

WALKING THE EXTRA MILE

Information for Walkers



Welcome to Walking the Extra Mile with u3a Gosport which was set up in 2015. The fundamental u3a aim for everyone to share their knowledge and try new experiences is central to the spirit of this group. We welcome new members who would like to enjoy exploring our varied countryside with us.

We aim to cover a variety of walking routes in Hampshire and Sussex involving distances of 7-10 miles, with ups and downs, mostly off-road tracks, and designated footpaths. Over 11 years we have explored some hidden corners of our wonderful countryside. We encourage members to learn more about organising walks because active member involvement is vital if the group is to have long term sustainability.

THE WALK PROGRAMME

- Our walk dates are the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month except August and only 1 in December.
- Refer to the Extra Mile page of the website for the current programme of walks.
- **21 walks a year need the involvement of members.** We ask all to take a turn to plan, recce and lead a walk, **OR** to be a deputy /second lead with an established leader.
- Novices or members new to the idea of leading a walk will be supported by several of our confident leaders and there are many walks we have in our back catalogue to refer to.

WALK PLANNING AND RISK ASSESSMENT

In line with u3a National Regulations the Extra Mile Walking group has completed a General Risk Assessment for our walks. It covers the key aspects which need careful consideration for planning: -

ROUTE RECCE SAFETY TRAFFIC ANIMALS WEATHER

This Risk Assessment, using the National u3a framework, is available on our page of the website.

All Walk Leaders complete a walk recce and submit a Plan to the Group Co-ordinator at least 1 week before the walk. It covers route location, distance, brief information of the walk plus location of the parking at the start. It also lists any **additional challenges/risks** that this walk may present beyond the usual challenges/risks of countryside walking in all seasons. This email that goes out to all walkers so they can decide if it is an appropriate walk for them to join.

The nature of our walking in the countryside will feature the following challenges/risks in any of our walk locations. Extra Mile participants must expect to manage any of these on their next walk.

- Hills – up and down gradients of different lengths and steepness
- Stiles – often with quite big steps up, down or they may be poorly maintained.
- Tracks that are rocky underfoot caused by the lumps of flint or slippery with exposed chalk.
- Muddy, squelchy paths and tracks including puddles when the weather is very wet.
- Walking along roads – walk in single file on the RH side or LH when there is a blind RH bend.
- Crossing roads – Members may need to listen to instructions at a busy main road.
- There may be animals in fields – farmland or roaming in New Forest.
- Any unforeseen/ recent obstacle which may have appeared since the recce e.g. fallen trees.

In the walk information published in advance of the walk only risks that are more extreme than those listed above will be highlighted. Walkers joining the group must consider whether they can manage any of the above challenges, within the support of the group.

Walks organised by u3a Groups receive Public Liability Insurance cover for members through the Third Age Trust. This is NOT a personal accident insurance.

It should be noted that participants walk at their own risk.

GETTING TO THE START AND HOME FROM A WALK

The Group activity starts at Holbrook Leisure Centre where we can organise car sharing. We are grateful to drivers willing to offer lifts in their cars including members who do not have cars. The group can only operate if sufficient members with cars enter into this carpool. Drivers should inform their insurers they are offering lifts for a pleasure activity.

Parking can be tight at some walk starts and it is good for the environment to take the minimum number of cars. Membership of the group has become larger in recent years and for safety, Walk Leaders' management, and parking capacity we will limit the number of walkers to 24 – usually 6 cars.

If we exceed 24 or if there are insufficient cars we may not be able to take everyone. This will be managed as fairly as possible.

Members are asked to arrive at Holbrook by 0920 when cars can be sorted and we will depart, as soon as everyone who has said they are coming, are there. We are usually back at Holbrook around 1530 – 1600 depending on the length of the walk and distance to the start.

We ask ALL Members to reply to the email to say if they are coming or not by the Wednesday before the walk.

BE PREPARED

- Check the email & reply by email if you plan to walk or not.
- Wear suitable strong walking shoes/boots & wear appropriate clothing for the weather.
- Bring a picnic in a small rucksack, including drinks. We will have 2 stops on a longer walk.
- Bring something to sit on – a plastic bag will do but you can get little mats in outdoor shops.
- If you are offered a lift, be ready to make a fuel contribution of £4 and bring spare shoes for the return. If parking must be paid for, all in each car should share that cost – this is in addition to the fuel cost.

STAY SAFE

- Only attend a walk which you feel is appropriate for your fitness level.
- Bring any medication you may need and speak to the Group Coordinator if you have any medical needs that might affect your participation.
- Bring sunscreen & sunglasses in the summer; also plenty of water.
- Have extra warm layers in cold weather for stops or in case have to stand around for an incident.
- Stay in sight of the Walk Leader who should be at the front - a backmarker will be nominated.
- We walk at a reasonable pace but recognise everyone has their own comfortable speed – especially up hills. The group will wait for everyone to complete a climb and give everyone the chance to recover their breath.
- Walking poles help support knees and balance on uneven ground and hills.
- We use your contact details held on the Beacon database -you must report changes to the membership secretary.
- You will be asked to provide additional information for safety e.g. emergency contact numbers.
- When driving to the start make sure that you have an accessible mobile in your car.

ENJOY AND RESPECT THE COUNTRYSIDE

We are fortunate to have access to the counties of Hampshire, Sussex & IOW - right on our doorstep - with several areas of outstanding natural beauty. This includes the varied coastlines, the South Downs and the New Forest as well as several other nature reserves. We are committed to observing the Countryside Code, to respecting other land users, and to using Public Rights of Way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Group Co-ordinator : **Kathy Parker** OR

Deputy Group Co-ordinator: **Anna Wood**

From the link on the Extra Mile Group Page on the website.

