

Response to 2025 Survey

Introduction

The questionnaire set out to determine several facts about our membership. How often and why people walked with us, what sort of walks they liked, their preferences for distance travelled, starting times, meeting place et cetera and finally what improvements to the walking programme they could suggest. A copy of the questions presented in the questionnaire is provided in appendix 1.

Response

There were forty-two responses to the questionnaire from a sample of approximately one hundred. This is a good response as 25% - 30% would be a normal response level. It was disappointing that we had very few 'Never' responses as we know that we have a lot of members who never come out walking with us. It had been hoped that the committee might learn why people were not walking with us and if there was anything we could do to encourage them to walk with us. The results also indicated the shortcomings of the questions in the survey. Unfortunately, several of the terms used were vague and open to individual interpretation. For example, do the terms 'short' and 'long' in the question about walk preferences refer to duration or distance? Another area where I failed to ask the correct questions concerned the desirability of a central meeting point. This question should have been in two parts. Firstly "Would you like a central meeting point?" with an option to answer only 'yes' or 'no'. If the answer 'yes' was chosen, this should have been followed by the question "Where should we meet?" with the options 'Helensburgh', 'Dumbarton', 'Balloch' 'somewhere else' or 'a different location depending on where the walk was'.

Summary

The 'ideal' walk would be a short hill walk within fifty miles and two hours' drive of Helensburgh. We would meet at a central location prior to the walk, which would start at 10:00 and be of at least five hours duration.

This 'ideal' walk is difficult to achieve as a short hill walk implies a duration of less than five hours and a walk lasting more than five hours, if involving a hill, implies a long hill walk. It can be achieved and walks such as Balmaha to Drymen via Conic Hill or some of our walks in the Kilpatrick Hills satisfy both criteria. However, I don't think too much emphasis should be placed on providing the 'ideal' walk as even the least popular walks received positive feedback from 46% of respondents.

Considering the responses from those people who do not join us regularly for walks. There were nine responses from people who came out with us twice or less times per year. None of these respondents left any suggestions as to what would encourage them to join our walks although two of them did state that there was nothing we could do to encourage them to walk with us.

The remaining thirty-three response provided useful information, although there are only two areas in which the committee could make any changes. In both cases the evidence from the questionnaire leads us to retain the status quo. The remaining areas would only change if our leaders decided to lead different walks. There seems to be high degree of satisfaction with the walks programme as it is, and the conclusion is 'if it ain't broke don't fix it'.

Over half (57%) of our respondents participate in group walks at least twice a month. The most popular type of walk is the short hill walk (85%), followed by long but reasonably flat walks (72%). Full day mountain walks and local walks are also popular, but themed walks and half-day walks do not have such a great appeal.

The main reason for walking is physical exercise followed by the enjoyment of the natural world. The majority consider fifty miles to be the furthest we should travel to the start of a walk, although a third consider thirty miles is far enough. There was a clear view that walks should be within two hours driving distance and we should not spend longer driving to the walk than walking.

A large minority (40%) didn't mind when our walks started. Amongst those who did comment, 37% would like an earlier start, 47% are happy with the present start (10:00) and 16% would like a later start.

There was an overwhelming majority in favour of walking every week.

Opinion was divided with regards to mid-week walks with a majority answering 'Maybe' to this question although of those who had a definite opinion there were three times as many in favour of mid-week walks than against it (15 in favour, 5 against). All those who responded 'Maybe' left explanations for their choice, which in most cases provided both a reason to have a mid-week walk and a reason not to have one.

Approximately one third (37%) of respondents considered a walk could be repeated after one or two years with another third (29%) thinking between six months and one year was an appropriate interval for repeating a walk. The remaining third (36%) were divided between those who thought two years was the earliest we should repeat a walk (11%) and those who thought six months (21%) was long enough before repeating a walk. One person considered a walk could be repeated after less than three months.

A central meeting point was another area which divided opinion. There was no overall majority although more people were in favour of a central meeting point (49%) than against it (21%) This was another question for which a significant number of responses were in the 'Maybe' category (31%). If we ignore 'Maybe' responses and look at the definite responses, then there is a clear majority in favour of a central meeting point. (70% in favour, 30% against). As was the case in the previous question with a 'Maybe' response, the reasons for giving 'Maybe' as an answer were varied but mostly stating the benefit and drawbacks of a central meeting point.

