





East Cheshire Ramblers Walk Coordinators' Meeting

Date of Meeting – 2.00 pm Monday 30th October 2023
13 Cherington Crescent, Macclesfield, SK11 8LA


Attendees	Maggie Swindells	MS	
	Jane Gay	Jane G	
	John Galligan	John G	
	Paul Higinbotham	PH	
	Andy Davies	AD	
	Steve Hull	SH	
	Dave Collorick	DC	
	Anne Ball	AB	
Apologies	Ralph Atherton	RA	
	Jane Collorick	JC	
In attendance	Melanie Davy	MD	
Notes	Appendices 1 & 2 attached		
1.0	Welcome & Matters Arising		
1.1	Maggie thanked all the coordinators for all their hard work in setting up the excellent programme.		Note
2.0	Walk Numbers		
2.1	See Appendices 1 & 2 for full analysis and details. Thanks to Steve Hull for collating the figures and questionnaire responses.		Note
2.2	There was some discussion over how walk number statistics were distorted by coach trips and weekends away. It was agreed that, in future, weekends away and coach trips would be listed separately with just the total number of walkers attending. Only walks included on the walk coordinators' programmes would be included in the main statistics.		SH
2.3	It was noted that some leaders request people to book on their walks. It was agreed that it was the leader's prerogative and particularly understandable if the start point was some distance away. Informal offers of lifts were also useful.		Note
2.4	Our walks are now regularly posted on Facebook. It was suggested that walk numbers might increase further if we expanded our social media presence to platforms used by younger people. MS will discuss with Jennie Mellor the feasibility of posting on Instagram, snapchat, X, Tik Tok etc		MS
3.0	Snapshot Questionnaire 2023		
3.1	During the months of September 2013 and 2014 ECR had a census. Leaders were asked to write down the names of all walk attendees and where people came from (eg, ECR or elsewhere). MS asked walk coordinators if they thought it was worth doing this again. The consensus was that there was little point unless ECR was going to do something with the data. As Ramblers had a 'walking month' this year, John G offered to investigate what this had consisted of and been designed to achieve, and feed back to the group, so a decision could be made on whether to do a similar census.		John G

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4.0	Walks Manager – Update and Quick Guide	
4.1	In the past Teresa Marshall uploaded ECR walks to the main Ramblers website. Recently, when Ramblers CO upgraded their website, they also changed to a new system called “Walks Manager”, and Teresa decided it was too onerous to continue.	Note
4.2	Jennie Mellor will take over the bulk upload of walks, however there is currently a glitch in the system and our walks cannot be uploaded in bulk to the Ramblers website. A lot of groups are struggling with this. Jennie is currently working with the Tech Team at Ramblers CO to solve the issue. In the meantime, she is putting walks on Facebook.	Note
4.3	We have the option to post our walks individually using Walks Manager. However, this would involve our leaders having to upload the walks twice (to ECR and Walks Manager). The ECR Committee have decided that this is too onerous, and the Walk Coordinators agree.	Note
4.4	For anyone wishing to post on the Ramblers website, MD has created a one-page checklist on how to upload walks to Walks Manager and some of the Committee have trialled this successfully and have had non-ECR walkers joining their walks. Walk Coordinators have been given these instructions to try out if they wish and pass on to any interested walk leaders. It was suggested that anyone leading a walk a distance away might wish to post on Walks Manager to attract walkers from other Ramblers groups. MS would include this information in an email to members.	MS
4.5	Walk leaders needed to be reminded to publish walks 2 weeks in advance. There was some discussion about walk choices being affected by the weather so it was suggested that leaders affected by this should try to publish their walk 2 weeks before with the proviso that people should check the website nearer the time in case of change. MS would include this reminder in an email to members.	MS
5.0	Walks Programme – What’s gone well and improvements	
5.1	Some walk coordinators were concerned that they were losing leaders. MS agreed to send out another email requesting leaders and including details of available training: ECR courses, Training on Ramblers website details; buddy system. MS would also put the request in Chair’s report for AGM. MS was conscious that we were always going back to the same leaders.	MS
5.2	John G said that he had a lot of success by encouraging a spirit of welcome by thanking both leaders and attendees and getting regular attendees’ email addresses so he could inform them about last minute changes, which seemed to be appreciated. Jane G found encouraging chats on walks a good way of recruiting leaders. There had been no problem getting leaders for stroller walks and mid-week long this year.	Note
5.3	There was a discussion about changing the day we offer stroller walks, as Fridays impact on weekends. It was agreed to trial alternate Wednesdays (the Wednesday not covered by the midweek short walks) from March-October 2024. It was noted that Wellbeing walks are organised by Cheshire East, and these are advertised on the main Ramblers website. We should promote these to stroller walkers.	Note
5.4	AD had considered reducing the midweek medium offering to one day per week due to lack of leaders, but has decided to stick with both Monday and Thursday walks for flexibility, even if the programme isn’t filled completely. He would endeavour to ensure that there was at least one midweek walk per week.	AD
6.0	Vulnerable Walkers	

