



# STRATEGY FOR GET IRELAND WALKING

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2023 - 2027

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**Our core aim**  
**is to unify and enable**  
**the efforts** of all agencies  
and organisations  
interested in promoting  
walking.

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**Get Ireland Walking**  
**is an initiative of**  
Sport Ireland, supported  
by Healthy Ireland  
and delivered by  
Mountaineering Ireland.



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# CONTEXT

**Much of the work of Get Ireland Walking following its establishment in 2013 was focused around the implementation of local level community based walking programmes. Active Community Walking Programmes – across Ireland. Over time, the Get Ireland Walking team and the strategic direction of the initiative began to change.**

Get Ireland Walking became interested in understanding the nexus of policies, programmes, organisations, initiatives, and infrastructure which have a role to play in how walking is promoted and developed in Ireland. More importantly, much of the work of Get Ireland Walking became focused on aligning the work of organisations from different sectors and disciplines with a role in the promotion and development of walking in Ireland.

Get Ireland Walking set out to understand how systems approaches could be of practical benefit to the work of Get Ireland Walking at local and national level. The project was carried out as an initial step to understand the potential avenues which the Get Ireland Walking initiative could take while aligning to global goals such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Key findings

from this study shone light on how the World Health Organisation's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 was a useful way of identifying areas for action and structuring work on the ground.

An evaluation of the Get Ireland Walking Initiative was undertaken to inform and support the strategic direction of the initiative. The evaluation assessed the initiatives strengths, weaknesses and provided key actions to support the growth and success of Get Ireland Walking over the next number of years.

This Strategy builds on the work of Get Ireland Walking over the past decade and presents real opportunity to help shape the direction of the initiative over the next ten years. Get Ireland Walking's work is partnership focused and has an added value impact for all stakeholders, supporting their work in walking promotion.

Get Ireland Walking will work toward joining the dots across local and national policies, engage and bring together stakeholders, advocate for more accessible, safe, recreational walking and measure the impact of the strategy objectives, to increase more walking more often.

# FOREWORD

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**Walking is the most popular form of physical activity among adults in Ireland**, transcending age, physical ability and background. On behalf of Healthy Ireland, Sport Ireland and Mountaineering Ireland, we are delighted to welcome the second Get Ireland Walking strategy.

**Since its establishment by Sport Ireland in 2013, Get Ireland Walking, with the support of Healthy Ireland and delivered by Mountaineering Ireland, has worked to achieve its core aim; to unify and enable the efforts of all agencies and organisations interested in promoting walking.**

Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 provides a national framework to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. Get Ireland Walking delivers under the key themes and objectives of this Framework, and sets out to achieve the shared goal of increasing participation in physical activity levels across the population whilst providing a strong focus for modifying unhealthy lifestyle habits and promoting awareness of the benefits of physical activity.

Over the last 10 years, Get Ireland Walking has grown into a key nationwide initiative, delivering programmes in conjunction with Local Sports Partnerships to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in Ireland, in line with Sport Ireland's key objectives.

There are roles and responsibilities for many different agencies in promoting physical activity and in providing and maintaining the necessary infrastructure. All work closely together and involve a range of relevant stakeholders across Government, the wider public service, education, the private sector and the community and voluntary sector in order to maximise our objectives of increased participation.

Whilst the previous Get Ireland Strategy emphasised the objective of getting more people in Ireland walking for health and wellbeing, and continues to promote this objective through programmes and initiatives, this new strategy highlights a change in focus. Central to this new strategy are the principles of partnership, inclusivity, and engagement with hard-to-reach groups.

Building on the success of the Get Ireland Walking initiative thus far, this strategy will continue to create a cultural shift in our society, where walking is embraced not only as a recreational pursuit but also as a fundamental means of transportation. It articulates the strategic imperative of joining local and national

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policies, of uniting stakeholders from diverse sectors, and of advocating for recreational walking that is accessible and secure, which will increase walking rates and contribute to global physical activity goals as well as sustainable development goals. Success is born from collaboration. The driving force behind this strategy is the shared expertise of stakeholders who span the length and breadth of Ireland.

