

active travel cymru news

Issue 8



Green Exercise –

The Natural Health Service

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sustrans

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News in brief

Sustainable Travel Coordinator for the NHS in Wales

A travel coordinator has been appointed by Sustrans to work in partnership with the NHS in Wales to promote sustainable transport and help reduce traffic congestion around hospitals and other health care sites. The coordinator will also help the trusts through the process of developing their travel plans. The post is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. Further information: www.wales.gov.uk

Bike it, Walk it! continues to keep people active in the Upper Rhymney Valley

Bike it, Walk it! has won funding to extend its work in the Upper Rhymney Valley and nearby communities over the next three years. The project runs a series of guided walks and cycle rides around various country parks and traffic-free routes in the Caerphilly area. The extended funding was awarded from the Big Lottery Fund's People and Places programme. Further information: www.activetravelcymru.org.uk

Getting kids active

The British Heart Foundation has published a *Get kids on the go!* booklet to encourage children to participate in regular physical activity. The booklet contains plenty of ideas on how to inspire children to get up and go! Further information: www.bhf.org.uk

New Green Gyms in the Valleys

Two new Green Gyms have been launched in the Welsh eastern valleys. Merthyr Tydfil now has Aberfan Green Gym and Blaenau Gwent Green Gym is underway around Cwmtillery. Both projects are funded through the Lottery's Mento Allan programme. Further information: www.btcv.org/greengym

Active Travel Cymru works with policy-makers and practitioners to promote walking and cycling as health-enhancing physical activity. Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity and works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit health and the environment.

Photography credits: Sustrans staff, Steph Thompson, BTCV.

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More people...more active...more often...in Wales



Green Exercise – The Natural Health Service

In an effort to combat the rising trend of obesity in the UK a newly funded collaboration has been created within the voluntary sector in Wales to drive forward physical activity projects in the natural environment.

Climbing Higher, the Welsh Assembly Government's 20-year strategy for sport and physical activity states that obesity levels in Wales are high and rising. The Green Exercise Partnership aims to play a key role in helping to achieve the objective of Wales becoming more physically active in order to be a healthier nation. It will bring together Sustrans, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and Groundwork Wales, alongside other environmental voluntary organisations.

The partnership not only aims to provide a multi-sector approach to incorporating physical activity and the natural environment, but also to contribute to policy making and to help increase understanding at all levels, particularly for the development and delivery of Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies.

Areas as diverse as urban green corridors and large rural countryside settings will be utilised for local interventions, offering physical activity in a broad spectrum of ways including cycling,

walking, horse riding, kite flying, gardening and conservation projects.

Each partner will lead on one of the project themes, which include *Healthy Workplaces*, *Neighbourhood Action* and *People on the Move*. Sustrans will contribute to the *Healthy Workplaces* element helping employers attain their Corporate Health Standard, the quality mark for workplace health promotion in Wales. BTCV will work on *Neighbourhood Action*, engaging local communities in physical activity projects and Groundwork will target *People on the Move*, encouraging individuals to take action to improve their health.

In addition to developing new physical activity opportunities within Wales, the partnership will encompass many existing projects with the aim to increase their impacts across the country.

Further information:
www.activetravelcymru.org.uk/greenexercise



Active Travel Workplace Toolkit

One of the aims of the Green Exercise partnership is to make long term behavioural changes that improve health and well-being. This is particularly important in the workplace, as according to research by the CBI and AXA, during 2007 172 million working days were lost to the British economy at a cost of £20 million to business and the public sector¹.

Sustrans has therefore developed the Active Travel Workplace Toolkit to facilitate workplace health promotion. Developed in partnership with the Sports Council for Wales, the toolkit gives employers ideas and practical information on how to promote walking and cycling to their staff.

