



photograph © Dave Gowans



ramblers scotland
at the heart of walking

Can Scotland deliver a Games Legacy?

All politicians who seek to secure support for major sporting events speak about “legacy”. It has become an essential part of the bidding process - who can deliver the best transformation in citizens’ lives beyond the excitement and razzamatazz of a few weeks of sporting excellence. Unfortunately, most of the evidence gathered after the events points to limited legacy achievement. Of course the construction or renovation of stadia and associated facilities, brings benefits which hopefully are ongoing, but no country has yet delivered fundamental changes to lifestyles and opportunities for its citizens as a whole as a result of hosting one of these major sporting events. Can Scotland be different? We have made a good start. Both First Ministers have been strongly committed to delivering legacy – Jack McConnell in emphasising the importance of raising physical activity levels amongst the population and Alex Salmond building on this with the “Active Nation” concept and the need to also deliver environmental, cultural and economic benefits to the whole of Scotland. There has been consistency in approach, despite different political perspectives. Today, with Shona Robison as Commonwealth Games and Sports Minister, we have an enthusiastic and experienced politician focussed on the task.

But there are many hurdles. Despite the best efforts of **sportscotland**, local authorities, and various health departments, most Scots are still far too inactive, increasingly overweight and participate in sport largely through watching TV. A fundamental culture change is needed, bringing Scotland closer to the lifestyles of the Scandinavian countries, where contact with nature and enjoyment of outdoor recreation is an integral part of everyone’s life from their earliest years.

Ramblers Scotland believes that physical activity legacy benefits will only be achieved from both the 2012 Olympic and 2014 Commonwealth Games if there is a massive increase in the proportion of the population who spend much more time walking or cycling. These are the fundamental building blocks to an active lifestyle. Participation in other sports must be strongly

encouraged, but if you go to other European countries where they are fitter and healthier than we are, it is the huge numbers of people who are walking or cycling that demonstrate why things are different.

We need to motivate people to get up from their desks and walk about, get outside over their lunch break, get off the bus a few stops early, park the car 30 minutes walk away from the office and get the bike out of the garage. But any sporting activity needs a supporting infrastructure. Walking and cycling needs lots of paths and tracks – Scotland is one of the worst European counties for its path network density, especially near where most of us live. Building new paths across Scotland, connecting every community with its neighbour, should be a central objective in delivering the Glasgow 2014 legacy. But it will need cooperation from all Scottish Government departments – the sports champions cannot do it alone. The Environment Minister, Stewart Stevenson, needs to become the Path Network Champion, while the Transport Minister, Keith Brown, needs to drag his officials out of the Dark Ages. Allocating only around 1% of the Transport Scotland budget to walking and cycling, year after year, when all official expert advice recommends at least 10%, is a dereliction of duty and an insult to all who aspire to a 2014 legacy.

Ramblers Scotland has a series of projects which we hope will help to deliver the Games legacy, see www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland/walkthepath2014. Join us on a winter walk over the next few months. With over 2,000 led walks available from October to March, delivered by our 55 Groups in Scotland, there is plenty to choose from. You will get fit, enjoy the open air, meet some friends and learn some more about our Games legacy programme. For more information contact:

Jeannie Cranfield, Games Legacy Advisor, Kingfisher House, Auld Mart Business Park, Milnathort, Kinross. KY13 9DA Tel: 01577 867744 Email: jeannie.cranfield@ramblers.org.uk

01577 861 222 - scotland@ramblers.org.uk - www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland