Guidelines for walk leaders

This document aims to lay out the steps involved in leading a walk from planning to the day itself.

Choose and assess the route

If it is a route you know well then a recce before submitting the route to the programme wouldn't always be necessary,
We need the details of length, ascent, and difficulty, plus a map (if possible) to include in the programme.
If you use a computer mapping program such as Memory Map, Outdoor Active, or OS maps you can send the walks coordinator (WC) a .gpx file. The WC can use this to generate a map for the web site. If you don't have the means of generating this information then if you can provide the WC with a detailed description of the route (or show it on the map) the WC can do the rest.
Our guidance for assessing the difficulty of a route is on the web site in the document “How our walks are rated or graded” at: https://ryedalewalking.org.uk/information

Recce the walk and carry out a Risk Assessment

A recce as close as possible to the date of the walk is advisable to check that the route is still walkable.
Leaders **must** carry out a Risk Assessment (RA) for their walk, usually on, or following the last recce.
Our group has insurance cover and one of the requirements is that all walks have had an RA.
The blank RA form is on the website on the “Information” page.
Leaders must complete a RA for each walk they plan to lead then keep that. The RA may be saved in a file on your PC, or just on paper.
One of the things the RA asks you to consider is "escape routes". This could be in case of the weather changing for the worse, or some incident requiring the walk to be cut short. This is particularly relevant for the more challenging and longer walks.

Cancelling the walk because of bad weather or because the leader is unable to lead it

If the weather is forecast to be bad enough to adversely affect the walk then let the WC or another committee member know as soon as you can that you think the walk should be cancelled. A cancellation email will then be sent out and the website updated.
If you, the leader, are unable to lead the walk for some reason you have two options: cancel it or see if somebody else can be found to lead the walk in your stead. Let the WC know as soon as possible; the earlier we know, the better chance we have of sorting something out.

On the day of the walk

Carry a map of the area

Even if you use a mapping app or GPS you should always carry the OS map or a printed copy of the route from the OS map with you as backup.

Registration Forms

Make sure you bring copies of the registration form to the walk The registration form is on the web site in the same place as the Risk Assessment. If you aren't able to print them out, please contact the WC.

At the start of the walk

Introduce yourself to the group if there are people there you don't know.
Check if there are any non-members there, and if so, ask them to complete a registration form. This will ensure you have emergency contact details should they be required on the walk.
Explain that they get their first walk free as a taster with no obligation.
Please get the completed form back to the membership secretary (name on the form) by passing it to a committee member or scanning and emailing it to the membership secretary.
If the person wishes to join on the day and forces cash or a cheque on you, give it to a committee member if one is on the walk, or get in touch with the treasurer after the walk.
Make sure you know how many walkers there are and, if required, ask for someone to be the back marker. Make sure that person understands the role. It is worth pointing out the back marker and telling everyone that they should inform the back marker if they are stopping for a natural break, or even leaving the walk(!).
If you think that someone is incapable of completing the walk, or is not suitably equipped, then you should try to persuade them to give the walk a miss.
Before you set off you could tell the walkers about the walk, and interesting features, history,…
It is also worth mentioning how many coffee stops you'll be having and when (or where) they and lunch will be happening.

The role of the back marker

Unless it is a very small group, the leader should ask for a volunteer back marker to assist him or her to keep track of the group. The back marker should remain at the back of the group so that if the leader can see the back marker they know everybody is there.
If any of the walkers need to stop for any reason (most often for a "natural break") then they should tell the back marker. In any event if anyone stops and gets behind the group the back marker should then slow down (and possibly stop) and wait for the person(s) to catch up before rejoining the main group.

On the walk

Keep an eye on how strung out the party is getting and set the pace accordingly. Stiles and gates slow walkers down so make sure everyone is through before setting off at full speed again.
If you have a backmarker, check regularly that you can see them; if you don't have a back marker keep checking that you still have all the people you expect!
You control the pace of the walk and if anyone does get ahead of you call them back, or at the very least ask them to wait at any path junctions.
As you approach any hazards identified on the recce point them out.
If some people are struggling to keep up make sure that you slow down the pace a little and stop as required to give them a chance to recover. This is a balance which you have to judge on the day.

Finally...

This is intended to be a guidance document. If there is other information that you think should be included, or things that should be changed, please let the WC know.