



**WALKERS ARE WELCOME
TOWNS NETWORK**

MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

Town/Village:	
Member since:	
Main contact:	

(issued October 2013)

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1.0 Introduction

This Handbook has been produced to help members get the most from their accreditation to Walkers Are Welcome, and also to help guide associate members through the process of becoming accredited.

Walkers Are Welcome accreditation should not be a difficult or even time-consuming activity for communities who already have enthusiasm for walking and some established walking routes.

In the past, some communities have managed the accreditation process almost on their own, while others have sought help from a Walkers Are Welcome mentor, especially when trying to explain the benefits of being a Walkers are Welcome town to a wider audience. We are now encouraging application with a mentor only.

The Walkers Are Welcome National Executive sincerely hope this handbook is a useful tool for you to carry forward the momentum gained during the accreditation process, and provide a framework for developing walking in your community.

For most communities the post-accreditation stage

can feel a little flat. You will have made initial goals to see you through this early stage. You are encouraged to use this handbook and talk to other members and mentors to continue to promote your community to a wider world thereby maximising the benefits of being a Walkers are Welcome town for locals and visitors alike.

2.0 WAW Town Network Mission Statement

To enable and assist the development and maintenance of a network of communities across the UK who have demonstrated their commitment to improving the walking environment in their areas. Thereby contributing to their communities' economic, environmental, physical and mental well-being.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT...

Do you agree with it? Do you like it? Do you think something is missing? Feedback from members is always welcome by the National Executive (and we are always open to volunteers to join the Committee too!)

3.0 WAWTN Quality Policy

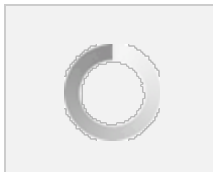
The Towns Network is committed to supporting potential and actual members of the network to become accredited members of the Network and to work to continually to improve the walking environments in members' territories and nationally. It is essential that all towns demonstrate continuous improvement by meeting the criteria year on year as demonstrated in their Annual Return (See Section 34).

4.0 Where did it all start?

The ***Walkers are Welcome*** scheme is different from most top-down accreditation schemes, in that it has emerged from, and is being promoted by, communities themselves. The idea, which was first discussed in 2006, became a reality when the Pennine town of Hebden Bridge became the first ***Walkers are Welcome*** town in Spring 2007, closely followed by Moffat in Scotland's Dumfries and Galloway region and by the north Wales town of Prestatyn.

Since then the number of towns and villages that have gained accreditation has grown in fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say, exploded.

It is very important to emphasize that the scheme is community-led, by ordinary citizens, not councilors of whatever rank or level. Councils and Councilors are important facilitators but should not be the leaders of any of the local Steering Groups or committees.



5.0 The Six Criteria

To gain Walkers are Welcome accreditation a town or village must satisfy the National Executive Committee that they satisfy six criteria. For most communities it takes about 6 months to produce the evidence that they meet the 6 criteria and these are set out below:

6.0 Support

1. Demonstration of popular local support for the concept.

This could be demonstrated, for example, by signatures of local residents collected on a petition. Recommended **minimum** support would be 5% of the local population. A sample Local Support Form can be found on the National website www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Please don't stop at a petition - we suggest that local businesses and organizations are contacted for their support. In one town, when word got out that sponsors were being sought, one of the first contributors was the local antiquarian book shop. Talking to people and businesses develops confidence in the WaW concept and most people and businesses are keen

to help.

7.0 Endorse

2. Formal endorsement of application for *Walkers are Welcome* status by local council

This could be demonstrated by the local council (unitary, district and/or town council) passing a resolution in support of the local organising committee or community group, perhaps nominating a councilor or councilors to become members of the committee or group and by allocating a small budget in support of the group's work.

A word of warning here; remember that the essence of WaW is that it is community led, not Council led. Some towns have made the mistake of allowing the Council to run the project and, almost without exception they have failed.

8.0 Action

3. Action to ensure that rights of way are maintained in good condition

This could be demonstrated by the local council and/or voluntary group making a commitment to ensuring that all paths in the parish or town are walked at least once a year; that any obstacles are removed promptly.

