Environment and the health and physical activity agenda
LINK discussion 26 May 2009

Present

Ian McCall, Ramblers' Association Scotland
Rob Bushby, John Muir Trust Award
David Gibson, Mountaineering Council of Scotland
Jenny Mollison, Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
Maggie Keegan, Scottish Wildlife Trust
Philippa Cochrane, Sustrans Scotland
Andrew Fairbairn, Woodland Trust Scotland
David Graham, BTCV Scotland
Rona Gibb, Paths for All
Helen Zealley, LINK President
Jen Anderson, LINK staff

Apologies

National Trust for Scotland
RSPB Scotland

How organisations are already engaging

RAS – engaged in agenda through various walking initiatives

SAGS – press for more allotments making the case on grounds of physical activity and mental health and wellbeing and safe quality food

SWT – interested in evidence of the benefits of access to biodiversity (reviewing literature), making connections between natural heritage and wellbeing, and tying this in to local nature conservation sites

Sustrans – promote walking and cycling in terms of the benefits of physical activity and health; also improve physical environment via cycle network, short and community links programmes

WTS –linking access to woodlands with quality of life & health; research shows best recreation had in open access woods near population centres, and that people are relatively unaware of local opportunities. WTS developing accessible woodland dataset for woods of 2ha, 500m distant from homes and woods of 20ha, 4km distant. 23% of people use the first category though 55% could do if access were better; 20% use the second though this could be raised to nearly 100%. Dataset to become more of an online hub for places to walk in Scotland.

BTCV – Green gym, health walks, volunteering opportunities for conservation; 32 green gyms in 3 years, 15000 walk days, 220 green spaces worked on, 4000 volunteers involved. Have launched a model for community green gyms. BTCV working with FEVA on ways of widening access and opportunity to volunteer. BTCV's funding recently moved across to Health Scotland. BTCV report demonstrates that £1 to them translates into £4 spent locally in communities, so that initiatives on the ground are saving NHS cost ultimately. Should we collectively analyse the cost saved? (Report coordinated by SNH and published 2008 *Economic Impact of Scotland's Natural Environment* may look at this.)

PfA – focus on path network development and the physical infrastructure via LAs, and on the Paths to Health side on getting people out, esp those who are not already active. 2000+ walk leaders; work with other organisation; trying to move people from short to longer opportunities; largest PA organisation supported through Health Dept.

MCoS – promote hill walking and indoor climbing actively embracing the government agenda. Work with RAS, SSA members and hopefully NHS on Common Health

programme linking sport and PA. Responded to Pathways into Sport consultation to stress importance of schools following requirement for PE. May work with schools/education sector on introducing youngsters to climbing. Will work through membership and clubs to promote these areas. Interested in building up the evidence (scattered) – have reviewed the literature.

JMT – would like scope of physical activity agenda include wider landscapes & environment. Pressing for more emphasis in awards generally to be on the outdoor environment. Health impacts of the experiences of those taking part in the awards and other similar activities were studied by Dr Richard Mitchell : key findings - 'enjoyment' and 'wanting more' of the experience point to the need for more resource.

Helen Zealley – background as a doctor and in public health, very committed to PA, was involvedin PATF. Analysis of situation indicates health sector very focussed (needs must) on health delivery, some very positive environmental, and some negative (and some unassessed) environmental impacts. The whole of this is important to the agenda.

LINK – establishing in discussion with members and other organisations what LINK could do to support existing initiative and add value; has met with SNH, Paths for All

Discussion points

The key agenda is to get the *non-active to start to do something* - 60% of women do not go anywhere to take activity

Studies indicate that health inequalities are less where people live near urban greenspace

Discussion with SNH of whether there is scope to link to GP practices where PA is not happening, not prescribed despite growing evidence of benefits and testimonials. GPs reluctant (patients resistant; risk of heart attack; competing pressures on GPs; poor awareness of local opportunities; people unsure where to do their half hour per day). Perhaps we need more understanding of why GPs are not informally encouraging continued/more exercise? We must be realistic about what can be achieved (eg 4% of the patients actively encouraged to, actually give up smoking)

June 2009 – Report due out on impact of health referrals

Keep Well project (supported by NHS focusses on agegroup 40+ and involves buddies to help people out the door to a walk, green gym, or other activity. Extending to mental health which might offer more scope for linkages

Richard Mitchell study for JMT (see above) found the poorer 15% had the strongest aspiration to get out again for further experience, with no difference across genders.

Craigmillar allotments (Edinburgh) operate with link to Health Care Trust – patients are referred. However, community health worker must be on site. Hospital estates vulnerable given tough economics vs value of estate

5-year review launched Feb 09 at PAHA conference – findings all relevant and include recognition of the environment's role in intervention

NICE guidelines and World Cancer Organisation reports both also link the environment to the health issue

Curriculum for Excellence – opportunity to (re)connect people to nature?

Through LINK member body membership there is probably access to GPs and other potential advocates to help cut red tape – messaging is important

Health visitors, practice nurses, occupational therapists and pharmacists have influence

There are champions in health and education & the Chief Medical Officer is empathetic

NHS Forest – rolled out in the south; offers opportunities too (Dr Muir Gray)

Would a single portal help? PfA is considering this.

Action points

All agreed this is a busy landscape, that it's important to add value not duplicate. What is needed most is probably alignment at this stage, connection between initiatives and between sectors and government departments. Paths for All have 'mapped' some of the work already being done (tabled). Players need to be relevant to the agenda.

1. LINK members to map/report how they already interface or could interface with the health & wellbeing and physical activity agenda, how they could/would like to in future, and what would prevent progress

2. PfA to organise autumn meeting between those present and others such as SPARcoll, NPARE, PAHA at which we can further consider how LINK can add value to existing work

3. Include relevance of sector in briefing for Cabinet on 9 June about helping Scotland out of recession

4. With Environment Minister September LINK will flag interest in this area, current effort, need/concern to see integration of key policy areas (transport, health and environment) and request for joint meeting with at least Environment and Health Ministers

5. Use Scottish Environment Week in Feb 2010 for an event pulling three strands together

6. LINK Congress addressing alternatives to GDP, economics, wellbeing and the environment

7. Potentially prepare a report on the value of the environment to health, and get this covered in as many of the members' newsletters as possible

8. Offer contacts for Richard Mitchell for his PhD on reducing health inequalities

9. Ensure legacy from Common Health Programme (revisit at future discussion) and Legacy discussions

Amongst reports noted

Promotion and Development of Path Networks
Access to Greenspace
Out there
Amazing things
The Health Impacts of the John Muir Award
Impacts of Health referrals (due June 09)
Economic Impact of Scotland's Natural Environment

Websites noted

www.activescotland.org.uk
www.paha.org.uk

JA/LINK/June 09