

WALKERS ARE WELCOME ANNUAL REPORT 2010

Town: Ross-on-Wye.....

To maintain your status as a Walkers are Welcome town, please send this report by email to the WaW Secretary 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.*

Demonstration of popular local support.

700 signature petition.

Support of Ross Town Council and 13 other groups and organisations.

Over 30 local businesses provided funding. See response to Q3.

Excellent support from local press.

Formal endorsement by local Council.

Ross-on-Wye Town Council passed a resolution of support. A member of the Town Council, currently the Mayor, is a member of the Steering Group Committee.

Adequate marketing of WaW status.

We have created a web site with links to numerous other relevant sites.

Articles have been published in local newspapers, several with photographs.

Four brand new leaflets/booklets have been published, all with an attractive WaW "House style". We have taken ownership of a large display cabinet on the riverside that is used for posters and other information. Permanent WaW display boards have been placed in the Tourist Office and Heritage Centre. More are planned See response to Q2. Ross WaW has a panel in the town mosaic.

Presentations have been made to the Town meeting, the AGM of the Herefordshire Area of the RA and the Association of Ross Traders (ART) and. We have allied ourselves with ART and play an active part in its activities. We have attended several exhibitions, the latest being the Visit Herefordshire Forum, and obtained the interest of the CEO of Visit England. An excellent article was published in Herefordshire Life magazine, featuring a walk from our "Dog-friendly" walks booklet. WaW was given considerable prominence in the article. The first Ross Walking Festival was a success with nearly 90 walkers taking part.

Action to ensure Rights of Way are in good condition.

Local paths are, generally, in good condition and accessible. The local Rights of Way Warden is a member of our Committee and very pro-active. Another member is the Ross Town Footpaths Officer. Another member has been working with a local Parish Council, completed a review of all footpaths in the Parish and produced a plan for all work involving use of P3 money. Members also monitor sections of the Herefordshire Trail and the Wye Valley Walk on behalf of the Ross RA Group. See also response to Q3.

Encouragement of the use of public transport.

The Group has produced a “bus walk” leaflet containing information on 14 walks. The starting point of each walk is reached by bus from Ross and the walker then walks back to the town, This leaflet was produced in conjunction with stagecoach busses. Local walking groups also use this principle for some walks.

Mechanisms in place to maintain WaW status.

A steering Group was set up with representatives from the Ross RA Group, Ross Walking Group, Ross Town Council, Ross TiC, Accommodation providers and Herefordshire Council RoW Department.

Local businesses have been very enthusiastic.

A second walking festival will be held over the weekend of 9th and 10th October. An Annual General Meeting of all interested parties will be held on Wednesday 28th April at which a full report of activities and income and expenditure will be presented.

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.

Most of these have been mentioned above.

A complete audit of all walking publications in Ross TiC was undertaken and, as a result, five leaflets/booklets were identified as being needed. Four have been completed including the Ross Buggy Route for electric scooters, wheelchairs etc, the dog-friendly walks booklet and the bus walks leaflet. The Group also saved the Town Tourist map from extinction as Herefordshire Council did not intend to reprint it. The Group funded and printed a new, improved map.

A close alliance with the new Association of Ross Traders was formed and the Group is active.

Permanent display boards have been placed at 2 locations in the town and both walking groups' walks programmes are displayed. The WaW logo and information on WaW is part of the permanent material on these boards. Two more have just been produced; one for the Town Council Offices, on which the WaW Certificate will be displayed and another for Ross Library. Two more, for use in a local designer outlet's tourist information section will be in place in the next few months.

The Group is actively considering using Twitter as a marketing tool. Watch this space.

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?

The Group has been remarkably successful in obtaining funding. (Why not, WaW is a great idea).

Over 30 local businesses contributed funds. We offered them 3 levels of involvement with a suggested level of contribution. These were; Business supporter £10; Key business supporter £25 and Business Patron £100. This raised in the region of £1500. Ross Town Council provided a grant of £750 and the Wye Valley AONB £918. Other donations came from Stagecoach busses and Herefordshire Tourism £500. We plan to discuss future funding at our AGM. We have become a recognised force in the local community. Ross Town Council has produced a draft plan for the town and the Group has been consulted on it. The Group will be involved in developing new walking routes as per para 1.3 of the report. Other local activities include supporting the campaign for safer crossings of the A40 and A49 roads near the town. The Ross-in-Bloom Committee has also asked the Group to develop a walking route and leaflet that takes in the public art and sculptures in and around the town.

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)

Members of the Ross-on-Wye Group have attended every Annual Conference since the first one at Hebden Bridge. The Group has attended a number of exhibitions and will attend the University of the Great Outdoors (UGO) show on 1st and 2nd May. The Group's Chairman is WAWTN Mentor and is currently working with three towns.

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: Sam Phillips

Organisation: Ross-on-Wye Walkers are Welcome Group

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.