

## **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY & GUIDANCE**

**Date Adopted:** 18 March 2026

**Review Date:** 19 March 2027

For Walk Leaders, Back Markers, Stewards, Walkers & Organising Committee

Festival Area: The Lordship of Gower, Wales

Terrain: Coastal paths, countryside, farmland, beaches, commons, roads & pavements

Typical Hazards: Uneven ground, cliffs, weather exposure, livestock, tides

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### **1. Purpose of This Document**

This document sets out the health and safety arrangements for the Gower Walking Festival.

Its aim is to:

- Promote safe enjoyment of walking activities
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Reduce risk to participants, volunteers, and the public
- Ensure compliance with relevant UK health and safety principles

Walking involves inherent risks, especially in coastal and rural environments. These risks cannot be entirely eliminated, but they can be managed responsibly.

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### **2. General Principles**

- Safety is a shared responsibility
- Walks must be planned with reasonable care
- Participants must take personal responsibility for their fitness and behaviour
- Leaders and volunteers are not expected to eliminate all risk, only to act sensibly and proportionately
- Any serious incident or near miss must be reported to the Organising Committee

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### **3. Roles & Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 Organising Committee**

The Organising Committee will:

- Appoint competent walk leaders and volunteers
- Ensure walk descriptions include:
  - Distance
  - Difficulty
  - Terrain
  - Ascent/descent
  - Time and start point
- Provide guidance on safeguarding and emergency procedures

- Hold appropriate public liability insurance
- Maintain an incident reporting system
- Cancel or amend walks if conditions make them unsafe

## 1. Walk Leaders

Walk Leaders are responsible for the safe management of their walk, including:

### Before the Walk

- Planning a suitable route
- Checking weather, tides (where relevant), and local conditions
- Identifying hazards such as:
  - Cliffs and steep drops
  - Slippery rocks
  - Livestock
  - Road crossings
- Carrying:
  - Mobile phone (fully charged)
  - Route map
  - Emergency contact numbers
- Confirming a back marker (where applicable)

### At the Start (following Stewards announcements)

- Introduce yourself and the back marker
- Explain:
  - Route and duration
  - Key hazards
  - Expected pace
  - Breaks
- Make clear that walkers must inform you if they leave the group

### During the Walk

- Set a pace appropriate to the slowest walkers
- Monitor group wellbeing
- Adjust plans if conditions change
- Keep visual or agreed contact with the back marker

### In an Emergency

- Ensure group safety
- Contact emergency services if needed (999 / 112 – ask for Police then Mountain Rescue if appropriate)
- Inform the Organising Committee as soon as possible

### 3.3 Walk Back Markers

Back Markers support the walk leader by:

- Staying at the rear of the group
- Informing the leader if anyone:
  - Is struggling
  - Stops or leaves the walk
  - Shows signs of illness or fatigue
- Helping manage road crossings or narrow paths if requested
- Carrying a mobile phone

Back markers do not make route decisions, but act as eyes and ears for the leader.

### 3.4 Stewards

Stewards should:

- Follow instructions from the Organising Committee
- Be visible and approachable before the start of the walk
- Distribute walkers' identity wrist band
- Request walkers have In Case of Emergency (ICE) information
- Check walkers have appropriate footwear, clothing, food and water
- Assist walkers with directions and safety advice prior to the walk
- Read 1 page safety summary to participants and check that they understand
- Check participants are ok with photos and videos for GDPR compliance and participant privacy

### 3.5 Walkers (Participants)

All walkers are expected to:

- Choose walks appropriate to their fitness and experience
- Wear suitable footwear and clothing
- Carry adequate food, water, and medication
- Follow instructions from walk leaders, back markers and stewards
- Take care near cliffs, roads, livestock, and uneven ground
- Keep dogs under control and on leads where required
- Inform leader of any allergies or health issues prior to the walk
- Have ICE information
- Inform the leader if they:
  - Feel unwell
  - Need to leave the walk

Participation is at the walker's own risk.

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## 4. Key Hazards & Control Measures

### 4.1 Terrain

- Uneven paths, mud, rocks, sand, and steep slopes
- Walk leaders will warn of hazards
- Walkers must take care and wear appropriate footwear
- Urban areas
- Roads and traffic

- Proximity to water (sea, rivers, reservoirs, lakes)

#### **4.2 Cliffs & Coastal Areas**

- Stay well back from cliff edges
- Beware of erosion and unstable ground
- Leaders to monitor group positioning

#### **4.3 Weather**

- Conditions can change rapidly
- Walks may be altered or cancelled
- Walkers should carry waterproofs and warm layers

#### **4.4 Livestock**

- Keep distance from animals
- Dogs must be on leads where livestock are present
- Walk calmly and do not run

#### **4.5 Roads**

- Walk in single file where necessary
- Leaders and stewards will manage crossings
- High-visibility clothing may be used where appropriate

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### **5. Medical & Emergency Procedures**

- Walk leaders will carry a mobile phone
- Emergency services: 999 or 112
- Give clear location details (OS grid reference if possible)
- Minor incidents should be recorded and reported
- Walk leaders are not expected to provide medical treatment beyond basic assistance

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### **6. Incident Reporting**

Any of the following must be reported to the Organising Committee:

- Accidents requiring medical attention
- Near misses
- Behaviour that put others at risk
- Walk cancellations due to safety concerns

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### **7. Acceptance of Risk**

Walking is an outdoor activity with inherent risks. By taking part in the Gower Walking Festival, all participants acknowledge these risks and accept responsibility for their own safety, while the festival undertakes to manage activities with reasonable care.

### **8. Review**

This Health & Safety document will be reviewed annually or following any significant incident.