

THREE TOWERS HIKE 2025

Process Manual and Risk Assessment

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this document

This document describes the organization and purpose of the Three Towers Hike, its planning and management processes and the event's operation, including its risk assessment which is reviewed annually.

Background

The Three Towers Hike is a down-land footpath competition hike that normally takes place in early Spring each year.

The first Hike took place during the 1970's as a result of Scout Leaders from the then Reading Riverside District having taken part in other well-established nationally-organizing Scout Hikes (e.g. Four Inns).

The name came from the original route which passed three Water Towers, including Emmer Green in north Reading, and Tilehurst in west Reading.

In the early days the event was based around the north and west of Reading and covered a route, much of which is now a housing estate on the northern edges of Reading. The hike gets its name from its early days when the route passed three large water towers including Emmer Green in northern Reading. Today, Tilehurst Water Tower is the most noticeable and is the only remaining tower visible on the route!

The route has changed over the years and now Tilehurst Water Tower remains the only tower on the original route. As this tower isn't on the Scout route, the hike has informally adopted East Ilsley Church as one of the towers on the route.

In the 1990's a junior event was introduced for Scouts, and in 2003 an Explorer route was added for Explorer Scouts. In 2010 a Scout Plus route was introduced for older Scouts. In 2023 the format of the hikes was changed with the Classic Hike being withdrawn due to lack of teams and the Explorer hike was changed to the Explorer + hike and is now based on footpaths and bridleways around the South Downs area and is planned as a daytime event

Explorer+

The Explorer event covers some 28 miles (branded as 45 km) and revised for the 2023 event.

The Explorer Event is the longest event and starts early in the morning. The hike covers some of the checkpoints of the Scout and Tim's Junket Hike and was introduced in its current format in 2023

Scout

The Scout event is a scaled down version of the hike covering about 18 miles (27km) running concurrently with the other Hike's and is intended for Scout age teams.

The Scout hike starts at the Dolphin Centre. Pangbourne and uses a number of checkpoints that the other event hike uses.

Tim's Junket

Tim's Junket hike was introduced as a shorter non-competitive Hike for adults and younger members to take part as a tester of the other two hikes - it is approximately 13 miles (21Km)

Pre-Event Management

The planning for the event is performed by the event's management committee. They meet to successfully establish the event each year, ensuring sufficient participating hiker numbers, to review the risk assessment, and to establish suitable controls and procedures for the safe operation of the event.

The Committee Structure

The committee is formed by a team interested in running the event. The core team is established as follows.

Position	Role	Scouting Appointment
<i>Hike Director</i>	<i>Chairs the planning team meetings, responsible for arranging meetings and coordinating and liaising with the various team members</i>	<i>Pauline Turner - 2025 Bob Spokes - 103rd Reading (planning)</i>
<i>Hike Secretary</i>	<i>Processing entries Notes of meetings</i>	<i>To be appointed - check with Pauline</i>
<i>Hike Treasurer</i>	<i>Maintain accounts Pay invoices etc.</i>	<i>Reading Central District Treasurer</i>
<i>Chief Marshall</i>	<i>Appoint checkpoint staff Advise on equipment needed Arrange pre hike meeting Liaise with Radio manager Liaise with First Aid Manager Organise sweep team</i>	<i>Pauline Turner - 1st Cold Ash Assistant - Richard Goodyear</i>
<i>Validation Manager</i>	<i>Responsible for reviewing the required hiker kit list Establishing check-in procedures at the beginning of event Arbiter if items on kit list are suitable or not provided by hikers as to whether they can take part</i>	