We would like to thank the dedicated staff and the Get Ireland Walking Steering Group who have contributed to the development of this strategy. It symbolises a continued commitment to change, a change that starts with one step but has the potential to impact all in Ireland. Let's continue the huge efforts seen over the last decade, to Get Ireland Walking.



*Hildegarde Naughton*

### **Hildegarde Naughton**

Minister for Public Health,  
Wellbeing + the National  
Drugs Strategy



*Úna May*

### **Dr. Úna May**

CEO, Sport Ireland



*Thomas Byrne*

### **Thomas Byrne**

Minister of State with  
responsibility for Sport  
+ Physical Education.



*Murrough McDonagh*

### **Murrough McDonagh**

CEO, Mountaineering Ireland



## GET IRELAND WALKING **VISION**

**A vibrant culture of walking** throughout Ireland.



## GET IRELAND WALKING **MISSION**

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

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# GET IRELAND WALKING VALUES



## LEADERSHIP

We will remain committed to championing our vision, driving our strategy and supporting our stakeholders.



## INCLUSION

We create increased walking opportunities for all members of society.



## COLLABORATION + PARTNERSHIP

We work cooperatively with local and national stakeholders to achieve shared goals.



## ADVOCACY

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



## CREATIVITY + INNOVATION

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.

## OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

### 2013 - 2014

- Programme inception to support walking groups and walk leaders through a dedicated website and insurance scheme
- Part-time Project Manager hired and Advisory Group established to oversee and support the initiative.

### 2015

- National Programme Manager and National Development Officer hired
- Funding allocated to expand the Active Community Walking Programme across 9 counties in Ireland in collaboration with Local Sports Partnerships.

### 2016

- Active Community Programme scaled to all counties to deliver actions within the National Physical Activity Plan
- Stakeholder consultation commenced to inform Get Ireland Walking's new strategic direction.

### 2017

- Strategy and Action Plan 2017 to 2020 is developed and launched
- Advisory Group is dissolved and a new Steering Group established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.

### 2018

- Partnership commences with Active School Flag to co-develop a toolkit for schools to be more active during the school day
- Dormant Account supported Walking Programmes launched to engage hard-to-reach groups.

### 2019

- Communications Officer employed and SETU Employment Based PhD Researcher starts
- Sheds Ag Siúl programme and resources developed for Men's Shed's nationally.

### 2020

- Walk the Walk Training Resource, Walk the Walk Cue Cards, Walk Leader Toolkit, Sheds ag Siúl Toolkit developed
- First Annual National Walking Day launched as part of European Week of Sport
  - Get Ireland Walking Brand refresh
  - Get Ireland Walking Brand guidelines & toolkit developed.

### 2021

- Get Cork Walking begins
  - Walking Promotion Officer hired for Cork
  - Community Hillwalking Programme developed with Mountaineering Ireland and the Local Sports Partnership in Cork
  - Walking the Talk in partnership with the Men's Development Network in Kilkenny
  - Sport Ireland Evaluation commissioned.

### 2022

- Action Plan developed for Cork City and County
- New National Walking Day website developed
  - Social Connection Walking Programme developed with the Social Prescribing team in Waterford
- Woodlands for Health scaled-up nationally
- Full-time National Woodlands for Health and Nature Project Lead employed.

**Together, Get Ireland Walking and partners aim to get more people walking more often** for recreation, active transport and health, embracing walking as part of our daily activity.



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



## WORKING TOGETHER

**Our previous strategic plan, the Get Ireland Walking Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2020, was our flagship strategy.** This new strategy will continue to build momentum by supporting, working in collaboration, and leveraging the expertise of stakeholders from across the entire walking system in Ireland.

## COLLABORATION PROJECTS



### STRATEGY 2017 - 2020

Get Ireland Walking developed the first Strategy and Action Plan with over 20 stakeholders engaged through its consultation and its implementation.



