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## Introduction

Every year the North Pennines Walking Festival presents a whole range of opportunities for people to put their boots on to go out and enjoy our wonderful countryside. Great walks in great company: it's a recipe with most of the ingredients for a memorable day out.

I say 'most of' because the key ingredient in the mix is you – whether as leader or steward. Your enthusiasm and professionalism will turn a pleasant day into one of the best for everyone on the walk.

This handbook is designed to help you do this, and to make life easier for you when you carry out the whole process of planning, leading and reviewing your walk. It's a comprehensive guide to everything you need to consider and I'm sure you will find it useful.

With your skills, knowledge and enthusiasm we will make the North Pennines Walking Festival an event that people will want to return to again and again.

Thank you for taking part.

*Ian Forbes*

*Chair, Friends of the North Pennines*



# 1 Aims of the North Pennines Walking Festival

The North Pennines Walking Festival, at the end of September and beginning of October, was initiated by the Friends of the North Pennines in 2013.

The purpose of the festival is to help local people and visitors to understand and enjoy the landscape of the AONB and to boost the local tourism economy.

The walks cover a variety of subjects including local history, nature and geology. Some walks cover specialist subjects such as photography, art or specific species of plants and animals. Others have no specific theme.

All walks enable people to experience the countryside, get some fresh air and exercise. This is vitally important in encouraging healthier lifestyles and contributes to the health of local people.

It is now widely recognised that walking is an effective form of exercise for people of all abilities. Studies have shown that the physical benefits of walking include reducing the risk of coronary heart disease and strokes, lowering blood pressure, reducing high cholesterol, controlling weight, improving sleep patterns and reducing the risk of osteoporosis, colon cancer, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes.

Exercising, particularly outdoors, can have a significant effect on mental health. It can improve self-esteem, relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety, improve mood, give opportunities for peace and quiet, give people breathing space and time to contemplate and stimulate the senses.

The social contact on a guided walk is also beneficial and allows participants to meet new people, make friends and explore and learn about their local area.

The North Pennines Walking Festival also has a focus on promoting the North Pennines AONB to visitors from other regions or countries, thus enabling them to explore the area in the presence of local experts and the safety of the group. The festival enables people to

### *Aims of the North Pennines Walking Festival*

explore the area in the presence of local experts and the safety of a group. The North Pennines is a popular place for tourists and the festival provides the opportunity to promote the area and encourage visitors to make use of local facilities e.g. coffee shops, public houses, shops and accommodation.

## 2 Summary of roles

### 2.1 Leader

Leader plans the route and researches the information to be given to walkers. Completes risk assessments and leads the walk and liaises with stewards as necessary

### 2.2 Steward

Steward keeps a check on people's progress during the walk, provides first aid cover and liaises with leader as necessary

### 2.3 Friends Administrator

Co-ordinates the guided walks and liaises with leaders, stewards and participants. Accepts bookings and manages the bookings list. Collects risk assessments and provides feedback from walk participants. Deals with applications from new leaders and responds to enquiries from public. Issues first aid kits when required

# 3 Leaders

## 3.1 Role

- Plans the route
- May produce a handout for participants
- Checks the route
- Completes the risk assessment
- Liaises with steward to sort out any problems prior and during walk
- Leads the walk
- Implement emergency contingency as necessary

## 3.2 Considering a route

### 3.2.1 *Planning a route*

- Must follow Public Rights of Way or officially recognised permissive paths at all times, except on open access land or private land with permission
- If the walk is to cross private land other than on a Public Right of Way or officially recognised permissive path, permission of the landowner must be obtained by the leader. A record of the landowner's consent should be forwarded to the administrator prior to the walk
- Use of public transport to the start of the walk is encouraged and leaders should consider opportunities by the public to utilise buses when planning their route
- Walks should be circular wherever possible. If the route is linear, the walking festival organisers must organise transport or liaise with the public transport provider to ensure timings of the walk are compatible with the journey times

- Identify start point (must have adequate car parking), lunch stop (is there shelter in bad weather?) and the location of telephones and toilets (if available)
- Availability of toilet facilities should be included where possible, either at the start point or mid-route. If passing a toilet please make people aware of the facility and stop if anyone wants to use it
- Consider shorter, easier walks for beginners, walks that might be attractive for families with children and walks for people with disabilities
- Any additional extras e.g. train fare, pub lunch, breakfasts must be made clear in the programme

### 3.2.2 *Safety considerations*

- Escape routes, location of emergency telephones, mobile reception and access routes must be considered at the planning stage
- Consider possible alternatives, this is absolutely essential on open access land which can close with 4 hours notice
- Bear in mind that route conditions may change with the weather
- Avoid road crossing and road walking wherever possible
- Be aware of any potential trouble spots on your route (fords, bulls, cows with calves, boggy ground etc)
- See further info on risk assessment (see sections 5.4 and 5.5)

### 3.2.3 *Check your route before putting it forward*

- The importance of a reconnoitre (recce) cannot be underestimated and is an essential part of the planning process
- Do a recce for each walk, even if you've done the walk in the past – things change

## *Leaders*

- The recce must be on the ground, don't just rely on the map
- Double check the mileage and grade of walk on your recce (see section 6.1 for grading structure)
- Time the route, but always assume a slower pace than your own. Allow additional time for stiles, gates, uphill routes etc.
- If your walk covers open access land, you must check alternative routes at this stage. Sections of the route may be closed at short notice so check where the Public Rights of Way are (See section 5.3 )

### *3.2.4 Information for walkers*

- At the planning stage consider the information which you will impart to participants
- Identify points of interest (nature, geology, history) This can be the basis for further research
- The route should be checked before any handout is produced
- Information should be pitched at a level which can be appreciated by people who may know very little about the subject but must also be interesting to those who are more knowledgeable