Position	Role	Scouting Appointment
<i>Rights of way</i>	<i>Establishing contacts with various landowners as to location of checkpoints and informing them date of hike etc.</i>	<i>Dave Weaver - 103rd Reading Assistant -</i>
<i>Catering Manager</i>	<i>Responsible for purchase of food and drink supplies for checkpoints and staff Co-Ordinate distribution of food and drink for the hike</i>	<i>Dave Coppock - Taceham District</i>
<i>Website and IT manager</i>	<i>Manage and update website Manage social media posts</i>	<i>Micheal Shellard - Neptune ESU</i>
<i>Communications Manager</i>	<i>Responsible for the establishment of an event-wide radio communications network for the relay of hiker welfare traffic Recruitment of sufficient qualified amateur radio operators to cover checkpoints, hike control and transport</i>	<i>Ian Alderton - RARC - Taceham District</i>
<i>First Aid</i>	<i>First aid cover to be supplied by Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue (BLSAR.) - extent of cover to be agreed prior to the hike BLSAR to provide backup information and any risk assessments required</i>	<i>Paul Chapman - BLSAR</i>

In addition to the above, the District Lead Volunteer and Treasurer are ex-officio members who can attend any of the planning meetings.

CONTROL AND PROCEDURE

The controls and procedures detail any control measures identified in the Risk Assessment which need further explanation for anyone implementing them.

Event Authorisation

The District Lead Volunteer of Reading Central has the de facto jurisdiction for the event by way of legacy of the original organising District, and as the accounts for the event are held in trust by Reading Central District.

Under Scout Association rules, the event is classified as Terrain Zero – entire under 500 meters altitude and within 30 minutes of a metaled highway.

The event passes through the following Scout Districts and Counties:

Pang Valley (Royal Berkshire)
Taceham Hundred (Royal Berkshire)
Kennet (Royal Berkshire)
King Alfred (Oxfordshire)
Didcot (Oxfordshire)
Wallingford (Oxfordshire)
South Chiltern (Oxfordshire)

As an adventurous activity, a notification of the event is posted via the Berkshire Scouts website's activity notification portal. Additionally, a notification will be made to the County Lead Volunteer of Oxfordshire and to the individual District Lead Volunteers of the relevant districts in Berkshire.

Validation and Check-in

The check-in process for teams establishes a standard level of team equipment and personal kit required by competitors; the requirements are identified in advance and published on the event website and in the hikers' joining instruction.

Every team prior to commencing the event will be scrutinised for sufficient clothing, rations, maps etc. A team can be disqualified and not permitted to start if it has insufficient equipment. This must be carried at all times, not just including when arriving and leaving a checkpoint.

INDIVIDUAL KIT

Each competitor must wear or carry as appropriate on the Hike:

- * Substantial footwear or walking boots (not soft-soled trainers) suitable for walking long distances;
- * Long trousers (not jeans). Shorts may be worn if weather conditions permit, however long trousers must be carried and worn if conditions change;
- * *Waterproof (not shower-proof) over-garment with hood*
- * Waterproof over trousers
- * Jumper with long sleeves or other warm body garment with high thermal properties. Plus, a spare sweater/alternative.
- * Headgear, Gloves
- * Reflectors or safety tapes (visible from front and rear).
- * Water bottle/bladder (minimum 1 litre)
- * Whistle
- * Personal first aid kit
- * Appropriate hiking snacks (plus additional for emergencies)
- * Pencil and notebook

TEAM KIT

Two sets of relevant maps (see website for clarification one can be a copy)

Adequate waterproof covering for maps

At least one mobile phone with a number provided at check in (stored securely in a bag for emergencies)

Survival bag

Route Checkpoints

The checkpoints on the event course provide a safe stopping point for hikers at which refreshments and/or first aid can be applied.

The locations of each checkpoint are identified in advance and published on the event website and in the hikers' joining instruction.

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Each checkpoint will be run by a checkpoint marshal who will be responsible for establishing the location in accordance with the chief marshal's instructions. The exception to this is Starveall, Kiddington Cottage and Cheseridge which will be an unmanned checkpoints.

The checkpoint marshal will be a member of the Scout Association.

