

Scottish Executive Consultation Document: A Walking Strategy for Scotland: Submission by Sustrans

“Walking is the nearest activity to perfect exercise”

Jerry Morris and Adrienne Hardman 1997, 'Walking to Health' in Sports Medicine 23 (5):306-332.

Sustrans is a civil engineering charity, which works to change the environment so that sustainable, physically active ways of travelling are more accessible. Sustrans has over 25 years experience in creating environments for physical activity, such as the National Cycle Network programme, and changing the transport culture to make it possible, as with Safe Routes to Schools (SRS).

Our **Active Travel** programme was established in 2001 to collaborate with the health sector. In England we work with the Department of Health, NHS Estates, the Department for Transport, NHS trusts and other bodies on a range of projects:

- to encourage and assist the development of travel plans within the NHS, in line with the Department's policies and strategies including the National Service Framework on Coronary Heart Disease
- to establish research into the health impact of measures to facilitate active forms of travel
- to promote cycling and walking as health enhancing physical activity
- and to address the role of the NHS in accessibility and social inclusion.

Sustrans Scotland is now finalising the details of an Active Travel programme for Scotland, working with the Scottish Executive, which will concentrate on the promotion of walking and the integration of physical activity promotion and health sector mobility management, with the Community Planning approach.

Sustrans' flagship project, the **National Cycle Network**, currently provides over 7,000 miles of cycling and walking routes throughout the UK. By 2005 this will be extended to 10,000 miles. About half of users are walkers with an average walking journey of 5km. In 2001 some 60 million journeys were made on the Network, UK-wide, and by 2002 this had risen to almost 100 million, with like-for-like growth of 13%. Sustrans Scotland works in close partnership with the Scottish Executive, as well as COSLA and the individual local authorities, on development and improvement of the Network in Scotland.

The **Safe Routes to Schools** concept was originated by Sustrans in the 1980s, at which time it was entirely orthodox for schools to discourage walking for the school journey. All English highway authorities now have a SRS component in their Local Transport Plan and the Department for Transport has established the travel plan co-ordinators bursary scheme. Sustrans Scotland has its own Safe Routes to Schools team, supported by the Bristol-based national secretariat. We are currently supporting 218 schools in Scotland in Safe Routes to Schools implementation.

Children who travel actively to school are also more active than their car-borne peers throughout the rest of the day, and Sustrans believes that both healthy and unhealthy travel patterns can be established for adult life. The health implications of school travel are clearly significant.

General Comments

From a sustainable transport point of view this strategy is clear and comprehensive and will provide an excellent national focus on walking. Although walking is clearly the mode of active travel available to most people, it has not to date been adequately addressed within the UK; we are pleased to see Scotland taking the lead in this way.

However, implementation of the strategy at local level will require substantial culture change, and training and new skills will be needed within local authorities as much as within the community.

Sustrans especially welcomes the strategic view taken in the document. We note the recognition that an effective walking strategy offers progress towards objectives in areas such as traffic reduction, climate change and the UK's Kyoto commitments, social inclusion, and health. Walking is a key form of transport and free and easy to do. It is also a key form of physical activity, which does not require attendance at sports facilities. The way we travel has a huge impact on public health. Walking to and from school and work could for many people incorporate the 30 minutes of physical activity into the daily routine and improve health.

Now that the Scottish School Travel Advisory Group has reported, the walking strategy needs to be updated to reflect their recommendations.

Response to Questions

Should we have national or local targets or indicators for walking?

Sustrans view is that targets are essential at both the national and local level, with an emphasis on outputs rather than inputs. Each local authority should be able to set specific targets for the proportion of pupils walking to school and employees walking to work. This should include walking when in combination with public transport trips.

In addition local authorities could set service standards, for instance:

- improving pavement condition and maintenance

- reducing the number of people falling and being injured on cracked, uneven pavements
- clearing litter and dog mess
- developing new walking routes and improving existing ones.

It is of crucial importance that local authorities commit the resources and the political will to meet these targets. We trust the Scottish Executive will performance manage on their achievement, and will guide authorities to include testing targets in their local transport planning.

What criteria should we use to measure targets or indicators?

Criteria should include distance, safety, trip numbers and modal shift for both utility and leisure journeys.

