

## WALKERS ARE WELCOME ANNUAL REPORT 2010

Town: .....**KINGSBRIDGE**.....

*To maintain your status as a Walkers are Welcome town, please send this report by email to the WaW Secretary [andrew@andrewbibby.com](mailto:andrew@andrewbibby.com) by 31 March 2010.*

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. *Please relate what you write to the six WaW criteria.*

Following accreditation in early June 2009 (which received press coverage at the time) Kingsbridge held their launch event in early October – this was specifically delayed until then to highlight walking as an ideal out-of-season activity and could thus help support the local economy at quieter times.

The launch event comprised:-

an evening event attended by nearly 200 including every level of local authority (Kingsbridge Town Council, with the Mayor accepting the framed Certificate on behalf of the town for display in the Council Chamber; South Hams District Council; and Devon County Council); press and radio. All members of the WAW Group are individual Project Champions and during the evening they manned exhibits and stands and played video footage highlighting some of the projects planned to be delivered under the umbrella WAW programme, together with the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team. Refreshments were provided showcasing local producers and suppliers from the town's Farmers Market.

a mini-walking festival the following day – this commenced under the WAW banner on the Town Bandstand to tour the Farmers Market and meet some of the producers and suppliers whose food and drink had been enjoyed the night before and continued with a multi-element walk led by a variety of individuals to whom we are deeply indebted : a Tree Trail highlighting the rare and specimen trees we enjoy around the head of the estuary led by world-renowned ecologist Dr Wendy Rees; a gentle estuary stroll led by two of our local Walking for Health leaders, Bryn and Jennie Hayden; lunch break at Brittons Field - the site of the traditional town's foreshore picnic site which has now been reclaimed and is being planted as a wildflower pictorial meadow with disabled access, seating and opportunities for its use by families again for picnics with special events (local story tellers and musicians; visits by local groups and individuals such as naturalists, RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust, etc.; the starting point of an art installation trail using The Owl and The Pussycat...plus lots more!) – where choices of hot soups and rolls from the farmers Market were served; a foreshore ramble guided by our Estuary Conservation Officer Nigel Mortimer; a country walk with stunning estuary views led by the Walks Secretary of the South Hams

Ramblers Group, Chris Barnwell, to show (a) that you can enjoy a beautiful rural walk without actually leaving the environs of the town; (b) to highlight improvements made to that walk (replacement of stiles with kissing gates, etc.) and demonstrate its ease of use for the less mobile; and (c) to introduce the concept of geocaching to Kingsbridge!

This walk ended up back at the Bandstand from where the second walk commenced. Led by Robert Waterhouse, a well-known historian, this explored the many alleys and back lanes of Kingsbridge town and explained their history culminating in a private tour of the wonderful Cookworthy Museum. Not only was it a fascinating and amusing afternoon, but by virtue of its route, this walk was also intended to showcase the many interesting individual independent shops which Kingsbridge has to offer and encourage the walkers to return to visit them – again, supporting the local economy.

All launch events were open to the public; entirely free of charge; and there were 30 on each of the walks – some doing both!

The launch weekend received considerable press coverage and as a result the local interest has grown with new members coming forward to join the Group – traders seeing it as a real marketing opportunity – and many more taking part in some of the local walking initiatives.

In November 2009 Kingsbridge Information Centre published their first Accommodation Guide highlighting the accreditation; explaining its purpose; and featuring those accommodation providers who had signed up to specific criteria to make walkers welcome by providing facilities walkers need to make their visits enjoyable and convenient. Those establishments display the WAW stickers at their premises and the logo appears against their adverts in the Guide, within the Centre, and on the website to assist visitors when planning their trips here. Even without statistical evidence to support the scheme's potential, it was encouraging that over 50 advertisers signed up without hesitation – others have subscribed since, recognising the benefits – and many of those who were simply unable (as opposed to unwilling) to meet the specific criteria are looking to make changes to their premises to accommodate walkers and their needs.

The subsequent two Guides in Kingsbridge Information Centre's annual "set" to promote the town/area all prominently feature WAW – and Kingsbridge is enormously proud to be the first town in Devon to hold that status. The award formed a specific section in the Mayor's address at the Town's Civic Dinner – and the Town Council is proactively looking at ways in which it can support and enhance the Group's activities (PP3 membership, etc.). Together with the overwhelming support of both the local residents and visitors it has just secured a Modification Order resulting in the only remaining footpath from the centre of town directly adjacent to the water's edge being added to the Definitive Map as

an additional public footpath having successfully fought the original decision of the Planning Officer.

The relationships which the Group enjoys with South Hams District Council and Devon County Council grow ever stronger; the support received from them in a variety of ways – whether by way of path maintenance and improvement – drawing office support for design and production of literature, leaflets, handouts, maps, etc. – grounds and landscaping maintenance and improvement to enhance the area (for example, the provision and planting of some very special specimen trees to enable us to create a Tree Trail which will spell out Kingsbridge – a Walkers Are Welcome Town!) is immeasurable and invaluable.

In addition discussions are now underway for one or both of the local authorities to be our partner in a major funding bid for significant funds to deliver the overall programme of projects.

In terms of marketing, between the 3 Guides some 80,000 copies are distributed nationally and internationally; the tourism partnerships of Visit South Devon and Visit Devon promote Kingsbridge's status – and WAW has been adopted as the overarching theme for this year's RHS Kingsbridge in Bloom entry. The town entered for the first time in 2008 and secured Silver-Gilt, a level which they maintained the following year. This year the aim is Gold and the major planting displays etc. will be based on the WAW award.

