

The Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society Walking Protocol

As a registered charity we have an obligation to deliver our objectives as stated in our constitution. We have also agreed to follow The Countryside Code and Highways Law. This protocol is aimed at ensuring safe effective and efficient walking in groups.

Countryside Code

Where car parking is needed we will not block access to drives, field gates or obstruct roads.

We will keep out of the way (unless otherwise instructed) when animals are being moved by landowner's personnel.

We will drive with due care and attention on small country roads.

We will follow paths intended for foot use (inter alia) using gates, stiles and gaps in fences and hedges when provided. On common or access land, the leader will use their discretion in choosing the route.

We will leave animals in distress alone but endeavour to inform farmers, landowners or RSPCA.

We will leave no trace of our visit (eg no food waste or packaging), other than footprints.

Highways Law

We will report incidents where a sign off a road (metalled surface) is missing to the Highways Authority (abbreviated to "the HA").

We will report incidents where stiles or gates are not in good order to the HA.

We will report incidents where a route defined on the HA definitive map is unclear or not easily walkable eg obstructed by vegetation or fixed obstruction such as a locked gate or fence.

If we come across an obstruction, we will attempt to clear the minimum to allow access, using the tools normally carried. We will remove the minimum of a wire obstruction if it is safe to do so and livestock will not be affected. This will be reported to the HA.

If we cannot remove an obstruction we will divert off the path to the minimum extent to enable us to bypass it. If we cannot divert we will turn around and re-plan a route avoiding the obstruction. In either case it will be reported to the HA.

Walking Group Etiquette and Safety.

Our walks are a balance of Right of Way Work, Physical Fitness, Enjoyment of the Surroundings, Safety and Social interaction.

In order to achieve this balance, we plan and lead weekly walks of various lengths in predetermined sections of our Footpath Society area. This requires the following to be considered by leaders and members of walks.

Road Walking - follow the lead of the leader and any directions they may give. Keep close together in single file and pay attention to the actions of any other road users (vehicles, bikes, horses etc). Cross the road where the leader crosses (not when) if it is safe to do so.

Keep up with the group – if you are finding this difficult, tell the leader and leave the group with at least one other person and ensure you know how to get back to the start.

Do not go in front of the leader unless asked eg to scout or clear a possible obstruction ahead.

Carry secateurs and be prepared to use them - don't leave all clearance to the leader.

Be patient if there is ROW work to be done eg writing notes, waymarking.

If the group encounters an obstruction or is unclear where to go, follow the leader's advice. This may require breakouts or scouting parties and if you are part of one, ensure you know how to meet up again or keep in contact. Do not take the initiative and explore unless instructed. If the leader decides to

explore wait until they return.

Electric fences are often encountered; our policy is:- if the fence is single strand marked and insulated in some way, the leader will temporarily ensure safe access through or over/under the fence. In all other cases this is an obstruction that will be reported and safe access will be determined on an ad hoc basis. If you are injured or involved in or see an accident, inform the leader as soon as possible by shouting or using a whistle. At least two persons are to stay with the injured party. Depending on the state of the injury the leader will arrange for the transportation of the person and then lead the rest of the group on. We have a reporting procedure for such incidents.

People who refuse to follow the leader's instructions are deemed to have left the walk and are then responsible for themselves. The committee may discuss any disciplinary action and our Insurers require us to have a membership disqualification procedure.