



Get  
Ireland  
Walking



# STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN 2017-2020

An initiative of



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND

Supported by



In association with

Our Partner  
Organisations





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## FOREWORD

**Recreational walking makes a significant contribution to the likelihood of meeting the physical activity guidelines for health and is the most popular form of physical activity among adults in Ireland.**

We recognise that walking is an ideal activity to promote as it is flexible, fun, free and accessible to all. It is a gateway physical activity that can lead on to participation in other sports including hillwalking. On behalf of Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland and Mountaineering Ireland, we are delighted to welcome the publication of the first Strategy and Action Plan for Get Ireland Walking.

Get Ireland Walking, an initiative of Sport Ireland, supported by Healthy Ireland and delivered by Mountaineering Ireland, was established in 2013 with the core aim to unify and enable the efforts of all agencies and organisations interested in promoting walking.

Since starting out as a pilot programme in 2013, Get Ireland Walking has grown and is now a nationwide initiative that will deliver programmes

in conjunction with all Local Sports Partnerships by the end of 2017. Get Ireland Walking has expanded the number and scope of the programmes offered, with a particular emphasis on disadvantaged communities and low active groups. This is consistent with one of Sport Ireland's key objectives of providing sporting and physical activity opportunities to people of all ages and backgrounds in Ireland. It links with Healthy Ireland's goal to reduce health inequalities and Mountaineering Ireland's values relating to recreation and wellbeing.

Since its foundation, the Get Ireland Walking initiative has always put a strong emphasis on partnership work and this is reflected in this document with a number of actions set out which will be managed directly by Get Ireland Walking and others which will be led by partner organisations.

**“ On behalf of Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland and Mountaineering Ireland, we are delighted to welcome the publication of the first Strategy and Action Plan for Get Ireland Walking ”**



It is vital that we take a strategic approach to the development and promotion of walking in Ireland. That is why the themes contained in this Strategy and Action Plan reflect the thematic action areas of Healthy Ireland's National Physical Activity Plan<sup>1</sup> for Ireland.

By being a leader and setting the walking agenda, Get Ireland Walking will build capacity for the promotion of walking, increase the visibility of walking promotion efforts, ensure better use is made of existing resources through collaborative working and strengthen the impact of all efforts to increase walking behaviour.

As with all strategic planning processes, the published document is simply the final illustration of the completed plan. It is the consultation, evaluation, negotiation and debate carried out

during the process which gives life and value to this strategy. It is a culmination of the work of several partner agencies striving to create a more active local population into the future.

We would like to thank the staff of Get Ireland Walking and all those who contributed to the strategy process for their hard work in delivering the initiative and preparing this document. We would especially like to thank the Get Ireland Walking Advisory Group members and all partner agencies for their ongoing support of Get Ireland Walking.

**Let's all keep working together  
to Get Ireland Walking!**



John Treacy  
*CEO,*  
**Sport Ireland**



Kate O'Flaherty  
*Head of Health & Wellbeing,*  
**Department of Health**



Murrough McDonagh  
*CEO,*  
**Mountaineering Ireland**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Get Ireland Walking (GIW) initiative is at an exciting stage of development as it releases its first Strategy and Action Plan. GIW is an initiative of Sport Ireland, funded by Healthy Ireland, delivered by Mountaineering Ireland and supported by multiple partner organisations.

Since its inception in 2013, the initiative has grown from a pilot programme to establish itself as a central hub, that collaborates with a broad range of stakeholders, for the promotion of walking. One of the core aims of GIW is to unify and enable the efforts of organisations and agencies interested in promoting walking for recreation, transport and health.

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“The vision of **Get Ireland Walking** is a vibrant culture of walking throughout Ireland.”

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### Overview of the Strategy & Action Plan

GIW developed this Strategy and Action Plan in consultation with government agencies, sporting bodies, charities, not for profit organisations and other relevant stakeholders comprising of partners from the pilot phase of the programme and new partners and collaborators who would help drive the implementation of the Plan.

The 41 actions within this document are arranged into thematic areas that reflect the action areas of Ireland's National Physical Activity Plan<sup>1</sup>. Although there are seven distinct themes, they are interrelated and work conducted in one thematic area will impact on another. Each theme consists of actions that will be managed by GIW (20 actions in total) and actions that will be led by partner organisations (21 actions in total).

### The seven themes are:

- **Theme 1 - Public Awareness, Education & Communication** aims to create accessible walking-related information and spread a positive walking message.
- **Theme 2 - Children and Young People** aims to provide children and young people with increased opportunities to be physically active through walking.
- **Theme 3 - Health** aims to acknowledge and promote walking as a health-enhancing activity.
- **Theme 4 - Environment** aims to connect walkers with suitable walking environments and advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure and recreational walking routes.
- **Theme 5 - Communities** aims to develop and support vibrant and sustainable walking communities.
- **Theme 6 - Research, Monitoring and Evaluation** aims to provide an evidence-base for the promotion of walking.
- **Theme 7 - Partnerships** aims to activate and grow a valued network of partners that collaborate to achieve shared outcomes.

