



“Walking City” International Conference, June 2-3, 2005 - Porto, Portugal
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Summary and Conclusions

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Conference Conclusions

We have been privileged to have some of the best experts in the world come and share their insight and experience in Portugal for this conference. Collectively, they have suggested functional solutions, identified processes for positive change and given a list of practical tools. Their talks have been illustrated with many examples of where politicians and technical professionals have applied a vision of wanting to provide communities where people can live well.

Such examples, intended to give confidence and inspiration, have the potential also to overwhelm and look out of reach when presented collectively over such a short and intensive time. Indeed, the local speakers at the conference suggested that although there are some good things happening in Portugal, there is not generally a supportive culture politically and professionals are not generally aware of how to make the changes that deliver welcoming, liveable and walkable communities.

Several common stepping stones to achieving culture change and raising awareness of these important issues have been laid down by many of the speakers. These include:

1. The need for data

Understanding the community and its behaviour, travel and movement trends, motivations and satisfaction, is an essential base from which to develop effective improvements.

To do this effectively requires careful consideration about who to consult with and how to do it, so that the community is engaged and empowered to ask for the right things that make their areas more liveable and walkable.

The quality of the environment needs to be audited and recorded in relation to understanding the quantitative and qualitative assessment of the community. Community Street Audits arranged by organisations such as Living Streets, are a useful tool to begin the assessment and engagement process.

2. The need for political commitment and technical expertise

The case needs to be made locally and appropriately, so that the solutions that have been applied effectively in other places have the opportunity to be considered and implemented in all communities.

This involves taking personal responsibility for improving the situation and working in partnership with the universities, professional institutions, government and voluntary organisations to provide the necessary training and support.

A practical starting point is to sell or adopt a strategic vision which is people orientated, inclusive and connected to a deliverable shopping list of actions.

Experience suggests that interdisciplinary teams, forums for debate and workshops to develop and disseminate best practice are particularly useful to facilitate the change.

3. The need for inclusive standards

It is important to set high standards to raise the expectation of the possibilities for liveable communities and provide the framework for delivering them.

The role of the professional is to bring communities together with the people who provide the services and facilities at their homes, shops and places of work and rest, in order to help set and raise best practice.

4. The need to celebrate success

Where communities are liveable and towns and cities are walkable, the courage of the individuals and investment by the government should be acknowledged and rewarded wherever possible to serve as an inspiration to others.

It is important to remember - particularly when starting from what can appear to be a rather lonely and insignificant point - that there is a community of professionals and

experts who have been there before you, and who have successfully made the leap of faith to make things better for the communities which they serve.

Walk21 is an international conference series that supports encourages and inspires professionals to evolve the best policies and implement the best initiatives, which create and promote liveable, community environments where people choose to walk. Welcome to the family and please let us help you if you would like any further information or assistance.

Biography

Jim Walker is an accomplished business planner, strategic thinker and project manager specialising in access planning and communications. He has wide experience of negotiating partnerships, delivering effective targeted campaigns and coordinating access audits, network planning and overseeing practical enhancement projects.

He has written best practice guidance on Greenway design and development, Increasing Access to the Wider Countryside, Walking - making it happen and contributed to the Institute of Highways and Transportation Guidelines for Increasing Journeys of Foot. He has secured Interreg funding for access projects in Kent; £3m LIFE money for access projects in London and a further £1m from Transport for London Borough Spending Plans for Pan London walking projects.

He has given strategic access advice to The Department for Transport (*National Walking Strategy, Local Transport Notes, Are you Doing Your Bit Campaign*), Countryside Agency (*Diversity Review, National Countryside Access Database Project, Common Visual Language Project, Sense and Accessibility, Paths Without Prejudice, Shared Use*); Visit Britain (*Outdoor Britain Campaign, Walking Holidays Toolkit*), English Nature (*Access Audits and planning*), British Waterways (*Access auditing and planning*), Heritage Lottery Fund (*The impact of Countryside and Rights of Way Act*); Corporation of London (*Pan London Strategic Walks Project*); Transport for London (*Mayor's Transport Strategy, London Plan, London Walking Plan*); Thames Estuary Partnership (*Greenways Project*); Royal Parks (*Diana Walkway*), Government of Chile (*Sendero de Chile Trail*); Government of Kenya (*Samburu Trail*); Government of Western Australia (*National Trail Strategy*); and America Trails (*Marketing Plan for Trails in USA*),

He has coordinated communication campaigns for Visit Britain (*Walking Britain*), Countryside Agency (*National Trails, Foot and Mouth – return to the Countryside, Common Visual Language Project*), Local Heritage Initiative (web site), High Weald AONB (*Management Plan consultation*); Thames Path (*Online accessibility information project*), Countryside Council for Wales (*National Trails*), Hadrian's Wall (web site),

Overall Experience

- In 2000 he started working as an independent advisor and then, in association with colleagues, set up The Access Company.
- Since 1998 he has been the Director of the London Walking Forum, Chair of Walk21 International Conference Series and Director of Jubilee Walkway Trust.
- Between 1996 –1998 he worked as a National Trail Manager for the Countryside Agency in Kent and Surrey
- From 1992 – 1996 he worked as an Interpretation Ranger and then Nature Conservation Officer in West London managing a ranger service, 40 sites and two education centres.
- In 1991 he worked as a Marketing Manger for a catering company in Australia.
- From 1989 – 1991 he worked as a Countryside Ranger and Environmental Education teacher in Berkshire for the Local authority; in Virginia USA for a United Nations Environment Programme initiative and in Tongariro National Park, New Zealand.

Teaching

He is a visiting lecturer at Loosehill Hall Peak District National Park Training Centre teaching best practice for managing access to the Countryside.