Also, work with local walking groups and encourage a system for reporting footpath problems to your local authority. It is always a good idea, though not always feasible, to invite a member of the local Rights of Way department to join your Committee or Steering Group.

9.0 Market

4. Adequate marketing of *Walkers are Welcome* status

This could be demonstrated in a number of ways. These include: press coverage; signage in the centre of town; waymarked walks starting from town centre; leaflets readily available; local shops encouraged to display ***Walkers are Welcome*** stickers.

Consider creating a website. This can be used to promote your work but can be a useful means of encouraging local businesses to support your work by providing a link from your site to theirs. This is

especially useful to any business in the hospitality sector, but don't limit your efforts to these, and it can be free to them if you so wish. For a local business this is really cheap advertising and a good way to get them on board.

It is important that the WaW logo is used on all publications, websites etc, and your web site address is on all non-web material.



10.0 Encourage

5. Encouragement of walking using public transport

This could be demonstrated, for example, by including clear public transport advice on marketing leaflets. Lead, or encourage your local walking groups to lead, walks that use the local bus services.

Perhaps you could produce a simple leaflet that indicates where walkers could alight from local buses and walk into town, or ride through town then walk back. Walkers are often hungry and thirsty after a walk, so where better to solve these problems than in your town's cafes! More sophisticated leaflets and Smartphone apps can also be produced that

describe one or more walks with directions and photographs.

11.0 Demonstrate

6. Demonstration of mechanisms in place to maintain *Walkers are Welcome* status

This could be demonstrated by the creation of a local ***Walkers are Welcome*** Steering Group or Advisory Board, which ensures the group submits an annual return, pays the annual membership fee and creates a sustainable funding stream. Remember, this Steering Group or Advisory Board should be managed by members of the community, not Councillors, though it will be helpful to have Councillors as members.

There are many ways to interpret and satisfy the 6 criteria and this is one of the many good things about the scheme. Every town and village can be different. However, if a community is unsure of what to do then contact the National Executive Committee and ask. There will always be plenty of advice and help available.

12.0. What Does The National Executive Committee Do?

The National Executive Committee administers the whole scheme. The committee members are volunteers drawn from ordinary members of local town groups and are elected to the National Executive Committee at the WAWTN Annual General Meeting. This takes place at the Annual Get Together in October each year.

The Committee is made up of the conventional 3 officers, Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary plus up to 12 others. The committee may also co-opt up to 2 more members. (See section 32).

The National Executive Committee “meets” by telephone each month and face-to-face twice a year, usually in April and at the Annual get-Together.

One of the key responsibilities of the National Executive Committee is to maintain a register of Full and Associate member towns and villages and consider new applications.

The committee receives expressions of interest from potential members and receives and reviews applications for full membership. When a town or village submits a successful application the

committee informs the local committee and issues a membership certificate. In cases where an application is not successful the committee refers the application back and discusses the reasons with the local committee, the objective in these cases is to help potential members become full members.

The committee is responsible for compiling and maintaining the accounts of the Network and all meetings are minuted.

As part of being a member town each town is required to complete an Annual Return that provides a brief summary of activities that have taken place during the past year. This enables the committee to assess whether a town or village is still meeting the requirements of the 6 criteria. In cases where there may be issues the committee will contact the local group and discuss the situation with an objective of resolving the issue.

The National Committee is also responsible for promoting the entire network and to this end is constantly contacting organisations and individuals who may be able to help the Network in any way. Examples of this include talking to MPs, Ministers and other elected officials; discussing items of mutual interest with like-minded bodies; ensuring that the Network's activities get as much press coverage as possible; speaking at various meetings and

conferences here in the UK and overseas.

One National Committee member was invited to Japan recently, to speak at several meetings about the benefits of WaW.

The committee is also constantly looking for new ideas that will enhance the Network generally and individual towns and villages when possible. This includes looking hard for sources of funding that will enable the Network in future to employ a person to take on some of the administration work.

The committee has set up a nationwide network of Mentors to help towns and villages with their walkers issues (See section 22).

The committee is also responsible for maintaining and developing the national website.

