

Active Travel Champions Project Case Study

Walking Group

The Challenge:

High levels of physical inactivity are linked to several chronic diseases including coronary heart disease, type-2 diabetes, obesity, some cancers and poor mental health. Encouraging people to be more active has proven difficult.¹

Walking is a familiar, convenient and free form of physical activity that most people can incorporate into everyday life. Evidence suggests that successful interventions can increase walking among targeted participants by up to 30-60 minutes a week on average.²



Craigmillar Castle entrance, with Hawkhill Wood behind

The Solution:

The Active Travel Champions programme enables participants to choose a particular package of interventions and techniques to suit their needs.

The Active Travel Champions at Little France, University of Edinburgh, wanted to start a weekly lunchtime walking group. With support from a Sustrans project officer, the Champions were trained as walk leaders and developed a strategy for promoting the walks. They discovered an accessible route from Little France, through Hawkhill Wood to Craigmillar Castle Park.

To raise awareness of the walking group, Sustrans funded a trip using the Champions' route. Despite light rain, over 80 people participated in the walk, using it as an opportunity for:

- ✓ relaxation
- ✓ exploration of a local greenspace
- ✓ a walking meeting
- ✓ a team-building exercise
- ✓ socialising between workplace teams

The lunchtime walk model is now being adopted by other Champion teams at the University of Edinburgh.

References:

¹ Procter *et al.* Views and experiences of behaviour change techniques to encourage walking to work: a qualitative study. *BMC Public Health* 2014 [https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-14-868]

² Ogilvie *et al.* Interventions to promote walking: systematic review. *Br Med J* 2007 [https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39198.722720.BE]



“Lunchtime walking is a great opportunity for fresh air, social chatter and re-energising for an afternoon of productivity.”

Mary
University of Edinburgh Active Travel Champion

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