## **3.3 Week prior to the walk**

- Re-walk the route. Re-acquaint yourself with the route and check to see if there are any problems, this allows time to amend route if necessary
- The steward must contact the leader prior to the walk to discuss the route and conditions. If the steward has not made contact, then please call them. A list of leaders and stewards contact details are provided. These contact details should be treated as confidential and must not be given to anyone else. Only telephone calls and e-mails related to the guided walks programme should be sent

- Leader must know their route and be able to describe to someone and supply an accurate plan of the route, should another leader or steward have to step in for any reason

### 3.4 Day of the walk

#### 3.4.1 Equipment

- Clothing and equipment should be suitable for the level of the walk
- Leaders should have as a minimum: boots, rucksack, waterproofs, drink, pen and paper, OS map, any supporting material (old photos, rock samples etc)
- A mobile phone and GPS are useful if you have them (the possession of these items is not a substitute for planned emergency procedures)
- A hat and sunscreen in warm weather
- Long or remote walks will require additional equipment (compass, first aid kit, whistle, torch, polythene emergency shelter/group shelter)

#### 3.4.2 General

- Be at the start point at least half an hour before the advertised start of the walk
- You must not bring a dog
- Remain friendly, polite and approachable at all times
- If the walk is on any open access land, the leader must check the Natural England website [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) for any restrictions – be prepared to amend route if necessary
- Always remember that people go on a guided walk to enjoy themselves
- Participants appreciate a brief refreshment stop in the morning and afternoon on long walks, in addition to the normal lunch stop
- Leaders and stewards should not smoke

### *3.4.3 Risk assessment*

- Leader to consider any potential hazards (ground conditions, hills, livestock, roads etc) and location of telephones and complete a risk assessment to be given to the administrator before the day of the walk
- See template for completing the forms (Appendix 1)
- Modifications to the planned route may need to be made on the day (group size, fitness, weather, open access restrictions). Leader must discuss with steward
- Road walking. Leaders to discuss any road walking with stewards before setting off. Confirm where safe crossing points are (See section 5.2)
- When stopping to talk to the group, ensure the group is in a safe place and you are not blocking the route for anyone else
- You must not lead the group into hazardous situations
- If a walker comes with a dog have quiet word with owner. Explain they must keep their dog on a short lead for the duration of the walk. If going through field with livestock, explain procedure to dog owner and their responsibilities. If the dog is infirm or aggressive the leader and steward can decide not to allow it on the walk. The leader must explain the decision to the walker (See section 5.1)
- If a walker is unwell or has an accident, the steward and leader decide jointly whether the participant should continue, take shortcut, be escorted back to start or call for an ambulance
- Check you have the up-to-date mobile telephone number of your steward

### *3.4.4 Introducing the walk*

- The steward will gather walkers together and then introduce the leader who will give a general introduction to the North Pennines Walking Festival

- Introduction to walkers – distribute any handout, go over mileage, terrain, conditions and focus of walk. Ask people to stay together and behind the leader. If you have specific permission to cross private land, explain this to walkers. They won't be able to follow your route at a later date

#### 3.4.5 During the walk

- Ensure all walkers follow the Countryside Code
- Leader must always be at the front of the group
- If the group is getting strung out, the leader should slow the pace and make frequent stops to allow the group to catch up. Don't move on just as the back people appear since their need for a short rest will be, if anything, greater than those at the front. At the same time the steward should encourage the back group to try and walk a bit faster. Remember though that they have come to enjoy the walk as well. If necessary the steward should find a suitable time to discuss the speed and compactness of the party with the leader
- Close up the party for complicated turnings, poor visibility or in woods
- Leader should know where the back of the group is at all times
- Alter walk in accordance with conditions. If wet or cold, don't spend ages talking, people will get cold. If noisy, try to find somewhere quiet to impart information
- Wait until all assembled before talking
- Speak loud and clearly
- Face group when talking, don't look at your view
- Try to be visible. Sometimes standing on something can help, especially if there is a large audience

## *Leaders*

- Take an interest in participants' comments, be prepared to answer questions or explain in a different way if they don't understand something
- If people on the walk have local knowledge or expertise, make use of it
- If you don't know the answer to a question – say so
- Lunch should be about 30 minutes, however in poor weather, this may be shortened. Ensure all litter is cleared before leaving
- Short morning and/or afternoon breaks should be considered on longer walks, in addition to the normal lunch stop
- If there are any disagreements with steward/participants/landowner, try and discuss quietly at one side. Don't get drawn into an argument in front of the group
- If there are any disagreements on the walk, the leader has the final say
- Don't allow one person to monopolise your time and attention
- Ensure the group walks in single file across arable fields and hay meadows. Generally try to walk no more than two abreast. This is however often dictated by the condition of the path itself and on wider paths this may not be an issue
- At the end thank people for coming and hand back over to the steward

### **3.5 Post walk**

- Discuss with the steward how the walk went. If there are any issues, try and sort them out between you
- If the leaders have any concerns with regard to the performance of the steward, they are encouraged to refer

to the administrator. All comments are treated in confidence

- Look at the feedback reports for alternative route suggestions and possible improvements
- Any lost property items or queries should be sent to the administrator

### 3.6 Feedback

- At the start of each walk, the participant is given a feedback sheet which they can complete and send back to the administrator
- Statistics of participants (not names or addresses) will be generated and distributed to the various people within the Friends of the North Pennines and walking festival steering group who require this information. Statistics may also be shared with leaders and participants where appropriate

# 4 Stewards

## 4.1 Role

- Issue feedback forms
- Liaise with leader regarding health and safety of the party and individual walkers
- Assist walkers to negotiate stiles, steps, gates and road crossings
- Help the public to enjoy the walk
- Be prepared to administer first aid if necessary
- Return paperwork to the administrator

## 4.2 Week prior to the walk

- Steward must contact the leader before the walk to discuss details such as length and duration of walk, expected walking conditions and any specific hazards that might be encountered on the route
- A list of leaders and stewards contact details are provided. These contact details should be treated as confidential and must not be given to anyone else. Only telephone calls and e-mails related to the guided walks programme should be sent

