



Evaluation Report

Published - August 2008

WalkFest'08 – Evaluation

Introduction

The 6th Annual Newton Stewart Walking Festival, known as WalkFest'08 was organised by a stand alone committee of unpaid volunteers who share a passion and enthusiasm for the Galloway Hills and the surrounding environs. The event, customarily held in mid May, has evolved since it was first introduced in 2003. This year it was held between the 9th and 15th May 2008.

This report examines the event in detail and compares views and opinions from:

- Participants who visited the festival
- The Festival organising committee members
- Walk Leaders/Guides who assisted with the event

The report is weighted towards the views and opinions of visitors and it is important to note that all of the statistical data is drawn from the Evaluation Questionnaire which was circulated in the week ending 30th May 2008. Feedback provided from sources closely associated with the event has been included to provide a more inclusive evaluation.

The future success of any event on this scale depends upon objective appraisal of achievement and shortcomings. This report provides recommendations and suggestions based upon all of the data and comments collected.

Festival History

The festival was first introduced in May 2003 and until 2005 was a two day festival held over a weekend. As demand for walk places increased it was extended to include the Friday. During these formative years the festival expanded from a small local event to a larger and more popular walking attraction with visitors travelling from all over the United Kingdom and beyond. In 2005 the committee embraced the potential publicity from the internet and invested much time and effort creating a public website. They simultaneously introduced the 'WalkFest' brand which has now become widely recognised in walking and outdoor circles. Additional funding in the form of commercial sponsorship was identified to finance additional advertising, transport and other related costs.

After a three fold increase in visitor numbers in 2006, the decision was taken to increase the 2007 festival to a 7 day event. The relationship at that time with the Newton Stewart Initiative and the Wigtown Rural Transport Initiative was well established and the planning and execution of the event was hugely successful. The Evaluation Report of 2007 confirmed that the decision to increase the festival in size was well taken and a number of recommendations and suggestions were identified for future improvement.

With a newly delivered successful format the committee planned to forge ahead for a similar style event in 2008. The upheaval created by the need to break away from the Newton Stewart Initiative and the loss of transport services, potentially jeopardised the future of the festival (see below). Notwithstanding the difficulties presented, WalkFest'08 was held between Friday 9th and Thursday 15th May 2008.

Consequential Information

Reformation of the WalkFest Committee

Following WalkFest'07, there was a significant change in the way the committee functioned. The committee had hitherto been a sub committee of the much larger and well funded 'Newton Stewart Initiative'. Funding of the event in previous years had never been an issue, as funds were drawn down for advertising, transport and other costs associated with the festival. Third Party liability insurance was also an issue in that the festival would no longer benefit from the cover provided by the initiative.

Notwithstanding these issues, all of the former committee members agreed to form a new stand alone group. An additional four volunteers joined the team.

Forming a new formally constituted committee was relatively easily achieved; the difficulties presented as a result of the lack of financial backing were a more difficult obstacle to overcome.

The committee were faced with potentially significant increase in walker attendance at WalkFest'08 whilst dealing with a substantially reduced budget. They were determined to maintain the format of the successfully delivered WalkFest'07, but recognised the challenges they would encounter along the way.

Transportation Issues

In addition, it was announced that the previously successful relationship with the Wigtownshire Rural Transport Initiative was no longer possible due to new operating restrictions. The consequence being that a new and potentially significantly more expensive transport company would need to be identified to provide bus transfers to and from the walks. The relationship and understanding which had developed with the transport initiative was immediately lost.

To their credit, the committee made a conscious decision to continue with the format of WalkFest'07 and to press ahead, as far as possible, with the implementation of the recommendations and suggestions which emanated from the festival evaluation. (Refer to Appendix 'A' for a summary of recommendations and actions undertaken).

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Funding and Sponsorship

Funding was generated from commercial sponsorship as well as financial support from Dumfries and Galloway Council. The latter eventually agreeing to underwrite the event to an agreed maximum. The main financial difficulty related to what was effectively 'Year 1' funding. It had been quickly determined that 'Year 2' and beyond might be less of a concern through grants from a variety of relevant organisations.

Members of the committee commented reflectively that it would have been easy to reduce the programme for WalkFest'08 to work within a reduced budget; but to do so would have undoubtedly impacted upon the overall participant experience. The long term outcome from such a diminution may impact upon the festival for many years.

It is clear that noteworthy effort was focussed upon 'business as usual' with the expectation that participant numbers would optimistically increase in 2008.

It should be highlighted that in the current economic climate, financial support from commercial sponsors may be more difficult to secure. Early efforts to secure sufficiency of funding should be seen as a priority.

Event Overview

WalkFest'08 followed exactly the format of the 2007 festival with almost all of the recommendations and suggestions in the Evaluation Report being implemented. Participant numbers were significantly increased, as anticipated, and all of the scheduled walks went ahead. Likewise the evening programme of events run to schedule. This was the first year that there were no cancelled walks.

The event was generally blessed with fine weather throughout the week, the only exception being a period of heavy rain and thunder storms on Saturday 10th May. Otherwise, visitors were able to experience the beauty and splendour of Galloway at its very best.

