

Questionnaire Analysis Summary

1. What works well? What would you like to keep?

- Club Community & Friendships: Many respondents value the long-standing friendships and social aspects of the club.
- Variety & Quality of Walks: Members appreciate the range of walks (high/low level, local, Lake District, Scotland) and the ability to organize day/weekend/week trips.
- Club Structure & Organization: The committee, membership model, website, email communications, and booking system are seen as strengths.
- Transport: The minibus and car sharing options are frequently mentioned as positive features.
- Learning & Support: Members value the opportunity to learn from others (map reading, route planning) and the professional standards maintained.

2. What needs improving? What causes difficulties?

- Transport Issues: Problems with minibus bookings, costs, and availability; need for more flexible transport arrangements.
- Booking & Cancellations: Early booking requirements, loss of fare if unable to attend, and cancellations causing extra work.
- Route Planning & Time Pressure: Time constraints on walks, especially high-level ones, and route-finding difficulties.
- Member Engagement: Reduced bookings, lack of volunteers for leading walks, and some members not taking personal responsibility.
- Inclusivity & Accessibility: Difficulty for members without cars, and issues with dog-friendly travel.
- Communication: Confusing emails and lack of clear contact with walk organizers.

3. How can we improve things? What will help sustain the Club into the future?

- Transport Solutions: More car sharing, streamlined reimbursement for petrol, and limiting minibus use to longer trips.
- Simplified Administration: Reduce committee workload, remove unnecessary admin fees, and make booking/cancellation policies more flexible.
- Member-Led Activities: Encourage members to suggest and lead walks, and take more responsibility for arrangements.
- Promotion & Recruitment: Use social media and broader advertising to attract new members.
- Training & Mentoring: Offer map reading and mountain-craft training, especially for new members.
- Adapt Walks to Members' Needs: Shorter, more local walks, and routes tailored to changing abilities.

4. Suggestions for venues/specific routes for the 2026 programme

- Popular Routes & Areas: Lake District, Northumberland, Yorkshire Dales, North Pennines, Cheviots, Scottish Borders, Teesdale, Brampton, Northumberland coast.

- Local & Accessible Walks: More walks within 20 miles of Gateshead, Chopwell Woods, and routes accessible by public transport.
- Repeat Successful Walks: Continue with routes that have been popular in previous years.
- Flexible Scheduling: Consider weekend sessions and publish dates early for group coordination.

5. Anything else you want to tell us?

- Club Sustainability: Some suggest testing new models and, if unsuccessful, allowing the club to close gracefully.
- Aging Membership: Recognition that the group is aging and needs to attract new members.
- Social Events: Suggestions for more social activities (quiz nights, meals) to strengthen community.
- Financial Management: Proposals to donate surplus funds to charity and reset club finances.
- Inclusivity: Emphasis on making walks accessible for all, including those with health issues or without cars.

Summary Table of Categories

Question	Main Categories/Themes
1. What works well?	Community, Walk Variety, Organization, Transport, Learning
2. Needs Improving	Transport, Booking, Route Planning, Engagement, Accessibility, Communication
3. Improvements	Transport Solutions, Admin Simplification, Member-Led, Promotion, Training, Adaptation
4. Venues/Routes	Popular Areas, Local Walks, Repeat Routes, Flexible Scheduling
5. Other Comments	Sustainability, Aging, Social Events, Finance, Inclusivity

Detailed Breakdown of all Answers - Categorized:

1. What works well? What would you like to keep?

Club Community & Friendships

"We have been around a long time it would be nice to keep the club running."

"Friendships."

"Longstanding membership over 30 years making long-standing friendships."

"Meeting with members on the bus and having their company."

"Everyone is very friendly and the easy-going atmosphere on the walks is great."

Variety & Quality of Walks

"Ability to organise day walks, weekend and week trips."

"Ability to do day walks in Lake District."

"Ability to offer higher and lower-level walks."

"Choice of high and low-level walks to suit changing ability over the years."

"Introduction of Sunday local walks to suit all needs."

