

Improving Scotland's health with active travel



It is nothing new to be told that we should be exercising more, but with active travel at the front of your mind, you will be encouraged to walk or cycle rather than any form of motorised transport.

This exercise will become part of your day rather than something that you have to think about doing. An alliance of Scotland's national walking and cycling charities have this week launched a joint platform setting out how to radically improve Scotland's public health by getting Scots more active.

The document, 'Scotland on the move', calls for a range of measures, including infrastructure, safety, policy, behaviour change interventions and a long-term funding commitment to increase walking and cycling in Scotland.

The alliance of groups comprises seven Scottish organisations who together champion walking, cycling and sustainable transport: CTC Scotland, Cycling Scotland, Living Streets, Paths for All, Ramblers Scotland, Sustrans Scotland, and Transform Scotland.

The groups have put forward a number of evidenced arguments for the consideration of Scotland's political parties as they begin work on preparing their party manifestos for the 2016 Holyrood elections.

Colin Howden, Director of Transform Scotland, said: "Our core aim is to see increased long term investment in active travel with a call for 10% of local and national transport budgets to be allocated to walking and cycling. While we recognise and welcome recent additional investment announcements by the

Transport Minister, Derek Mackay, active travel investment remains at only 1-2% of the Scottish Government's transport budget."

Ian Findlay, Chief Officer of Paths for All, said: "Realising commitments to increase and enable everyday walking amongst the Scottish population will improve people's physical, mental and social health and decrease health inequalities – walking is physical activity which almost anyone can do for free from their front door. But too often it is taken for granted. Continued commitment and investment are required from all parties to ensure active choices are the first and easiest choices for people."

John Lauder, Director of Sustrans Scotland, said: "Enabling and promoting active travel needs to be put firmly on the party manifesto agenda for 2016. Now is the right time for the parties to commit to specific policies to increase levels of walking and cycling, as we believe this could be the game changer not only for Scotland's health but also for our economy and environment. We hope that the 2016 Scottish elections will be an exciting time for those of us who would like to see walking and cycling become the normal modes of transport for everyday shorter journeys."

Specific infrastructure commitments highlighted include entirely segregated cycle routes in all of Scotland's cities and the consolidation of long-distance walking and cycling routes. Funding for creation, maintenance and promotion of a comprehensive network of walking and cycling routes in towns and cities across Scotland is also a key recommendation.

The groups also set out a range of actions that political parties should use to get Scotland on the move. All of these are being piloted throughout Scotland but the groups want to see them delivered cohesively in towns, cities and rural areas. They include reducing speed limits to 20mph in towns and cities and enabling children to travel actively through

calming traffic around schools, promotion and educating them to be skilled and confident cyclists. Other measures include tackling pavement parking, a particular issue for pedestrians with mobility issues, and pursuing a 'Vision Zero' where no one is killed on Scotland's roads.