

Lancaster RA Guide for Walkers



Stepping Stones, Beezleys, Ingleton



V8 October 2025

Lancaster RA Guide for Walkers

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Lancaster RA Walkers Guide, version 8, October 2025. It is designed to draw together information useful to walkers and should be especially useful for new members. Some of the information is taken from the national RA website (<http://www.ramblers.org.uk>), policy, advice and volunteer sections and existing documents pertaining to Lancaster ramblers. The website is useful for additional information. The pack is complemented by the small pocket leaflet “Walkers Check List / First Aid Guide”, copies of which are also available within the Group.

Much of the document may already be familiar to you but new members should find plenty of interest to them.

Much of the information is general. The RA run Volunteer courses on many topics in various parts of the country – see the RA website for further details or speak to a member of the committee.

2. Lancaster RA Walks - Before the Walk



General Information

There are several points to consider when deciding to join a walk.

- How long is the walk, how many miles?

The length of the walk is intimately connected with the amount of climbing, time available and the terrain.

- How fast is the walk?

Lancaster Wednesday day walks / evening walks and afternoon walks typically average around 2 – 2.5 mph walking speed, excluding pauses at stiles, gates etc. and coffee, lunch and other planned stops, and around 1.5 – 2 mph including these stops. Long Saturday walks are at a similar or higher walking pace and the conditions are typically rougher.

- How long is the walk? How many hours?

See table on next page.

- What time of the year the walk is to be undertaken?

The same walk on a nice summer's day is very different to it on a wet, windy and cold winter's day.

- In which area is the walk?

This will determine the terrain and type of path – fields, moorland, mountain, woodland, farm tracks, narrow lanes, likelihood of muddy conditions, etc.

- **EmergencySMS.** Although we all hope that an emergency situation will not occur it is as well to be prepared. Ensure you carry a mobile phone and you are registered in advance for emergencySMS. Any mobile phone is fine.

If you get into trouble in the hills and need to contact the emergency services for help then sometimes you can find yourself in the situation where you can just about get a signal but it's not enough to make a call. That's where **emergencySMS** comes in.

Originally developed for people who cannot make voice calls because they have a hearing loss or a speech impairment the authorities have now accepted that it's valid for use in situations where you have marginal coverage too.

Essentially you just send a text to 999 asking for help however you must **register your mobile phone** with the service before an emergency happens.

Go to the website for more details (**SMS to the emergency services | EmergencySMS**). They emphasise the need to say in the text which service you need, what the problem is, and your location.

So, if you broke your leg climbing Scafell Pike you might text: **999** then

Police / Mountain Rescue. I have broken leg. Scafell Pike OSGR NY212077

If you have an 8 or 10 figure grid reference, so much the better.

What happens next?

The emergency service will either ask for more information or will tell you that help is on the way. Don't assume that your message has been received until the emergency service sends a message back. It will usually take about two minutes before you get a reply. If you don't get a reply within three minutes, please try again or find other ways of getting help.

It is quite common to be in the situation where only SMS works so it's well worth while registering for this service: it could help get you out of trouble one day.

To register mobile phone for "emergency SMS". To register, text 'register' to 999. You will get a reply – then follow the instructions you are sent. **IMPORTANT:** an SMS text requires a signal from your mobile phone home network, unlike a voice call to 999 (or 112) which can use other networks. Also, a voice call to 999 (or 112) is faster. For both these reasons, **a voice call should always be the preferred option.**

- The use of the What3words APP may be useful. Every 3 metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of three words. Details may be found on-line. <https://what3words.com>

Specifics for Lancaster Ramblers

The group now uses an on-line system for volunteering to lead walks. The walks are communicated to walkers using e-mail a month at a time, a week in advance, by the Programme Secretary (2025 Judy Steele, walks@lancasterramblers.org.uk). There is no need to book unless specified for the particular walk.