"A great club that offers something different from other clubs. I would like to keep the variety of walks on offer and use of minibus."

"For me – Long weekends and the Full Week Holiday."

Club Structure & Organization

"Membership model."

"Membership fee."

"Committee."

"Bank account."

"Website."

"Email."

"Co-ordinators for walks."

"Contact sheet."

"Professional standards kept for club admin, adapting to legislation, compliances and adapting to challenges over the years."

"Regular contact, website updating, printing, banking, booking system."

"Continuous work of committee and Graeme's taking on of multiple tasks to keep accounts, insurance, website updating to date."

"An organized year programme of walks and club trips to the Lakes (Patterdale) and Scotland."

Transport

"Minibus."

"Car sharing."

"Enjoyed luxury of self-drive mini bus (especially when I did not have my car) with various volunteer drivers."

"Flexibility of self-drive bus able to access more remote routes."

"I would like to keep the minibus as long as possible."

"Shared Transport should be encouraged."

"Organised bus transport – it is nice to go on the same bus and have time for chatting, laughing and singing (socialising)."

Learning & Support

"Knowledge, skills, and experience of members."

"Learned so much from fellow walkers i.e. routes map reading courses."

"Members value the opportunity to learn from others (map reading, route planning)."

2. What needs improving? What causes difficulties?

Transport Issues

"The minibus doesn't work for many reasons and it is not financially viable."

"Time/venue constraints when using minibus."

“Reduced numbers of bookings for minibus events.”

“Loss of self-drive bus.”

“Price of rented bus.”

“Time restrictions of hire bus, due to legislation, reducing walking time and socialising.”

“Transport arrangements need to be changed as I think the cost of the minibus could be too costly for some members.”

Booking & Cancellations

“Bookings not going ahead.”

“Cancellations of some planned Saturday walks – loss of walking opportunities and more work involved.”

“Fewer members booking up early, which may be discouraging other members from considering booking.”

“Early booking system due to bus hire.”

“Difficulties are caused I think by having to book so far ahead as no one, certainly myself, do not know what I am doing so far ahead and to lose your bus fare if you cannot attend, then I think this is unfair.”

“Booking too early, bookings should be more flexible up to walk date.”

Route Planning & Time Pressure

“Negativity over the minibus timings, too much work with people changing their minds.”

“The pressure on planners to provide a long and short walk in an area each time adds extra work and needs to be reviewed.”

“Time pressure on some high-level walks which reduces enjoyment.”

“Sometimes route-finding issues add to the time pressure.”

“Not enough volunteer drivers.”

“Vulnerability of members not knowing routes.”

“Navigation around particularly the Lakeland Fells. Often confusion and time wasting.”

“No time to read the map, not always there is a person who knows the route by heart.”

Member Engagement

“People expecting the club to do everything for them and not taking personal responsibility.”

“Reduced fitness if member.”

“Less capable route finders, map readers, navigators.”

“Reduced bookings, lack of volunteers for leading walks, and some members not taking personal responsibility.”

“Members need to start to take more responsibility for themselves on walks and not expect to be ‘lead’.”

Inclusivity & Accessibility

“Difficulty for members without cars.”

“Issues with dog-friendly travel.”

“Sunday events are lacking essential route details (especially ascent and suggested route details).”

“No one on the middle walks. Either high or low which I'm not interested in.”

“Designated pick-up points on route for walkers who might struggle to get to Gateshead for 8.00am.”

Communication

“Confusing emails and lack of clear contact with walk organizers.”

“I find the emails very confusing and I'm having difficulty filling in this questionnaire.”

“Lack of clear contact with walk organizers.”

3. How can we improve things? What will help sustain the Club into the future?

Transport Solutions

“We need to make some major changes to put the onus on the members to sort themselves out and simplify the bookings and transport.”

“Reduce number of Saturday walks using minibus, use these for Lake District and other longer distance venues.”

“Maximum 2-hour drive to minibus drop off points to maximise available walking time.”

“Use meet at venue/informal car share transport arrangement for these walks.”

