

A walk in search of the commons

A group walk for women looking to identify common land or common resources in the public domain



A step by step guide to recreating a walk in search of the commons.



Recruit a group

A diverse group of women that have some investment in the area.



Map a route

Decide on the time and distance and start and finish.



Gather your kit -

Bring the following materials with you on the walk:

- A print out map of the area you wish to walk in
- Paper, pens, pencils and drawing boards
- Twine or rope and sticks or canes for marking out space
- Jam jars and water for soil samples
- Plastic bags or envelopes for storing samples



Take a walk

Decide on the area to walk as a group



Observe environs

Look for sites



Select a site

The site not contain boundaries or signs that imply private property. It should feel suitable as a community growing space. It can be large or small. Ideally it contains some soil and possibly, existing vegetation.



Observe the site

By observing the landscape we draw inspiration from the survival strategies followed by natural systems and imitate them using species of more direct use to us.



Use the checklist in Appendix 1 to note the features of the site.





Mark out area

Mark out the site with wool, string or twine or take rough measurements.

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Collect data and samples

You may wish to draw sketches, take photos, carry out soil tests and collect soil samples, take resource samples.

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Plot site on a printed map

Delimit the area

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Walk on ending with a group discussion.

After the walk, if a decision is made to revisit a site, do a Land Registry check.

Start to create your vision for the site.

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Site Checklist

Use all your senses to smell, touch, hearing, sight, taste. Get a feel for the space. Take note of the following aspects:

**Temperatures/
Location of sun**

View/outlook

**Access to the
site (track/road
etc)**

**Sloping, rocky or
boggy areas**

**Existing
vegetation**

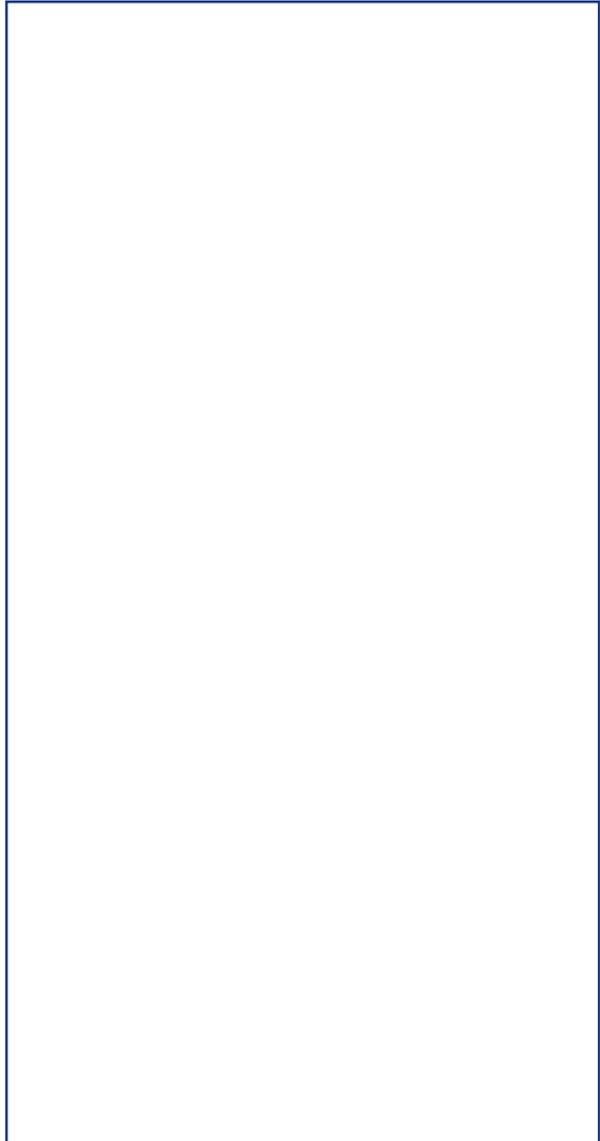
**Wind breaks
(e.g. trees)**

**People, animals
and wildlife**

**Potential
problems**

**Any useful re-
sources (water,
wood etc)**

**Anything else
you notice?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for taking notes or observations during a site visit. It occupies the right half of the page, adjacent to the checklist items.

Preliminary soil tests

Check that your site is not anaerobic, polluted, waterlogged or too dry.

1) Anaerobic conditions and pollution

The smell test:

1. Take a handful of soil from the site.
2. Thoroughly smell the handful of soil, does it have a:
 - Sour, putrid or chemical smell?
 - No smell?
 - Earthy, sweet or fresh smell?

Record the answer.

2) Waterlogging and dryness

The squeeze test:

1. Take a handful of soil in your palm and squeeze
2. Observe what happens to the soil:
 - The soil is dry if there is no water and the soil does not stick together at all when squeezed.
 - The soil is moist if there is no visible water and no drips, however the soil sticks together slightly and is not dry
 - The soil is wet if there is visible water which runs or drips out of the soil when squeezed

Record the answer.

Soil texture test

Purpose: To establish the proportion of clay, silt and sand in your soil. Clay soil will hold water and nutrients but is easily compacted and can become waterlogged in wet weather and bake hard in dry weather. Sandy soil holds its structure well but drains quickly and does not hold nutrients well. Silty soils comes in the middle. Loam is a good mix of clay, silt and sand.

The soil jar test

Equipment: Glass jar, timer, water, ruler/tape measure and a fine-tip marker pen

On site complete steps 1-3.

1. Remove a vertical slice of soil approximately 30 cm deep from the side of the pit being used for soil tests.
2. Remove any large rocks or organic matter, then break up all the lumps.
3. Fill the jar to the halfway point with soil
4. Using your fingers pack the soil down as much as possible to reduce pore space and mark the level of soil on the side of the jar with a pen.
5. Fill the jar to the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark with water and shake vigorously for 3 minutes or until the sample is fully suspended in the water.
6. Set the jar on a level surface where it can be left undisturbed for a day.
7. After 1 minute mark on the side of the jar the level of settled particles at the bottom, this is the volume of sand in the sample.
8. After 2 hours mark on the side of the jar the level of settled particles, these particles are the silt in the sample.
9. After the water has cleared (this can take over 24 hours) mark on the side of the jar the level of particles. These particles are the clay in the sample.
10. Using a ruler or a tape measure use the distances on the jar to calculate the relative proportions of sand, silt and clay in the soil samples.
11. Using the soil texture triangle on the next page, determine the type of soil
12. Record your results