Finally, on the topic of public transport, there was a clear majority (85%) opinion that the proportion of walks accessible by public transport should remain the same. 15% of respondents thought we should have more walks accessible by public transport, while nobody considered we should have less. In 2024 22% of our walks were deemed accessible by public transport. In simple numbers this would equate to one walk per month.

Author's Comment

The analysis of each question presented on the following pages contains conclusions and proposed actions by the committee based on the responses to the survey. Several of the responses require the committee to bring the results of the survey to the attention of our walk leaders. I would like to emphasize that this is not a criticism of our leaders nor of the walks they offer to lead. We are extremely grateful to them for leading walks and are delighted to accept any walks they offer to lead. The survey is only intended to assist them should they be wondering what sort of walk to lead. Obviously, they must lead the walks they want to lead and not feel dictated to by the results of this survey. Walk leaders shouldn't put too much emphasis on providing the 'ideal' walk as even the least popular walks received positive feedback from 46% of respondents. I would also like to thank our members who responded to the survey and hope they are not disappointed with the results.

For additional information or to access the raw data collected by the survey, please contact David Clark, Idris Scott, or any other committee member. Contact details are available in the current walking programme. The data will be provided as a CSV file, which can also be viewed in Excel.

Analysis of the response to each question

How often do you join our walks?

There were 42 responses to this question and the majority (27 or 64%) walked with us at least once a month.

Conclusion Most respondents walked with us at least once a month.

Committee Action None required.

You are obviously interested in walking, but could you let us know why you do not walk with us more often?

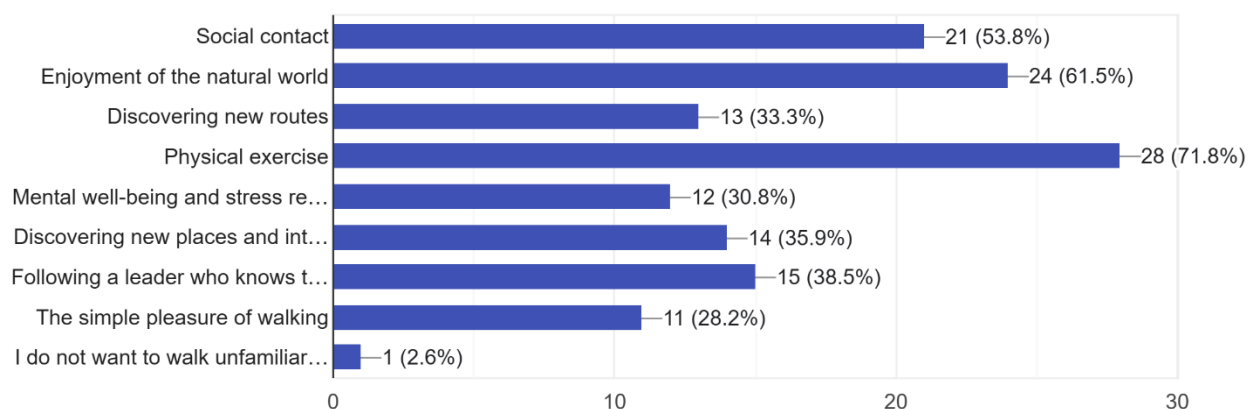
This question was only seen by those respondents who had replied 'Never' to the first question.

All three respondents completed this section, but their responses were inconclusive.

Conclusion Too few responses to form any conclusion.

Committee Action No action at present but consider alternative methods to contact these members.

Why do you walk with us?