There should be a range of indicators, covering all aspects of walking. We recommend consideration of the following:

- number of walking trips
- modal share
- travel to work
- travel to school
- travel to leisure
- all pedestrian casualties
- facilities available for walkers.

The role of voluntary organisations

Many voluntary organisations play key roles in the promotion of walking; Sustrans is proud to count itself among them. Modern approaches to walking promotion include the exemplary Walking for Health initiative of the Countryside Agency and British Heart Foundation in England, now being replicated in Scotland by Paths for All with support from SNH and the BHF. However, it is not appropriate for the ultimate responsibility nor the raising of funds to be delegated to the voluntary sector; as the draft strategy recognises, successful promotion of walking will help in the delivery of many policy objectives pertaining to national and local government, and other statutory bodies.

Detail comments on the text

1.1-1.14 A role for walking

We strongly support the way this introductory section is argued, in particular the recognition that walking contributes to policy objectives in a whole range of areas, and that many other policies impact positively or negatively on the promotion of walking. We would however go further.

The removal of barriers to walking, such as the location of services in out-of-town sites, is equally important. The location of services where access is only easy by car promotes a sedentary lifestyle and helps to 'lock in' car dependency. This also promotes social exclusion.

The effective integration of walking strategies with the planning process should therefore help achieve objectives in social inclusion and accessibility. People need easy access to key services including healthcare, shops, work, schools and social activities.

3.2 Targets

Targets are essential at the national and local level, with an emphasis required on outputs rather than inputs. The short-term halting of the decline in walking trips needs to be quantified. In the past, there has been criticism of “finger in the air” targets such as the proposal here for a 10% increase in walking trips, but our view is that such a target is better than none. It is quite appropriate to begin with a rough target of this kind, to help focus resources and encourage research, which can then be refined.

3.6 Links with other policies

Another policy that should benefit from increased walking is crime reduction, as less isolation on the streets increases personal security.

We should like to see a specific reference here to the promotion of cycling. Many of the measures to promote either mode will have beneficial impacts on the other; it is also important to minimise any unintended negative such impacts.

In particular, we are delighted to see reference to road traffic reduction in this section. Road traffic reduction offers a significant improvement to our quality of life, in many ways; in terms of the promotion of walking, it is likely to be indispensable.

3.14-3.15 School Travel

Sustrans regards the school journey as of critical importance in establishing travel habits, good or bad, for the future. School travel will be a key area for the walking strategy, and a key measuring point to test its effective implementation.

5.5 Land Use Planning

Schools and healthcare should be specifically mentioned within this list.

5.13 Travel to work

There are currently a number of incentives to unnecessary use of sedentary forms of travel, such as financial support for car use, free car parking etc. It is still, unfortunately, quite conventional for a hospital or school to provide free or subsidised car parking for staff or visitors, while offering no comparable benefit to people who walk. The costs of this to the business may not be identified, no explicit management decision may ever have been taken, and no one may have considered how inequitable or unhealthy is the situation. This problem needs to be addressed. So we support the proposals in this section.

In particular, it will be necessary to increase the emphasis on travel plans, and the emphasis on walking within them. Travel plans should be developed for retail customers, tourist attraction visitors, healthcare patients and visitors etc, as well as for employees. Walking provision and information should be planned in for these and other trips, including mixed-mode journeys involving walking and public transport.

5.17 Health

We most strongly support the recommendation for closer partnership between the NHS and health sector more generally, and local authorities. This is likely to be critical in addressing a wide range of public health issues (going much more widely than walking or indeed transport, physical activity and active travel). In particular, we recommend the closest engagement between professionals in public health and the land-use and traffic planners whose efforts will be so important in the implementation of this strategy. Sustrans looks forward to working with the Scottish Executive to help this happen.

5.21 School Travel

There should be reference to school travel plans here together with programmes of physical measures around schools.

5.24-5.27 Pedestrianisation and Vehicle Restricted Areas

We are pleased to see the clarity of argument regarding the quality of walking routes to retail and other services at 5.26; this argument applies elsewhere too. Studies such as Touche Ross's *Environmental Review of Edinburgh*, or work elsewhere in Europe by Socialdata GmbH, have shown that traders hugely over-estimate the importance of car parking to their customers. It will be important to tackle obstruction by traders of traffic restraint measures (Sustrans is shortly to publish a briefing note for traders addressing this issue).

