

2018 Festival of Walks Working Group

Meeting 10

Notes of Meeting held on Thursday 17 May 2018

Present: Cllr C Ashton (Chair), K Gee, S Kellett, P Webley, L Kenny (Admin Officer)

Apologies: A Shaw

1. Notes of last meeting

The notes of the Working Group meeting held on 19 April 2018 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Feedback from the Festival

(a) Attendance

Liz provided a summary of attendance figures from the signing-in sheets. She agreed to check the figures against gross numbers reported by some of the walk leaders as the group felt some numbers were too low. In any case, the overall figures reported by Liz (874) were higher than last year (850). Also it was noted that some attendees did numerous walks!

(b) Feedback from Working Group

Members felt that the Festival had been a great success. Specific issues to be picked up under item 3 of the agenda.

(c) Feedback from leaders' comment sheets

A summary of the feedback was circulated. Specific issues to be picked up under item 3 of the agenda.

(d) Feedback from walkers' online questionnaire

Walkers who had provided an email address (252) had been invited to complete an online feedback questionnaire. At the time of the meeting, 130 responses had been received, representing a response rate of over 50% which is very high for an online survey. All respondents indicated that they had enjoyed the walk(s) they had attended. Specific feedback issues to be picked up under item 3 of the agenda.

3. Issues arising from the Feedback

(a) Dogs

A complaint had been received from one walker after a walk expressing concern over a tripping hazard from a dog walking off the lead. The group felt it was unfortunate that the complainant had not raised the issue at the time as there had been plenty of opportunity to do so. After the complaint had been received, walk leaders had made a point of asking people to raise any concerns at the time. The issue of dogs was also mentioned in feedback from some of the walk leaders and individual walkers.

Liz circulated the current version of the Dog Walking Code.

To avoid the problem caused on the Highlights of Frodsham walk where the "Sorry no dogs" message had been accidentally omitted, it was **suggested that** the final walk description text should be checked by individual walk leaders before the leaflet is printed in future.

(b) Walker numbers

Some walk leaders and walkers felt that the high numbers on some walks made it difficult to hear the walk leader or to keep the group together. The Working Group felt that overall the numbers had not posed a problem. A back stop is present on ALL walks. However, it was agreed to aim to have a third named person identified on future walks expected to attract high numbers, who knew the route and would be able to help if the group needed to be subdivided. This would also provide some additional resilience in case a walk leader had to drop out at short notice.

(c) Pre-booking

The online booking arrangements for the coach travel on the Walk by the Waterside walk had worked well and the coach hire fee had been recovered. The Working Group considered whether to introduce on-line booking (either compulsory or optional) for future Festivals, especially where numbers might be high.

It was decided to avoid pre-booking except in exceptional circumstances as it was likely to discourage people from making a late decision to join a walk. This view was supported by the responses to the feedback questionnaire, where 21% of respondents said they would not have attended if pre-booking was required.

(d) Signing-on sheets

Some walk leaders had commented on the time taken to complete the signing-in sheets or had asked questions about the purpose of the information collected. The Working Group felt that the current signing-on arrangements were satisfactory, but the form should be amended to ask only for name and signature to indicate acceptance of the conditions, town where people live (for statistics), email address if they want to provide feedback and join the mailing list, and an emergency contact number.

It was also agreed to investigate the possibility of ICE (in case of emergency) contact tags for walkers to attach to their backpacks. Sue agreed to send Liz details of the tags used by the local Ramblers group.

(e) Health & Safety

There were no serious concerns, except the condition of the boardwalks in Hob Hey Wood. Liz reported that The Conservation Volunteers had been commissioned to carry out repairs that would take place in the coming weeks. This work is now complete (as at 7 June 2018).

There was also a suggestion from one walk leader that First Aid kits should be provided for walk leaders.

(f) Equipment

The new equipment had been generally well-received. It was noted that the Festival of Walks logos on the vests were not visible when carrying a rucksack, but the Group felt this was not a problem – the logo was visible at the start of the walk for signing in, and this was very useful.

One leader said the whistles were not loud, but it was agreed they are very loud if blown hard!

The Working Group asked Liz to look into the cost of Emergency Information Keyrings for next year.

(g) Mailing lists and GDPR

The online feedback survey sent to 2018 walkers included a GDPR-compliant permission question. Only those walkers giving permission would have their details retained on the mailing list.

There had been several complaints that people on previous years' mailing lists had not been notified of the details of the 2018 Festival. The Group approved the text of an email to be sent out before the GDPR's 25 May deadline seeking permission from people on the old mailing list to retain their details. This would mean that we will have a GDPR-compliant mailing list for the 2019 Festival.

(h) Publicity

The feedback survey had asked how walkers had found out about the Festival of Walks.

Festival leaflet	75	58%
Festival poster	7	5%
Festival banner	16	12%
Facebook	32	25%
Town Council website	7	5%
Word of mouth	35	27%
Other	6	5%

NB: The percentage is the percentage of respondents mentioning the source, so the total adds up to more than 100%.

It was noted that the Festival leaflet played an important role, as did the Festival's Facebook page. Next year Twitter will also be considered.

4. West Cheshire Walking Festival

There had been some comments about the duplication of publicity between the West Cheshire Walking Festival (WCWF) booklet and the Frodsham Festival of Walks (FFOW) leaflet. However, the Group felt that:

- The WCWF booklet did not include all the FFOV walks (walks in April and those outside of West Cheshire)
- The FFOV leaflet is effective because of the large amount of work local volunteers put into distributing it around the area.

It was agreed that FFOV needs to retain its own leaflet. If, as expected, the WCWF continues in 2019 then the FFOV walks in it should state that the walk is part of the FFOV.

5. ViewRanger routes

Several walk leaders had provided tracks of their walks, which had been uploaded to the Frodsham Festival of Walks ViewRanger webpage <http://my.viewranger.com/user/details/2239540>

6. Photography Competition

Liz had secured two prizes for the competition:

- Welshot Imaging - Photographic Academy have donated a free evening photography workshop (normally £35) at either Chester or Ellesmere Port
- Boots Frodsham have given a free photo gift.

Liz had produced a shortlist of 30 images provided by walk leaders or submitted via the Festival's Facebook page, and the Frodsham U3A Photography Group had chosen two winners. Liz would be contacting the winners to choose and receive their prizes.

7. Walkers are Welcome status

Liz circulated information about the national "Walkers are Welcome" accreditation scheme which communities can apply for and can be used to stimulate the development of walking in an area and help local businesses attract walkers.

The Group were sympathetic but felt it was something the Town Council could pursue if they felt it was appropriate.

The Active Cheshire initiative was also discussed.

8. Next year's programme

No specific suggestions but the Group felt that we should go to existing local groups to ask for walk leaders.

9. Next year's working group

It was agreed that the current working group works well together and is about the right size, so no need to actively seek new members.

10. Any other business

Liz was asked to contact all the walk leaders and supporting organisations to thank them for their support.

11. Date of next meeting

The dates for the 2019 Festival will be 27 April – 6 May.

The next meeting of the group will be at 9.30am on Thursday 11 October 2018 at Castle Park House (if available).