“No money to be handled by Club for any meet at venue walks – no booking fee and no car mileage paid to drivers of car sharing.”

“Drivers and passengers share petrol cost between them, i.e. full tank before and after.”

“Reduce Lakes walks, summer only.”

“No walks in August.”

“More meet at venue where possible.”

“Limit the minibus to the furthest walking events in the calendar (ie the lakes), and increase car sharing for the nearer venues in the “shorter” months.”

Simplified Administration

“Reduce amount of work the committee undertakes.”

“Remove unnecessary admin fees.”

“Make booking/cancellation policies more flexible.”

“Remove the Admin fees for ‘Meet at venue’. Too much hassle for £1.”

“Definitely remove the Admin charge for Weekends / Weeks away as the club already has a large surplus fund.”

Member-Led Activities

“Encourage members to suggest venues/specific walks that they are familiar with and will attend, to reduce the likelihood of route-finding difficulties.”

“For potential venues/walks which are less familiar or routes are possibly challenging ask for volunteers from the committee or membership to reccie.”

“Get more members involved and get members to recommend walks.”

“Get members to volunteer to lead walks.”

“Ask those suggesting walk to lead walk if possible.”

“Member led management of each walk.”

“A walk leader could monitor the page for their walk, allowing members to manage themselves and field any questions.”

Promotion & Recruitment

“Use social media and broader advertising to attract new members.”

“Contact and advertise within the big employers in the region, specially Gateshead and Newcastle? Local authorities, NHS, universities.”

“The Club needs to make greater use of social media and technology to improve advertising, communication, bookings etc.”

Training & Mentoring

“Offer map reading and mountain-craft training, especially for new members.”

“As an experienced walking club all members have a huge experience, skills and knowledge to share. Maybe on easier/more relaxed routes those who are experienced could teach/mentor new members how to read map etc. or even provide a training as an offer from the club.”

Adapt Walks to Members’ Needs

“Shorter, more local walks, and routes tailored to changing abilities.”

“Shorten routes without time pressure being put on walkers.”

“Change approach from so many Lakeland walks to use other local areas such as Cheviots, Scottish Borders, Weardale, Teesdale, North Yorkshire.”

“More flexibility and less bureaucracy as regards bookings particularly Sunday walks.”

“Not all members find it acceptable to have to go to Gateshead Civic to meet up for walks if they wish to car share.”

4. Suggestions for venues/specific routes for the 2026 programme

Popular Routes & Areas

“Kirby Stephen to Nine Standards Rigg”

“Windy Gyle Circular”

“Scald Hill, The Cheviot and Hedgehope”

“Lake District, Northumberland, Yorkshire Dales, North Pennines, Cheviots, Scottish Borders, Teesdale, Brampton, Northumberland coast.”

“Moffat offers middle walks in beautiful surroundings and is the same distance from Civic as Lake District.”

“Walks in areas like Yorkshire, Teesdale, the cheviots and the Northumberland coast.”

Local & Accessible Walks

“More walks within 20 miles of Gateshead, Chopwell Woods to encourage more people to attend as quicker/easier to get to.”

“I also like the shorter, local walks that are not too far to travel to.”

“Anything public-transport accessible.”

“I would like to see more walks in Northumberland, the Borders and North Yorkshire.”

Repeat Successful Walks

“Repeat popular walks.”

“Continue with routes that have been popular in previous years.”

Flexible Scheduling

“Consider weekend sessions where a date is published at start of the year.”

“I would like to see what feedback we get from members before looking to draft a programme for 2026. Then I would suggest we identify venues/walks based on travel distance/time of year/degree of length and difficulty etc.”

5. Anything else you want to tell us?

Club Sustainability

“Test a new model in 2026 and if it doesn’t work, then allow the club to close gracefully.”

“Without new members coming in we are an aging group of friends. Members need to positively consider trying to attract new members or accept it is a closed residual group.”

Aging Membership

“Long standing members are a lot older now and some are unable to walk at a fast pace.”

