

Report of Director of Public Health

Report to: Martin Bennett – Chair Ramblers Leeds Group

Date: 9 December 2014

Subject: DEPUTATION – Walk Leeds – WY Ramblers Association Walking festival

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

- 1 West Riding Ramblers Association brought a deputation to council on 20 October, regarding the eight day walking festival, WalkLeeds, to be held in June 2015. The deputation requested support for the WalkLeeds week from Leeds City Council and to consider ways and ideas to best promote the event to achieve the Council's vision and strategies for health, well-being and the natural environment.
- 2 In responding to the Deputation it is important to highlight the ongoing commitment of both the council and other partner organisations to increasing the accessibility of walking as a both a utility and leisure activity
- 3 Leeds' rationale for supporting activity to increase walking across the city mirrors the main points raised by the Deputation in that:
 - Walking is a safe form of exercise for all ages and abilities, which can easily be incorporated into a normal daily routine and contributes to physical and mental health improvement.
 - Walking is an ideal form of exercise for families, it is free, does not require specialist equipment and can be done 'from the doorstep'

- Walking is an ideal form of older exercise for older people, it brings benefits of increased muscle strength which result in improved balance and co-ordination, and strengthening bones and joints, preventing the development of osteoarthritis and osteoporosis. In addition, walking can provide the opportunity for socialisation through walking with friends or joining a walking group.
- Walking is an appropriate form of exercise for overweight and obese people as it does not put too much strain onto the joints or heart. Thirty minutes of moderate daily walking, alongside a healthy diet can contribute to an effective weight loss programme.
- Walking is environmentally friendly; if we can increase the numbers of people walking as a form of active transport, this would result in reduced numbers of vehicles on the road, which bring additional benefits to the city.

4 The council recognises the benefits of a comprehensive programme of actions to increase walking levels across the city, making walking an easy and attractive choice, including:

- Supporting schemes to improve the environment for pedestrians
- Giving due consideration for the needs of pedestrians in the design of new developments
- Co-ordinating a pathway of walking activity to cater for the diverse needs of the population
- Delivering campaigns, with consistent, easy to understand messages, to increase motivation for residents to walk and promoting the range of opportunities for walking.

Recommendations

- West Yorkshire Ramblers Association deputation requested that: Leeds City Council join West Yorkshire Ramblers Association for the festival, and ask that councillors support the WalkLeeds week and consider ways and ideas to best promote and achieve the Council's aims and policies for health, well-being and the natural environment
- Leeds City Council is requested to:
 1. Note the contents of the report, and the current programmes of walking activity in the context of the overall promotion of physical activity in Leeds.
 2. Recognise the Ramblers WalkLeeds festival as a key opportunity to both promote and enable walking and its contribution to increasing the rates of physical activity within the city.

3. Acknowledge that Parks and Countryside are already working with the Ramblers on the logistics for the festival.
4. Identify the opportunities through existing commitments in 'Leeds Let's Get Active' and other commissioned healthy lifestyle programmes to promote a walking legacy for the festival
5. Acknowledge that a small grants fund has been made available through the CityConnect Walking project to support the festival and to specifically promote urban doorstep walks in the project areas.
6. Promote the walking festival and other urban and health walks alongside our leisure centres, through the Leeds City Council website, the Health and Well Being Board, via a presence across social media and availability of print materials through a range of public facing outlets including, council services, healthcare facilities and 3rd sector organisations.
7. Support the establishment of a working group with the Ramblers to take forward the above actions. The group will include representation from public health, parks and countryside and leisure services as well as relevant external agencies.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report responds to the Deputation received by the Council on 20th October 2014 from the West Yorkshire Ramblers Association.
- 1.2 The Deputation requested that Leeds City Council join West Yorkshire Ramblers Association for the festival, and ask that councillors support the WalkLeeds week and consider ways and ideas to best promote and achieve the Council's aims and policies for health, well-being and the natural environment.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Increasing how much someone walks or cycles may lead to associated physical and mental health benefits. These include: Reducing the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Keeping the musculoskeletal system healthy and promoting mental wellbeing.
- 2.2 An increase in walking or cycling would also help reduce car travel, leading to reductions in air pollution, carbon dioxide emissions and congestion. It can reduce road danger and noise which in turn can increase the number of people of all ages who are out on the streets, making public spaces seem more welcoming and providing opportunities for social interaction. Walking can provide an opportunity for most people, including those with impairment, to participate in and enjoy the outdoor environment.
- 2.3 Walking is reported to be the most common recreational and sporting activity undertaken by adults in Britain. It is the most likely way that adults can achieve the recommended levels of physical activity, particularly when incorporated into daily living as a mode of travel.

