

SDOS Birding Walks Risk Assessment Form:

Assessor: Tony Benton, with grateful support to Val Bentley. : Date of - Assessment 3 January 2024

Location: **Henfield levels**, including **Downlink Path** and various footpaths.

Brief Description: A very **low risk** walk - the main hazard being mud and water and slippery surfaces. Generally we meet at 8.30 am at the Downlink Car Park, Upper Station Road, Henfield (Just past the Old Railway pub) (OS TQ205161 ///utensil.however.pancake) Can be muddy, so wear waterproof footwear. Walk will be approx. 4 hours. No toilets on site, but there are public toilets in the High Street by the bus shelter. (Park in the Library car park TQ214160, there is a parking charge, but you may get away with it if you're just using the loo)

Suggested clothing: Warm, waterproof clothing depending on weather conditions; strong footwear or wellington boots after rain. Please note that it can be **very muddy after rain**, and there can be a lot of **standing water**.

Hazard	Who might be harmed	Evaluation of Risk	Risk mitigation measures	Comments
Bad weather	All participants	Low / Medium	Cancel or curtail walk	Monitor weather forecast
Lightning storms	All participants	Medium	Cancel or curtail walk	Monitor weather forecast
Snow and ice	All participants	Low / Medium	Cancel or curtail walk	Monitor weather forecast
Darkness, cloud, fog	All participants	Low	Cancel or curtail walk	Monitor weather forecast
Hot weather - if this is walked spring or summer.	All participants	Low/medium	Participants should bring a drink and wear suitable clothing and consider the need for sunscreen	Monitor weather forecast
Uneven walking surfaces	All participants	Low	Suitable walking shoes or boots are recommended	Participants to ensure that suitable footwear is available to them
Muddy conditions	All participants	Low - but increases to medium or high after heavy rain	Walking boots or wellington boots/ adjust route.	Monitor weather forecast
Standing water and flooding	All participants	Low	Adjust route	Monitor weather forecast

Slippery surfaces	All participants	Low but increases to medium or high after heavy rain.	Adjust route	This is a flat route but it can become very muddy and slippery after rain. A walking pole or similar might help some people.
Steep slopes	All participants	Low	Participants to judge their own capabilities - but overall this is a very flat route.	
Trip hazards	All participants	Low	Participants to judge their own capabilities and take care	
Stiles and gates	All participants	Low	Possibly one stile depending on route, leader to adjust route if necessary	
Barbed wire, electric fences	All participants	Low	People to take care.	
Obstructive vegetation	All participants	Low	leader to check & adjust route if necessary	
Stinging or thorny plants	N/a			
Falling trees or branches	N/a			
Biting insects	All participants	Low - except in spring or summer	If wearing shorts or similar, be aware of very low possibility of ticks	Consult a GP if a tick bite is suspected
Snakes	N/a			
Farm or other animals	All participants	Low	Although unlikely, any farm animals encountered should be given a wide berth and not cornered	

Cycles (and possibly horses being ridden)	All participants	Low/medium	The DownLink is popular with cyclists - take care as their approach might not be heard. Advise members to stand to one side. Advise members carrying telescopes to set them down and stand aside if a horse approaches as they can be spooked by 'scopes	It's worth participants recognising that the Downlink is a shared space. Don't assume it is a completely benign environment
Dogs	All participants	Low	The DownLink is popular with dog walkers - take care if loose dogs around	