13.0 We've Gained Accreditation - What Now?

The period after the euphoria of gaining accreditation and a celebratory event can be a difficult time for many towns. Working through the requirements of the 6 Criteria provides a structure to the task.

Post accreditation activities are up to individual towns and the road ahead is not always clear or obvious. It is easy to think that, once accredited, the world will beat a path to your door, simply because you have become a WaW town. It doesn't work like that. After accreditation the real work starts and, hopefully, your Mentor will have warned you of this!

Fortunately the opportunities post-accreditation are virtually limitless and offers huge scope for imaginative, innovative activities and projects.

Before going on, it may be timely to remind members that if you have ANY doubts, concerns or questions, you are not alone. Get in touch with the Executive Committee and ask for advice.

So, where do we go from here?

Walkers Are Welcome accreditation is, as one

person observed, “A brilliant concept”. True, but it is in reality an initiative with an objective of promoting your town/village/area’s walking offer to everyone in your community and can also be used effectively to encourage visitors.

You love walking in your community. Walkers Are Welcome can help others to do the same!

Having grasped this fundamental fact, the following pages highlight just some of the possibilities you may like to consider or develop. As you read through, use the margins to record your own notes on how you might take forward some of these ideas in your community.

14.0 Guided Walks

Organise some local guided walks.

This is a really easy and quick activity to organise and many towns already do it. It is not difficult to arrange one or a series of local guided walks and invite local people to come along and enjoy the fresh air and friendship that walking in a group provides. Publicise the event or events in the local press; set out and have fun. This is an opportunity to train walk leaders, learn how to do risk assessments and arrange insurance through our recommended Tennyson Insurance.

**We can help you publicise if you send us your news for the website, facebook and twitter.
WaW banners and bunting are available free of charge, just pay the postage cost,
full details on the website.**



15.0 Walking Festivals

Consider organising a festival

The following are just some points to help you on your way if you decide to do this.

What sort of Festival do you want to organise?

Big, “All comers”
or
Small and local.

It’s up to you to do what you feel comfortable with.

A big event will take quite a lot of organising and may cost a fair amount of money for printing and marketing etc. BUT it publicises your town and gives you the chance to promote your town to a wider audience.

Small and local will be easier, cheaper and gives the opportunity to demonstrate that WaW is for locals as well as visitors. Why not try a one-day weekend Festival with, say 3 or 4 walks and advertise in the local press (costs nothing if you write an article) and on local radio (also, usually, free).

Festivals cost money to organize so, get sponsorship. Don’t be shy, get out there and sell this

“Brilliant concept”. You may well be surprised at the reaction of local businesses. Festivals aimed at a wider audience will bring revenue into your town’s cafes, pubs, restaurants, B & Bs and hotels so ask them to help.

16.0 Walks Leaflets

Do people in your town know where all the footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way are? A traditional leaflet can cost quite a lot but consider showing some walking routes on a simple map on your website and then seek funding to polish and publish either as a map or a poster with QR codes. If your group's IT skills aren't quite up to this, talk to your local school about turning it into a student project!



17.0 Twinning Visits

Organise “twinning” visits.

This is where a party from one town visits another. The host town may just recommend walking routes or may even lead the visitors.

One member town recently completed a very successful “Twin” visit and 50 walkers stayed in the host town for 4 nights. The hosts arranged 6 led walks over 3 days and provided entertainment on 3 evenings. It was hard work, but not as hard as a Festival and the hosts estimate it brought nearly £15,000 into their economy.

Several towns have organized very successful “Twin” visits and the best place to find a “Twin” is at the Annual Get-Together.

18.0 Clusters

Promote your town/area by cooperating with other local WaW towns.

Sometimes working with others can produce excellent results and, by pooling resources, it is easier to ask for, and justify, funding requests for projects.

An example of where this has happened is in Shropshire. With support from the Shropshire Hills AONB five towns grouped together to promote their **area** as well as their towns. They produced a very nice booklet describing and promoting:

The AONB

Individual towns

The network of towns

They worked on a walking route that links the five towns.

This, loose, cooperative grouping provides support for new towns and also helps re-energise existing towns that may be flagging.

