



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report 14.1: Increase % of people who walk as one mode of travel by 10% by 2023
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Date of Report	22 January 2024
Governance Group	CPA Board – 29 February 2024

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim which aimed to increase % of people who walk as one mode of travel by 10% by 2023

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Links to LOIP Stretch Outcome 14, Increase Sustainable Travel, 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026.
- 1.2 Benefit to community will be a model shift in travel from cars (motorised vehicles) to more active forms of transport such as cycling and walking. This will contribute to improved air quality, decreased greenhouse gas emissions, improved public health and make Aberdeen a nicer place to be, due to reduced congestion, reduced pollution and a healthier population.
- 1.3 Walking is one of the easiest forms of exercise for those that are able and is a cheap way to travel. There are many projects, plans and work ongoing to increase the amount of walking in Aberdeen, with lots of good walking routes and health walks available in Aberdeen. Aberdeen already has high walking rates comparable with other European Cities. This improvement project is to encourage walking and promote the large number of resources, health walks and walking trails and routes that are already available to see if it increases the number of people walking and helps overcome the barriers to walking.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 Against this background, in September 2020 the CPA Board approved the initial [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to increase % of people who walk as one mode of travel by 10% by 2023.

2.2 The aim links to policies in Aberdeen City Council's Local Transport Strategy, Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy, and the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy and associated active travel delivery plans. There are specific health and well-being impacts associated with increased levels walking (aerobic and weight-bearing exercise), and associated reduction of sedentary behaviours. There can also be wider community benefits associated with increased levels of walking.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

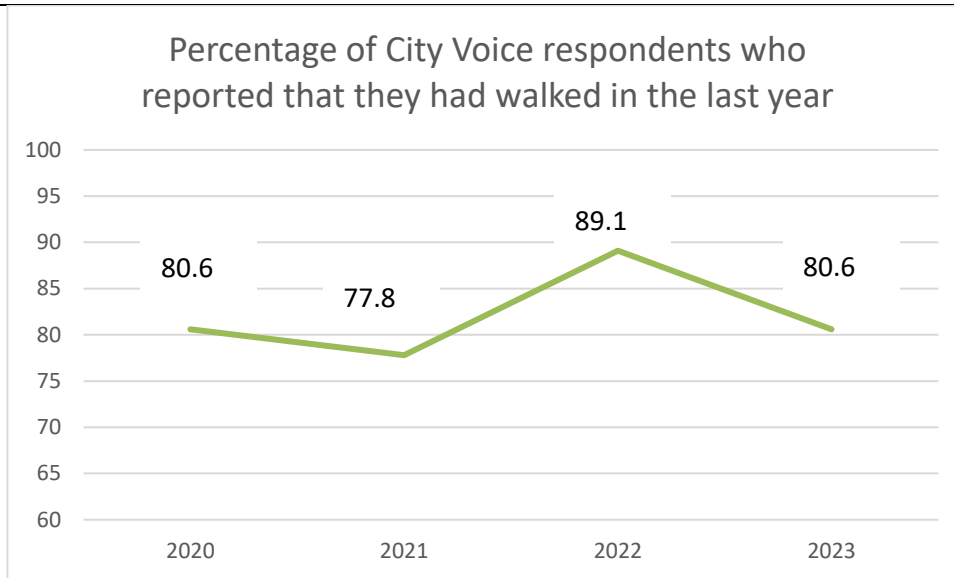
3.1 The following actions were implemented.

- a) Promotion of existing "health walks" using community newsletters;
- b) Setting up a new "health walk" at RGU and encouragement of staff and students at RGU to undertake Walk leader training and volunteer on health walks. This project actively encouraged and signposted people to existing resources such as walking routes and health walks available. This was done through Health walk co-ordinators, Link workers, as well as other public and third sector organisations, promotional materials and social media.;
- c) Use the current Scarf/ Energy Saving Trust advice helpline to disseminate information and signposting to active travel and record the number of these interactions;
- d) Road Safety Campaign "Be Bright at Night" using radio adverts, posters and social media; and
- e) Installation of benches on a key walking route identified by the community and subsequent monitoring of impacts.