## 4.3 Day of the walk

### 4.3.1 Equipment

- Clothing and equipment should be suitable for the level of the walk
- Stewards should have as a minimum: boots, rucksack, waterproofs, drink, feedback forms, pen and paper, OS map, compass, first aid kit, walking festival programmes
- Long or remote walks will require additional equipment (whistle, torch, polythene emergency

shelter/group shelter)

- A mobile phone and GPS are useful if you have them
- A hat and sunscreen in warm weather

#### 4.3.2 *General*

- Be at the start point at least half an hour before the advertised start of the walk
- You must not bring a dog
- Remain friendly, polite and approachable at all times
- Always remember that people go on a guided walk to enjoy themselves
- You must not smoke while stewarding a walk

#### 4.3.3 *Risk assessment*

- Should something happen to the leader the steward is responsible for the party and must know their location at all times and be able to take control and lead the group back to the start
- The risk assessment and any modifications to the walk must be discussed with the leader
- All participants should be suitably equipped to cope with the terrain and prevailing weather conditions. This will have to be a subjective assessment but in extreme circumstances you would be justified in turning away someone if you thought that a lack of proper footwear or equipment could put them or others at risk. Politely explain the problem to them. If possible try to suggest a walk they can do by themselves for which their equipment is adequate
- The above approach should also be adopted if someone who is obviously unfit for a walk insists, after suitable warnings, on joining a walk
- If a dog is present, bring this to the leaders attention, if they haven't already seen it

## *Stewards*

- Either the steward or the leader will have had first aid training and will be carrying a first aid kit. If anyone requires first aid, it is administered by the first aider
- If appropriate, ask the group if anyone has medical training and can assist
- The steward and leader then decide jointly whether the participant should continue, take shortcut, be escorted back to start or call for an ambulance
- Head count before set off and at various points around walk
- Check you have the up-to-date mobile telephone number of the leader and any other stewards

### *4.3.4 Introducing the walk*

- Help people to park their vehicles. Cars must not create an obstruction. Ensure private entrances and farm accesses are unobstructed
- If meeting point is in a busy place, look for people who may be unsure of the start. Approach them if they look like they are wanting to join the walk
- Welcome walkers as they turn up
- Introductions: welcome to the walk, introduce yourself any other stewards and the leader by name, invite people to tell the steward in confidence if they think the leader should be made aware of an issue e.g. health or they think they may struggle with the terrain
- Identify the first aider
- Explain that the North Pennines Walking Festival has a range of walks and offer a programme
- Ask people to complete their feedback form at the end of the walk and send it back
- Advise people to lock cars and put valuables out of sight

- Ensure that participants know that if they stop for a toilet break, have a problem or need to leave the walk, they must tell the steward or leader
- Remind walkers that our walks are non-smoking. It is intended that the policy will be self enforcing. Anyone smoking on a walk should be politely advised of the policy. However you should not enter into any confrontational situation which may put you at risk. If someone insists on smoking please ensure they do so away from the main group, preferably downwind

#### 4.3.5 *During the walk*

- Follow the Countryside Code at all times
- One steward should always be a back marker
- If there is more than one steward, split up and mingle with the group. One should be nearer the front of the group to assist people crossing stiles, roads and difficult areas
- All participants and stewards should be reminded to stay behind the leader
- Keep a check on numbers and people's progress during the walk. A head count is particularly important after stops since it is at such points that some people have a tendency to wander off
- The steward should be the last person to leave a stopping place and should check that no belongings or litter have been left behind
- If the group is getting strung out, the leader should slow the pace and make frequent stops to allow the group to catch up. Don't move on just as the back people appear since their need for a short rest will be, if anything, greater than those at the front. At the same time the steward should encourage the back group to try and walk a bit faster. Remember though

that they have come to enjoy the walk as well. If necessary the steward should find a suitable time to discuss the speed and compactness of the party with the leader

- In some situations you may decide, with the leader, to shorten the walk
- Ensure group walks in a single file across arable fields and meadows. Generally try to walk no more than two abreast. This is however often dictated by the condition of the path itself and on wider paths this may not be an issue
- If there are any disagreements with leader/participants/landowner, try and discuss quietly at one side. Don't get drawn into an argument in front of the group
- If there are any disagreements on the walk, the leader has the final say. The steward should inform the leader, as discreetly as possible, that they must then take full responsibility for any mishaps which might then occur

#### **4.4 Post walk**

- Check that all participants are accounted for. Do a final head count before people leave
- As people are leaving say goodbye and thank them for coming
- Remind people to fill in feedback forms
- Discuss with the leader how the walk went. If there are any issues, try and sort them out between you
- If the stewards have any concerns with regard to the performance of the leader, they are encouraged to contact the administrator. All comments are treated in confidence
- Any lost property items or queries should be sent to the administrator

## 4.5 Feedback

- At the start of each walk, the participant is given a feedback form which they complete and send back to the administrator
- Statistics of participants (not names or addresses) will be generated and distributed to the various people who require this information

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# 5 Issues

## 5.1 Dogs

### 5.1.1 General

- Dogs are allowed on all walks unless: walks are leaving Public Rights of Way on Open Access land, walks are crossing private land and the landowner forbids them, the dog is deemed infirm or aggressive on the day
- Leaders and Stewards must not have their own dogs present on walks
- Any incidents should be reported to the administrator as soon as possible

### 5.1.2 Programme entry

- If leaders have a specific reason why dogs are unsuitable on a particular walk e.g. landowner stipulation when they have their permission to go off a Right of Way, or walks on open access land, then they should inform the administrator when they put their walk offers forward
- This can then be discussed before the programme goes to print
- If necessary, a 'no dogs allowed' symbol will be inserted next to a particular walk.

