

## **Guidelines for Walk Leaders - Wendover U3A Walking Group** **Regular walks starting at 10am on 1st Thurs & 3rd Tues.**

Thank you for volunteering to lead a walk. We hope it is a happy experience. Your aim is to provide a walk close to 5 miles in length, starting at 10am and taking 2½ hours to complete. It doesn't have to be a new walk - it is quite alright to repeat a walk, perhaps in reverse direction, in a different season or starting from a different location. If you have any questions, please contact the group convenors who will be happy to help. You may also find the separate document 'Tips for Organising a Pub Lunch' useful.

If you are planning a Summer Special or a Strollers Walk these Guidelines still apply but the start time, length and level of walk and relevant convenor may vary.

### **Planning your Route**

The Walking Group has a collection of local books and maps which are kept by the convenors. Please ask if you would like to borrow any. If you are still short of ideas ask other walkers and leaders for thoughts, you'll find people helpful and supportive. You may find it useful to link up with another member for moral support and for company when practicing your route.

### **Practice your chosen Route**

- Go out and do a recce of your route, it's not unusual to have to adjust it slightly to make it work.
- Start from somewhere with sufficient parking space
- Aim to complete your walk in about 2 hours 10 minutes without stops. A group of walkers take longer to negotiate stiles and gradients and will need a 10 minute rest & refreshment break, all of which will lengthen your walk by at least 20 minutes.
- Count stiles, note steep gradients and hazards such as road crossings etc.
- Look for a nice spot to have a mid-way refreshment break.
- Nearer the day re-walk your route to check for the unexpected e.g. cows with calves are now in a field, fallen trees, a muddy path has become an impassable bog, a footpath across a field has been ploughed up. You may need to re-route around the hazard.

### **Walk Description**

- Use the current Walking Programme as a guide for what to include - length, terrain, number of stiles etc. Your description must be accurate as walkers will use it to decide whether the walk is suitable for them. Include the address, postcode and Grid Ref of the meeting place. (<http://www.gridreferencefinder.com> is a useful website which converts postcodes to 6 figure grid refs.)
- Email your walk description to the relevant convenor (currently Moira) together with your landline and mobile numbers. It will be published on the 6 monthly Walking Programme, the Group Webpage and the Screen Updates at the Monthly Meeting before your walk.

### **How walkers sign up for a walk**

- At the Monthly Meeting before your walk the convenors will provide a Sign-up List with your walk description for people to put their names on and indicate if they are staying for lunch. If possible please collect it together with the First Aid Kit from the Walking Group table by 11am (before the Speaker starts). If you are not attending the convenors will get the List and First Aid Kit to you later.
- Not all members attend the Monthly Meetings so expect phone calls from people wanting to sign up for the walk and from others who may need to cancel. Keep the Sign-up List up to date with the changes as it will become your Walk Register on the day.

### **The Day Before**

- Check the weather forecast (and public transport if you're using bus or train)
- If you have to cancel your walk contact a Convenor first to see if a way can be found for the walk to go ahead, e.g. with a stand-in Leader. If there is no alternative to cancelling notify everyone on the Sign-up List by phone.

### **On the Day of your Walk**

- Take everything you'll need – route map, OS map, First Aid Kit, mobile phone, and the Sign-up List (using a clipboard helps if you have one).
- Arrive early and tick people off the Sign-up List as they arrive. Cross through cancellations and no-shows, add people who have turned up without booking (which happens sometimes) so that you have a complete list of walkers.
- You are not obliged to wait for latecomers, better to leave on time and return on time.
- The walkers are in your care but each individual is responsible for their own safety.
- Advise any would be walkers if you consider their clothing or footwear is not up to the demands of the walk –BUT the decision to walk or not is theirs.
- Dogs are welcome under proper control and on leads on roads or near livestock.
- Appoint a volunteer backmarker. Make sure you both know the head count before setting off.

### **Before setting off**

- welcome everyone and introduce yourself and your backmarker
- give an outline of your route-direction, length, terrain, plus any hazards such as main road crossings, stiles etc
- tell walkers to speak to you or the backmarker if they wish to leave the walk early, feel unwell or have any concerns
- tell walkers to let the backmarker know if they are dropping back to take a comfort break, so they are not accidentally left behind
- remind walkers to keep sight of the person in front of them or they may risk not knowing which way to turn at a path junction
- make it clear you are setting off so the group moves off as one

### **During your Walk**

- Stay at the front and set a comfortable pace
- If faster walkers get ahead of you either you ask them to stay behind you or ask them not to go out of your sight and to stop when they come to a path junction.
- Regularly check behind you to see how the group is doing, stop as necessary to let walkers catch up and regroup, especially at footpath junctions or in woodland where there is a higher risk of walkers losing sight of each other.
- Whilst stopped check the headcount and speak with your backmarker to see how people at the back of the group are doing. Give those at the back a chance to catch their breath if necessary before moving off.
- If any walkers wish to leave the group before completion of the walk you should assess whether they are safe to find their own way. Eg are they injured or unwell; do they know their current location and route back to the start; do they have a map, water and mobile phone with them? If necessary appoint a volunteer to lead them safely back to their transport or take the whole group back to the starting point.

### **The Role of the Backmarker**

- Their role is to make sure no-one gets left behind or drops out of the group without anyone realising, and to advise you if anyone is struggling or needs a break to catch their breath.
- They should stay at the back, frequently check the headcount, and ensure no walkers drop behind them except for discreet comfort breaks, in which case they should continue on for a sensible distance and wait until the walker catches up and re-joins the group.

### **After the Walk**

- Check everyone has returned safely.
- Give the First Aid Kit and your Sign Up List to the relevant convenor (currently Judy). If she is not present give them to Moira, if neither are present keep both items and pass them on when you next see them.
- If an accident resulting in injury has occurred on your walk please complete the Accident Report Form which is inside the First Aid Kit and give it to one of the convenors.

**Well done and thank you!**