

GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS

(Part 2) ROAD WALKING and CROSSING RAILWAYS

When researching a walk the leader should have special regard to the sections of road that he will expect to include in the ramble from the point of view of the safety of the party.

As the leader, if there is serious injury or a fatality you will be expected to be able to justify the actions you have taken and to prove that you took all the sensible precautions that were available to you.

The following guidance is the starting point for the decision making process and no interpretation should be slavishly followed to the exclusion of common sense and the practicalities of the particular situation. Every situation cannot be covered here but below are some points to think about.

SOME EXTRACTS FROM:

a) THE HIGHWAY CODE

5: Organised walks. Groups of people should use a path 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 carry 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.

b) FROM Des de Moor (Walk Promotion Officer, Ramblers association)

When the Highway Code was amended, the matter was reviewed by the then Walk Leading and Navigation Panel. After careful consideration and discussion with various parties they concluded that the “organised groups” the code refers to are formally organised groups, for example parties of marchers, and that while it might be safer for such groups to behave as if they were vehicular traffic by walking on the left, this was not the case for most Ramblers groups, who are typically much more informal and tend to behave as a succession of individuals and small groups of two or three rather than a single, organised group.

Our advice therefore remains the same as in the Navigation and Leadership Manual, section 3.38 (p71)

c) NAVIGATION AND LEADERSHIP MANUAL section 3.

Published by The Ramblers Association

38 If you must use a **country road with no pavement or verge:**

i The party should walk in single file, on the right-hand side of the road (as stipulated in the Highway Code). Discourage people from walking two abreast in order to chat.

ii However there are situations when walking on the right-hand side can be dangerous, especially at right-hand bends, where vehicles driven close to the edge may come into contact with walkers. In such cases the leader should:

- approach the bend with care, moving out a little to check that there is no oncoming traffic
- having passed the bend, signal any oncoming traffic to slow down, using the map at arms length.

iii Alternatively, the leader should move carefully to the left-hand side of the road, asking the party to remain on the right. If a vehicle approaches, tell members to wait some distance back from the bend until it has passed. Also warn the vehicle by waving the map up and down.

iv If you have to turn left off the road onto a path shortly after a right-hand bend, it may be practicable for the leader to tell the party to cross to the left-hand side shortly before the bend having first checked that it is safe to do so. During this time the backmarker should watch out for traffic approaching from behind.

v At all times, the party should be warned of the approach of a vehicle: by the leader when from ahead: by the backmarker when from behind. The usual way of doing this is by just shouting “car” – this is effective, whatever kind of vehicle it is. At such times, check that everyone is in single file and keeping well into the side. Repeat the warnings when vehicles follow in succession.

FURTHER ADVICE from Eastleigh Group Committee

Think about the position you will put drivers in who approach the party from the front or the rear.

Before starting out along the road section ensure the party and in particular the back marker are properly briefed on the dangers you have identified and the actions you expect them to take. It is recommended that High Visibility clothing is worn

by the leader and backmarker. If you do not have your own these are available on loan from the group through various leaders.

On reaching a road wait for the whole party to catch up, and keep them as close together as possible for all the time you have to use it. If the path leads straight into a road with no pavement, wait a little way before the junction and warn party members so that they do not rush out into the road.

Similarly when leaving the road to enter a footpath allow for the party to catch up.

When it is deemed necessary to walk in single file, to assert your authority one way may be to halt the walk in a safe place and insist that they obey your instructions.

There are situations when walking on the right-hand side can be dangerous, especially at right-hand bends, and on either side when a hump in the road (such as a railway bridge) is encountered. In such cases the leader, having assessed the situation in advance, should have decided on the action to be taken, and made his / her intentions clear to the group. Depending on circumstances the following are suggestions:-

If the leader is 50 metres ahead and the back marker 50 metres behind they can see and be seen by oncoming traffic and can signal them to slow down. This practise is useful at bends or humps in the road.

A small group when walking around a bend should keep to the outside of the bend so a driver will see you earlier. Whenever changing sides choose a point that gives maximum visibility.

In the case of a large group however, it is not recommended to attempt to move them from one side of the road to the other if this can be avoided. *See c) 3.38 iii*

If not all the party get across on the pedestrian phase at traffic lights, hold the party back until the remainder have the opportunity to cross safely so they will not be tempted to take risks to catch up.

Keep a special eye on members of the party whom for one reason or another may have difficulty in understanding or coping with the dangers of the situation.

At night or dawn or dusk torches should be used as described in the Highway Code.

Some paths cross railway lines at unguarded crossings. If you have to use one of these;

- (1) Wait until the whole party has caught up before crossing. Ensure no greater numbers start across than there is room for on the other side. Tell everyone to "stop, look and listen" before crossing and ask them to wait on the far side, beyond the fence.
- (2) While the members are crossing, the back marker should stand away from the near side of the line, and the leader away from the far side, looking out for approaching trains, and making sure that everyone is taking care.
- (3) Do not continue until satisfied that all members have crossed safely.
