

WALKERS ARE WELCOME UK NETWORK

Towns and villages with something special to offer walkers



Newsletter December 2013

Contents:

Annual Returns and subscriptions

Formalisation

Mitigating the cuts

Local Area Partnerships

Council Budgets

National Trails' website

Assessing the risk

Events



All the lights are switched on, torchlight processions marched, Santa's Grottos visited and shopping done, time to relax and reflect on the year.

Abergavenny gave us 100 towns and villages accredited in February, we launched the new website, facebook and twitter links, celebrated the quality and innovation coming in from members and had a great Get-Together in Swaffham in October. You should by now all have received your new Handbooks. WaW is raising their profile nationally and internationally and is being recognised for the welcome each destination offers coupled with the great successes in rural economic regeneration nationwide. Visit England's CEO, James Beresford has officially recognised 'the fantastic work of Walkers are Welcome Towns Network and the national executive.'

But what of the year ahead..... Firstly, don't forget your Annual Returns and subscriptions are due between 1 January and 30 April. If you are a new member and need some advice about completing your Annual Return, just ask. We would be grateful if these all came in on time so we are not spending valuable time chasing them up. See report and information [here](#)



Formalisation

As mentioned in the last [newsletter](#), we are working to change the constituted group that is Walkers are Welcome into a more formal entity. We have now formed a sub-committee who are looking at the intricate details of formalisation and the way forward, probably our biggest step for early 2014. Further information will follow as soon as possible.

Mitigating the cuts

It's also the time of year when council's are deciding their budgets for the next financial year, and how to spend them. It's all too likely that your highway authority (county or unitary council) is planning to make further cuts to its public rights-of-way service. Such cuts are short-sighted, and you need to be sure that your councillors know just what good investment public paths are. A small amount spent on a footpath or bridleway, removing a broken stile or improving the surface for instance, can make a big difference.

Good paths are vital not only for the local population to get out and enjoy the countryside but also to attract visitors, who then spend, in your town and elsewhere. If the paths and access are poor, they may not come. Walking is healthy too, and money spent on paths is helping to keep people out of doctors' surgeries and hospitals.

These are all points you can make to your councillors and to be cabinet member who is responsible for highways or rights of way, to persuade them not to cut the funding for paths. Put together a note of all the benefits of good public paths and send it to relevant councillors, and encourage your residents to write too. Invite your councillors out on a walk, show them how paths help the local economy and get a photo of them in the local press.

You may already be doing this of course but, if not, why not give it a try? Get in touch with us if you want any further advice. And do look at the Ramblers' *Paths in Crisis* report which explains the effect of the cuts and what the Ramblers are doing to help mitigate them. You can read it [here](#)

Local Area Partnerships

Many of you will now have some experience of Local Area Partnerships (LAP's). Working with The Ramblers, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), the Outdoor Industries Association (OIA), the Open Spaces Society (OSS), the British Horse Society (BHS), the Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management (IPROW) and the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA,) a joint paper to LAP's has been submitted to DEFRA. The document highlights the economic benefits of and opportunities for supporting the rural tourism infrastructure. This particularly calls for joint working with 'Walkers are Welcome' towns and villages, increased financial support for Rights of Way improvement plans and 'Visitor Hubs' to facilitate growth. This is an important initiative as LAP's are currently preparing Draft European Structural and Investment Funds Investment Plans for the period 2014-2020. Why not contact your local LAP to engage support. If you would like a copy, let us know.

National Trails website

We recently sent out information about the new National Trails [website](#). If your WaW town or village is on or very close to a National Trail this offers new opportunities for your destination. To add or amend information, just choose the relevant Trail, click on **Plan your visit** then scroll to the bottom of the page and click on **Add to the map**. You will find instructions to help you. You can add details of services, photos and

events but please note this must be relevant to a National Trail. Business owners can add their details free and for just £24.99 per year, they can have an enhanced entry with images. The new website will also allow you to report problems on a Trail direct to the Trail office.

Assessing the risk

We all need reminding occasionally of the blame culture and the importance of assessing our guided walks to help ensure that risks are minimised and all our walkers come home safely. This is relevant to health walks as well as walking festivals and most insurance companies will not insure guided walks that are not risk assessed. If you need guidance on this subject, we shall be pleased to help. We have a special WaW insurance to cover your risks for a discounted price at [Tennyson Insurance](#)

Events

Just a reminder that we now have facilities to promote your events on [facebook](#) and [twitter](#) or send the what, when, where, details for entering on the website to our [webmaster](#). If you would like to send a short article promoting your event or your latest news, we shall be pleased to add that to the website but please make sure that it is suitable for loading and does not need editing or writing, see section 26 in the Handbook. We want your good news stories and we are here to help promote your events nationally.

With very best wishes for a healthy and prosperous New Year

Walkers are Welcome Network UK national executive committee

e-mail: info@walkersarewelcome.org.uk