We welcome the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. Our comments are limited to those aspects that have direct relevance to the work and objectives of Paths for All. We would be delighted to offer more information if required.

Summary
- Participation in sport should be looked at as part of a spectrum of physical activity.
- Walking is of overwhelming importance for getting significant numbers of people more active - especially for getting inactive people active and hence tackling health inequalities.
- Walking is by far the most popular recreational activity among Scottish adults.
- For the fifth year in a row, more people are walking for recreation.
- The National Walking Strategy is key to promoting and sustaining increased levels of walking.

Background
Paths for All is a Scottish charity founded in 1996. We champion everyday walking as the way to a happier, healthier Scotland. We want to get Scotland walking: everyone, everyday, everywhere.

Our aim is to significantly increase the number of people who choose to walk in Scotland - whether that's for leisure or walking to work, school, the shops or to a nearby public transport hub. We want to create a happier, healthier Scotland where increased physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but also for cycling and other activities, to help make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.

Our work supports the delivery of the Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework, National Walking Strategy and the Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland, community and workplace health walking, path network development and active travel policy development. We are a partnership organisation with 29 national partners. Our funders include the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Macmillan, The Life Changes Trust and Awards for All.

Participation in sport and walking
We recommend that the Committee should consider participation in sport as part of a spectrum of physical activity. This approach is reflected in the Scottish Government Active Scotland Outcomes Framework. http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/partnerstories/Outcomes-Framework

“Walkabout Stirling gave me the incentive to become more active”
Walkabout Stirling participant

Paths for All is a partnership organisation; for a full list of our current partners please visit our website. Paths for Partnership is a recognised Scottish Charity No: SC025535 and a Company Limited by Guarantee No: 168554 incorporated 19 September 1996 at Companies House, Edinburgh. Registered Office: Office 8, Forrester Lodge, Tullibody Road, Alloa FK10 2HU.
The benefits of physical activity

*Physical activity is the “best buy in public health”* (Faculty of Public Health)

*If a medication existed which had a similar effect to physical activity, it would be regarded as a ‘wonder drug’ or ‘miracle cure’* (CMO 2009)

Physical activity has a role in preventing and tackling obesity but it also has a raft of other health and well-being benefits. For example - benefits (reduction in risk) for adults and older adults:

**CMO 2011 ‘Start Active, Stay Active’**

- Type 2 Diabetes: 40%
- Cardiovascular Disease: 35%
- Falls, Depression and Dementia: 30%
- Joint and Back Pain: 25%
- Cancers (Colon and Breast): 20%

The Scottish Government’s Active Scotland Outcomes Framework describes Scotland’s ambitions for sport and physical activity and the key outcomes over the next ten years. The headline measure of progress is the proportion of the population who meet the recommended level of physical activity. This is a National Indicator.

If we want to get significant numbers of people more active, then walking is of overwhelming importance – as both a recreational activity and as part of everyday life. This is particularly the case if we want to get inactive people more active.

The desire and intent to encourage more walking and embedding it in our daily lives is reflected in the Scottish Government’s National Walking Strategy and Action Plan


[http://www.stepchangescot.scot/](http://www.stepchangescot.scot/)

The National Walking Strategy has three strategic aims:

- Create a culture of walking
- Better walking environments throughout Scotland
- Ensure easy, convenient independent mobility for all

Walking has been described as near perfect exercise and, perhaps most importantly, walking is fun and free! It provides a low impact, low cost, effective way of incorporating physical activity into daily life, across the life course and in every setting (communities, schools/further education, workplaces, health and care settings, public spaces and individually). It can be undertaken at a level that is accessible to all and provides tangible benefits to health. The social benefits of walking should also not be underestimated with regular walkers more likely to engage in their local communities and experience less social isolation and loneliness.