We will examine later in the report a cluster of difficulties experienced in relation to transportation of walkers both to and from walks. Other than a few minor anomalies with regards walk routes and availability of suitable walk leaders or guides, everything else went comparatively to plan.

The organising committee clearly take enormous pride in delivering a very professional and well organised festival; regrettably the impact of the problems they encountered, variously out with their control or anticipation, has strengthened their resolve to avoid repetition in 2009.

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As determined by this evaluation, the vast majority of participants enjoyed WalkFest'08. Even those affected by the transport problems have otherwise been satisfied with their overall experience.

In summary, the full programme of events was as follows:

- 26 walk routes over 7 days graded from Moderate to Very Strenuous
 - 8 walks on both Saturday and Sunday
 - 2 walks every week day
- 4 evening events
 - Ceilidh
 - Wildlife Presentation and Slide Show
 - Mountain Rescue Presentation
 - GPS Workshop

Participant Profile

Walker numbers were encouraging for 2008 with a total of 241(212 in 2007) people booking for 436(343) walks. This represented 89.7% of the total walk places originally planned for the festival and an increase overall from 2007 of just over 27%. The total number of walkers who took part, including the walk leaders and guides was 530(425) an increase of 25%. There were 16(22) walk cancellations. These figures show that walkers are now staying longer and doing more walks during the week. An objective set down by the organisers.

Despite efforts to attract visitors from further a field, the originating location for our walkers was largely similar to 2007. 33% originated from the DG8 post code which encompasses Newton Stewart and the Machars, with a further 33% coming from other DG postcodes – a total of 66%(65%). If we consider the total number of travelling visitors 46%(59%) were from Scotland, 48%(41%) were from England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 6%(0%) were from outside the United Kingdom.

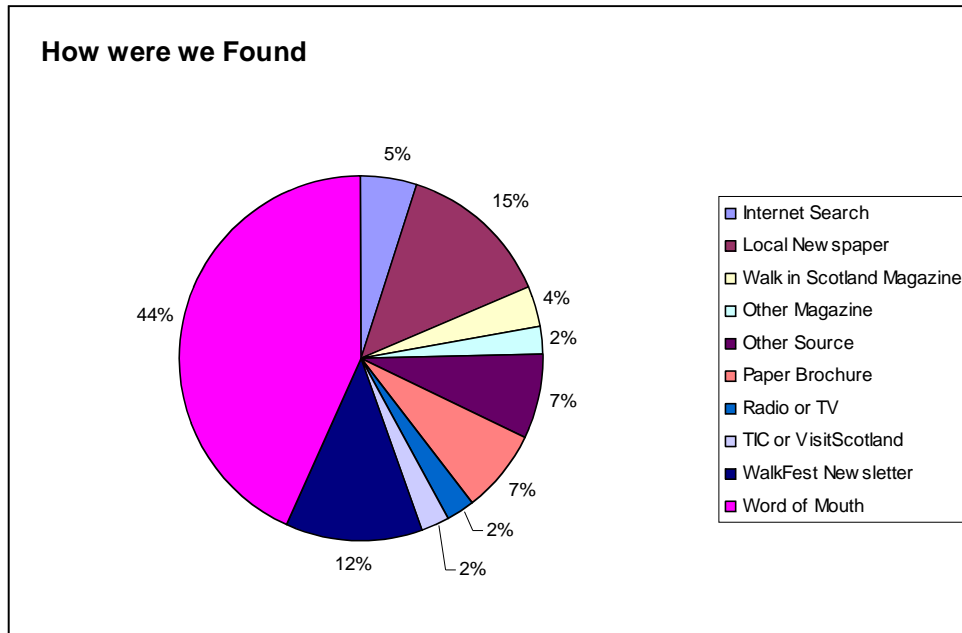
This shows that we continue to attract a consistent support for the event from the people of Dumfries and Galloway and in particular the local people around Newton Stewart. We have succeeded in attracting a higher number of people from outwith Scotland as a percentage of the total walkers. The figures are not massively different so it is difficult to draw meaningful comparison, but the data is encouraging and should be regarded as a positive improvement in line with the aspirations of the committee.

Marketing and Exposure

The committee were keen to maximise their advertising exposure whilst building upon the success of WalkFest'07. Respondents were asked to identify how they found out about WalkFest'08. New advertising opportunities were harnessed

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and discussions with VisitScotland resulted in some good exposure on the VisitScotland website. Web statistics gathered from visitors to the website showed this link to be particularly popular with a significant number of visitors finding us by this route.



Clearly 'Word of Mouth' discussion continues to be the most popular means of finding out about WalkFest. It is thus imperative that positive outcomes from this year's event, including plans to counteract the problems associated with transportation, are communicated to WalkFest visitors.

There were no negative comments about interaction with VisitScotland and the positive exposure we enjoyed via both electronic and print media was seen as a very positive improvement. Members of the committee had to work hard to maintain the momentum, but it appears that the efforts have paid dividends.

