

# WALKERS ARE WELCOME TOWNS NETWORK

Towns and villages with something special to offer walkers



## Fact Sheet – Making Long Distance Trails

Long Distance Trails are a good way of linking Walkers are Welcome towns and can bring additional visitors into your town but remember that unless you are the end of the line they also take them out again and on to the next stage.

Some trails are famous because of where they are, the challenge they represent and because they receive national publicity. There are 16 National Trails which have been developed since the Pennine Way was opened in 1965. Each Trail in England and Wales has a Trail Partnership made up of the local authorities responsible for the path on the ground. Usually there is a dedicated National Trail Officer with responsibility for keeping the Trail up to the high standards set for National Trails. Maintenance work is carried out by the local highway authorities together with landowners often with the help of volunteers. Funding for National Trails is provided by national government through Natural England and Natural Resources Wales and also by local highway authorities and other funding partners. Promotion of National Trails is carried out by Walk Unlimited; a social enterprise dedicated to encouraging walking. There is currently no intention to add to this stock no matter how good your new trail might be. There is a similar scheme in Scotland called Scotland's Great Trails with 26 routes each over 25 miles in length

Making your own trail is not an action to be taken on lightly, it will be time consuming but it can be fulfilled with dedication and experience of walking other trails will be useful. You should first decide what you want your new trail to achieve and identify some partners because you will need support, help, advice, co-operation and/or funding along the way. Your trail might link say 5 towns with five stage stops and say 15 miles per day for an easy week and encourage extra length stops over a week period and maximum commercial capacity. Sit down with your OS maps covering the areas and identify possible routes. You will then have to take to your feet and walk these potential routes until your trail has an identified route. This might include permissive paths with the owner's permission in writing.

If you are considering waymarking and eventually putting your trail on an OS map, there are a number of hurdles to be crossed with your Rights of Way authority, some vary but

generally they require the following to permit discs and support your OS application. Each authority or National Park will have to be consulted separately.

### *Making Long Distance Trails 2*

#### 1. Regional importance

Routes which are long enough that they are completed over several days and which attract significant numbers of visitors will be considered favourably. For routes which have sections in neighbouring authorities, their support will also be a factor.

#### 2. Permanence

Routes must be expected to last (i.e. to be actively inspected and promoted) for a minimum of 5 years. Routes which have to be in existence for less than 5 years will only be waymarked in exceptional circumstances.

#### 3. Length of route

Routes that are designed to be completed in the course of a day will not normally be waymarked as long distance walks. This would not prevent shorter routes being waymarked for other reasons such as shorter routes aimed at increasing participation, circular routes round settlements and so on.

#### 4. Responsibility

There must be a specific group or organisation (not local authority) prepared to take responsibility for inspections and publicity material. The Authority will take responsibility for waymarking off of the highway. Other areas of waymarking would be assessed and carried out if navigational issues are identified.

#### 5. Public access

The route must always stay open for the public to use. This could include routes with a permissive access agreement provided that sufficient longevity can be guaranteed.

#### 6. Additional factors

The following will be considered favourably (prepare papers identifying these issues)

- Economic benefit to the area
- Heritage, scenic or ecological interest
- Routes benefitting the local community as well as visitors
- Routes that promote the use of public transport and green businesses

### Publicity materials

Must be:

- clear to read
- easily available
- give clear advice on minimising the impact on the area, and
- be kept up to date

Material that provides additional information to promote greater understanding of the area will be seen positively.

#### 7. Route alignment

The route must be checked by the authorities for legal status and issues, and agreed in advance in the case of new routes. Where promoted routes use permissive paths, agreement from the

landowner should be made available in writing and should confirm that permission is granted for a minimum of five years.

#### 8. Road safety

Road sections and crossings, where they are not already approved need to have been safety audited by the relevant highway authority.

As you will identify from the above, some of these steps might mean additional work and take some time for the local authority to process before the waymarking stage. Think carefully about the sustainability of monitoring inspections and publicity materials.

#### *Making Long Distance Trails 3*

##### **Example 1 - Winchcombe**

In 2009 the Winchcombe WaW group heard that the Wychavon Way was being diverted away from their town, to end in the neighbouring village of Broadway, keeping the entire route within Worcestershire. A lot of money had recently been spent on upgrading the Gloucestershire section so it seemed a shame for this route to disappear and for Winchcombe to lose out on the economic benefits that a long distance trail brings.