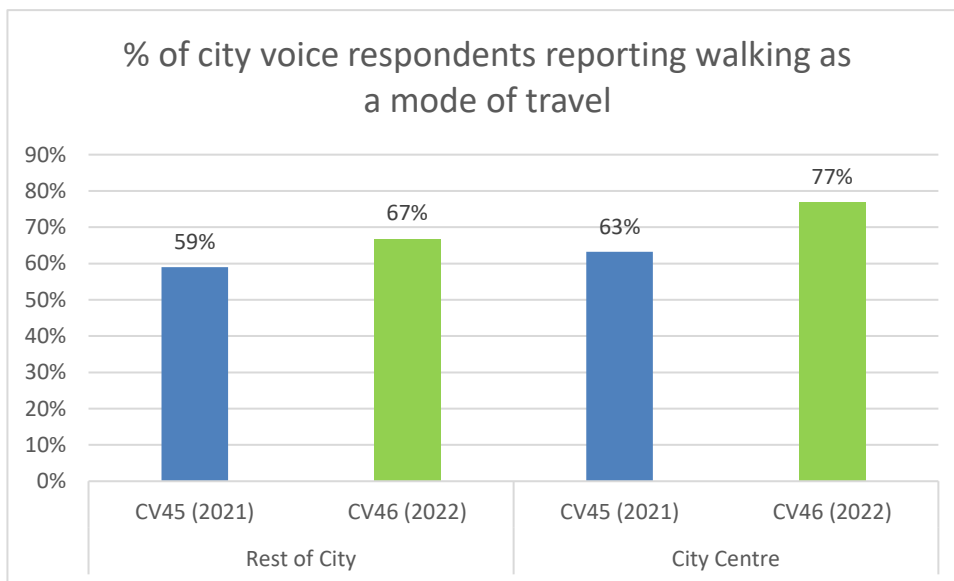
3.2 Regarding (e), the identified walking route linked Hutcheon Street and Foresterhill Campus and Drs Surgery on Westburn Road. It was identified by the community connector, on a walking route with an appreciable gradient.

4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 Between 2020 and 2023, there has been no change in the % of City Voice respondents who reported that they had walked in last year from 80.6% in 2020 to 80.6.1% in 2023. Intermediate years saw a fall to 77.8% in 2021 and an increased to 89.1% in 2022.



4.2 Whilst the 10% increase sought has not been achieved, positive outcomes in relation to walking as a mode of travel both in the city centre and rest of the city can be reported. Based on the City Voice survey, 77% of respondents reported having walked as a mode of travel (city centre) in 2022 compared to 63 % in 2021 (14% increase). Similarly for the rest of the city a 4% increase was reported.

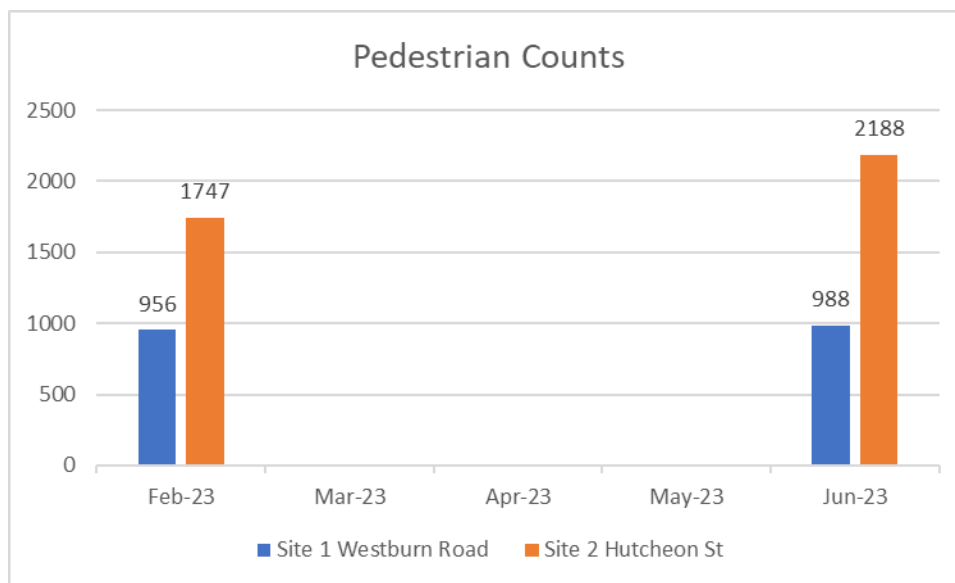


4.3 As well as the overall aim data, data shows positive impact from the changes tested:

Installation of benches:

4.4 Throughout 2022/23 the [walking project](#) has been working on a project that came about as an improvement idea from the Central community to make walking more accessible and encourage more people to walk to appointments at the Foresterhill Campus, having highlighted that it was not accessible for all to walk the full distance in one go. This has involved a variety of partners to get a series of park benches installed on Hutcheon Road and Westburn Road to the

Foresterhill Campus to test if having places to stop and rest on their journey encouraged more people to walk. Nine locations were identified along the route and working with the landowners by March 2023, all were installed. Bespoke pedestrian CCTV surveys have been undertaken prior to (Feb 23), and after (Jun 23), the installation of nine park benches on the walking route along Hutcheon Street and Westburn Road. The surveys have shown an increase in the number of people walking, with a 3% increase at the survey site on Westburn Road (from 956 to 988) and a 25% increase at the survey site on Hutcheon Street (from 1,747 to 2,188). It is noted that the weather is better in June compared to February so this also may have helped lead to the increase in walking levels. The pedestrian count will be repeated in February 2024, so a more like for like comparison can be made.