### WALK21 IRELAND

Get Ireland Walking has been committed to and a supporter of Walk21 and its international walking objectives since 2017. Get Ireland Walking presented at Walk21 conferences in Canada, Rotterdam, Columbia and Dublin.



### GET CORK WALKING

In partnership with the South Eastern Technological University, Get Ireland Walking built a systems approach to walking promotion at a local level in Co. Cork. An action plan has been developed and the Global Physical Activity Action Plan adopted to guide our work.



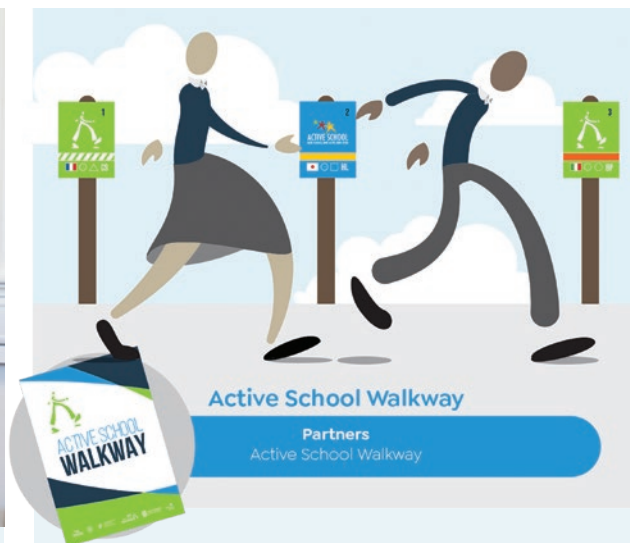
## NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER GATHERING 2020

National Stakeholder Gathering in TUD, Grangegorman. Over 70 Stakeholders participated and contributed to Get Ireland Walking's new strategic direction.



## WOODLANDS FOR HEALTH NATIONAL SCALE UP

Get Ireland Walking supported the national scale-up of Woodlands for Health. Get Ireland Walking co-funded a new officer role National Woodlands for Health and Nature Project Lead.



## ACTIVE SCHOOL FLAG ACTIVE SCHOOL WALKWAY

Get Ireland Walking collaborated with Active School Flag and developed signposting for Active School Walkway Packs. The packs were distributed to schools around Ireland.







Get Ireland Walking  
strive to improve and  
adapt walking related  
communications and utilise  
social platforms to ensure the  
Get Ireland Walking message  
is adopted and received  
in a fun and inclusive way.



This new strategy provides an opportunity to build on existing successes and continue the momentum Get Ireland Walking and partners have established.

# GAPPA FRAMEWORK

In 2018, the World Health Organisation published the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 (GAPPA). This is a framework for action, for national governments to adopt, which encompasses a whole systems approach to physical activity promotion across four strategic objectives.

Throughout the implementation of this strategy, Get Ireland Walking will use the GAPPA framework to guide our work at a local and national level.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This strategy aims to support the delivery of the **United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals:**

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See appendix 1 (pg 30)



# CREATE ACTIVE SOCIETIES

By **Creating Active Societies**, we hope to support a paradigm shift in society by developing knowledge and understanding of - and celebrating - the multifaceted benefits of more people walking more often.

## Specifically, our work supports:

- 1 Building workforce capacity.
- 2 Promoting the co-benefits of walking.
- 3 Providing mass participation events.
- 4 Implementing social marketing campaigns.

## AIMS

**Create accessible walking** related information for the public, health professionals and practitioners.

**Spread a positive walking message** and support the creation and visibility of sustainable walking communities to generate local activation.

## OBJECTIVES

### OBJECTIVE 1

**Implement** effective communication campaigns and align Get Ireland Walking's work with mass participation events.

### OBJECTIVE 2

**Promote the co-benefits** of walking and provide tools, utilities and resources that ensure best practice is achieved across the partnership network.