The next step is to work closely with the local traders and businesses through the Kingsbridge and Salcombe Chamber of Commerce and its hugely successful Business Club to ensure that if they display the WAW stocker – they live up to its promise!

Whilst the WAW Group does not claim to be responsible for all that is happening, there is no doubt that through its participation in other initiatives the essential aims are being delivered. For example, a local community volunteer transport group which provides an essential service linking some of our more remote villages and parishes has recently been successful in securing major funding and one of the specific conditions for its sustainability is that it works with Kingsbridge WAW to develop and provide services to support walkers; the locally-based commercial bus company has assisted with and is actively promoting walks which connect with their services; the local Walking for Health and Walk and Talk groups have secured a grant to extend the scope of their activities by factoring in public transport to their activities; a working party looking at rural transport deprivation has secured funding for a feasibility study to look at the provision of services to actively promote and support healthy lifestyles, improve the visitor experience, etc.

Kingsbridge WAW Group is based on the Leader principle – each member of the Group is themselves a Project Champion and they, in turn, bring together their

own project group drawn from the local community and other interested parties (perhaps where specific skills or knowledge is required) to deliver that project – all of which sit underneath the umbrella of the WAW ongoing programme. Some of the projects will be delivered in the short term – others will require far longer – but many of them we anticipate will still be producing benefits well into the future. The community has well and truly seized ownership of the programme – as was said at the launch, “this is for ever – now we’ve got it, we’re never going to let it go!”.

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.

One of the projects which we are currently developing within our programme is a vocational course with the working title "Walking for Non-Walkers"! This is designed to take someone who has little or even no walking experience or expertise to the level of being a competent, confident, independent walker. It will cover both theoretical and practical elements and the plan is to use some of our Walking for Health group members as "guinea pigs" to work up the scheme and its content – this will encompass everything from basic map reading to how to choose the right boots; what do you take for emergencies; how to interpret weather conditions; etc., etc.

Once we have completed this stage we will use the information to create a formalised course structure and run this through a pilot scheme with Learning Skills Council assessment with a view to securing NVQ status for the course. If we are successful this can then be rolled out as an open NVQ Course which can be operated anywhere – and therefore might be of benefit to other WAW members.

We have had initial discussions with the University of Exeter School of Sport Science and it is hoped that they will be an active partner in this particular project.

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?

When Kingsbridge Town Council provided their letter of endorsement/support to accompany our application of WAW accreditation, they also invited the group to submit an application for funding in the forthcoming round of Grant Aid. This was successful and the sum of £200 was made available for us to use as we wish – it has specifically been used to finance the cost of items sourced from local businesses and traders in connection with our various activities so that it would be of direct benefit to the local economy.

The local team of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been hugely supportive of the initiative and work very closely with us to ensure that our activities complement and not conflict. This year sees their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and many of our projects dovetail and/or deliver the overarching themes of their celebrations. To assist with the launch costs we received a grant of £1,350 from their Sustainable Development Fund against a total cost of £3,000, the balance being funded by Kingsbridge Information Centre.

In addition, through the Sustainable Development Fund, the South Devon AONB have contributed significantly towards the costs of conception, design and production of a Children's Activity Handout which will be made available free of charge through Kingsbridge Information Centre with free pencils to use and small prizes for completed handouts returned. This handout accompanies a trail around the head of the estuary encouraging children to really see the world around them – its wildlife, plants, trees, etc. – and is designed to appeal to more than one age group (ideal for families with children of differing ages). The total value of this project is £8,634.50 against which a Sustainable Development Fund grant of £2,385 was made available.

The South Devon AONB already hold a very successful Walking Festival in October each year and as it would lead to both duplication and audience dilution if we were to hold a WAW Walking Festival (particularly as we would wish to run it at virtually the same time), we have an arrangement whereby we plan specific "badged" WAW events to take place during their Festival which they in turn promote and publicise through their own printed literature and website, etc. We therefore receive "in kind" funding contribution from them via this avenue.

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)

Kingsbridge WAW group was represented by its programme manager (Amanda Bloomer) as an Associate Member at 2008 Annual Conference and as a Member in 2009.

Amanda sits on National Committee and is mentor for South Devon and Cornwall - currently mentoring Associate Member Hayle.

Kingsbridge are working with the independent Information Centres serving their sister towns in the South Hams (Dartmouth, Modbury, Salcombe and Totnes) to assist them to become members [this is part of a joint project for the benefit of their collective geographical area of focus, the first part of which is working towards securing WAW status for the whole of the South Hams]

Kingsbridge have addressed/advised/provided information to a number of local parish councils within the area.

Devon County Council Parish Paths Officer is arranging for Kingsbridge to address the next South Hams PP3 Forum to explain the network and encourage membership.

Through the Devon-wide Sustainable Tourism Action Group (STAG) Kingsbridge are working with representatives of sustainable tourism initiatives across the county to spread the WAW accreditation – in this connection a funding grant is being made available through STAG to assist towns to join. Members of STAG who have already expressed interest are Hartland Peninsula and Dartmoor National Park Authority and Kingsbridge will be talking to them about how, practically, they can proceed.

Kingsbridge was invited to attend the South West Sustainable Tourism and Travel Conference in early March specifically to exhibit WAW and explain the network, its aims, and potential benefits. This exhibition was well received and raised considerable awareness within the South West region.

Kingsbridge Information Centre has links with the Snow Cap Region of Transylvania who are looking for sustainable tourism initiatives and support – the WAW network appeals to them as a logical way forward and it is hoped to develop a workable arrangement to see this area as a future international WAW member.

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.

Name: AMANDA BLOOMER

Organisation: KINGSBRIDGE WALKERS ARE WELCOME

*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.*