- 2.4 Encouraging and enabling people to walk requires co-ordinated action across different partners and sectors. A range of factors have to be considered, including environmental, social, financial and personal factors such as motivation and ability. Successful programmes to encourage walking can be particularly important in tackling inequalities in health, including with regard to people with impairments.
- 2.5 National Guidance - *NICE PH041 Guidance – Walking and Cycling: local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation*, recommends developing programmes which are cross sector, addressing infrastructure for walking, increasing access to walking opportunities and delivering behaviour change initiatives to support and encourage people to walk.
- 2.6 NICE PH041 Recommendation 6 Walking: community-wide programmes, specifically reference the delivery of programmes of walking which ‘offer a variety of routes, paces and distances at different times of the day (including evenings and on different days of the week or at the weekend)’. Local people with different preferences, time constraints and physical abilities should all be able to participate. Programmes could include:
- community-wide events, such as mass participation walking groups, community challenges and ‘walkathons’
 - walks led by suitably trained walk leaders (paid or voluntary) and aimed at people who are currently inactive

Also recommended:

- Ensure walking routes are integrated with accessible public transport links to support longer journeys.
- Provide information tailored for individuals who want to go walking without joining a group or club.
- Develop and implement a publicity strategy to let the local community know about the walking routes and events and how accessible they are.

2.7 Levels of physical activity in Leeds

- 2.7.1 30.1 per cent of people (age 16 and over) in Leeds now take part in sport or active recreation three times a week or more (Active People Survey 8, the percentage of the adult population in a local area who participate in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks).
- 2.7.2 26.9 per cent of people (aged 16 and over) in Leeds are doing less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week (Public Health England – Annual Population Survey 2012)

3 Main issues

3.1 At the 20 October 2014 council meeting, a Deputation was received from the West Riding Ramblers Association, presented by Martin Bennett, Chair of the Leeds Group. The deputation called for:

- Support for the WalkLeeds week from Leeds City Council and to consider ways and ideas to best promote the event to achieve the Council's aims and policies for health, well-being and the natural environment.

3.2 In many regards the Council and its partners are already providing a comprehensive approach to encouraging walking across the city whether for leisure, health or utility purposes which can complement the Leeds Walking Festival and some of the existing activities could be utilised to promote and support the festival.

3.3 *Infrastructure and increasing access for walking:*

3.3.3 The Council seeks to provide an attractive well maintained public path network to enable walkers, cyclists, horse riders and people with additional mobility needs to both link between green spaces and enjoy their natural environment and thus the network in turn has the potential to significantly contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of the general public.

3.3.4 The Public Rights of Way Section is mindful of its duties in this regard and as well as carrying seasonal maintenance, wherever possible improvements are carried out on the PROW network and Key Recreational Routes (such as the Leeds Country Way) to facilitate better access for all. However, funding for improvements has to be sought and secured via capital sources such as Community Committees, the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and the capital programme. There is always a shortfall between aims and objectives and what can be delivered on the ground.

3.3.5 The Council has published a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which serves as a management plan up to 2017. The RoWIP sets out areas for improvement and identifies priorities for action in order to deliver the long term development of the public rights of way network in Leeds.

3.3.6 With regard to steps to address road safety issues, there is a comprehensive roll out of a 20mph programme of work. During the current programme, which commenced in 2012, over 40 new area schemes are being introduced which will bring coverage of 20mph limits to around 520 km of residential streets by the end of March 2014. Preparations are now being made for the next forward programme which, subject to resources, will run from 2014 to 2020 and deliver a further 120 local area schemes to more than double the length of residential streets within a 20 mph limit.

3.4 *Support and encouragement for walking*

3.4.1 The Walking for Health network, supported by the Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support, has a number of Walking Schemes within Leeds who deliver weekly short led walks within both the inner city and outer areas. Schemes are currently working through the Walking for Health accreditation. We will have

greater indication as to who has passed accreditation early 2015. Weekly walks are also delivered by NHS groups and community third sector groups to support the needs of their clients.

- 3.4.2 The Sport and Active Lifestyles team deliver regular Walking for Health Walk Leader training, increasing confidence of volunteers and paid workers who wish to deliver led walks. The training ensures leaders feel well equipped for leading walks. The training focuses on the practicalities of leading a health walk, but also touches on the benefits of walking, route planning and leading walkers with special requirements.
- 3.4.3 Leeds Let's Get Active is one of 14 national pilots looking at different ways of increasing the activity levels of those who are currently inactive. The community element of this aims to engage with communities in areas of highest deprivation to understand barriers, motivations and develop appropriate activities. The walking element of the programme has included social led walks, health walks and pushchair walks. Walks aim to utilise local parks, or urban walks around street areas.
- 3.4.4 CityConnect Walking is working in areas of the city where rates of physical activity are lower than elsewhere in the city and rates of ill health, linked to physical activity are greater than citywide average.

3.5 *Collaboration*

- 3.5.1 CityConnect Walking – The council is working in partnership with Living Streets and West Yorkshire Combined Authority in the delivery of the CityConnect Walking project which is integrated into the CityConnect programme (www.cyclecityconnect.co.uk). The overall aim of CityConnect is to increase the numbers of people cycling and walking through a comprehensive programme of high quality infrastructure supported by engagement and behaviour change initiatives.

