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WALKERS ARE WELCOME ANNUAL REPORT 2010

Town: Huntly

1. Please use the space below to summarise the main activities you have undertaken in 2009 to ensure that your town/village continues to be one where walkers are welcome.

It has not been long since we were granted the Walkers are Welcome status (late Nov 2009), but we are actively working to ensure our walkers are welcome and to promote the scheme in the area.

When we were officially recognised as a WaW town, a press release was issued announcing the success of the application to the local residents. The response was very positive, and people from the town and its surrounding area were delighted with the result. We have received emails from local businesses requesting WaW stickers and calls from local residents when our status was published in the local newspaper.

This year, we are hosting our 1st Annual Walking Festival, where we intend to launch our Walkers are Welcome status. The programme includes guided walks in the woods, seminars about walks, dowsing workshop and a mass sponsored walk, for the benefit of two local charities. During the Festival, the town will host the world famous walking artist Hamish Fulton. While in town, Hamish will have talks about how walking can also be art.





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For the preparation of the Walking Festival, we worked closely with Forestry Commission and Aberdeenshire Council rangers, ensuring that all the paths are in good condition for the walkers. As a result of the inspection, maps have been revised with updated routes. As we mentioned in our application, we also intended to broaden our network of paths. Since then, Huntly Development Trust appointed a contractor that is currently working on the construction of a bridge connecting Huntly and Dufftown. The project also includes improvement of paths and signposts.

We are currently working on the production of a "Huntly Walks and Pathways" brochure, soon to be available to the general public. The brochure will also contain walks suggested by local residents and we intend to give them the credit for the published content. We have also launched www.huntlywalks.com. The webpage is a gateway for walkers to learn more about what the town has to offer. The webpage is already live but still under construction. Information about the Walkers are Welcome scheme is also available on the website, where there is also a link to redirect traffic to WaW site. Also on the website, people can find information on how to get to Huntly by public transportation. Also as part of our online promotional activities, we launched our Facebook page; in less than 3 months, we have over 500 fans. Details about our WaW status and a link to the WaW webpage are also available on our Facebook page.

In order to strengthen the scheme in the area, we are currently working with Keith and Dufftown to promote the region as a Walkers are Welcome area (both towns are already working on their application).

In May, we are planning to hold a meeting with our steering group to analyse the outcomes of the Walking Festival and the lessons we can learn from this experience, to ensure that Walkers are truly Welcome to our town.





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It is important to emphasise that, all these projects, including the application for the WaW itself, are a result of previous public consultations.

2. If you have undertaken any initiatives which you feel are particularly innovative and which might be of interest to other Walkers are Welcome towns/villages, please give details below.

In Huntly, walking is a highly popular activity. Given the high interest in walking in the community, it has raised the opportunity to address social related issues associated with walking.

Bearing this in mind, next month we will host the 1st annual Huntly Walking Festival. This year, the theme for the mass walk is “social responsibility”. Not only will part of the revenue from the registrations be given to local charity groups, but also these groups will have the chance to promote their organisation and raise awareness of their cause.

Also as part of the Festival, there will be a choreographed walk in wheelchairs. People who are not disabled will also take part in the walk; the aim is to raise awareness of the difficulties encountered on a daily basis by disabled people.

For the following year, our intention is that the theme will be chosen by the community. Online surveys will be created, using tools such as surveymonkey and our Facebook page, and the community will elect the theme they want to learn more about. Amongst these themes, there would be Carbon Reduction, recycling, renewable energy etc.





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The main objective is to make the Walking Festival a platform not only to instruct but also to engage our community in current social and environmental matters.

To keep the momentum going, after the Walking Festival, in partnership with local groups, we intend to train local guides from our community. The intention is to reinforce the culture of walking and engage local residents in healthy activities while supporting the promotion of the town as a walking destination. We also expect that this project will also have a positive impact to the local economy, as it may represent employment opportunities for local youngsters.

3. What funding have you been able to obtain? Have you any evidence of ways in which WaW status is helping your community, your local economy?

As stated in our application, we have secured funding from LEADER European Funding, the Scottish Natural Heritage and the Aberdeenshire Council to deliver walking related projects. We also have the support of Forestry Commission Scotland.

We are still in the early stages of our status, but we expect that it will have a positive impact in the local economy, across a variety of sectors, including retail, hospitality and catering. For example, during the Walking Festival, we expect a number of short-break visitors to come to the town who will consequently spend money in local attractions and local shops. Also, to host and support some of the events in the programme, local venues and services have been hired, strengthening the local economy.





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4. The Walkers are Welcome principle is a 'bottom-up' one, operating on the basis of mutual support and activity. What contributions are you making towards developing the network, nationally and/or regionally? (eg: attendance at conference, mentoring other towns)

As mentioned in the first answer, we are currently working with Dufftown and Keith in order to promote the area as a WaW region. We are working very closely with Keith and offered to mentor them during these early stages of their application.

We intend to offer to host a WaW national conference in our town in the near future and we would be glad to be referred as a point of contact in the North East region for those who wish to apply for the WaW status.

Declaration

We wish to apply for continuation of our status as a Walkers are Welcome town/village. We have sent a cheque for our annual membership to the Walkers are Welcome treasurer.

Town: Huntly

Organisation: Huntly Development Trust

Note: Annual returns will normally be posted on the WaW website, so that others are aware of each town's achievements. Please advise us if for any reason you would rather that this form was not made public.

