

## Spring Vale Rambling Class Darwen

### Risk Assessments

#### **For Easy, Leisurely, Moderate and Strenuous Walks as graded within the annual syllabus of walks.**

Spring Vale Rambling Class organise a varied range of walks from modest urban strolls to more moderate open country or moorland walks and occasionally more strenuous hill walks. All walks will have at least some associated risk. The hazards encountered and their consequences will vary from walk to walk. On all walks participants must be appropriately dressed, alert to the terrain and surroundings, and concentrate on the walking. It is very easy to increase the risk and to suffer an accident, if distracted for a moment or being unaware of the environment whilst walking.

Spring Vale Rambling Class will provide a competent, experienced leader for the walk. The leader must be a paid-up member of Spring Vale Rambling Class. The walking group should remain together so the leader can see everybody. This is important in poor visibility. If the group size is such that it is not easy to check if everybody is present, then one member will be asked to act as back-marker. All groups of 10 and above will use a backmarker, below 10 the decision is at the leader's discretion. For larger groups (20+) additional assistants will be appointed. If you want to leave the group for a short while tell the leader/back-marker, do not just disappear.

Walking routes are devised based upon the Spring Vale Rambling Class experience of organising similar walks and the times needed to complete the routes. Hence it is important that walkers are in a party compatible with their abilities. Walkers new to Spring Vale Rambling Class are requested to make themselves known to the leaders so we can ensure they undertake an appropriate walk, within their capabilities and enjoy the day.

Spring Vale Rambling Class has Public Liability Insurance however this is not Personal Accident Insurance and participants must be aware they walk at their own risk. Each walker is responsible for their own safety and comfort on the walk.

A risk assessment lists the different hazards that people might encounter whilst taking part in walking activities organised by Spring Vale Rambling Class. Darwen

#### **Common sense risk assessing**

People assess risk, and take action to minimise that risk, all the time, every day, in all sorts of situations. A lot of the time we don't even notice we're doing it. When we are organising activities with the group, we will also already be assessing risk, even if we are not aware that you're doing it. When undertaking a more formal risk assessment, an evaluation of the ways that harm could occur during that activities are made, and what will be done to reduce the risk of this happening. These when written down form the basis of a risk assessment. This task has already been completed in the publication of the Generic Risk Assessments which details the common risks associated with walking in the countryside. Risk assessment is about achieving a balance between a reasonable level of risk and being able to get on with organising the walking activity. Remember, no activity is completely free from risk, and doing a risk assessment is not about making the activities risk free. Instead of trying to make the walking activities risk free, measures have been put in place to reduce that risk.

#### **Generic and Specific Risk Assessments**

The following Generic Risk Assessments have been derived from guidelines produced by the Rambles. (the Ramblers are the national charity for walkers). Additional risks may be added to the list as and when required. It is recommended to make a note of any additional hazards (**Specific Risk Assessments**) when carrying out the recce walk – for example if there's an obstruction on the route, or if the weather has made one spot particularly tricky. Always review any plans again on the day of the walk – and don't be afraid to make changes to them if there is a need to do so. Remember to share the plan and any important information with walkers before setting off.