3.6 *Additional Actions to supporting Walk Leeds Week*

- 3.6.1 Leeds City Council (public health) will convene a meeting with the Ramblers and other stakeholders to consider appropriate actions required to support Walk Leeds Week. This will include identifying opportunities to communicate internally with Councillors and externally with members of the public to promote the festival and to encourage participation
- 3.6.2 CityConnect Walking has allocated some of the community grant fund specifically to support the Rambler's festival. This fund will be to support the delivery of urban walks in the project areas (Armley / New Wortley, Gipton South, Holbeck and Cross Green, East End Park and Richmond Hill).
- 3.6.3 Parks and Countryside and Living Streets have met with the Ramblers to discuss the 2015 walking festival to discuss the logistics of the event and how the council can assist. Living Streets have provided information to the Ramblers regarding the grant scheme highlighted in 3.6.3. A follow up meeting is planned.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 CityConnect Walking involves local people in carrying out Community Street Audits. The process identifies the barriers pedestrians face in safely accessing their streets, and propose solutions to these issues. The Community Street Audits help determine what activities and small scale improvements can be easily carried out to encourage walking and improve the local environment.
- 4.1.2 Small grants are made available to communities in the project to address barriers to walking.
- 4.1.3 Presentations and briefings regarding the CityConnect walking activity have been provided to community committees and the executive member for health and wellbeing.
- 4.1.4 Leeds Let's Get Active carries out local consultation to find out what different activities may address different local needs, where appropriate then setting up walking activity with the aim of setting up sustainable walking activity within areas or encouraging more walking activity within a locality.
- 4.1.5 The Public Rights of Way Section actively works with Parish and Town Councils, particularly through the Paths Partnership Project, and also with developers, private landowners, countryside organisations, volunteers, local schools and Friends of Groups to bring about improvements to the PROW network and encourage a greater degree of interest.
- 4.1.6 Action targets set in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan in relation to the delivery of the public rights of way service are regularly reported to the Leeds Local Access Forum, which advises the Council on open air recreational issues.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Through work via Living Streets and walking4health there has been an emphasis on working with people and communities where access to 'countryside' walks is limited. Much of the work through these projects promotes and facilitates opportunities for walking within more local urban environments and for communities to have an opportunity to walk from their doorstep and discover the assets and space available to them.
- 4.2.2 Walking for Health emphasises that walks should aim to be local and accessible by walking or using public transport and that where schemes do their best to make walks accessible in the local area. Scheme walks should also require the walker to have no special equipment and be free for walkers to participate in.

- 4.2.3 Leeds Let's Get Active has focused on developing walking within localities within inner city areas of Leeds, helping people connect with local resources such as parks, facilities and groups within their local areas. Where appropriate participants are encouraged to move onto other physical activity opportunities or groups when they are ready.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The Best City ambition is to improve life for the people of Leeds and make our city a better place. Comprehensive walking programmes contribute to this ambition by improving the safety and quality of life of Leeds residents by enabling safe pedestrian journeys in local communities to make a specific contribution to the Best City for Communities and Child Friendly City ambitions.
- 4.3.2 The Health and Wellbeing strategy for Leeds identifies 5 key outcomes with an underpinning priority of reducing inequalities in health. Increasing rates of walking and physical activity in areas where the incidence of poor health is greatest can make a positive impact on the key outcomes.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Active forms of transport, such as walking, are highly cost effective. To the individual, walking has few costs associated with it. A review of UK and international evidence in 2010 found that almost all studies reported economic benefits of walking and cycling interventions in the UK studies, the review concluded a cost to benefit ratio of 19:1 which was better than the median cost benefit of all countries included of 13:1.
- 4.4.2 The health cost of inactivity in Leeds is almost £10.1 million per year (Sport Year 2009/10, Measure Sport England commissioned data from British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group for PCTs, Year 2009/2010: Health costs of physical inactivity, split by disease type)

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications. The report is eligible for Call-In.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There are no risk management issues relating to this response

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council endorses the sentiments expressed in the Ramblers deputation and is keen to support the event
- 5.2 This report has set out the Council's approach and the some of the actions that are being taken with its own programmes for increasing the numbers of people

choosing to walk for either leisure or utility purposes. The council and its' partners collectively deliver a comprehensive approach to increasing walking and acknowledges the valuable contribution that activities including the Walking Festival can make to this overall work package.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Leeds City Council is requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report, and the current programmes of walking activity in the context of the overall promotion of physical activity in Leeds.
2. Recognise the Ramblers WalkLeeds festival as a key opportunity to both promote and enable walking and its contribution to increasing the rates of physical activity within the city.
3. Acknowledge that Parks and Countryside are already working with the Ramblers on the logistics for the festival.
4. Identify the opportunities through existing commitments in 'Leeds Let's Get Active' and other commissioned healthy lifestyle programmes to promote a walking legacy for the festival
5. Acknowledge that a small grants fund has been made available through the CityConnect Walking project to support the festival and to specifically promote urban doorstep walks in the project areas.
6. Promote the walking festival and other urban and health walks alongside our leisure centres, through the Leeds City Council website, the Health and Well Being Board, via a presence across social media and availability of print materials through a range of public facing outlets including, council services, healthcare facilities and 3rd sector organisations.
7. Support the establishment of a working group with the Ramblers to take forward the above actions. The group will include representation from public health, parks and countryside and leisure services as well as relevant external agencies.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.