19.0 Widening Your Appeal

Consider the “less able”

A great project to work on is a route for buggies, shopping scooters and wheelchairs. A number of towns now have them and they are simple routes with no kerbs or steps. This is a project that will require the involvement of the local authority and in these days of austerity getting their help may be difficult, but a lot can be done for relatively little money.

Think “Dogs”

Many walkers have dogs but not everyone, especially visitors, know where they can walk their dogs along routes that are dog-friendly. So try getting out and finding stile-free or easy for dogs and their owners. Perhaps you could design and publish some leaflets or a booklet of dog-friendly walks with few, or no, stiles and place them in the Tourist Office or B & Bs, hotels and pubs.



Develop new walking paths and trails

These paths and trails don't have to be literally "new" but can involve linking existing paths in a new way and can be short or long. Winchcombe has devised a longer walk/trail, "The Winchcombe Way" and obtained funding for a professionally printed Guide Book.

Think "Visitors"

Work with other local organisations to help them with their event(s). One WaW group helps marshal the Annual Pancake Races and provided marshals when the Olympic Torch came through their town.

20.0 Public Transport

Remember Public Transport is an important link to your walking offer.

Devise some Bus Walks. Consider producing a simple leaflet that contains the information that enables walkers to take the bus from town, alight at an appropriate stop and walk back. In one town the leaflet was paid for (enthusiastically) by the local bus company. This not only helps visitors but locals too, and this may be useful when you go out looking for sponsorship.

21.0 Infrastructure Improvements

Help improve your local walking infrastructure.

Be willing to take part in working parties that maintain and/or improve local footpaths.

If possible maybe consider a project to replace stiles with gates. This is, by definition, a costly exercise but funding is available and one source is your local waste disposal company. Many of them have environmental funds that could fund such projects and have done so.

One town designed and bought some small roundels (about 1.5 inches in diameter) that stick into the middle of a standard waymarker, thus clarifying a particular route. Ross-on-Wye produced 3 of these roundels. One clarifies a 20-mile section of the Wye Valley Walk. Another that points the way for the Ross Buggy Route and another that is used just outside the town says, simply "This way to Ross-on-Wye" to get the visitors into town.

22.0 Mentoring

Become a Mentor?

This is great fun and need cost virtually nothing except some petrol. The National Committee appoints Mentors around the country whose job it is to help aspiring towns get through the accreditation process.

All that's needed is to have been through the process and a willingness to talk or meet the reps from interested towns and advise them on the process. You will get lots of contacts from other places and every time this happens is an opportunity to promote your town because by helping others you promote yourselves.

If you're interested contact any member of the National Committee.

Mentoring really pays dividends in terms of promoting your town.

23. Ambassador Towns

Winchcombe is a great example of an “Ambassador” town. They have received delegations from individual towns and groups of towns to explain what they have done and what other towns could do if they worked at it.

The result of this work has elevated Winchcombe’s profile enormously and they have been approached to meet and talk to journalists from around the world and to meet delegations from countries such as South Korea, Japan and Sweden, who want to find out more about creating new trails and encouraging walking related tourism in their own countries. This has led to invitations to visit these countries and to consider twinning arrangements. It has also lead to more people from those countries visiting their town.

24.0 Innovation

Using the Annual Returns, the National Executive will highlight examples of good practice and invention in this section, which is currently under development.

If you have something you would like to promote here, then let us know!

MONMOUTHEDIA. This is a novel idea aimed at providing visitors and locals with more information about their town using QR Codes set up on local, historic, buildings. If you Google “Monmouthpedia”, all will be revealed!

Kirkby Stephen is also looking at the idea.

Finally, remember.

“The more you put in the more you will get out”

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25.0 Benefits of being a WAW Town

If you are prepared to work at it, the benefits of being a WaW town can be enormous and immensely satisfying. The following points were presented at the 2012 national Get-Together, in Ross-on-Wye and reflect the experiences of Winchcombe, in the Cotswolds and Kirkby Stephen, in Cumbria. They are, however, almost universal in that any town that works can accrue the same benefits. So, go for it, the benefits are waiting.

Use the WaW Logo.

