

## Finance Committee

### Draft Budget 2012-13

#### Submission from Paths for All

##### About Paths for All

Paths for All is the national charity promoting walking for health and the development of multi-use path networks. Paths for All's vision is to create a **happier, healthier, greener, more active Scotland**.

Paths for All's (PFA) strategic direction is to increase the proportion of the population who are physically active and ensure that there are conducive environments where people live to encourage and sustain this behaviour change.

**This submission from Paths for All sets out examples where a more preventative approach to public spending would deliver real benefits.**

From the Scottish Physical Activity Charter (consultation draft)

*Physical activity is often referred to as 'the best buy in public health' – the 'magic bullet' proven to prevent disease, improve health and promote independence and quality of life.*

*However, physical inactivity remains one of Scotland's major public health challenges, with at least 60% of Scottish adults and 37% of Scottish children failing to meet the minimum recommendations for physical activity. The economic benefit that would be achieved if the number of inactive Scots was reduced by 1% each year for the next five years would be £85.2 million. Physical activity is any movement of the body that uses energy and includes: exercise; sport; play; dance; and active living such as walking, housework, gardening and active travel.*

*The evidence supporting the benefits of physical activity is incontestable. Scotland has an evidence-informed national physical activity policy, 'Let's Make Scotland More Active'. Now is the time to act on this existing knowledge and evidence to **make it happen** and create a more physically active Scotland.*

This document recommends that policies should be aligned so that physical activity is embedded with real commitment in related strategies and associated budgetary arrangements. It identifies six main target areas to ensure an overall increase in population-wide physical activity participation levels. These are:

- Built and natural environments
- Education
- NHS Scotland
- Active recreation
- Transport and planning

- Workplace

### **Active travel delivers cross-cutting, significant public benefits**

Active travel makes a positive and significant contribution to delivering on a whole range of public policies and national indicators including transport, health and well-being, economy, climate change and the environment and community development.

The provision, management and maintenance of adequate infrastructure that encourages more people to walk and cycle safely, efficiently and enjoyably, and connect easily to other transport modes is an essential foundation for active travel. However, adequate infrastructure on its own is insufficient. Greater uptake of active travel will require society-wide culture change. Awareness raising, promotion and marketing, education, training and incentives are required to encourage the necessary individual behaviour change.

In general and with the exception of walking, specific policies and strategies to support active travel are in place. Robust implementation of these policies is now the priority. This will require strong leadership and vision, adequate, long-term investment, co-ordination and partnership working. If Scotland is to deliver the policies to reduce carbon emissions, improve public health and change the quality of life of its citizens, it has to recognise that active travel has a vital contribution to make.

There is considerable evidence that higher rates of walking and cycling can result in lower rates of obesity and mental and physical illness. There is evidence that countries which have invested in walking and cycling infrastructure over a period of time have obesity rates which are less than half of Scotland's. An ageing population in particular – has serious consequences for spending. Encouraging healthy habits such as walking and cycling throughout the population will lead to people leading longer, healthier lives. Without this action, the government will be spending ever greater amounts on healthcare for the long-term sick.

The Scottish Household Survey (2009/10) covered participation of adults in sport. A broad definition of sport was used and includes, for example, recreational walking for more than 30 minutes. Adults were asked about participation in the previous four weeks. It highlights that by far the most prevalent activity was walking for 30 minutes (for recreational purposes). Over half (54%) of adults had participated in this activity in the last four weeks compared with fewer than one-in-five undertaking any other individual activity.

### **The economic benefit of walking and cycling – evidence**

The World Health Organisation has developed **Health Economic Assessment Tools (HEAT)** for both cycling and walking. These HEAT tools are an online resource to estimate the economic savings resulting from reductions in mortality from regular

cycling and/or walking. It is based on best available evidence, with parameters that can be adapted to fit specific situations.