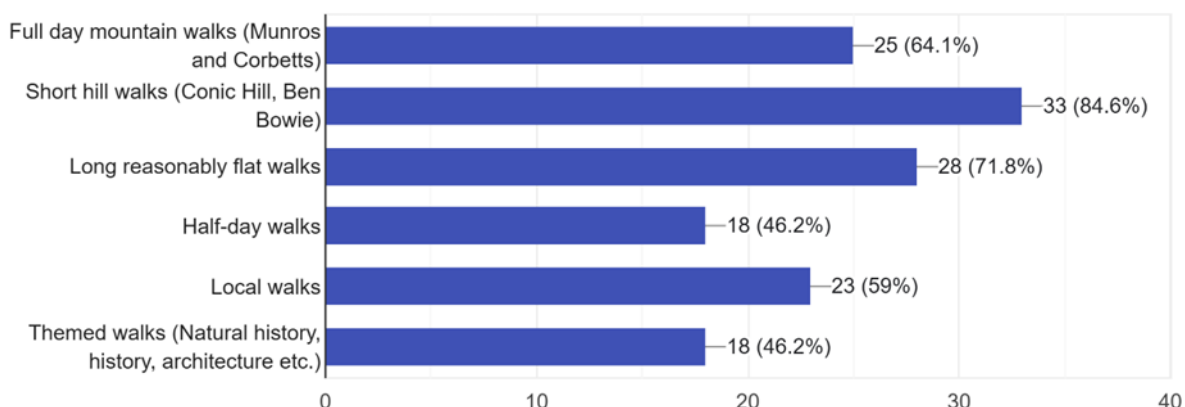


This question was seen by all respondents and provided a clear response that most walkers join us for physical exercise, but enjoyment of the natural world and social contact were also popular reasons for walking. Less popular were a wish to avoid walking on unfamiliar route alone and the simple pleasure of walking.

Conclusion Exercise is the main reason people join our walks

Committee Action None required.

What sort of walks do you like?

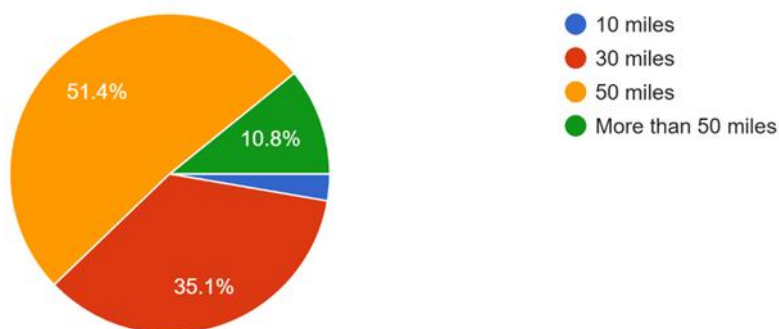


The wording was a little vague, but we received one hundred and forty-five 'walk-likes' from thirty-nine respondents. The most popular walks were the short hill walks and the long reasonably flat walks. Full day mountain walks were a close third in popularity. The least popular walks were the themed walks and half day walks.

Conclusion Short hill walks and longer flat walks were our most popular walk.

Committee Action Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses

What do you think is the furthest we should travel to the start of a walk?

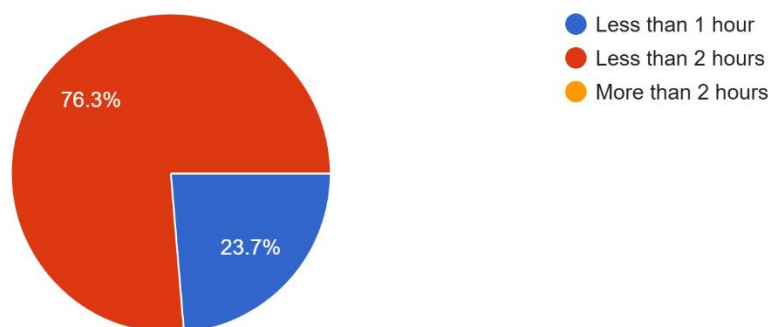


We received thirty-seven responses to this question and a majority (51%, 19) thought fifty miles was the furthest we should travel to the start of a walk. A significant proportion (35%, 13) considered thirty miles to be the furthest we should travel. One person thought ten miles should be limit for our walks but 10% (4) thought it was acceptable to travel more than fifty miles.

Conclusion Our walks should be within fifty miles of Helensburgh.

Committee Action Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses

How much time do you think we should spend travelling to the start of a walk?

