



Sheffield Walkers Constitution

Proposed for adoption

This constitution sets out the purpose of Sheffield Walkers, the rights and responsibilities of its members, and how the group is managed and held accountable. It takes effect when adopted by the members at a general meeting.

1 The group and its objectives

1.1 Sheffield Walkers (the group) was founded in September 2018. It is a voluntary, not-for-profit, unincorporated membership association, run by volunteers. Friendship, enjoyment of walking and mutual support are its core values.

1.2 The group aims to encourage walking for pleasure, health and wellbeing in the countryside around Sheffield, the Peak District and beyond; to organise walks ranging from easy to strenuous on varied terrain; and to provide social activities through which members can build friendships.

1.3 The group will act inclusively, treat people with dignity and avoid unlawful discrimination. It will promote responsible enjoyment of the countryside and respect for landowners, local communities and the environment.

1.4 The group is independent of political parties. Its funds and assets must support its objectives and the charitable support authorised under this constitution, and must not be distributed for members' private profit.

2 Membership

2.1 Membership is open to anyone interested in walking who supports the group's objectives, accepts this constitution and its published rules, completes the membership process and pays any applicable subscription. The Membership Secretary maintains the membership register.

2.2 Members under 18 must have written consent from a parent or legal guardian to join. Their participation is subject to the safeguarding and supervision requirements in section 4.

2.3 The Committee sets subscriptions and renewal terms, reports them to the Annual General Meeting (AGM), and gives members at least 28 days' notice of any increase. An increase applies at the member's next renewal after that notice period. Any concessions, refunds or grace periods must follow published, consistently applied terms.

2.4 Every current member has one vote on each resolution and may nominate candidates, submit resolutions and attend general meetings. A current member is one whose membership has not expired or ended and whose subscription, if payable, is up to date or covered by an approved concession or grace period. A temporary restriction on activities does not itself remove voting rights.

2.5 Members must provide accurate contact and booking information, follow reasonable safety instructions, treat others respectfully, and comply with the group's conduct and booking rules. Membership does not guarantee a place on every activity.

2.6 Membership ends on resignation, death, expiry without renewal under the published terms, or termination under section 11. Resignation does not remove an existing payment obligation. The Committee may refuse an application for a reasonable, recorded reason connected with conduct, safety or eligibility, but must give the applicant a reason and access to the appeal process in section 11.

3 Guests and trial walks

3.1 Members may invite guests to walks and social events where guest attendance is permitted. There is no specific numerical limit on member-invited guests or their visits, but members are expected to encourage repeat guests to become members. Capacity limits and event-specific conditions still apply.

3.2 The group may offer prospective members of the public one free trial walk before they become members. This is discretionary and subject to availability, suitability and the published booking arrangements. A free trial walk does not include transport, refreshments or other separately stated third-party costs.

3.3 Walk leaders and event organisers should notify the Committee if they wish to refuse a guest, giving the reasons so that the Committee can ensure a consistent approach and coordinate the decision and communication. Personal contact information must not be disclosed unnecessarily; the Committee will manage any necessary contact. Where an immediate safety or conduct issue arises, the leader or organiser may refuse participation at the time and must notify the Committee as soon as practicable. Decisions must be reasonable and made without unlawful discrimination.

3.4 Guests must be booked through the group's published arrangements, accept the relevant rules and provide the information reasonably needed to manage their attendance. Guests are responsible for their own safety. An inviting member must accompany their guest and is responsible for their conduct, including ensuring that they understand and follow the group's rules and reasonable instructions. These responsibilities do not exclude any responsibility or liability that cannot lawfully be excluded.

3.5 Public guest access to social events may be offered only where the Committee has authorised it and the event details expressly permit it. The free trial walk arrangement does not create a right to attend social events.

3.6 Guests have no membership voting rights and cannot hold Committee office. The supervision requirements for under-18 participants apply equally to guests.

4 Activities safety and safeguarding

4.1 The Committee is responsible for encouraging members to become walk leaders and event organisers, giving them support, and putting in place proportionate guidance for planning and running activities and dealing with incidents and emergencies. Published activity details should describe the relevant difficulty, demands, equipment and booking conditions.

4.2 Participants must assess their fitness and ability against the activity information, bring suitable equipment, and give the leader or organiser relevant safety information through the group's approved arrangements. Walking involves inherent risks; nothing in this constitution excludes any responsibility or liability that cannot lawfully be excluded.

4.3 Leaders and organisers may reasonably limit numbers, refuse or end participation, alter a route, postpone or cancel an activity because of weather, conditions, safety, conduct or other operational needs. Participants must follow reasonable instructions. Cancellation and refund terms must be stated before any payment commitment.

4.4 An under-18 participant must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, or by another responsible adult expressly authorised in writing by that parent or guardian and accepted by the organiser. The accompanying adult remains responsible for supervision throughout. Parental consent alone does not transfer supervision to a walk leader.