### 5.1.3 Start of the walk

- The leader must make the dog owner aware of their responsibilities. If the leader is unaware that a dog owner is present, the steward should bring it to their attention
- The leader should reiterate the points below to dog owners at the beginning of each walk
  - Dogs must be kept on a short fixed lead

- The dog must be fit enough to complete the walk
  - It is the responsibility of the owner that they can personally get their dog over any stiles, bridges and muddy sections without assistance
- We may refuse to allow a dog on a walk if it is infirm, behaving aggressively or not kept under control
- There may be occasions when it is felt that a dog should not be allowed on a walk because it is infirm or showing signs of aggression. If this is the case, the leader and steward should explain their concerns to the owner and discuss the walk conditions with them
- As a last resort they can refuse the dog entry

#### 5.1.4 Dogs and stock

- If the route will cross fields where stock are, or may be, present the leader should mention this at the start of the walk
- If stock is present, the dog and owner should not cross with the rest of the group
- For safety reasons they should wait until last to cross
- When crossing fields with stock, the dog must be kept under control and on a short fixed lead. If a cow or bullock threatens to attack a dog, the owner should let it go. A dog running free is able to take care of itself and may draw cattle away from the owner
- If they take it off the lead, it must be retrieved and placed back on the lead as soon as they have passed the stock

## 5.2 Road crossing/walking

### 5.2.1 General

- All instances of road walking should be considered at an early stage, and avoided if an alternative route is available

- The leader must cross with the group in a safe place even if it means going slightly out of the way (must use Public Rights of Way and/or highway)
- The group should be in single file and keep close together

#### *5.2.2 Walking on the left*

- Current official guidance from the Highway Code and Department of Transport recommends that groups of walkers should keep to the left (in the direction of traffic flow) with a lookout at the front and back of the group, wearing high visibility jackets
- The reasoning is that it is easier for drivers to see groups of walkers if they are on the left, they are easier to overtake and the impact is lessened if a collision occurs
- Guided walks should follow official guidance and walk on the left
- However, this rule can be used at the discretion of the leader where, following a recce and risk assessment, it is deemed safer to walk on the right e.g. to save crossing at a blind bend, there is a poor line of sight or the verges are wider

### **5.3 Open Access**

#### *5.3.1 What is Open Access?*

- Right to access on foot – areas of mountain, moorland, downland, forest, open country and registered common land
- Walkers can explore away from established Public Rights of Way
- You can walk, sightsee, picnic, birdwatch, climb and run
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)

also applies to wheelchair users, although access land is often very rough terrain

- You can only get onto Access Land by using the Public Rights of Way network
- Follow the Moorland Visitor's Code ([www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk))
- Access land is shown on the new Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer maps.

#### 5.3.2 *What you cannot do (without separate permission from the landowner)*

- Ride a bicycle or horse (unless you are on a registered bridleway) or a motorised vehicle (unless you are on a Byway)
- Hanglide/paraglide
- Metal detect
- Sail
- Collect stones/plants/animals
- Light or cause fires
- Swim in non-tidal waters
- Make a profit from Access Land (guided walks are classed as a commercial venture and require landowner permission)

#### 5.3.3 *Other restrictions*

Access Land is not necessarily available for you to walk on at all times. Permanent restrictions may be in place for a wide range of reasons, including nature conservation, land management and public safety. In addition, local restrictions may be in force

- Temporary restrictions – as little as four hours notice is required for short term restrictions so land which is available when you set out on a morning, may not be available later that day

- Restrictions allowed for a variety of reasons, up to 28 non-weekend days per year
- Safety restrictions can be implemented at any time
- No access within 20 metres of buildings
- No access to active mineral workings
- No access to Ministry of Defence (MoD) land
- DOGS – while the act allows for walking with dogs they must be on leads of no more than 2 metres from 1 March to 31 July and at any time near livestock. Dogs may also be restricted completely on land used for grouse rearing. This is most important as virtually all Access Land in the North Pennines falls into this category!

Any restrictions in place on Access Land DO NOT apply when using Public Rights of Way that cross Access Land

#### *5.3.4 Where can I find out about restrictions?*

- Go to [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) and follow the links – this website can be difficult to navigate and even more difficult to achieve usable maps and sensible lists of restrictions but it is the only realistic source of information at present
- At access points – The landowner may put up a notice for a short term closure

#### *5.3.5 Open Access and the Walking Festival*

- Guided walks are classed as a commercial activity and therefore the CROW Act does not apply. If you wish to use Access Land you must obtain, either in writing or by e-mail, permission from the landowner. This permission should be forwarded to the administrator where it will be kept on file
- You must tell the administrator when you are planning a walk on open access land as a ‘no dogs’ symbol will

be inserted into the leaflet

- If someone attends the start of a walk with a dog, you must actually prevent people from taking their dog. This may mean a person is turned away from a walk
- You must check online the day before (preferably also on the morning of the walk) to establish if there are any temporary restrictions
- You must be prepared to take your walk on an alternative route in the event of restrictions/closures
- Old mines are a specific hazard on open moorland. Take extra care and do not investigate any unusual features

## 5.4 Risk assessment

### 5.4.1 General

- The leader and steward are jointly responsible for the overall safety of the walk. In the event of difference of opinion over any safety aspects, the leader's decision will apply
- One steward will normally attend each walk and assist the leader
- The leader and steward(s) should arrive at least 30 minutes before the advertised start time to discuss any last minute details
- The walk must not proceed until the Risk Assessment Form is completed and signed by the leader and sent to the administrator

### 5.4.2 Reasonable precautions and reconnoitre (*recce*)

- Accidents can and do happen, but leaders must show that they have done as much as is reasonably possible to foresee and mitigate against any potential accidents
- Walk participants must not be led into potentially

dangerous situations. When leaders are choosing a route they must be aware of potential hazards and do all they can to minimise risk. The leader should be aware of the suitability of routes for potentially large groups