This Strategy and Action Plan provides a blueprint for the promotion of walking over the next four years. A partnership approach with multi-sectoral and multi-agency commitment is central to the successful implementation of all planned actions. The extensive number of partners and collaborators listed herein represent those who have agreed to work together on specific actions. However, there are further organisations, agencies and initiatives that can add value to the work being undertaken and who may connect to promote walking at any stage. Together, GIW and partners strive to get more people walking for recreation, transport and health, and the collective impact of all working together is greater than any organisation could achieve working in isolation.

# GET IRELAND WALKING BACKGROUND

The Get Ireland Walking (GIW) initiative, established in 2013, aims to (a) encourage widespread participation in walking, (b) promote the benefits of walking, and (c) unify and enable the efforts of all organisations and agencies interested in promoting walking for recreation, transport and health.

The work undertaken by GIW is informed by the Healthy Ireland Framework<sup>2</sup>, and international charters and strategies for physical activity including the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity<sup>3</sup>, the World Health Organization's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health<sup>4</sup>, the Physical Activity Strategy for the WHO European Region 2016 – 2025<sup>5</sup> and the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland<sup>1</sup>.

The development of partnerships for action is a fundamental and recurring theme among these guidance documents. GIW provides a unique contribution to physical activity promotion by facilitating cross-collaboration between national and local organisations and stakeholders across the country in the most prevalent physical activity; walking. GIW plays a role in bringing together

partners involved in walking promotion - either for transport, recreation or health - retaining a national overview of walking initiatives, identifying gaps in provision of training and support, supporting partners in developing new promotional materials and resources, undertaking research, developing new programmes, and sharing information and expertise among partner organisations.

Within Ireland, a multitude of stakeholders engage in walking-related work. By leading the walking agenda, GIW can create increased visibility of walking promotion efforts, ensure better utilisation of resources through collaborative working, and strengthen the potential for a cumulative impact on walking behaviour, and therefore physical activity, across the nation.

Walking has wide-ranging benefits to health and wellbeing<sup>6-9</sup>, and is a low-risk activity<sup>10</sup> that is readily accessible and achievable for all, regardless of fitness level. With these factors considered, it is clear that GIW can assist with the delivery of the National Physical Activity Plan<sup>1</sup>.





GIW undertakes the following activities that support the principles and approaches of the National Physical Activity Plan<sup>1</sup>:

- Works to reduce health inequalities by targeting interventions within communities experiencing socio-economic deprivation and fragmentation.
- Collaborates with partners to adapt programmes and materials to cater for mixed abilities.
- Repeatedly engages in consultations with young people and others in the design and implementation of walking programmes in which they are involved.
- Embeds monitoring and evaluation within programmes and Strategy and Action Plan implementation.

GIW developed this Strategy and Action Plan in consultation with an Advisory Group comprising of government agencies, sporting bodies, charities and not for profit organisations (membership listed in Appendix 1), and other relevant stakeholders, taking into consideration the perspectives from grassroots to government. The document was developed with current partners and collaborators for use by these organisations and agencies. However, the document may serve as a resource for every organisation

and individual with an interest in promoting or advocating for walking by linking with others working in the area or through engagement with the themes. It is envisaged that this document, and the ongoing partnership work, will strengthen the capacity for walking promotion in Ireland over the life of this Strategy and Action Plan. Collectively, GIW and partner organisations advocate for a National Walking Strategy to follow this plan in the year 2020.

GIW is an initiative of Sport Ireland, supported by Healthy Ireland, delivered by Mountaineering Ireland and works in association with partner organisations. Structures have been put in place to ensure there is direction, good governance and accountability for the GIW initiative. As GIW is delivered by Mountaineering Ireland, GIW follows the policies and procedures established by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland. Prior to the launch of the Strategy and Action Plan, GIW was guided by an Advisory Group chaired by Sport Ireland. Moving forward, a Steering Group will provide direction and an oversight on GIW activities. Working Groups will facilitate collaborative working on a number of key areas and will ensure activities are conducted in a more effective way.

“GIW provides a unique contribution to physical activity promotion by facilitating cross-collaboration between national and local organisations and stakeholders across the country in the most prevalent physical activity; walking.”



# VISION, MISSION & VALUES



## ▶ **GIW VISION**

A vibrant culture of walking throughout Ireland.

## ▶ **GIW MISSION**

To empower and support people to choose to walk more often for recreation, transport and health as part of their everyday life.

## ▶ **GIW VALUES**

### **Inclusion**

- We create increased walking opportunities for all members of society.

### **Collaboration and Partnership**

- We work cooperatively with local and national stakeholders to achieve shared goals.
- We support each other, and acknowledge and value contributions of all collaborators.

### **Advocacy**

- We support and empower individuals, groups and organisations to promote walking.

### **Leadership**

- We provide leadership on a shared vision and actions for promoting walking across the country based on the collective contribution of our partner organisations.
- We embed creativity and innovation in our actions and work with partners and collaborators.

