

Walkers are Welcome

Community Interest Company

Towns and Villages where walkers are welcome

THE WAY FORWARD 2022 - 2025



®



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WHO WE ARE

Walkers are Welcome is a nationwide initiative launched at Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire in 2007, to encourage towns and villages to be 'welcoming to walkers'. The network has expanded rapidly and there are now over 100 locations across the UK that have joined this innovative community-led scheme to benefit from Walkers are Welcome accreditation.

The network is managed by a National Executive Committee of volunteers and a part-time paid secretary on behalf of the Directors and Membership. We also have a Patron.

OUR MISSION

To enable and assist the development and maintenance of nationally accredited Walkers are Welcome towns and villages across England Scotland & Wales thereby contributing to their communities' economic, physical health and mental well-being.

OUR VISION

To support a thriving network of first-class walking venues for residents and visitors.

OUR AIMS

To encourage and support towns and villages to:

- Be attractive destinations for walkers providing top quality information on local walks
- Offer local people and visitors excellent walking opportunities within their areas
- Ensure that footpaths and facilities for walkers are developed, maintained, improved, and well signposted
- Contribute to local tourism plans business growth and regeneration strategies
- Promote the health benefits of walking and increase participation from all sections of the community
- Encourage the use of public transport

WHAT WE DO

Accreditation

To gain Walkers are Welcome (WaW) accreditation, a town or village* must satisfy the National Executive Committee that their community is working in partnership to be a destination that welcomes walkers.

** to avoid cumbersome repetition, from here on, the term 'town' is used but fully includes communities which are villages.*

To gain and maintain accreditation, the town must meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate popular local support from the community and local businesses for the concept.
- Demonstrate that the local council formally endorses the application for Walkers are Welcome status.
- Demonstrate a commitment that the local public path network will be maintained in good condition.
- Demonstrate that there is adequate marketing of the towns' Walkers are Welcome status.
- Demonstrate how the town encourages the use of public transport.
- Demonstrate the mechanisms in place to maintain Walkers are Welcome status.

Annual Returns

Each Member town is required to submit an Annual Return detailing their activities, successes, and problems of the previous year to renew accreditation for the following year. This is then reviewed by a mentor against the WaW values and criteria, thereby maintaining the organisation's standards and values. Additionally, this will help to maintain and raise standards, to improve the benefits of membership and allows mentors to offer advice.

Membership Fees

Membership fees are decided each year with any proposed changes brought to the members at the General Meeting. The fee structure is based on a sliding scale of population to a current maximum of 35,000 at joining. The annual subscription is due 1st January each year along with the Annual Return.

The Annual Get-Together

The Annual Get-Together is held in a different WaW destination each year, normally in October. WaW towns are encouraged to bid to host the event. This event has interactive workshops providing opportunities to pick up tips and advice as well as sharing information in line with best practice and innovation. The Annual Get-Together includes a General Meeting to hear the review of the past year and consider future policies.

The Annual Get-Together brings people from WaW towns together and provides:

- A platform to promote WaW towns
- An opportunity for networking
- Information exchange on best practice and innovation
- Opportunities for towns to visit one another
- An event to inspire and encourage members

Mentor Network

WAW has a nationwide network of regional mentors, involving people who have been through the accreditation process. Mentors are appointed by the National Executive Committee and have substantial experience of the WaW ethos, and an understanding of the standards and quality expected.

The role of mentors includes:

- Helping prospective members to gain accreditation. The mentor is available and experienced to advise the 'provisional member town' throughout the accreditation development and the completion with endorsement of the application
- Offering support, advice, and encouragement to existing members, including reviewing, and commenting on Annual Returns
- Often attending early-stage public meetings to inform local people of the benefits, and fun, of becoming a WaW community.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

The benefits of membership include:

- An administrative central point and up-to-date membership database
- A comprehensive website with 'members only' sections and links to member communities
- Resources, such as best practice guides, factsheets, and leaflets
- Mentoring for towns and villages to attain and maintain membership
- A quality system for WaW towns to be walker-friendly
- Annual monitoring and reporting back of quality compliance to members
- A vehicle for regular member networking to informally share experiences and discuss new ideas
- An annual conference and opportunity to provide input into the national network
- Lobbying at all levels of local and national government and other organisations to support the initiatives of WaW members.

Use of WaW Logo and branding

The Gold on Black ‘Walkers are Welcome’ logo in English (and other language and bi-lingual representations) are the property of Walkers are Welcome CIC., registration no. UK 00003414099 (and others). Use is subject to being an accredited member of the organisation or having a current written agreement in place. The black on white non colour alternative may be used where the colour logo is less suitable. No other style variations are permitted.

Walkers are Welcome logos may also not be used to promote or support any political or religious organisations, or individuals thereof, in any way.

Following accreditation towns should be able to realise the following tourism and economic benefits and opportunities

- Demonstrates that walkers will be given a warm welcome by the local community
- Establishes or strengthens the town’s reputation as a walking destination
- Provides economic benefit for retail, B&Bs, hotels, pubs, cafés, restaurants, and other businesses through increased footfall
- Promotes other local visitor attractions
- Complements the town’s economic growth, tourism plans and strategies
- Benefits from national WaW publicity and promotion
- Promotes professionalism and good practice

.... and these community benefits

- Empowers communities by providing people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make a difference.
- Promotes the concept of shared ownership and community cohesion
- Shares responsibilities and access to opportunities
- Promotes social interaction and combats exclusion
- Generates pride in the community
- Promotes the health benefits of walking
- Promotes enjoyment and respect for what the countryside offers
- Gives local people and visitors the opportunity to learn about the culture, heritage and biodiversity of the town and its surrounding countryside
- Encourages the formation of walking groups, walking festivals and events

There are also benefits for local footpaths (and other walking routes)

- Promotes liaison with local authorities, councils, agencies, and landowners responsible for Public Rights of Way ensuring that paths are monitored for the benefit of local people and visitors
- Helps to create new paths, routes and long-distance trails
- Encourages preparation of local walking publications and signage
- Better promotion through improved waymarking and interactive signage

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

Long-term Objectives

- Ensuring the long-term maintenance, growth, and sustainability of the network
- Fostering closer working relationships between members and with the National Executive Committee
- Maintaining and improving quality standards
- Developing a funding package from a variety of funding streams to ensure sustainability
- Encouraging additional facilities within communities
- Continually fostering support and encouragement across the network
- Raising the profile of the brand and logo recognition through marketing and publicity
- Improving the appreciation of the brand through partnership working and lobbying
- Adding additional membership resources
- Seeking new and replacement National Executive Committee members

Priorities 2022-2025

- Further research sources of funding to support and expand the WaW scheme
- Establish and implement a Public Relations Plan
- Develop our relationships with like-minded organisations
- Continue to seek new National Executive Committee members
- Assist and support members to maintain and develop sustainability
- Continue to improve and promote the WaW website

Adopted by the National Executive Committee
Chairman – Ken Hawkins
December 2021