

# Nature Climate Health

**A guide for Community Partnerships in Highland**

*Highland Adapts  
Highland Environment Forum  
Highland Green Health Partnership*



# Who we are

## HIGHLAND ADAPTS



The Highland Adapts initiative brings organisations from across the region together to facilitate transformational action towards a climate-ready Highland. Deep rooted in an understanding of the needs and priorities of communities, the initiative is building a strong place-centred evidence base that sets out the climate risks and opportunities that are affecting the Highlands.

<https://highlandadapts.scot/>

## HIGHLAND ENVIRONMENT FORUM



The Highland Environment Forum was initiated by the Highland Community Planning Partnership in 2013, and now has more than 460 members from across the region. The members represent public bodies, land managers, third sector organisations, businesses and interested individuals. Partnership working, cross-sector discussions, information and skills sharing lie at the core of the Forum's work.

<https://www.highlandenvironmentforum.info/>

## HIGHLAND GREEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP



The Highland Green Health Partnership, established in 2018 has 16 partner members covering voluntary, private and public sectors as well as interested individuals. It is led by NHS Highland and has the overall aim of connecting people with nature for their improved health & wellbeing and tackling health inequalities.

[www.thinkhealththinknature.scot](http://www.thinkhealththinknature.scot)

# Our Vision

Community Partnerships can play a vital role in establishing and supporting green networks, where local action on nature, climate and health are discussed collaboratively in an environment of shared learning and accountability.

---

In order to maintain good health we must live work and play in healthy environments. We can maintain and enhance our physical and mental wellbeing through connection with nature, but we also have a responsibility to safeguard our natural environment, so that future generations can continue to benefit.

Pressures on the natural environment, from climate change, resource depletion and biodiversity loss are a threat to human health, as they damage the systems that protect our wellbeing.

*"Humans are fundamentally dependent on nature. All systems and goods that support health and well-being can ultimately be traced back to the natural world. Environmental change threatens human health in a variety of ways, from the disruption of essential natural mechanisms (such as pollination) and the loss of potential (such as new nature-inspired pharmaceuticals) to direct health threats of extreme events, the spread of vector-borne diseases or water scarcity. Growing understanding of how the natural environment supports, protects and threatens health underlines the importance of recognizing the links in policy and practice."*

**World Health Organisation (WHO), Nature, Biodiversity and Health report 2021**


# The Role of Community Partnerships

*"The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan's main ambition is to tackle the issues that lead to inequalities. In doing so, we will make the Highlands a fairer place, so that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of our region. We will do this by listening to our communities and working with them to make Highland an even better place to live, work and play."*

**David Alston, Highland Community Planning Board Chair**

The Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP) brings together public agencies, third sector organisations and other key community groups to work collaboratively with the people of Highland to deliver better outcomes. The Partnership works at a Highland level but also at a local level through nine Community Partnerships which are located across the area.

Community Partnerships play a valuable role in coordinating action around climate, nature and health. They ensure appropriate representation; allowing for continuity and demonstrating leadership through their influence. They also facilitate a pathway for governance and accountability.



*Community Partnerships can help to Identify and reach out to the voices that don't speak*