The checkpoint will also have a radio operator whose responsibility is purely to provide a reliable VHF radio communications link from the checkpoint to the hike control, and to pass any traffic instructed by the hike, in accordance with any licensing conditions.

In addition, some key checkpoints may have personnel from the appointed First Aid service to provide additional facilities.

The marshal and radio operator may be the same person, but always there must be at least two adults at the checkpoint.

The following is a full list of checkpoints for the 2025 checkpoints that can be found on the website: www.hike.org.uk

Public Highway – shared route and crossing points.

The event consists of a series of checkpoints to which hikers are required to navigate a route between each checkpoint. As such, no prescribed route is employed in the event, however, there is usually an obvious route that can be taken between each checkpoint. Young hikers are particularly encouraged to practice with under the leadership of their section leader to gain familiarity of the terrain involved. The majority of the route follows public footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and paved urban footpaths. A small portion of the route involves on-road walking, or the crossing of a metalled highway. Note A34 must only be crossed in Explorer + hike and only by underpass or bridge.

Cut off time.

Teams not reaching checkpoints by a certain time will be withdrawn. This can only be overridden at the exclusive discretion of the Hike Director. The times for Scout hike are Warren Farm at 14.00 hours and 19.00 Hours at East Isley, the Explorer + Hike are Warren Farm at 14.00 Hours, Blewbury at 16.00 Hours, East Hendred at 18.00 Hours and East Isley at 19.00 Hours

Sweep and Search

A sweep team is put in place to enable.

1. Identification and tracking of tail-end teams
2. Permit checkpoints to close before the last hikers have reached the next checkpoint
3. Enable tail-end hikers to continue where there are less than 3 hikers

A search team is put in place to enable:

1. Priority identification and location of tail-end teams or missing individuals
2. Alerting hike control room of any priority needs to enable deployment of additional support
3. To stay with teams/hikers in the event of an emergency

A sweep/search team consists of a minimum of two adults, one of whom is a Scout Association member, and one of whom holds and is able to operate radio (can be the same person). The sweep team will carry basic rations, drinking water for hikers, survival bag/jacket and first aid.

In the event that the trailing team is reduced to two members, then the sweep will walk with them to ensure the minimum three until such a time that the team can form an ad hoc team with other hikers to continue the event.

Minibuses

The hike will only use road-worthy minibuses fitted with seat belts

Seatbelts must be worn by ALL drivers and passengers.

By law, the driver is responsible for ensuring all passengers under 14 years old wear a seatbelt

No hiker under 16 years old will sit in the front seats of the minibuses.

Drivers must be suitably licensed for the vehicle and have a valid MIDAS or PSV qualification

The installation of radio communications devices into the minibus must not interfere with the driver's ability to control the vehicle.

The driver is not permitted to use the radio communication device while driving the vehicle

When parked at roadside, the vehicle must be positioned such that alighting passengers are not required to enter the main public highway

The minibus driver will take instructions of the next destination to drive to from the marshal or the radio operator in the minibus

Gangways and exits will be kept clear at all times.

A record of which Scouts/Explorers have been transported back to Compton HQ in any minibuses will be maintained; As the buses return, the list should be handed in to the control room.

First Aid Provision

The organisers recognise that a range of conditions may be encountered by participants, including.

Hypothermia, Hyperthermia, Dehydration, Exhaustion
Cuts and grazes, Blisters, Ankle injuries

These conditions are mitigated by

Appropriate clothing (as per kit list)

Ability for people to resolve their own condition (e.g. Personal first aid, water bottle)

Medical Cover for the hike will be provided by Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue (BLSAR.)
They will provide mobile and fixed cover as per their Operational Medical Plan.

Buildings.

Hike Control and kit checking for Explorer+ and Junket Hikes will be based as Compton Scout HQ

Scout hike kit check will be at Dolphin Centre Pangbourne

Marshall in charge at each location will clear the building if need arises.

