



Walk4Life Mile Project

Introduction to the Walk4Life Mile Project (Formerly Active Challenge Routes)

Walk England are working on behalf of the Department of Health to encourage more people to walk to improve their health. The Walk4Life Mile Project aims to identify, map and waymark 2,012 one mile long routes by 2012. It has the Olympic and Paralympic 'Inspire' mark and is part of the legacy action plan for the 2012 Games. The routes will be promoted on a new interactive website, aimed at the public, where people can find routes, upload new routes, and record their fitness. The project is closely linked with the Change4Life initiative and will be the focus of a large-scale media campaign on the sub-brand 'Walk4Life' this coming September. The web portal will go 'live' on the 17th September 2010 with the URL: www.walk4life.info

The project aims to make it easy for people, especially people who are not currently active, to find a place near where they live where they can go for a short walk. Information about the walks will be clearly displayed so that people will know what to expect, helping them feel confident that they will be able to do the walk. The routes can be used by individuals or by communities and may be promoted at a local level through challenge events.

Having tried a walk people will be encouraged to record their time and to challenge themselves to try to improve on their time and increase their fitness. There will also be an option to use an additional fitness test, based on the Rockport test (an established health measurement tool based on the Rockport 1 mile fitness test) to measure estimated aerobic capacity.

Personal fitness logs can be kept on the website or through more traditional means where appropriate.

The routes

Walk England are working with partners and communities to identify 1 mile walking routes as well as other short walking routes. These may be existing health walks routes, or promoted routes, around schools or parks, or just about anywhere where people like to walk.

The Walk4Life Miles (1 mile routes) can be part of a longer route, or a 1 mile circuit, or a half mile long route which people can walk both ways to achieve a full mile of walking. The routes will reflect the best walking opportunities in communities and provide a focus for promoting walking at a local

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level.

The routes will vary depending on where they are. Information relating to 5 key criteria will be recorded for each route. The website will show which of the following criteria apply to each individual route:

Criteria

1. One mile long (as defined above)
2. Flat (and with a level, firm surface)
3. Barrier free and allow uninterrupted walking (i.e. will have no road crossings, or gates or other barriers)
4. Waymarked at either end of the mile (with the Walk4Life waymarkers)
5. Potential hazards identified (these will be briefly described)

Routes do not have to meet any of the above criteria but we encourage partners to meet as many of the criteria as possible to ensure the routes can be enjoyed by as many people as possible. Where they do meet any criteria they will be indicated with a symbol – the ones with 5 symbols will be the most predictable routes, and will be ones which people can use to test and compare their fitness using the walking fitness test.

The walking fitness test

The website will encourage people to measure the time they take to walk a mile and to build a personal fitness log. They will also be able to collect and record additional information and to use this to calculate their estimated aerobic capacity, using a fitness test based on the Rockport walking fitness test.

This test can be carried out after walking any mile. The test is only truly valid if the route is level and flat. In order to use the test people need to:

- Warm up at a gentle pace for at least 5 minutes.
- Walk 1 mile as fast as they can.
- Record the time to walk 1 mile.
- Take their pulse over 10 seconds immediately at the end of 1 mile.
- Enter the data into a calculator on the website, along with information on gender, height and weight. The calculator will determine estimated aerobic capacity (VO₂ Max) and compare that to standards for the relevant gender and age group.

Waymarking the Walk4Life Mile routes

Walk England will provide waymarkers for the start, midway and end-point of each 1 mile route. We will be providing guidance on where these should be erected, and how to obtain the necessary

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permissions. This will form part of the 'Waymarking' toolkit.

The website

The website will build on the success of the existing Walk England website, which is supported by BIG and the Department of Transport, but will be a completely new public-facing site. It will be designed to be very user-friendly, with easy to use functionality allowing people to:

- Find a Walk4Life Mile using a postcode search
- Find other short walks anywhere in England (the emphasis will be on 'short' walks of an hour or less which people can fit into their day on most days of the week)
- Add their own walks
- Register and create a personal fitness log

Registered users will be able to

- Record which routes they have walked
- Record their walking times against each route
- Record their pulse and time for the higher tier routes, enabling a fitness score to be calculated and recorded
- Generate a personal fitness record, which can be printed out, and which will show progress over time.

Walk England will monitor the effectiveness of the website, and provide feedback to strategic partners.

The website will not only record and show routes which meet the criteria described above, but will also show routes which have been added directly by the public making it clear that no responsibility can be given by Walk England, the local highway authority, health authority or any other strategic partner as to the quality, legality or safety of routes added to the site by individuals.

The role of delivery partners

Walk England are looking for partners to support the delivery of this project. WE welcome partners from different backgrounds. Examples of current partners include Natural England's Walking for Health schemes, Primary Care Trusts and schools. As an example of a partnership Walk England is working with NHS Camden to identify walking routes which can be accessed within 5 minutes by anyone living in the Borough. These are published on tear-off pads which doctors are 'prescribing' to patients who are not currently active enough to benefit their health, as well as promoted through the Walk England website where people will be encouraged to record their activity. This work is seen as complementing and adding value to other initiatives including health check services, outdoor gyms, workplace health initiatives and walking for health.

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Partners will be provided with all the information and support they need by Walk England wherever possible.

Further information

Walk England will be producing a toolkit for delivery partners to explain the project and the steps which need to be taken to get a route identified and waymarked on the ground, and onto the website. The toolkit will be published on-line and emailed to everyone who has registered their interest in the project.

The toolkit will be published in sections including:

1. **Identifying routes** – including definitions of the 5 criteria outlined above, ways to record routes, how to record information relating to hazards and other route information.
2. **Use of the website** – including how to add routes directly onto the website, directing partners and local people to the site, use of personal fitness logs and the walking fitness test.
3. **Waymarking routes** - how to obtain waymarkers, advice on where to put them, how to secure agreements with landowners, and what to avoid when waymarking.
4. **Making the most of your routes**, including ideas for local publicity, advice on planning and organising events on routes.

The first section of the toolkit is now available on the Walk England website by clicking on the following link: <http://www.walkengland.org.uk/>

We plan to have a working area on the Walk4Life portal by July where partners can upload routes, with the site ready to launch in September.

We will be providing advice on how to use the website, although we are hoping it will be so easy to use there will be no real need! This advice will be issued as a toolkit during the summer.

How you can get involved

We are working with partners at a strategic level, and are starting to collect the contact details for groups and individuals who want to be involved with the project. If you want to be involved please contact caroline.markham@walkengland.org.uk

If you would like one of our team to talk to you or your group about the project let Caroline know and we will do our best to fit you in.

At the moment we cannot provide an on-line site for you to upload your routes, this will not be available until the website development progresses, but we can accept paper maps of routes which

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we will digitise as soon as we can. These can be sent directly to Caroline, who is also there to answer any questions you have about the project.

We hope you are as excited about this as we are, and we look forward to working together to identify 2012 routes, and to encourage people to walk on them.

To register as a partner, to find out more, or talk to us at Walk England about this project please contact us at caroline.markham@walkengland.org.uk Telephone 07920 198605.

We look forward to working together to inspire more people to walk!

Walk4Life Miles V 1 Veronica Reynolds

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