# Tackling Inequalities

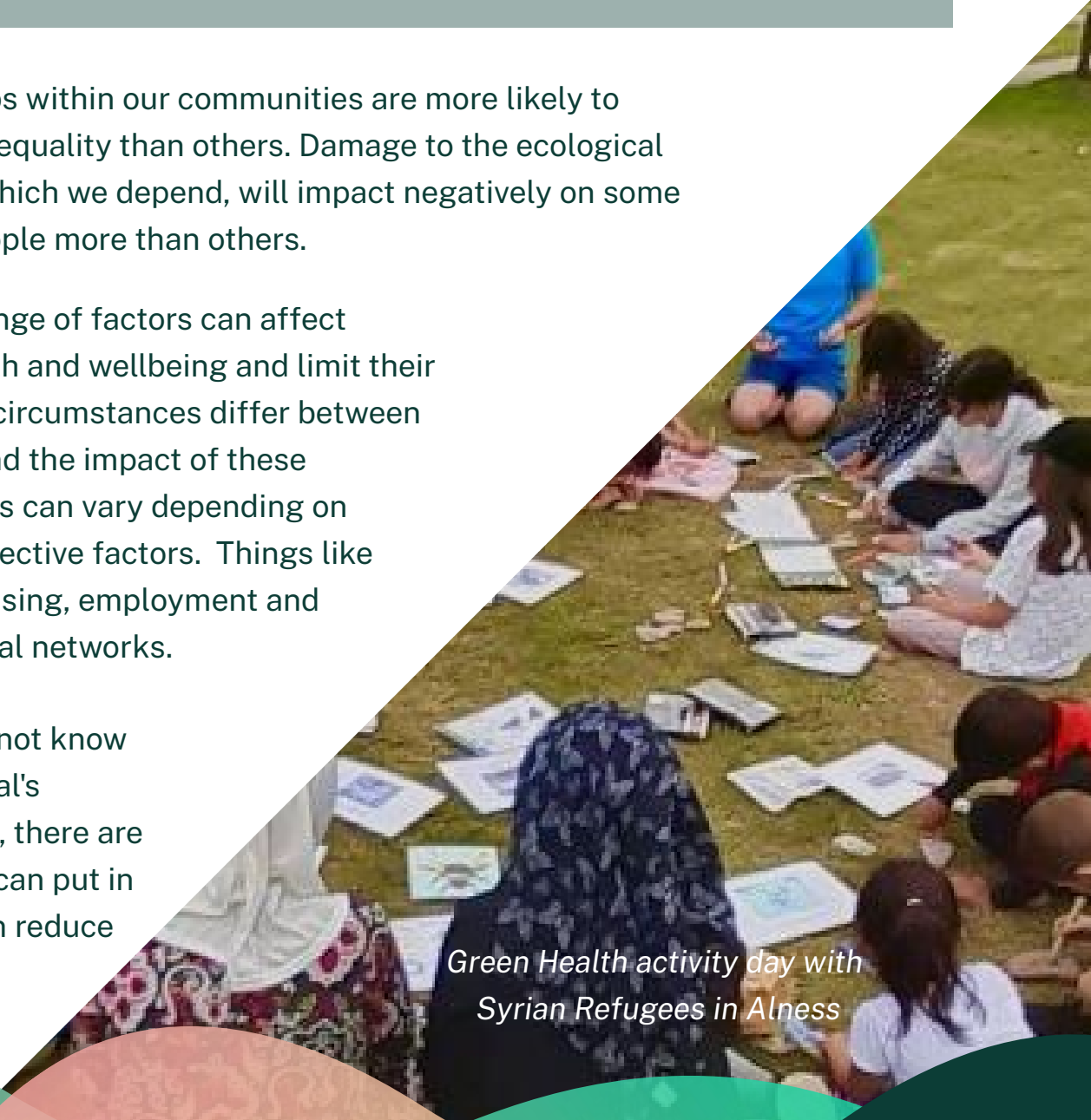
*There is a growing body of evidence which typically shows that greener living environments are associated with reduced levels of socio-economic inequalities in multiple health outcomes. The natural environment was thought to mediate the detrimental health effects of long term deprivation. The restorative impacts of walking in natural environments was shown to be most beneficial for those with poor health (in comparison to those with better health).*

**European Centre for Environment and Human Health (2018)**

Certain groups within our communities are more likely to experience inequality than others. Damage to the ecological systems on which we depend, will impact negatively on some groups of people more than others.

A complex range of factors can affect people's health and wellbeing and limit their choices. Life circumstances differ between individuals and the impact of these circumstances can vary depending on available protective factors. Things like quality of housing, employment and available social networks.

While we cannot know each individual's circumstance, there are practices we can put in place that can reduce inequalities



*Green Health activity day with Syrian Refugees in Alness*

# Empowered Communities

Climate change and Biodiversity loss are important issues globally, as well as regionally and nationally. While action and strategic direction is important from Governments, it is at the local level that opportunities for collaborative action will be implemented and sustained.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, commits the CPPs to working more closely with communities to ensure that the outcomes delivered reflect the needs of the communities each partnership represents. It is aimed at greater localism and CPPs must support community bodies to participate in all parts of the process, in the development, design and delivery of plans, including Locality Plans for areas experiencing disadvantage.

Scotland's Sustainable Development Goals make strong links back to the community including:

- Clean Water and Sanitation
- Life on Land and Water
- Sustainable Communities
- Social Justice
- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Climate Change
- Health and Wellbeing





# Community Land

***Community land is a valuable asset for tackling climate change, enhancing biodiversity and promoting health.***

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, extends the The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and gives communities the right to buy land in all of Scotland, (urban and rural). It introduces a new provision to purchase land which is abandoned, neglected or causing harm to the environmental wellbeing of the community, where the owner is not willing to sell that land. This is if the purchase is in the public interest and compatible with the achievement of sustainable development of the land. In addition there are provisions for the leasing of forests and the allocation of public space for allotments.

Across Highland there are many Development Trusts and Community Woodland Associations working to create valuable assets for the residents through the creation of functional greenspace.

## Case Study - Kyle's Community Parkland - The Plock

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust was established in August 2012 to achieve the sustainable regeneration of the community which, despite its magnificent geographic setting, had been identified as one of the most economically fragile in the Highlands. This included the community purchase of an area of derelict land (formerly a golf course) West of the town and the creation of a masterplan that has since seen it used for green health activities for the community including health walks, outdoor education and the establishment of a men's shed. They work closely with the local GP surgery and have also employed two rangers focused on habitat restoration.