With reference to Lancaster RA walks, the following details are important:

- Mileage and Time, the following is typical.
Wednesday full day walks – 6-8 miles (4 – 5 hours)
Wednesday dual walk days (Typically 1 per month) Walk 1. 6-9 miles (4 - 5 hours)
Walk 2. 5-6 miles (4 - 5 hours)
The two walks do not need to start from the same spot or walk in the same area.
Saturday/Sunday, full day walks – 7-12 miles (5 - 7 hours)
Short Saturday walks – 4-5 miles (2-3 hours). This walk is independent of the Saturday full day walk
Evening Walks – 3-4 miles (1.5 – 2.5 hours). Late Spring and Summer only.
- As shown in the Lancaster RA walk programme, climbing grades are as follows;
1 – 2000/3000 ft.; 2 – 1500/2000 ft.; 3 – 1000/1500 ft.
4 – 500/1000 ft.; 5 < 500 ft; 6 – fairly flat.
- Degrees of terrain difficulty are as follows:
A – Very strenuous walking, including scrambling or very rough moorland
B – Strenuous walking, possibly steep or rough moorland
C – Moderate walking, possibly including some climbing
D – Easy walk (with respect to terrain)
- For the range of walks we do, combined with the mileage, the following grades pertain to the walks as follows:
Wednesday full day walks – 6-8 miles, grades – C4 to D6 typically (up to C3 or B4)
Saturday/Sunday, full day walks – 7-12 miles – A1 to C4 typically
Saturday short walks – 4-5 miles - D5 to D6 typically
Evening Walks – 3-4 miles – D5 to D6 typically
- Areas:- LD – Lake District; L – Local; B – Bowland; YD – Yorkshire Dales
HENP – Howgills, Eden, North Pennines; RV – Ribble Valley
- We welcome Ramblers members from outside our area. Also, non-members may join us for up to three walks as guests but are expected to join if they wish to continue coming out with us.

- Everyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility. In all cases leaders must be satisfied that the person under 18 and the responsible adult fulfil the other requirements for suitability to walk. Young children should only be allowed on the walk if it is suitable for them.
- People with special needs must be accompanied by someone responsible for their direct care (who needn't be a Ramblers member).
- We regret that only registered assistance dogs are allowed on the walks.
- The use of mobile phones on walks is discouraged and persons should be sensitive to the wishes of fellow walkers. If a call needs to be made it should be done so discretely at a break time and away from the group. Emergency calls are an exception, of course.
- Smoking or vaping on the walk is strongly discouraged and persons should be sensitive to the comfort of fellow walkers. It is tolerated at break times if done discretely, downwind and well away from the group.
- The minimum number of walkers on an official Lancaster RA walk is 3 fit, adult persons. To be covered by Ramblers Insurance, a walk must be a recognised Ramblers activity, i.e. in the Walks Programme or on the web site.
- Ensure that you are sufficiently fit and equipped for the particular walk to be undertaken – check mileage, grade and weather forecast. If unsure, try an easier walk first and contact the leader in advance, his/her telephone number is given in the Walks Programme.
- If you have any underlying medical condition, please inform the walk's leader. All walkers come at their own risk.
- It is necessary to wear walking boots and have a rucksack, to carry sufficient food and drink for the day's walk as well as waterproofs and spare clothing commensurate with the time of year, weather forecast and walk area.
- Check the weather for the day for the locality of the walk.
- If travelling by car please take a change of shoes and a bag for muddy boots at the end of the walk as a courtesy to the driver.
- We typically car share. Your regular car insurance is not compromised by accepting donations as long as it is not for profit. The suggested donation complies with this ruling. Car parking costs are also shared.

- Depending on the details of the walk, consider taking the following items:-
Map, compass, flashlight, mobile phone, GPS (if available) and whistle.
- Finally, the leader is in charge and is responsible for the safety and enjoyment of the party.

If you require further information on specific walks, please contact the walk leader (their phone number is given in the programme). For information on the walks in general, please see the Lancaster Ramblers web site
(www.lancasterramblers.org.uk)

or e-mail walks@lancasterramblers.org.uk.

Meeting Arrangements

Meet in the Centre of Lancaster: Lancaster RA walkers meet (currently, 2025) at Kingsway Retail Park (Pizza Hut. Lidl etc) car park (the departure time is given in the programme, please meet at least 15 minutes prior to this time) to allow departure at the designated time using the minimum number of cars. Normally this means a circular walk. Use of public transport, entirely or in part, is occasionally used so that one can also walk a “linear” route from A to B rather than having to end up where you started. Don’t forget any bus passes or rail cards. The meeting point for full public transport walks will be given in the walk programme notification – typically the bus station or railway station.

By prior arrangement with the leader, a walker may elect to meet the group at the start of the walk, eg if he/she lives close to the start point. Please arrive 10 minutes or so before the time the leader expects to start the walk. Details will be communicated by the leader to the walker.

