

**Children's
Play
Advisory
Service**

***Let's all get fit
(for the Olympics)***

Increasing Fitness	→	Decreasing Obesity
Increasing Neighbourliness	→	Decreasing Stranger Fears
Increasing Safety	→	Decreasing Accidents
Increasing Citizenship	→	Decreasing Apathy
Increasing Healthy Environment	→	Decreasing Pollution

**A proposal from the Children's Play Advisory
Service and Fair Play for Children**

“ ‘Let's get fit' is a really good idea” says Lord Tony Greaves, a life-long walker and climber. “It is a combination of two things I am really keen on – people getting together to organise things in their own local areas, and taking the opportunity of the Olympics to set up activities that bring long-lasting benefits to people's health.”

AIMS

1. To enable the general public to play their part in overcoming increasing obesity and pollution.
2. To increase neighbourliness/citizenship.
3. To encourage participation in the overall fun of the Olympics and to leave an Olympic legacy of healthier and happier neighbourhoods for millions of people.

UNIQUE PROPOSITION

Efforts to increase participation in sport and active lifestyles are having limited success because they are taking a “training or treatment” approach which deals with a relatively small number of individuals at relatively high cost.

“Let’s all get fit” recognises that the increasing obesity and decreasing neighbourliness are environmental problems and therefore proposes an environmental solution which costs little and changes the lifestyle for millions of people.

“Let’s all get fit” is based on considerable observational and interview research by Rob Whewey for many Local Authorities and Housing Trusts at well over 60 different areas of housing in various parts of England and Wales. (see appendix)

METHODOLOGY

Short residential roads would be closed to through traffic for 2-4 weeks during the summer holidays. This would be based on requests from residents (in the way that “Royal event” street parties and similar happen) rather than imposed. It would be subject to usual Council controls (essential distributory roads would clearly not be eligible).

This would allow people to walk and talk in their street, as people over 50 will remember used to happen naturally, and did so for previous generations. In this way exercise is a routine part of a normal lifestyle.

The weeks’ activities would loosely be called “training” but would primarily be informal e.g. children playing out and adults being encouraged to walk (or jog) a few laps of the street/block - “walk a mile” each day. People would also be encouraged to reduce car usage for local journeys.

The emphasis would be on fun and enabling people to do the sorts of activities that had previously happened for generations. The media could be encouraged to show pictures of grandmothers and grandfathers showing children how to skip, play hopscotch, etc. and children persuading their parents to get out and walk.

The final day would be a parade (children to make flags, dress up, etc) and community walk/jog in which the total miles travelled would be sent to a central location so that a total for the country can be given. This would be a "Guinness Book of Records" type - "Biggest Athletic Event". The scheme would try to attract TV coverage of the total gradually building up in a similar way to the money builds up in "Children in Need".

For tens of thousands it will be their first active participation in a sporting event.

All events would be locally organised with no central control and would be in the manner of Jubilee/Millennium events or similar. As people would only do what they might informally do there is no need for usual organisation costs, separate insurance, etc. (Roads closed for mains repairs have no insurance for extra walking happening)

There would be a need for some limited central co-ordination to give advice, possibly produce some standard posters, and answer common questions.

From 2011 trials in school holidays could be undertaken and the whole built up until the London Olympics in summer 2012.

OUTCOMES

In the summer millions of people will have a period of increased exercise. Given the period of 2-4 weeks this should be sufficient to persuade some to change their lifestyle.

Experience has shown that where traffic is severely restricted (20mph is not enough) residents find that they talk to each other more and neighbourliness increases. Children play out more and get more exercise.

Many neighbourhoods are likely to want to increase the weeks of closure in successive years, or to make permanent the "no through traffic" so that the benefits of change in lifestyle are likely to increase.

There will therefore be a cultural change in public perception of walking locally. There will be an environmental change which will enable and encourage a healthy lifestyle. A lasting Olympic legacy - for virtually no cost..

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For Information

"Living Streets" (Pedestrians Association) and "Streets Alive" have expressed support, Play England has expressed interest

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Client Profile

Over the last 20 years Rob Wheway has regularly carried out annual inspections (EN 1176 and BS 5696) for all tiers of local authority, housing trusts and commercial organisations. He has also carried out inspections of skateboard areas and indoor play areas.

In addition he has undertaken contracts (including risk assessments) leading to strategic and operational recommendations for:

- Belfast City Council
- Malvern Town Council
- Mole Valley District Council
- London Borough of Newham
- Nottingham City Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Warwick District Council
- Wychavon District Council

He has carried out **observational and interview research** and consultations leading to strategic recommendations for:

- Basingstoke & Deane B. C. (Playschemes, Disabled Children, Play in Environment)
- Birmingham City Council (Play in environment and in play areas)
- Cardiff City Council (Play in Environment, Play Areas)
- Elmbridge Borough Council (Play Areas)
- Knightstone Housing Trust (Play on Housing Estates)
- Lewes District Council (Play in Environment, Play Areas)
- London Borough of Lambeth (Adventure Playgrounds)
- Oxford City Council (Playspace, Play in the Environment and Playschemes)
- Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust (Play/Youth Work and Playspace)
- Waverley Borough Council (Play in Environment, Play Areas)
- William Sutton Housing Trust (Play Areas and Where Children Play)

He regularly carries out “Inspecting Children’s Playgrounds” training courses for a wide variety of organisations and repeatedly for:

- Belfast City Council
- Bristol City Council
- Crawley Borough Council
- Forestry Commission
- Uckfield Town Council

He regularly advises on design and undertakes inspections of non-standard and “natural” play areas. He has carried out inspections for 12 “Play Pathfinder” playgrounds (renewed for a further 12 the following year) for:

- London Borough of Camden

Following a successful audit of their playgrounds has been awarded a second three-year contract to assess their playgrounds and improve their operational management by:

- North Warwickshire Borough Council

He has run seminars for local authority managers to instruct them in how to have more robust playground inspection procedures yet save money at the same time for:

- LondonPlay