- It is vital that the leader considers potential areas of danger when planning a walk (e.g. roads, pit shafts). They do not necessarily need to avoid these areas, although if an alternative is available this would be preferable
- However they must show they are aware of potential problems and have a plan in place to deal with them. Leaders must do a recce and risk assessment
- There may be hazards on the day which could not be known about in advance e.g. tractors obscuring or obstructing a route or land slips, may need to alter route or take extra care when passing
- Many participants are not seasoned walkers and any walk will attract people of varying abilities. To ensure an appropriate response in the event of problems, particularly in more difficult terrain, escape routes, location of emergency telephones and access routes for emergency vehicles must have been considered at the route planning stage. The emergency contact number of leaders and stewards next-of-kin must be included on Risk Assessment Form
- It is essential that leaders are familiar with their walk area to enable them to find an alternative route in the event of unforeseen problems and the possibility of bad weather or an individual's inability to complete the whole route
- Parts of the North Pennines have been worked for lead or coal and as a result there are deep shafts and crumbling tunnels, long disused, unmapped and

dangerous to the unwary. Do not investigate old buildings or shafts

- Drivers and shepherds have used the Pennines for centuries and most Public Rights of Way follow the tracks which they established. Take advantage of their knowledge and try to follow the well-trodden tracks to avoid the hazards of mines
- Avoid bogs, peat-mosses, river crossings, flooded stream crossings, crags, screes and loose boulders

#### 5.4.3 *Weather*

- Weather and its effect on ground conditions must be considered
- In the event of particularly bad weather, the decision to cancel the walk should be made at the starting point by the Leader and Steward
- Exposed open moorland often has weather which bears no resemblance to that of adjoining lowlands so 'be prepared for the worst'. Keep an eye on the weather which can close in at alarming rates, especially on high ground
- If the weather deteriorates to an unacceptable degree during the course of the walk, the group must either return or follow an alternative safe route. The group must not be endangered for any reason
- Remember the wind-chill influence on temperatures

#### 5.4.4 *Group size*

- At the planning stage consider the appropriate number for your walk and place this limit on the programme

#### 5.4.5 *Completing the Risk Assessment forms*

- Potential hazards must be noted on the risk assessment, and stewards must be made aware of these potential hazards

- When completing RA forms consider: uneven surfaces, stiles, adverse weather conditions, over exertion/sun stroke/dehydration, identify suitable escape routes or shortcuts, stock in fields
- See the template for the Risk Assessment form (Appendix 1)

## **5.5 Emergency planning**

### *5.5.1 Planning*

- Emergency plans will have been considered at planning stage and while completing risk assessment (see section 5.4)
- Leaders and stewards should take a mobile telephone on the walk, if they have one. However the possession of a mobile is not a substitute for planned emergency procedures
- If the walk is in an isolated or remote location, a copy of the route should be forwarded to the administrator prior to the event
- Leader and steward should carry the relevant map and a compass and know how to use them
- Verbal warnings are vital in trying to avoid accidents happening. Warn people at the start of any difficult points e.g. slopes, muddy sections, busy roads and narrow pavements

### *5.5.2 First aid/unable to complete the walk*

- Group must stop in a safe place while leader and steward calmly assess situation and plan of action
- First aider to assess and deal with minor injuries
- If a person wishes to leave the walk, they should preferably be accompanied back to the start by another participant
- Once they are back at the start point, the participant

should call the leader (or another walk participant) on their mobile to say they are safe. If there is no mobile, they should leave a note on the leader's or steward's car windscreen to say they are safe. This ensures that the person returned safely, if not emergency plans may need to be implemented

- Exhaustion and hypothermia are serious threats and can kill. Be on the alert for them in cold, wet and windy weather (and look out for heat exhaustion in hot weather). Recognise the symptoms and act before the situation becomes dangerous – pallor and shivering, listlessness, slurred speech, abnormal vision, irrational or violent behaviour, stumbling or falling, collapse and unconsciousness
- If near a house or farmstead, get the group there as soon as possible. Assume that others in the group may be at risk and get help quickly
- Know the treatment - prevent further heat loss; dress them in spare dry clothes; give warm food and a warm, sugary drink. Do not allow further exertion, do not rub them to stimulate circulation, and do not give them alcohol. If someone is suffering from severe hypothermia they should not be moved other than by a trained rescue team or ambulance staff
- If the group is miles from anywhere: stop immediately; provide shelter from the elements; place in a survival bag (if you have one); warm them with a fit companion; follow the same treatment as above
- If there has been an accident or incident other members of the group may be afraid, anxious or indeed panicking. If this occurs, a member of the group who is calm should take responsibility for reassuring and calming the group. People may benefit by being distracted from the situation, for example

being given a job or may need to be removed from the immediate scene where the casualty is

### 5.5.3 Summoning help

- If someone cannot make it back to the start, but the situation does not require an ambulance, call the administrator for assistance (tel nos. supplied)
- If more serious, call emergency service (112 from a mobile telephone)
- The Emergency Services Control Room requires as much information as possible to locate the party quickly; ideally the nearest road, street name or building; time of the accident or incident, nature of any injuries and number of people involved
- The Control Room computer can now process grid coordinates which are accurate but should be used in conjunction with the above information. The coordinates must be given as two 6 figure references:
  - o Easting (give this figure first)
    - If it has the prefix NY: start with a 3, then enter the first 3 numbers from the Grid Reference, followed by 00
    - If it has the prefix NZ: start with a 4, then enter the first 3 numbers from the Grid Reference, followed by 00
  - o Northing (give this figure second)
    - Start with a 5, then enter the second 3 numbers from the Grid Reference, followed by 00

e.g. Using Explorer map 307, Consett. Grid Coordinates for Pow Hill Country Park is NZ 009 515. Eastings 400900 Northings 551500 – give these two 6-figure digits to the Emergency Services

