



Holyrood 2016: Manifesto for a Walking Scotland



ramblers scotland
at the heart of walking



Manifesto for a walking Scotland

The 2016 Holyrood election is an opportunity for politicians from all parties to support walking and demonstrate their commitment to promoting active, healthy lifestyles, protecting the environment and improving access to the outdoors.

Our vision is of a Scotland where walking is part of everyone's daily lives, as a way of spending time with friends or just keeping healthy, as a mode of transport or simply for the joy of being outdoors. Let's capitalise on our unrivalled natural heritage to transform the culture of our country, so that everyone in Scotland is inspired to walk the West Highland Way, climb a Munro or bag their own personal summit. Everyone should feel they belong in our countryside and greenspaces and value our landscapes and wildlife, enjoying the many benefits of being outdoors.

For this change in culture and behaviour to happen, we believe much of the policy framework is in place but we need political will and leadership and the resources to deliver these policies. Ramblers Scotland is ready to work together with partners to support this change.



Promoting active, healthy lifestyles

Scotland has one of the lowest life expectancies in Western Europe, and there is strong evidence of the role physical inactivity plays in this.

Being more active in the natural environment as part of our daily lives can help to improve our physical and mental health. Benefits include a more productive and healthy workforce, a better environment and quality of life, and even a more socially just society with reduced health inequalities. Good policies and strategies are already in place, but we need leadership, a change in political priorities and greater investment in walking and other outdoor activities to ensure they are delivered to all sectors of society.

National Walking Strategy - this strategy needs clear targets and a specific budget to be delivered. Public, private and third sector organisations all have a role to play.

Investment in outdoor recreation - with our magnificent scenery and world-class access rights we can inspire people of all ages across Scotland to be more active. But we need investment in paths and bridges, signs and promotion, and in training to help develop the skills to do these activities safely, especially for young people.

Developing hut trails - we can learn from countries like New Zealand, where hut trails offer simple, low cost lodgings in remote areas for long distance routes. These trails bring economic opportunities for rural communities and we are keen to work with partners to scope such trails in Scotland.

Active travel - a reprioritisation of transport spending to increase investment in walking and cycling, and public transport, would make it easier for people to choose to walk or cycle, especially for shorter journeys. Public transport provision is especially important in rural areas. We have joined other active travel organisations to produce a separate manifesto document, [Scotland on the move](#).





A Scotland designed for walking

Scotland's access rights are recognised as among the best in the world, but there is a constant need to uphold these rights and ensure they are not diminished over time. We believe there is an urgent need to expand and improve our path networks using a variety of funding mechanisms. All relevant government departments should recognise the role of access in providing benefits to health, the environment, tourism and communities, and identify appropriate funding streams from agriculture, transport and other budgets.

Scottish Paths Fund - new path development is slow in Scotland so we would like to see a challenge fund set up specifically to provide funding for paths used for recreation, with core paths as a priority.

NPF3/4 - the National Planning Framework 3 introduced a national walking and cycling network of long distance routes. NPF4 should include a commitment to expand this network.

Level crossings - there is legal confusion over the 400 'private' level crossings in Scotland, and many of these crossings are important for local communities and also recreation interests. We call for the statutory rights of access to be established across all private crossings where access rights also apply to land on either side.

Removing obstructions - access authorities often find it difficult to get obstructions removed, especially due to the need to prove that the obstruction is there for the purpose or for the main purpose of preventing access. We propose an amendment to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (s.14(1)) to help resolve this problem.

Protecting access rights - new developments often threaten existing access rights and there are also many long-standing access issues which never seem to be resolved. We'd like to see more support from government to encourage access authorities to uphold these rights, and more involvement from the public in raising access issues.