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6.1	Walk Coordinators had been sent the new Vulnerable Walkers Protocol, specifically designed for people with special needs of some kind. MS thanked AB, John G and Sue Thersby for their help in setting it up. Briefly it was agreed that the partner/carer of a vulnerable person, who wished to attend a specific walk, should contact the relevant walk coordinator/Chair, who would contact the walk leader to see if they were prepared to take the vulnerable person on the walk. The vulnerable person must be accompanied by a 'buddy' on the walk. If the carer/partner has been unable to provide a 'buddy', then the Walk Coordinator/Walk Leader will endeavour to provide one, but this might not always be possible.	Note
6.2	The Chair's contact number would be used for mid-week medium walks; the other walk coordinators were happy for their own contact numbers to be used. Anyone wishing to have a copy of the new protocol could contact the Chair.	Note
7.0	Cancelling a walk, especially at short notice	
7.1	MS would get clear instructions from Roger Fielding (RF) on how to publish a cancellation of a walk on the website. These would be included in an email sent out to members. MS would ask if we can have a back-up if RF is unable to cancel the walk.	MS
8.0	Encouraging New Leaders and Further Training	
8.1	In 2023 there were 3 lots of walk leader training sessions, an apps session with another one planned for 10 th November. The walk leader training programme for 2024 has been further improved. Dates would be published in the New Year, and it was planned to try and do one at a weekend for people who work. The training was successful as we were getting new leaders from it.	Note
9.0	Managing Safety on Group Walks - Update	
9.1	Ramblers have a new strategy regarding risk assessment. Following employment of a consultant, they will be moving away from written assessments to a more common-sense approach of mentally assessing risks following recesses etc. (Date TBA). There will also be a new handbook for walk leaders.	Note
10.0	Standardising Cumulative Ascent postings	
10.1	AB proposed people put an ascent on their walks and say where they got the ascent from, e.g., OS Maps. MS to include in email to members.	MS
10.2	We can now send a GPX file to Roger Fielding, who will attach a link to go on the website with the walk details. MS would advise members in an email.	MS
11.0	Weekends Away 2024	
11.1	MD was happy to do admin for weekends away provided others suggested venues. She had contacted the Eversons, who go away with another Ramblers group, but their recent weekends away did not provide sufficiently large accommodation for ECR. Meeting attendees suggested: Golden Fleece at Thirsk; Alnwick; County Hotel, Hexham (Hadrian's wall); Appleby in Westmoreland.	MD
11.2	Ann T is investigating Borrowdale but this may need to be a mid-week break.	AT
12.0	Any Other Business	
12.1	Coach Trips: SH suggested a coach trip to Church Stretton on a Saturday in April (possibly 20th April). Would need volunteer walk leaders. Maggie Swindells offered to lead a short walk and Anne Ball and John Galligan would check their availability.	SH
12.2	Christmas Meals: Mid-week and Weekend Christmas meals have been organised and Nick Wild is intending to organise a Long walkers' Christmas meal.	

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12.3	Group Meals: AD is organising a Vietnamese meal in the New Year.	
12.4	Emailing Groups: John G reminded walk coordinators to use blind copies when emailing groups (walk leaders etc.)	
12.5	DC informed the meeting that one of his walk leaders, Duncan Learmond, is leaving the area. Both DC and MS have written to him expressing their appreciation for his valuable assistance over the years.	
13.0	Date of Next Meeting	
13.1	Monday 28 th October 2.00, 13 Cherington Crescent.	

Meeting Closed at 4.30



Appendix 1

Walk Numbers for 2021

Programme	LMW	LWE	MMW	MWE	SMW	SWE	EVE	STR
<i>Jan to June</i>								
No. Walks	12	10	12	10	11	10	7	5
Max	11	11	13	16	22	19	12	15
Min	4	5	5	4	9	9	3	8
Mean	8	8	10	10	15	13	8	9
Median	8	8	11	11	15	12.5	8	8
<i>July to Dec</i>								
No. Walks	25	17	20	18	25	23	8	8
Max	15	15	19	14	28	28	12	12
Min	3	5	6	4	3	3	3	4
Mean	9	10	11	7	15	13	9	7
Median	9	9	11	7	14	13	8.5	6

Walk Numbers for 2022

Programme	LMW	LWE	MMon	MThu	MWE	SMW	SWE	EVE	STR
<i>Jan to June</i>									
No. Walks	24	20	23	26	22	26	25	8	5
Max	16	13	14	19	15	31	46	12	15
Min	4	4	2	2	4	7	4	6	3
Mean	8	8	7	11	9	17	14	9	8
Median	8	8	8	11	9	16.5	12	8.5	8
<i>July to Dec</i>									
No. Walks	21	18	20	21	16	24	23	7	6
Max	15	15	15	20	17	33	27	11	13
Min	2	5	2	3	3	3	5	6	6
Mean	8	9	8	10	8	16	16	8	9
Median	7	9	8	9	8	15	16	8	9

Notes

Cancelled walks not included.

Short weekend distorted by including New Year's day walk with 46 people.

Numbers on walks have held up well in the second half of 2022.



Walk Numbers for 2023

Programme	LMW	LWE	MMon	MThu	MWE	SMW	SWE	EVE	STR
Jan to June									
No. Walks	18	24	14	24	23	26	24	8	7
Max	16	17	11	14	25	26	27	10	16
Min	3	5	3	3	3	6	3	3	3
Mean	8	12	6	8	11	17	13	6	8
Median	8	12	6	8	10	17	12	4	5
July to Dec									
No. Walks	14	14	9	9	12	15	14	7	8
Max	15	15	11	11	13	23	16	15	15
Min	3	1	3	3	3	3	5	4	3
Mean	8	10	7	7	8	13	10	8	7
Median	8.5	10	6	6	7	14	10	7	6.5

Notes

New year's day walk and Sunday Chirk walk not included in short weekend

A few walks missing from the medium midweek for first half of year.

Weekend programmes slightly distorted by inclusion of Chirk walks. Midweek slightly distorted by inclusion of coach trip walks.

Weekend long walks include one walk where only the leader turned up. A similar situation for a midweek walk is not included.

The numbers for all programmes have declined in the second half of the year except for LMW, MMon and EVE. The evening walks were up from a disappointing first half of the programme. The largest decline has been in the short walk programmes; this is probably because of the miserable weather over the past few months.

The second half figures are as supplied by the coordinators and are complete up to various dates between 10th and 23rd October. To save having to repeat the process I will supply these figures for discussion at the AGM.



Summary of Walk Numbers Since 2010

Year	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23 1	23 2
SMW	17	17	17	17	17	18	20	19	14	20		15	16	17	13
SWE	14	15	15	15	15	15	16	15	10	15		13	15	13	10
MMon													8	6	7
MMW	18	15	12	16	13	11	13	11	12	9		9			
MThu	-	9	11	12	11	13	12	12	10	9			11	8	7
MWE	12	11	11	12	12	9	9	9	10	9		8	9	11	8
LMW	15	14	12	13	13	12	14	12	9	10		9	8	8	8
LWE	12	11	12	11	12	10	11	10	13	12		9	9	12	10
EVE	9	11	11	14	12	15	11	12	11	7		8	9	6	8
STR									17	14		8	9	8	7
										Jan- Jun	Lost				

I can't explain the temporary drop in short walk numbers in 2018.


There has been a general decline on numbers on walks over the years. This is particularly apparent for long and medium walks, probably because of our ageing membership, although the long weekend numbers have, gratifyingly, reverted closer to the long term trend. Long walks had reduced numbers post covid. Long weekend walks this year are now more popular than their midweek equivalents which reverses the situation in earlier years. We have lost a number of midweek long walkers and newer members seem to be keener on walking at weekends. Hopefully we will have an increased number of midweek long walks in the second half of the year and that will encourage people to come on them more regularly.

The midweek medium numbers have declined, but the Thursday walks are still slightly more popular than the Monday walks.

The mid 2010's saw a much larger number of people on evening walks than has been the case over the last few years and the decline in the number of walkers continued in the first half of this year, but picked up slightly in the second half. The average hides the fact that some walks have been well attended and some very poorly attended.

The stroller walk numbers have halved post covid. Perhaps we need to give extra publicity to these walks. The hot weather in June followed by poor weather since July may have put some people off coming on these walks.

Steve Hull

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Appendix 2

ECR Walk Coordinators Questionnaire 2023

1. Have you filled the July to December programme?

SMW: Yes

SWE: *I have completed the July to December program, except for the weekend 23rd 24th of December and 30th, 31st of December. I have no intention of attempting to find leaders for these since nobody has stepped forward*

MMW: *With July to September 2023 there were 10 gaps. October to December has yet to be filled.*

MWE: *No – 3 dates missing, one is Christmas Eve weekend and one is New Years Eve weekend.*

LMW: Yes

LWE: *mostly - just one blank date in Sept and nothing arranged yet for December*

EVE: Programme filled for all 15 walks

STR: *One gap in October*

2. Did you fill the January to June programme?

SMW: Yes

SWE: I did complete the January to June program.

MMW: With January to June there were 8 gaps.

