

## Field Meetings Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessments

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.

### Statement of intent

Our health and safety policy has three broad aims:

- manage health and safety risks in the field;
- prevent accidents and cases of field meeting-related ill health; and
- provide clear instructions, information, training and support to our leaders to ensure that they are competent to do their work.

### Phase 1: Review the risks

If the leader does not know the site of the field meeting well or has not visited for a while, the leader should carry out a reconnoitring visit (in similar conditions to those they expect to prevail on the date of the proposed field meetings) within a month of the field meeting.

If the leader is familiar with the site, the leader should consider the risks applicable. In all circumstances – where this is a familiar or unfamiliar field meeting site - a leader needs to be able to show that the risks have been considered. 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.

For most meetings this will be straightforward. If the hazards are those found on an everyday walk in the city or country, it will be sufficient for the leader to complete a short **Generic Risk Assessment Form** (see p.3).

If additional or unusual hazards are present, the leader should complete a formal **Full Risk Assessment Form** (see pp. 4-6). This takes each hazard, assesses the risk, and plans control measures to ensure that the proposed meeting will be safe. This is important because if something does go wrong, our insurers will want to audit that we are following best practice and to see the evidence.

If a parent or guardian 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 or guardian of these. Parents and guardians have full responsibility for any young person attending a meeting. Dogs are not normally allowed on field meetings. Registered guide dogs are exempt, unless they are prohibited by the landowners.

### Phase 2: Prepare for the field meeting

The leader should ensure that the details of the meeting on the calendar or in any printed listing include notes of any particular clothing, footwear or other items required for that meeting. If anything is not permitted or not encouraged, this should also be noted. Inclusion of the leader's name and contact details is optional.

In the event of sudden adverse weather or environmental conditions, the leader should consider if the field meeting needs to be postponed, modified or cancelled. If the leader determines that a field meeting cannot or should not go ahead, the leader must inform the participants.

### Phase 3: During the field meeting

Leaders must be at the planned location and time (at least 10 minutes ahead of the planned commencement time) to meet participants.

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. The briefing can also be used to share the planned route, including lunch arrangements.

While conducting the safety briefing, leaders should ask participants to advise if they have any medical conditions or injuries which may increase their individual risk. Leaders should provide participants the opportunity to advise on these conditions or injuries in private – rather than in front of the group.

Leaders have the right to exclude participants on safety grounds for example if they are not adequately shod or clothed.

The leader must ensure that their group follows the relevant codes. This includes complying with:

- the [Countryside Code](#), by avoiding damage to property and ensuring that livestock does not escape,
- when on roads - the [Highway Code](#), by keeping to footpaths and walking in an organised, single-file line,
- 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.

Participants 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, participants should also be reminded before dispersing to check for ticks as soon as possible and remove them.

#### **Phase 4: After the field meeting**

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 relevant **Field Meetings Organiser** on the **Health & Safety Incident Form** (see p.7). The Field Meetings Organiser should forward the Incident Form to the LNHS Secretary, who can escalate it to Council if necessary.

#### **Change Log**

APPROVED by Council February 2021. For review 2025

APPROVED by Council February 2026. For review 2028

**Health & Safety Generic Risk Assessment Form (submit to Field Meetings Organiser)**

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>

**Health & Safety Full Risk Assessment Form (submit to Fields Meetings Organiser)**

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>		<u>In the description of the meeting:</u> - State whether the day will be easy, moderate or strenuous and the nature of the terrain, whether it is rough or steep - Include guidance on suitable footwear. <u>In the safety briefing:</u> - Remind participants that the most frequent cause of accidents are simple slips and trips - - Mention the risks of slippery wet rocks & grass, steep, rough or uneven ground, unstable rocks, banks, cliffs, etc.
<b>Traffic</b>		<u>Planning the field meeting:</u> Avoid routes along or across roads as far as possible. <u>In the safety briefing:</u> warn people about traffic. <u>During the field meeting:</u> - 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.
<b>Cliffs</b>		<u>In the safety briefing:</u> warn people not to climb cliffs.
<b>Falling objects</b>		<u>In the safety briefing:</u> remind participants that care must be taken to avoid dislodging stones, and if this does happen, what to do. <u>During the field meeting:</u> - If stones are dislodged, shout warning to the other members of the field group and/or general public in the vicinity. - Wear hard hats, if necessary, when walking close to cliffs.
<b>Contact with branches or twigs</b>  <b>Other scrapes or abrasions</b>		<u>In the safety briefing:</u> warn participants on the risk to eyes from twigs, and of possible allergic reaction to puncture wounds e.g. from Blackthorn. <u>During the field meeting:</u> - Take care passing such bushes. - Assess danger from falling branches. - Warn of any other obvious hazards such as sharp rocks.