Being part of a national organisation with a high profile Patron means that we are taken seriously. We use the logo and our WaW status for the following:



- when we are applying for grants (we believe it has been a key factor in our success at obtaining grants)
- when we issue press releases and promotional items to the media. Our local newspaper now scans our website for regular news updates and we have been approached by several national magazines for stories
- when we deal with the Town, Borough and County Councils

- when we approach other organisations as prospective project partners
- when we deal with local businesses and land owners

Promote the WaW brand and your town.

Through promoting our membership of WaW and our local successes, we have been asked to give talks at a variety of events from local social groups to high level tourism and countryside access events. This in turn means that we are recognised and highly regarded by organisations such as the Cotswolds AONB, Cotswold Tourism, Gloucestershire Rights of Way and the Cotswold Way National Trail team.

Don't be put off at the prospect of "giving a talk". Be proud of what you have achieved and be willing to talk about your successes. Success builds on success.

Encourage visitors, especially from abroad.

We are now often approached to meet and talk to visiting journalists from around the world and to meet delegations from countries such as South Korea, Japan and Sweden, who want to find out more about creating new trails and encouraging walking related tourism in their own countries. This has led to invitations for us to visit these countries and to consider twinning arrangements. It also leads to more people from those countries visiting our town.

Work at it.

We firmly believe that to make a success of being a WaW town the steering group cannot afford to sit back. It is easy to have few quick successes, but it is important to keep the momentum going and to keep telling the world what you are doing.

Winchcombe's motto is 'The more you put into it, the more you get out of it!' and it certainly seems to be working there.

Trumpet your triumphs.

Every time your efforts bring new, or repeat visitors to town, your WaW has made a contribution to your town's economy. It's not always easy, but why not do a rough estimate of what the visitors spent and tell your Town council or Chamber of Trade.

Community involvement.

The first of the 6 Criteria talked about Community support and WaW is a really useful mechanism for bringing many bodies / organisations / groups / activities together – not only so that, it helps share the load of the responsibility, but it helps you get more done, generates more ideas and makes it easier for the visitor and resident to access all the opportunities. It is almost impossible to overstate the benefits of community involvement, of social

interaction, combating exclusion and pride in the community which shines through to visitors.

If funding applications fill you with dread, remember many regional volunteer organisations do free or reasonably priced courses to help you improve your bid writing. Even simple things like making sure you read all the information carefully and “tick all the boxes” means it’s not as daunting as it may appear.

26.0 The WAWTN Website

One of the most important means of promoting the Network and attracting interest in it is the web site. This has been brought up to date recently and involved a huge amount of work by several members of the committee. It is important that every WaW town adds a link to the WaW website from their website and that the website address is added to publications and articles.

Familiarise yourself with the website.

If you forget your password, you can email webmaster@walkersarewelcome.org.uk for a reminder. The site contains lots of information that you may find useful and it is continually added to including news.

It is an extremely useful source of information and advice for members. In addition to providing basic who's who and what's what information, it is a portal to a vast network of people and organisations that can help a town or village with ideas and advice. In common with any good web site there are links to other organisations.

The website is only as good as the content, which needs to be accurate, readable, attractive and up to date. It is up to each member town to check the

content for its town and to provide news and images.

Please note that the webmaster is a volunteer and it is not his job to write content, he just loads it on the website. When submitting content please make sure it is the finished article, well written in web style (concise and lively) and that suitable images are provided in .jpg format. Here is a useful link to a BBC article on Writing for the web:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/school_report/resources_for_teachers/9600548.stm

WaW have a Twitter feed and Facebook link so make full use of these facilities in promoting your news and events. Events, particularly Walking Festivals are also featured on the website - we don't know if you don't tell us!

Twitter: @WalkersrWelcome

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WalkersAreWelcome#!/WalkersAreWelcome>

27.0 Mentor Network

For Associate members and even for full members the Mentor system is a really useful tool. The National Committee has established a nationwide network of Mentors. These are people (not necessarily committee members) who have been through the process and are willing to help prospective members through the process of gaining accreditation.