“We need to accept our members are getting older and new members aren’t jumping to join us.”

Social Events

“Possibly organise (but not sure who would do this) some more ‘Social events’ i.e. Quiz night / Meal Out. So that people in the club can get to know each other better and feel part of the club and therefore attend more walks.”

Financial Management

“Proposals to donate surplus funds to charity and reset club finances.”

“Over the course of the last three years, the Club have spent £1584 subsidising the Denton Travel minibus. Had Committee not proactively cancelled five other scheduled minibus events with one week's notice, this could easily have doubled the cost of subsidy (an additional £1800 assuming a total lack of last-minute bookings by members). During the same period, if, as some members have suggested, the Club had adopted a more generous fare refund policy, this would have cost an additional £346 (20 x cancellations).”

Inclusivity

“Emphasis on making walks accessible for all, including those with health issues or without cars.”

“Is there anything else you want to tell us? Apologies for repeating myself on the dog issue!”

Questionnaire Themes and Chart

Summary of Key Themes and Response Counts

1. What works well? (What would you like to keep?)

- Club Community & Friendships: 8
- Variety & Quality of Walks: 9
- Club Structure & Organization: 8
- Transport (Minibus/Car Sharing): 9
- Learning & Support: 4

2. What needs improving? (What causes difficulties?)

- Transport Issues (Minibus/Costs/Arrangements): 11
- Booking & Cancellations: 7
- Route Planning & Time Pressure: 8
- Member Engagement/Responsibility: 6
- Inclusivity & Accessibility: 6
- Communication: 4

3. How can we improve things? (What will help sustain the Club?)

- Transport Solutions (Car Sharing, Minibus Use): 10
- Simplified Administration: 6
- Member-Led Activities: 7
- Promotion & Recruitment: 5
- Training & Mentoring: 3
- Adapt Walks to Members' Needs: 7

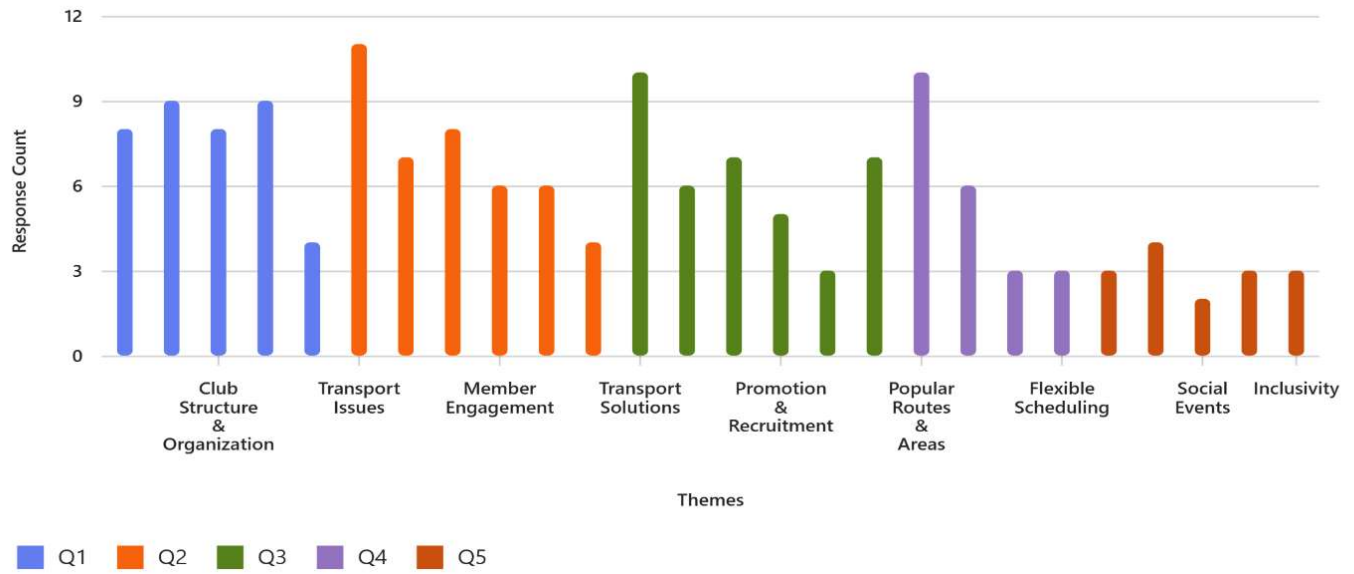
4. Suggestions for venues/specific routes