- Confirm your location, giving landmarks where possible
- The Control Room will send an ambulance or contact the relevant people to dispatch specialist help to search for, find and evacuate people if needed
- In remote areas or where a mobile phone has no reception, try and work out exactly where you are and send a competent messenger (preferably two if numbers permit) to raise help, travelling by a safe direct route to the nearest settlement, or telephone box (marked on an OS map)
- The International Distress Signal is made by a whistle or a torch. A series of six long blasts or flashes in quick succession, then followed by a one minute break, then repeat, and so on. The acknowledged reply is three whistles, waves or flashes. The distress signal should be repeated continuously after being acknowledged, especially in darkness or fog
- Whilst waiting for help to arrive, make your location as visible as possible with bright clothing or rucksacks
- You will normally be alerted to a helicopter by the noise. Do not wave frantically at the aircraft. The recognised ground signal to helicopter crews is to stand with your back to the wind and hold your arms out in a 'Y' shape. If all available members of the party stand side by side in this manner, this unusual image will be quickly picked out by the aircrew as the group in need of assistance. Do not approach the aircraft until instructed by the crew

#### 5.5.4 Reporting

- If an accident, incident, ill health or violence occurs, the steward should contact the administrator
- If necessary, witnesses may be asked to complete an Incident Report Form.

## 5.6 Insurance and liability

- Walk participants must not be led into potentially dangerous situations. When leaders are choosing a route they must be aware of potential hazards and do all they can to minimise risk. The leader should be aware of the suitability of routes for potentially large groups
- A recce must have been carried out by the leader prior to the walk taking place
- Guided Walk Leaders on authorised duties are covered by the Friends of the North Pennines public liability policy in respect of third parties. Members are also insured against risks of death and total or partial disablement and personal accident whilst on voluntary duties on behalf of the Friends of the North Pennines
- Insurers would expect that all effort has been made to minimise risks. Therefore the completion of a recce and risk assessment prior to the walk is necessary to be covered by this insurance policy
- Details of the insurance policy are available upon request
- Any incident which may result in a claim under either policy should be reported to the administrator without delay

## 5.7 Equality and Diversity

### 5.7.1 *What is 'Equality and Diversity'?*

Volunteers should be made aware of what this means to them and how they represent the Friends of the North Pennines. The following quick definitions may be of assistance:

#### Equality

- Everyone has individual needs and the right to have

those needs respected

- Everyone should have equal access to services, information and engagement in decision-making processes as well as employment and social opportunities
- It goes beyond the concept of treating everyone ‘the same’, takes into account the higher level of support some people need to gain equal access to life chances

Diversity

- People should be valued as individuals
- People from different backgrounds can bring a wider range of experiences, fresh ideas and perceptions which improves employment and service delivery

It is important that all people regardless of age, gender, disability or ethnic origin have the same opportunities to access Friends of the North Pennines services, including guided walks.

#### 5.7.2 Disabled Access

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is a statutory duty and is also incorporated into the Friends of the North Pennines policies
- With reference to the Disability Discrimination Act, consideration must be given to disabled people when planning a route
- Disabled access is not about physically altering the countryside but it is about considering everyone’s needs in order to provide the best service
- Nor is it about making every walk ‘easy access’. The walks programme is available for all people and the programme needs to reflect this
- Clearly, there are routes where it is impractical to lead people with mobility difficulties but, if alternative

routes are available, perhaps simply avoiding steps or a particular stile, they should be taken

- Often poor attitudes can be more of a problem than physical access (see below for tips on improving communication for people with disabilities)
- Improving the service for disabled users improves the service for everyone
- Do not make assumptions about a person or their disability
- Thought must be given to the route e.g. could it be made shorter, take a flatter route, pass toilets etc.
- Walk introduction by leader – give a brief verbal description of route. Speak clearly and face participants (both at start and at points along the route). Explain potential hazards and ensure they are understood
- Give a few minutes for anyone who has any points for discussion/problems to bring them to your attention. Speak to them away from the group. Discussion between leader, steward and participant should take place if there are any problems and a decision made. There is discretion to stop a participant joining a walk, ultimately this is the leader's decision

*Meeting people who have sight loss*

- Identify yourself clearly and introduce anyone else who is present
- When help is needed on unfamiliar ground ask “would you like me to guide you?” or “let me offer you an arm”. This will enable you to guide rather than propel or lead the person
- If talking in a group but addressing one person in particular, remember to say the name of the person to whom you are speaking

- Do not leave someone talking to an empty space. Say when you wish to end a conversation or to move away and make sure they are not left alone in unfamiliar surroundings
- If they have a guide dog never pat or feed it without the owner's permission

*Meeting people who are Deaf or hard of hearing*

- Do not always make assumptions about a person's ability to communicate or the ways in which they do it – always ask
- Do not shout. It's a common reaction, but it only causes embarrassment and may be painful to hearing aid users
- If you are not immediately understood, try re-phrasing what you are saying
- Write things down if necessary, using short common language
- If you are with a deaf person and a verbal warning is given, make sure they understand what is happening, for example "the bridge is icy so take care when crossing"
- Use text messaging if appropriate

*Meeting people who lip-read*

- Do not assume that everyone who is deaf can lip-read
- If they do lip-read, remember that this skill is never wholly reliable. It requires intense concentration and is very tiring
- To avoid startling someone who may not know you are there or to attract the person's attention in a group of people either use a light touch on their shoulder or wave your hand
- Look directly at them and speak slowly, clearly and naturally

- Try to use plain language
- Speak with facial expressions, gestures and body movements which emphasise the words you use
- Face the light and keep hands and food away from your face while speaking

*Meeting people with a speech impediment*

- Give them your full attention
- Be encouraging and patient – resist temptation to finish sentences
- Do not correct or speak for the person
- Where possible ask questions that require short answers
- If you have difficulty in understanding, don't pretend, repeat what you do not understand and the person's reactions will guide you

*Meeting a wheelchair user*

- When talking for more than a few moments to someone in a wheelchair, try to put yourself at their eye level
- Avoid leaning on a person's wheelchair, this is similar to leaning on a person and can be both annoying and rude. The chair is part of a person's body space