<b>Personal attack (by assailant or animal)</b>		<p><u>In the safety briefing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tell participants who is carrying the mobile phone for use in emergencies.</li> <li>- Be aware that there may be areas with a poor signal.</li> </ul> <p><u>During the field meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leave no-one isolated.</li> <li>- Lock personal valuables out of sight.</li> <li>- Be aware of the movement of farm animals.</li> <li>- Carry a mobile phone.</li> </ul>
<b>Infection (especially diseases carried on faeces)</b>		<p><u>Planning the field meeting:</u> Consider whether you want to take a supply of antiseptic wet wipes.</p> <p><u>In the safety briefing:</u> 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.</p>
<b>Contact with poisonous plants or fungi</b>		<p><u>During the field meeting:</u> Take care in the vicinity of any hazardous plants or fungi, particularly parsnip and giant hogweed.</p>
<b>Adders</b>		<p><u>In the description of the meeting:</u> Remind attendees to wear sturdy shoes and thick socks.</p> <p><u>During the field meeting:</u> Do not disturb any adders you find.</p>
<b>Ticks (Lyme disease)</b>		<p><u>In the description of the meeting:</u> Include clothing advice to wear long trousers / long sleeved shirts and the suggestion that trousers should be tucked into boots so as to reduce risk.</p> <p><u>In the safety briefing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give advice on ticks, how to minimise bites and safe tick removal and the main symptoms of Lyme disease.</li> <li>- Remind people of the need to check for (and remove) ticks at first opportunity.</li> </ul>
<b>Sunburn / sunstroke</b>		<p><u>In the description of the meeting:</u> 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 sunscreen as required during the day.</p>
<b>Bad weather:</b>  <b>Exposure / Hypothermia / Discomfort/</b>  <b>Danger from high winds</b>		<p><u>Planning the field meeting:</u> Check the forecast carefully and be prepared to cancel the field meeting or alter plans if necessary.</p> <p><u>In the description of the meeting:</u> Include guidance on suitable food and clothing.</p> <p><u>In the safety briefing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remind those on the walk of the need for suitable clothing.</li> <li>- If a participant's clothing is inadequate, the leader can exclude them on safety grounds.</li> </ul> <p><u>During the field meeting:</u> Be aware that weather conditions can change rapidly.</p>
<b>Bad weather:</b>  <b>Getting lost</b>		<p><u>Planning the field meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each leader should take a full list of names and mobile numbers of those in group.</li> <li>- Each leader should take map, whistle, phone and GPS.</li> </ul> <p><u>In the description of the meeting:</u> Ask participants to bring maps - if available - and mobile phones.</p> <p><u>In the safety briefing:</u> Stress importance of the group staying close together and within sight of each other.</p>

<p><b>Water hazards</b></p>		<p><u>Planning the field meeting:</u> Assess tidal situation prior to meeting and ensure that safe access is possible.  <u>In the safety briefing:</u> Include appropriate warnings.  <u>During the field meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wear buoyancy aid if appropriate.</li> <li>- Assess water levels and do not walk close to rivers in spate.</li> <li>- Be aware of the particular hazards of towpaths and docks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minor injuries</b></p>		<p><u>In the description of the meeting:</u> Recommend participants take simple first aid kits and blister treatment packs for personal use.</p>
<p><b>Manual handling</b></p>		<p><u>During the field meeting:</u> 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.</p>
<p><b>Additional hazards associated with this specific site</b></p>		
<p><b>Additional hazards associated with the field group</b> (e.g. young people, people with disabilities, support animals)</p>		<p><u>During the safety briefing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explain to the parents or guardians of young people attending the field meeting of any additional risks or hazards and remind them that they have responsibility for the young person.</li> <li>- Identify any additional risks or hazards impacting people with disabilities and discuss with them any mitigating factors.</li> </ul> <p><u>During the field meeting:</u> Ensure that young people and people with disabilities are not being separated from the group and/or struggling to remain safely with the rest of the field group.</p>

**Health & Safety Incident Form (submit to Field Meetings Organiser)**

<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>