



Highland Green Health Partnership Showcase and Planning Event Report

Summary

The one-day showcase and planning event was organised by the Highland Green Health Partnership (HGHP) and held at UHI Inverness on May 18th, 2023. It aimed to bring together representatives from the public sector, health & social care sector, and third sector organisations, that have been invaluable in making the project a success. The partnership agreed that the key audience for the day would be decision makers in Highland including representatives from across the nine Community Partnerships and the Community Planning Chief Officers group.

Overall objectives of the day;

- Celebrate our joint successes in Years 1-5 of the project
- Gather commitment to continued support of Green Health initiatives in Highland
- Establish a Sustainability Plan and Highland Charter for project delivery into the future

The day was chaired by Cathy Steer, Head of Health Improvement and the chair of the HGHP. The morning session focussed on celebrating the achievements of the project to date. An opening presentation from Professor Sir Gregor Smith, the Chief Medical Officer was followed by a summary of the partnerships progress from Ailsa Villegas, Health Improvement Specialist and previous Green Health Senior Development Officer. Professor Richard Mitchell from the University of Glasgow presented on the current research and findings in relations to green health initiatives in Highland and the wider Green Health Partnership network.

The latter part of the day encouraged input from delegates through a series of workshops. Workshop themes were selected from the Strategic Review and focussed on areas of work that were identified as having scope for development.

1. Referral Pathways and Evaluation
2. Sustainable Funding for Nature-based Health Improvement Initiatives
3. Community Networking for Nature, Climate and Health
4. Greenspace and Infrastructure

A marketplace showcased exemplars of green health action in Highland through a variety of displays from community organisations and partners.

The event attracted 45 delegates with a wide spread of organisations and sectors represented.

Background

The HGHP has been active and delivering a programme of work since 2019. In the final year of the substantive funding from Nature Scot, the members of the partnership were asked to confirm a commitment to a Highland Green Health Partnership beyond Sept 2023, and invited to participate in this showcase and planning event to demonstrate that commitment. A sub-group of the Highland Green Health Partnership met six times to plan and organise the event.

Planning Sub-group members

- Ailsa Villegas, Health Improvement Specialist NHS Highland
- Dan Jenkins, Health, Strategic Green Health Development Manager NHS Highland/Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Imogen Furlong, Outdoor Activities and Countryside Ranger Manager, High Life Highland
- Caroline Vawdrey, Highland Environment Forum
- Charlotte Mackenzie, Health Walks Manager, HTSI
- Gavin Hosie, Green Health Link Worker, Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Kate Thomson, Senior Development Officer, NHS Highland

Who was there?



In total, 45 delegates registered at the event. 22 from community/third sector organisations, 3 from NHS Health & Social Care, 7 NHS Public Health, 1 Highland Counsellor, 4 from Local Authority, 4 other public sector bodies, 1 NHS Grampian. 3 representing Community Partnerships; Lochaber CP, East Ross CP and Caithness CP had representation.

Opening Speeches

Cathy Steer, Head of Health Improvement and Chair of the HGHP opened the day with a [welcome](#) which set the scene for the day ahead, bringing context to the work of the partnership in terms of reducing health inequalities and promotion of preventative healthcare, and reflected on the importance of the work programme and the significant investment of funding which has made it possible.

Professor Sir Gregor Smith, the Chief Medical Officer provided a strong endorsement for the work of the Highland Green Health Partnership through pre-recorded [video](#). He highlighted the opportunities that Green Health Partnerships can provide for improving accessibility and reducing health inequalities and the importance of green health in delivering the NHS Scotland's vision of a Healthier Scotland.

Keynote Presentations

[‘The Highland Green Health Partnership- An overview of our outcomes’](#) - Ailsa Villegas, Health Improvement Specialist

Ailsa Villegas provided a comprehensive overview of the work of the HGHP to date which included insights and perspectives gained from her four years as Senior Development Officer for the project. She outlined the inception of the partnership, the projects framework in relation to Our Natural Health Service and the specific aims of the HGHP. The impact of the pandemic on delivery of the programme of work and adjacent High Life Highland LEADER project was noted, including the diversion of funding from community events to the provision of a website, directory and suite of self-led resources. The presentation highlighted the significant body of work achieved through partnership work and network creation- a key success of the HGHP. Challenges were acknowledged including disparity in service provision, short-term funding for third sector providers and the difficulty in measuring impact.