Protecting the environment

Scotland's natural heritage provides a magnificent setting for outdoor recreation. Our landscapes, mountains, wildlife, woodlands, coastline, lochs and rivers all attract millions of visitors each year and nature based tourism is worth around £1.4bn to the economy, as well as contributing to our wellbeing as a nation. However, this environment needs protected from obtrusive and inappropriate developments which are eroding away our wildest land and detracting from the enjoyment gained from walking in our countryside.

Deer management - this has a great influence on the natural beauty of our land, affecting many aspects of sustainable land use such as woodland regeneration. Electrified deer fencing and hill tracks built for field sports impact on our upland landscapes and can be constructed without planning permission. We are calling for stronger control by SNH over deer management plans. For walkers, deer stalking information should be more widely available from estates.

Landscape protection - the government-led Scottish Landscape Forum should be re-established to fully demonstrate the importance of our landscapes and support measures for their protection.

National parks - we would like to see a Ministerially-led National Parks Strategy Group to carry out a review of the existing parks and consider future national parks. National parks can play an important role in regenerating some of the more economically fragile parts of rural Scotland. We have long called for Scotland's third national park to be established in Harris, and feel that new parks could follow a lighter-touch operational model.

National Recreation Areas - we would like consideration of a new designation which recognises certain areas for their importance for recreation, enabling greater numbers of visitors to be attracted to the areas and managed more effectively.

Litter - high levels of litter blight some of our prime beauty spots and we have joined the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland's **Have you got the Bottle** campaign, calling for a deposit-return system to be introduced for cans and glass and plastic bottles.

The case for walking

Good for physical health - the Chief Medical Officer in 2013 estimated physical inactivity kills 7 people in Scotland every day, contributes to over 40 chronic diseases, and costs the NHS around £94m per year. Walking is the most practical solution to this. More people walking 150 minutes a week would lead to better life expectancy and decreased pressures on the NHS.

Good for mental health - regular walking improves mood, reduces anxiety, aids sleep and improves self-image. People that stay active have a 30% lower risk of getting depression and a reduced risk of suffering from dementia.

Good for the economy - walkers contribute hugely to economies through tourism - the 2012 Scottish Recreation Survey estimated £2.6bn in expenditure on visits to the outdoors. Investment in infrastructure and promotion of paths and other facilities can support jobs and businesses in fragile areas.

Good for social justice - people living in areas of deprivation have less contact with nature and wildlife. Improving access to high quality greenspace and landscapes would lead to better outcomes for health and wellbeing.

Good for the environment - half of all car journeys taken in Scotland are under 5km, so being able to choose to walk or cycle for short trips would bring benefits to our environment through reduced air pollution and congestion. In addition, if more people are encouraged to feel a sense of ownership for our countryside, they are more likely to respect it and help care for it.

By properly investing in the places people walk, encouraging walking and improving access to the outdoors, we can build a healthier, happier Scotland. Get walking today!





ramblers scotland
at the heart of walking

Ramblers Scotland helps everyone, across Scotland, enjoy walking and protects the places we love to walk. We are recognised by **sportscotland** as a governing body of sport. We are part of the Ramblers, which has been campaigning across Great Britain for over 80 years to secure and facilitate access, promote walking and protect the natural beauty of the countryside.

- 📍 Nearly 6,500 members across Scotland
- 📍 56 volunteer-led walking groups, organising thousands of walks and social activities each year



 @ramblersscot

 Ramblers Scotland

 www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland



Ramblers Scotland
Caledonia House
1 Redheughs Rigg
South Gyle
Edinburgh
EH12 9DQ

0131 472 7006

scotland@ramblers.org.uk

Photo credits: Front page: Lindsey Mathers; p2: Mark Ferguson; p3: Jeannie Cranfield; p5: Colin Rae; p6: Jeannie Cranfield; p9: Stuart King; p11: Ramblers Scotland; Back page: Alastair Maclean. All photos © photographer / Ramblers Scotland. Design: Lynx Graphic Design

The Ramblers' Association is a registered charity (England and Wales no 1093577, Scotland no SC039799) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England (no 4458492).