

Kendal Fellwalkers

GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF WALKS

The purpose of this note is to emphasise that the club's walks are planned and intended to be run as group events. This means that in normal circumstances *members are expected to stay in touch with the leader and to follow the published programme*. Despite the best endeavours, there is a tendency in all walking clubs for groups to break up. This can happen for various reasons:

- ❑ when people who feel tired, unwell or unsafe become separated and are then left behind
- ❑ when faster walkers pull ahead and open a gap between themselves and the main group
- ❑ when part of a group detaches itself and heads off on an unscheduled detour

Whatever the causes of break-ups, we should try very hard to avoid them because of the potentially serious problems, as well as the trouble and annoyance, to which they can lead. The consequences may include:

- ❑ putting members at risk of injuring themselves or getting lost
- ❑ causing distress to members left behind by the main party
- ❑ causing delay if a detached group is slow in returning to the main party
- ❑ making leaders feel upset and blameworthy for failing to control the walk
- ❑ disrupting transport arrangements for the journey home

The companion note 'Safety on the Hills' gives guidelines for increasing enjoyment and reducing the chances of accidents on club walks. Some recommendations from this note are restated below.

1. Try to stay in visual contact with the group. If you do nevertheless find yourself too far ahead, please allow the rest to catch up by waiting at a significant feature like a summit, a col or a major path junction. It is a matter of courtesy as well as of safety to do this.
2. When you see anyone in difficulty or being left behind, do something about it – pass word ahead to the leader, and if you find yourself in the same position, shout! This is better than letting someone become anxious or exhausted and perhaps in need of help or rescue later on.
3. Be sure to tell the leader if you decide to separate from the group. If you leave the walk voluntarily you will thereafter be regarded as independent – the main party will not be obliged to wait for you or to provide any further help, and the club's insurance may no longer cover you. (You may also need to rearrange your transport home.) Never leave a walk without telling anyone or you may be treated as missing and consequently be searched for, just as you would be if you were to fall behind through fatigue or injury.
4. Carry your mobile phone. Switch it on (at least in emergencies) and store selected numbers.
5. Be realistic about your capabilities and choose your walks from the club programme accordingly.
6. Remember that the leaders are volunteers. You and the club are indebted to them, so please give them your full support and respect their authority.

The following guidelines are for the attention of leaders:

1. Problems will be minimised if you keep the group as compact as is practicable. Look out for the slower members, don't always be at the front, and at intervals check that all those in the initial headcount are still present. Unless the group is small (below about six) you should name a fit member as the 'back marker' who must ensure that no one is left behind and advise you of any problems at the tail of the walk. All these points are especially important in poor visibility or approaching darkness.
2. Have a definite route in mind. Ideally you should have walked it out quite recently so that you are prepared for any difficulties and know suitable coffee break, lunch and rendezvous points.
3. At the start of a walk stress that it is a club event and that leaving the group without good reason is discouraged. You may like to give members an outline of the route, although this is not obligatory.

(Revised September 2010)
