



Kirkby Stephen Walkers are Welcome steering group January 2009 to January 2010 WaW Report

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Jackie Scarr	Kirkby Stephen Parish Councillor
Margaret Albon	Kirkby Stephen Parish Council Deputy Chairman & Cumbria Wildlife Trust
David Stewart	Kirkby Stephen Mountain Rescue and walkingworld.com
Libby Bateman	Project Officer, Upper Eden Community Plan Group
Additional mention for Dick Capel, Denise Robinson- Kirkby Stephen Youth Hostel, Andrew Griffiths- Image Rail	

The group have met bi-monthly in Kirkby Stephen over the period, with thanks to Eden District Council for free rental of the room. Arrangements were firstly put into action to meet the criteria laid down by Walkers are Welcome before application for accreditation and then in maintaining and developing the criteria. Individual member have taken up differing roles.

1. Demonstration of popular local support for the concept

We collected 180 residents and business signatures from the launch at a Walking Exhibition in October 2008 to our application being submitted 27.03.09. We are a town of less than 2000 residents but with a larger hinter land population of the Upper Eden Valley.

2. Formal endorsement of application for WALKERS ARE WELCOME status by local council

Kirkby Stephen Town Council initially backed the suggested scheme and later formally minuted its endorsement. Two Town Councillors volunteered to serve on the steering group. We have also been fortunate in having support from the district council, Eden District Council with their Economic Development and Tourism Officer joining our group. Our County Council by way of the Countryside Access Ranger joined the group and has been instrumental in helping us to manage maintenance issues. District Councillors and County Councillors have also shown an interest.

The Town Council are paying our membership fee and their Clerk, Jeanette Cooper has given every assistance. Additional support has been given by Kirkby Stephen Town Forum.

We are indebted to Jane Saunders and the Kirkby Stephen Community and Council Centre for all their help and handling of Rights of Way Problem Reporting cards, mailing address and printing etc.

3. Action to ensure that the footpath network is maintained in good condition

In the initial stages we devised and set up a Rights of Way Problem reporting card which visitors and local residents could use to notify any problems that they encounter in the area. These cards are returned to our Community and Council Centre who report the problem for action as appropriate. The cards are then handed to our steering group to monitor the action and reply to the person who made the report if they have left contact details. Eden District Council was kind enough to finance the printing of the cards and the report is now also available online. This has proved brilliantly successful in many ways.

We inspected the 23 footpaths and bridleways of Kirkby Stephen parish last year as well as some in nearby parishes adjoining and have ensured that any problems have been put right with additional waymarking completed where

required. With the exception of two flooding problems that have had some work done but are not totally successful, all items have been rectified bringing all paths and bridleways to an acceptable standard or above.

We have been involved with the future of our popular Poetry Path and how best to guarantee the best outcomes.

One footpath we are planning to upgrade this year with grant funding and the support from the Town Council and Cumbria County Council. This footpath leads to a new community wood just planted and we have been closely involved with its planning.

We have one section of permissive path and open access land that is causing concerns in a nearby parish as walkers are getting lost. The Countryside Access Ranger is working with the owners to find a solution.

One of our group is working with some Duke of Edinburgh Award students and we are hoping that they will be given rights of way to monitor as their voluntary role. It is planned that these will include paths that sometimes experience litter from the nearby school.

All footpaths will be checked before the summer to ensure no deterioration from last year and any problems addressed.

There was an amount of adverse publicity surrounding cattle last year and we did have some cattle incidents reported locally. We investigated incidents and issued advice for walkers through the Tourist Information Centre and Community and Council Centre.

To conclude, there are a number of schemes in place to monitor our footpath network in our own area and beyond in the wider area.

4. Adequate marketing of WALKERS ARE WELCOME status

This item has been addressed in a number of ways

We promoted our receiving accreditation as the first Walkers are Welcome town in Cumbria in press releases and Cumbria Tourism also advertised this through their network and it is featured on their website. We had a launch linked with an exhibition celebrating our Tourist Information Centre.

Eden District Council and Cumbria Tourism often mentions the fact in their tourism promotions, booklets, leaflets and website, the first Walkers are Welcome town in Cumbria. Every opportunity is taken to promote the accreditation.

We have launched our own website www.walkeden.org.uk to which we are adding detail and we have now won funding through another of our group to promote the website. We are adding a mailing list facility to the website.

We were fortunate to already have a large array of leaflets and walks already written for our area. We have ensured that our Tourist Information Centre has good stocks and that they are now better displayed in a dedicated space with WaW signs. This will need further work this year. Additional merchandise is also available.

We are sending out quarterly newsletters to accommodation providers in our area to keep them informed of developments and other information that might be useful for example, advertising opportunities, inspection and green tourism.

We already have three long distance routes crossing our area and a new route, the Pennine Journey, is to be launched this spring. We have been involved in its promotion which will continue.

The majority of local shops and cafes etc now carry Walkers are Welcome stickers and we found only two that did not wish to. We actually sold the stickers for £1 to raise some initial funds. Signs have been added to the town Welcome signs

We have had a stall at local events and are planning some advertising at other events this year.

We have several waymarked walks already in place and monitor their condition. Other waymarking is in place.

We have suggested a 'passport' scheme to WaW to encourage walkers to visit WaW towns. We await details of WaW merchandise which can be stocked at our Tourist Information Centre.

We were one of the first towns to have yearly walking festivals some years ago and whilst proving very popular it was excessively time consuming and local volunteers burnt out. With so many walking festivals now in place, every week of the season and an old idea, we looked for an innovative idea for the future. We decided on a walking programme to spread the walking visitors throughout the season hopefully attracting walking weekenders. We put together two Walking Programmes in 2009 collating local events as well as some new ideas and we are hoping to carry this forward for 2010 to include different themed events. Events are now being entered onto our events calendar on the website. Additional themed guided walks for groups have been arranged on request e.g. Kirkby Stephen Town History (general and specific), Industrial Heritage, Wildlife and the Poetry Path. The Mountain Rescue have run orienteering courses.

We have given assistance to St. Bees, Alston and Dent in furtherance to the Walkers are Welcome status.

5. Encouragement of walking using public transport

Public transport details and links are available on our website with local and long distant links.

We are meeting with Cumbria County Council to try to improve public transport provision and links in our area.

Improvements have been made at the station with far better information available including Walkers are Welcome posters. There is now a shop with walk information and refreshments. The second station development plan is being written. Further work is already in hand including a new upgraded footpath to the town suitable for wheeled cases. The train company and 'friends' of the line liaise through the station representative. There are regular walks linked with train travel on the Settle to Carlisle line.

We have one booklet dedicated to walking using the bus which was already in place.

6. Demonstration of mechanisms in place to maintain WALKERS ARE WELCOME status

We have a steering group as listed above which also feeds back to the Town Council and Town Forum and others.

7. Improvements in facilities for walkers

We suggest this additional numbered criteria for accredited towns perhaps to replace number 1.

We arranged an online survey of accommodation providers to ascertain facilities already available and have encouraged inspection to walking or cycling accreditation standards as well as highlighting green tourism ideas.

We have been working with Cumbria Tourism to encourage accreditation.

A new walkers or cyclists camp is going through the planning process and will hopefully open for the summer.

We are working on a refreshments dedicated page where providers can say that they welcome walkers and advertise free of charge with opening hours. We are encouraging opening late on Saturday and Sunday afternoons where there is additional need.

A. V. Sandell March 2010