

# Active Travel case study: East Lindsey Active

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## Health walk scheme

March 2009



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**Intervention:** walking scheme

**Activities:**

- regular led health walks
- volunteer walk leader recruitment and training
- one-off themed walks

**Aims:**

- to encourage East Lindsey residents to participate in regular physical activity
- to address sedentary lifestyles and related diseases including obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and mental health issues.

**Target group:**

- walks are open to all East Lindsey residents, though the majority of participants join the scheme through a health referral programme which operates out of a Mablethorpe GP's surgery.

**Setting:** Skegness, Ingoldmells and Mablethorpe

**Geographical area:** East Lindsey District

**Overview:**

East Lindsey Active works with inactive people living in the most deprived wards of the Lincolnshire coastal area between Mablethorpe and Skegness, encouraging them to walk and cycle as part of their everyday lives.

The project's health walk scheme began in January 2008 and has successfully encouraged many local residents to become more active and start exploring their surroundings on foot.

The walk scheme is open to all residents of East Lindsey district. However, the majority of participants have joined the scheme through a pioneering health referral programme which operates out of a local Mablethorpe GP's surgery. Local GP's and other health professionals refer patients who could benefit from a course of exercise to a physical activity programme.

Patients can undertake 22 free sessions of physical activity and are able to choose from a number of options which include the healthy walks offered by East Lindsey Active. A number of walks are currently taking place in Skegness, Ingoldmells and Mablethorpe.

The East Lindsey Active project also provides training to enthusiastic walkers who wish to become volunteer walk leaders. Alex Woollen, East Lindsey Active Project Coordinator, explains:



“East Lindsey Active really encourages walkers to get involved with the project, above and beyond just taking part in walks. For some of the group this has meant undertaking the training required to become a volunteer walk leader. So far 30 people have trained and they are an invaluable resource to the project.”

### **How participants have benefitted:**

Whilst the health walk scheme is proving beneficial for the majority of participants, there are some who are really embracing the spirit of the walks and making changes to their everyday lives. Yvonne Allen, a member of the Skegness walking group had this to say about the scheme.

“In my younger years I was an avid walker and would think nothing of heading off into the beautiful Lincolnshire Wold’s with my local branch of the Ramblers Association for a ten mile hike. Unfortunately during my forties and early fifties I was blighted by ill health, having first suffered from a stroke I then had to contend with ongoing troubles with my heart. I was forced to change my lifestyle and start taking things easier.

As I am sure most people can relate to, when you get out of the habit of keeping fit and active you soon find yourself falling into the trap of doing nothing at all. I wanted to do things to stay active but lacked motivation and a suitable outlet.

I couldn’t go out with the walking group that I used to walk with as I was concerned about being able to manage the distance and whether or not it would be too much for me to handle. Nor did I want to go out on my own as I felt vulnerable and was conscious that people would think it odd seeing a women walking on her own.

After seeing a leaflet in my local GP’s surgery advertising the East Lindsey Active scheme I popped along to one of the advertised walks to see if it would be suitable for me to join. Six months on and I feel that I am an integral member of both the Skegness and Chapel St Leonards walking groups and am keen to join the group that walks from Mablethorpe. The opportunity to get out in my local natural environment has had a massive effect on my health and personal well-being. After completing a WHI training course I am now a qualified walk leader and have helped the walks co-ordinator lead some of the group walks.”

It is not only walk participants that are feeling the benefits of the scheme. Staff within East Lindsey District Council are also starting to reap the rewards of regular outdoor activity. Bernice Wilson, East Lindsey District Council Physical Activity and Walks Coordinator comments:

“I am a very active person by nature and lead a very physically demanding life, so I didn’t expect small amounts of low intensity exercise to have a great deal of impact on my own physical and mental well being. However I could not have been more wrong. The majority of my exercise is based around a structured training programme and the walks give me a chance to relax and enjoy my surroundings which is something I find difficult to do when I am concentrating on my heart rate or stride length during training.”

### **Sustainability:**

Project Coordinator Alex Woollen will continue to offer volunteer walk leader training in order to build skills among participants and ensure that the health walk scheme becomes embedded within the community.



## **Plans for the future:**

A number of one-off themed walking events are planned for the future including a trip to Donna Nook, one of the largest colonies of breeding grey seals in the UK, located just outside of Mablethorpe.

## **Local partnerships:**

East Lindsey Active is delivered by Sustrans in partnership with The Big Lottery, East Lindsey District Council, Natural England and NHS Lincolnshire.

## **National partnerships:**

### **Active Travel Consortium**

East Lindsey Active is a Sustrans Active Travel local project. Sustrans forms part of a Consortium of leading walking, cycling and health organisations being funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Well-being programme, which provides funding to support the development of healthier lifestyles and to improve well-being.

The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004.

## **Sustrans**

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical programmes to enable people to incorporate health-enhancing active travel - walking and cycling - into their daily routine, thus helping to improve public health, address disease prevention (including obesity, cancer, CHD, diabetes and mental ill-health) and make a major contribution to the government's physical activity targets.

Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