### **Integrity**

- We undertake our work with integrity, transparency, and in an ethical manner at all times.

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# CONTEXT

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Walking is the most natural form of physical activity and one of the easiest ways to be physically active and gain the associated health benefits. It is a low impact form of exercise that is suitable for people of all ages and fitness levels; it can be done just about anywhere, anytime and is free.

Walking has a broad range of benefits including societal benefits relating to climate change and sustainable transport<sup>3</sup> and benefits to physical<sup>6-9</sup> and mental health<sup>11,12</sup>. There is growing evidence of the additive effect that activity in the natural environment has on benefits to mental health<sup>13</sup>. Specifically, natural environments are restorative, can reduce stress, feelings of tension, anger, confusion and depression, and aid recovery from stressful events<sup>14,15</sup>.

An evaluation of the pilot phase of GIW's Active Community Walking Programme revealed that the main motivation for joining a walking group was to improve health and fitness. To socialise and meet people was the second highest motivation illustrating the importance of physical and social wellbeing as reasons for engaging in walking. Notwithstanding the health benefits of walking, it has also been shown to act as a gateway to higher intensity physical activities and increase general levels of activity<sup>16</sup>.

The National Physical Activity Guidelines<sup>17</sup> provide recommendations for children and young people, adults, people with disabilities and older people. The key message is that physical activity is for everyone, and any level of activity is better for your health than none. For health benefits, adults should take part in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on five days per week (or 150

minutes per week). All children and youths should be active at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least 60 minutes every day. This should include muscle strengthening, flexibility and bone strengthening exercises two to three times per week.

Findings from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) demonstrated that those aged 50 years and older who walk for the recommended 150 minutes per week had better wellbeing and were more socially active<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, findings from the Irish Sports Monitor show that walking makes a significant contribution to the likelihood of meeting the physical activity guidelines. In adults, walkers are over four times more likely to attain the guidelines than non-walkers (42% versus 9%)<sup>16</sup>.

The Irish Sports Monitor provides the most comprehensive data on walking in Ireland and includes a representative sample of 8,543 respondents aged 16 years and over. The following figures are from an analysis of data from the 2015 Irish Sports Monitor<sup>16</sup>. Findings illustrate that recreational walking is the most popular form of exercise across all gender and age groups with approximately 2.25 million people (65% of adults) regularly participating in walking across the Republic of Ireland. In those who report having a disability that prevents participation in sport, over 60% still participate in recreational walking.

“...those aged 50 years and older who walk for the recommended 150 minutes per week had better wellbeing and were more socially active”



Recreational walking acts as something of an equaliser in narrowing the various social gradients that exist in terms of the overall likelihood of meeting the physical activity guidelines with any variations in recreational walking by socio-economic status being much less pronounced than in the case of all other sport. Nearly one fifth (18%) of adults aged 16 years and over met the physical activity guidelines solely through recreational walking, i.e. walked at least five times per week for 30 minutes at an average or greater speed. Despite the high levels of walking participation, this figure demonstrates that many could benefit their health by increasing the frequency of walking by at least one walk per week.

On average, walkers take 4.5 walks per week. Regardless of the frequency of walks, the average walking duration is 45 minutes with 80% of walks lasting for at least 30 minutes. The vast majority of these walks (93%) are at an average pace or faster. These figures highlight that most walks that people go on are of a sufficient duration and intensity to elicit health benefits for the walker.

Regarding walking for transport, 44% of respondents (up from 40% in 2013) indicated they walk for transport at least once per week. The rise in walking for transport can be explained by increases in economic activity and employment over this time with increases in walking for transport highest in those aged 25 to 44 years and those living in Dublin.

In Ireland, there is no comprehensive data that outlines walking behaviour in children but there is limited research that describes walking as a form of transport to school. The Growing Up in Ireland Study illustrates that approximately one quarter (24%) of children aged nine years walk to school<sup>18</sup>. This figure is similar to that reported in the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study where less than a third of children and young people aged 10 – 18 years walked to school<sup>19</sup>.





# RECREATIONAL **WALKING** IN IRELAND



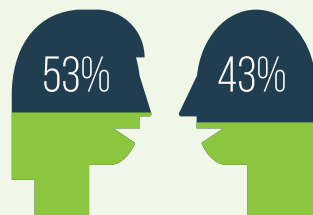


APPROXIMATELY

# 2.25 MILLION

ADULTS REGULARLY WALK FOR RECREATION

 **18%** OF  
**ADULTS**  
MEET THE  
PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY  
GUIDELINES  
BY WALKING



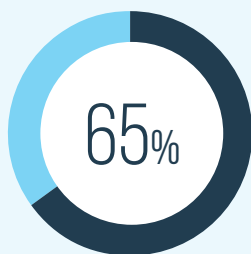
OF THOSE WHO  
WALK FOR RECREATION  
**53% OF WOMEN WALK**  
AT A FAIRLY BRISK OR  
FAST PACE COMPARED  
TO **43% OF MEN**