‘Green Health Research Findings’- Professor Richard Mitchell, University of Glasgow

Professor Richard Mitchell gave an engaging overview of the green health research findings. He highlighted the positive impact that access to natural environments can have on population health and drew attention to the findings that better access to and more contact with nature seems to benefit disadvantaged groups to a greater extent- underlining the key role for green health in reducing health inequalities. He gave an overview of the evaluation

of the Green Health Partnerships (GHP's) and like Ailsa, highlighted the challenge in assessing the impact of the work. He noted that the Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Teams (PHIRST) is currently undertaking an independent evaluation of the GHP's. He recommended that evaluability assessment should be included at project inceptions- to inform the timing of an evaluation and to improve the prospects for an evaluation producing useful results.

Marketplace Participants

We enlisted the help of several community groups and third sector organisations that are delivering green health initiatives to showcase the variety of the work across Highland. The marketplace created a bustling atmosphere and networking environment. We aimed to include a range of green health activities and a wide geographic spread of opportunities. The eight organisations that showcased their work at the marketplace were:

Think Nature Health Walks

Charlotte Mackenzie the Health Walk Manager for [Think Health Nature Walks](#) showcased the network of community Health Walk and Buggy Walk groups throughout rural Highland, from Lochaber to Caithness. This project aims to promote walking in the outdoors to help tackle physical inactivity, mental health issues and health inequalities. They wish to encourage a broad spectrum of participants of varying abilities and health needs and target those who may be isolated in rural communities.

Nature 4 Health

Stephen Wiseman and Ruairaidh Milne from [Nature 4 Health](#) aim to help people connect with nature, each other and themselves. Alongside other activities, they deliver regular Nature Walks for wellbeing in Inverness & Nairn and [Branching Out](#) programmes (an outdoor therapeutic programme for adults who use mental health services in Scotland).

High Life Highland Grow Project and Ranger Service

Imogen Furlong and Eleanor Campbell alongside several volunteers from High Life Highland represented the [G.R.O.W Project](#) and the [Highland Ranger Service](#).

The G.R.O.W project provides an opportunity for practical horticulture for adults with a learning disability. This is delivered through a sympathetic workplace-type environment that uses horticulture therapy to deliver training and work experience.

The Highland Ranger Service deliver a varied work programme across Highland working with local community groups, the public, volunteers and schools on nature connection, education, biodiversity and awareness raising activities.

Highland Quietlife

Cath Wright delivers forest bathing sessions for [Highland Quietlife](#) in the Cairngorms area. A Forest Bathing session involves being guided through a series of 'invitations' aimed at opening your senses and reconnecting you with yourself and the environment around you.

Cycling UK

George Ewing from [Cycling UK](#) brought a series of adapted cycles to show the options available to enable inclusive access to cycling. Their Rural Connections project targets Scotland's rural and remote areas, supporting people to cycle, walk and wheel – for everyday journeys, leisure and adventure. The Golspie Bothy project supports local community groups, organisations, businesses and individuals within Golspie, Brora and nearby surrounding areas of East Sutherland to reduce the amount of short car journeys by replacing them with walking and cycling.

Roots & Shoots

Rachel Avery from [Roots & Shoots](#) provided a slideshow which showcased the organisations work in providing opportunities to learn, play and explore our surrounding woodlands. They run after school, holiday and weekend clubs, family programmes, branching out, training and other support for getting into the outdoors and connecting with nature.

The Plock

Judith Bullivant from [Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust](#) represented 'The Plock', Kyle's community woodland site. This project encompasses green infrastructure, ranger led activities, a health walk and forest school.

Alzheimer Scotland- Tipi project

[Alzheimer Scotland](#) provided some printed materials showcasing their Tipi Project and Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre which enable people living with dementia and their family and carers to experience the mental and physical benefits of spending time outdoors. They provide a range of dementia friendly outdoor activities, including cycling, gardening, walking, arts and crafts, and interactive nature education. This short [film](#) illustrates the work.

Video Case Studies

Two video case studies gave an informative insight into two green health interventions in Highland. These videos can be accessed by following the links below.

[Tongue Health Walk, Think Nature Health Walks](#)

Workshop Discussions

Delegates were able to sign up to two workshops from a choice of four. Workshops were tasked with producing three outputs; however, the discussions were active and detailed and most struggled to narrow down discussions to three key aspects. Following the event members of the HGHP were then invited to comment and add any additional considerations using an online service, Padlet, as it was recognised that facilitators of the workshops were unable to contribute across the other themes. The summaries below provide an overview of the key priorities and issues raised.