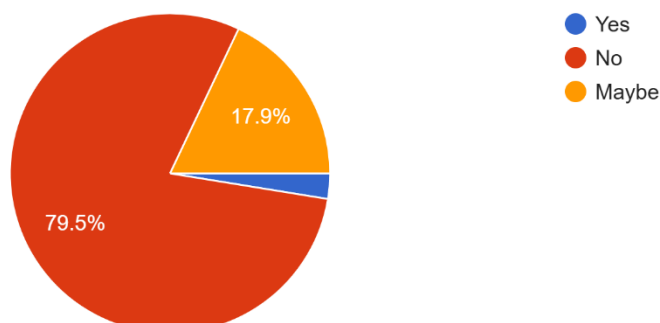


The majority, 76.3%, of respondents thought two hours was the longest time we should spend travelling to the start of a walk, while the remaining 23.7% thought less than one hour was acceptable.

Conclusion Driving to the start of our walks should take less than two hours.

Committee Action Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses

Is it reasonable to spend longer travelling to and from a walk than doing the walk itself?

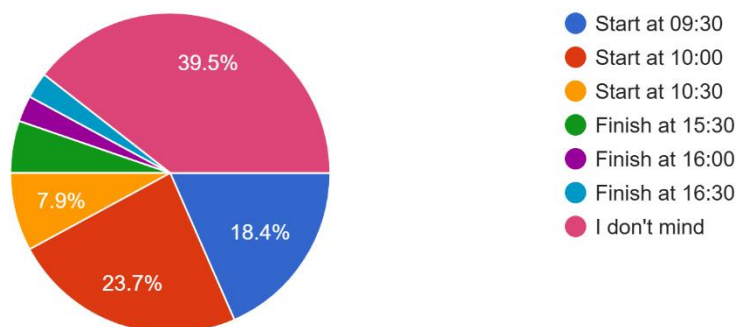


Thirty-one respondents (79.5%) thought it **wasn't** reasonable to spend longer travelling to the walk than walking. This question offered respondents the opportunity to explain why it might be acceptable to spend longer travelling than walking. Seven (17.9%) respondents took advantage of this option and most thought that a particularly interesting walk or one associated with another event would justify the time spent travelling.

Conclusion We shouldn't spend longer getting to a walk than doing the walk.

Committee Action Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses

If there were no other constraints, such as distance to travel, daylight hours or parking, would you prefer our walks to: -



This question was preceded by a brief comment on the average starting time (setting off walking) before and after the Covid lockdown. Prior to lockdown the average starting time was 10:20 but since Covid this has changed to 09:50. There was a similar comment about the finishing time of the walk (arrival back at the start). This had changed from 15:45 before lockdown to 15:10 since lockdown.

The purpose of the question was to determine if there was a strong feeling that walks should start earlier or later than at present.

Most respondents (15, 39.5%) didn't mind but of those who expressed an opinion, most (9, 23.7%) wanted a 10:00 start and seven (18.4%) wanted a 09:30 start. Three respondents (7.9%) would prefer a 10:30 start.

Only four respondents considered the finishing time to be more important than the starting time. Of these the majority (2, 50%) considered 15:30 to be the preferred finishing time while one preferred 16:00 and one 16:30.

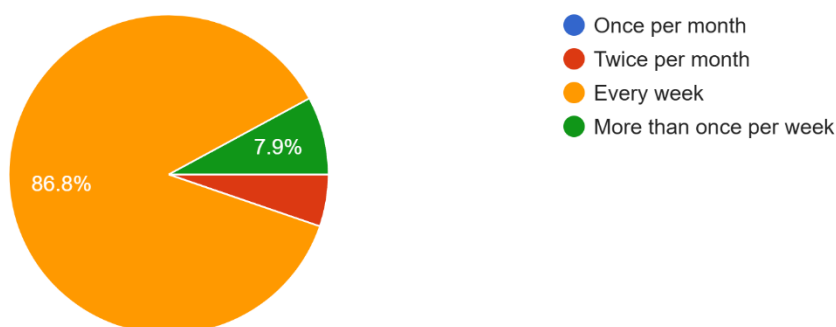
The question allowed respondents to comment on their response and there were fourteen comments.