New members are encouraged to meet at the starting point in Lancaster rather than at the start of the walk unless they live close to the start point. New members should have called the leader to discuss the walk and requirements for the day. – boots, food, experience etc.

- Since free, all-day parking is not possible at the Kingsway Retail Park, car drivers not using their cars need to park elsewhere. The location will be suggested by the leader but typically for trips north we use the Park ‘n’ Ride, trips east we use the Park ‘n’ Ride or Bull Beck Picnic site near Caton and for trips south we use Barton Road or another suitable location.

3. Lancaster RA Walks

During the Walk

- We are encouraging all of our walkers to carry a laminated tag, or equivalent, which gives information for an emergency; contact telephone number, address and any critical medical conditions. Any new group members should collect a tag from the leader or a committee member.
- Those with mobile phones are encouraged to use the ICE (In Case of Emergency) facility.
- If you are driving make sure you know the start location and the route to the start. The leader will give you instructions.
- Anyone wishing to go directly to the start of the walk should contact the leader in advance. You are warned that the party may not set out so you go at your own risk. Give your mobile number so that you may be contacted. Parking priority is given to shared cars.
- Note that groups of people in general, and walkers are no exception, feel safe in a group and are often less safety conscious, especially with regard to road traffic. This is not the case. Everyone is responsible for keeping alert and acting in a safe manner.
- Do not walk ahead of the leader as a general rule.
- Do not leave the group to find your own route. You may not meet up where you expect to and this will cause many problems. This may be relaxed in the case of medical problems and the alternative route is wholly along a road or obvious track. The walk leader will advise.
- If you stop on a path please step to one side to allow others to pass.
- If you are experiencing any problems, let the leader know as soon as possible.
- Everyone should behave responsibly – leave gates as found (usually shut), single file through crops, climb gates (only if you have to) at the hinge end. Do not allow anyone to climb walls and stick to the Public Rights of Way (PRoWs).
- No radios should be played on the walk or during breaks.

- Mobile phones – except on Footpath check walks – should be left on silent and social calls of a non RA nature should not be taken or made on the walk (unless made discreetly, away from the group, typically, at breaks) or when travelling to or from the walk. If calls are necessary, they should be made discreetly.
- Use of walking sticks or poles. Please ensure that these are used safely and do not walk with the poles pointing backwards where they could injure a following walker. If they are not being used, keep them in a safe position (vertical).
- Emergencies – see later (and emergencySMS on page 3). The leader or nominee will phone 999 or preferably, from a mobile, 112. Police / Mountain rescue.
- **Road Walking.** Walkers should stay alert at all times. From the 2022 Highway Code, <https://thehighway-code.co.uk/highway/code/1-to-35/rules-for-pedestrians.html>

“Rule 2

If there is no pavement, keep to the right-hand side of the road so that you can see oncoming traffic. You should take extra care and

- be prepared to walk in single file, especially on narrow roads or in poor light
- keep close to the side of the road.

It may be safer to cross the road well before a sharp right-hand bend so that oncoming traffic has a better chance of seeing you. Cross back after the bend.

“Rule 5”

Organised walks. Large groups of people walking together should use a pavement if available; if one is not, they should keep to the left. Look-outs should be positioned at the front and back of the group, and they should wear fluorescent clothes in daylight and reflective clothes in the dark. At night, the look-out in front should show a white light and the one at the back a red light. People on the outside of large groups should also carry lights and wear reflective clothing.”

This is an unclear area for our walks, since large is not defined. Obviously, where there is a pavement, on either side of the road, this should be used. Also, everyone in the group must use the same protocol. A single lane road needs more care than a two lane road. Our advice is to obey the Highway Code and take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of the group. The Leader is in charge. Stay alert to the dangers. **Typically walk on the right hand side where there is no pavement.**

Take care crossing the road. If a car is heard coming from either direction then anybody should call “Car” so that all the party can hear and move into single file at the side of the road. Remember that “Car” is not necessarily singular. Always check behind you if a vehicle passes from the rear to ensure that another car is not following.

In all cases the walkers should be alert to vehicle approach, minimize the width of walkers on the road and take responsibility for one’s own and companions’ safety. The busier the road, the more important this is. The “Group Syndrome” of safety does not apply, you are not extra safe in a group, you must be alert to danger. Talking is a distraction that can be dangerous, it is much safer not to talk on busy roads.

