

BUSY, BUSY, BUSY - Don't mention the weather

So what do you think?



**WALKERS ARE WELCOME**

**Towns and villages with something special to offer all walkers**

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**Newsletter March 2018 - Members Special**

Contents this month:

**The North**

**#clusters**

**Face to Face**

**Login & Members' Profile**

**Accessibility**

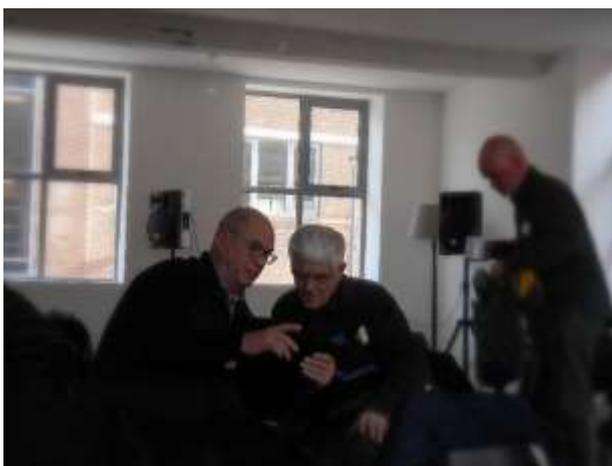
**Annual Return Questions**

**Marketing & Social Media**

**Members' News**

**Refill App.**

**Insurance**



## *Sharing best practice in Leeds*

### **The North**

On 24th February, representatives from 15 of the 27 towns in the north of England met at Leeds to discuss ideas for the future of 'A regional representation within the National WAW Network'. The north of England was chosen to discuss possibilities because they are the largest grouping and national committee member, Randal Metzger from Otley was willing to take this forward.

Overwhelmingly, there is a feeling that towns thrive through meeting other WaW towns to share best practice and of course, make friends who work together for the benefit of their own towns. Clusters of nearby towns or common interest work well and should be encouraged.

A close relationship with your appointed mentor allows for quick and easy access to advice, support and, wider knowledge, not forgetting that any town should feel able to contact the national committee at any time. There are currently five, mainly new, northern mentors that are being supported by Randal.

It has been decided to proceed with a northern region in name and with little formality, this will be encouraged to grow organically as members feel appropriate. Members have agreed that there should be a yearly get-together in May each year to share best practice.

So how does this transfer to other regions? Please work with your mentor to get the most out of being part of a family. You might enjoy cluster meetings and work together on joint projects of best practice sessions.

A group of people will be working on producing a Welsh or Welsh Marches Get-Together at a central Welsh location. But don't forget the benefits of the annual Get-Together.

Some members' questions raised at the northern get-together are answered below.

**2018 buzz word #clusters**



*National committee in Knutsford*

## Face to Face

**If you are at all interested in joining the national committee in whatever capacity, we shall be delighted to hear from you even if it is only to find out additional information.**

At least twice a year, the national committee meet to discuss, well, anything relevant to the months ahead, be that challenges or planning. The spring two-day meeting was held at Knutsford on 11/12th March.

We are sorry that Don Davenport from Cromer has left the national committee and we would like to thank him for everything he has contributed. We look forward to seeing Don in October. Hilary Cox from **Cromer** briefed us on arrangements so far and the exciting programme of activities that they are planning for us all. A formal invitation and full details will be available shortly. **Have you thought of holding a regional or annual Get-Together, just drop us a line, for further information?**

We looked at recent advertising in VisitScotland's, 'Walk in Scotland 2018' brochure and Country Walking, Spring Walking Festival edition. Chepstow has said that they have already had a booking because of this festival promotion. We are talking to a professional about further press promotions and looking at other advertising for further brand awareness. facebook and twitter are going from strength to strength, do you participate?

The focus for the next 6 months will be on the following items from the [2015-2018 Business Plan:](#)

1. Fostering closer working relationships between members and, with the National Committee. #clusters
2. Raising the profile of the brand and logo recognition through marketing and publicity.
3. Adding additional membership resources.
4. Seek new and replacement National committee members.
5. Recruit part-time professional help for specific expertise.

