Consultation on Sport England Strategy

Sustrans submission to Sport England
March 2016

Sustrans is a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

Question 1: Tackling Inactivity

Within the new Government strategy there is a clear statement that “We (Government) will distribute funding to focus on those people who tend not take part in sport as much, including women and girls, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people”.

With this recommendation in mind, please provide your views on the following questions:

a. Which particular audiences should Sport England focus upon?

Sustrans agrees with the proposed government focus on people or demographic groups that tend to be most inactive in society. According to the NICE physical activity guidelines, these groups are largely the same as those who do not participate in sport, namely: women, girls, older people, people living in deprived areas, and black and minority ethnic groups.

We believe it is important for Sport England and DCMS to do so in conjunction with other governmental departments working towards common objectives.

The Infrastructure Act placed a requirement upon government for a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) for England. The CWIS is currently in development by DfT although allocated funding is unlikely to enable the Government’s stated ambition of doubling cycling by 2020. This investment brings a serious risk that walking and cycling in many parts of England will actually decline over the next 5-10 years.
It is therefore vital that DCMS and Sport England work alongside the DfT to improve physical activity. One way to do this for cycling and walking would be to draw together capital funding from CWIS for better infrastructure alongside Sport England revenue funding for community engagement and participation.

Our previous experience and research shows that an integrated offer works best to change behaviours for cycling and walking. Therefore we urge Sport England and DCMS to liaise with DfT’s CWIS team in the production of this strategy.

b. **What is the best way to engage with these audiences?**

Building brisk walking and/or cycling into everyday routines has proven to be an effective way of encouraging many people that are not currently physical active to begin introducing exercise into their lifestyles or for people already active to become more active overall (Fit for Life, Sustrans). Cycling and walking can be a free way of getting exercise that over time can become routine. This everyday activity can in turn increase fitness and confidence to enable participation in sport.

To be successful, especially with harder-to-reach groups, interventions need to focus on the needs of the audience. Multi-faceted interventions are likely to have most impact - linking environmental changes alongside engagement with people. Safety, for example is a significant barrier to encouraging cycling. Training people to ride a bike to build their confidence is important but doing this in combination with the introduction of 20mph speed limits and building a network of separated cycle lanes, is likely to be far more effective. A long term approach is required that focuses on changing the environment rather than just changing perceptions. Sport England’s own Active Design report provides some excellent recommendations as to how redesigning urban areas and public spaces can enable physical activity.

When considering community interventions with specific audiences we would suggest Sport England works through groups or third sector organisations that already engage with the target audience. Finally whether an intervention is a new policy, an environmental change, or a community programme, it is important to engage with these audiences to better understand their needs and ensure solutions, for example new footways and cycle paths, are user focused. At Sustrans, for example we have developed a new mapping tool known as RATE to better understand how to design routes based upon the needs of different users.

c. **Do you have experience of working with these audience groups? If yes, please provide practical examples of where and how you have been successful.**

Sustrans has been involved in many projects focusing on particular audience groups. Some examples are provided below:

- **Oceans 11** – Promoting active travel in a BAME community in Tower Hamlets. Sustrans engaged with over 800 people during this project, over 60% of whom felt fitter at the end of the project than they did at the start, with a 56% increase in the people who walked on 5-7 days a week, especially amongst women participants. Part of the project was in-depth engagement with 11 women from the Oceans Estate. Sustrans provided regular training sessions, for the women participating whom progressed from having very little cycling skills or confidence to completing an 11-mile ride around London.
• Bike Belles – Bike Belles is a project in York to create a cycling community for women. Women are known to cycle significantly less than men, partially due to a perception that cycling is unsafe. Bike Belles used communications and confidence-building activities to encourage women to cycle, including facebook communities, social rides, cheese and wine bike maintenance workshops, loan bikes and child-carrying equipment and try-outs. 2,000 women engaged in the project in 2014/15, 75% of which said they increased their cycling levels. The project has evolved into a cycling community – see more details here: https://www.facebook.com/yorkbikebelles/

• Active Steps - Luton suffers higher than national average levels of deprivation and obesity. 36% of adults in the town are classified as inactive, compared to the England average of 28.5%. Active Steps is a free, intensive ten-week health programme. Participants get a free health check before and after and a range of motivational activities happen in between. Active Steps increased individuals actively travelling five or more days a week from 17% to 42% and lowered participants BMI and blood pressure, and reduced their weight by an average of 1.5kg.