We are also pleased to note the flexible recommendations at 5.27. The aim should be to reduce traffic and improve provision for walking; full pedestrianisation may not always be the best way to do this. In general, the creation of high-quality trading environments with restricted vehicle access are likely to be most successful.

Wherever possible, cycling access should be preserved and design guidelines should take this into account.

We should like to see Scottish pilots of the "Winkelerf" concept, trading areas based on many of the design principles used for Home Zones.

5.28-5.30 Home Zones

Sustrans is working in partnership with the Children's Play Council and Transport 2000 to encourage the development of Home Zones in the UK, both in existing communities and in new housing developments.

We would like to see reference to the importance of good walking (and cycling) links to and from Home Zones, to ensure that they are not just traffic calmed enclaves but have a wider impact on the quality of life. It is also important that they be monitored, both to provide evidence of success and to test which design elements are most effective. With regard to safety and speed management, we need carefully monitored trial 20mph towns, to see how this affects walking.

Measures are needed to make the street environment safer and more pleasant for pedestrians and a place for children to play. The application of Home Zone

principles, in residential areas and elsewhere (such as in retail streets) should be made a priority. The perception of traffic risk is a major impediment to walking, and cycling, for many people, and our failure as a society to reduce the incidence of death and injury among pedestrians suggests that the individual risk assessment is well founded. Not only the danger, but also the noise and hostile atmosphere engendered by fast-moving traffic discourage physical activity by inhibiting walking in both urban and rural areas.

5.42 Walking and cycling – how close are the links

Currently, cyclists and walkers are often forced to compete for scraps of highway space left in a car-dominated system. The interaction of cycling and walking strategies needs expanding in the document.

Reducing the perceived conflicts between walkers and cyclists on shared or segregated paths, and reducing the threat of illegal pavement cycling must be addressed through joint education and awareness campaigns. On the positive side, integrated local authority spending on provision of cycling and walking facilities can be cost effective and design out the problems of conflict.

Design standards need to rise; a reasonable objective would be the allocation of a share of transport capital budgets to walking and to cycling commensurate with their share of trips. Pedestrians should not be faced by narrow, over-parked and broken pavements, sign pillars and site materials, and all the obstacles that bar their way.

6 Promotion and Education

The consultation underestimates the role of soft measures. Sustrans manages the UK pilots of TravelSmart, an individualised travel marketing technique which helps to overcome real and perceived impediments to cycling, walking and public transport, in partnership with Socialdata GmbH. Results from the first two pilots, in line with experience gained elsewhere around the world, showed walking trips per person per year increased by 10% in Gloucester and 11% in Frome. Further analysis showed that walking was the mode to benefit most from the reduction in car trips, taking up to 80% of the substituted car trips. (Ref. TravelSmart: Changing the way we travel, Sustrans 2002)

A good example of walking should be set by leaders in politics, the health sector and other areas.

Active, on-going promotion is needed of healthy and active behaviour, using promotional and media campaigns and individualised marketing techniques.

6.6-6.10 Education

This section should be expanded to include the development of school travel plans which will enable schools to bring together in an action plan, a range of initiatives to encourage more pupils to make all or part of a journey to school on foot. These initiatives should be accompanied by improvements to the physical infrastructure. The Travelling Green Project in West Dunbartonshire referred to in 6.5 also demonstrated how classwork can lead to an increase in more children walking to school.

Encouraging walking to school can be part of an holistic approach including EcoSchools and Health Promoting Schools. Schools need to be supported in making the links between the various initiatives to maximise benefits.

6.11 Driver Behaviour

As elsewhere in the UK, there is still a need for more consistent enforcement of traffic law, and for offender sentencing in line with the seriousness of many offences committed. This should be backed up with a communication programme, to let drivers know that the old ways no longer apply; an approach whose success in tackling UK drink-driving is to be applauded.

Employers, including the Scottish Executive and local authorities themselves, should introduce and apply driver behaviour codes for their employed and contracted drivers.

General

Sustrans very much welcomes the development of this walking strategy and recognises it as an exciting opportunity to lead the UK towards more sustainable transport behaviour, a better quality of life for Scotland's people, and better public health. We wish the Scottish Executive well in your deliberations and would be happy to provide any additional information or assistance.

Yours faithfully

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