“Investing money on walking and cycling infrastructure and staff facilities at Singleton Hospital has increased the number of people actively commuting to work. We consider this investment excellent value for money and are keen to make similar improvements at our other sites.” Joanna Davies, Deputy Director of Planning at ABMU NHS Trust West

The toolkit features a number of case studies from organisations across Wales who have successfully implemented active travel schemes. In addition to this the toolkit also gives advice on how to go about putting a scheme together, from getting the support of senior management, to promoting initiatives to staff. Practical guidance is offered on topics such as cycle storage and running a pool bike scheme.

Copies of the Active Travel Workplace Toolkit can be obtained by contacting info@sustrans.org.uk or downloaded along with additional information from www.activetravelcymru.org.uk/toolkit

Practical help with putting together an active travel scheme and integrating it into an overall sustainable travel plan is also available through Sustrans.

References

¹ CBI / AXA, 2008, *Absence and labour turnover survey*

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Pedal Power!

As the Green Exercise Partnership aims to include people of all ages and capabilities, Groundwork has piloted a Pedal Power project that lies within the *People on the Move* division of the scheme. The project runs in the Wrexham and Flintshire area and provides physical activity opportunities for special needs groups. The scheme aims to help people with disabilities overcome physical, environmental and attitudinal barriers that can often arise against participating in physical activity.

The project has been popular and successful with over 700 participants benefitting to date, and the group owns a fleet of 30 specialist bikes, all with the appropriate safety equipment including side by side tandems, seated tricycles, co-pilot tandems, handcycles, wheelchair bikes and tricycles.

Pedal Power also offers cycling activities through an exercise referral programme to



support and rehabilitate people recovering from illness, as well as bike hire and safe cycling opportunities for schools and the general public. In conjunction with this, the Get Bike Fit programme uses the bikes in combination with fitness assessments and individual cycling plans to help improve fitness.

The success of the pilot scheme has attracted further funding for 2008 – 09 from the Countryside Council for Wales.

Further information:
www.groundworkinwales.org.uk

The Evidence!

The Evidence is a regular information service identifying research evidence on the benefits of physically active travel.

Active commuting linked to lower obesity levels

Two studies investigated the associations between mode of transport to work and prevalence of obesity and overweight levels in men and women. Both studies indicated a lower incidence of obesity and overweight levels amongst men that walked and cycled to work, and also

amongst those who travelled to work via public transport.

Ming Wen & Rissel, 2008, Inverse associations between cycling to work, public transport and overweight and obesity: Findings from a population based study in Australia. Preventive Medicine.

Lindstrom, 2007, Means of transportation to work and overweight and obesity: A population-based study in southern Sweden. Preventive Medicine.

Research papers are available to download from www.the-evidence.org.uk

Grounds for Health: a growing idea in Wales



BTCV's *Grounds for Health* programme uses the grounds of a hospital or workplace to provide opportunities for regular environmental activities. The programme provides physical activities for employees, patients, centre users and the general wider community. For many people it provides a restful space to recuperate from the stresses of being a worker, carer or patient.

The design and implementation of *Grounds for Health* is carried out in partnership between BTCV staff and local employees, patients and other users of the site, and can be organised through a Green Gym, or any other similar model. The scheme often involves organic growing and harvesting; promoting biodiversity and the benefits that access to green space can have. The scheme also aims to be linked to the Corporate Health Standard programme.

The first *Grounds for Health* project took place at Cefn Coed hospital, Swansea, and following its success the programme has

been extended to St.Tydfil's hospital in Merthyr Tydfil. In partnership with the local Mentro Allan programme, BTCV volunteers, Green Gym members and hospital staff and patients designed a scheme to bring all hospital grounds into therapeutic use.

Staff and patients have learnt how to plant hanging baskets and herbs, grow flowers and vegetables from seed and propagate seedlings. The group then moved on to work on a secret garden at the rear of the Trecynon Ward at St. Tydfil's, which has now been cultivated as a welcoming space for patients and visitors.

Over 90 patients have worked on *Grounds for Health*, with as many as 14 regulars each week. Several hospital staff participated in the programme, with three being trained by BTCV as leaders. It is hoped that *Grounds for Health* will eventually operate at all suitable NHS premises.

Further information: www.btcv.org.uk