

# WALKERS ARE WELCOME TOWNS NETWORK

Towns and villages with something special to offer walkers

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## NEWSLETTER MARCH 2015

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### Spring is in the air.....



At last, spring is in air with bulbs pushing through even the claggiest soil with the lapwings and curlews calling over the moors, here's a [sound track](#) or [two](#) for you to set the scene. There is warmth in the sun and a few early amusing lambs playing in the fields. Let's hope we have seen the last of the snow as we are all ready for our Easter events and the beginning of the summer season.

### Committee update

The committee have had a busy weekend at a face to face meeting with a long list of business.

First on the agenda was the **Sidmouth Get-Together, Saturday and Sunday 24/25 October 2015.**

John Dyson and Di Fuller are getting organised in Sidmouth. We have been discussing the workshops and as Sidmouth are particularly good at looking after their footpaths, this will be a main item on the programme. **We would like to ask members whether there are any particularly subjects that would help you or you would like included in this year's workshops.** The Get-Together is always a good time to share best practice and exchange information.

We are also thinking about the 2016. There is still time to apply to host the 2016 Get-Together. **Let us know if this may be of interest to your town or you would like to ask any questions about hosting this event.**

Thank you to everyone who took the trouble to read the draft [Articles of Association](#), and send in your comments. The documents have now all been signed and are off to Companies House for the Community Interest Company to be registered. We look forward to telling you further news on this formalisation process.

As usual, there have been some brilliant Annual Returns submitted and the majority on time. We have some new mentors this year to help with the process of reading Annual Returns, keeping in touch and assisting anyone that needs some help or advice. You will all be given some feedback. The innovation will be picked up as usual and used for the preparation of information and factsheets and at the Get-Together. On a more exciting note, we are currently expanding an idea of awards for the best practice and innovation to be presented at the Annual Get-Together. If you have had difficulties getting your Annual Return in on time, we need to hear from you urgently.

Amongst other things, we have been discussing advancing our marketing strategy to take us into the next year. Our Chairman is keen to bring members and the committee closer together, maximise logo awareness and find new partners to further our recognition. If any members have steering group individuals with brand management experience, **we would be delighted to hear from you.**

## Public Access

Particularly for our newer members - we have loaded a booklet by The Countryside Agency entitled [Managing Public Access](#) which gives information for England but which is almost identical for Wales.

Plus [Public Access to Scotland's Outdoors](#) Both booklets will give you information on who is responsible for what in the world of public access regulation.

Our Patron, Kate Ashbrook and the Open Spaces Society have just published a booklet 'Saving Open Spaces'. This excellent publication marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Commons Preservation Society, its early battles to save commons and the society's activities over the period. There is also up to date information on their current activities. This booklet may be purchased from the [Society's website](#), priced at £5.

You may be interested in a number of the Open Spaces Society's other publications which include 'Rights of Way: A Guide to Law and Practice' and 'Common Land'. This website contains invaluable information; you can also make a donation or become a member.

## Member news update

If you would like the opportunity to win a memorable weekend for two in a Walkers are Welcome town, **Winchcombe** in the Cotswolds, there is a competition to win two nights' accommodation on 22/23 May 2015 at the 15<sup>th</sup> century Wesley House complete with a self-guided walks pack. See country-walks [website entry](#). If you are not successful, why not consider a trip to this pretty town which recently hosted our Japanese visitors.

Some of us live in areas of our nation with higher hills, open access moors and mountains where additional hill walking and mountaineering expertise is necessary to keep your walking party safe no matter what weather is thrown at them. There are a number of hill navigation courses available where you are given the opportunity to escape to Britain's wilder places and gain confidence in map and compass skills. [Kirkby Stephen Mountain Rescue](#) have regular courses when they share their expertise, the next one day course is Easter Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April and also coincides with the Annual Classic Commercial Vehicle Rally.

The first Walking Festival of the season this year is **Boroughbridge**, Yorkshire over the Easter weekend which includes a Children's Prize Treasure Hunt, Ghost Walk and 2-day Beer Festival. Details on their [website](#).

Other news from **Boroughbridge** is that their website was hacked by someone said to be 'ISIS'. This serves to remind us to ensure that you have complex hack-proof passwords and your website backed up in case of any problems.

**Hebden Bridge**, Yorkshire will be launching a new Pennine Way loop on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 50 years and a day after the Pennine Way was officially opened. [Hebden Bridge Walkers Action](#) are including entertainment along the way and it all sounds like a fun event.

Don't forget to send us details of your **Walking Festivals** and **events** to load on to the website. We do ask that this is an event that your Walkers are Welcome group are actually involved in and have a mention, and we like to see the **logo**. **We also love to hear your news to share on the website, facebook or twitter.**

## Twitter

Many of you use twitter to promote your town and events, raise awareness or just keep followers interested. This "micro-blogging" is an easy and very effective tool for marketing especially if you tweet regular messages. An excellent way to enhance the management of your twitter messaging is with the aid of [Hootsuite](#) or [Tweetdeck](#). These tools are free to download and allow you to track, organise and

manage your account. You can, for instance, have a column for your town and the clever people will track every time this is mentioned on twitter allowing you to engage with the messenger or hear local news. Or you might like a Walkers are Welcome column. You can also schedule repeat tweets and lots more. Don't forget to link your twitter to your Facebook account so that every time you message it is entered on Facebook as well and saves repeating the news. Include @WalkersWelcome in your message and Ruth Coulthard will retweet or add a hash-tag #walkersarewelcome

If that sounds all too complicated or enough for now, please ignore the next bit.

You can use Twitter Website cards to promote your events, product or town. This medium is said to be 43% more effective and includes a good sized image, header and web address. The message can be directed to markets of your choice with single tweets, schedules, campaign budgets and conversion tracking costing from only 1p per tweet. So say you have a walking festival open for booking, use a pretty picture of walkers enjoying themselves, with a message and weblink and identify your market with a budget of say £10. You can use this method and only be charged when the twitter receiver accesses your webpage and have a cost effective budget. If you want to know more there is a [free tutorial to watch](#).

### **Your Town's Walkers are Welcome offer**

So you have persuaded new walkers to come to your town or village. On arrival how do they know that you are a Walkers are Welcome town? They should see lots of the familiar black and yellow logo stickers on businesses that welcome walkers and if you have only a few businesses why not show them in front windows as proof that the community really welcome walkers. Are you able to put the logo on road or street signs and information boards or maps? Where you have the opportunity to display walking literature do they have the logo on or a sign above the display declaring 'Walkers are Welcome'? If you have somewhere suitable, an explanation of what this actually means is invaluable. The more we all use the logo the better it is for our communities and the national network getting it better known. Let's saturate our towns this Spring. Need more stickers or want to download the logo? See the [resources page?](#)

Have you considered what happens when you come to a strange town with a dog? Assuming you have found dog friendly accommodation, will you know what the local by-laws are or know where you might be able to let your dog off a lead or the best places to walk. See next month for our Dog Factsheet full of information that many will not have thought of.

**Wherever you are over the Easter holiday, enjoy the walking .....**

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