Most comments seemed to be justifying an earlier start, but others were indicating that the starting time depends on the distance to travel to the start of the walk.

Conclusion **The status quo should be maintained, and walks should start at about 10:00.**

Committee Action **Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses**

How often do you think we should walk?

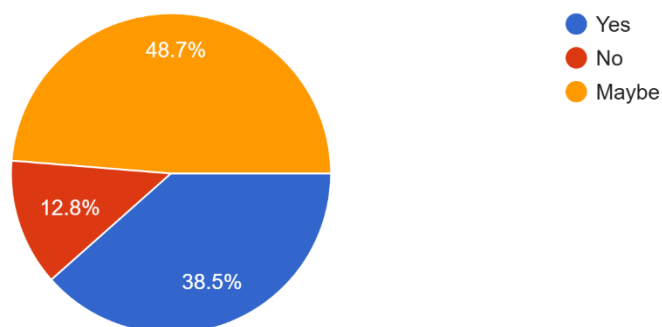


Thirty-three (86.8%) from thirty-eight responses thought we should walk every week. Three people would like us to walk more often than once per week while two thought once every fortnight was enough.

Conclusion **The status quo of one walk per week should remain**

Committee Action **Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses**

Do you think we should have some mid-week walks as well as some weekend walks?

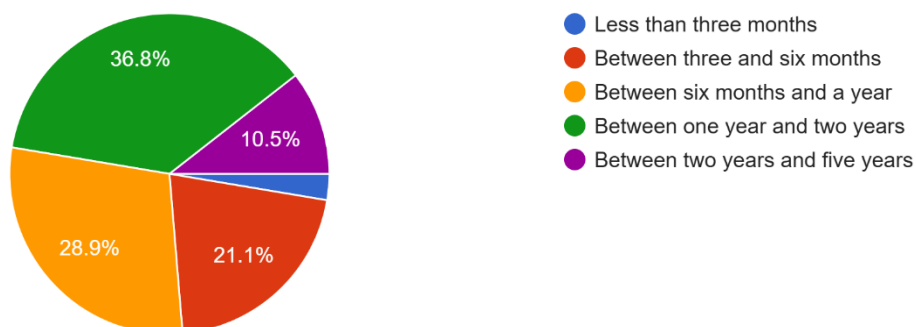


This was another question where respondents were able to explain their views. Views were mixed, with most (19, 48.7%) saying perhaps we should have mid-week walks. A large proportion (15, 38.5%) thought we should have mid-week walks and a few (5, 12.8%) thought we shouldn't have mid-week walks. The questionnaire encouraged respondents who had replied 'Maybe' to this question to explain their response and all nineteen respondents provided an explanation for their response. The full list of responses is provided as Appendix 2.

Conclusion **The status quo of unadvertised mid-week walks should be retained**

Committee Action **No action required**

How often should we wait before repeating a walk

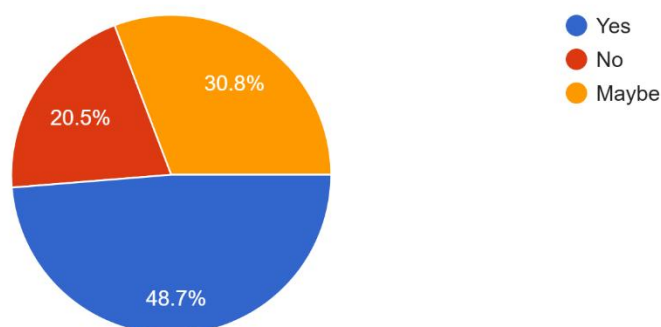


In retrospect this question was not sufficiently clearly defined. It should have stated "If a walk has been completed, in good weather and without any problems, how soon should we repeat it?" However, the response was good with an interesting range of opinions. Approximately a third of respondents thought we should wait between one and two years before repeating a walk, a third thought that between six months and one year was a sufficient interval while the remaining third were divided 2:1 whether the interval should be less than six months or greater than two years.

Conclusion **Repeating a walk within six months should be avoided.**

Committee Action **Ensure leaders are aware of the survey responses**

Should we have a central meeting place and then share cars to the start of the walk?