Workshop 1- Referral Pathways and Evaluation

- Formal and informal pathways should be supported– top down from health services and bottom up from community contacts and networks.
- Provide as wide a choice of opportunities as possible with links to ‘buddies’ and volunteers where possible (this is necessary to help many people make the first steps / join activities for the first time).
- Pathways need to prioritise relationships.
- The patient must be at the heart of the pathway; language used should be tailored to each patient’s perspective, and the people involved should be asked about the process to improve opportunities for empowerment.
- Are the right people referred; and how do we improve this?
- We need to ensure there is a bridge of some kind to support that whole journey-link worker role is crucial.
- Quantitative and qualitative evaluation equally valuable.
- Show how better recovery outcomes are achieved.
- Evaluation of community impact as well as individual impact.

Workshop 2- Sustainable Funding for Nature-based Health Improvement Initiatives

- Where to take the body of evidence that has been gathered to influence funding?
- How can funding follow the person – use of self-directed support funding.
- Collaboration – do things together to maximise funding.
- How to link to needs – share/use data.
- Pull together information about to access data/intelligence.
- How to pool expertise across initiatives.
- Co-design initiatives/services with providers & funders- funders’ forum could be a useful initiative.
- Continue to link people/initiatives/projects – networking.
- More leadership for social prescribing.
- Align active travel funds to green health opportunities relevant to rural areas.

- Funding is disconnected from NHS services - 3rd Sector – community support.
- Look to climate change/sustainability funding for NHS & realistic medicine.
- Social enterprise could be a model for sustainability.
- Invest in prevention rather than downstream activity.

Workshop 3- Community Networking for Nature, Climate and Health

- **How can we sustain networks?**
 - Public engagement- need quality improvement methodology around our engagement.
 - Funding- capital funding is easier than revenue to source, multiple year-round funding is needed
 - Valuing volunteers is important
 - Introduce 'time banks' and encourage social enterprise ([information on time banking](#))
 - Thematic sub-groups with theme reps who have clout
 - A Green Health Charter
 - Everything should be underpinned by reducing inequalities
- **What skills, knowledge and tools do we need to engage?**
 - People connect with the agenda by doing active projects- engagement often lower with less active approaches (climate stories).
 - Community partnerships should be more integrated into existing networks, e.g. sign up to newsletters and play a more active role on existing networks (Highland Environment Forum (HEF), HGHP, Highland Adapts).
 - Revisit historic consultations e.g. transition towns, climate action towns.
 - Shared practice with other locality areas.
 - Have specialist input to discussions e.g. RSPB, Biodiversity, HEF
 - How do we equip and empower areas with high health inequalities to collectively engage with community partnerships?
 - Community involvement needs to be a two-way thing and shouldn't be extractive.
 - Communities need more information about the community partnerships and how to engage.
- **Who should be involved with networks?**
 - Community Link Workers
 - Quiet Routes Initiatives
 - High Life Highland Rangers
 - Local Community Service Volunteer Groups
 - Individuals as well as groups
 - Youth Parliament
 - Agricultural communities/land managers
 - Industry/employers/small and medium sized businesses

- Volunteers
- Community
- Champions/Mentors/Can do people
- School Children/families

Workshop 4- Greenspace and Infrastructure

- Address the barriers; physical, perceived and language.
- Skills development for community groups and interested parties- skills to grow and take forward projects.
- Inventory, knowing what we have in terms of places and skills and gaps.
- Greenspace infrastructure projects can be any scale but need to be where people are.
- Need to address representation in the imagery around greenspace use to make it more inclusive.
- What do we mean by 'greenspace' and where is it and where are the gaps?
- A need to make the language we use to define greenspace in the Highlands more applicable to other initiatives and projects, e.g., community projects, community woodland projects.
- A strong desire to focus on what constitutes greenspace in the Highlands; it's different from more urban areas. Emphasis on infrastructure.

