Delivering the Physical Activity Legacy from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games

The role of walking and cycling in the outdoors

Dave Morris and Jeannie Cranfield, Ramblers Scotland.

Dave Morris: In Sept 2009 the Scottish Government published its legacy plans for the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. The First Minister, writing in the foreword about this “once in a lifetime opportunity”, spoke of the need for Scotland to be ambitious, to build a lasting and positive legacy and, above all, to become a fitter and more active nation. The report includes words which encapsulate why we are here today: “if Scotland rises to the challenge we will have done something no country has done before”.

By way of introduction, however, I want to make a number of general points to set the scene and, in doing so, draw on the experience of previous major sporting events, notably the Manchester Commonwealth Games of 2002, the London Olympics of 2012 and the Winter Olympics of 2010 (Vancouver) and 2014 (Sochi). All these events claim to have been delivering physical activity legacy benefits and all have something to contribute to our thinking. My conclusion is that success will only be achieved if a legacy programme is seen as an integral part of the sporting event, is able to use the event as a springboard to capture and maintain public and political enthusiasm, which lasts long after the event itself, involves all the key government departments and recognises that it is the partnership with the voluntary sector which is crucial. We need to understand that it is not up to the organisers of the Games to carry the responsibility for legacy delivery - it is for others, in the public and private sectors who need to carry the physical activity baton forward. And we need to monitor that process, learning and adjusting as we go on.

Scotland appears to be on track, with all the signs pointing to a well planned and organised Games, with construction and operations designed to meet
sustainable development principles. Physical activity legacy proposals were incorporated from the early days of the bid process. But now that the Games are almost upon us can we deliver the legacy?

My answer is yes, providing we all commit this year to a ten year programme and recognise what we have done in the past is not good enough, by a long way, and we must be ambitious and brave in what we seek.

We can achieve a lot in 10 years. Up until 2007 I used to wander down to the shore of Loch Leven near Kinross and Milnathort, where our Scottish office is located. A walk around the perimeter was not a pleasant experience - Scottish Natural Heritage signs warned me to go no further, presumably to avoid disturbing wildlife or landowners, I am not sure which! Fences, locked gates and no paths made sure that I was alone as I wandered through the fields near the loch. Today, everything is transformed. A multiuse path has been constructed around two thirds of the loch. The final section will be completed by Easter, going through the RSPB nature reserve at Vane Farm, then crossing farmland and a major watercourse on the way to Kinross. The funding for this section, nearly £800,000, is in place and covers not only path construction but also viewpoint and interpretive facilities. Already nearly 300,000 people are using the existing path each year and five new café facilities have appeared close to or linked to the path since construction began. All this has been achieved within 10 years, clearly demonstrating that a bit of vision plus commitment can deliver huge environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits.

There are three things we need to focus on to secure our 2014 physical activity legacy. We must motivate most individuals to be more active, even if it means no more than sitting down less. Motivating the individual should be easy – walking is free and can be done anywhere. Secondly, we need to encourage people to get together with others to go out walking and cycling – just meeting up with a few friends, joining a club or forming a new group is a great way of stimulating interest and enthusiasm. And the members can always get together for other activities as well - there is no reason why the local walking club should not also have its mountain biking, swimming, snowboarding or badminton sections, etc etc. Thirdly, we need to spend money on infrastructure – we need to recognise that building paths is as important as bridges across the Firth of Forth. We need a fundamental change in transport
budgets at national and local level to bring this about. Chris Hoy, with three gold medals around his neck in Beijing in 2008, said it all – we need more paths and other routes so that people of all ages can go out on bicycles and feel safe. How many more Olympians do we need to say this before enough action is taken? If Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Oslo, Berlin etc etc can do it why not Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee etc etc.

So let me explain what I think Scotland will be like in 10 years time. Then you will hear about some of the things we are doing in the Ramblers to help ensure that the 10 year plan comes to fruition.

By 2024:

- Most of the population will be aware of the need to take physical exercise and realise this is as important as eating and sleeping.
- The value of being part of a walking or cycling group, for enjoyment, health and social reasons will be recognised by most people, even if they do their own walking or cycling alone.
- A massive increase in the numbers of people walking and cycling will have taken place as part of everyday activity.
- At least 10% of all annual transport budgets will be spent on non motorised travel, with Glasgow and other Scottish cities among the best in Europe for walking and cycling.
- The Common Agriculture Policy will have been reformed so that all direct payments to farmers will require 10% of such payments to be spent on environmental measures, including the provision of walking and cycling routes through farmland.
- Every community in Scotland will be connected to its neighbours by walking and cycling routes in recognition that it is a basic human right to be able to walk or cycle to your neighbouring community by non motorised means.

That should keep us all busy for the next few years. Meanwhile I would like to finish my contribution by showing you a 4 minute video which illustrates what Ramblers groups are up to in Scotland today, from swimming to snowball fighting!  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cg6b1leSzbs
Dave Morris, Director Scotland  
www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland


**Jeannie Cranfield:** For our part Ramblers Scotland have been promoting projects and campaigns that support people to become more active and able to integrate walking and cycling more easily into their everyday life.

We know the majority of us still don’t exercise enough and that nearly 2,500 people die prematurely each year in Scotland due to physical inactivity, costing the NHS £94 million a year.

So it is right that a key aspiration for the Commonwealth Games should be to increase the number of people meeting the recommended physical activity levels.