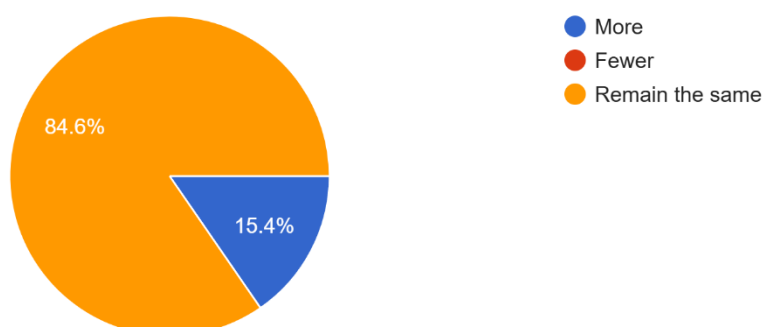


This was a divisive issue although there was a majority in favour of having a central meeting point. Nineteen respondents (48.7%) thought we should have a central meeting point while only eight (20.5%) thought we shouldn't have one. A large number (12, 30.8%) were undecided and offered reasons why a central meeting point should be adopted but also why it was undesirable to have one. The responses are listed in appendix 3.

Conclusion We should consider adopting a central meeting point at the next committee meeting.

Committee Action This issue was discussed at the April Committee meeting and the decision taken to continue meeting at the start of the walk and making individual arrangements to share cars.

Should we have more or fewer walks which can be accessed by public transport?



Nobody thought we should have fewer walks accessible by public transport. Most of the respondents (33, 84.6%) thought we should have the same number as at present and six (15.4%) thought we should have more. Since the end of lockdown we have had 27.1% of our walks accessible by public transport.

Conclusion The status quo of approximately one walk accessible by public transport per month should remain.

Committee Action Ensure public transport options are advertised if available

Have you any further comments you would like to add?

There were twenty-four responses from twenty-two respondents to this question although six of them were simply stating that they hadn't got any further comments. I've divided the remaining responses into four categories. Comments, suggestions, criticisms and compliments. It is pleasing to note that we received five compliments and only two criticisms. Although we received three suggestions, I think it will be very difficult to implement any of them. The responses, divided into the four categories are shown in appendix 4.

Conclusion Implementation of any of the suggestions is dependent on our walk leaders but the two critical comments should be discussed at the April Committee meeting.

Committee Action Both criticisms were discussed at the April Committee meeting. Adoption of a central meeting point was postponed for further consideration. The pace of walks is a constant problem but walk leaders will be reminded to 'hold back' walkers who are walking too fast on C or C+ walks.

Appendix 1

Questions

Question	No. of responses
How often do you join our walks?	42
Why do you walk with us? (tick all that apply)	39
You are obviously interested in walking, but could you let us know why you do not walk with us more often? (tick all that apply)	3
What sort of walks do you like? (tick all that apply)	39
What do you think is the furthest we should travel to the start of a walk?	37
How much time do you think we should spend travelling to the start of a walk?	38
Is it reasonable to spend longer travelled to and from a walk than doing the walk itself?	39
Could you explain why you answered 'Maybe' to the last question?	7
If there were no other constraints, such as distance to travel, daylight hours or parking, at what time would you prefer our walks to start: -	38
Have you any comments would you like to add to the last question?	14
How often do you think we should walk?	38
Do you think we should have some mid-week walks as well as some weekend walks?	39
Could you explain why you answered 'Maybe' to the last question?	19
How often should we wait before repeating a walk?	38
Should we have a central meeting place and then share cars to the start of the walk?	39
Could you explain why you answered 'Maybe' to the last question?	12
Should we have more or fewer walks which can be accessed by public transport?	39
Please list below anything we could do to encourage you to join a walk.	3
Have you any further comments you would like to add?	22

Appendix 2

Responses to ‘Do you think we should have some mid-week walks as well as some weekend walks?’ question

