

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL



PRESS RELEASE

22/11/2011

St Swithun – Patron Saint of Bus Travellers?

An innovative promotion of a long distance footpath should give passengers waiting for buses in Alton's busy High Street something other to read than bus timetables from now on.

Five bus shelters in the thoroughfare have been brightened-up with maps and text depicting St Swithun's Way, a 70 mile long distance footpath linking Winchester and Canterbury, which runs along the town's High Street. Written in a mediaeval text and complimenting an official information pack about the route, the panels are designed to raise awareness about the route, and further boost the town's credentials as a popular base for exploring the surrounding countryside.

Alton Town Council's Parish Paths Working Party, which masterminded the project has been keen to raise awareness of the route for some time, but wanted to do something other than just erect more signs on poles, the traditional method of promoting footpaths.

Chairman of the Working Party, Cllr Kevin Stevens said "I suspect that most people are unaware that St Swithun's Way runs up Alton High Street, and rather than install more furniture, using something that was already there and needed brightening-up seemed a good idea. We think we might be the first to promote a long-distance footpath in this way. In the future we hope to get Alton accredited as a *Walker's Welcome* town, and this latest project, coupled with the many other things that have been done in the past, such as Map Boards and excellent walks' leaflets, really should help our bid."

The scheme was jointly funded by the Town Council and Hampshire County Council through its Community Challenge Fund for groups working in rural areas. Marilyn Meeks of the County Council's Countryside Service said, "We were delighted to support this project, particularly as it is promoting walking and our

wonderful Long Distance Footpaths in a novel and innovative way, hopefully to a much wider audience than perhaps a conventional leaflet would achieve. Full marks to Alton for coming up with such a great idea and we will certainly be using this as an example to others on how to think *outside the box!*”

St Swithun’s Way was established by Hampshire County Council in 2001 and shares much of the route with the Pilgrim’s Way, which also runs through Alton’s High Street.

Ends

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Note to Editors:

To promote the panels, a photo-call will be held at **2pm on Tuesday 29 November 2011** in the High Street, including the Town Mayor of Alton, Cllr Robert Saunders, the Chairman of the Working Party, Cllr Kevin Stevens, former Chairman Pam Jones, other members of the Working Party and Marilyn Meeks from Hampshire County Council.