



Manx Footpaths Conservation Group

Rev.Final

General Guidelines for Walk Leaders

It is hoped that all members will consider leading walks. The following information sets out general guidance which will help with the different aspects of a walk.

1. Eligibility.

The walking environment on the Island is a mix of hill, coast and lowland walks. The club arranges 4 levels of standard walk (5 during the Summer), supplemented by a series of 'pop up' and special interest walks. Details of all walks can be found on the website.

Each level has a walk coordinator who is responsible for finding members to act as Leaders and to then structure the walk programme to provide a balance and mix of different locations and walking conditions.

To be eligible to lead a walk you should be able to demonstrate a level of experience and knowledge consistent with the ability needed for the chosen walk level. If you are unsure you should speak to the Walk Coordinator. Their decision on eligibility is final.

The club offers a first aid course, through St John Ambulance, to provide members with a working knowledge of how to deal with typical minor injuries that may be encountered on a walk. Attendance is highly recommended for all members, especially those who want to progress to leading walks.

2. Planning.

The Walk Programme is issued for a six-month period (May-October and November-April). The Walk Coordinator will advise you of the deadline set for completion of the Programme.

Plan the length and difficulty in line with guidelines set for each programme and remember to consider the possible weather conditions and the daylight hours for the month of your walk.

Always 'reconnoitre' ('recce') the walk so that you know of any problems in advance. Footpaths marked on a map may often be poorly maintained and some may be very muddy or impassable. The 'recce' can also be used to prepare the risk assessment for the walk. A risk assessment is a requirement for every walk.

Consider how many hills there are. Several small hills can be more taxing than one long hill. Gates and stiles can slow a group considerably. Always bear in mind that weather conditions can adversely affect plans.

You can ask a more experienced walker to help and advise as you plan your first few walks. Do not worry if your walk includes footpaths used by other Leaders.

Consider a suitable place for lunch, if appropriate, and if there are any public toilets on the route.

Include a start point with a grid reference and details of any travel information and date(s) you are available to lead the walk.

3. Walk

All our walks are carefully planned but individuals are primarily responsible for their own safety. At the beginning of each walk the Leader should let walkers know they are walking at their own risk.

Occasionally, during winter, the weather can be severe, and you may have concerns for safety. If you decide, in advance, that the walk needs to be cancelled then let your Walk Coordinator know. They will try to contact as many regular group members as possible.

However, if the short term (5 day) weather forecast has a risk of severe weather, but is uncertain as to timing, it would be prudent to ask the Walk Coordinator to contact regular group members. This will put them on notice of the possibility of cancellation. A final decision can be taken and notified the day prior to the walk.

If cancelled, and if practical, go to the start of the walk, at the start time, in case members have not had the message. Consider requesting Manx Radio to broadcast the cancellation.

If the weather turns bad during a walk do not be afraid to make the decision to cut short or terminate the walk. Take the shortest and safest way back.

You should be confident reading a map and it is recommended that you carry one with you. You should also consider taking a device, such as gps watch or phone app., which can provide a gps reading. Access to precise location information is essential if emergency services need to be contacted.

It is a club rule that dogs are not allowed.

Be aware of new members in the group and those joining in as a 'taster' walk. Check that they have suitable footwear and wet weather gear. Record their names and address and introduce them to the group if no one else does. Check that they are comfortable with the pace and conditions. Please forward details of the 'taster' participants on the walk to the Membership Secretary on completion. 'Tasters' are limited to three walks in total.

4. Health and Safety

Every walk will have a designated Leader and a Back-marker. No person should walk in front of the walk leader or behind the back-marker.

The Leader and Back-marker should count the number of walkers participating at the start and during each walk.

If a walker leaves a walk, then the back-marker or leader must be made aware of this.

On all walks, be aware of 'escape routes' in case the walk needs to be cut short for whatever reason.

Leaders should be aware of the general wellbeing of those on the walk. At the assembly point, you should remind walkers that you are not authorised to administer any medication. Suggest that any medication being carried is stored at the top of their rucksack to be easily accessed.

To improve the overall walk safety Leaders must carry the approved First Aid kit provided by the Club. This will enable you to deal with most of the minor walking issues. It is your responsibility to re-stock the kit for any used items and to ensure that it is passed, with the high vis jackets (see below), to the next leader in your Programme. Receipts for replacement items should be passed to the Treasurer for reimbursement. In addition, the Club will provide you with two high vis jackets to be used by the walk leader and back marker where any section of the walk is along public roads and where there is poor visibility.

In the event of an incident during the walk, the leader (or person designated by the walk leader) is required to complete the club's Incident Report. This can be obtained from the Safety Officer, or downloaded from the MFCG website, and should be returned to club officials, as marked. It is a matter for your own judgement to determine whether an Incident Report is appropriate.