

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT DEBATE ON 'SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY SPORT' THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER A BRIEFING BY PATHS FOR ALL (PFA)

### Why is walking so important to community sport development?

- 61% of the Scottish population is inactive (PAHA 2012), and with physical inactivity described as the “silent killer of our time”, improving activity levels is a top priority
- Walking is the most common physical activity, at any age, income or gender (it, therefore, also helps tackle inequalities)
- Walking is an accessible “entry point” into a more active lifestyle for people who are currently inactive – it is easily accessible, needs no specialist equipment and anyone can do it
- If more adults walk more often, then these adults can be sign-posted into community sporting opportunities as part of their progression
- Walking is the ideal way of including older people in community sport. This is vital as the Scottish population is projected to age significantly between now and 2035, with the number of people over 65 projected to rise by 63% (i.e. 0.88 million to 1.43 million)
- Walking also delivers major health improvement benefits - it has been proven to reduce the severity of dementia, retain bone density, the risks of some cancers, cardiovascular diseases (reduced by up to 30%), depression and high blood pressure. It has even been shown to reduce overall mortality rates by up to 20%
- PFA has recently had a Social Return on Investment (SROI) study of the Stirling walking network assured, which demonstrates that every £1 invested in walking generates around £9 of benefits.

### Key points for consideration

- Recreational walking (and cycling) has an important role to play in the development of community sport
- Walking has the biggest potential to create a lasting physical activity and community sport legacy in Scotland from the 2014 Commonwealth Games and 2012 Olympics
- Recreational walking should be a key part of the development of Community Sports Hubs in that it is the most popular means of introducing people to physical activity and sport (see chart overleaf)
- The development of path networks around Community Sports Hubs should be an integral part of their development in order to maximise the Hubs' impact within the communities they serve
- From evaluations of walkers attending PFA walks, it is clear that walking is often the first step to a more physically active lifestyle and crucially from a community sport perspective is a progression route to other forms of physical activity and sports (1,315 new walkers returned follow-up forms after walking with walking groups for 6 months. 64% report they now take part in additional physical activity. The most popular activities (most popular first) are longer walks, keep fit, swimming, cycling, jogging, dancing and yoga.) Many quotes from walkers emphasise how walking has motivated them to try additional forms of physical activity, for example:

*“I feel better within myself, I've gained more confidence, and have started swimming, wii dance and also go to the gym twice a week, it's the best decision I've made to join.”*

*“I have now promoted myself to the Vitality Circuit Class 2 days a week and the gym inductions.”*

*“My husband and I have rejoined the gym and go together 3/4 times a week.”*

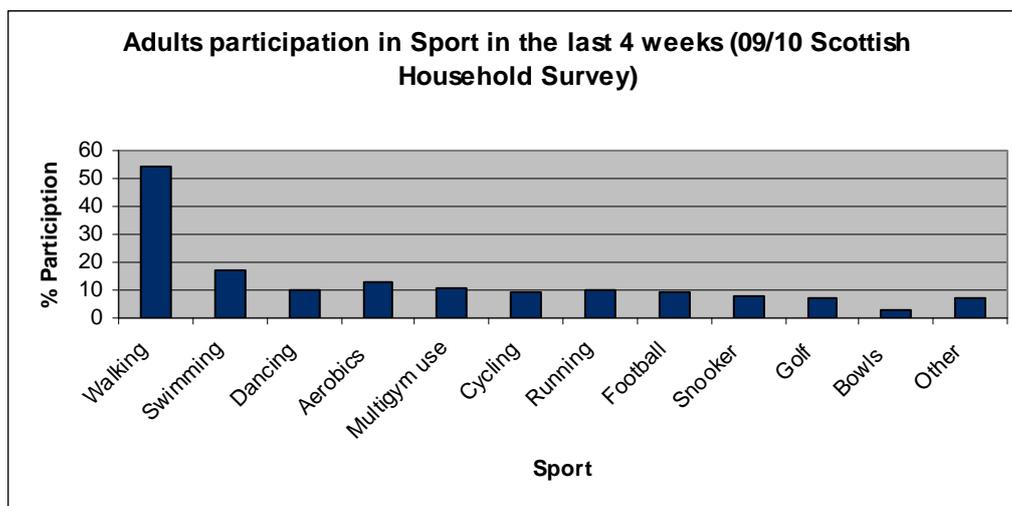
- In order to optimise accessibility for all to Community Sports Hubs, we suggest that consideration is given to re-naming them ‘Active Community Hubs’.

## Paths for All

Paths for All is a Scottish charity whose **vision is for a happier, healthier, greener, more active Scotland**. Our main areas of activity are walking for health and path network development. PFA is also a partnership organisation representing 26 national organisations from the public and third sectors.

Below are some highlights regarding our current activities:

- PFA has supported over 440 community health walks across every local authority area in Scotland
- There are currently 130 active community and 30 workplace walking projects supported by PFA
- It is estimated that the 130 community walking projects generated over 210,000 walking attendances between April 2011 and March 2012
- 30% of the Scottish population lives within 2km of a PFA walk start point; over 50% live within 5km of a PFA walk start point and the average distance between each walker and a PFA walk start point is 3.9km
- PFA has trained over 6000 Volunteer Walk Leaders
- In the 2012 PFA Step Count Challenge, over 4,500 people from 295 workplaces collectively walked over 975,895 miles in 8 weeks
- PFA provides grant support to Living Streets Scotland, Long Term Conditions Alliance for Scotland and Ramblers Association Scotland for projects that assist PFA to deliver its outcomes
- PFA supports community groups to develop local path networks through its Local People: Local Paths project and Technical Advice Programme
- PFA manages 2 national path demonstration sites.



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