

Proposal to end the Walks Booking System

The recent email about changes to the booking system causes me to suggest that it is now time to bring the booking system to an end, and that this be discussed with members.

For many years the Society's walks functioned very well without a booking system.

The booking system was brought in at the time of the Covid difficulties, and it worked well at that time, but that situation has now changed. The Covid difficulties have passed.

For me as an individual the booking system has significantly reduced my interaction and ability to walk with the Society. It is very unusual for me to be able to confidently book a walk in advance, and I won't book a walk unless I can be confident of going.

Prior to the booking system being implemented I was able to decide whether or not to go on a walk on the morning of the walk itself. I never heard even the faintest hint that this caused a problem for walk leaders or other walkers.

Moving away from my own circumstances and considering matters more widely, in informal conversations with other members of the Society I have found a lot of agreement with my views. The fact that other members rarely instigate discussion of this does not necessarily mean they are content with the current situation.

Now to consider the number of walkers on a walk, I believe the current maximum permitted number is 16. Why this number?

When I was able to walk regularly with the Society most walks had between 10 and 16 walkers.

I have been on a handful of walks with between 16 and 20 walkers, but many more walks with fewer than 12 than walks with more than 16.

I suggest that if the booking system and the limit on numbers were to be ended there would be an initial increase in the numbers turning up. After that I would expect the numbers to self-regulate in the way they did for years before the booking system was introduced.

I am sceptical that a group of 20 walkers, or 24 walkers, poses more difficulty than 16 walkers.

We are all responsible adults, the overwhelming majority of us are experienced walkers, and we all co-operate with walk leaders.

In the unlikely event of an emergency the walkers are an additional resource for the walk leader or incident manager.

Regarding the environmental impact of larger groups: we don't leave rubbish and we don't walk the same routes week after week. Therefore the environment has time to recover. If it is claimed that there is a greater environmental impact from groups of more than 16 then I suspect the extra impact is negligible.

For all these reasons I think it is time to end the booking system. Please discuss it and put it to members.

Unfortunately, for the same reasons that make it difficult for me to book, I can never be a walk leader for you. I am grateful to all walk leaders and programme organisers for the work they do.

This email is not confidential; please feel free to share this email with any member of the Society or with the Society as a whole, with my name or without my name as you choose.

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