

Walkers are Welcome Conference – 18 October 2009

Attendees: Phil Folly and Andrew and Joan Clark

What is a WAW Town?

We already meet much of the criteria for membership:

1. Demonstration of local support – We are close to achieving the target of 500 signatures they need to show ‘bottom up’ support.
2. Formal endorsement for application – The Town Council have given their support and will need to pass a resolution appointing a representative who will have a small budget available.
3. Good facilities for walkers – BCC and the Chiltern Society are already fully committed to maintaining and upgrading the footpath network. Chiltern Society and Rambler members ensure that all paths are walked at least once per annum.
4. Adequate marketing of WAW – We already have the walking leaflets in place. If the current stock runs out reprints may be required. Support from the local businesses is vital with as many as possible carrying the WAW stickers.
5. Encouraging use of public transport – The walking leaflets already do this. Perhaps we could talk to TFL and the local bus companies to include in their literature?
6. Demonstrate mechanisms to ensure maintenance of WAW status – Need to form a steering Group of interested parties so the responsibility does not fall to a few people and that the Momentum is maintained.

How To Keep the Town Involved

Approach local businesses that are going to benefit from an increase in visitors. These could include B&B's, café's pubs, shops, transport, etc. Get them to buy into the idea and seek their support which may be financial, putting the sticker in the window, being actively involved in the walks.

Improve the signage within the town to show where walks start and end. Have a central notice board.

Have regular walks from and around the town. Train people to be walk leaders.

Hold an annual walking festival.

Funding

To achieve WAW status and to maintain it will require funding. Various avenues for this were discussed at the conference and it will be up to the steering group to push this forward. Additional income may also come from the sale of literature and the proposed walking festivals. The group will be incurring regular expenditure in the form of running costs, insurance, marketing, and website.

Marketing Chesham

The conference looked at ways to market Chesham. Two key considerations; how does a WAW town benefit and what is unique about our town. The workshop then looked at the various routes to achieving this. This was backed up by a presentation giving hints and tips on how to involve the media.

Organising a Walking Festival

One of the best ways to bring visitors to your town is to have a walking festival. This will mean a considerable amount of work and can only be achieved by the town putting effort in as a team. It can't be down to one or two people. It is vital to decide your target market, e.g. families, long walkers, short walkers, less able, etc.

Next Steps

1. Form a steering group to drive the project forward.
2. Complete the required number of signatures.

Other points of Interest

1. Membership fee now £50 from 31 January 2010
2. Put together a constitution, draft available.
3. Mentor available to get us through the process.

Andrew Clark
19 October 2009