- Popular Routes & Areas: 10
- Local & Accessible Walks: 6
- Repeat Successful Walks: 3
- Flexible Scheduling: 3

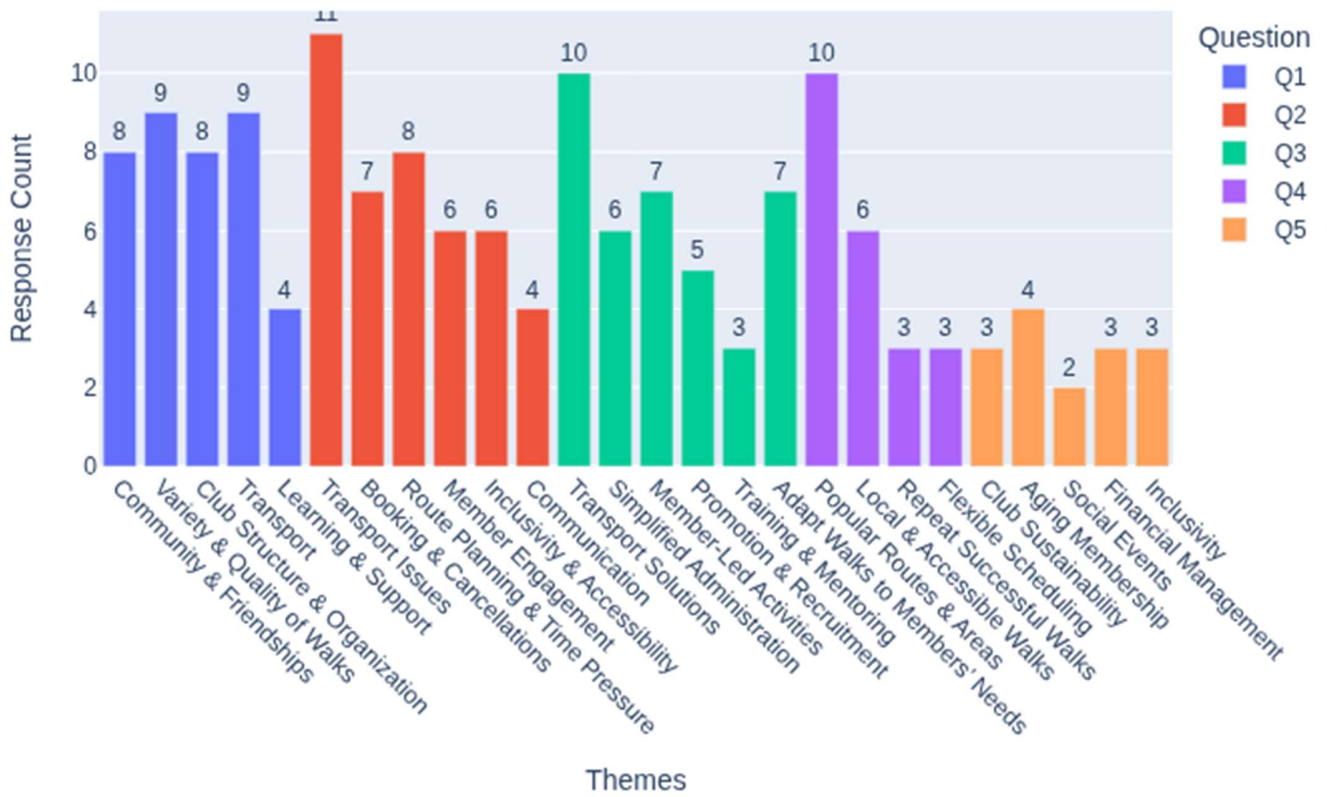
5. Anything else you want to tell us?