## **5.8 Handouts**

### *5.8.1 Purpose of the handout*

- Leaders are encouraged to produce a handout for each walk
- Provides information to participants about the route and points of interest on the walk
- Enables walkers with a hearing impairment to access the information
- Maps provide a visual aid

- Enables people to walk the route later alone or with friends and family
- Helps to build up confidence in map reading as people are encouraged to follow the map as they are walking

### 5.8.2 Content of the handout

- Should include a route description, map and key points of the route.
- Ideally 1 sheet of A4. This provides enough information but is still a convenient size
- Ordnance Survey (OS) maps cannot be photocopied or printed from GIS without permission
- Follow accessible information guidelines:
  - Where possible, type the document rather than handwrite
  - If you must handwrite, print in lower case
  - Minimum font size of 12
  - Use sans serif fonts (e.g. arial or comic sans) rather than serif fonts (e.g. times new roman)
  - Make information simple and easy to understand, avoid jargon and abbreviations. Aim at a reading age of 12.
  - Avoid italics and only underline headings or titles
  - White and black or blue and yellow provide the best contrast and should be used wherever possible
  - Don't use red and green together (difficult for people who are colour blind)
  - Don't write in BLOCK CAPITALS
  - Don't put text over pictures
  - Left align text and do not justify

- o Don't split words at the ends of line, even with the use of a hyphen
- o Use Easy Read format (short sentences, avoid difficult words, use appropriate pictures and illustrations)

### 5.8.3 Sources of Information

- Natural England (formerly English Nature, Countryside Agency and Rural Development Agency) [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)
- Environment Agency - [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)
- Countryside Access - [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)
- Association for Heritage Interpretation – [www.heritage-interpretation.org.uk](http://www.heritage-interpretation.org.uk)
- Durham County Council Countryside Group – [www.durham.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.durham.gov.uk/countryside)
- North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)

## 5.9 Code of Conduct

- Leaders and stewards must carry out their duties to the standard outlined in this Handbook
- Leaders and stewards must maintain the good reputation of the Friends of the North Pennines
- Any complaints or concerns should be directed to the administrator and should not be aired to members of the public
- Leaders and stewards can be investigated and dismissed if they do not meet the minimum requirements for training or minimum levels of service, or if they bring the Friends of the North Pennines into disrepute
- All walk participants must be treated with respect and dignity

- All staff and volunteer contact details must be kept confidential

Aims

Roles  
summary

Leaders

Stewards

**Issues**

Walk  
details

First Aid



# 6 Walk details required

When completing the sheet with your preferred walks and dates, please ensure that you supply all the details requested (Appendix 2)

- A recce should be carried out before putting a walk forward
- If a walk will go onto open access land, or crossing private land a landowner forbids dogs, make a note on sheet. A no dogs symbol will be added
- Grid Reference should include the two letters as well as numerals – e.g. NZ or NY
- Supply map numbers for OS and Explorer series
- Supply road numbers in directions
- Meeting point description should be obvious for new walkers e.g. next to church
- Include the number of miles of open access as well as the total mileage
- Ensure you choose the correct grade from those described below

### Grades

EASY	Country walk suitable for most levels of fitness. Good paths. Relatively flat. Possibly a few stiles
MEDIUM	Country walk suitable for people of average fitness. Comfortable walking in undulating landscapes, avoiding strenuous climbs. Some stiles. Boots essential
HARD	Requires a good level of fitness. Walks with steep or strenuous climbs or rough moorland. Boots essential

- The finalised programme draft is sent back to leaders to check their walk details. Leaders are asked to pay particular attention to date, day, times, grading, grid reference and whether all the appropriate symbols are present

## **7 First Aid training**

- Guided walk leaders and stewards are encouraged to obtain a recognised first aid qualification
- Each walk must have a suitably qualified first aider present
- Free first aid courses are organised by the Friends of the North Pennines
- All walk stewards or leaders with a first aid certificate are issued with a small first aid kit
- Friends of the North Pennines will replenish any items used in administering first aid to members of the public during walks
- Stewards must check that items within the kit are still in date
- Contact the administrator if any items require replacement

## Guided Walks Checklist

The following checklist will make sure that you and everyone on your walk have a great day out in the North Pennines.

### Considering a walk route

#### *Leader*

- Must follow Public Rights of Way or officially recognised permissive paths at all times, except on open access land or private land with permission
- At the planning stage, considered possible alternatives, especially on open access land which can close with 4 hours notice
- Doesn't take group across private land (without written permission)
- Avoids road crossing and road walking wherever possible
- Walks is circular, unless the walking festival has agreed to arrange transport
- Consideration has been given to people with disabilities
- Done a recce for each walk, even if I've done the walk in the past – things change
- Done a recce on the ground, not just relying on the map
- Identifies start point (preferably with plenty of parking) lunch stop, telephones and toilets (where available)
- Checked mileage
- Checked grade of walk, against key in programme. If it's over 8 miles insert LONG plus a GRADE
- Escape routes, location of emergency telephones, mobile reception and access routes have been considered at the planning stage

## Checklist

- Identified points of interest (nature, geology, history), research information, put main points down on paper
- Borne in mind that route conditions may change with the season
- Am aware of any trouble spots on your route (drinking dens, rubbish, bulls, streams to be forded etc)

## Walk details for programme

### *Leader*

When completing the sheet with your preferred walks and dates, please ensure that you supply the following details:

- If a walk will go onto open access land, make a note on sheet. A no dogs symbol will be added
- Grid Reference for start and finish points
- Supply map numbers for OS and Explorer series
- Supply road numbers in directions
- Meeting point description should be obvious for new walkers e.g. next to church
- Let the organisers know if specific reason why dogs not suitable (private land, open access)
- Give a brief title and description of proposed walk. Please note this information is used to market the walk, so it should be descriptive - and attractive!
- Maximum number of participants it is safe, or you are comfortable, to lead
- What, if any, specific equipment is needed
- What, if any, specific clothing is needed
- Whether a packed lunch should be taken
- Grade of walk (using our easy/moderate/hard grading)
- The proposed start and finish times