Health walks at RGU

4.5 Walk and Talk sessions were arranged at RGU. Six sessions were implemented during the Autumn term of 2021, and Spring term of 2022. Numbers peaked at eleven participants, but averaged at around six.



Of those attending, *students and staff have increased amount of walking during the week*. Positive feedback was received with comments as below:

- *“It breaks up my day, and I can get outside and speak to new people”* – RGU Staff
- *“I came along to meet new people and join a club at the University.”* - RGU Student
- *“Its been good to make friends and do exercise”*. – RGU Student

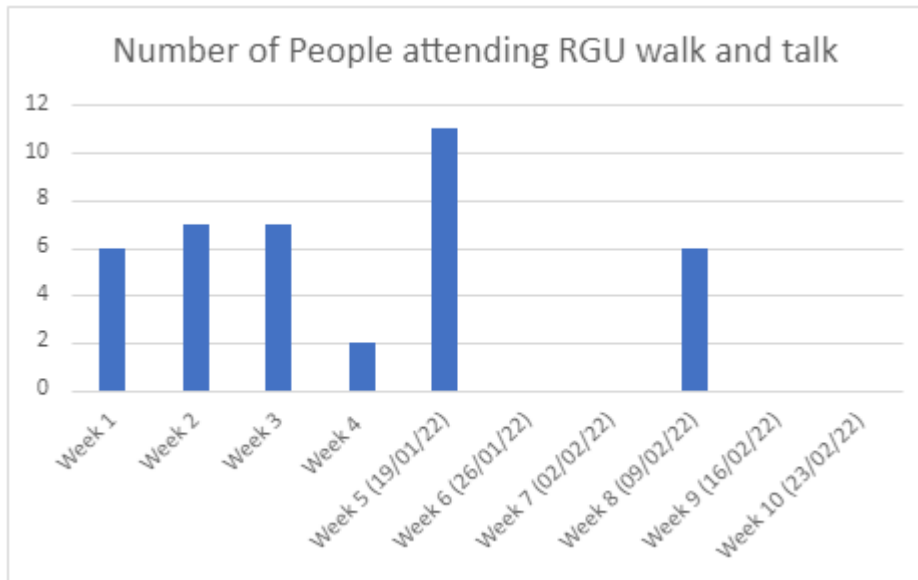
In reviewing the data and impact of the health walks the project concluded that the test had successfully demonstrated an improvement in participants physical activity however noted the following challenges/positive outcomes:

Challenges

- Weather
- Participation
- Covid-19 Safety guidelines

Positive outcomes

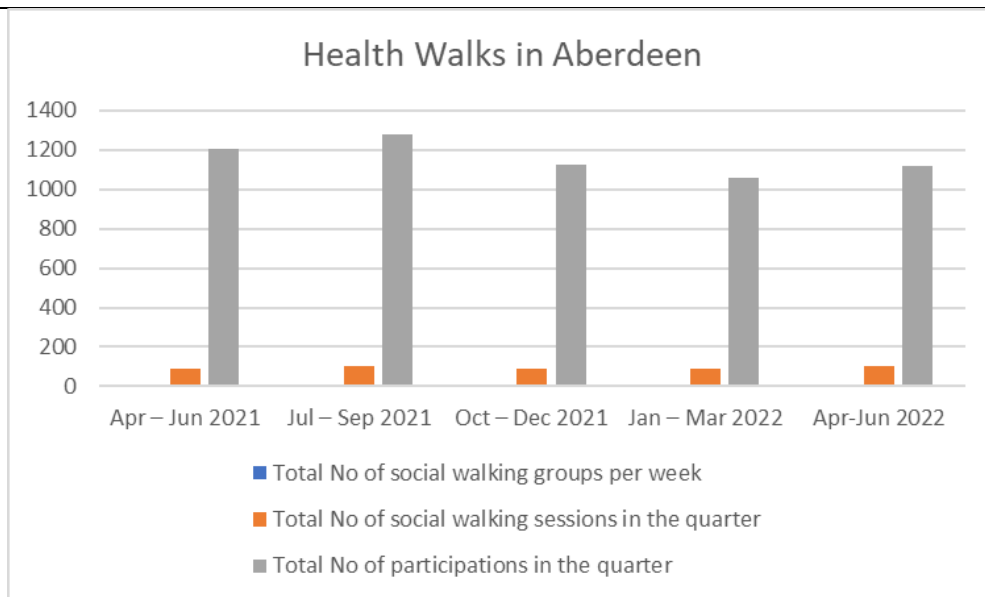
- Attendance from international students
- Friendships made
- Enhanced confidence in fitness levels