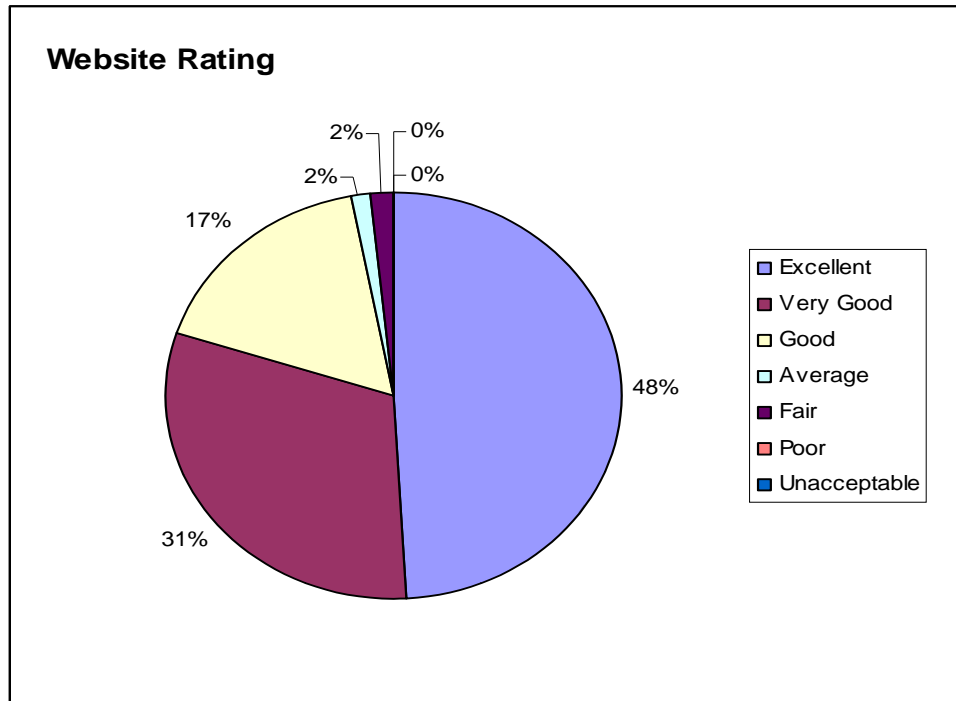
Suggestions

- 1. We should continue with our current marketing strategy but continue to try and identify means of dissemination beyond the boundaries of Dumfries and Galloway***
- 2. Embrace the success from this years VisitScotland website exposure to ensure this is available in 2009.***
- 3. Continue to provide regular updates to subscribers to the electronic newsletter to ensure they are fully informed of changes and improvements for 2009.***

Website

Visitors were asked to comment on our website and how they were able to navigate and obtain information relative to WalkFest. In line with comments received in 2007 a number of changes were made to simplify the information provided and to enhance the user interface. Mapping copyright restrictions were overcome nearer the date of the festival after Ordnance Survey provided an online mapping application which was linked to the WalkFest website.

Respondents were asked to rate our website:



The chart shows that 96% (98% in 2007) of recipients considered the website to be Good to Excellent. This confirms that our visitors continue to find the website an effective means of obtaining information about the event and that they like the layout and improved presentation. There was some negativity surrounding the lack of functionality about booking more than one walker simultaneously, however the committee decision not to progress with this suggestion on the grounds of accurate walker details being obtained during the booking process remains valid.

Suggestions

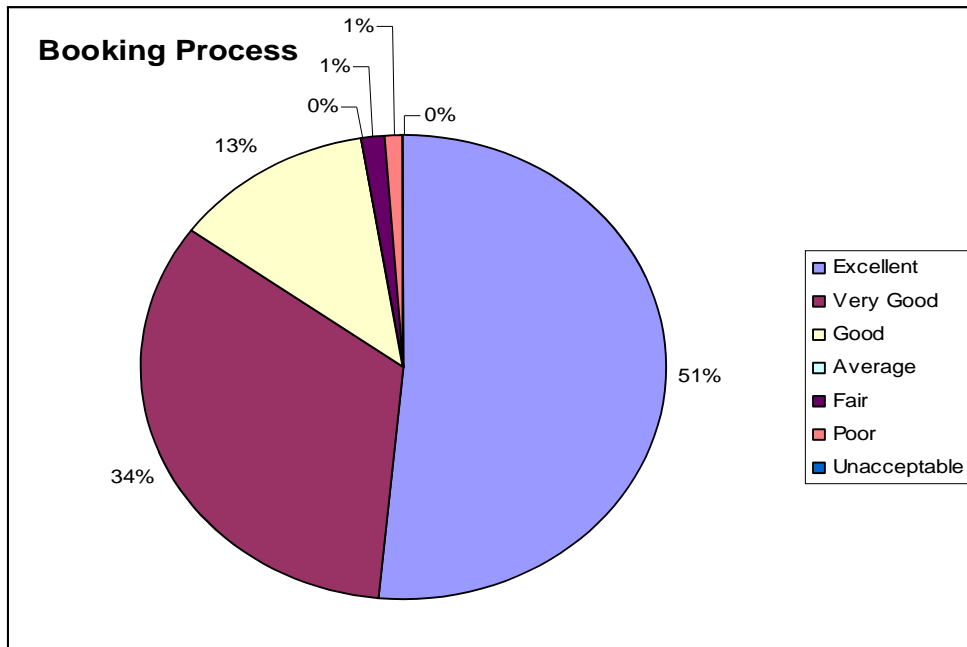
- 1. Continue to use the popular filtration system introduced for WalkFest'08 but introduce a refreshed overall appearance to keep visitors interested.**

- 2. Continue to use the new Ordnance Survey online mapping system with greater integration into the website for 2009.**
- 3. Ensure that linked sites such as VisitScotland are providing maximum exposure in the weeks prior to WalkFest'09**

Online Booking

Following the success of our partial association with Wigtown Rural Development Company (WRDC) the entire process was contracted to them for 2008. This was a recommendation from last year and the necessary re-programming of the website to provide WRDC with back office access to the data gathered from walkers was a straightforward process which was easily completed. The committee were of the opinion that the new process had worked very effectively. The £1 booking fee for telephone and personal callers was withdrawn.

