

## **Good Practice Guide: walking with Red Rope (A Helpful Advice Sheet contributed by Mike Hargaden)**

These suggestions for good practice when walking are focused on encouraging members to take responsibility for themselves, to look out for others and to engage fully with the experience of walking with others in nature.

### **Introduction**

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> The suggestions outlined below will apply to whatever environment we are walking in. Whether it is at <500m, >500m or >500m in winter or in Scotland, members need to be able to look after themselves in terms of possessing the **appropriate level** of fitness, skills and equipment and of course also be prepared to look out for each other.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Walking in a group with a range of abilities is different from walking alone or with a couple of mates, not least because you need to consider others in your group.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> These are suggestions and not 'rules'. Lets have your suggestions for any changes to them. Send all comments to [mikehargaden@btinternet.com](mailto:mikehargaden@btinternet.com)

### **Suggestions for how we can prepare for the walk?**

Taking responsibility for ourselves.

- Decide whether you are up to doing the walk. Check what the walk involves in terms of distance, ascent, time and any special features such as demanding terrain, 'bad steps' etc?
- Know where you are going. Ask the walk leader to show you the route on a map or even get involved in planning the route.
- Be properly equipped with the appropriate clothes and other gear you need for the terrain you will cover.
- Carry sufficient food and drink. Consider carrying your own map and compass.
- Carry an information (waterproof) card with relevant personal details such as medical conditions and medication, contact details of next-of-kin, GP, and NHS number
- **Note:** Walking in areas such as Snowdonia, the Lake District and Scotland poses particular challenges for the hill walker especially when venturing high, say above 500 m. It is particularly important that people venturing out in these areas spend time getting to know the route being proposed in some detail, the terrain it will pass through and the weather conditions you will encounter. In these areas it is even more important to ensure you possess the appropriate equipment, level of fitness and skills, for example mountain rescue teams in all these areas strongly recommend that hill walkers carry a map and a compass and know how to use them.

Looking out for others

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Offer to give advice on how to prepare for the walk to any people in the group who are new to walking .

### **Suggestions for what to do when on the walk.**

Taking responsibility for ourselves.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Walk at a suitable pace, especially when starting the walk, in order to conserve your energy – try to avoid going into competitive mode and racing ahead - stay within earshot of the group.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Know where you are. Pay attention to the landscape you are passing through and check your position on a map each time the group has a rest stop. Ask someone with a map to show you your current location.

Looking out for others.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Work to keep the group together, turn around occasionally and check where the back markers are. Are they dropping too far behind? Do you need to slow down? Do people need a rest stop?

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Be aware of the possibility of forming a faster/slower group, but only following discussion by the full group (and not by the group becoming so stretched out that some people become detached from it). Ensure no-one's safety is compromised.

### **Suggestions for what to do when things happen.**

Taking responsibility for ourselves.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Know how to find the route again if you become lost (find 3 pieces of evidence to find your location).

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Be able to respond to an emergency e. g. don't make the situation worse, know how to offer first aid.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Be able to contact the emergency services and give them the necessary information such as a grid reference of your location. Consider registering your mobile phone with 999 so you can send texts.

### **Suggestions for taking it further**

**Skills** Formal training is a good way to learn relevant skills but you need to have the opportunity to apply

them when you go out walking again to consolidate what you have learnt.

**Engaged hill walking** can be very therapeutic. It addresses the '**5 Ways to Well-being**' **1. Be active** – **2. Have positive connections** with others (empathy, compassion and consideration) – **3. Learning new stuff** (open to change in how we do things) – **4. Mindfulness** (taking notice of our surroundings) – **5. Doing things for others** (offering advice or perhaps leading a walk).

And of course it is very therapeutic to leave our daily cares behind us for a few hours.