

Kington Walks AGM

31st December 2025

Chair's Report on 2025 by Paul Finch

Walking Festival

It was decided, early in the year, not to hold the Spring Festival. This due in part to the Committee working on procedures and policy documents, to provide Kington Walks volunteers with more guidance and support, and in part because we were in the process of changing our Festival Organiser.

The Autumn Festival went ahead as per normal, but with a small reduction in the number of walks available. Apart from a rather damp Saturday, all the walks went ahead without any problems. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Evening events were not as busy as in previous years, but costs were covered, except for the room hire for the band. Disappointingly participation in the photography competition was down on recent years.

We continue to be very appreciative of the crucial contribution made by our walk leaders. As some of our longstanding walk leaders step down, we recognise the importance of recruiting new walk leaders.

Our thanks go to all our walk leaders, their back markers and other volunteers who helped us, not only during the festival, but throughout the year. Thanks also to Geoff Cooper our Festival Organiser and to the Festival Planning team who supported him throughout the year.

Website, Marketing and Sponsorship

Work continued throughout the year to improve our website and to make the website easier to use. As well as carrying all the information and the means of booking for the walking festivals, the website features pages for the photography competition, Kington Walking for Health, Footpaths around Kington, and information and links relating to the town. As part of this process of improvement, we changed the company we use for payment of walks and events etc. The new payment process has proved to be a significant improvement.

We have continued with sponsorship of our walks and our thanks to local businesses who support us. As well as supporting the festival financially, walk sponsorship strengthens our local partnerships and gives sponsors the opportunity to publicise and

get involved with their walk. The photography competition prize was sponsored by Paramo, and the Casserole Evening by Tarmac.

Marketing analysis based on information provided by online bookings for the autumn festival shows that most bookings were return visits by previous festivalgoers; followed by word of mouth and social media.

Many thanks to our website manager, Andy Lauder.

Footpath Maintenance

The footpath maintenance team, of 9, has had another busy year. The team met 6 times and undertook 18 working days of between 2-4 hours each. As well as undertaking regular maintenance days, the team has continued to liaise with the Ramblers over maintenance of the Mortimer Trail. During the year 9 stiles in disrepair were replaced by kissing gates; 4 styes repaired, one ditch crossing installed and one repaired plus circa one kilometre of undergrowth cleared.

Kevin Robinson has continued in his role as Footpath Officer. Our system to allow walkers to report any faults directly through footpaths@kingtonwalks.org, has been used regularly, either directly or via the Kington Tourist information Centre. All issues have been followed up, where possible directly by Kevin and the footpath team, or where appropriate referred to Hereford County Council, and then monitored by Kevin.

Walking for Health

We are pleased to report that the Kington Walking for Health scheme continues to be well supported by 10 volunteer walk leaders and backmarkers and greatly appreciated by the participants, we now have 48 registered with the scheme. In addition to the weekly walks, there is a monthly social for our participants, which is always well attended. Individual feedback emphasises the benefits of the scheme to mental as well as physical health, for example to participants who had rarely left their own homes.

In addition to the weekly short walk on the Kington Recreation Ground, there is now a regular longer walk. The scheme will take a short break during the winter months and return in the spring.

We were fortunate enough to be selected as a chosen charity by the Co-Op community charity scheme. We received a generous charitable grant of £4,583 in November 2023. This continues to be of great assistance in maintaining and expanding the scheme.

Kings Award for Voluntary Service (KAWS)

During the Spring of this year Kington Walks was nominated to receive this award, and were delighted to learn in mid-November, that as part of the Kings Birthday honours, we have been awarded the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

For Kington Walks and all its 100+ volunteers this marks a significant achievement and is a testament to all the time, effort and commitment freely given by our volunteers over the last 14 years. The award recognises the work of all Kington Walks volunteers in promoting walking for its benefits to health, pleasure, and wellbeing.

To celebrate this achievement, with our volunteers and Kington town and to raise awareness of the award and of Kington Walks, we held an event at the Place de Marines on the 26th November, which was well attended. Further events are being planned for 2026.

Role Changes

2025 has seen a number of role changes:

- Paul Finch stood down as Treasurer and has undertaken the role of Chair.
- Nigel Sheath has taken on the role of Treasurer.
- Kevin Robinson, Val Burden and Helen Yeomans have become Trustees.
- Geoff Cooper has taken on the role of Festival Organiser
- Andy Lauder has stepped down from the role of Website Manager
- Helen Lauder has stepped down from her role as marketing and media.
- Julia Bluett has stepped down as minute-taker and has been replaced by Ruth Robinson

My thanks go to all who have undertaken these roles with dedication and diligence and contributed to Kington Walks becoming the successful organisation that it is today. We continue to depend on the willingness of our committee of volunteers to support each other and to take our turn by stepping up, either into existing roles, or to contribute where a new opportunity emerges. I am extremely grateful to all of you for your commitment and generosity.

Paul Finch

Chair of Kington Walks