The master plan was achieved through collaborative networking across the community which led to a strong focus on health & wellbeing and tackling inequalities. Funding of over £400,000 for five years was secured through Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Fund.

[www.lochalsh.uk](http://www.lochalsh.uk)



# Joint Projects

There are many opportunities for joint initiatives on climate, nature and health. For example:

- Green Health activities such as conservation volunteering, citizen science, litter picking and tree planting help to enhance our natural spaces while keeping people physically active outdoors.
- Walking and cycling projects benefit health and help to reduce carbon emissions.
- Community food growing and gardening initiatives have many health benefits, reduce food waste and can manage land in a way that is good for nature.
- Outdoor education projects help to encourage physical activity while also raising understanding of the value of nature for health and the need to safeguard it.
- Green infrastructure projects enhance communities, encouraging people out in to their Greenspaces while enhancing biodiversity.

## Case Study - Green Leadership Award Scheme

Launched in 2022, the Green Leadership programme is a partnership between High Life Highland (Leadership/Rangers), Trees for Life, NHS, Highland Adapts and others. It came about as a result of discussions from a network established by Highland Healthcare for Climate Action.

It is open to young people aged 12-25 years, and although underpinned by leadership in sport and youth work, the awards can be utilised by young people volunteering in conservation and other health & wellbeing initiatives outdoors.



*Young Leaders are awarded a sweatshirt upon reaching different award levels.*

Click [here](#) for more information.



# Local Networks

Local Networks provide opportunities for joint action, shared learning and skills development as well as generating local solutions to problems that meet community priorities and needs. By working through local networks, groups can work to their collective strengths, maximise impact and avoid duplication of effort. This can be achieved through:



**1** Raising awareness, sharing of resources, knowledge and skills



**2** Facilitating collaborative working



**3** Ensuring actions are targeted where they are most needed.

Linking with Community Partnerships will ensure action delivered through local networks are aligned with the community planning priorities for that area. Networks in return, can have the opportunity to be consulted upon and input into the develop of future plans and priorities.

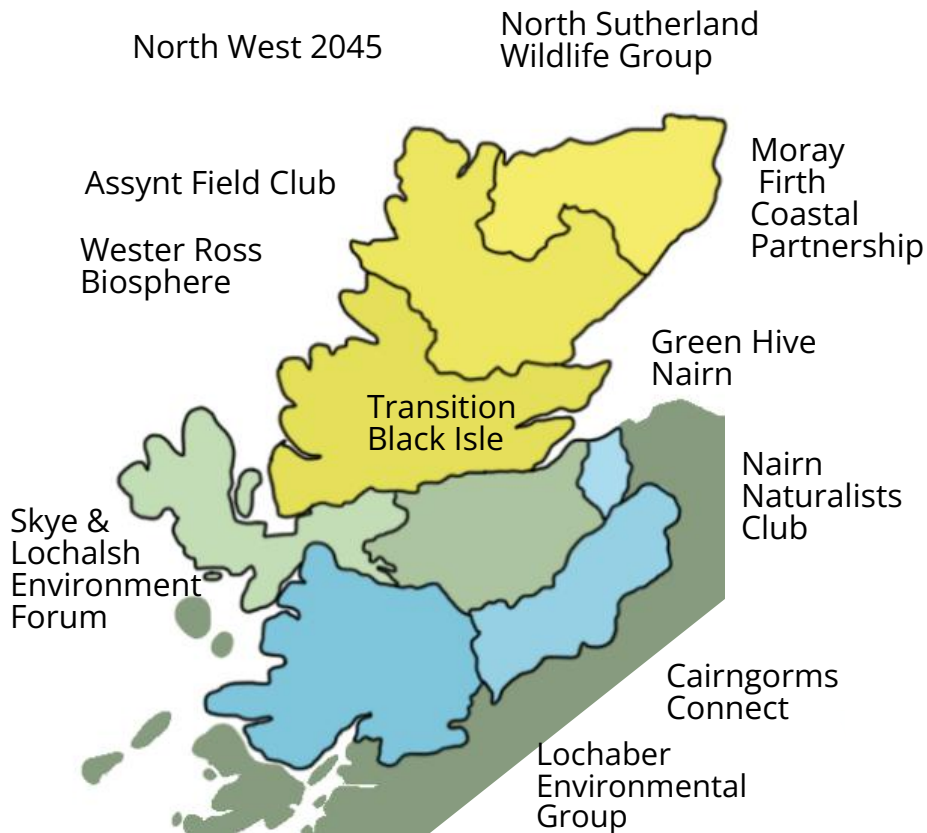
Community Partnerships can provide an avenue for regular governance and accountability for local climate, nature and health networks. This will help to avoid duplication while adding value to the work under way.