- **Leaving the party:** If a walker needs to leave the party for any reason, typically medical, he/she must inform the leader in person. The leader will agree with him/her the best, safest route back to the cars or transport back to Lancaster / home. The leader will also decide if 1 or 2 other members of the walk need to accompany the walker back to the cars / transport stop. The returning party may need a map and compass or GPS. Walk members are not allowed to leave the party because they wish to pursue another route unless it is for safety or ability reasons. The leader will then discuss the next course of action, as above.

After the Walk

- Settle up the travel donation with the car drivers, including any car parking charges.
- On mid-week walks, we typically stop at a tea room after the walk and before returning to Lancaster. It is not mandatory of course but if your driver stops, so do you in most cases!
- If you or anyone on your walk enjoys taking photographs you can send some (showing walkers plus scenery) to **photos@lancasterramblers.org.uk** for publication on our web site and social media.
- Report any footpath defects to the Footpath Secretary (2025: Neil Herbert, **footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk**).
- We would like to get reports of our activities into the Lancaster Guardian ‘Social Scene’. These are only short items of 200 words or so. If you, or someone on your walk, can draft a suitable interesting description of your walk please send it to the Press Officer (2025: Catherine Corless, **catherine.corless@btinternet.com**). There is a Tuesday deadline for the Thursday paper.

4. The Role of the Leader

The role of the leader may be summed up as sharing their enthusiasm and passion for walking by leading people on group walks in a welcoming, safe, responsible and enjoyable way.

If you would like additional information about the suitability of a specific walk, please contact the leader, whose contact number is given on the Walks programme, in advance.

Further information on leading walks may be found in the Lancaster RA Group Leaders Guide, available on the group website.

If you are interested in leading a walk, we now use an on-line system. For details please contact the Programme Secretary (2025 Judy Steele, walks@lancasterramblers.org.uk). We now have a walk leaders' mentoring system for anyone wishing to learn how to lead walks – contact the Programme Secretary for details, as above. It is also available if you just want a refresher session.

Now for some general path and walking considerations.

5. Public Rights of Way

In England and Wales we have over 140,000 miles of public rights of way, providing the ability to walk recreationally and to get from one place to another on foot, sometimes by using paths which have been walked for thousands of years. These public rights of way should be maintained by your local Highway Authority and are recorded on official maps (called definitive maps) in England and Wales. Public rights of way are not just footpaths - there are bridleways and byways which the public has a right to use. Unfortunately not all public rights of way are recorded on definitive maps or shown on the Ordnance Survey, and neither are other paths which are open by permission or under other arrangements. The Ramblers work to protect public rights of way and their Don't Lose Your Way (or Lost Ways) project works to return these paths to the public domain.

Rights of way and cattle



The RA works to ensure that walkers are not exposed to unnecessary risks caused by cattle kept on land to which the public has access.

Farmers are allowed to keep cattle in fields with public access, but legislation bans the keeping of bulls in fields crossed by rights of way, unless they are less than 10 months old, or not of a recognized dairy breed. Beef bulls in such fields must be accompanied by cows or heifers

Whilst the law on bulls is specific, incidents in which members of the public are chased or injured by cattle are far more likely to involve cows with calves.

Walking near livestock

The countryside is an inspiring place to walk but it can also be little daunting when cows and bulls are grazing near your path.

However, the countryside is a working environment and it's important to be mindful and respectful of farms and farm animals, particularly during spring when cattle are rearing their young.

Dogs are a major annoyance to livestock. Although our Group walks do not allow dogs, be aware of other dogs nearby.

Here's some advice from the RA experts on what to do when walking near cattle:

Do:

- Stop, look and listen on entering a field. Look out for any animals and watch how they are behaving, particularly bulls or cows with calves.
- Avoid getting between cows and their calves.
- Be prepared for cattle to react to your presence.
- Move quickly, calmly and quietly, keep together and if possible walk around the herd.
- If they try to get too close, clap your hands loudly.
- Remember to close gates behind you when walking through fields containing livestock.
- Report any frightening incidents or attacks to the landowner, the highway authority, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), and also the police if it's of a serious nature, typically via the leader of the walk.
- Keep the Lancaster RA committee informed of any problems you experience.