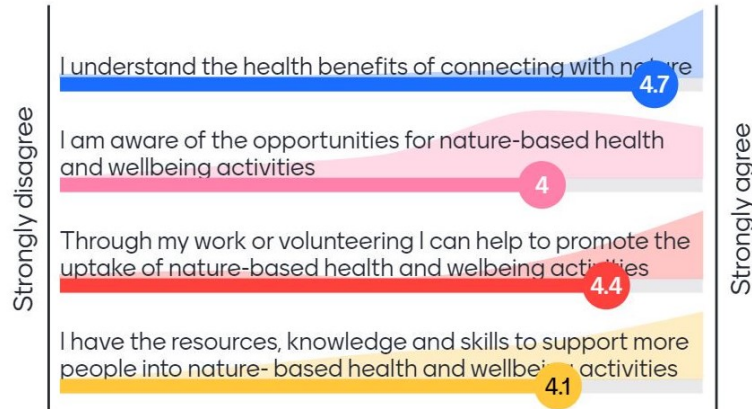
Key themes from the day

- **Enthusiasm** for Green Health was plentiful.
- There is **no one size fits all** approach to provision of Green Health in Highland.
- There is a **wealth of expertise**, experience and Green Health action happening in Highland.
- **Short-term funding** is an issue for third sector organisations sustainability and has a knock-on impact on ability to establish trust between referrers and providers.
- **Language** is important; it can create unnecessary barriers to participation and engagement with the work. Collective understanding and creation of shared definitions is essential.
- Organising action and networking through local **community partnerships** needs engagement at all levels and community members need more information and reasons to engage in the process.
- In Highland **formal and informal referral pathways** need supported and facilitated.
- We need to focus work where the **gaps** are and maximise impact of existing networks.

At the event a Mentimeter online platform was used to gather delegate opinion.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

Mentimeter

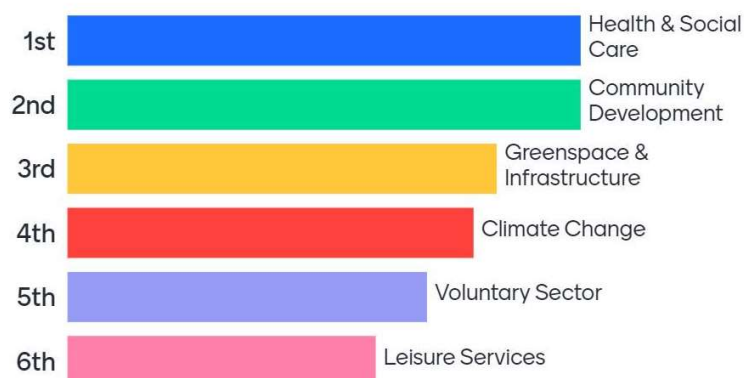


Please rank the areas of action we should be working towards, in order of importance

Mentimeter



Looking ahead - Rank the policy areas that you think best align with the green health  Mentimeter



Outdoor Qui Gong

The day ended with an outdoor Qui Gong session led by Imogen Furlong from High Life Highland. Delegates who took part enjoyed a first-hand experience of a green health activity- a great way to relax and re-balance following the fullness of the day.



Plenary and Next Steps

The output from the event will be a Sustainability Report and Highland Green Health Charter which will be co-written by the HGHP, this will consider the priorities raised through the workshops and discussions from the day.

Evaluation

A feedback questionnaire was sent by email following the event received 6 responses. Everyone who responded found the event **useful for networking and building connections**. Most respondents felt that a good amount of information about Green Health Action in Highland and the Highland Green Health Partnership was given. **65% felt that they were able to input to the priorities of Green Health** to inform ongoing work and the sustainability strategy, and 35% felt this was 'sort of' achieved. When asked to outline what the main take away from the day was, responses included the **value of networking** with projects, the **importance of spreading the word** about green health, and the **enthusiasm** for the work was mentioned several times. When asked what action they have taken since the event to progress Green Health in Highland, respondents mentioned **sharing the information with colleagues** and following up on contacts made at the event. It was also noted that the Inverness Community Partnership are lodging a motion at full council in June to ask the **Council Leader to publicly commit** to supporting the work.

Conclusions

Overall, the event was deemed a success in meeting the objectives of showcasing work and celebrating the joint successes of the HGHP. There is definite enthusiasm for green health action in Highland, and we feel that the spread of interest around the event, across disciplines and sectors is a good indication of the commitment to continued support of green health Initiatives in Highland. All members of the HGHP had representatives attending on the day, except for, Forest & Land Scotland. We made progress towards pulling collective thinking to establish a Sustainability Plan and Highland Green Health Charter for project delivery into the future. Finally, linkages with Community Planning Partnerships were strengthened through the event. It is acknowledged that there is still a way to go in this area of work as not all CPs were represented. We know that some CPs are experiencing change and transition and are not well placed to engage with the work currently. It will be important to capitalise on the energy, networks and shared learning that took place and work is already underway to this effect.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone involved in the planning and delivery of this event and to everyone who attended, bringing their energy and enthusiasm.

Compiled by Kate Thomson, Senior Development Officer for Green Health, 2023

Think Health Think Nature is delivered by the Highland Green Health Partnership, a programme of activity helping to make more use of Scotland's Outdoors as a Natural Health Service. The Partnership is supported through funding from Nature Scot.