Respondents were asked to rate the booking process.



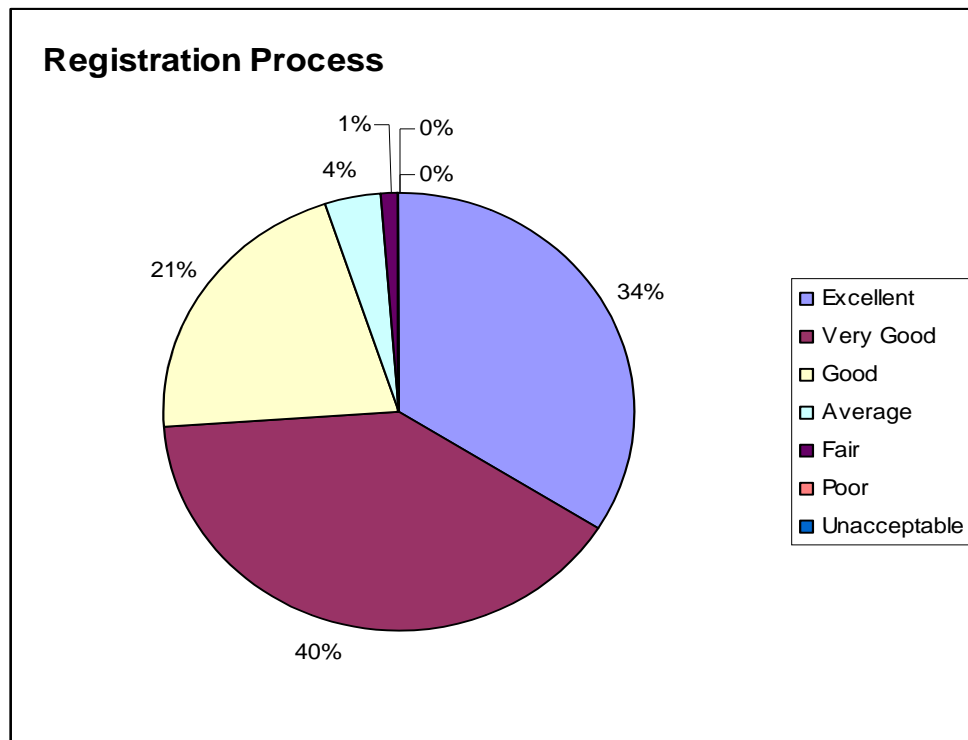
98% (92% in 2007) graded the process as Good to Excellent, with excellent grading up from 32% to 51%. Walkers were clearly impressed with the new arrangements and many commented on how quick and efficient the process had been. The friendly and helpful personalities on the end of the telephone were also commented upon very positively. Considering that this is the first point of contact with the organisers of the event, such positive feedback is very important. There was a valid suggestion from a number of walkers regarding the possibility of providing a formal cancellation process, including a telephone number for last minute cancellations.

Suggestions

- 1. WRDC should continue to administer the booking process in line with changes introduced in 2008.**
- 2. Provision of a cancellation process and telephone hotline.**

Registration Arrangements

Visitors were asked to rate our registration arrangements. Generally very few problems were mentioned here and respondents were pleased with arrangements at the McMillan Hall. A few suggested that they expected to see WalkFest staff earlier in the morning and later in the evening after walks had returned. There were concerns also if the weather had been poor as to where everyone might have been accommodated.



Walkers were comparing our Registration process to 2007 and we note a slight reduction to 95% (100% in 2007) of respondents who rated the Registration process as Good to Excellent. It would be fair to suggest that the committee had identified a number of areas for improvement, primarily due to the increased number of visitors and ambitious schedules.

