



LDWA - FAQs for Social Walks in England Following Updated Government Guidance

The Government made some changes to the maximum size for groups in England. These come into effect from 14 September 2020. We have consulted other organisations and we are exempt from the limit of six people, so organised social walks of a larger number (up to and including 30 people) can continue in England as per our existing rules and risk assessment.

There is some background to this decision at:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus>

Which includes the text:

“While social gatherings of more than six people will be banned in England from 14 September, the government’s confirmed that organised sports and activities that have been through return to play protocols can continue, as can organised outdoor sports and physical activity events such as parkrun, which is due to return next month.”

Along with the Ramblers, we are the two governing bodies for walking and we take that very seriously as we know that with this comes a great deal of responsibility. Without guidelines, there would be no walking in groups for over six people.

Below are some FAQs regarding our decision:

Why are the LDWA exempt?

Our walks are *“outdoor physical activity events”* and so are not included in the limits. The Ramblers have made the same decision, because we have put together a structure in our rules which has reduced the risks of COVID-19.

The NEC has undertaken work to ensure that we produce a risk assessment which complies with the rules, including covering droplet transmission, aerosol generation, fomite transmission and population

risks in line with Sport England guidance. The outcome of that risk assessment, which can be seen at https://www.ldwa.org.uk/website/downloads/toolkit/LDWA_MASTER_COVID-19_Risk_Assessment_Rules_and_Guidance_Combined_V3_0_FINAL.pdf, has informed our rules which must be adhered to at a local level.

The LDWA and walking is not listed by the UK Government (England) as an activity that can be pursued in groups of more than six. How does the LDWA qualify legally to allow social walks in England to have more than six people?

The UK Government (England) guidance does not currently list walking as an organised sport or licensed outdoor physical activity but does go on to say (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>), *“Other sports or licensed outdoor physical activities may also be permitted where their governing body has published guidance.”* The LDWA is the national governing body for rambling and has published guidance to its members and therefore enables social walking to continue as long as the introduced rules are followed.

What about if members of the public see the LDWA walking in large groups and don't understand?

Walk leaders must carry, either on paper or electronically, a copy of the risk assessment (pages 7-10 inclusive) required for the walk (if 7-30 people), in case of a query from the authorities or a member of the public. We encourage walk leaders and groups to consider the reputation of the LDWA and the impact on communities. However, the NEC is content that we have provided a legal framework so that individual leaders and groups can make decisions that they feel appropriate for their local area.

We also recommend that leaders have access to the high-level risk assessment (pages 1 to 6 of the document) produced by the LDWA in case of query on a walk. Please be aware that some members of the community may be concerned to see larger groups out in the public and so please be tolerant and understanding if approached by anyone. We want to work with communities at this time more than ever.

I'm nervous about walking with larger groups.

As before, walk leaders and groups can make the decision on how many people they're comfortable with on walks. In England, this can be any number up to and including 30. If it's 7 or more people, there needs to be a risk assessment.

As a walk leader, is there any help in organising a walk, are there any external tools?

Any walk leader who is looking for assistance can look at the Toolkit on the LDWA web-site for help in the first instance, or speak to local group representatives. Although these guidelines are aimed at Scotland, there is information at <https://www.sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/> which can be used in England.

Can groups of more than six LDWA members walk together on unofficial walks as friends?

Any walk organised by the LDWA using our web-site, local web-site or social media is an official walk, which would mean following the rules laid out for the return of social walking. Walking with friends is outside of the jurisdiction of the LDWA, so would be limited to 6 people and would not be classed as an LDWA walk.

Is it worth leading walks at the moment?

The current situation does mean some extra steps for walk leaders in preparing and thinking about their walk to complete the risk assessment. However, much of this is common sense and we've had feedback that walk leaders have found the process very manageable. We understand that some walk leaders aren't yet ready to return to leading, which is absolutely fine and everyone must feel comfortable. But, we do want to provide walks where we can, so if walk leaders are willing to lead walks we do very much appreciate it, as do our members.

What about food and drink stops?

Care should be taken to ensure that social distancing is maintained not just during the walk, but also during any stops for refreshments. Please be aware that new regulations in England limit groups in pubs, cafes and restaurants to six people. The walk leader should be conscious of the legal situation and the reputational challenge of this.