

Bridgnorth and District Walking Club

Guidance for Walk Leaders

1. Risks and insurance cover

Please read the document “Guidance for Members” in conjunction with this document. It covers a number of risks that might arise and tells you how members should have prepared. It also reduces the length of briefing you need to give.

Other actions you, as walk leader, can take to reduce risk are covered below.

You are insured for negligence and any claims against you or the club for any incidents arising. Note that the insurance does NOT cover injuries members may sustain that are their own fault – it is not personal accident insurance. You can view the club’s insurance policy on its web site.

2. Before the walk

If you have not led a walk before, there are experienced members who are happy to assist. Ask a committee member to put you in touch with one of them.

Choose the route

- Choose a route within your own capabilities to lead. You can use routes from books, magazines or off the internet, or make up your own route from maps or from previous walks on the club web site.
- Plan to start your route where there is safe provision for several cars to park. If there are toilets in the area then include the location in your information to be sent to members.
- Consider the likely ability and fitness of the group and the season and terrain.
- Consider what the grade will be and the time of year most appropriate for the walk.
- Make use of public rights of way, permissive ways and access land. Try to keep road walking to a minimum. Good tracks may be more suitable than footpaths when it is wet.
- Plan options to shorten the route if necessary and for alternative walks in bad weather.

Recce the Walk

- It is essential to recce your walk to check it is viable and to ensure you can find the way. A second person is good company and can be back-marker on the walk.
- Take notes of any possible difficulties, risks and interesting features. Identify places for coffee breaks and lunch, preferably on dry ground, sheltered but possibly with a view.
- Please report any obstacles on the route or broken stiles to the appropriate local authority giving the exact location and a photograph if possible. See the club web site.

Admin

- Send information on the walk and starting point to the Programme Secretary in the usual format. Include more information in the difficulty of the walk for mountain walks.
- The club will provide walk leaders and back-markers with a whistle to keep, if they don’t have one.
- If you wish to claim expenses for your fuel costs when you recce your walk, download the claim form from the club web site. The Club can reimburse expenses in excess of an 80-mile round trip at the current rate. Please submit claim forms promptly after your recce.

3. The day before the walk

- Check the weather forecast: www.metoffice.gov.uk or www.mwis.org.uk for mountain areas. Be prepared to make alterations to the proposed route, or cancel it in extremis, and advise the Programme Secretary (or another committee member) if you do so.
- Pack your maps and compass. A GPS may be worthwhile for some walks.
- Check you have access to a club first-aid kit and a (charged) mobile phone.
- Ensure that you have contact details for the emergency services: 999 or 112.
- Make sure that you, or someone on the walk, will be able give map grid references to the emergency services, if necessary.
- Arrange for someone to be prepared to answer any queries from members by phone.

4. On the day

Meeting at the start of the walk

- Arrive early and check people can park safely. Welcome those arriving, particularly newcomers. You can refuse to take anyone whom you consider to be inadequately equipped.
- Be prepared for anyone to tell you, in private, of any medical conditions or medication.
- Keep the briefing short. Introduce any new walkers. Mention interesting features, the total distance to be walked and point out any hazards.
- Mention the "Guidance for Members" document. Stress that we expect anyone that gets separated from the group to **return to the last point where they were last with the group and WAIT**. Send someone back to find them if this occurs.
- Count the number of people in the group.
- Brief a back-marker, who should have a whistle and, if appropriate, a route map.

On the walk

- Set a pace to suit the capabilities of the group and the grade of the walk. Keep an eye on the slowest walkers and stay in touch with your back-marker, waiting as necessary.
- Manage the group when passing along or crossing roads and when crossing stiles. Only cross streams where it is safe to do so – change the route if levels are high.
- Keep the group together if visibility is reduced: nobody should be out of sight.
- Keep to the Country Code. Endeavour to cause minimum damage to crops, passing through cultivation in single file, when appropriate. Give cattle a wide berth.
- Ensure that walkers pressing ahead know to stay in contact, and to wait whenever there is a choice of route.
- Allow everyone to catch-up periodically and recover, especially at the end of ascents.
- Be alert to everyone's welfare, allow time to alter clothing and for comfort stops as well as for food and drink breaks.
- Should someone become unwell, then two people should stay with the person or accompany them back to an appropriate safe place. Take a short route to a road if necessary.

End of walk

- Check the headcount and thank everyone for attending.
- Return the club first aid kit to safe keeping for the next walk.