- Club Sustainability/Closure: 3
- Aging Membership: 4
- Social Events: 2
- Financial Management: 3
- Inclusivity: 3

Chart of Key Themes



Key Questionnaire Themes with Response Counts





Committee Proposals Arising from Club Questionnaire Responses

For Discussion at AGM – 15th January 2026

Minibus

We will attempt to continue to offer some minibus trips as many members value these, in particular the ability to access the Lake District and other longer distance venues. However, this will depend on minibus quotes for 2026.

If able we will offer a limited number of minibus trips in 2026 due to the low numbers of bookings and the likely increase in cost. It was suggested that these be in May, June and September.

We will need to increase the cost per person depending on quotes for 2026, but will proceed on the basis of a minimum of 12 bookings. This will require the continuation of subsidies from Club funds.

We will only give refunds if all places on the bus are filled.

We will aim at bus journey times not exceeding 2 hours to allow more time for walking, socialising etc.

Car sharing

Other Saturday walks should be on a strictly car sharing basis. (Not meet at venue).

This is vital because it is more inclusive, allows non car owners/drivers to attend, is better for new members, is better for the environment, and reduces pressure on limited car parking spaces, particularly in more remote or small venues.

We will aim at a maximum 1.45 driving time from Gateshead, to venues in Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire Coast, Moors and Dales, and the Scottish Borders.

We need a workable car sharing system, with more meet up to share points (Hexham? Durham? Morpeth? Other?) and considering how to cater for members who are none car owners/drivers, and members who wish to bring their dog.

Petrol costs will be shared by the driver and passengers of each car with money to be agreed and paid on the day.

Bookings will still need to be made with the Club but no booking fee will be charged for car sharing events.

We need all members to identify if they are a car owner /driver, and are prepared to drive and offer lifts to those who need them. Specific drivers can be arranged on an event basis.

Start time for car share walks will be 10am.

We will encourage sharing of contact numbers for easier co-ordination on the day if individual members agree. (Data Protection requirement).

Walking routes

We will aim to cater for all members by offering higher level/longer routes, and lower level/shorter routes.

We will ensure that the higher level/longer routes can be comfortably achieved in time to return to the minibus.

We will continue to encourage members to suggest walks to be added to the programme. Members should provide details of starting point, distance, ascent and route map.

We will explore the viability of having 'led' walks as requested by some members, bearing in mind we would need members to volunteer to lead walks. There may be scope in asking members to informally lead on routes they are familiar with. We could also ask for volunteers to reccie unfamiliar/potentially more challenging routes, and informally lead these.

Other

The email booking system will remain in place for now but we will look at other potential options for the future, such as WhatsApp.

We will retain a minimal membership fee of £5 per year.

We will continue to offer an instalment system of payments for weekend and week trips.

We will retain the additional charges of £5 for a weekend trip and £10 for a week trip. If instalments are not required, these charges could be dropped.

We will discuss changing the date of the AGM to April to encourage a bigger attendance, and run an April to March programme.

In line with the above, we will extend the current membership to 31 March 2026, without charge. This will allow time for the new systems to be put in place and changes to the Club constitution can be discussed at the new AGM.

We will propose a £500 donation to Mountain Rescue at the AGM. The increased donation to Mountain Rescue is suggested as making best use of reserve funds, while keeping enough to cover other expenses such as minibus subsidies, yearly insurance, advance payments for bus hire, and holiday deposits.

We will review the constitution to reflect any changes made.

As David Ellerington has regretfully decided to step down from organising Sunday walks these events are likely not to continue. However, members could arrange Sunday walks on an informal basis for example via WhatsApp.

We will explore more use of tech/social media for promotion, organisation and bookings.

We will explore offering informal and formal means of map reading training for new and inexperienced members.

We will explore having more weekend events, which could be organised on a less formal basis.

We will organise social events.