



WALKERS ARE WELCOME TOWNS NETWORK

Towns and villages with something special to offer walkers

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NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2015

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Going International



Fantastic news. Following WaW committee member and our overseas ambassador, Shelia Talbot's visit to Japan in May 2013, the Walkers are Welcome Town of Winchcombe played host to a delegation from Japan. A ceremony was arranged in this pretty Cotswold town on 6th February to sign a friendship agreement between our organisation and the Japan Footpath Association (JFA).

The JFA was established in 2009 to support groups that promote footpath initiatives throughout Japan and are now going to spread the WaW philosophy throughout their island nation.

Left to right: Mr Kosei Hamada, director JFA; Mike Dawson, CEO Tewkesbury Borough Council; Sheila Talbot, WAW; Jim Mason, Winchcombe Town Council; Ms Izawa Ruriko, JFA and our Patron, Kate Ashbrook

Ms. Ruriko Izawa, member of the JFA planning committee commented: *"I have learnt the joy of walking the footpaths. Through walking you realise the beauty and abundance of nature. I would like to spread the culture of walking in Japan."*

And a word from Shelia: "Having visited Japan, I can see many similarities between our two countries, both have beautiful, varied countryside. We also both have enthusiastic, friendly people living in rural communities which are struggling economically. However, Japan does not have a Public Rights of Way network like ours, so they have more work to do to secure better access. I wish them success with WaW and I hope that in the future some UK towns will twin with Japanese towns and visits can be arranged. I think it is wonderful that an idea that started in a small Yorkshire town in 2007 has now spread to the other side of the world. Hebden Bridge - look what you've started!"

For further information is available in [Kate's blog](#) and the [website news](#)

Charitable status

As mentioned in our new Chairman, Sam Phillips' letter in January, we have been working on Articles of Association to make WaW a Community Interest Company. These are now loaded onto the website [Reports on National Executive Business page](#). **Please send any comment by 28th February 2015** to allow any amendments to be made and registration during March.

Member News Update

Thank you to everyone for your comments and newsletter feedback.

Chas Hollis, way up in **Unst**, has advised that Shetland also has Geopark status and Unst Walkers are Welcome have included a number of the official Geopark Walks within their own offer. Unst has its own Geopark information pack and Geopark Tours visit the island once a week during the summer see [Geopark Shetland information](#). Chas also reminds us that there are more Viking sites on Unst than anywhere else in Europe.

Naomi Wrighton in **Wellington** has provided us with an html code for the WaW logo if you need it for your own website or one of your partners. That will save some expense or time writing the code for anyone. Just [e-mail Rob Talbot](#).

The WaW **quilted banner** is now on display at **Chepstow** Tourist Information Centre. Chepstow WaW are writing a protocol so that any town can borrow this lovely piece of work to display at a special event. If you would like to add your towns' square, please see the instructions on the [website](#).

Dafydd Wyn Morgan at **Tregarron** has been telling us about Hinterland guided walks in Ceredigion being produced for 2015/16 which have been inspired by the S4C/Fiction Factory BBC TV detective series [Hinterland](#). This will also involve WaW town **Aberystwyth**.



News from **Liskeard** about their town tidy up and **Hebden Bridge's** new Pennine Way loop is posted on the [website news](#).

Thank you to everyone who sent in their snow photographs, these were tweeted and added to facebook. This one is from **Alston Moor**, Cumbria. The snow against the red telephone box is brilliant and there are walkers in the shot, an added bonus.

Walking is good for you

It's official, walking is good for you.

An [ITV report](#) has revealed that having studied 334,161 European men and women for 12 years, they have found that *'people who took moderate levels of daily exercise, the equivalent of an energetic 20 minute walk, were 16% to 30% less likely to die than those classed as inactive'*.

Many Walkers are Welcome towns run health walks which will introduce gentle exercise and will go at a pace to suit the less able on the road to improving fitness levels and overcoming health issues. There are, of course, social benefits in meeting new people and sharing a regular walk. Many extend this to stopping for refreshments after their walk and make new friends.

If you are interested in introducing health walks we can offer advice from members' experience. You might also like to use this research in your funding applications.

Some towns have managed to take health walks that one step further with outdoor recreation prescription walks. Winchcombe have written a Prescription Walks fact sheet, now loaded onto the [website](#).

Walking Festival promotion

We sent out a notification at the end of January about Walking Festivals advising that, once again, we have negotiated free entry in Country Walking for WaW towns' festivals. It occurred to us that there are many websites that will give free advertising for Walking Festivals but we are probably all using different organisations. **Send in details** of national opportunities and we will collate this information for everyone to share and maximise publicity.

Buses

Unfortunately, due to so many cuts to council funding in the past couple of years, we have seen repercussions for, particularly rural, bus services. In many areas bus subsidies have been cut leading to routes being reduced or stopped completely. Whilst this is having devastating effects on rural communities, this also means that walkers have less public transport to use, an aim that we support through our criteria.

Currently, there are national bus passes which allow retired people to visit other areas and take advantage of walking in WaW towns and villages. There is a shortfall in this funding which has to be made up by councils or unitary authorities. There are moves to not allow use of bus passes on visitor routes in Yorkshire, and Cumbria is talking about introducing some charges. If you can advise us of new policies in your area, we will be able to build a national picture.

You may be interested to read Campaign for Better Transport's [Buses in Crisis Report](#).

Campaign for Better Transport, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Living Streets, British Cycling, CTC, and Sustrans are all backing an amendment to the Infrastructure Bill to give cycling and walking the same priority as roads. [Further information](#)

And finally

All Annual Returns should now have been submitted. If you are running late for some reason, please send in your Annual Return as soon as possible. Similarly, subscriptions were due in January and our Treasurer sent out reminders this year with an invoice attached for your convenience, we hope that has been helpful. If you are having any difficulties with either of these two annual formalities, please get in touch urgently.

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