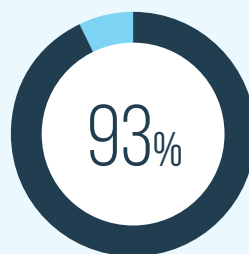
WALKERS TAKE AN  
AVERAGE OF **4.5**  
**WALKS WEEKLY**



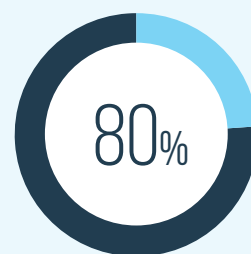
WALKING IS THE  
**MOST POPULAR**  
RECREATIONAL  
**ACTIVITY**  
IN IRELAND  
ACROSS ALL GENDER  
& AGE GROUPS



65% of ISM respondents  
**WALK AT LEAST**  
**ONCE A WEEK**



93% of walks are at  
AN **AVERAGE**  
**PAGE OR FASTER**



80% of walks last for  
**30 MINUTES**  
OR LONGER

Source: 2015 Irish Sports Monitor

# STRATEGY & **ACTION PLAN** THEMES:





## THEMES

The actions within this Strategy and Action Plan are arranged into seven themes that reflect the action areas of Ireland's National Physical Activity Plan<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this approach is to illustrate how the actions of GIW and partner organisations contribute to the actions set out under the National Physical Activity Plan<sup>1</sup>. A unique feature of this document is the inclusion of actions that are led by partner organisations, in addition to, actions that are managed directly by GIW, thus signifying the strong focus on partnership work and the potential of the cumulative efforts of key stakeholders on walking participation in Ireland. The role of key partners, lead partners and collaborators are distinguished in Appendix 3. Although there are seven distinct themes, they are all interrelated and influence each other. For example, improvements in the built environment around a school may impact on the walking behaviour of children and young people and conversely increased walking behaviour in certain regions may call for improvements in infrastructure.

**Note:** The key partners, lead partners and collaborators in each theme are listed in alphabetical order.

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# THEME 01



## PUBLIC AWARENESS EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

**To create accessible walking-related information and spread a positive walking message.**

Communication is core to generating greater awareness around the benefits of walking, promoting a positive walking message and connecting people with programmes, events, training opportunities and educational materials.

A GIW communication strategy will be developed to support this Strategy and Action Plan. GIW will focus on improving the methods and channels through which information is disseminated, and utilise different communication mediums and platforms to interact with a diverse range of individuals, communities and organisations. The content of the communications strategy will relate to the work undertaken and the resources developed in the seven themes of this document, in addition to, information to raise awareness and build knowledge and skills of walking. Information will be shared online via the GIW website and social media accounts, in person at a grassroots level at relevant fairs and events, and other interfaces including through partner and collaborator networks.

GIW will provide advice and direction by acting as an information hub and support service giving examples of evidence-based practice and establishing a system of signposting to improve the ease of access to relevant information and training courses that will support everyone from pedestrians and recreational walkers to organisations.



## Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
1.1	Develop and implement a three year GIW communication strategy.	Mountaineering Ireland.	All partner organisations.	2018 - 2020
1.2	Improve the accessibility and contents of the GIW website to create a 'one-stop shop' for walking-related information.	Mountaineering Ireland.	DOH, HSE, Sport Ireland and partner organisations.	2017-2020
1.3	Engage in promotional talks, events and activities that align with the vision, mission and values of GIW.	LSPs.	ETBs, Ireland Active, LAs, news and media broadcasters, Waterways Ireland and other organisations.	2017 - 2020
1.4	Act as an information hub and support service for walkers, volunteers, registered walking groups, clubs, organisations and others.	Mountaineering Ireland.	All partner organisations, community and voluntary organisations, and others.	2017 - 2020

## Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
1.5	Promote the suite of existing training available to walkers and volunteers, and plan for the development of new training resources that focus on the inclusion of all individuals and sectors of society.	IHF, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, CARA, GAA, Irish Men's Sheds Association, LSPs, MHI, NGBs, Waterways Ireland and other organisations.	2017 – 2020
1.6	Coordinate a development pathway for walkers, volunteers and programme staff to advance skills and participation in walking.	IHF, Mountaineering Ireland.	Arthritis Ireland, CARA, MHI, NGBs and other stakeholders.	2019

# THEME 02

## CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

**To provide children and young people with increased opportunities to be physically active through walking.**

As part of their daily lives, all children and young people should experience opportunities to be physically active. Walking provides a feasible and inclusive physical activity for youth, from all cultural and social backgrounds, that can be integrated into school, community and home life. These characteristics are particularly critical to target the well-documented declines in physical activity levels from childhood through adolescence and into young adulthood.

