

Kendal Fellwalkers

CONDUCT OF CLUB WALKS

The chief purpose of these guidelines is to stress that the club's walks are organised, and are intended to be conducted, as group events. Members are therefore expected to keep in touch with the leader and the rest of the party and to stick to the scheduled route.

In spite of the best efforts and intentions, however, walking groups sometimes break up. This can happen for a number of reasons:

- people who feel tired or unwell, or for some reason are delayed, become separated from the group and are then left behind
- faster walkers pull ahead and open a gap between themselves and the main party
- a sub-group goes off on an unscheduled route or detour.

Whatever the reasons for break-ups, we must strive to avoid them since they not only cause a lot of annoyance but can lead to serious problems. These include:

- putting members at risk of getting lost or injuring themselves
- causing distress to people left behind by the main group
- delaying the walk if a sub-group is slow in returning to the programmed route
- upsetting leaders and making them less willing to offer their services
- disrupting transport arrangements for the journey home.

Remember that walk leaders are volunteers who do a vital job; you and the club depend on them, so give them full support and respect their authority. By all means discuss with them any difficulties or dangers that arise, but never just take over!

Play your part in ensuring your own safety and that of the group by observing the following guidelines:

1. Stay in contact with the main party. If you do get too far ahead you should let the others catch up without delay by waiting at a prominent feature like a summit, col, path junction or stile. It is a matter of good manners as well as of safety to do this.

2. When you see someone in difficulty or being left behind, do something about it – alert the leader or the nearest member, and if you find yourself in the same position, shout! This is better than letting anyone become anxious or exhausted and perhaps in need of help or rescue later.

3. Tell the leader if for any reason you wish to leave a walk. Failure to do this may mean that you will be treated as missing and hence be searched for, just as you would be if you were separated involuntarily from the group. If you state your intention of leaving a walk for reasons other than doubts about your ability to carry on, you will thereafter be treated as independent

and the main party will not be obliged to wait for you or to provide you with any further help.

4. If you take your mobile phone out on the hills, please store in it the contact numbers of the leader and other key members of the group. Keep it switched on, at least in difficult conditions and emergencies.

5. Be realistic about your capabilities and choose the appropriate grade of walk from the programme.

The following recommendations are aimed specifically at walks leaders:

1. With groups of six or more it may be advisable to ask an experienced member to act as 'back marker' who will be responsible for ensuring that no one is left behind and advising you of any problems at the tail end of the group.

2. Try to keep the group as compact as is practicable. Stay in touch with the back marker and the slower walkers (which means not always being at the front). Check at intervals that all members of the group are still present and ensure that after a meal or rest stop everyone moves off together. Experience has shown that these points are vital when visibility is poor or darkness is approaching.

3. Stick to the programmed route unless safety or low morale within the group dictates otherwise, and be prepared to modify or curtail the walk if severe weather or the welfare of participants makes this advisable. Do not increase the total distance and ascent unless all members of the party are in agreement.

4. You should preferably have walked the route out recently so that you are aware of potential hazards, you know suitable places for breaks, and you can to find a safe route for descent if this is necessitated by bad weather or an emergency.

5. The start of a walk is a good time to reinforce the chief message of these guidelines, which is to *stay together as a group*. Also, although it is not obligatory, you may like to give participants an outline of the route so that they can ask questions or raise any concerns they may have before setting off.

6. So long as you take reasonable care and do not act negligently the club's civil liability insurance covers you in the unlikely event of damages being awarded in any legal actions brought by third parties (including fellow members).

January 2013

(Note: Advice on fellwalking safety, dealing with choice of gear and procedures for dealing with accidents and emergencies, will be found in the companion document "Safety on the Hills" which may be viewed on the club website or obtained from the Secretary.