Catering

Compton Scout building is used as the hub for food distribution and meal preparation. Meals, snacks and refreshments are offered to all participants at different parts of the route.

Contamination

Care will be taken to reduce the hazards caused by contamination. These are bacterial (likely to cause food poisoning), chemicals (such as cleaning materials or fuels), and foreign materials (e.g. glass, plastic)

Special Diets

The event catering manager will ensure that special dietary needs which have been requested by hikers and staff are effectively implemented. This includes vegan/vegetarian, intolerance/allergy, and religious diets.

Food Purchase

Only reputable and trusted suppliers will be used.

Food Storage

Food bought for the event will be stored in an appropriate and safe manner for the type of food it is.

Food requiring immediate refrigeration must be stored at the correct temperatures for the product until required.

Raw meat must be stored below cooked meat to prevent contamination by juices.

Chilled food should be stored wrapped or in containers.

Food Preparation

Persons appointed to handle and prepare food must always wash and clean their hands before contact with food. Hygiene is paramount!

Surfaces should be kept clean and tidy at all times and an area allocated for chopping and preparation maintain separately from storage areas and serving areas.

Colour-coded chopping boards and knives must be used to reduce contamination.

Food requiring cooking should be heated to a centre temperature of at least 75°C to kill bacteria.

Cooked food requiring cooling should be chilled rapidly to below 5°C.

Chilled food required to be reheated must be reheated once only to a centre temperature of at least 75°C.

Food heated and maintained warmth must be kept above 65°C and covered.

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

As part of the effective safety management of The Three Towers Hike, we carry out risk assessments. The risk assessment form has two principle functions:

1. Provide staff with a clear method for assessing the activities we are managing and to ensure that measures are in place to control your hazards.
2. Give senior staff visibility of the risk exposure during the event, allowing them to provide assistance with mitigation and ensuring appropriate emergency response is in place.

The assessment covers the use of buildings, facilities and equipment, and the safety of individual participants and staff. The assessment does not cover facilities out of the control of the hike organisation. To be reviewed annually.

Risk Assessment Scoring **The Risk Factor (R) is calculated as the product of Severity (S) And Likelihood (L) $R=S \times L$**

Severity Scale (S)

1=minor injury, damage or loss to a small number of people of damage to insignificant equipment;

2=serious injury, damage or loss requiring inability to take part in event;

3=fatality, major injury or total loss of equipment.

Likelihood Scale (S)

1=Most Unlikely; 2=Unlikely; 3=Fairly Likely; 4=Likely; 5=Most Likely.

Last updated **26th March 2025**

History

1 Dec 2007 – initial RA created and reviewed at 3 Dec 2007 meeting 3 Dec 2008 reviewed at Hike Planning

30 Jan 2009 - Further reviewed by Bob Meldrum & Howard da Silva, Jan 2009. 17 Feb 2009 – reviewed and adopted for 2009 event at Hike Planning Meeting 31 March 2009 – typos.

28 Feb 2010 – scout plus, and transport

16 Dec 2010 – review for 2011 event - added Search & Sweep 21 Feb 2011 – Inclusion into 2011 Operations manual

1 March 2011 – Publication for 2011 event.

18 January 2012 – Updated for 2012 operations – Jubilee Event + ScoutMed services 7 February 2012 – Updated following review by Paul Bandy

15 January 2013 – update 1 for 2013 event.

15 January 2016 – update 1 for 2016 event – Wording updated Junket/SEBEV 6 February

6 February 2018 – Explorers start changed.

28 February 2020 – Minor changes to wording, dates etc.

June 2023 – Classic hike omitted; Explorer amended to Explorer +

27/01/2024 - Amendments as October 23 hike

26 March 2025 – Leader roles updated to new terminology.

Change to Hike Director on the day for 2025.

Ref to SEBEV updated to Berkshire Lowland Search & Rescue / BLSAR Grammatical, spelling and formatting corrections.