

Peak District Local Access Forum

On: Thursday 19th June 2014

Agenda item 5

PEAK PARK HEALTH WALKS

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Peak Park Health Walks were set up in 1992 and is a partnership between the Peak District National Park Authority and Derbyshire Community Health Services.

The walks are designed to reach physical activity low participation groups such as people with physical and mental health problems, people on a low income, older people and people who are otherwise excluded from mainstream activities. The geographical area of this provision includes rurally isolated areas where residents may have a lack of access to services. They are for people who are unable to access our Ranger Guided Walks programme and they take place throughout the National Park. Community Transport is available for those people who cannot get to the start of a walk using their own transport.

The health walks provide a high level of support for people of all ages and abilities who are unable to access other walks or do not have the confidence to go for a walk without support. The walks encourage people to adopt healthier lifestyles, and they benefit the participant's mental health and physical fitness and give them the opportunity to enjoy visiting and learning about their National Park.

To join the Health Walks, participants need to register with the scheme and meet the qualifying criteria.

The walks are between 3 to 5 miles and are graded easy or moderate. There is always an easy walk available. They take place once a month and for those that are able, there is a progression scheme called Next Steps which enables the participants to access the normal ranger led guided walks programme.

For those that prefer not to walk we have Peak Park Pedals which is a guided cycle ride scheme on safe, traffic free Trails in the National Park. Community Transport is available and cycles are provided. There are cycles to suit all ages and abilities including tricycles and specific disability bikes.

This scheme is ideal for people who haven't ridden a bicycle for some time. Cycling has all the benefits of walking and for some people who cannot walk very far they find they can cycle so they can still benefit from an activity that will keep them healthy.

(Next Steps walks and Peak Park Pedals are reliant on external funding to pay for Community Transport.)

Walking and cycling are everyday activities that are good for us and help us to stay healthy, watch our weight and gives us energy. Being active helps to prevent illnesses like cancer, heart disease and diabetes and if you have a health condition, walking helps to relieve some of the symptoms helping you to get back to a full recovery and feel good again. Walking improves the flexibility and strength of your muscles, joints and bones and helps to reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Being active and walking helps to keep your mind and your social life healthy. When we are active our brains release chemicals that make us feel good, this helps us to cope with stress, anxiety and depression. Feeling fitter increases our confidence. Walking and cycling are great ways to get active and prevent illness and you gain benefits for both your physical and your mental health.

In 2013, a total of 199 people took part in 9 health walks which is an average of 22 walkers per walk. 92 people took part in 9 next steps walks which is an average of 10 walkers per walk and 50 people took part in 6 cycle rides which is an average of 8 cyclists per ride.

This year our Volunteer Rangers won UK Group of the Year Award from UK National Parks and the £1000 money they won was put towards providing Community Transport for 2014 Next Steps Walks.