### OBJECTIVE 3

**Build workplace support** and interest in walking integration nationally for improved health and wellbeing.

### OBJECTIVE 6

**Support the development** of vibrant walking communities throughout Ireland.

### OBJECTIVE 5

**Increase** the number of trained Volunteer Walk Leaders/ Group Coordinators that will act as Community Champions and advocate for more walking, more often.

### OBJECTIVE 4

**Ensure** walking communities and stakeholders are acknowledged and celebrated.

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE



**Get Ireland Walking recognised as a go to place** for walking information and resources that support health professionals and practitioners in their work.



**Signpost** the public to health enhancing campaigns, programmes and activities through supportive and accessible environments.



**Increase** local led community walking groups that have been developed from the leadership and support provided by Get Ireland Walking in partnership with stakeholders.



# CREATE ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

By **Creating Active Environments**, we will support the creation and maintenance of environment which are conducive to the rights of everybody to engage in regular walking.

## Specifically, our work supports:

- 1 Implementation of proactive building policies.
- 2 Integration of transport and urban planning policies.
- 3 Improving walking and cycling networks.
- 4 Strengthening road safety.
- 5 Improving access to trails and public open spaces.

## AIMS



Create national guidance and best practice for accessible walking environments and support the advocacy of improved pedestrian infrastructure.

## OBJECTIVES

### OBJECTIVE 1

Walking positioned **strongly** in national and county plans.

### OBJECTIVE 2

Increase knowledge **sharing** and expertise in the sector.

### OBJECTIVE 3

Improved local advocacy for walking environments.

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE



Get Ireland Walking positioned as a leader in providing guidance on best practice and has supported and advocated for the development of increased, sustainable walking environments.





# CREATE ACTIVE PEOPLE

By **Creating Active People**, we will support and promote opportunities and programmes in multiple settings which help people of all ages and abilities engage in walking.

## Specifically, our work supports:

- 1 Providing programmes across multiple settings.
- 2 Improving provision for older adults.
- 3 Enhancing school based programmes.
- 4 Prioritising programmes for the least active.
- 5 Implementing community wide initiatives.
- 6 Incorporating walking into health and social services.

## AIMS

To acknowledge and promote walking as a life enhancing activity.

Walking is branded as the most accessible physical activity mode to support people to be more active.

## OBJECTIVES

### OBJECTIVE 1

**Develop and co-ordinate innovative communications campaign** to increase awareness and participation in walking.

### OBJECTIVE 2

**Promote the benefits** of walking and provide tools, utilities and resources that ensure best practice is achieved across the partnership network.

### OBJECTIVE 3

**Continue to expand and support the scale** of community wide walking initiatives and programmes for a variety of target population groups.

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

**Get Ireland Walking's resources, mentoring and supports** are relevant, utilised and prioritised in physical activity promotion and health and wellbeing programmes throughout Ireland.



# CREATE ACTIVE SYSTEMS

By **Creating Active Systems** we aim to create and strengthen leadership, governance, policies, and multisectoral partnerships to support the increase of population levels of walking.

## Specifically, our work supports:

- 1 Building research and development.
- 2 Developing innovative finance mechanisms.
- 3 Expanding advocacy.
- 4 Strengthening policy, leadership and governance.
- 5 Improving and integrating data systems.

## AIMS

**Progress our collective understanding** of walking behaviours in Ireland with key stakeholders and collaborators.

**Embed strong mechanisms** for monitoring the implementation of the Get Ireland Walking Action Plan.

**Increase the evidence base** relating to walking in Ireland, with a particular influence on how systems approaches can be implemented at national level.

**Host stakeholder gatherings** for Get Ireland Walking's wider network of organisations in local and national walking systems in Ireland.

## OBJECTIVES

### OBJECTIVE 1

**Strengthen policy, leadership & governance** by ensuring Get Ireland Walking is a recognised partner to help shape the walking agenda; "a decade to change".