- The estimated distance, in miles
- Information about whether the event is aimed at children/families, and if not, then the minimum age recommended

### **Week before the walk**

#### *Leader*

- Re-walked the route, checked for problems, allowing time to amend route if necessary, re-acquainted with route
- Made contact with the steward to discuss the walk
- Completed the risk assessment supplied by the organisers and returned it

### **Day of walk**

#### *Both Leader and Steward*

- Leader and stewards should be at the start point ½ hour before advertised start of walk
- Modifications to the planned route may need to be made on the day (group size, fitness, weather, open access restrictions). Leader must discuss with steward
- Road walking. Should be on left whenever it is safe and reasonable to do so. Leaders to discuss any road walking with stewards before setting off. Confirm where safe crossing points are. Discretion for leaders to decide depending on road conditions, position of sun, whether being on left would mean crossing over a road for the sake of it etc
- Leaders and stewards must not bring a dog
- Follow the Countryside Code
- Ensure group walks in single line across arable/hay fields
- If there are any disagreements with participants, do not get drawn into an argument in front of the group

## Checklist

- Remain polite at all times

### *Leader*

- Leader must know their route and be able to describe to someone and supply written material, should another leader have to step in for any reason
- If the walk is on any open access land, the leader must check the Countryside Agency website [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) for any restrictions – be prepared to amend route if necessary
- Leader to discuss route, any potential hazards (ground conditions, hills, cattle, roads etc), location of telephones with the steward
- Introduction to walkers - distribute handout if you have one, go over mileage, terrain, conditions and focus of walk. Ask people to stay together and behind the leader. If you have specific permission to cross private land, explain to walkers. They won't be able to follow your route at a later date. Tell your group about the North Pennines Walking Festival
- Alter walk in accordance with conditions. If wet or cold, don't spend ages talking, people will get cold. If noisy, try to find somewhere quiet to impart information
- Dogs – have quiet word with owner. Explain they must keep their dog on a short lead for the duration of the walk. If going through field with cattle, explain procedure to dog owner and their responsibilities. Dogs are not allowed on open access, will have been stated in the programme
- Face group when talking, don't look at your view
- Take an interest in participants' comments, be prepared to answer questions or explain in a different way if they don't understand something

- Leader should always be at the front of the group
- The speed is dictated by that of the slowest person on the walk
- Leader should know where the back of the group is at all times and don't allow to get strung out
- If there are any disagreements with a landowner, try and discuss quietly at one side. Don't get drawn into an argument in front of group
- Don't allow one person to monopolise the leader's time and attention
- Wait until all assembled before talking
- Speak loud and clearly

*Stewards*

- Welcome walkers as they turn up
- Give out evaluation sheets
- Identify the first aider for the walk by name
- If dog is present, bring this to the leaders attention, if they haven't already seen it
- Introductions: welcome to walking festival walk, introduce stewards and leader by name, invite people to have a quiet word if they think the leader should be made aware of an issue e.g. health or they think they may struggle with the terrain
- Head count before set off and at various points around walk
- Should always be a back marker
- Keep an eye out for people who look like they are struggling, if necessary discuss pace/options with leader

## *Checklist*

- Stewards should give assistance over stiles and difficult areas where necessary

## **Emergency**

- Emergency plans will have been considered at planning stage and while completing risk assessment
- Group must stop in a safe place while leader and steward calmly assess situation and plan of action
- First aider to assess and deal with minor injuries
- If person leaves group, they should preferably be accompanied back to the start. They must leave a note on leader/steward car windscreen to say they are safe, or call leader/steward mobile
- If more serious, call emergency service (112 from mobile)
- Any problems must be reported to the organisers after the walk

## **After the walk**

### *Steward*

- Thank people for coming
- Explain that the walking festival has a range of walks – offer programme
- Remind people to fill in evaluation forms and send back

### *Both leader and steward*

- Discuss how walk went, if there were any issues, try and sort them out between leader and steward

### *Leader*

- Look at feedback for alternative route suggestions and possible

## Walk Confirmation Sheet

<b>Date</b>	
<b>Walk Title</b>	
<b>Walk Details</b> <i>(Give start/finish location with grid reference, bearing in mind parking)</i>	Start/finish:
<b>Brief description of proposed walk for use on our website</b> <i>(Max. 50 words)</i>	
<b>Walk leader name and contact details</b>	
<b>Assistant leader/first aider's name and contact details</b>	
<b>If you are an individual do you need us to provide an assistant leader?</b>	YES NO
<b>Estimated distance (miles)</b>	
<b>Proposed start time</b>	
<b>Proposed end time</b>	
<b>Grade</b> <i>(easy/moderate/hard)</i>	
<b>Packed lunch required?</b>	YES NO
<b>Specific clothing required</b> <i>(e.g. walking boots, waterproofs)?</i>	
<b>Specific equipment required</b> <i>(e.g. head torch, mat etc)?</i>	YES NO
<b>Will dogs be allowed?</b> <i>(Please note that dogs are not allowed on much of the Access Land in the North Pennines, except on Public Rights of Way)</i>	YES NO
<b>Maximum number of participants</b> <i>(Please bear in mind parking)</i>	
<b>Does the event require minibus/coach transport?</b> <i>If so, will you book this? Please give details:</i>	
<b>Will the event held in a public space/on Public Rights of Way/Access Land?</b> <i>Please describe briefly:</i>	
<b>Is the event specifically aimed at children/families?</b> <i>If yes, indicate age range</i>	YES NO
<b>If the event is not aimed at children what is the minimum age (if any)?</b>	

*Appendix 2: Risk Assessment sheet*