Promotion/Campaigns

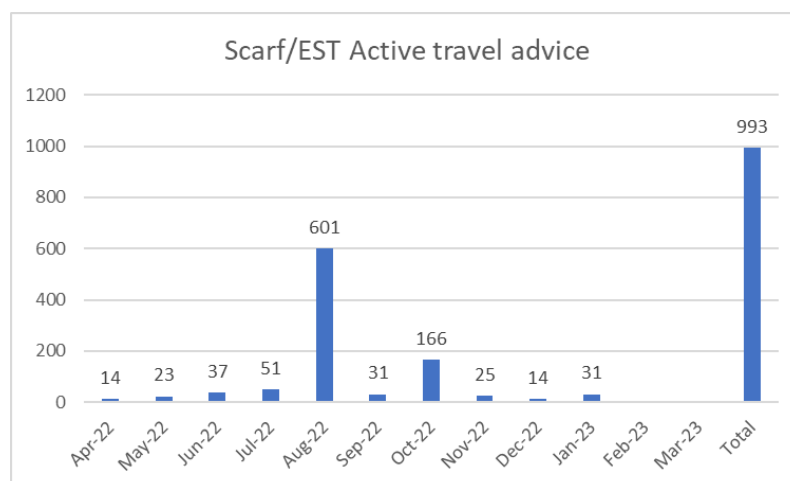


- 4.6 Social media and community newsletters have been used to promote local health walks taking place across Aberdeen. Nine social walking groups have been sustained, and 26 new walk leaders trained. However, there has been a decline in participation from 1208 participations per quarter in Apr-Jun 21, to 1121 participations per quarter in the Apr-Jun 2022 period.



SCARF Active Travel Advice

4.7 SCARF have monitored the number of active travel advice requests via their helpline service, and this is shown in the graph below.



5. HOW HAVE OUR COMMUNITIES/PROTECTED GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT OF THIS

5.1 The Project Lead attended a meeting of the wider Central Locality group which included Community Connectors. One of the Community Connectors raised the issue of a lack of places to rest whilst walking up from the city centre to the Hospital, along Hutcheon Street and Westburn Drive. The benches project is a result of this community idea.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

6.1 The benches have been permanently installed, so their benefit will continue to be realised for as long as they are maintained in-situ. Monitoring of activity was

via bespoke CCTV surveys, and these will not be continued following the end of this particularly test of change project.

6.2 Wider surveys on prevalence of walking will continue to be undertaken and monitored, and supplemented by wider information gathered locally by local, regional and national partners.

6.3 Data will continue to be reported to the Sustainable City Group and through the Outcomes Framework.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

7.1 Opportunity 1: The projects has indicated that targeted interventions have the potential to improve the walking environment, and encourage increased walking activity. There may be opportunity to role out similar improvements on other identified walking routes, and consider the impact of other elements such as water fountains, pavement treatment, crossing points, lighting etc.

7.2 Opportunity 2: Wider improvements in walking facilities are being implemented across the City and City Centre as part of ACC's ongoing investment in active travel, and this is being supported by wider behaviour change initiatives. Increases in walking are being reported in city-wide surveys. Continued investment in infrastructure, facilities, and behaviour change programmes can continue to encourage increased levels of walking participation across different communities.

7.3 Opportunity 3: Closer tie in to Behaviour Change initiatives. ACC and partners are involved in a wide range of behaviour change initiatives, there is an opportunity to closer tie these activities into areas seeing infrastructure etc improvements to deliver enduring change.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that whilst the aim has not been achieved there have been some positive outcomes to date with regards the range of walking initiatives implemented, including the impact of the benches project; and
- ii) Agree that increasing walking remains a priority and note that the Sustainable City Group was developing a revised aim as part of the refreshed LOIP to build on the improvements to date with new innovative improvements, as well as taking forward the opportunities for scale up and spread as detailed.

Opportunities and Risks

A key opportunity is the strong policy and funding availability for the implementation of active travel measures (walking, wheeling and cycling) in the City. There is an

opportunity for the Community Planning Process to be more effective in complementing and influencing the existing number of ongoing active travel infrastructure and behaviour change initiatives currently in development across the City.

Risks relate to availability of appropriately skilled human resource to deliver measures and establish sustainable delivery pathways. There is also a risk arising from the difficulty in quantifiably measuring walking levels as an activity, and furthermore establishing the causal links between activity levels and specific interventions. There are also risks relating to the effective communication of benefits arising from the promotion of active travel measures.

Consultation

Members of the Sustainable City group have been consulted on this report.

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Sustainable City Walking Charter; and Associated Updates.

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