

‘Walk Back Better’ – A statement from National Walking Strategy Delivery Forum

Since March we have seen a significant change in people’s attitude and interest in walking throughout Scotland. The Covid19 pandemic and lockdown have been a hugely challenging and devastating time for individuals, communities and businesses, but it has also had many positive societal impacts in relation to walking;

- it has made us stay local and walk local
- it has also allowed some of us the time to explore, rediscover, reconnect and enjoy our local areas and appreciate being outdoors for a short walk
- it has contributed to the reduction in traffic noise and pollution
- it has provided the opportunity for many to reconnect with nature
- it has helped us to use walking as an important way to look after our physical and mental wellbeing

The National Walking Strategy Delivery Forum is looking towards the ‘new normal’ and what that could mean for walking and wheeling (i.e. wheelchair) in Scotland.

We are already seeing significant changes within our towns and cities through the temporary introduction of wider pavements, closed roads for traffic to encourage walking and cycling and reductions in speed limits. We would like to see this continue well into the future and not just as temporary measures during the pandemic. These small scale, local projects, focussed on walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport can have a significant impact. We would like to see the shift from large scale car dominated projects to smaller scale interventions that can be distributed more equitably across communities and local economies.

We want to see walking and wheeling as a significant factor in how we ‘build back better’ and move forward to a ‘new normal’. We believe that by encouraging more people to walk more often, and by creating safe and attractive places to walk, we can harness some of the positive societal changes that the Coronavirus lockdown has brought and begin to rebuild our communities for the better. We want it to be done in an equitable way within and across communities to support a reduction in health inequalities.

From continuing to encourage local walking for ‘daily exercise’ to supporting people to walk for short journeys to the shops, to work, to schools or to public transport, we’ll move forward from this pandemic to a healthier, cleaner, safer and happier nation.

Our call to action.

The National Walking Strategy Delivery Forum will:

- champion walking across Scotland
- work to ensure that people and walking are put first in national and local planning developments
- use our collective voice to advocate for better walking environments and safer, attractive urban spaces that put people first
- support walking as part of public transport journeys
- promote walking as an easy and attractive way to look after physical and mental wellbeing
- Seek new and adapted capital funding to create safe space for walking at a local level

We want others to:

- engage with the public and communities on ways to implement walking initiatives and improve their local areas
- encourage delivery of projects that support walking
- promote 'walk local' – support town centre developments
- put people first and integrate good walking infrastructure into all developments
- enable the shift from private vehicle use to public transport and active modes of travel
- ensure good walking environments, as part of the 'green recovery' are a significant factor within national strategic plans such as NPF4, STPR2 and the delivery of the National Transport Strategy
- allocate space and investment using the National Transport Strategy hierarchy
- ensure 20mph limits in our towns and cities
- improve and maintain pavements to ensure safe environments for all
- keep pavements clear of unnecessary clutter and obstructions and enforce pavement parking and blocking dropped kerbs
- enable areas that support older people i.e. ensure that seats are available in busy streets, toilets etc.
- give pedestrians more time at traffic signals and crossings, with 'green man' on demand

National Walking Strategy Delivery Forum, July 2020

<http://stepchangescot.scot/>