Don't:

- Don't put yourself at risk by walking close to cattle.
- Don't startle them.
- Don't panic or run – most cattle will stop before they reach you; if they follow just walk on quietly.
- Don't try to stroke or feed them, they are not pets.
- Don't stop to rest in the field with cattle, especially bullocks, who can be very inquisitive.

Encountering dogs while walking

Many dogs will be friendly towards unfamiliar people they meet and won't show any signs of aggression when approached, but there may be some who will behave aggressively if approached too closely.

The RSPCA has produced a helpful leaflet on what you do when you meet an unfamiliar dog. In particular, the RSPCA advises that you should do the following if faced by an aggressive dog:

- Stay calm
- Talk to the dog calmly in a pleasant tone of voice
- Get something as solid as possible between you and the dog
- Watch the dog – but do not stare into his/her face
- You may need to move, either behind something or to get away from the dog
- Do not make sudden movements or run, just walk slowly away from the dog

In the event of an attack the RSPCA advises you should:

- Fend the dog off rather than try to fight back
- Do not scream or yell
- Continue to walk slowly away, backwards or sideways

If you're bitten or intimidated by a dog when you using a public right of way always report the problem to both the police and to the local highway authority.

Walking near Horses or Donkeys

When walking in places where horses are grazing it's best to exercise the same caution as when walking near livestock, keeping dogs – which could frighten horses – close by and under control and avoiding walking between mares and their foals. The British Horse Society has also produced a useful leaflet on **minimising risks when horses encounter dogs**.

6. Reporting path and access problems



Can't walk where your map says you should be able to walk? When you're out walking you'll sometimes come across a broken stile or overgrown hedge obstructing a footpath. Or occasionally you might be blocked from walking on access land. By reporting these types of problems you'll be helping out the next walker that comes along.

Report the problem to the Footpath secretary at footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk (2025: Neil Herbert). Please state the following:-

- a. Accurate grid reference for the problem
- b. The route one was taking.
- c. Location – to where is the problem close, eg farm, road etc
- d. Nature of the problem
- e. Photo of the problem if possible. This is very useful.

The footpath secretary will typically add parish and footpath number to the report and send it to the local authority. Report problems in and out of our area. For problems outside the area, the issue will be sent to the local RA footpath secretary.

Typically these details will be taken on the walk by the footpath secretary, the walk leader or any of the walkers.

7. Navigation

Map Reading



Maps are simply an accurate picture of the ground as seen from above, scaled down from life size, and with symbols to show particular features and landmarks.

For more information see Section 9 of the Guide for Leaders on the Lancaster RA website (<http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk>). Also, see more at: **Navigation - Ramblers**

Types of maps



Ordnance Survey maps

The best and most comprehensive maps of Britain for walkers are Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer maps at a scale of 1:25 000. These are divided into sheets covering the whole of Great Britain. See **www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk**.

They give a clear depiction of the physical landscape, detailing a range of geographical features, landmarks, field boundaries, valley contours, summit heights, rivers, roads, railways, villages and towns.

Most importantly, they also show public rights of way and open access land in England and Wales, 'core paths' in Scotland, many long-distance trails and off-road cycle ways.

Digital maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger maps, and some Harvey maps, are now available in digital form. There are also a number of websites which offer map extracts online. In our area the following are useful:

MARIO for Lancashire. ([mario \(arcgis.com\)](http://mario.arcgis.com))
or the Westmorland and Furness Definitive map ([Map \(highway-iams.uk\)](http://Map(highway-iams.uk)))
or the Cumberland Definitive map ([Public rights of way in Cumbria | Cumberland Council](http://Public%20rights%20of%20way%20in%20Cumbria%20-%20Cumberland%20Council))
or the North Yorkshire Definitive map
(http://maps.northyorks.gov.uk/connect/analyst/?mapcfg=Out_and_About).

. The use of the OS ([Online maps & routes for walking, cycling and running | OS Maps](http://Online%20maps%20&%20routes%20for%20walking,%20cycling%20and%20running%20-%20OS%20Maps)) for OS on-line members is also useful.

Using a compass



Learning how to use a compass is a skill that everyone who enjoys the outdoors will find useful and can be essential if you walk in isolated areas or in more challenging conditions.

To navigate successfully you will need to use your compass alongside a map – so first make sure you are comfortable with reading maps. In urban areas and lowland countryside in good visibility, good map readers can navigate well without using a compass.

For walking an orienteering compass is recommended, eg Silva, with a rectangular base, which is marked with km/m scales that can be seen even in poor light.