HEAT for cycling has been pilot-tested in several countries within and outside the WHO European Region. As an example of its performance, estimates for Austria indicate that current levels of cycling, a mode of transport accounting for 5% of the total and with an average trip length of 2 km, save 412 lives every year due to regular physical activity, amounting to €405 million. ***In Scotland, the annual savings would amount to £1–2 billion if the cycling share rose to 13% from the current level (1%).***

The new HEAT for walking will expand the opportunities of including this universal mode of transport into the *calculation* of the benefits of active transport and regular walking for health/leisure/recreation. HEAT for walking and cycling has been used to quantify the health benefits of the canal system in a report for British Waterways Scotland and The Waterways Trust Scotland, ['Positively Affecting Lives – The Health Benefits of the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals' \(June 2011\).](#)

*A survey of canal users identified that the Forth & Clyde and Union canals generate almost 3.9 million additional person kilometers of travel per annum, equating to a physical health benefit of £6.4m (walking - £2.818m, cycling - £2.348m and running - £1.205m).*

Paths for All supports community and workplace volunteer led health walk projects across Scotland. Through the workplace and community led walk models we have directly supported 159 community schemes since 2000 and over 200 workplace schemes since 2007. Walking for health is appropriate to many age groups however our current targets are older adults and our performance to date reflects that we can target this group effectively; 42% of current walkers are 45-64 and 37% of current walkers are 65+. Similarly the age range of volunteer walk leaders corresponds to these target groups, with 70% walk leaders being over 45. In addition, our workplace programme is proving to be very successful and is a good model to target the inactive working age population, for example 65% of our workplace walkers are women. Paths for All also support a wide range of professional staff as well as community path groups who work with local authorities, landowners and others to manage and develop path networks. We provide training, technical guidance, networking and capacity building. Furthermore, Paths for All is a partnership organisation. Working with our partners significantly increases our reach and adds value to our and our partners' overall impacts

Natural England is investigating the cost effectiveness of their Walking for Health initiative, in order to identify health and environmental costs, benefits and effectiveness – overall and for individuals. The pilot data from their research suggest the average cost of a single dose of walking for an individual participant to be £0.84p which compares well to the cost of prescribing medication. Natural England's projects show that over the 3 year period they will provide a life-cost averted saving to the health service of £81,167,864; and a cost-benefit ratio of 7:1

Dr Adrian Davies produced 'Value for Money: An Economic Assessment of Investment in *Walking and Cycling*' (March 2010) for NHS Bristol and Bristol City Council. This report shows that *'walking and cycling have been identified as a key means by which people can build physical activity into their lifestyles. Yet the volume of literature on Cost Benefit Analysis of interventions to promote routine walking and cycling has grown in the past decade or so and reveals that the economic justification for investments to facilitate cycling and walking has been undervalued or rarely considered in public policy decision-making.'* The review assessed the evidence base from both peer reviewed and grey literature both in the UK and beyond. *'Investment in infrastructure and to facilitate increased activity levels amongst local communities through cycling and walking is likely to be a 'best buy' for our health, the NHS at large in terms of cost savings, as well as for the road transport sector.'* Almost all of the studies identified report economic benefits of walking and cycling interventions that are highly significant – **the average benefit-cost ratio (BCR) is 13:1. For UK interventions only, the average BCR is 19:1**, possibly reflecting the currently lower levels of walking and cycling in the UK compared to other European countries.

### **Paths for All's recommendations for a step change in the delivery of physical activity**

There are a number of areas where we feel that a significant impact could be made to help deliver improved levels of physical activity by aligning existing and focusing new spend:

- A clear recommendation of the importance of physical activity as a preventative measure.
- *Prioritising preventative measures to reduce demand and lessen inequalities.*
- *Encourage local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships to give a high priority to physical activity in new Single Outcome Agreements.*
- *Priority should be given to walking and cycling interventions e.g. walking schemes, workplace walking and cycling schemes etc*
- Increase investment in walking and cycling infrastructure to help deliver economic and health benefits and the carbon emission reductions that are needed to meet climate change commitments.
- Resources should be concentrated on maintaining existing pavements and paths – to the highest possible standards. The implementation of Core Paths Plans, (under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003) should be prioritised and resourced.
- Priority should be given to planning developments that minimise travel and incorporate walking and cycling.
- Provide sufficient provision to implement the Central Scotland Green Network (National Planning Framework 2).
- Good quality, accessible places to take part in physical activity (recreational and functional – to work and school) are an essential part of getting more people physically active, more often.