4.5 Members bringing a dog on a walk are responsible for the dog's behaviour at all times. They must ensure that the dog is always on a short lead, except that they should release it if threatened by livestock, in accordance with the Countryside Code. The Walk Leader may deem a walk unsuitable for dogs, in which case dogs will not be allowed to attend.

4.6 The Committee will review insurance needs at least annually and ensure the group's arrangements reflect the activities and participants covered. Significant incidents and near misses should be recorded and reviewed to improve practice.

5 The Committee

5.1 The group is managed by a Committee of at least five and no more than seven members, including any co-opted members. Five elected members hold the roles of Chairperson, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Walks Coordinator and Social Coordinator; up to two additional members may be elected or co-opted to support the group's work. Roles are allocated at the first Committee meeting after the AGM, normally within 14 days. The Chairperson and Treasurer must be different people. Temporary vacancies are managed under paragraph 5.4.

5.2 The Chairperson coordinates the Committee and chairs meetings. The Membership Secretary manages membership records and general meeting notices, minutes and correspondence, with agreed help where needed. The Treasurer maintains financial records and reporting. The Walks Coordinator supports the walking programme and its leaders. The Social Coordinator supports social activities and their organisers.

5.3 Committee members must be current members aged 18 or over. They are elected annually and serve until the close of the next AGM, unless they resign, cease to be a member or are removed under this constitution. They may stand for re-election. A member who resigns from the Committee is ineligible for election or co-option for 12 months from resignation.

5.4 The Committee may co-opt a current adult member to cover a vacancy until the next AGM, or to assist with its work. Co-opted members have no Committee vote and do not count towards its quorum. If fewer than three elected members remain, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) must be arranged within 42 days to fill vacancies; meanwhile, remaining members may only protect assets, meet existing essential obligations and arrange that meeting.

5.5 The Committee is collectively accountable to the members. It must act in the group's interests, keep proper records, oversee finances and risks, and apply this constitution consistently. Members may remove an elected Committee member by a simple majority at a general meeting where the proposed removal was expressly notified; the member must have a fair opportunity to respond.

5.6 The Committee may delegate defined tasks to members, working groups or sub-committees, with clear limits and reporting arrangements. It remains accountable for delegated work. It must nominate a member to keep an inventory and oversee the custody of group property and equipment.

5.7 Committee members and volunteers must return group money, property, records and access credentials promptly when leaving a role. The Committee must arrange an orderly handover and remove access that is no longer needed.

6 Committee meetings and decisions

6.1 The Committee will meet at least quarterly and more frequently when necessary. Meetings may be in person, online or hybrid. Normally at least seven days' notice and an agenda will be given; shorter notice is permitted for urgent matters if every Committee member is informed.

6.2 A majority of the elected Committee members, and in any event at least three elected, non-conflicted members, form a quorum. If the Chairperson is absent or conflicted, those present appoint an elected member to chair. Co-opted members and invited advisers may contribute but cannot vote.

6.3 The Committee should seek agreement, but any elected member may request a vote. Decisions require a simple majority of votes cast. Each elected member has one vote; the meeting chair has an additional casting vote in a tie, except on a matter in which they have a conflict of interest. Abstentions are not votes cast.

6.4 A member must declare any actual or potential conflict, including a personal or financial interest, and withdraw from the affected discussion and decision unless asked to provide factual information. They must not vote or count towards that item's quorum. If too few unconflicted members remain, the matter must be referred to a general meeting or deferred; the conflict and action taken must be recorded.

6.5 Between meetings, a written or electronic decision may be made only if all eligible, non-conflicted elected members agree and at least three take part. Every Committee member must receive the proposal, subject to necessary confidentiality. The decision must be recorded at the next meeting.

6.6 Minutes must record attendance, decisions, votes where taken, conflicts and agreed actions. Members may inspect approved minutes, with personal, safeguarding, disciplinary or commercially sensitive information withheld where appropriate.

7 Finance and assets

7.1 The Treasurer must keep accurate records of income, expenditure, assets and liabilities, reconcile the bank account regularly, and report the financial position at each Committee meeting. The financial year runs from 1 September to 31 August.

7.2 Funds must be held in an account in the group's name. The Committee will appoint at least three authorised adult members, including the Treasurer, to support continuity. Every payment requires approval from two authorised people; no person may approve a payment to themselves. Where a banking service cannot enforce two approvals, the second approval must be documented before payment.

7.3 The Committee will approve an annual budget and proportionate spending limits. Recurring payments may be approved in advance within recorded limits and must be reviewed regularly. The Treasurer must maintain an appropriate working balance, and the Committee must consider foreseeable commitments before agreeing expenditure. Restricted donations must be used only for their stated purpose.

7.4 Volunteers may receive reimbursement of reasonable, evidenced expenses incurred for authorised group business. Committee service is unpaid. Any proposed paid arrangement involving a member must be justified, recorded and approved by unconflicted decision-makers under section 6.

7.5 No member may enter into a contract or make a financial commitment on the group's behalf without Committee authority. Borrowing or guarantees require prior approval at a general meeting. The Committee must consider the obligations and personal exposure associated with the group's unincorporated status before entering significant commitments.

7.6 Members may inspect the group's accounts and supporting records at any reasonable time by arrangement with the Treasurer, subject to appropriate protection of personal and confidential information.

7.7 The annual accounts must be circulated at least 14 days before the AGM and presented for members' approval. An annual independent review of the accounts is not required by this constitution but may be arranged by the Committee. Where an independent review of the accounts is not presented to members, all supporting records and documents must be made available to members for inspection alongside the publication of the accounts subject to appropriate protection of personal and confidential information. Any review or audit required by law must still be arranged.

8 General meetings and voting

8.1 The AGM will be held each October or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. Members must receive at least 14 days' notice of its date, time, venue or joining arrangements and the business to be decided.

8.2 The full agenda, proposed resolutions and constitutional amendments, candidate details, charity nominations, annual reports and accounts, and advance voting instructions must all be circulated at least 14 days before the AGM. The Committee must invite proposals and nominations sufficiently in advance to include them in that circulation. Items received too late for the 14-day circulation may be discussed but must not be decided at that AGM; any decision must be deferred to a later properly notified general meeting.

8.3 AGM business includes approval of previous minutes; consideration of annual activity and financial reports; approval of accounts; election of the Committee; selection of the annual charity; and notified resolutions. Any other business may be discussed, but no binding decision may be taken on a substantive matter not included in the circulated agenda.

8.4 The Committee may call an EGM. It must also arrange one within 42 days of receiving a written request from at least 25% of current members specifying the business and any resolutions. If it fails to issue notice within 14 days, the requesting members may arrange the meeting using the same rules; the Membership Secretary must facilitate circulation without disclosing the membership list unnecessarily.

8.5 An EGM requires at least 14 days' notice to all members, including the full business and resolutions to be decided and any advance voting instructions. This also applies to constitutional amendments and dissolution. Only the notified business may be transacted.

8.6 The quorum for an AGM or EGM is 25% of current members, rounded up to the next whole person, attending in person or through a live online connection. Membership numbers at the date notice is issued determine the quorum; numbers on the date a request is received determine the threshold for a member-requested EGM. Advance votes do not count towards attendance or quorum.

8.7 If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes, or is lost before a decision, no further binding business may be conducted. The meeting must be reconvened with at least 14 days' notice, the same notified business and the same quorum. Discussion may continue informally.

8.8 The Chairperson chairs general meetings unless absent or conflicted, when members present elect a chair. Ordinary resolutions require more votes in favour than against. A tied resolution fails; the chair has no casting vote at a general meeting. Abstentions and invalid ballots are excluded from votes cast.

8.9 Members unable to attend may vote in advance by post or an approved electronic method on the circulated resolutions and elections. Votes must arrive by the published deadline, which must fall within the 24 hours before the meeting starts. Identity and eligibility must be checked, one vote per member ensured and election secrecy protected. Proxy voting is not permitted.

8.10 A member attending after voting in advance may replace their advance vote if the voting officers can withdraw it before counting; otherwise it remains their only vote. No substantive change may be made at the meeting to a resolution open to advance voting. Such a change must be deferred and re-notified.

8.11 Committee nominations require the candidate's consent and a seconder who is a current member. Members elect up to seven people by secret ballot, each voter selecting up to seven different candidates. Where more than seven candidates stand, the seven candidates with the most votes are elected. A tie affecting the final place is resolved by a further secret ballot of members present between the tied candidates and, if still tied, by drawing lots overseen by the voting officers.

8.12 If seven or fewer eligible candidates stand, they are elected unopposed. If fewer than five are elected, the shortfall is managed under paragraph 5.4. Two impartial adult members who are not candidates must supervise the election, validate advance votes and report the result. For an EGM election, candidate details and advance ballots must be circulated at least 14 days beforehand; the same ballot rules apply, adjusted to the number of vacancies. Approved general meeting minutes and voting results must be made available to members.

9 Annual charity support

9.1 The group will support a nominated charity each year. Members may submit charity nominations for inclusion in the AGM papers circulated under section 8. Nominations must identify the charity and explain the proposed support.

9.2 Members select the charity at the AGM. If more than one is nominated, each member may vote for one, including by advance vote. The charity with the most votes is selected. A tie is resolved by a further vote of those present and, if still tied, by drawing lots. If no charity is nominated, the Committee must invite nominations and bring a selection to an EGM.

