

NORTHUMBRIA LDWA - WALK LEADER GUIDELINES

This document is for guidance only and attempts to identify the actions and procedures that should normally be followed when a walk leader is preparing to lead a full days walk on behalf of the Northumbria LDWA.

This is not an exhaustive list and additional guidance can be obtained from local Committee members and from the national LDWA website (logon as a member then refer to the LDWA TOOLKIT):
https://ldwa.org.uk/website/downloads/toolkit/Leading_Social_Walks_Guidance_v2_0.pdf

1) **Route Planning:**
   a. Work out a detailed route on OS 1:50,000 or 1:25,000 maps following rights of way (or core paths in Scotland), permissive paths or access land. Obtain specific permission to cross private land

   b. Decide route, approx mileage, date and start time, description (incl ascents & strenuous terrain) approx. duration (generally based on 2.5mph walking speed [incl breaks]), start/finish location. Bear in mind the time of year for the walk and length of daylight available. Determine a start point with suitable parking to accommodate a large number of members cars. Identify a pub/café for end of walk social/drink

   c. Derive a GPS record of the route

   d. Risk factors – see Risk Assessment Factors below. Consider contingency routes in case of poor weather, emergencies or members wishing to shorten their route

   e. Identify a sweeper / backmarker and issue them with a copy of the route. It is suggested that new walk leaders should try to ensure that an existing competent walk leader from the group accompanies them on the recce and on the day of the walk in order to provide guidance or assistance in case they encounter any leadership issues on the walk

2) **Recce The Route:**
   a. Walk the route (preferably with the designated sweeper) and seek alternatives that circumvent difficulties or improve the walk. Ensure the specified walk duration is sufficient for even the slowest members of the group

   b. Consider:
      i. areas of shelter for breaks during poor weather and find out a little about historic buildings, wildlife locations, geographic features etc., to make the walk more interesting for the group
      ii. locating any public toilets / comfort stops and stops for breaks (mid-morning, lunch and mid-afternoon)

   c. Report any issues with the route (e.g. path closures, broken stiles etc.) to the Walks Secretary

3) **Provide Walk Secretary with:**
   a. Leaders and Sweepers contact details

b. Full Details of the Walk: Walk title, Distance, Start Time, .gpx File of the Route, Route Desc, General Notes, Leader Contact (Mobile Phone), Start Location (OS Grid Ref & What3Words Ref), Finish Location (OS Grid Ref & What3Words Ref). Car parking and any associated charges.

c. The walk details should be provided in time for inclusion in Strider and on the Northumbria group LDWA web pages (pre-publicising walks is an insurance requirement) .

d. Provide the Walk Secretary with any changes to the publicised walk

4) Day Before The Walk:

a. Check weather forecast and tides (where relevant) and consider any consequent changes to the route or walk cancellation if needs be

b. Leader and/or Sweeper equipment list
   i. **Must have:** Adequate clothing (see below), mobile phone (ideally with OS Maps / Locate Me app and/or the What3Words app), phone charger, route map, whistle, compass, pen & paper, torch, first aid kit (see below), emergency foil (space) blanket / bivvy bag / group shelter
   ii. **Should have:** Paper map(s), spare food and drink, spare loose change (for toilet stops)

5) Day of the Walk:

a. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start time to welcome members, particularly newcomers.

b. ***Complete an Attendance Form – name, membership number, their contact number and an ICE (in case of emergency) number***. Young people under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian

c. Members should be encouraged to carry an ICE (in case of emergency) card in the top of their rucksack giving details of an emergency contact and of any medical conditions (alternatively, get members to update the emergency contact details on their phone)

d. Check that everyone is adequately equipped – ALL members must have adequate clothing (see below)

e. Introduce the sweeper / backmarker and any newcomers

f. Spend a couple of minutes telling the group about the walk – mentioning breaks and lunch, route changes, ascents / terrain, weather forecast etc.

g. Explain photos may be taken on the walk which may be published on social media so members should let the leader know if they object to appearing in any such photos

h. ALL members are to adhere to the Countryside Code by ensuring that no one within the group drops litter, gates are left in their original state and that any dogs are properly under control

i. Count the group and check numbers on the Attendance Form and take it (or a copy) with you during the walk. Take a photo of the Attendance Form and send a copy of the names and emergency contact details to the Walk Secretary before commencing on the walk

j. Explain walking group etiquette: group to stay together, everyone to be in sight and preferably between leader and sweeper, pace determined by slowest member within the group, inform the sweeper if stopping behind for a comfort break

6) **During the walk:**
   a. Avoid the group getting split up - regularly count the group and keep in touch with the backmarker to ensure pace is ok and no-one is suffering too much.

   b. Leadership style - it's not necessary to be at the front all the time, but ensure no-one gets too far ahead. Be at the front when the route is difficult or not obvious. Be particularly alert at hazards such as road crossings, slippery / broken stiles, rough sections, livestock areas

   c. Keep an eye on the time with a view to finishing the walk at the designated time

   d. Indicate how long each break will be and give a two-minute warning before restarting.

   e. Try to talk to everyone, especially newcomers, and do your best to ensure that everyone enjoys the walk

   f. Be prepared to shorten the route and use a contingency route in the event the weather deteriorates or many on the route are finding it too strenuous

7) **At the end of the walk:**
   a. Thank members for coming and remind them of the next walk

   b. Have a word with any newcomers to encourage them to come on future walks and to join the LDWA - non-members are expected to join after coming on three walks

   c. If there have been any accidents, injuries or incidents, including damage to property, ensure that the Walk Secretary is informed accordingly

8) **Issues During the Walk:**
   a. The fast walker – if a member dashes off far ahead, point out that they are expected to stay with the group. Anyone not accepting this should be told to continue independently and under their own responsibility

   b. The slow walker – if a member falls behind so much and is unlikely to complete the route in a reasonable time, this needs to be pointed out to the person sooner rather than later. Options such as highlighting contingency routes, taxis, buses should be considered

   c. If a member(s) decide to leave the walk - make it clear that they are no longer part of the walk and you have no further responsibility towards them. Where possible, ensure they (or an accompanied member) are competent at navigation and have a map. Try to get someone with a map & competent at navigation to accompany them. Ensure you exchange contact numbers (Attendance Form?) & check they return to the start location / home safely. Else shorten the route for the whole group if needs be

9) **Emergencies:**
   a. Get help by phoning 999 or 112 from a mobile – provide name, location (OS grid reference AND What3Words), details of any injury, terrain and hazards

   b. If necessary, provide first aid, keep the casualty warm and provide reassurance. In bad conditions, a leader may appoint a deputy (the sweeper?) to lead most of the group to the finish of the walk whilst just a few wait at the incident scene

c. Medication - leaders/first aiders may provide first aid but should not give tablets, medication or creams to others

10) Risk Assessment Factors:

a. Weather – wind, precipitation, temperature (high / low), visibility
b. Terrain – ascents, altitude, ridges, ground cover (rocky, boggy..), rivers / water courses / tides
c. Sunset – daylight hours
d. Members of Group – general fitness and health, newbies, poor clothing, footwear or equipment

11) Adequate Clothing:

ALL walkers (incl leaders) must have adequate footwear (preferably boots with ankle support), kagoul / waterproofs, sufficient food and drink for a whole days walk, hat, gloves and additional layer of warm clothing

12) First Aid Kit:

a. **Must have**: plasters, scissors, sterile wipes, face shield, CPR face mask
b. **Should have**: plastic gloves , sterile crepe and triangular bandages and wound dressings