**Walkabout Wrekin Newsletter**

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| **Where Next ?**  After many years operating as a highly successful scheme firstly within Telford and subsequently as part of the national Walking for Health initiative, it feels as if Walkabout Wrekin has come to a significant crossroads.  With more than 20 regular walks we are one of the largest schemes in the country. On the positive side we have a committed group of experienced walk leaders as well as happy regular walkers, and the number of walkers taking part on a weekly basis remains consistent if sometimes affected by the occasional spell of inclement weather. In addition we have an enthusiastic voluntary committee who have worked to maintain our organisation and to ensure its financial stability, thanks in no small part to the various grants from local parish and town councils across Telford as well as some fundraising by individuals. Also on the positive side, we have been asked recently to set up some new walks, some for residents of sheltered housing schemes, unfortunately we are not able to do this at the moment.  On the less positive side we are entirely dependent on the good will of the leaders and committee, all of whom are entirely voluntary, unlike many Walking for Health schemes in the country where the schemes are run by paid staff. Like everyone else, there comes a time when people need to move on and at our last committee meeting the chair, Jean Escott resigned due to personal circumstances, she has a centenarian mother who needs regular support. In addition to this, Celia Steventon, who has been the scheme co-ordinator for the last few years, also said she would not be continuing after the end of the year. Further to that, we have not attracted many new walkers over the last year or two and most importantly we are struggling to find people who are prepared to lead the walks at the same time as one or two of our long term leaders are beginning to feel, well not quite as young as they were. We have, on a number of occasions recently, asked for existing walkers to consider if they would become leaders. One or two of our existing walks are in severe jeopardy.  A couple of interesting things have happened recently – firstly we were invited to set up a stand at a recent training day for all local GPs and their nurses, this has established some good contacts and a greater awareness of who we are and what we do BUT one of the doctors said she could not possibly suggest to her unfit or overweight patients that they come to one of our walks as they would not be able to climb the Wrekin! Secondly, one of our experienced leaders was convinced that Celia was paid as co-ordinator, nothing could be further from the truth.  So where do we go in the next few years? If we do nothing it is likely that Walkabout Wrekin will gradually decline and possibly vanish.  If you look at the health indicators for Telford we have one of the least active and most overweight populations in the country – on this basis alone we should be growing at a rapid rate but we are only able to offer a small number of entry level walks for people who might be referred to us.  The committee is grappling with a number of issues:-  - Why can we not recruit more walk leaders?  - How can we provide more entry level walks for people who might be referred by local GPs and nurses or local sheltered housing schemes?  - How do we recruit a new co-ordinator?  - How do we recruit a new committee chair?  - Do we continue as Walkabout Wrekin or should we re-badge ourselves as Walking for Health Telford?  If we can successfully deal with these issues the future should be bright, if not….. cont. overleaf  We are asking everyone currently involved with Walkabout Wrekin to think about these issues and hopefully to come forward with some answers – as a committee we cannot do it alone.  Please send any ideas/answers to [info@walkaboutwrekin.org.uk](mailto:info@walkaboutwrekin.org.uk) or phone 01952 276534 |
| **What’s happening in the future?**  We have several events coming up which we hope you will be interested in joining, so make a note in your diaries :-   * Our next FREE Walk Leader and Back Marker Training will be on the **27th April 2017** at Meeting Point House, Telford Centre from 10.00am to 4.00pm .   We are looking for volunteers who can offer about 2 hours per month to support and help out  on walks which are held throughout Telford, either as a back marker or leader.  Our walks are designed to enable people to increase their physical health and wellbeing by  walking and each walks lasts no longer than 90 minutes  If you would like more details then please contact the training team at  [training@walkaboutwrekin.org.uk](mailto:training@walkaboutwrekin.org.uk)   * A fund raising Bluebell walk around Apley Woods on **Saturday 20th May 2017** starting at 10.00am from the Peregrine entrance. This walk is open to everyone and small donation would be welcome to boost funds. Veronica says the walk will be about an hour. Please join in and bring your family and friends as well, all welcome. * We are almost in the position to complete the purchase and site the bench bought in memory of Dorothy Anslow, details will be sent to your walk leaders, so they can let you know. * Ironbridge Walking Festival April 29th to 7th May 2017 full details on their website http://www.shropshiresgreatoutdoors.co.uk/event/ironbridge-gorge-walking-festival-2017/ * Wellington Walking Festival 11th to 17th September 2017 full details on their website <http://www.wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk> * Saturday April 8th - part of Wellington Spring Festival - Exploring Dothill Local Nature Reserve. Start 2 pm Wellington Market Square. Whilst in Dothill LNR, the Friends group will give a talk about the wildlife, history and features within the reserve.   • Monday April 10th - part of Wellington Spring Festival - Geology of The Ercall. The full walk starts  at 2:00pm from Market Square. The Geology Tour will begin at 2:30pm from The Ercall car park  (by the M54) where the group will be joined by Andrew Jenkinson of the Shropshire Geological  Society  Details of booking for both events will appear on  <http://www.wellingtonwalkersarewelcome.org.uk> |