### OBJECTIVE 2

**Explore and build on integrated systems** and mechanisms to measure impact, monitoring and evaluation outcomes.

### OBJECTIVE 3

**Expand advocacy work** and commitment by supporting communities and stakeholders to implement their walking objectives.

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

**Get Ireland Walking harnessing the ability to adapt** to the needs of the system of walking through regular assessment of data.

**The use of multiple data sources** to monitor progress across the entire system of walking in Ireland.

**Increased opportunities for stakeholders** within national and local walking systems to connect and collaborate.

**Get Ireland Walking as a major contributor** of practice-based evidence in local and national walking promotion.

## PATHWAY TO SUCCESS



### CONSULT

Discuss walking-related objectives and plans with key stakeholders locally and nationally.



### COLLABORATE

Align the work of Get Ireland Walking and add value to the work of practitioners and professionals within the walking space.



### COMMUNICATE

Effectively communicate a positive message of walking, communicate key walking-related information, activities, programmes, resources, and campaigns.



### CONNECT

Connect people and organisations with programmes, opportunities, and resources to be more active.



### LEAD

Lead and support multi-agency thinking through planned gatherings at local and national level, utilising Global Models and Frameworks.



### ADVOCATE


Ensure walking has its place of relevance within all local and national plans.



### REVIEW

Review the work of Get Ireland Walking and ensure we are meeting our strategic objectives throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

From children and young people to older adults, **our target audience is vast and inclusive of all abilities.**



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# APPENDICES

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# APPENDIX 01

## List of Walking & Physical Activity Related Sustainable Development Goals

NO.S:	SDG DESCRIPTION:
1	Health; Sport; Transport; Research; Education; Recreation and leisure.
2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
10	Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

 Walking/PA related SDGs

## APPENDIX 02

### List of Walking Related Policies: [Cont'd overleaf >](#)

POLICY:	POLICY SECTOR
<b>Climate Action Plan</b>	Transport; Environment; Public finance; Urban/rural planning and design; Recreation and leisure.
<b>Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets</b>	Transport; Environment; Urban/rural planning and design.
<b>Get Ireland Walking Strategy</b>	Health; Education; Transport; Environment; Urban/rural planning and design; Research.
<b>Healthy Ireland Framework</b>	Health; Work and Employment; Tourism; Sport; Research; Education.
<b>Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan</b>	Health; Work and Employment; Tourism; Sport; Research; Education; Recreation and leisure.
<b>National Disability Inclusion Strategy</b>	Education; Employment; Health; Public finance; Research; Urban/rural planning and design; Work and employment; Environment.
<b>National Outdoor Recreation Strategy</b>	Environment; Urban/rural planning and design; Sport; Recreation and Leisure; Health.
<b>National Physical Activity Plan</b>	Health; Sport; Transport; Research; Education; Recreation and leisure.
<b>National Planning Framework</b>	Transport; Environment; Public finance; Urban/rural planning and design; Recreation and leisure.
<b>National Policy Framework for Children and Young People</b>	Health; Sport; Tourism; Work and employment; Transport; Public finance; Recreation and leisure.
<b>National Sports Policy</b>	Health; Sport; Research; Education; Recreation and leisure.
<b>National Strategy for Women and Girls</b>	Transport; Environment; Public finance; Urban/rural planning and design; Recreation and leisure.
<b>Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone</b>	Health; Education; Urban/Rural Planning and design; Work and employment.
<b>Smarter Travel – A New Transport Policy</b>	Transport; Environment; Urban/rural planning and design.

[Cont'd overleaf >](#)



## APPENDIX 02 (Cont'd)

### List of Walking Related Policies:

POLICY:	POLICY SECTOR
Strategy for Future Development of Greenways	Tourism; Recreation and leisure; Urban/rural planning and design.
Tourism Development and Innovation – A strategy for investment	Tourism; Recreation and leisure; Transport; Public finance.
Walks Scheme	Environment; Urban/rural planning and design.
Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice	Health; Work and Employment; Tourism; Sport; Research; Education; Recreation and leisure.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with **a single step.**

- Lao Tzu





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