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**Value for money**

Walking is the most accessible physical activity for most people and its promotion represents great value for money. Getting people active through walking is a key way to support better physical and mental health and longer healthy lives – taking pressure off health and social care
services. It is therefore a key opportunity for effective preventative spending. This is particularly important as our population ages and resources come under more pressure.

The economic benefits associated with increased physical activity levels far outweigh the costs with walking developments showing significant value for money.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) studies show a return of approximately £8 for every £1 invested in health walk and path development projects. The benefits include making people fitter, healthier and improving their mental and social health which in turn makes cost savings to the NHS and local authorities such as reduced spending on care and prescriptions. 


**Physical activity levels in Scotland**

- Just under two-thirds (63%) of adults in 2015 met the guideline for Moderate or Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA), a similar level to those seen since 2012 (62-64%).
- In 2015 approximately one in five adults (21%) had very low activity levels (less than 30 minutes in a week). (The Scottish Health Survey (SHeS))

**Participation in walking**

- For the fifth year in a row, more people are walking recreationally.
- 69% of the population now walk regularly for recreation, an increase of 5 percentage points from the previous year.
- Walking as part of active travel is stable
- The greatest increase between 2014 and 2015 was in those aged 75 and over, who are amongst those most likely to be inactive
- Walking is three times more popular (57%) as a recreational activity among Scottish adults, than the next most popular activity, swimming (18%) and football (7%)
- In 2015, 52% of adults reported participating in sport in the last four weeks.
- Participation in sport by adults has remained relatively stable over the past four years. (Scottish Household Survey)

**Walking for Health**

Paths for All supports 149 active Walking for Health projects delivering over 500 regular walks. There are Walking for Health projects in every Scottish local authority area. Last year* 4,513 new registered walkers with Walking for Health projects and there were 305,845 attendances at Health Walks

*2015-16

More than 145 local walking groups have provided information to our National Walkers Database:

- 76% are women
- 73% join group to feel healthier
- 63% are over 55
- 12% over 75
- 59% join to meet new people
- 67% of new walkers recorded on our database report that they are meeting the recommended PA guidelines, 6 months later, of those who responded to the follow up survey, 71% of walkers report that they now meet the guidelines

I feel fitter and have more energy

South G Walker
Walking can provide a pathway on to other activities such as swimming, aerobics, badminton, etc. It can also people remain active if they are losing physical function and can no longer take part in organised sport or more vigorous activity.

**Workplace walking**
The Step Count Challenge is a workplace walking challenge. Research by the University of Edinburgh shows an increase in the amount of time people were walking each week. The biggest increase was around active travel (e.g. walking to work) where there was a weekly increase of 109 minutes. There was also a 55-minute increase in walking as part of people’s leisure time. [http://stepcount-staging.linux-live.stormid.com/2015/02/step-count-challenge-research-results/](http://stepcount-staging.linux-live.stormid.com/2015/02/step-count-challenge-research-results/)

**Active travel**
The Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) Programme is Paths for All’s grant scheme to support behaviour change initiatives to increase active and sustainable travel. The programme is funded through Transport Scotland and aims to make walking and cycling the modes of choice for short local.

**Examples of relevant work we currently deliver or support:**
- **Health walks** – local walking projects across Scotland - training, resources and support
- **Strength and Balance** – for example in care homes - training, resources and support
- **Step count challenge** – workplace team walking challenges
- **Workplace** – training, resources and support
- **Macmillan** – promoting walking for people affected by cancer
- **Dementia Friendly Walking Project** – training, resources and support - funded by the Life Changes Trust
- **Community paths** – training, resources and support to create active environments
- **Active travel** – including the Smarter Choices Smarter Places Fund – encouraging travel behaviour change
- **Walking football** – supporting the development of local Walking Football opportunities across Scotland
- **The Big Fit Walk** takes place annually in June and aims to inspire communities across Scotland to come together for a short walk to celebrate the benefits of being active.

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I started out unfit, then walked each week with the local group and was surprised how much I could manage after a while.

*Step It Up Highland*