Suggestions

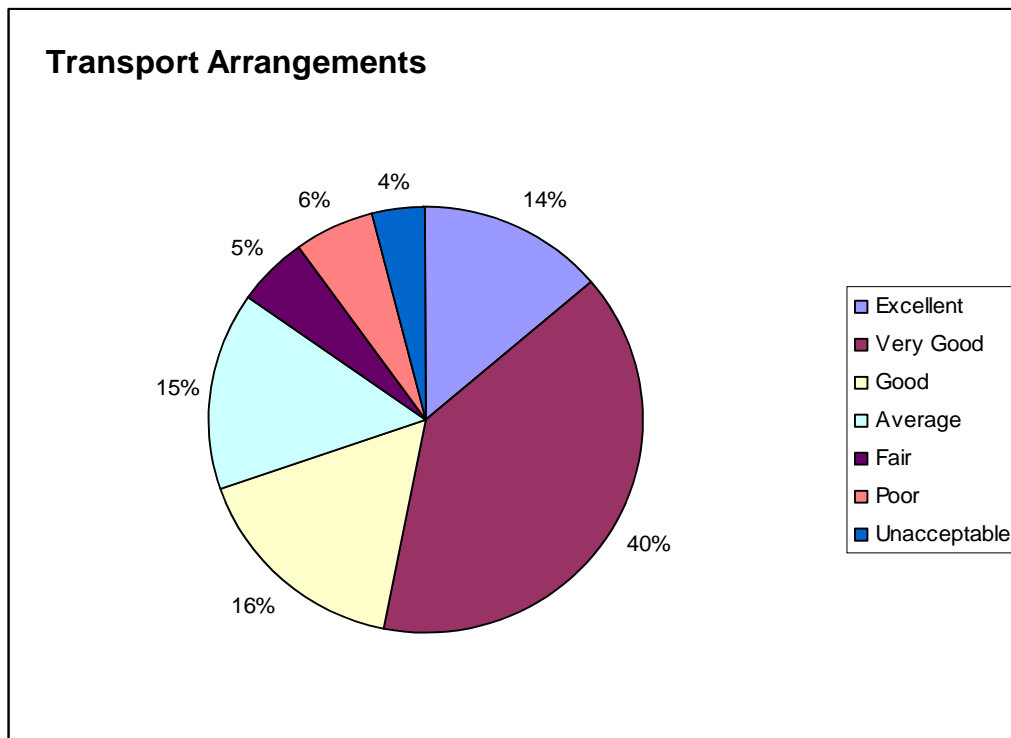
- 1. Continue with existing Registration Process with potentially enhanced contribution from WRDC to provide improved continuity**

- 2. In line with transportation improvements (see below) ensure that walkers are not unduly delayed after registration – make sure buses are available to avoid hanging around.***
- 3. Wider coverage of the Event HQ at McMillan Hall with staff present until all walks return.***

Transportation

Transportation was highlighted in the post event debrief as a major concern to the committee and the mitigating circumstances which contributed to this problem have been discussed elsewhere in this report. Respondents in general were very balanced in their criticism although a number were very negative about their experiences with transport. Many identified that the problem was closely associated with walk routes which were running behind schedule and the domino effect that this had upon the bus schedule. Respondents were however unaware of the circumstances beyond the organising committees control.

We asked respondents to rate our Transport Arrangements



The committee had undertaken to resolve the issues associated with transportation prior to the evaluation being carried out. It was not unexpected that we would receive criticism in respect of the transportation. It is important to note however that not everyone was affected by these problems and the figures

above confirm this to be the case. In the end 70% (98% in 2007) of respondents rated the transportation as Good to Excellent. Discussion and analysis prior to the completion of this report has confirmed the reasons behind these problems and plans afoot by the committee will hopefully restore the hitherto success of WalkFest transportation arrangements.

Suggestions

- 1. Initiate a radical review of the bus scheduling process to include representation from the preferred bus company**
- 2. Consider increasing the number of buses deployed, particularly during the weekend**
- 3. Ensure (in close consultation with Walk Co-ordinators) that walk routes have increased timings to ensure that unnecessary delays are avoided both when departing registration and upon departing the walk finish point to return to Newton Stewart.**

Walks

Most respondents had walked on a number of routes during WalkFest. It is clear that the programme of walks offered was popular with respondents and there were no negative comments about the variety and level of walks on offer. Overwhelmingly, respondents were highly complementary about the WalkFest guides. The team of volunteers including local historians, walking enthusiasts and members of Galloway Mountain Rescue Team has clearly fulfilled visitor expectations. Respondents undoubtedly feel reassured in the presence of mountain rescue team members on the hill routes and savor the knowledge and local information which they are keen to impart.

There were however a few negative comments in relation to two of the longer walks. Respondents were concerned that the guides were moving at an unacceptable pace which affected their overall enjoyment of the walk. Others were surprised by the strenuousness of the route they had chosen and felt they might have misjudged the suitability of their chosen route; based upon the information gleaned from publicity material.

The committee had identified that there were issues with guides on two of the less strenuous routes where problems had developed which seem not to have been identified by respondents. They had also agreed that whilst the new walk grading was generally an improvement on previous years, the timings of the walks, particularly the longer hill routes required to be reviewed. Guides had provided feedback which largely echoed some of the comments made by respondents. The committee have acknowledged that the ethos of the festival is to provide a complete walking experience which provides sufficient time to savor the views and splendour of Galloway.

There were a number of people who were disappointed that the easier routes had been withdrawn.

The maximum number of walkers on routes is now regarded as ideal, although in almost every case, cancellations meant that maximum permissible numbers were not achieved. Evidence prior to the event suggests that a number of walkers were unable to book their preferred routes and thus didn't attend the festival. This has now been repeated for the past 3 years.