Increased opportunities to engage in walking can be facilitated through teacher education, by generating supportive environments, taking a whole-school approach in education settings, and advancing new and existing walking initiatives such as the Active School Flag, Gaisce - The President's Award, Green-Schools, HSE Health Promoting Schools and initiatives of the local sports partnerships. Walking promotion efforts can be maximised by consulting with children and young people on intervention elements, resources and the implementation of walking programmes in which they are involved. The Department of Education and Skills (DES) recognises the value of promoting walking in children and young people and endorses the approach taken within this Strategy and Action Plan.

### Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
2.1	Implement a walking project in DEIS post-primary schools and make project resources available to all schools.	Active School Flag.	DES, ETBs, HSE, HSE Health Promoting Schools, IHF, LSPs.	2017 - 2020

### Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
2.2	Facilitate teacher education on the promotion of walking in the school setting.	Green-Schools, HSE.	Active School Flag, DES, HSE Health Promoting Schools.	2017 - 2020
2.3	Encourage the advancement of existing initiatives that promote walking in children and young people in pre-school, primary and post-primary school and community settings.	Active School Flag, Green-Schools, HSE, LSPs.	DES, Gaisce - The President's Award, HSE Health Promoting Schools, IHF, NGBs, Orienteering Ireland, parkrun, schools, Waterways Ireland, youth development organisations and clubs.	2017 - 2020
2.4	Identify one lead partner to work with on a pilot of a new youth walking initiative.	To be confirmed in 2018.	To be confirmed in 2018.	2019



# THEME 03



## HEALTH

### To acknowledge and promote walking as a health-enhancing activity.

Walking is a low-risk physical activity that can positively influence physical, mental and social health. Walking is suitable for people of all activity levels especially those who are inactive. In a health context, walking behaviour can be recommended in community-based wellness programmes, the clinical setting and as part of *Making Every Contact Count* and *Self-Management Support* frameworks.

Health care professionals and others working in the health and leisure sector are well placed to spread a positive walking message and signpost individuals and groups to available information, resources and programmes. To achieve this, it is necessary for the information to be readily accessible and relevant to those who wish to promote walking for improved health and wellbeing.

Under this theme, GIW will raise awareness and understanding of the health benefits of walking and work with partners for the inclusion of walking-related information in health promotion and patient information resources. Further, GIW will link with and support the delivery of programmes and initiatives that encourage increased participation in walking.

## Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
3.1	Provide information and resources to Health Care Professionals who wish to promote walking for health and wellbeing.	HSE.	DOH, health care professionals, MHI.	2017 – 2020

## Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
3.2	Create links with existing programmes that incorporate walking for improved health and wellbeing.	LSPs.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, Coillte, DOH, National Healthy Cities and Counties Network, HSE, IHF, Mountaineering Ireland, NGBs, Sport Ireland, Waterways Ireland.	Ongoing
3.3	Support the roll-out of the Woodlands for Health programme in one additional region per annum.	Coillte, MHI.	LSPs.	2018 - 2020
3.4	Include walking as a suitable health-enhancing activity in health promotion and patient information resources.	HSE.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, Diabetes Ireland, health care professional bodies and associations, IHF, MHI.	2018 – 2020
3.5	Promote walking as a health-enhancing activity and integrate sign-posting and referral to walking information, supports and programmes as part of <i>Making Every Contact Count</i> and <i>Self-Management Support</i> frameworks.	HSE.	DOH, health care professionals, and others.	Ongoing



# THEME 04

## ENVIRONMENT

To connect walkers with suitable walking environments and advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure and recreational walking routes.

As the environment influences behaviour, under the right conditions it can be used as a sustainable way of promoting walking. There are ample walkable environments - both natural and built - around the country in communities, towns, tracks, trails and in the hills waiting to be used and explored. People can be unaware of the permeability of their local environments and the amenities that are on their doorsteps, and so, it is essential to connect pedestrians and walkers with relevant information.

Access, safety, connectivity and quality of the public realm including pathways are among a broad range of factors that affect whether people choose to walk for transport and recreation. To ensure places and spaces are conducive to walking in the future, walking needs to be incorporated into national and local area strategies. Strategies should prioritise walking in the design of settlement patterns and the delivery of infrastructure that is safe, attractive to walk in and caters for all users including people using strollers and wheelchairs. Planning guidance documents<sup>20,21</sup> that make recommendations for improving the pedestrian friendliness of the built environment can be drawn on in this process. Sustainable neighbourhoods that support walking can be achieved by retrofitting existing streets and areas, as well as, in the planning of new developments.

Individuals, groups, clubs or organisations have a role to play in advocating for improvements in the walkability of their local areas and can be supported in this by providing them with a toolkit that can help direct their actions and link them with relevant funding schemes.



## Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
4.1	Contribute to a publicly available directory of walking routes that contains information on accessibility and suitability of routes for different types of walkers.	HSE, Sport Ireland.	CARA, Coillte, GAA, IHF, LAs, Mountaineering Ireland, parkrun, Waterways Ireland.	2017 – 2020
4.2	Identify funding schemes, grants and resources available to communities to improve the walking environment in their areas, negotiate funding opportunities at a national level and communicate details to local communities.	LSPs.	GAA, National Healthy Cities and Counties Network, LAs, LCDCs, Sport Ireland and other collaborators.	2019

## Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
4.3	Develop a toolkit for individuals or groups to conduct local area mapping and to advocate for improvements in access, infrastructure and walkability of the environment in their local communities.	HSE.	Age & Opportunity, Green-Schools, IHF, Irish Men's Sheds Association, MHI, Mountaineering Ireland.	2019
4.4	Encourage and support the inclusion of walking into local and national strategies and policies to support pedestrian infrastructure and deliver safe, accessible and attractive walking environments for new and existing settlements.	LAs, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland.	Green-Schools, HSE, IPH, LSPs, MHI, National Healthy Cities and Counties Network.	2018 – 2020
4.5	Create opportunities for improved access to lands for recreational walking.	Mountaineering Ireland.	LAs, LCDCs, parkrun, Sport Ireland.	Ongoing
4.6	Develop and market recreational walking infrastructure.		Bórd na Móna, Coillte, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland.	2017 - 2020

# THEME 05

## COMMUNITIES

### To develop and support vibrant and sustainable walking communities.

Communities are comprised of individuals and groups of people with common interests or characteristics. Communities can be defined by geography where a group of people reside in the same locality (i.e. neighbourhood, village, town or region), by culture (e.g. religion, language, ethnicity), or by social network (e.g. education setting, workplace, occupational group, membership of a club).

Social support, a sense of belonging and collectiveness are characteristics of groups that can support efforts to promote walking. A key advantage of working in the community setting is the ability to identify specific population groups who would benefit from increasing their physical activity. Support services and participation programmes can focus on, for example, workplaces, men's groups, older persons and persons from economically, socially or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, persons with disabilities and persons from minority communities.

All communities are different and different approaches are needed to promote sustained walking behaviour. Programmes need to be adapted and tailored to each setting and population group. In local contexts, programmes can be supported by existing amenities and facilities and local volunteer networks.

### Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
5.1	Continue to grow and expand the Active Community Walking Programme to 500 communities across Ireland by 2020.	LSPs.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, GAA, HSE, IHF, Ireland Active, LAs, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland and partner organisations.	Ongoing
5.2	Support the development of walking groups for persons with disabilities, persons from minority communities, and persons who are economically, socially or educationally disadvantaged.	CARA, LSPs.	Age & Opportunity, community and voluntary organisations, Ireland Active, LCDCs, NGBs, parkrun.	Ongoing
5.3	Develop and implement a walking project for men in three counties in year one and expand the project reach of resources in subsequent years.	Irish Men's Sheds Association.	HSE, LSPs and NGBs.	2017 – 2020

Continued overleaf



## Get Ireland Walking Actions (Cont'd.)

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
5.4	Expand the number of walking groups registered with GIW by 100 per annum.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, GAA, HSE, IHF, Ireland Active, LSPs, MHI.	Community and voluntary organisations, all partner organisations.	2017 – 2020
5.5	Cultivate, support and celebrate a volunteer network.	LSPs.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, community and voluntary organisations, GAA and other NGBs, IHF, Ireland Active, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland, Waterways Ireland.	2018 – 2020
5.6	Explore new and innovative opportunities and initiatives to promote and encourage walking.		DOH, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland and other organisations.	Ongoing

## Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
5.7	Encourage and support independent walkers.	LSPs.	Age & Opportunity, Arthritis Ireland, Diabetes Ireland, health care professionals , HSE, IHF, MHI.	Ongoing
5.8	Promote walking for transport and recreation in the workplace and third-level institution settings.	IHF.	Business associations and trade unions, Ireland Active, LCDCs, National Healthy Cities and Counties Network.	2018 - 2020
5.9	Encourage and support walking activities within the workplace for the greater health and wellbeing of employers and employees.	DOH.	All partner organisations.	2017 – 2020
5.10	Explore opportunities for leisure facilities and community sports hubs to support walking and to link with local walking groups in the area.	GAA, Ireland Active, LSPs.	NGBs and other organisations.	2017 – 2020

# THEME 05

CONT'D.





# THEME 06

## RESEARCH, MONITORING & EVALUATION

**To provide an evidence-base for the promotion of walking.**

When setting priorities, deciphering actions and delivering programmes, it is vital that activities are underpinned by an evidence-base to ensure actions achieve what they set out to achieve and resources are used in the most effective way. However, the delivery of quality actions and interventions is dependent on the availability of an evidence-base to support the work. Academic research studies and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of existing programmes and actions is key to sustain and update the evidence required for best practice.

A coordinated approach is needed to inform priorities for research and action. The sharing of knowledge, new innovations and examples of good practice can be achieved by linking researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and organisations whom improving walking activity is relevant to their work. The context in which walking promotion takes place and overall national trends in walking can be drawn from national reports and surveys that include figures on walking behaviour.