### **New Website - Login and Members' Profile**

All members need to log onto the [website](#) and click on the Members Area section to allow you to complete the Members Profile, Submit an Event, Submit a news story, or, Download a Logo Pack.

The Members Profile allows you to keep your contacts up to date controlling your data, and importantly, add your town information for the [Active Towns lists](#). Adding your own news or events will act as a shortcut and allow you to control your promotions. So win, win.

If you have mislaid your login details and instructions please [email us](#).

Please ensure you have two different, and not generic, contacts on the profile form plus your public contact.

This information will be used in the future as the main contact details. If the emails you

have given on the profile are an update from the Annual Return, please advise, otherwise, they should agree.



### **Accessibility**

Introducing, Debbie North from [Access the Dales](#) and the [Outdoor Guide](#) who you may have met, with her husband Andy, at the Lincolnshire Get-Together in October 2016.

Debs has kindly offered to give us an insight into accessibility, in a series of articles starting this month.

Did you know that more than one in six people in England and Wales have an 'activity limiting' health problem or disability?

The 'purple pound' is a term used to describe the spending power of disabled people and their families. The 'purple pound' is worth £212 billion within the UK, yet provision for wheelchair users is often overlooked or is a bolt-on/afterthought in planning activities.

Disabled people are increasingly choosing to visit the countryside in their leisure time. This is partly due to the general rise in disabled people's expectations to be able to participate in the same activities as everyone else. Also, there have been improvements in access provision for disabled people in the countryside over the recent past.

As we begin English Tourism Week, which generally marks the start of the tourist season, it is worth considering what provision your town has for the disabled visitor.

With this in mind, these are some of the things I consider, as a wheelchair user, when choosing a town or city to visit.

- Wheelchair accessible public transport.
- Accessible toilets
- Accessible cafes, bars, and restaurants
- Accessible accommodation
- Accessible taxis
- Accessible places of interest and resources
- Is there anywhere that I can hire out an all-terrain wheelchair?

All too often it is the provision for wheelchair users that cause the disability and not the body. As a Walkers Are Welcome Town have you considered wheelchair access? Are you able to recommend a wheel friendly walk? Does your Tourist information have a list of accessible accommodation available in the area? Does your town have a 'welcome pack' for visitors with poor or no mobility?

### **Annual Return questions**

It is always difficult to get the right balance between the formality of the Annual Return questions and making the task too onerous or time-consuming.

In order to apply accreditation for the following year, it is necessary to ensure that each town or village is meeting the criteria. Protecting brand quality is very important for us all. Each category is not prescriptive allowing local interpretation to meet your needs.

There has been a traffic light system in operation for a while now with feedback sheets that might include queries or mentor's suggestions to encourage best practice or development. Any queries are quickly flagged up as amber or red in the various categories. It is often that insufficient information has been included on the Annual Return, a year is a long time to remember. Now if you get an amber or red, this will be discussed, perhaps even a visit, to help the member, through the mentor network and the national committee, to support the town to get back on track. It would be some considerable time down the line that any member might leave because they do not feel that they are able to continue. We certainly don't throw anyone out but will make suggestions or even propose returning to Provisional Membership for a year. Probably the biggest threat in recent years has been towns that no longer have an active or sustainable committee and wish to reform through increasing community involvement. You might wish to provide your views on this process.

There is a 'Love your Annual Return' factsheet that was sent out again this year and is available in the website [resources](#). The action of reviewing your year and plans for the following year is also very good practice for any organisation and additionally, forms the basis for a report that you might like to give to your sponsors, partners, council, and walk participants. There is nothing wrong with a bit of bragging and publicity for your achievements. Best practice and innovation are also picked up.

The Annual Return form is renewed every year and we will always listen to proposed changes. For instance, next year, we are hoping that it will not be necessary to complete the contact information because this can be handled by the new website system giving members control over their own data.

