

# WALKERS ARE WELCOME TOWNS NETWORK

Towns and villages with something special to offer walkers



## Fact Sheet: Children's Walks

### Mytholmroyd tells us about their experience.....

#### Introduction

Children as a target group to get walking are incredibly important. It is the only time walking action groups can reach out to a complete cross-section of the population, and walks can tie in with a wide range of learning topics, from science/nature to history, some related to the national curriculum.

If children get excited about local walks, they are likely to carry a walking habit through to adulthood. Through children, you can target families to get adults walking too.

#### Objectives

The outcomes any group might want to achieve could be varied, but some or all of the following objectives might be worth considering:

- Encouraging children and their families to get more exercise
- Getting children interested in their local area and countryside
- Helping children to learn about local history/nature/other topics
- Providing access to enjoyable local walks for short legs and even buggies

#### Consultation

A key starting point is to see what kind of walking local children are already taking part in. Do many have walking boots? Go walking in wellies?

Which local primary schools or playgroups take their children out for regular walks? Or participate in local authority 'Walking to School' weeks. Can you tie in with or capitalise on those schools? Identify teachers as champions?

What other groups can you talk to? Local brownies, cubs and other similar groups are good value. A few chat and listen sessions with a very lively group of local brownies was certainly productive for us.

Questions to ask might include the following topics:

- footwear
- their knowledge of local countryside and paths
- favourite walks
- with family or friends
- how often
- how far
- map-reading knowledge
- younger brothers/sisters still in buggies

#### Choosing the walks

Check out your local footpaths to target a number of walks for the project (we identified six routes). These might be:

- Of up to three or four miles, ideally circular or linked to a regular bus or train route – perhaps with some very short walks for toddlers
- With interesting, quirky, child-friendly features
- Some of which are suitable (or potentially suitable) for buggies
- Which are safe for children (or could be made safe)
- Which might include family picnic spots.

## *Children's Walks 2*

Get local volunteers or members of your group to walk lots of routes to test them out and select the ones you'd like to publicise. Consult with the groups mentioned earlier to make the final selection. If you are planning to publicise walks via the internet, there is less of a cost limitation than publishing a leaflet or booklet. Or you might decide to do both, with a leaflet as a taster for more walks available on your web-site.

### **Improving the walks to be child-friendly**

Most groups will probably find as we did, that quite a lot of improvements are needed to the more exciting paths to make them accessible for little legs and additionally to make them safe. Our area is very hilly, so we had to get lots of steps made on some really steep paths. We also have lots of streams which needed to be made easier to cross. Once, local authority countryside teams might have been funded to carry out this work, but in most areas now you'll find you need to secure grant monies to cover at least some of these costs. Most of our costs were for materials, with the work carried out by volunteers.

### **Planning a booklet or leaflet**

The main cost of our project was the design and publication of a booklet setting out our six chosen walks. We decided to do this as we had been inspired by 'Making Tracks' walks booklets, which had been designed by Jo Poyser for the Peak District and the Yorkshire Dales. So if you can secure the funding, you might want to find a designer who specialises in children's illustrations. This also meant we had, through Jo (a primary school headteacher), the expertise to add learning topics and games to make the walks both more fun and more useful. We added to the walks:

- A cookie recipe
- A picnic idea
- A wordsearch
- A bookmark to make
- How to grow a twig
- Lots of child-friendly 'did you know?' facts.

### **Securing funding**

Any project like this will need to try a number of grant sources and you will have local knowledge about which organisations to approach that may be sympathetic. We certainly found it easier to get grant approvals for a children's project than for previous adult-related walk proposals. We had success with:

- The Cooperative Society
- The local Town Council
- The local authority – both small community grants and rural development grants.

We raised £2,400 to fund the whole project.

We had committed ourselves to distribute about 500 booklets free of charge so that every child in Mytholmroyd up to age 11 had their own. We did this via the four local schools.

The rest we are selling at £1.50. We sell through local shops and tourist information centres at the same price but for £1, so that outlets collect 50P per booklet as an incentive. We have set up PayPal on our web-site to enable internet sales.

We also funded 200 waymark signs, with a different motif for each of the six walks (eg a bumble bee for the Bee Boles walk; a bluebell for the Woodland walk). Volunteers from our group nailed these up for each walk. These are colourful and children love spotting the next one so that they can follow the walk themselves. This does mean about twice as many waymark signs as might normally be used.