No.	Response
1	If you are retired, then yes it would make sense. I am in full employment so I am happy to have mid-week walks but I wouldn't be able to attend them, unless I take annual leave.
2	Priority Sunday is Church, & Fridays volunteering so no Rambling those days for me.
3	I think a midweek walk might take attendees away from weekend walks, particularly if the weather is better midweek and looks inclement for the weekend. Perhaps if these walks were unofficial those who are prevented from midweek walks due to work commitments would not feel “left out” or “disgruntled”.
4	I work weekdays
5	If there are insufficient walk leaders to maintain a weekly program it would be difficult to fill additional mid-week requirements. Mid-week walks may suit retired members but would not be available to those who work.
6	It depends on the weather.
7	Depends on numbers, leaders and commitments.
8	Depends on availability of walk leaders and participants mid-week.
9	Perhaps short local walks would be an idea.
10	Those who are retired and don't have any other exercise would enjoy a midweek walk.
11	I would be interested in joining mid-week walks if the day and walk were suitable.
12	Because it might suit others and make the Ramblers more attractive to new participants.
13	Mid-week walks should be less formal and more flexible timing.
14	Would depend on the willingness of leaders to do so.
15	I can't as at work but good for others.
16	I work Mon -Fri.
17	I work full time during the week but if a walk was particularly good or interesting then I would try getting time off. For example, the Clyde towers walk, which I keep missing.
18	I currently can't do mid-week walks as I work, but I will be retiring later this year and could join them. Besides, I know that other people can join mid-week walks already.
19	Current model works well: advance planning/publication of weekend walks, mid weeks for shorter notice, weather dependent, smaller numbers.

Appendix 3

Responses to 'Should we have a central meeting place and then share cars to the start of the walk?' question

No.	Response
1	Some members without transport may prefer this.
2	All depends on where you live.
3	Where parking is limited, I think it would ease the leader's job in selecting a walk. However, it would probably add a bit of time.
4	I don't drive.
5	Would make sense when start points have limited space or are likely to be busy.
6	Not always feasible.
7	Because that would suit me but not others.
8	Not regularly. Works well as is. Maybe if mini-bus were to be used for example, a central meeting point would be better.
9	Car share would be useful.
10	Sometimes it would be convenient to do this, but that may mean driving further, doubling back or past a place depending on where the walk was.
11	Most of us already share cars but we don't all start from a central point. Might mean more travel for some people.
12	Depends. Instinctively, want to reduce overall road miles, especially for more distant starts. Also where limited parking. But recognise that less suited when closer to home.

Appendix 4

Further comments made at the end of the questionnaire

Category	Comment
Suggestion	I would like to see more walks in Cowal area.
Suggestion	Maintenance of the recent balance of being a walking group at the same time as fulfilling the interests of members who like the more challenging Munro and Corbett walks should be a goal.
Suggestion	Two walks each weekend, one A/B, one C.
Comment	OK for less demanding walks, but doesn't suit me so well, especially for more strenuous walks, for which I always take a 'recovery' bag for post-walk shoes, dry clothes etc.
Comment	Unfortunately, I cannot walk on rough steep grassy hillside now still enjoying tracks and reasonable distance. Balance and age (80) slower on hills still good pace on level and aerobically fit eg still Scottish Country dancing and keep fit classes.
Comment	As a relative newcomer I find, on the whole, the walks are a bit too demanding.
Comment	Ramblers policy regarding obligations on walk leaders is having a detrimental effect on willingness of walk leaders coming forward.
Comment	I look forward to reading the results - good luck.
Comment	Using public transport limits walks accessibility.
Comment	Optimising numbers is most important.
Criticism	Current policy of starting in remote locations rather than a central point and car sharing has effectively barred many former walkers who don't drive.
Criticism	All walks irrespective of grade seem to be taken at the same (fast) pace which is not fair to those of lesser ability. No point in having a C walk if taken at A pace.
Compliment	Ramblers is great.
Compliment	I've greatly enjoyed the walks even though I can't get to as many as I'd like to. I also only do the C or C+ walks due to my fitness level so that rules me out of quite a few walks, although I recognise that fitter people enjoy the more strenuous walks. I'm happy with the range and nature of the walks offered.
Compliment	Great group. Happy with things as they are.
Compliment	I'm very happy with how the walks are run. I suppose more walk leaders would be useful.
Compliment	I enjoy walking with group and would like to thank the ones who organised walks.