For more information see Section 7 of the Guide for Leaders on the Lancaster RA website (<http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk>).

Using a GPS device



A GPS (Global Positioning System) device is a hand-held receiver that picks up signals from satellites circling the earth, enabling you to locate your current position to an accuracy of 10-20m. Most modern GPS devices can then show that position on a map and, if you have stored a pre-programmed route, help you navigate along it. For more information see Section 7 of the Guide for Leaders on the Lancaster RA website (<http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk>).

Walking guidebooks

Guidebooks have been around in some shape or form since antiquity. There are several guide books available from Lancaster booksellers detailing walks in our areas including some devised by Lancaster Ramblers. Contact the Lancaster RA Secretary for details. There are also many walk routes available on the internet, including some with downloadable routes for GPS devices (GPX). Recommended examples are: where2walk, walklakes and walkingenglishman. See also Ramblers Routes on the Ramblers Association main web-site.

Ramblers Route Finder (**Find a walk or route - Ramblers**)

Lancaster Ramblers Walk Archive (**Walk Archive ([lancasterramblers.org.uk](http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk))**) also gives details of walks undertaken previously by members.

8. Types of paths in England and Wales



A right of way in England and Wales is a path that anyone has the legal right to use on foot, and sometimes using other modes of transport. Legally, a public right of way is part of the Queen's highway and subject to the same protection in law as all other highways, including trunk roads.

For more information see Section 10 of the Guide for Leaders on the Lancaster RA website (<http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk>).

9. Countryside Code for the public

Content reproduced from RA by permission of Natural England.

- Respect other people

- Protect the natural environment
- Enjoy the outdoors

Respect other people

Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors

- Respect the needs of local people and visitors alike – for example, don't block gateways, driveways or other paths with your vehicle.
- When riding a bike or driving a vehicle, slow down or stop for horses, walkers and farm animals and give them plenty of room. By law, cyclists must give way to walkers and horse-riders on bridleways.
- Co-operate with people at work in the countryside. For example, keep out of the way when farm animals are being gathered or moved and follow directions from the farmer.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- A farmer will normally close gates to keep farm animals in, but may sometimes leave them open so the animals can reach food and water. Leave gates as you find them or follow instructions on signs. When in a group, make sure the last person knows how to leave the gates.
- Follow paths unless wider access is available, such as in open country or registered common land (known as "**Open Access**" land). See the RA guide, www.ramblers.org.uk/accessguide.
- If you think a sign is illegal or misleading such as a 'Private – No Entry' sign on a public path, contact the Footpath Secretary.
- Leave machinery and farm animals alone – don't interfere with animals even if you think they're in distress. Try to alert the farmer instead.
- Use gates, stiles or gaps in field boundaries if you can – climbing over walls, hedges and fences can damage them and increase the risk of farm animals escaping.
- Our heritage matters to all of us – be careful not to disturb ruins and historic sites.

Protect the natural environment

Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home

- Protecting the natural environment means taking special care not to damage, destroy or remove features such as rocks, plants and trees. They provide homes and food for wildlife, and add to everybody's enjoyment of the countryside.
- Litter and leftover food doesn't just spoil the beauty of the countryside, it can be dangerous to wildlife and farm animals – so take your litter home with you. Dropping litter and dumping rubbish are criminal offences.
- Fires can be as devastating to wildlife and habitats as they are to people and property – so be careful with naked flames at any time of the year. Smoking is not permitted on Lancaster RA walks. Sometimes, controlled fires are used to manage vegetation, particularly on heaths and moors between 1st October and 15th April, but if a fire appears to be unattended then report it by calling 999 / 112. Some areas can be closed to the public if there is an extreme fire risk.

Enjoy the outdoors

Plan ahead and be prepared

- Although the Leader is in overall charge of the walk, you're responsible for your own safety and for others in your personal care – especially children – so be prepared for natural hazards, changes in weather and other events. Wild animals, farm animals and horses can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young – so give them plenty of space.
- Check weather forecasts before you leave. Conditions can change rapidly especially on mountains and along the coast, so ensure you have the right clothing and equipment.
- Part of the appeal of the countryside is that you can get away from it all. You may not see anyone for hours, and there are many places without clear mobile phone signals, so let someone else know where you're going and when you expect to return. This is most applicable to lone, rather than group, walking of course.