Action could be discussed as a standing item on each partnership meeting or a sub-group can be formed. Meetings should be regular and should feed back progress to the community partnership.

Each local network should assign responsibility to a lead individual or agency that can feedback progress of their collective discussions to the Community Partnerships.

# Who to get involved?

There exists a wealth of knowledge and expertise across all parts of Highland. Below are some examples of the community groups and networks in Highland.



You may wish to engage with local employers.

Many of the larger firms have sustainability or health & wellbeing leads.

Landowners and larger conservation organisations may be valuable partners to include such as RSPB, The National Trust or the John Muir Trust as well as local officers from public agencies such as NatureScot or Forestry and Land Scotland.

**Your nearest climate, nature or health group may be listed in the websites below:**

- [Highland Adapts](#)
- [Highland Environment Forum](#)
- Think Health Think Nature online [Directory](#)
- [Highland Good Food Partnership](#)
- [Development Trusts Association Scotland](#)
- [Community Woodlands Association Scotland](#)

Active travel partnerships link well with health and climate change agenda with groups such as Hi-trans and Sustrans and Cycling UK being valuable partners.



# Who to get involved continued...

## North Highlands and Islands Climate Hub

The aim of the hub is to support community led climate action in the North Highlands & Northern Isles in all the stages it takes to design, develop and deliver a project. We can support existing community groups or help communities to form new groups. Connecting communities through new and existing networks and signposting to further support as needed. Even if you are not developing a specific climate action project we can help you with climate ready policies for your organisations and how to embed climate action in your work. Find out more [here](#).

## High Life Highland Countryside Rangers

The rangers work closely with local community groups to access nature in their area. We have a programme of interpretation events across Highlands and deliver environmental education to local schools and community groups. The Rangers are also able to assist in organising local volunteering efforts around nature conservation and nature restoration, these are essential to tackle biodiversity loss. If you have a project in mind – contact your local ranger to look at a collaboration, it is best to contact us at the planning and development phase of your initiative. We are also able to deliver at one off events, running guided walks or fun nature discovery sessions for groups. Find your local ranger [here](#):





# Training & Skills Development

There are many opportunities for groups and organisations to share their expertise and learning across networks. Networks across Highland have worked collectively to organise the following training:

- Outdoor First Aid Training
- Mental Health Awareness Training
- Volunteer Management
- Funding Applications
- Place-Based planning and consultation

Groups have also work collaboratively to share:

- Skills, transport and equipment
- Volunteers
- Evidence



*Using Nature as a Resource to support  
Mental Wellbeing - a blended course  
delivered by  
[Nature 4 Health](#)*

## Case Study - Locality Planning in Kinlochleven

Lochaber Community Partnership was set up to provide a forum within the local area where partner agencies and the community can come together to plan and take forward the needs of the local community. The partnership was tasked with developing a Locality Plan for three areas including one for Kinlochleven.

Think Health Think nature collaborated with High Life Highland and Highland Council to host two community engagement events to consulting with the communities over their needs and priorities and to showcase the services available locally.

Green health activity providers joined a network to explore community led referral pathways and were supported with funding and training to build capacity to receive referrals. The Stepping Stones model was developed for use in this and other small rural communities as a result. More information [here](#).

A key priority for the community was to upgrade the community play park and this will enhance the community greenspace. The aim is that this work continues to be supported through the Community Partnership going forward.





*Muir of Ord Green Action Day 2021*

## Events & Joint Campaigns

A great place to start could be through running a campaign or hosting an event that brings people together and motivates action. There are a number of campaigns that can be linked with throughout the year including:

- Green Health Week
- Climate Week
- World Biodiversity Day
- Walk to School Week
- World Health Day
- Volunteers Week

Partners can promote through their respective communities and networks and share on social media.





## Case Study - Melvich Beach Day

With funding from think Health Think Nature, Portskerra Activ' Club (PAC) put on a whole day of events at Melvich Beach to encourage children, families and the wider community to make use of their local Green/Blue spaces.

The youth development officer and active school coordinator, together with young leaders from Farr High School organised a series of fun activities. North Coast Watersports held surf and paddle board lessons. The local Health Walk group joined in the fun for a multi generational event that promoted physical activity in the outdoors and many who attended said they would make more use of their local beach for activities in the future. The event came about as part of a wider programme events being supported across Highland with LEADER funding managed through High Life Highland. The aim of the initiative was to promote and encourage connection with our natural spaces for wellbeing.



## Supporting Resources

A range of tools and guidance have been created that can assist Community Partnerships in their discussions around Nature, Climate and Health. These tools will help you to find a good starting place for your discussions and some facilitated workshop ideas to get you on your way. These Include:

[Think Health Think Nature Toolkit](#)

[Highland Adapts - Starter Pack](#)

[Highland Environment Forum](#)

[Highland Third Sector Interface Support](#)