Monitoring and evaluation of current GIW programmes and actions is essential to enhance accountability, assess how the activities are delivered in different contexts, and to facilitate increased efficiency and effectiveness in how the programmes are delivered. For these reasons, monitoring and evaluation is embedded throughout each theme in this document.



## Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
6.1	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of GIW programmes and actions, and monitoring of partnership actions.	Sport Ireland.	LSPs and programme partners.	Annually
6.2	Create a national overview of walking-related research and coordinate the sharing of research findings to provide an evidence-base for the promotion of walking in Ireland.		Academic researchers and partner organisations.	Annually

## Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
6.3	Encourage academic institutions to undertake walking-related research including developing frameworks for gathering an evidence-base for health promoting projects.	Specific to project.	Academic institutions, Age & Opportunity, IHF, NGBs and partner organisations.	2017 – 2020
6.4	Monitor national trends in walking utilising data from the Irish Sports Monitor, the Healthy Ireland Survey and other relevant national reports.	DOH, Sport Ireland.	Academic institutions.	Annually
6.5	Explore the use of technology for programme monitoring and evaluation.		Sport Ireland.	2020

# THEME 07



## PARTNERSHIP

**To activate and grow a valued network of partners that collaborate to achieve shared outcomes.**

The combined and concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders is greater than each working in isolation. Partnership work builds capacity by minimising replication of work, maximising the reach of walking promotion efforts and use of resources, and sharing of multi-disciplinary expertise.

There is an array of stakeholders from various perspectives that have an interest in walking promotion including for health (e.g. disease prevention and improving physical or mental health), recreation (e.g. increasing physical activity levels and growing hillwalking participation) and transport (e.g. decreasing car dependency and creating sustainable communities). Despite the common goal of getting more people to walk more often, work is often conducted independently due to the diversity of stakeholders.

Partnerships do not occur spontaneously and need to be built over time. GIW will provide an oversight for partnership work to drive implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan by: (a) continuing to foster existing partnerships and develop new partnerships as appropriate; (b) encouraging and facilitating interaction between different partner and collaborator organisations; and (c) garnering a commitment to delivering shared actions as identified with partners in the development of this document. Under this theme, GIW and partners will celebrate the contribution of all those engaging in walk promotion from organisations to local volunteers.

## Get Ireland Walking Actions

REF.	ACTION	KEY PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
7.1	Build and sustain partnerships and stakeholder relationships at a national level with organisations interested in promoting walking.	Sport Ireland.	All partner organisations.	Ongoing
7.2	Host a biennial National Forum on walking and provide leadership to maximise the reach and capacity of the work of GIW and partner organisations.	To be confirmed in each event year.	All relevant academic institutions, partner organisations and stakeholders.	2018, 2020
7.3	Manage the GIW Advisory Group and Working Groups including setting out Terms of Reference, and forming and altering groups as appropriate.		DOH, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport Ireland and other partner organisations.	Ongoing
7.4	Review and update all agreements with partner organisations.	Mountaineering Ireland.	All partner organisations.	2017

## Partnership Actions

REF.	ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	COLLABORATORS	TIMEFRAME
7.5	Gather commitment to a Walking Charter at local and national levels.	All partner organisations.	Any agency, department, initiative or organisation committed to walking.	2018 - 2020



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# IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

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## Implementation

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The seven themes outlined in this document provide a blueprint for the promotion of walking over the next four years. The GIW staff team will undertake actions relevant to the GIW programme areas and build and sustain partnerships for the delivery of wider actions that link with the GIW mission; “to empower and support people to choose to walk more often for recreation, transport and health as part of their everyday life”.

The volume and content of actions listed herein (20 GIW Actions and 21 Partnership Actions) is ambitious yet achievable with commitment from partner organisations and continued funding. New opportunities will present over the lifetime of the Strategy and Action Plan, and these opportunities will need resourcing in the form of direct funding to GIW and/or support through collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders.

Implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan may be influenced, either positively or negatively, by factors such as personnel, funding, partnership agreements, and changes in policy and the political landscape. GIW will not view these as challenges, but as opportunities to grow, develop and expand the initiative. To deliver the actions of this document, GIW will produce annual Operational Plans. The Operational Plans will outline the actions for development and implementation, identify partners and collaborators, and delineate specific and measurable targets for the year based on the funding and resources available. They will focus on the ‘Get Ireland Walking Actions’ (programmes and activities led directly by GIW) and negotiated commitments for the ‘Partnership Actions’ including information on how each partner will contribute to the action.

### A Partnership Approach

Successful implementation of all actions within this Strategy and Action Plan will require a multi-sectoral and multi-agency commitment to delivering actions. GIW values and embraces partnership work through a combined commitment and approach to achieving shared goals. Working together creates a collective voice and clear plans moving forward.

In some instances, the actions set out in this document mirror those of existing strategies and plans of partner organisations demonstrating the partner commitment to delivering actions. Further actions agreed in the development of this Strategy and Action Plan will be reflected in future plans of partners to the year 2020 and beyond.