Highway Code for walkers



As well as the **Countryside Code**, parts of the Highway Code – which applies to road users in England, Scotland and Wales – are also relevant for walkers.

Pedestrians are the most vulnerable road users along with cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. It is as important for walkers to be familiar with the rules of the Highway Code, and therefore not put themselves at unnecessary risk, as it is for vehicle drivers to be considerate of those on foot.

Except for motorways and slip roads, all public roads are open to walkers. Even if you plan on walking off-road though, many walking routes will include at least some road walking if only to link between footpaths or areas of open access so it's important to take care, especially on country roads with no pavements where traffic could be moving very fast.

Key points to remember:

- Use the pavement (including any path along the side of the road) where there is one
- Cross together and use safe crossings, where possible, and follow the Green Cross Code. Cross at a place with good visibility and take care that all cross safely with minimum risk to all road users.
- Use reflective materials at night such as armbands, sashes or jackets.
- When there is no pavement available, groups should keep to the right-hand side of the road so you can see oncoming traffic. Keep close to the side of the road and be prepared to walk

in single file. If you come across a sharp right-hand bend it may be safer to cross to the left-hand side of the road and cross back after the bend.

Level Crossings

If walking in a group, don't just follow the person in front. Ensure the person in front of you has cleared the crossing area and is over any stiles or through gates at the crossing before you start to cross. The leader will manage the group by acting as, or delegating, a watcher who looks and listens for trains and ensures that all individual walkers cross and leave the railway safely. Everyone is responsible for their own safety and should always stop, look and listen before crossing. No one should ever stop on a crossing.

10. Personal safety



General Safety Rules

Walking isn't without risk, but statistics show it's safer walking in the countryside than on a city street. Always take care however.

Mobile phones

It's always a good idea to carry a mobile with you, which you should fully charge before setting out. If you have to call the emergency services, make sure you keep your mobile on, so they can call you back. However remember that there may be no coverage in some hilly and remote areas.

Group walking

When you walk in a group, don't just follow the person in front - try to look around you and be aware of what's going on. It's important to take responsibility for your own safety.

Food and drink



Keeping your energy levels up

It's important to take plenty of food and water with you when out walking to keep hydrated and keep your energy levels up, especially on longer walks.

Being prepared will help make your walk more enjoyable so here are few handy tips:

- Carbohydrate-rich foods, fats, and healthy sugars are a good source of energy and will help you keep the pace and prevent exhaustion from setting in.
- Go for foods that provide long-lasting energy, rather than a short-term sugar-rush. A Trail mix, which combines nuts and dried fruits, or energy bars are an excellent, high energy snack.
- Fresh fruit also has a high water content so can help to keep you hydrated. Bananas are high in potassium and natural sugars and harder fruit like apples and pears are compact and easy to pack. Pack softer fruit with care at the top of your rucksack to avoid it getting squashed and take plastic bags to avoid anything leaking into your kit. Chocolate gives you a good boost of energy so it's always handy to keep a couple of bars on you.
- If you're going on a longer walk, it's better to snack on small amounts throughout the day rather than eating one big meal. This will help you keep your blood sugar levels up and avoid painful cramps.
- Adapt to suit any personal medical issues.

It's important to remember to take all your litter away with you – including fruit peels, skins and cores - to avoid spoiling the beauty of the countryside, and causing unnecessary harm to wildlife and farm animals.

Staying hydrated

Staying hydrated is one of the most important things to do when going walking.

Dehydration can lead to tiredness, cramps and headaches and could be dangerous, so take plenty of water with you, particularly if you're going on a long walk or are walking in remote areas.

A few helpful tips:

- The Department of Health recommends that we should drink about 1-2 litres of fluids a day. If you're exercising you may need more, particularly in warm weather. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink, as this is one of the first signs of dehydration. Rather take regular sips as you go along.
- Plain tap or still mineral water is your best option. Fizzy drinks are not good for quenching thirst as they are difficult to drink quickly. Fruit juice and non-diet soft drinks contain sugar which will boost your energy but aren't as effective as water at keeping you hydrated.

- Isotonic and sports drinks are formulated to improve the rate at which water is absorbed, but water is still the healthiest option and best way to rehydrate.
- Avoid drinking unboiled or unpurified water from streams. Bring plenty of water with you.