## Generic Risk Assessments

What are the risks or hazards?	What could happen and who could be harmed?	How we manage the risks
Lack of confidence and/or skills	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All walk leaders must be a fully paid-up member of the Class.</li> <li>• All new walk leaders make the most of opportunities to develop their skills by understanding the responsibility of leading.</li> <li>• Peer support is available from more experienced leaders.</li> <li>• Leaders only lead within their capabilities.</li> </ul>
	Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks	
Too many people walking in the group	Leaders are stressed and overwhelmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders refer to recommended ratios and manage group size depending on the specific circumstances.</li> <li>• Identify additional helpers (e.g. walk assistant, co-leader or backmarkers) for large groups.</li> </ul>
	Walkers are exposed to unnecessary risks	
Walkers act recklessly	Walkers put themselves and others at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information with walkers in advance to establish clear expectations and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Give a walk briefing before setting off, to share your plan and expectations.</li> <li>• Communicate with walkers throughout the walk.</li> </ul>
	Walkers put themselves and others at risk	
Weather	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat, or wet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the weather before the walk.</li> <li>• Let people know what to wear and what to bring.</li> <li>• Make contingency plans.</li> <li>• Set an appropriate pace and take breaks as needed.</li> <li>• Stay alert to changing conditions and adjust plans accordingly.</li> </ul>
Getting lost	Walkers get lost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, recce the route a week or so in advance – or carefully plan with good local knowledge, guidebooks and/or maps.</li> <li>• Leaders are familiar with the route and contingency plans in case changes are needed.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate navigation skills in the group for the walk and possible conditions.</li> <li>• Pre-register phone with 999 emergency text service.</li> <li>• Know the hours of dusk and darkness, and plan accordingly.</li> <li>• Carry the relevant kit – for example a whistle, headtorch and an emergency blanket for more remote walks.</li> <li>• On more remote walks, complete a Route Card in advance and leave a copy with a designated Emergency Point of Contact (EPOC) – “late back procedure” should be implemented by the EPOC if needed.</li> </ul>
	Walkers are exposed to extreme cold, heat or wet	
	There is a communications blackout	
	Walkers run low on food/drink supplied.	
Terrain	Walkers trip or fall, resulting in injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check for muddy/slippery/steep sections when planning</li> <li>• Advise walkers of terrain and suitable footwear in advance.</li> <li>• Make contingency plans, to draw on if needed in response to the group and conditions.</li> <li>• Zigzag up/down any steep sections – highlight benefits of walking poles.</li> <li>• Offer reassurance to nervous walkers and take adequate breaks.</li> <li>• Adjust plans on the walk, if needed.</li> </ul>

<b>What are the risks or hazards?</b>	<b>What could happen and who could be harmed?</b>	<b>How we manage the risks</b>
Unsafe/unstable geographic features or obstacles (e.g., water, tides, rock fall, overhangs, and fallen trees)	Walkers trip or fall, resulting in injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow any local warnings or signs and advise walkers to keep away from sheer drops/edges. Advise to keep away from the canal side and the edge of riverbanks or fast flowing water.</li> <li>Check paths are suitable for a group to use safely and make changes if necessary.</li> <li>Make contingency plans to deal with unexpected features and obstacles.</li> <li>Avoid crossing any significant water features – use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.</li> <li>Check the tide time.</li> </ul>
	Walkers get into difficulty and drown	
Livestock	Walkers are at risk of injury from livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross fields with livestock calmly and quietly, keeping the walking group together and any dogs on a short lead (releasing the dog if charged by cows)</li> <li>Follow the Countryside Code (England &amp; Wales)</li> <li>Leave gates and property as you find them.</li> </ul>
	Property is damaged	
	The wider public are at risk of injury from escaped livestock.	
Road	Walkers are at risk of road traffic accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross in small groups and be aware of participants with impaired mobility.</li> <li>Maintain single file on any road sections without footpath/pavement.</li> <li>Plan route to avoid busy roads where possible.</li> <li>Check for suitable crossing place.</li> </ul>
	Other road users are at risk of accident	
Roads (driving)	Road traffic accident puts walkers and other road users at risk of injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remind walkers that the drive to/from the walk is often the riskiest part of the day.</li> <li>Remind drivers to take care, take adequate rests on longer journeys and maintain fluid/blood sugar levels at the end of the day.</li> </ul>
Losing walkers	Walkers could get left behind/lost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader knows who is on the walk – asking for names and emergency contact details.</li> <li>Regular headcounts and communication with the group.</li> <li>Appoint a backmarker.</li> <li>Communicate with group throughout the walk</li> </ul>
Accident or medical emergency	Walkers require first aid or medical attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leader knows who is on the walk – asking for names and emergency contact details.</li> <li>Ask walkers to complete and carry an In Case of Emergency (ICE) card.</li> <li>Know how to contact the emergency services.</li> <li>Ensure mobile phone is fully charged and consider carrying a power bank.</li> <li>Carry a first aid kit – and extra supplies/layers and an emergency foil blanket to keep people warm and comfortable while waiting for help to arrive.</li> <li>Ensure appropriate first aid awareness and skills amongst the group.</li> </ul>
Dogs	Walkers or Public bitten Livestock worried or stressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advise dog owners of their responsibilities to keep dogs under strict control and on short leads.</li> <li>Advise dog owners when you know of livestock in the area.</li> </ul>