• Finally Sustrans delivered a variety of projects targeting older people and physical activity between 2008 and 2011 focusing on walking and cycling. Collectively over 10,000 older people participated in these programmes with almost 20% of participants achieving at least 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days each week.

Question 2: Investment approach

Sporting Future states that “All new Government funding for sport and physical activity will go to organisations which can best demonstrate that they will deliver some or all of the five outcomes in this strategy”

This means that Sport England will need to decide what evidence of ability to deliver it should require from the organisations it funds, bearing in mind the Key Performance Indicators and strategic outcomes in the new Government strategy. What evidence do you think Sport England should expect from:

a. Organisations that have regularly received long term Sport England investment (2-4 years)?

Sustrans would expect all funded organisations, except for recipients of small grants, to be able to demonstrate how their project contributes towards one or more of the outcomes described in Sporting Future. This should be a pre-requisite of funding and all funding applications should include monitoring and evaluation as standard.

Sport England may want to consider if the production of guidance for organisations would be useful to build consistency and quality in evaluation across funded projects. Training workshops could be provided to all organisations, especially organisations applying for investment for the first time.

b. Organisations that are applying for investment from Sport England for the first time?

As above.

c. Small organisations or projects seeking small grant opportunities?
A lower expectation would apply although some level of evaluation in many circumstances would be useful.

**Question 3: Five - Fourteen year olds now within Sport England’s Remit**

Sport England’s remit has been extended with a responsibility for sport and physical activity now being for children aged 5 years and upwards outside of school. The Department for Education will remain responsible for the delivery of physical activity and sport during curriculum time.

a. With an extended remit but no additional funding available for Sport England, what should the priorities be for Sport England working with children aged 5-14?

Firstly there are many benefits of active travel for young people including health and fitness, mental alertness and motivation, encouraging independence and road safety. More information can be accessed by the link below:


Many studies suggest regular or routine childhood exercise also increases the odds of being a healthy and active adult and Sport England’s Start Active, Stay Active recommends a life-course approach. This provides a good incentive to invest in enabling children to engage in sport and physical activity both within and outside of the school environment, even when no additionally budget is available.

Sustrans recommends the following priorities for children aged 5-14:

- A focus on children walking, cycling or scooting on their journey to school. The journey to school is one of the easiest wins and is an everyday routine behaviour.
- Outside of the school environment we would recommend working through existing groups that already provide services/activities for this age group, especially those working with girls and children from deprived or ethnic backgrounds.
- We would also stress the need to work alongside other Departments to encourage participation in physical activities to ensure this strategy joins up their work, specifically:
  - DfT – Identifying how this work can support the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, beyond the Bikeability scheme.
  - The Department of Health’s soon to be published Childhood Obesity Strategy.
  - The Department of Education – making links to the school environment and national curriculum

Sustrans has delivered programmes with children in this age group for many years. Our research and delivery indicates five areas that are critical for successful participation in active travel. These can all be delivered both inside and outside of the school environment:

- Developing skills
- Understanding equipment
- Benefits of being active
- Journey planning
- Safety awareness

Sustrans has developed a ‘learning journey’ to enable lifelong active travel habits in young people and we would be very happy to share our work and learnings in this area with Sport England.
Finally we must stress that if our roads are not made safer for both cycling and walking success will only be limited. Both parents and children need to feel and be safe and this will require interventions in policy and the built environment.

**Question 4: Governance standards for sport sector**

Sustrans is not aware of the UK Sports Governance Code and will not be answering this question.

**Section 5: Campaigning and communications**

The Government has recognised that the success of the new sport strategy will be significantly aided by the creation of both campaigns, such as This Girl Can, and overarching messages that the sector can use to help change behaviours in targeted audiences.

Sport England along with Public Health England has been tasked with leading “message development and marketing activity to create a compelling environment that encourages everybody, especially people in under-represented groups, to meet the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidelines on physical activity”

“Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week.”

**a. What approach do you think would be most effective in terms of creating a campaign to encourage people to meet the CMO’s physical activity guidelines?**

Firstly we would not advocate a campaign approach alone. Campaigns and information can be effective but often behaviours lapse if other factors change.