Robert Talbot thought about how the local section of the Wychavon Way could be incorporated into a new route along existing RoW that would benefit Winchcombe. What started out as a circular route in the Cotswold hills around the town gradually transformed into a figure of eight route, 42 miles long, with the beginning, the middle and the end all in the centre of Winchcombe. This meant that everyone walking the new trail would visit the town 3 times, no doubt spending money in the shops, restaurants and accommodation. The route was also designed to benefit shops, pubs and tea shops along the route.

With help from Gloucestershire RoW Dept, the Cotswolds AONB Voluntary Wardens, the Ramblers and many others, the route was checked, mapped, sign posted and a Guide Book produced with mapping. The OS agreed to show the route on their maps and the Deputy Editor of Country Walking magazine was invited to open the Winchcombe Way at the annual Walking Festival. This led to a 5 page article in the magazine and it was also covered on BBC Radio Gloucestershire and BBC TV Midlands Today.

Many local people walk it in short sections and others travel long distances to complete the walk over several days. It has helped to put Winchcombe on the walkers' map. It has become popular with members of the Long Distance Walkers Association, who like to do one of the loops or even the whole route in one go and end up back at their car!

The WaW group has it's own website <http://www.winchcombewelcomeswalkers.com/> and the WaW group had the idea of adding the website address to the waymarkers. This means people who come across the route while doing another walk can find out about it and people

have a means of reporting problems and giving feedback.

### **Example 2 – Pennine Journey**

David and Heather Pitt decided to work out a long distance trail based on Alfred Wainwright's Pennine Journey walked in 1938 from Settle to Hadrian's Wall and returning 11 days and 211 miles later. This was later published in 1986 as a pictorial guide with Wainwright's drawings. David and Heather walked their route in 1998 and as the Wainwright Society was formed in 2004 they supported the project adding Society members who helped with test walking and route writing. Colin Bywater did the black and white illustrations and Ron Scholes' hand drawn route maps in a likeness to Alfred Wainwright's own publications completed the book. In 2004 the Wainwright Society's new publishers, Frances Lincoln published the guide with a further print run later in the year because of demand.

The story doesn't end there, in 2010 The Pennine Journey Supporters Club was formed to replace the Wainwright Society as 'Responsible Organisation' in the eyes of Highway Authorities. Members pay £2.47 per year as a £1 per mile annual subscription and this coupled with the profits from the sale of the guide is used for sustainable income. Accommodation advertising is now also carried on the website to inform walkers and for a small additional income. Some members have taken on the responsibility of an annual audit of the trail.

Having met all the required criteria, the Pennine Journey was finally waymarked throughout on 24 September 2013 and December 2014 Ordnance Survey confirmed that the Pennine Journey will be shown on all future reprints.

For further details see <http://www.penninejourney.org.uk/>

### *Making Long Distance Trails 3*

### **Example 3 – Wainwright's Coast to Coast**

Alfred Wainwright's Coast to Coast route from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay is phenomenally successful but was never intended to be a guide book when published in 1973. It still managed to be voted the second best long distance trail in 2004 after more than 30 years of increasing popularity and benefitting many towns and villages along the trail.

However, only small sections of this 190 miles have ever been waymarked. The route is fraught with permissive, non-permissive paths and alternative routes making it a challenge to navigate as well as walk.

After the Wainwright Society was formed in 2004 they were able to become the 'Responsible Organisation' it was decided to deal with the problems and work towards waymarking the entire route. This is a considerable feat with three different local authorities, three National Parks and an AONB to work with and please.

A newly designed waymarker was introduced in 2012. The sale of The 2014 Wainwright Calendar has raised £7,500 with £3,000 set aside for waymarking the route whilst the remainder has been shared between seven mountain rescue groups.

<http://www.wainwright.org.uk/coasttocoast.html>

### **Example 4 – Swale Way**

The Swale Way has been in existence for a number of years but dropped in popularity since the original publication went out of print and publicity diminished. Boroughbridge and Richmond Walkers are Welcome groups decided to resurrect this walk seeing the benefits to both towns. Kirkby Stephen is also at the end of the extended route which links to the Settle to Carlisle

railway so they were also contacted. Thirsk has later been accredited who are on the first leg.

The towns have so far launched a website for the downloadable route maps, routes and photographs of this 77 mile partly in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. There are no plans to waymark the route at the present time and they are aware of the obstacles that they would need to overcome when and if they want to take the next step. <http://www.swaleway.org.uk/>

Many of these principles are also useful in designing shorter routes.

*While the WAWTN has made every effort to ensure the information obtained in this factsheet is an accurate summary of the subject as at the date of publication, it is unable to accept liability for any misinterpretation of the law or any other error or omission in the advice in this paper.*

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