Suggestions

- 1. Continue with similar walk routes for 2009 providing a variety of hill and or themed routes.**
- 2. Continue the association with Galloway Mountain Rescue Team and other walk guides.**
- 3. Ensure that walk guides are fully briefed on exact routes and expected timings to complete the route.**
- 4. Ensure walk guides are familiar with the procedures to adopt when walkers are unable to cope with the strenuousness of the route.**
- 5. Make adjustments to total walk timings to ensure that walkers are not pushed to walk faster than is comfortable for a group.**
- 6. Consider building into the maximum numbers for each walk a margin to allow for cancellations. This could be achieved without exceeding the maximum ratio of guides to walkers, but provision needs to be considered for transportation.**

Entertainment

Respondents were asked to provide comment on our additional entertainment. Generally everyone who attended the evening entertainment thoroughly enjoyed our programme. The variety we offered undoubtedly provided a good package of evening activities. The committee were of the opinion immediately after the festival that the extended entertainment programme had been worthwhile and was worthy of continuation for 2009.

The Wildlife Presentation and the Ceilidh were particularly well attended. The committee identified that it was very difficult for walk guides to be so involved in the evening programme as there was no opportunity to rest for the following day's activities.

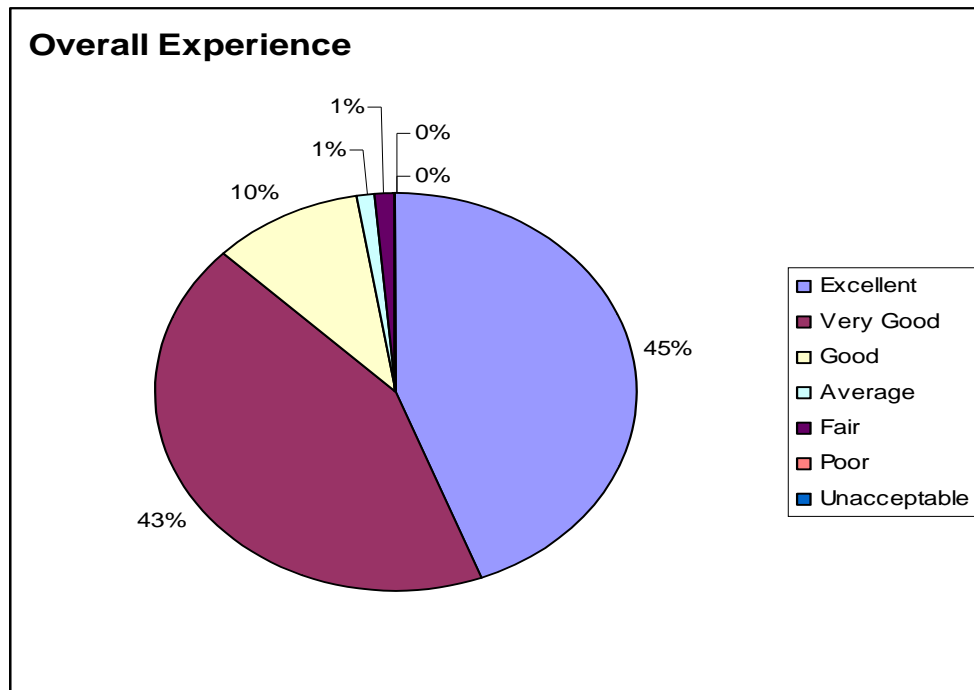
Suggestions

- 1. Continue with the Ceilidh on the Friday evening as this appears to be favourable with respondents.**

2. **Consider tasking a committee member or other person with hosting and managing the evening entertainment to allow walk leaders to concentrate fully on their guide duties.**
3. **Continue with a midweek programme of events**

Overall Experience

Respondents were asked to grade the overall experience of WalkFest'07.



88% (89% in 2007) of respondents rated the overall experience as Very Good or Excellent. This is comparable with last year although 2% of respondents described the experience as Average or Fair respectively. Analysis of the data confirms that these are respondents most affected by transportation problems.

Appendix B shows Improvement Suggestions which respondents have offered.

The continuation of linear routes appears to be popular with respondents although the committee is of the opinion that we need to be more pragmatic about the distance from Newton Stewart to the start point. Additional strain is inevitably placed upon the bus fleet where extended travel distances are involved.

The new walk grades have apparently made it easier for respondents to make a more informed choice about their chosen walk routes. We still need to be careful about promulgating information about the terrain in the Galloway Hills.

The additional number of walkers attending the festival this year appears to have supported the move to remove the easier walk routes from the programme. It would seem the balance is now about right.

Our launch of the programme in paper version might not have been so widely known amongst respondents. Those who don't live locally or have access to the internet will not benefit from this launch and we are not able to correct this problem. Two respondents felt like 'second class' walkers because they didn't have access to the internet. Clearly this is something which the committee wishes to avoid.

Generally, improvement advice offered by respondents is for more of the same, notwithstanding the issue of transportation!