The long running five-a-day campaign to encourage fruit and vegetable consumption is a good example of this. Levels slowly increased until the recession hit in 2007 when fruit and vegetable consumption declined again. This is thought to result from increasing food prices and declining household spending as the recession took hold. This widespread campaign, just like stop smoking campaigns have a significant public awareness but do not necessarily change behaviours on their own.

Therefore we would suggest campaigns should be used alongside a toolbox of other activities focusing on environmental changes, such as the provision of sports facilities, public green spaces, building safe separated cycle lanes, and redesigning streets and junctions to encourage activity. This could be supported by common campaign messaging.

More targeted campaigns focusing on specific demographic audiences can be more effective than broader based campaigns focusing on the whole population, especially with reduced budgets. We would also recommend underpinning these with local targeted face-to-face community programmes.
Question 6: increasing the number of people volunteering in sport and physical activity

A key element of the Government’s new strategy is to require Sport England to invest in and subsequently deliver upon the following key performance indicators:

- Increase in the numbers of people volunteering in sport at least twice a year
- The demographics of volunteers in sport to become more representative of society as a whole.

a. What are the key interventions you think would increase both the number and diversity of new volunteers?

Firstly it should be made clear that Sustrans believes Sport England should take a wider view of the role of volunteers in encouraging all types of physical activity not just sport. For example in the same way that the Games Makers worked tirelessly to enable the success at the London Olympics.

Sustrans has around 4,000 volunteers across the country. They help encourage more people to walk and ride a bike by:

- Maintaining and sprucing up the National Cycle Network to help maintain cycle paths for cyclists and walkers alike.
- Improving biodiversity and artwork across the National Cycle Network
- Leading walks and cycle rides in their local communities

All of these activities in themselves are physical in nature therefore supporting many of the outcomes described in Sporting Future. Furthermore they enable and/or attract other people to start riding a bicycle or walking.

Therefore we suggest Sport England works with organisations like ourselves to reach thousands of existing volunteers and provide support to enable more people to join in, especially through specific initiatives to diversify this volunteer base.

b. Who are the key partners, (within or outside the sporting sector) Sport England could work with to deliver these targets?

In terms of recruitment of volunteers to increase physical activity outside of the sporting sector we would suggest:

- Third sector organisations that already use volunteers to encourage/enable people to participate in physical activities
- Supporting innovation that has enabled schemes like Good Gym and Green Gyms to flourish
- Local community/health organisations
- The outdoor recreation sector

Question 7: Further Questions

a. If there are other issues or areas you wish to comment upon, please do so below:

We want to make three further recommendations that we feel require consideration by Sport England:

1. Better aligning Sport England’s strategy with the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy
2. Increasing focus and support for physical activity alongside sport
3. Integrating housing and planning and physical activity

Better aligning Sport England’s strategy with the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

The Infrastructure Act placed a requirement upon government for a Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) and a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) for England. The Roads Investment Strategy has £15bn of dedicated funding. In contrast the CWIS according to the Spending Review has only £316m of Department for Transport (DfT) dedicated funding for cycling and walking over the next five years in England outside of London. This equates to investment of just £1.40 per person per year on cycling and walking in England outside of London.

Across England there is a widening gap between funding and support for large road and rail transport infrastructure projects, and funding for cycling and walking. Furthermore there is a widening gulf between the government’s commitment to double cycling by 2020 and the necessary investment to do so. This investment brings a serious risk that walking and cycling in many parts of England will actually decline over the next 5-10 years.

It is essential that in the development of the CWIS, the Department of Transport must identify ways that additional funding and support can be levered from outside existing sources identified. It is therefore vital that DCMS and Sport England work alongside the DfT and the Department of Health if we are to realise our common objectives to improve physical and mental wellbeing and local community and economic development.

Increasing focus and support for physical activity alongside sport

We welcomed the shift to focus more on all physical activity beyond traditional sport in the DCMS Strategy: Sporting Future.

Whilst this shift is positive, there is still a clear focus on traditional sports participation in this consultation. We would like to see more recognition of everyday activities like walking and cycling that can go hand in hand with the encouragement of sports participation.

