

Walking hockey taking big steps forward

Inverleith Walking Hockey for the over-50s was spawned as Britain came out of lockdown and now it is going from strength to strength.

The venue is The University of Edinburgh Playing Fields at Peffermill every Tuesday from noon and when mixed teams play for an hour, with water breaks.

Organiser Neil Sinclair said the activity started in June 2021 when lockdown was opened up and he said he had been playing walking football for a number of years before that and he used the template to transfer to offer walking hockey.

He stressed that it does not matter what skill level players have and he added: "It is a way of meeting together and having a bit of fun. Some of the people who are playing now have not played for years and it has built up from there.

"Our numbers are increasing which is good and we started with six and those six are still with us. Initially, we started playing on the big pitch at Peffermill but we got fed up of that as we found the ball kept running away to the other end of the pitch.

"We thought, that was not a good idea and so we moved to the five-a-side football pitches which are perfect. We have adapted the rules to suit and we can use the fence and whatever angle the ball bounces off it. We have learned as we have gone along."

The first club, he said, to introduce walking hockey in the area was Eskvale at Lasswade High School and they started on a Wednesday evening and they are still doing that so I started on a Tuesday at lunchtime.

He added that there was a walking hockey event at Meadowmill near Prestonpans but that stopped because they were struggling for numbers. However, a meeting was held recently and it is hoped that they will be able to re-start.

Another strong club who play walking hockey is Uddingston and Sinclair said that the Inverleith club have visited twice and he added: "We are very much at the forefront of pushing the sport forward.

"We want more people aged over 50 to give it a shot. Most people say they can still run and get about but most of the people who play walking hockey have physical limits as we are at that age now, aches and pains and all that.

"A full game is past us not but it is a nice feeling to have a hockey stick in your hand and I emphasise that it does not matter if you have played or not, we are adaptable. We can have a no tackle rule if we wish so we can progress it from there.

"It is very important that people have fun with it and it should not be competitive at all, it shouldn't be and it is mixed."

Sinclair said that anybody interested should email inverleithwalkinghockey@hotmail.com but he is on site at Peffermill from 11.30am every Tuesday.

PICTURE: Neil Sinclair delivers a pass during the Tuesday noon session of Inverleith Walking Hockey at The University of Edinburgh Playing Fields, Peffermill. Picture **Nigel Duncan**