9.3 The Committee will agree affordable fundraising or support arrangements and report amounts raised and donated to members. Money raised for a named charity must be separately identifiable and passed to that charity, subject to any clearly disclosed fundraising costs.

10 Conduct communications and personal information

10.1 The group operates primarily through its website. Members are expected to register on it to access activity information, book places and maintain their details. The Committee should endeavour to provide reasonable assistance or alternative arrangements where digital access is a barrier.

10.2 Formal notices may be sent to the member's registered email address or, where agreed, by post. Website publication alone does not replace the individual notice required for general meetings. Members are responsible for keeping contact details current.

10.3 Members and guests must not bully, harass, threaten, unlawfully discriminate against or abuse others, in person or online. Group channels must not be used for party-political campaigning, inflammatory political arguments, offensive material or disclosure of another person's private information. Respectful disagreement and good-faith concerns are not misconduct.

10.4 Conduct on other online platforms may be considered where it involves group participants or materially affects their safety or the group's activities. Moderators may remove content or temporarily restrict access to prevent harm, with reasons recorded and any further action handled under section 11.

10.5 The Committee is responsible for proportionate data protection arrangements, an accessible privacy notice, secure records, appropriate retention periods and handling information requests. Personal information must be collected only for clear purposes and accessed only by people who need it for their role. Health and emergency contact information requires particular protection.

11 Concerns complaints and discipline

11.1 Concerns or complaints should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson or Membership Secretary. Where either is involved, they may be sent to another uninvolved Committee member. Assistance must be offered where needed to make a complaint. Immediate safety or safeguarding concerns must be acted on promptly.

11.2 The Committee should acknowledge a complaint within seven days and aim to determine it within 28 days. If more time is needed, those involved must be told why and

given an expected timetable. Informal resolution should be considered where appropriate, without preventing a formal complaint.

11.3 Any investigation and decision must be fair and proportionate. The person concerned must receive the substance of the allegation and relevant evidence, have a reasonable opportunity to respond, and may be accompanied by a supporter. Anyone personally involved or conflicted must not investigate, decide or hear an appeal.

11.4 The Committee may issue advice or a warning, impose reasonable conditions, suspend participation for a defined period or terminate membership for serious or repeated misconduct. The decision, reasons, duration of any restriction and appeal arrangements must be given in writing. The complainant must be told the outcome to the extent appropriate without unnecessary disclosure of confidential information.

11.5 An urgent temporary restriction may be imposed where reasonably necessary to protect people or the group pending investigation. It is a precaution, not a finding of misconduct, and must be explained, kept under review and last no longer than necessary.

11.6 The person subject to disciplinary action, or an applicant refused membership, may appeal in writing within 14 days of receiving the decision. An appeal must not be refused solely at the Committee's discretion. It must be considered by at least two impartial people who were not involved in the original matter, using uninvolved members or suitable independent volunteers if necessary.

11.7 The appeal panel may uphold, vary or overturn the decision, or require reconsideration. It should provide a reasoned written outcome within 28 days of the appeal, or explain any delay. Its decision concludes the group's internal process. A complainant may also request an impartial review of how their complaint was handled. Nothing prevents reporting a concern to an appropriate external authority.

12 Policies and constitutional changes

12.1 The Committee may adopt, review and amend operational policies, booking arrangements and codes of conduct to support this constitution. They must be proportionate, accessible and consistent with it. Members must be informed of material changes before they take effect, except where immediate action is reasonably necessary for safety or legal compliance.

12.2 This constitution takes precedence over conflicting policies or Committee decisions. Only an AGM or EGM may amend it. Amendments require at least two-thirds of valid votes cast, including valid advance votes, at a quorate meeting and with the notice required in section 8.

12.3 The Committee must keep the approved version and the minutes recording its adoption and any changes, and make the current constitution available to all members.

13 Dissolution

13.1 The group may be wound up only by a resolution supported by at least two-thirds of valid votes cast, including valid advance votes, at a quorate AGM or EGM called with at least 14 days' notice expressly stating the proposal.

13.2 The Committee must settle outstanding obligations from available group funds, deal with restricted funds in accordance with their conditions, and dispose of remaining property

responsibly. Remaining money and assets must be donated to one or more charities chosen by the Committee, having regard to any recommendation made by the members. No surplus may be distributed to members.

13.3 The Committee must provide members with a final financial statement and arrange secure retention or disposal of records and closure of accounts and services.

14 Adoption

14.1 This constitution is adopted by resolution of the members at an AGM or EGM and replaces previous versions from the date recorded below. Until that resolution is passed, this proposed text has no effect as an adopted constitution.

14.2 Date of adoption: _____ Meeting: AGM / EGM

14.3 Chairperson name: _____ Signature: _____

14.4 Membership Secretary name: _____ Signature: _____