Suggestions

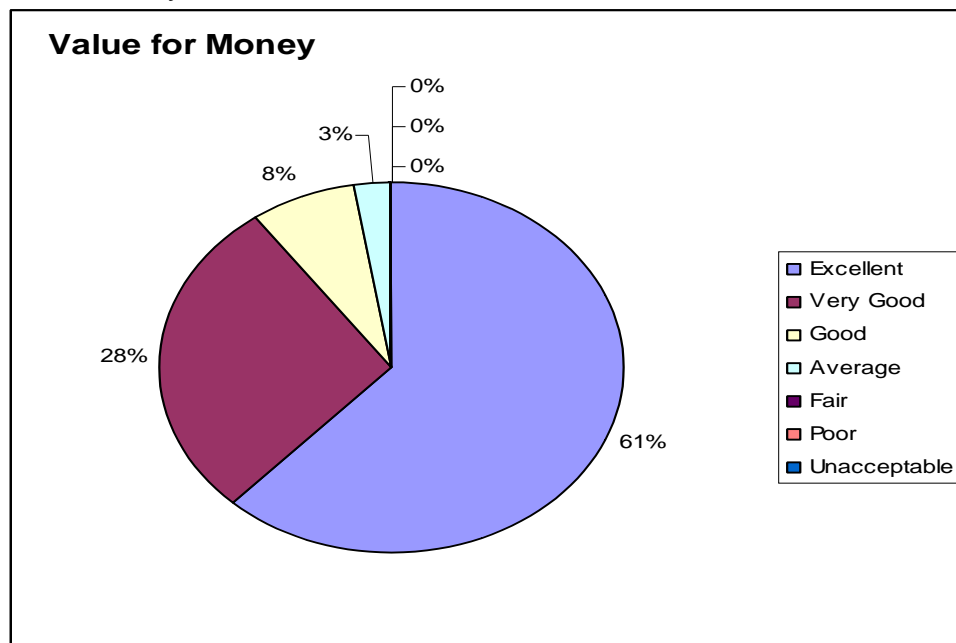
- 1. Consider re-introducing posting of a launch versions of our publicity to walkers who booked 'offline' in 2008.**

Final Comments

Respondents were asked to provide final comments and Appendix B lists the comments that were submitted. .

Value for Money

The final question posed to respondents asked them to rate the event in respect of Value for Money.



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97% (100% in 2007) of respondents graded the event as Good to Excellent. Again it would be fair to attribute the very slight reduction in rating to the transportation issues. Such an overall grading is very positive and demonstrates that despite the problems encountered this year our walkers still feel we are offering a value for money event.

Conclusion

This evaluation provides an accurate breakdown of WalkFest'08. It confirms that despite the problems which everyone associated with the event was aware, the respondents have confirmed that WalkFest was a successful event which essentially met or exceeded their expectations.

The festival model introduced in 2007 and shaped for 2008 is a good platform upon which the proposed improvements can be introduced. The transitional funding problems associated with this year's event will no longer be an issue in 2009, so there is no reason to suggest that with a growing and dedicated committee, that WalkFest will not go from strength to strength.

Each year will be a new learning experience, and growing walker numbers will introduce new challenges, however the suggestions in the evaluation should pave the way for a more robust implementation model for 2009.

August 2008

Appendix 'A'

Summary of Actions resulting from the Evaluation of WalkFest'07

:: Suggestions for Marketing and Exposure

- *We should consider our marketing strategy in an effort to identify any obvious weaknesses. How do we reach the national walkers and convince them to visit Galloway?*

Action:

More aggressive internet marketing campaign through walking magazines and the internet – VisitScotland in particular

- *We need to build upon our relationships with the local media and consider options with local radio and television – ITV Border and BBC Scotland*

Action:

Done – featured on Border TV and BBC Radio Scotland

- *Discuss with VisitScotland how we overcome the problems experienced when callers enquire about the festival – surely they have access to the internet?*

Action:

Better response achieved this year – internet link from the VisitScotland website very productive

- *We should drop the mailshot for future festivals.*

Action:

Dropped from marketing strategy

:: Suggestions for Website

- *Continue to develop the website using the existing template but consider the following options*
 - *Allow users to select the option of full descriptions for walks or a brief synopsis*
 - *Provide filtration to allow users to read walks of similar grading on one page for the whole week*

Action: *Both suggestions implemented*

- *Note that mapping cannot be enhanced due to copyright issues – to use better map imagery would require us to purchase a license from Ordnance Survey*

Action:

Links to the new OS Explore Website created in the weeks prior resolved this problem and can be utilised for 2009

:: Suggestions for Booking Process

- *WRDC are contracted to handle both parts of the process and provided online access to the WalkFest database.*

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- **Action:**
Proposal successfully implemented
- **Consideration is given to provide equity to all walkers and remove the £1 booking fee for telephone bookings and personal callers**

Action:
Charge no longer applies – absorbed by event funds.

- **The website is redesigned to allow multiple bookings without compromise to the back office process.**

Action:
Not possible due to data recording processes with existing software. Additional cost not viable at present. Continue to review in the future

:: Suggestions for Transportation

- **Walk Leaders to ensure their walk group is ready to leave on time – buses should not be delayed on departure to wait for 'no show' walkers. They can be added to alternative later routes if they turn up. Update Guidance for Walkers Information to make walkers aware.**

Action:
Above implemented but with partial success

- **Add names of walk routes as well as numerical identifier for bus markings.**

Action:
Implemented

- **Attention to bus timetable to ensure all buses leave on time.**

Action:
Attempted but unsuccessfully – see resolution plan for 2009.