This change in focus is especially relevant for many people who currently are least active and rarely if ever participate in sport. Public Health England advises that walking and cycling is one of the best ways to increase physical activity amongst these groups and we would advocate Sport England working in partnership with the Public Health England and the Department of Transport to link policy and initiatives to encourage sport and physical activity.

Finally following the overwhelming evidence presented in Nike’s Design to Move study, the All-Party Commission on Physical Activity was set up to take a new approach towards investigating physical activity in the UK. The Commission was supported by the British Heart Foundation, the Lawn Tennis Association, Nike, the Premier League, Sustrans and the Young Foundation. The Commission heard evidence from the health, sport, transport/urban planning and education sectors and produced a report entitled ‘Tackling Physical Inactivity’. It made a number of recommendations listed below which we believe are still highly relevant for increasing physical activity in England:
A national plan of action
1. **Have a plan:** Establish an over-arching National Plan of Action to tackle declining levels of physical activity, to be reviewed annually and progress reassessed every 5 years against its goals.

2. **Cross-party agreement:** Ensure a cross-political party commitment from leaders to supporting the development and implementation of the National Plan of Action within Government, Parliament and beyond.

3. **Cross-sector agreement:** Create a cross-sectoral, cross-government departmental drive to construct and implement a framework for the measurement and increase of Physical Activity across the board. This can ensure a collaborative approach to funding, commissioning, delivering investments, policies and interventions, with a specific focus on the first 15 years of life.

4. **Oversight and Accountability:** Establish an independent body to have oversight and ensure accountability for progress on both development and implementation of the National Plan of Action at both a national and local level.

Getting the message out
1. **Breaking new ground:** An innovative strategic communications strategy that goes beyond the traditional Public Health campaigns.

2. **Reaching the people:** A population-wide approach, but with a focus on motivating key audiences: young people, parents and community role models, health and social care professionals, and education professionals.

3. **Working together:** The campaign to be delivered and supported by a coalition of organisations from the public, private and third sectors.

Designing physical activity back into our everyday lives
1. **Transport:** Re-focus transport strategy over time, to provide long-term continuity of resources to incentivise and facilitate walking and cycling as regular daily transport.

2. **Our world:** Existing and planned new developments and infrastructure to be ‘health-checked’ to ensure that walking, cycling, active recreation and other forms of physical activity are prioritised.

3. **Our work:** Active workplaces: Employers are encouraged to support their employees, suppliers and visitors to be active while at work, or travelling to or from it.

Making physical activity a lifelong habit
1. **Active schools:** A whole school approach is needed across the breadth of the school day.

2. **Ofsted Activity:** The quality of physical activity provision in schools to be formally evaluated.

3. **Involve Activity:** Actively seek the advantages sport and activity providers can play in delivering high quality, accessible educational, health and social interventions, as well as positive sports experiences for all.

Proving Success
1. **Measure:** We need to develop standardised measures of physical activity.

2. **Evaluate:** We need to develop standardised evaluations of physical activity interventions.

Integrating housing and planning and physical activity
There is no magic bullet for reducing inactivity and Sporting Future and Sport England’s upcoming strategy should focus on a long term approach towards reversing current trends and enabling physical activity and sport for all. If this is to be successful it needs to work alongside the planning system and improve our built environment. Sport England’s ten principles of active design in the recent report of the same name provide a useful set of indicators for this although many are largely beyond the remit or control of Sport England.

Therefore it is essential that Sport England and DCMS work alongside the Department for Communities and Local Government to encourage principles for active design within current reforms for the planning system. As the government embarks on the biggest house building programme for the past 15 years we need to ensure new developments are built following plans that are founded upon active and sustainable design.

To enable new developments to facilitate walking, cycling and sport whilst reducing dependency on the car we recommend the following:

- developing within existing settlements where access to employment and services are already present and walkable or bike-able
- developing mixed zones of housing, retail, commercial and leisure/sports facilities to reduce distances travelled and dependency on the car
- ensuring new housing developments are built at higher densities which facilitate better cycling and walking infrastructure
- follow the lead of London and reduce parking spaces alongside the provision of good cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure
- create high-quality open spaces, linear parks and shared spaces to encourage streets to become destinations rather than thoroughfares
- creating green spaces and parks to encourage recreation and sport
- design new building infrastructure and immediate external space to encourage physical activity, for example prominent stairs and cycle parking infrastructure

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