



HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Society is required by law to take reasonable steps to protect the health and well-being of its volunteers and those taking part in activities sanctioned by the Society. Failure to meet its duty of care to protect volunteers and members from harm could result in the organization and its trustees being liable if a volunteer is injured. Because it is a small organisation, with low levels of staff and substantial numbers of volunteers, the legal expectations on the Society are reduced. However, it is essential that we can show that the Society has met its legal obligations by considering properly the risks related to its voluntary activities, as well as encouraging its members to take full responsibility for their own well-being when taking part in activities organised by the Society . By keeping in mind this simple policy and the accompanying guidance note, volunteers and the Society will be protected in the unlikely event of something going wrong.

Our Commitment

The South Downs Society is committed to protecting the health and safety of its volunteers, members, and members of the public when engaged on activities managed or promoted by the Society. We are conscious of being an organisation with limited employees but with a substantial membership, and with an increasing range of voluntary activities from walks, day trips and meetings. We are committed to doing all we reasonably can to keep our members and members of the public who may have contact with our activities as safe as possible within our resources. We will keep a record of emergency contact details for any volunteer who makes such a request.

We expect and require all our members and volunteers to take all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and members of the public in all activities sponsored or promoted by the Society.

All task leaders or walks leaders acting on behalf of the Society will receive a copy of this policy. They will also be provided with guidance relating to the specific types of activities and will be expected to tell those participating in voluntary activities and group events of potential risks which may be encountered.

Policy Reviews

The policy and its application and effectiveness will be reviewed on an annual basis, or more frequently if legislation requires it, to ensure it is appropriate to the activities of the Society.

Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for this policy rests with the Council of the Society, who may delegate the day-to-day management of the policy to the Director of the Society, supported by the Countryside Officer.

Specific Responsibilities of Volunteers

- To be aware of the contents of the policy
- To ensure that a basic risk assessment is carried out in preparation for all activities
- At the beginning of the event/walk, to make participants aware of possible hazards.
- To accommodate, where possible, people with health problems, whilst reminding them that they participate at their own risk.
- To ensure that provisions are in place to respond to any serious incidents/accidents

- To endeavour to protect their own and others' health and safety at all times
- To report any significant incidents to the Society's Director
- To endeavour to remove members/colleagues from any high risk situation, without putting their own safety at risk.

Leaders should read the *Guidance for Leaders of South Downs Society Walks and Strolls* which is on the website at <http://www.southdownssociety.org.uk/go/walkingandevents/default/> and available from the South Downs Society office, 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL, 01798 875073,

Reportable accidents/incidents

Volunteers and leaders must report to the Director of the Society any incident where serious injury occurred or could have occurred, using the *Serious Accidents Report Form*. Any disease or illness which may have been related to an activity of the Society must also be promptly reported. As required by law, the Society will undertake statutory reporting to the Health & Safety Executive.

First Aid

Leaders of walks are not expected to be First Aid qualified or to carry first aid equipment on such walks, as this would not be a practical precaution, but it may be helpful to carry a basic first aid kit.

Specific responsibilities of participants

The fitness and health of those taking part in walks promoted by the Society are the responsibility of the individual. Information on factors such as length, type of terrain and number of stiles will be provided before the walk or stroll to any walker who asks the leader, and will be drawn to the attention of participants at the start of each walk so they are able to consider if they are fit to proceed. Wearing of appropriate clothing and footwear and carrying water and other necessary items on walks promoted by the Society are the responsibility of the individual. Walkers are encouraged to read the *Guidance for Participants of South Downs Society Walks and Strolls* which is on the website <http://www.southdownssociety.org.uk/go/walkingandevents/default/> and available from the South Downs Society office, 2 Swan Court, Station Road, Pulborough RH20 1RL, 01798 875073, info@southdownssociety.org.uk.

Safety for Planning and Access Volunteers

Much of the Society's work on access or planning is carried out by members being vigilant when they are out and about, whether walking the rights of way or checking up on a recent planning application – or lack of one. We have no rights of access beyond those available to all members of the general public and it is members' own responsibility to have full regard to their own safety and welfare in this role.

It would be wise where practical to notify a family member, or other person close to you, of your intended itinerary, especially if you anticipate any difficulty.

Approval of this Policy

This policy was formally approved by the Council of the Society on 14 March 2011.