A key feature of partnership work is ensuring effective use of resources. This requires recognising what resources are available and agreement on how these resources can be utilised to achieve common goals. Dependent on the actions, partners can contribute in whichever manner is most appropriate

for the specific action, for example, by providing functional support such as expertise, sharing information across their network, training and staff time, or financial support by covering the costs associated with their direct contribution to the action.

Some actions within this Strategy and Action Plan are resourced through GIW core funding and in-kind contributions from various partners. Others will require additional financial supports that may be sourced directly by GIW and/or part-financed by partner organisations as appropriate and agreed.

The list of partners and collaborators referenced in this document is not exhaustive. There are many other organisations and agencies that can significantly add value to the ongoing work. While implementing the Strategy and Action Plan, further partners will be welcomed to join the walking movement to work towards a vibrant culture of walking throughout Ireland.

“The GIW staff team will undertake actions relevant to the GIW programme areas and build and sustain partnerships for the delivery of wider actions that link with the GIW mission; “to empower and support people to choose to walk more often for recreation, transport and health as part of their everyday life”

# IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN CONT'D.

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## Funding

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Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland currently fund the GIW initiative and have committed to provide continued financial support for the life of this Strategy and Action Plan. At present, the core funding supports the Programme Manager and the National Development Officer in their roles, and provides for the delivery of GIW's Active Community Walking Programme in local sports partnerships across the nation. Nonetheless, a significant increase in funding is necessary to meet the target of Action 43 of the National Physical Activity Plan; to roll out 500 walking groups under the Active Community Walking Programme by 2020.

As the GIW programmes expand, the actions of GIW broaden and the strategy unfolds over the coming years, it is expected that the GIW team and resources extend with it. GIW will monitor opportunities for external funding from statutory bodies, government departments, local authorities, research agencies, Dormant Accounts Funds, and other national and international grant schemes. GIW may co-apply for funds with collaborators as appropriate to projects and funding calls.

In 2016, funding was secured from the Dormant Accounts Sports Inclusion Fund to roll out two projects throughout 2017; the Men's Shed Project and the Schools Walking Project. The funding is awarded for a 12-month duration to engage with disadvantaged groups. The short-term nature of this funding type means more supports need to be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the projects. There will be an additional opportunity to apply for funding for 2018.

## Sponsorship

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GIW will explore sources of financial, operational and/or in-kind support and sponsorship to add value to specific programmes and to aid the implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan. It is critical that any sponsorship arrangements do not undermine the integrity or objectives of GIW or partner organisations. A policy that outlines parameters for seeking and negotiating sponsorship of programmes and initiatives will be developed, agreed upon and signed by partners.

“GIW values and embraces partnership work through a combined commitment and approach to achieving shared goals.”













# APPENDICES

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01 MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

02 PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

03 DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

04 REFERENCES

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# APPENDIX 01



## MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

Ms. Mary Dorgan (Chairperson)	Sport Ireland
Ms. Mary Harkin	Age & Opportunity
Mr. Ronan Toomey	Department of Health
Mr. Colin Regan	Gaelic Athletic Association
Dr. Michelle Hardie Murphy	Get Ireland Walking
Mr. Jason King	Get Ireland Walking
Mr. Jim Gorman	Health Service Executive
Ms. Caroline Kelleher	Health Service Executive
Ms. Sarah O'Brien	Health Service Executive
Mr. Conn McCluskey	Ireland Active
Ms. Tara Curran	Irish Heart Foundation
Mr. Paul Barron	Mountaineering Ireland
Mr. Murrough McDonagh	Mountaineering Ireland
Mr. Cormac MacDonnell	Sport Ireland
Dr. Una May	Sport Ireland



# APPENDIX 02





## PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

Active School Flag	Health Service Executive
Age & Opportunity	Ireland Active
Arthritis Ireland	Irish Heart Foundation
CARA	Irish Men's Sheds Association
Coillte	Local Sports Partnerships
Department of Education and Skills	Mental Health Ireland
Department of Health & Healthy Ireland	Mountaineering Ireland
Diabetes Ireland	National Healthy Cities and Counties Network
Education and Training Boards Ireland	Orienteering Ireland
Gaelic Athletic Association	parkrun
Gaisce - The President's Award	Sport Ireland & National Trails Office
Green-Schools	Waterways Ireland



# APPENDIX 03

# DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

## Definitions

### Key Partner

A partner who works closely with GIW to deliver a specified action.

### Lead Partner

A partner who takes a leadership role and shared responsibility with GIW for the implementation of a specified action.

### Collaborator

An organisation, initiative or agency who contributes to the delivery of a specified action and works with others towards a common goal.

## Abbreviations

DES	Department of Education and Skills	IPH	Institute of Public Health
DOH	Department of Health	LA	Local Authority
ETB	Education and Training Board	LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association	LSP	Local Sports Partnership
GIW	Get Ireland Walking	MHI	Mental Health Ireland
HSE	Health Service Executive	NGB	National Governing Body of Sport
IHF	Irish Heart Foundation		



# APPENDIX 04

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