When a town or Village expresses an interest to the National Committee a mentor is appointed and informed that they have a prospective member in their territory. The two parties then contact each other and talk about the process, the mentor offering advice on meeting the 6 criteria. The Mentor is available to advise the potential member town right through the accreditation process and will advise on completing the application.

Depending on location and travel arrangements it is sometimes possible for the Mentor to visit the potential member town. This is usually a very useful step in the process. Mentors often attend early stage public meetings to inform local people of the benefits, and fun, of becoming a WaW town. For details of your local Mentor contact the Secretary of the National Committee.

28.0 The Annual National Conference - Get-Together

The Annual Conference, now known as the Get-Together is held in a different town each year. Towns interested in hosting the event are asked to bid for the honour and bids should be with the Executive Committee in March of the year preceding the year in which they hope to be the host town. This enables the successful bidder to attend a Get-Together in the year prior to their Get-Together. It is customary for the successful town to give a short (approx 10 minutes) presentation on their ideas for their Get-Together. The Get-Together is normally held towards the end of October.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the Annual Get-Together. It has proved to be the “glue” that has the potential to bring people from members towns together; to promote your town to a receptive audience; to make new friends; to get a better understanding of what fellow member towns have to offer; to create opportunities for towns to visit one another; to work together to boost our towns’ economies. The list really does go on and on. Many towns also provide a display stand with information about their town and area, a valuable opportunity to “sell”.

The Annual Get-Together usually includes expert speakers who present on a wide spectrum of topics. Useful, interactive, workshops provide an opportunity to pick up tips and advice as well as telling others what your town has done.

The Annual Get-Together also hosts the Network's Annual General Meeting. This too is an opportunity to air points of interest, to hear the review of the past year and, importantly, to elect the Executive Committee.

We are continuing to accumulate experience and best practice from these events and by sharing information.

29.0. Towns/Villages in the Network

As mentioned earlier the whole scheme started, in 2007, with just one town, Hebden Bridge. Since then the network of towns and villages has grown to over 100. The network covers the country from Cornwall to the Shetland Islands and from West Wales to East Yorkshire. Every town, though satisfying the 6 Criteria, is different and has a unique offering for walkers to enjoy. Many are in areas that are well known to the walking fraternity but the real beauty of the network is that it provides an opportunity for towns that are “hidden gems” in less well-known areas to promote themselves to a wider world. For a full list of member towns visit the WAWTN web site at www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk

30.0 How can we make best use of the Network?

(This section is under development. Your suggestions are very much appreciated)

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31.0 WAWTN

Affiliations/Partnerships

Hidden Britain (now a charity) who offer some free advice and a great range of helpful information.

<http://www.hidden-britain.co.uk/>

HF Holidays currently have a grant scheme if they are operating in your area.

<http://www.hfholidays.co.uk/>

Tennyson Insurance have a discounted insurance scheme which may be suitable for your walking group's activities.

<http://tennysoninsurance.co.uk/>

32.0 WAW National Executive Committee Who's Who 2012/13

Chair **Nigel Botting, Market Weighton**
chair@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Vice Chair **Sam Phillips, Ross-on-Wye**

Treasurer **Geoff Kitt, Moffat**
treasurer@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Secretary **Ann Sandall, Kirkby Stephen**
secretary@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

Members **Sheila Talbot, Winchcombe**
Ruth Coulthard, Abergavenny
Kate Francis, Swaffham
Bob Coalbran, Wellington
Chris Prescott, Bradfield

info@walkersarewelcome.org.uk

(Elections take place at the AGM in October)



33.0 WAWTN Publicity Leaflet

The National Executive are in the process of updating the WaW promotional leaflet. Further information will be emailed to members.

Banners and bunting are available to borrow for the cost of postage for your special event, see the website.

34.0 Towns' Annual Return

Each member town is required to submit a short report annually by **31 March** to outline progress, good practice and any issues which the Network may be able to help with. Please remember to do this promptly each year. A form is available on the website. Subscription fees are also due at this time.

Please note that if these two items necessary to membership are not completed by June, the town or village will be deemed to no longer be a member of the network. If you think you will have difficulty with either of these two items or the deadlines, please contact your mentor to let them know.

35.0 Notes

Over to you to record any relevant thoughts and observations for your group...