Thunder and Lightning



Thunder and lightning shouldn't be taken lightly when walking outdoors. Always check the weather forecast before starting your walk. If you do find yourself in a thunder and lightning storm whilst outdoors, try to follow these safety tips.

- If you hear thunder, see lightning or if your hair stands on end, postpone activities even if the sky looks blue and clear. Lightning will strike as far as 10 miles (15kms) away from any rainfall.
- Lightning can strike the same place repeatedly, especially tall, pointed, isolated objects, so avoid being the tallest point.
- Seek shelter inside a completely enclosed building or a hard-topped all-metal vehicle. Avoid fences or exposed metal sheds.
- Abandon exposed pointed metal items like umbrellas, tools, walking sticks or rucksacks.
- If there is no shelter you should keep moving. If you become the tallest object, crouch in the open twice as far away from the nearest pointed object as it is tall. Make yourself as small as possible, stay on your toes and keep your heels together as it will allow electricity to go up one foot, through the heels and back into the ground through the other.
- Avoid standing in water, even if wearing rubber boots (they offer no protection).
- If in a group move several yards away from each other.
- It is safe to touch someone who has been struck by lightning and provide them with **CPR and First Aid**.
- The standard lightning safety guide is the 30-30 rule. The first 30 represents 30 seconds. If the time between when you see the flash and hear the thunder is 30 seconds or less, the lightning is close enough to hit you. After the last flash of lightning, wait 30 minutes (the second 30) before leaving your shelter.

Insects



For more information see Section 12 of the Guide for Leaders on the Lancaster RA website (<http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk>).

Emergencies

If an emergency occurs, the international distress signal is six loud blasts of a whistle, or flashes of a torch, to be repeated at one minute intervals.

Summoning help: This will be coordinated by the Leader of the walk. Call 999 / 112 and ask for the Police, letting them know your location. They will contact mountain rescue and ambulance services for you as appropriate. The ambulance service usually uses post codes and will not go off-road so only ask for Ambulance if you are on, or very close to, a road. Send others (two recommended) for help if there is no mobile signal. Remember, even if your mobile phone has no signal make the call to the emergency services as other networks may transmit the call. Post watchers at suitable points and make yourself visible for the rescue party.

When calling the emergency services remember: Stay calm; Describe the nature of the emergency; State the location accurately, preferably with a grid reference; Answer any questions clearly; be patient – your call will be prioritized and handled as quickly as possible. When the situation is under control ensure the casualty is kept warm, dry and comfortable as far as practical.

All members of the group should keep dry. In an emergency situation the victim and all the rest of the group will be stopped and not generating heat so wet weather and warm gear may be necessary.

For more information and what to do in specific situations see Section 10 of the Guide for Leaders on the Lancaster RA website (<http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk>).

First Aid

In March 2023 a half day first aid course was organized by Lancaster Ramblers in collaboration with Bowland Mountain Rescue. The notes are available in section 13 of the Guide for Leaders.

Ramblers have formed a collaboration with St Johns Ambulance and offer first aid training courses. St Johns Ambulance have a series of presentations and links to their First Aid courses.

Get first aid advice | St John Ambulance (sja.org.uk) or their First Aid advice app. **Free Mobile First Aid Apps - St John Ambulance | St John Ambulance (sja.org.uk)**

First Aid kits

From the Ramblers web-site go to “A Walking First Aid Kit – what do I need to bring? **A walking first aid kit – what do I need to bring? - Ramblers**

Notes are also available on the Lancaster RA website, Information, Leaders and Walkers Guides.

Ramblers recommend that every walker carries a first aid kit. A variety of kits are available on the High Street and online from organizations such as St John Ambulance, above. Specialist outdoor activity kits may contain items more appropriate for walkers, but in any case Ramblers recommend the following items be included:

Low adherent dressings/gauze swabs, triangular bandage(s), wound dressings (various sizes), woven bandage(s), latex free plasters, Compeed (or other) blister plasters, foil survival blanket, micropore tape, antiseptic wipes, nitrile or vinyl gloves, scissors, safety pins, tweezers and pain relief tablets, eg paracetamol or ibuprofen

. Ramblers also offer occasional first aid training courses, open to all members. Lancaster Group may also arrange training for our group members.

If you are a qualified First Aider, make yourself known to the leader if an accident occurs.

11. Final Comments

We hope you have found this manual useful. If you notice any errors or omissions or wish to comment, please contact Neil Herbert (footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk).

V8 October 2025