

## Walk Leader Guidance

Ross Walking Group aims to provide a programme of walks for us all to enjoy and we hope the following guide will help us all to have good days out and to keep us safe.

### Planning a walk

- If you are unsure about leading a walk, please contact a more experienced member of the group and ask them to help you choose a suitable walk, go with you and your co-leader on a recce to assist with any problems such as finding the right footpath and to help work out the correct grading of the walk.
- Plan and recce the walk well in advance. Both leaders need to be familiar with the walk. It is a good idea to walk through the route a second time with your co-leader shortly before leading a group, to ensure nothing has changed e.g., footpaths blocked by dense crops. If you find any problems such as blocked footpaths or broken stiles, please report them to the Local Authority footpaths officer. When doing the recce please look out for the position of Defibrillators. If there are any on or near your route please make a note of this in case one is needed.
- Make sure the car parking place is big enough for several cars. Always ask permission to park in a private car park such as a pub car park or at a Village Hall. RWG will pay up to £15 where required for parking at a Village Hall for example and you should advise the Treasurer in advance of the walk.
- When submitting your walk ensure you give sufficient information about the terrain and obstacles (e.g. number of stiles, length and difficulty of hills) to allow walkers to decide if the walk is suitable for them. An experienced member would help with this.
- Walks can be scheduled for any day of the week and walks of different grades can be scheduled for the same day.

### Preparing for the walk

- The day before the walk check the weather forecast to ensure conditions will be suitable. For example, if strong winds and storms are forecast, it may be a good idea to postpone the walk.
- Don't forget your mobile phone (charged and turned on). It's a good idea to let some of the walkers know your number and you have theirs.
- It is good practice to take a map, compass, whistle and hi-vis jackets for use on roads. If you are not able to map read, ask someone else on the walk to help you with this if needed. Following the instructions of a route from a book that may be out of date may be difficult as things change and referring to a map may be necessary.
- Take a pair of secateurs with you if you think the route may be blocked by nettles or brambles etc.

### Leading a Walk

- On arrival at the meeting place, make a note of all the walkers attending that day or delegate this to someone else on the walk to do for you and forward to Rosemary using the link on the programme page of the RWG website.
- Identify any walkers with First Aid or Heartstart training.
- Ask any walkers with medical conditions of which you need to be aware (e.g. asthma, diabetes) to discretely speak to one of the leaders.
- Do not be afraid to offer advice to a walker if you feel they are at risk.
- Walk at a steady pace to suit everyone. You may need to reduce the pace. Glance back regularly to make sure gaps are not developing and if necessary, wait for people to catch up and give them a few moments rest before continuing.

- The “back marker” can use the whistle to stop the group if it is becoming fragmented or if anyone is struggling at the back. If it would help, ask them to come nearer the front and keep an eye on them and slow your pace.
- Using a whistle

1 whistle blast means STOP

2 whistle blasts means STOP & GO TO WHISTLE SOURCE – there is a problem.

- If there are more than 20 walkers in the group, you may wish to appoint a volunteer “middle marker” to walk in the middle of the group and to help prevent large gaps.
- Remember to stop occasionally to look at a good view or point out something of interest.
- Public rights of way across fields are a maximum of one metre wide. Do remember this when walking across a planted field and remind members if necessary.
- Coffee and lunch stops – give a few minutes warning before moving off again. Allow about 30 minutes for lunch to give people time to finish eating and repack their rucksacks. Make sure everyone is ready to go and don’t set off without them. Count to ensure all are there.
- Road safety. The group should walk on the right-hand side (facing oncoming traffic); only cross over to the left-hand side if approaching a blind right-hand bend. Keep in a single file and check the group is NOT straddled all over the road. When crossing busy roads, advise walkers when it is safe to cross and avoid congregating around stiles and spilling onto the road. Leaders should wear the high visibility jackets when walking on or crossing roads. These are kept by the Walks Co-ordinator

### **Dealing with Incidents**

- In the event of an accident or health problem, if the leaders are not able to deal with the situation, delegate to 2 other responsible walkers who are. Don’t be afraid to make this decision. Too many people trying to help may be confusing and/or distressing for the person needing help
- Do not place yourself in danger when attempting to assist a walker in difficulties.
- Make sure the casualty is not in danger, if they are breathing and conscious make them comfortable and keep them warm. If not, call the Emergency Services immediately.
- Assess the situation and establish the options. You will need to consider and decide what help the casualty needs and are the Emergency Services needed. Given a little time to recover can the walker make it to a safe place to be picked up or walk to the cars. Should the group stay together, all return to the start or some carry on to the end of the walk. If required, does anyone in the group have First Aid or Heartstart training.
- Dialling the 112 emergency number from a mobile phone enables the Emergency Services to pinpoint your location.

Following the incident, please complete and return the Incident form, a copy of this can be downloaded from the RWG website and should be carried by the leader on walks.