### **Marketing and Social Media**

The best advice is, "don't be afraid to have a go". All marketing is time-consuming because drip feeding your message by different media is important. A bit of advance planning makes it easier. Do you have someone or a team in your group that will take this on?

Get to know your local press that might include community news and radio. See our factsheets 'PR and Marketing' and 'Publicity Tips' in website [Fact Sheets](#). (you have to be logged in) Have a look at what other towns are doing. **Tregaron** is probably the best or one of the best, (as Carlsberg say) Walkers are Welcome town at marketing, see what they are up to on their [website](#), [facebook](#), twitter, and TV.

facebook is very good for disseminating local information either in an open or closed group, for instance, your local walk network and residents, advertising local events. Follow the national [Walkers are Welcome facebook](#) page and they will share what you have to say. Open facebook relies on likes and shares to enlarge your message. facebook is the face of your group and can quickly carry a message rather than be updating your website with temporary information.

Twitter is best for a professional and nationwide or an international short message. Follow @WalkersrWelcome or add the hashtag #WalkersareWelcome and we will retweet your messages. Here twitter relies on reposts and likes to publish your message. Hashtags are useful to help put thousands of Twitter messages into subject streams, particularly on Twitter management systems, and attract attention.

As a generalisation, Instagram is used primarily by younger people to share photographs on the move. This can be a downside as your location can also be traced. Photos. are the best tool for shouting your message on facebook and twitter as well, so keep a stock ready. Keep it fun and quirky, engagement is very important.

Very often funding is given to local trade, council and, community organisations to put on free workshops for social media or marketing, look out for these, or share the costs with local businesses or #cluster groups. Google Digital Garage offers free [online digital training](#)

#Haveago.

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### **Members' News**

Also, see our website [members' news](#) section and [facebook](#)



Above: Spilsby & Hundleby celebrate one year accredited

New Sir Fred Hoyle Walks leaflet in **Bingley** featuring his childhood favourites. Sir Fred was a mathematician and astronomer, and science fiction writer, born in Bingley 1915.

Ten towns were shortlisted for The Ramblers Best Walking Neighbourhood with **Stocksbridge** and **Kirkby Stephen** included and engaging in some competitive banter. They were up against some very large towns. Hastings, Sussex (2,657 votes) won the award with Stocksbridge (2,377) a close 2nd and Kirkby Stephen (1003) 7th. Great effort, fantastic publicity and a brilliant opportunity for working together to get the votes in. If you think your town should be nominated for the 2019 award, you can download a form on [The Ramblers website](#). Congratulations Stocksbridge. Also see [website news](#).

Below: Market Weighton new Walking for Health banner.



Above: **Clare** launch event

**Sedbergh** has published their Quaker Trail with booklets available at outlets in the town or via [email](#). This 11 mile circular walk takes in the important early Quaker sites in the area.

Congratulations to Middleton-in-Teesdale, County Durham who are our newest accredited member. See [website news](#).

**Wellington** is helping to organise the Telford T50 50-mile Trail created to celebrate Telford's 50th anniversary. The launch event will be at Telford Town Park on Saturday, June 16th, 2018, see more [information](#).

Boroughbridge won a best event Community Award for their 3-day Walking Festival Easter 2017. They are currently preparing for this year's imminent event. See [website news](#).

Below: The Fisherman's Bridge over the upper Lune, **Sedbergh**, lost to flooding which has now been replaced.



#### **Refill App.**

With the current interest in reducing plastic waste in our towns and villages, the Refill App. is becoming increasingly popular. The App. allows businesses to register that they will refill water bottles free of charge. Many Walkers are Welcome towns are taking this up.

Please be aware that some businesses may not find this scheme commercially acceptable, however, we do not believe that drinking water replaces the desire to enjoy a cup of tea and a piece of cake after your walk.

**Insurance**

Last for this month, the Zurich Insurance discount for Walkers are Welcome members will now be applied via telephone. See [resources](#).

**See you next month,  
Secretary@walkersarewelcome.org.uk**

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