### **Publicising the walks**

A booklet or leaflet can be linked to lots of other publicity. We could do lots more, but so far have:

- Added details to our web-site
- Added regular photos and comments about the booklet and the individual walks on our Facebook page – you can keep reminding members and friends to do this
- Organised a series of Easter and summer walks and picnics to familiarise local families with the walks
- Contacted the local newspaper to get a story and photo about the booklet; subsequently about one of the walks; the new waymark signs... Whenever you think you have a new angle on the project, just phone your local newsdesk – children are very photogenic!

### **Evaluation and ongoing development**

No project of this kind comes to an end - there is always more to do! MWA continues to check and promote these walks to get more children walking:

- Checking for repairs/improvements particularly on certain tracks after heavy rain
- Talking to schools/offering teachers guided walks
- Organising more picnic walks in the school holidays
- Asking for feedback via Facebook and our web-site
- Creating photo opportunities for local news coverage....."

You can buy Mytholmroyd's 'Making Tracks' booklet in outlets in the town or from their website <http://www.mytholmroydwalkers.org/> priced £1.50.

## **And from Kirkby Stephen.....**

### **Introduction**

We identified that there were masses of publications locally that offered adult walks of various lengths, difficulty or interest but nothing aimed specifically at children or families. Additionally, we are short of activities for children in our area for visiting families.

### **Objectives**

Produce two cheap products to give away free that will offer an activity for families both local and visiting the area and encourage countryside exploration as a fun place to be.

Outcomes:

- A circular walk leaflet for Kirkby Stephen in a new area of the town away from existing popular well trodden paths
- A walk for Brough that would take in the castle and ice cream parlour as well as other businesses
- Something fun with added interest
- Suitable for different ages and abilities
- Suitable for residents and visitors
- Within a previously obtained budget of £470 to promote walking for children

### **Consultation**

Our group drew on their own experience of walking, own families, the area and working as volunteers in the visitor centre.

### **Choosing the Walks**

Most established short walks around Kirkby Stephen are on the eastern side of the town which takes in the river, the Poetry Path and nearby villages. We looked for a short circular walk on the western side of the town and worked out a 3K trail that would give a bit of an adventure for younger people so it is not the easy well trodden path suitable for buggies but something a little more exciting with a stile, fields, gates, duck door, ancient lanes, beck, pond, animals, playground, old trees and a sweet shop.

The second walk was to be in Brough and so with the Kirkby Stephen walk suitable for junior age children, we worked out a number of interlocking buggy loops in Market and Church Brough. This was then suitable for younger children, buggies and wheelchairs but still offering some fun for younger children starting and finishing in the car park next to the castle, playground and ice cream parlour. We included points of interest and a number game.

### **Planning the leaflets**

We went to a local designer that we have worked with before explaining that we wanted a bright fun leaflet and the budget available. We made the maps and the designer worked magic on them to be printed on double-sided A4 card in bright colours with animals etc. added. An unfolded A4 sheet works out cheaper than a folded leaflet and is easy to handle. The Brough maps needed two sides. The Kirkby Stephen leaflet made sense on one side so the reverse was used to list 41 other cheap or free children's activities in and around Kirkby Stephen to answer the visiting parents' questions of what is available for children in the area. Points of interest, things to find and questions have been added. We also included a word on clearing up after dogs, "we don't believe in poo bag fairies".

### **Publicising the walks**

There has been three articles in local press, the first generated by a twitter picture of Brough Castle and the other two editorial sent to the local paper to suit disabled activities in support of English Tourism Week and then announcing the publication.

We led a class of children from the local Primary school on the Kirkby Stephen Family Adventure Trail during 'Walk to School Week'. The map leaflets, photos of what to see together with risk assessment were provided in advance for the class teacher to prepare. A WaW banner was displayed at the school for a week to raise awareness. This has also been written up for the press together with a photograph of the children and permissions obtained. Leaflets were given to each child at the school in time for half-term.

The buggy leaflets have been delivered to businesses in Brough and the playgroup.

Both leaflets have been loaded onto our website <http://www.walkeden.org/> free to download. Both are available free of charge at the Upper Eden Visitor Centre.

### **Evaluation**

We did consider selling the leaflet but the amount of work involved with alternative outlets requiring different commissions for small sales we were not sure that it was not worth all the work and so decided to make it free. It will remain on the website even if we do not have funds for a reprint or something new.

This project will be evaluated with the help of the Primary School, Playgroup and Visitor Centre for funders and our own group.

*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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