause of accidents are simple slips and trips Mention the risks of slippery wet rocks &amp; grass, steep, rough or uneven ground, unstable rocks, banks, cliffs, etc.</p>
<b>Traffic</b>		<p>Avoid routes along or across roads as far as possible.</p> <p><b>In the safety briefing</b> warn people about traffic. Guide walkers across roads. Walk on right hand side of road to face oncoming traffic. Wait for farm vehicles to pass if agricultural work is taking place.</p>
<b>Cliffs</b>		<b>In the safety briefing</b> , warn people not to climb cliffs
<b>Falling objects</b>		<p>Wear hard hats, if necessary, when walking close to cliffs.</p> <p><b>In the safety briefing</b> remind participants that care must be taken to avoid dislodging stones, and if this does happen, what to do (shout warning!)</p>
<b>Contact with branches or twigs</b>  <b>Other scrapes or abrasions</b>		<p><b>In the safety briefing</b> warn participants on the risk to eyes from twigs, and of possible allergic reaction to puncture wounds e.g. from Blackthorn. Take care passing such bushes. Assess danger from falling branches. Warn of any other obvious hazards such as sharp rocks.</p>
<b>Personal attack (by assailant or animal)</b>		<p>Leave no-one isolated. Lock personal valuables out of sight. Be aware of the movement of farm animals. Carry a mobile phone.</p>

		<b>In the safety briefing</b> tell participants who is carrying the mobile phone for use in emergencies. Be aware that there may be areas with a poor signal.
<b>Infection (especially diseases carried on faeces)</b>		<b>The safety briefing</b> should remind people of the risk of infections which includes Weil's disease and remind them to ensure cuts are protected and instruct all to wash/clean hands before eating and drinking. You may want to take a supply of antiseptic wet wipes.
<b>Contact with poisonous plants or fungi</b>		Take care in the vicinity of any hazardous plants or fungi, particularly Parsnip and Giant Hogweed
<b>Adders</b>		Do not disturb any Adders you find. Wear sturdy shoes and thick socks
<b>Ticks (Lyme disease)</b>		Clothing advice in the description of the meeting should include long trousers / long sleeved shirts and the suggestion that trousers should be tucked into boots so as to reduce risk. <b>The safety briefing</b> should give advice on ticks, how to minimise bites and safe tick removal and the main symptoms of Lyme disease. The closing talk should mention the need to check for (and remove) ticks at first opportunity.
<b>Sunburn / sunstroke</b>		In the description of the meeting, advise participants to bring adequate drinking water, wear a sunhat and long-sleeved shirts and put on sun protection cream including lip block, re-applying sun-screen as required during the day.
<b>Bad weather:</b>  <b>Exposure / Hypothermia / Discomfort/</b>  <b>Danger from high winds</b>		In the description of the meeting include guidance on suitable food and clothing. <b>In the safety briefing</b> remind those on the walk of the need for suitable clothing. If a participant's clothing is inadequate, the leader can exclude them on safety grounds. Be aware that weather conditions can change rapidly. The leader should check the forecast carefully and be prepared to alter plans if necessary.
<b>Bad weather:</b>  <b>Getting lost</b>		Participants should be asked to bring maps - if available - and mobile phones Each leader should take a full list of names and mobile numbers of those in group. Each leader should take map, whistle, phone and GPS. <b>The safety briefing</b> should stress importance of the group staying close together and within sight of each other.
<b>Water hazards</b>		Wear buoyancy aid if appropriate. Assess tidal situation prior to meeting and ensure that safe access is possible. Assess water levels and do not walk close to rivers in spate. Be aware of the particular hazards of towpaths and docks.

		<b>The safety briefing</b> should include appropriate warnings.
<b>Minor injuries</b>		Recommend participants take simple first aid kits and blister treatment packs for personal use.
<b>Manual handling</b>		Manual handling will not often be necessary on field meetings, but may be involved for example in lifting logs when looking for invertebrates. Any such manual handling must be done safely.
<b>Additional hazards associated with this specific site</b>		

**Incident Form**

**Confidential - Return to: LNHS Secretary**

<b>Date and time of occurrence:</b>
<b>Location of occurrence:</b>
<b>Full name(s) of injured person(s):</b>
<b>Name of person reporting:</b>
<b>Name(s) of witnesses:</b>
<b>What was the injury, damage or nature of the near miss?</b>
<b>What first aid treatment was given (if applicable)?</b>
<b>What exactly happened to cause the accident?</b>