:: Suggestions for Walks

- **Continue with similar walk routes for 2008 providing a variety of hill and or themed routes.**

Action:
Good varied programme offered

- **Continue the association with Galloway Mountain Rescue Team.**

Action:
Long term association will continue

- **Ensure that all walk leaders are properly briefed and provide a high standard of guidance to the entire party**

Action:
Briefing arrangements improved

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- **Consider introduction of a Disclaimer style Health/Fitness Questionnaire to be completed by all walkers.**

Action:

Registration Form and medical disclaimer introduced and checked by walk leaders prior to departure

- **Consider providing information to walkers on the expected walk pace to allow for more informed decision when selecting walk route.**

Action:

Introduced but perhaps caused more confusion than clarity in some cases – to be reviewed for 2009

- **Consider theme options for 2008 and ensure that publicity accurately highlights walks with a themed focus.**

Action:

Themed walks continued in 2008

:: Suggestions for Entertainment

- **Consider options to promote the Ceilidh and attract more walkers**

Action:

Increased local publicity and better website exposure

- **Continue with the Talk or Presentation delivered by a suitable speaker on a walking theme**

Action:

Continued – Keith Kirk Wildlife Photographer

- **Include a mid week evening event – possibly a talk on the work of Galloway Mountain Rescue Team?**

Action:

Done – Two presentations delivered by the MRT

:: Suggestions for Overall Improvement

- **Consider reviewing the Walk Grading to ensure that walkers are better informed**

Action:

New grading system introduced to provide better informed choice for walkers

- **Ensure a better balance of walk routes throughout the week**

Action:

Achieved in programme

- **Improve co-ordination with local businesses to improve economic opportunities – particularly food providers.**

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Action:

Work still ongoing but walk schedule provided walkers with greater opportunity to explore the town

- ***As part of the marketing strategy – streamline and improve the distribution of leaflets and paper based advertising material to ensure walkers with no internet access are better informed.***

Action:

New strategy with a paper based launch and earlier circulation of paper based adverting including a WalkFest booklet introduced successfully

- ***Include more Linear Routes in the programme***

Action:

Done

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Appendix B – Comments for Improvement by respondents

keep the variety and range of walks please
Perhaps change the 7am registration to a bit later in view of the fact that it is lighter at nights and if people are staying over its easier to get an evening meal/bar supper than perhaps get a really early breakfast.
Better information on what you will encounter on the walk. For instance there was one lady on the walk that struggled to climb the hill. If the walk description had said "Strenuous with difficult ascent" then she may have chosen an alternative walk and had a more enjoyable day
Better co-ordination of transport
Was only able to do one walk which was excellent - can't comment on the overall Walkfest.
if you want this to be a festival which includes and involves more local people, then I think you have to bring back the easier walks and publicise it more. As with the Spring Fling a majority know nothing about it.
Sort out transport problems for next year and have a quiet word with some of the less good walk leaders.
Our return transport arrangements were a shambles. The bus driver had been waiting 2 hours by the time we arrived. There was difficulty in locating the bus and a lack of control amongst the mountain rescue team personnel. Again I heard several complaints
Not really, I think you all do a great job, it gets better every year.
How can you improve on excellence?!!!!
when booking it would be helpful if those wishing to share transport to N.S. could give a contact number thus reducing vehicle use and increasing parking opportunities at N.S.
better transport organisation
Length of walk to be more accurate (distance and estimated time). A request to those wanting to do the strenuous walks to be of a certain fitness.
see above request for contact number - in order to notify of changes in pick up points or cancellations
no everthing was 1st class
no, We enjoyed everything

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Communication between the Guides taking the walks and transport .
Fewer walks each day for logistical reasons.
very happy with current arrangements - you seem to be able to come up with a variety of walks each year
The organisation needs to be improved as it gave a poor impression to visitors. In addition to the transport mixup the walk leader was surprised to learn that he was leading the walk - he had been told he was depute walk leader.
It would be worth paying a little extra to enable each walk to have reliable transport (i.e. independent of other walks being late) at end of day
It would be worth paying a little extra to enable each walk to have reliable transport (i.e. independent of other walks being late) at end of day
it is a walk not a race.most people seemed to be on a race.
Living in the area but not very close to NS, it would be good to be able to pick up the bus en route if it's coming in my direction, rather than driving all the way to NS only to retrace my steps on the bus.
Only to the transport arrangements!
We found one or two of the groups larger than at other walking festivals we've attended. Don't know if it would be feasible to reduce the group size.
I certainly found that by the time I had completed the walks and attended the evening entertainment I was ready for bed, but for those who stayed the distance may have had problems filling their day
Spent very little time in Newton Stewart as a result of walks getting back late for various reasons
I missed the easy waslks of earlier years especially those led by Joan around Newton Stewart (PS I am 75!)
Clearer information on types of walks - Buchan Hill brochure states pleaseant straightforward - it was not.
Stick to walks - forget route marches
Transport as you are aware needs to be improved
Would be helpful if information centre had been open earlier or later because walks were early and back too late
For people like me who don't have a computer it would be good to have a route description and route map if possible available at registration or a brief route description in the brochure
Staying in a hotel or BandB makes pre 0900 very difficult. Starting the walk at 12.30 on walk 6.2 I believe we still managed 15 miles - surely 0900 is early enough

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Nice to have a group photo afterwards - at cost?
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Appropriate transport and transporting us in time to do designated route. Not changing the route due to muddled arrangements
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Slightly later registration times - 2008 very early if not staying in Newton Stewart
--