MWE: Yes

LMW: We did not fill the programme in the first half of the year. We had originally lost 10 leaders from the previous programme, but a couple of those stepped in to lead later. (Steve)

LWE: Mostly - just two blank dates in 6 months

EVE: Programme filled for all 15 walks

STR: Yes

3. How many different leaders have you got for July-December?

SMW: 13

SWE: 19 different leaders for July to December programme

MMW: 10


MWE: 12

LMW: 18. I was aware of 4 or 5 more people who potentially might have led (but didn't because of non-availability of their chosen date or an unusually busy personal schedule). They may lead next year.

LWE: 12

EVE: 12

STR: 7

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4. How many people are leading more than one walk in the July-December period?

SMW: 5

SWE: 5 leaders leading 2 walks in July to December programme

MMW: 4

MWE: 7

LMW: 6 people [1 person 3 walks (Richard Higham), 5 people 2 walks (John Chen, Tony Battilana, Christine Hyde, Ian Mabon, Steve Rawlings)]

LWE: 4

EVE: 3

STR: None

5. Has it been more difficult than previously to get leaders?

SMW: Yes, always a challenge - especially when leaders specifically ask to be removed from my team.....

SWE: It's not been more difficult to find leaders but the programme did fill up more slowly than normal. Hence I sent out one or maybe even 2 more reminders than normal. This was not a problem.

MMW: Yes, it has Definitely been harder to recruit walk leaders.

MWE: Up to now, it's been OK, however, I'm going to lose two leaders who can be relied on to lead a good number of walks, so recruiting new leaders will become pressing in the New Year.

LMW: The first half of the year was a bit more difficult. In the second half of the year it picked up

LWE: No, it has been easier since more people started coming on the walks

EVE: Usually I need 2 or 3 people to lead 2 walks, which includes me if necessary. Although a couple of usual leaders were unable to lead this year, we coped OK as others stepped in.

STR: No

6. How many walks are being led by non ECR members?

SMW: None


SWE: There is one walk being led by non ECR member. They walk very regularly with us and are a Ramblers member.

MMW: No walks have been led by non ECR members from July to September

MWE: There has been one in the last year, they have promised to do it again, but cannot find a date. Put it down as my walk as a way to get it an official walk.

LMW: 3 initially non ECR member provided 6 walks this year. The reason they all gave for joining in with ECR walks is the extensive programme we offer, in particular more longer walks which are not offered so often by their own groups. Two of these leaders have now changed their registered group to ECR.

LWE: Just one - Christine Hyde from Trafford (if Sue Readman is classed an ECR member)

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EVE: None. Why would we want a walk led by a non-member? Wouldn't that be unwise re insurance. (SH – I believe John Thorpe who is a Stockport member led a walk)

STR: None

7. Any other comments?

SMW: We would have been very interested to discuss the item in the agenda - 'vulnerable walkers'. Also we would welcome the return of the 3 month programme in chronological order for ALL walks. Leaders could then effect their own swaps if necessary.

SWE: No further comments

MMW: Thinking of only organising 1 medium midweek walk, per week from 2024?

MWE: Still need to be on the lookout for more leaders - have had a new one lead their first walk recently, but it's been a long gestation period.

LMW: I heard from several people who used to offer walks well in advance that they now do not want to commit to a date too far ahead, but they would be prepared to offer a walk later in the year nearer the time. Nevertheless, some people do like to get their commitments planned out well in advance so I think for my group it seems to work well to ask for leaders for a 6 month period, then ask again half way through to fill the gaps in the remaining 3 months of the period (with updates as leaders come forward). Then if there are still gaps when there is only a week or two before a walk should take place, put out a further request and/or ask individuals who have said they will offer if there is a need at short notice.

LWE: Several of our regular leaders will offer a "last minute" walk on blank days. This is typically discussed on the walk the week before the blank date. This will often be a repeat walk from a previous year or a repeat midweek walk if not many people turned up.

EVE: 7 of the 15 walks had only 2-4 attendees (other than the leader). In previous years I only had 1 or 2 walks in that category. The other 8 walks had 6 - 14 people excluding the leader.

STR: Numbers have varied wildly. I think Friday may not be the best day? I'm proposing I move Stroller Walks to alternate Wednesdays. I.e. Wednesday not covered by a short walk. It might also help if we could add a café or pub at the end of the walk?

Additional Comment from Anne:

I have had feedback that If we want to recruit more members, particularly younger ones, we need to have a greater social media presence, including posting walks with descriptions a couple of weeks ahead.

I know that we have been asked in the past to post walks two weeks ahead, but long walk leaders in particular are reluctant to do this - reasons given being that they want to recce the walk close to walking it and the route and even starting point might have to change after the recce, or they want to wait until they have a better idea of what the weather is going to be. I don't know what the solution is to this other than repeating the request to leaders to post walk details as soon as they can, and preferably two weeks before the walk.