

AGENDA ITEM No. 6

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: ENCOURAGING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN GREENSPACES
From: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS	
Date: 31 January 2017	Ref: KF/VA/HA

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the continuing work of Get Walking Lanarkshire and to highlight some of the initiatives that have recently been running alongside this project to encourage physical activity in greenspaces among North Lanarkshire's communities.

2. Background

- 2.1 Get Walking Lanarkshire (GWL) is a project developed by the Lanarkshire Greenspace Health and Wellbeing Partnership, chaired by NHS Lanarkshire. The outcomes for the Get Walking Lanarkshire Project are:

- Increased number of people participating in walking as a form of physical activity.
- Participants have improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Lanarkshire residents have a greater awareness of Get Walking Lanarkshire.
- More opportunity and access to health walks for Lanarkshire residents.
- Lanarkshire has a sustainable health walks programme.

- 2.2 Previous reports in 2013 and 2015 have detailed the development of the project in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council, including the funding of a coordinator post for 4 years by NHS Lanarkshire and Paths for All. Since the appointment of a temporary Health Walks coordinator in January 2014, there has been excellent progress in increasing the number of people walking throughout Lanarkshire, both through supporting existing walking groups, and by setting up groups in areas where there was no existing provision.

- 2.3 Our joint authority approach to health walk coordination is the only example of its kind in Scotland and is proving to be very successful, linking into programmes across NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) and across both authority leisure providers; with partners being able to signpost to local walks to help people in their goals to become and stay more active.

- 2.4 Since May 2014 the number of walks available has more than doubled, a total of 243 new walkers have joined a health walk in Lanarkshire and GWL is supporting around 300 people to walk each week. 75% of walkers with the project are now regularly physically active (doing more than the recommended 150 minutes a week of moderate activity), this compares to just 26% who met the target when they started.

- 2.5 The project has trained 110 people as volunteer walk leaders. We are starting to build evidence to show that the mental wellbeing of people walking with the project has been improved.

2.6 In 2017 our project will also be one of 10 across the country working towards Dementia Friendly Walking accreditation. This involves making simple adjustments to our walking routes and raising awareness among our volunteer walk leaders, allowing those living with dementia (and their carers) the opportunity to easily access our walks. We aim to achieve this accreditation by September 2017.

2.7 Future integration of walking for health into existing NHS Lanarkshire services is continuing to be a focus of the wider Lanarkshire Greenspace, Health and Wellbeing Partnership and links have been made with both of the Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnerships. Both partnerships intend to include support for the project in their Strategic Commissioning Plans.

3. Highlights Associated with Lanarkshire Greenspace Health and Wellbeing Partnership in the last 6 months:

3.1 Big Fit Walk, in partnership with Paths for All: 10 June
Minister for Public Health and Sport, Aileen Campbell, and Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Gregor Smith, promoted an active lifestyle by joining local school children, Health Walk groups and local walkers at the *Big Fit Walk* launch in Strathclyde Country Park. The minister highlighted walking as one of the most beneficial things you can do for your physical and mental health, and it's accessibility to all.

3.2 Inaugural North Lanarkshire Walking Festival: 23-26 September:
Officers from Greenspace Development together with the North Lanarkshire Outdoor Access Forum successfully planned and delivered a programme of 14 walks over the 4 day period. The variety of walks ranged from short health walks accessible to all, in local communities; to family friendly activities in Country Parks to longer 8 mile walks. The feedback was very positive from participants – people learned of places on their doorstep that they didn't know existed. On the back of the success of this year's festival we are planning a second walks festival in August 2017 focussing on families.

3.3 Walk at Work - Autumn Step Count Challenge: 31 October – 27 November
11 teams (including 5 from Greenspace Development), took part in this 4 week workplace walking challenge to get people to walk more and feel the difference. The challenge allowed people to enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle by: walking to work; going for a lunchtime stroll or taking the stairs rather than the lift. Some participants have made a permanent change to their routine as a result of being involved.

3.4 Greenlink Health Walk Filming: 9 November
Regular walkers at the Greenlink health walk in Motherwell were filmed in November as part of a BBC documentary looking at the uptake of and benefits to being regularly physically active, particularly through walking as it is being shown to be a positive intervention. The filming was part of the 'Scotland Investigates' series and hopefully some of the footage of our walkers will be included in the programme.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications to this report. The programme is fully funded by Paths for All and NHS Lanarkshire.

5. Corporate Considerations

5.1 The project is aligned particularly well with the service priority outcomes of Improving the Health, Wellbeing and Care of Communities, by making walking an opportunity for all (with a particular focus on the inactive) and also Improving Relationships with Communities and the Third Sector through the availability of volunteering opportunities that the project brings.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 That the committee note the council's continued contribution to the delivery of the Get Walking Lanarkshire outcomes and their importance to the work of the Lanarkshire Greenspace, Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Forbes', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

KENNETH FORBES
Head of Environmental Assets

Local Government Access to Information Act: For further information please contact (Vicky Abernethy 01236 780636)