

Paths for All good for mental and physical fitness

The walking charity, Paths for All, encourages Scots to ease their anxieties and boost their mental and physical wellbeing by connecting with nature.

Their six-week Walking with Nature campaign is aimed at helping people enjoy and appreciate the natural environment on their daily walks.

A UK-wide ONS survey finds that measures of happiness and life satisfaction are at their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic last March, and anxiety scores are at their highest since April 2020, indicating that there are real struggles with mental health right now.

The ambition of getting more people walking with nature comes after publication of a report published by NatureScot. This found an increased proportion of the population reported that they felt better after spending time outdoors connecting with nature during lockdown.



Of these, 70% indicated their outdoor visits and engagement with nature between August-September helped them to de-stress, relax and unwind which is up from 63% in March to May.

Ian Findlay CBE, Chief Officer at Paths for All said: “All too often when people go out walking they are still attached to their phone and forget to take in the surroundings that we are graced with in Scotland.

“We hope this campaign will help people unwind and begin to enjoy the small and simple things in life, like spotting a wild animal, hearing a new noise or just generally feeling relaxed when out in the fresh air.”

The online campaign hub will help people understand how to connect and enjoy nature whilst providing a variety of ideas, activities and information designed to motivate everyone to get outdoors.

The charity is also urges people to protect nature and keep

favourite local walks special for everyone. Small actions such as moving a branch blocking a path, or saying a friendly 'hello' as you pass or step aside for someone, are small things that can make a big difference just now.

Ian added: "60% of people in the NatureScot report found outdoor walks made them feel energised and revitalised which is up from 58% in March to May, and 56% agreed that it improved their physical health -up from 47% in March to May.

"Scots have increased their walking during this unprecedented time and we would encourage everyone to keep it up.

"We believe by encouraging people to walk everyday they will experience many positive physical, social and mental health benefits and in turn we will move forward from this pandemic as a healthier, greener, safer and happier nation".

More than half of the respondents to the survey agree that nature is important to their physical mental wellbeing and just less than half became more familiar with local greenspaces since lockdown began.

Caroline Fyfe, NatureScot's Strategic Paths & Funding Officer, said: "Our research has found that more people are visiting the outdoors and engaging with nature so it's great to see the Walking with Nature campaign encouraging people to build on that connection.

"The simple and fun activities are things we can all do, wherever we live. Tuning into nature while out walking and giving a few minutes of time to improve the local walking environment can make a huge difference, not only to personal mental and physical health but also to local communities.

"At NatureScot we want to support people to take the next step on their journey to caring for nature and experiencing all the benefits that can bring. For those inspired by Walking with Nature, we've lots more tips to help people [Make Space for](#)

[Nature](#) in their lives.”

Paths for All believe regular walking is key to leading a happy and healthy life – and it is important for people to continue enjoying short, local walks where it is safe and appropriate to do so, owing to the huge array of associated benefits.

The charity’s focus is clear: it wants to get Scotland walking: everyone, every day, everywhere.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk>