Last year the Scottish Govt launched a GP referral pilot to support brief advice and brief intervention to get patients more active. We didn’t envisage that health practitioners would necessarily refer people to the Ramblers so **TAKE 30** ([www.take30.co.uk](http://www.take30.co.uk)) was developed as a useful resource for GPs and health professionals to refer patients to. It’s full of useful information about the health benefits of walking, ideas on where to walk, short walks and walking groups. Patients can be encouraged to download a 12wk walk programme to get them started to help embed the habit of walking as an everyday activity.

TAKE 30 however is more than just a web resource, the main aim was to try and embed the message of taking 30 minutes of physical activity most days. T30 posters were sent to health professionals and every health centre across Scotland – we’d like to see the message TAKE 30 become firmly embedded in the Scottish psyche.

The 2012 Scottish Household Survey showed that by far the most prevalent sport/activity was walking so we recognise the role strong groups can play and the need to put in place a really strong group infrastructure. We’re grateful for investment from sportscotland which has provided us with a Development Officer to work with our 55 groups across Scotland to support them to grow and develop. Groups are being supported to diversify the range of their activities and expand their walk programmes to reach new audiences. We have several thriving young groups for people in their 20 – 40’s and are focussed on establishing more young walking groups across Scotland.
Investment from Paths for All has also meant we are able to develop routes for progression from health walks to Ramblers walks to bridge the gap between short health walks and the traditionally longer Ramblers walks. Pilots are currently in development in Glasgow, Kinross and Perth.

14 groups are involved in leading 18 walks as part of the John Muir Festival this April to promote the John Muir Way. Ramblers groups will be staging a relay along the long distance route from Dunbar to Helensburgh, each leading walks along a section of the trail. Ramblers Get Walking Week in May will see groups leading short walks across Scotland to encourage people to get walking and a Great Outdoors weekend is planned at the end of June to inspire everyone in Scotland to get active outdoors before the Commonwealth Games the following month.

Equally important for us is motivating children and young people from an early age to be physically active. Last year we made a short film which focusses on a school who managed to embed walking as part of the PE curriculum. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6ge_VzEsNg)

They wanted to engage less sporty S3 and S4 learners in some form of physical activity. They found that age group weren’t particularly interested in traditional PE activities, the pupils invariably didn’t bring their kit and would be sitting out doing written exercises for non kit compliance.

They introduced a walking programme as part of the core PE activities, children were given three choices over 5 week blocks – they could either participate in inside sport, outside sport or walk.

The walks proved so popular that they introduced walking within PE across all ages. They found the pupils enjoyed getting outside and they would come back refreshed and ready to learn again. The staff found in the less formal atmosphere on a walk the pupils would open up more about issues bothering them and as a consequence they were able to refer them onto guidance teachers for additional support.

One unexpected consequence of introducing a walking programme was they would come across young people in the vicinity of the school, bunking off school – so a surprising outcome was increased attendance at school!

We’re keen to support schools to embed a walking programme if they are interested. Currently we have 2 pilots in development and others in the pipeline. We can support schools by

• mapping routes
• developing useful resources for staff and pupils
• making links with Ramblers groups to encourage children and young people to walk with their families outwith school hours.

We also recognise the importance of improving and maintaining the infrastructure. Regional path maintenance teams are being established across Scotland to improve footpaths in their local area.

We also aim to establish a Scottish Paths Fund that community groups can apply to, to support the development of new paths in Scotland and the maintenance of existing ones.

Whilst improving infrastructure, we are also promoting the use of existing paths. Short routes are being mapped across Scotland to encourage people to walk more and build walking into their everyday life.

Inspired by the Commonwealth Games, Medal Routes are short bronze, silver and gold walking routes mapped from designated walking “hubs”. These could be community centres, community sports hubs, health centres, colleges/universities, schools, hotels, cafes, libraries etc – anywhere where people congregate. The routes themselves are 15min, 30 min and 60 mins respectively.

The project aims to support people to walk more in their local area as they become more familiar with paths and green spaces in their neighbourhood. It’s also about sharing local knowledge to create great walks for local people and visitors alike. The project is funded by Paths for All, Scottish Natural Heritage and Ramblers Holiday Charitable Trust and was launched in May 2012 by the Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, the Chair of sportscotland, the Chair of SNH and Dr Andrew Murray, the current President of Ramblers Scotland.

To date over 70 walking hubs and 210 Medal Routes have been created, you can download a route from the Ramblers Scotland website or Take 30 website. http://www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland/what-we-do/promoting-walking/medal-routes.aspx
http://www.take30.co.uk/medal-routes/medal-routes-in-your-area

Posters, stickers, leaflets and tear-off maps are available from the Hubs created so far to encourage people to walk the routes and to raise awareness
of the project. By October 2014, a minimum of 120 walking hubs and 360 walking routes will have been developed.

So if you’d like to walk a Medal Route and tell us how you got on, by responding to our on line survey – you’ll be in with a chance of winning an ipad mini, filled with loads of great apps to help you stay fit and healthy! How’s that for incentive!

And here is the Minister launching the Medal Routes project in 2012 and demonstrating that wherever you live and work there’s plenty of opportunity to TAKE 30 and get out and walk with your friends and colleagues. So all we have to do over the next 10 years is persuade thousands of people to follow this example!