

Green Health Partnerships Small Grants Project Evaluation November 2023

Background:

Think Health Think Nature is the work programme of The Highland Green Health Partnership, one of the four area wide partnerships delivered in Scotland. It will contribute towards “Our Natural Health Service”, a national programme led by NatureScot. The overall aim of the partnership in Highland is to “Develop opportunities and build on existing resources to support individuals and communities to improve their health and wellbeing and build resilience through engaging with and appreciating the natural environment”. The initiative has been extended to September 2023. Small Grant funding will focus on efforts to sustain community green health action and build capacity towards continued self-led or community green health opportunities in the future.

For more information about the guiding principles of green health in Highland please visit our community Green Health guidance. We also have lots of information available on our webpage at: www.thinkhealththinknature.scot

In March of 2023 funding was made available through Scottish National Heritage to Green Health Partnership to run a Small Grants Application process under the banner Think Health Think Nature. This was managed on behalf of the partnership by HTSI. Total Project fund available was £23,000 (£18k from Green Health Partnership Development budget and £5k extra contribution from the Cairngorms National Park for projects in Park Authority Area. Applications were sought for grants of up to £1,500 across Highland in March 2023. To support projects that could deliver before the end of September 2023. This could be full cost or for a contribution for larger projects that have match funding confirmed. The aim of The Small Grant Fund was to contribute towards sustained green health action across Highland. This could be used through networking, training, resource, creation and other activities that help build capacity to continue green health opportunities into the future. , had to be a not for profit community group or organisation providing a service, or benefit within the exclusive boundary of The Highland local authority area and (for this round of funding only) the wider Cairngorm National Park area.

Applications were open between March 15th to the 31st 2023.

Eligibility included:

Key outcomes to be met by all projects.

- Contribute towards **Sustained** participation in a green health activity.
This could be achieved through one or more of the following outcomes:
- Building capacity towards long term health action.
- Collaboration between group and organisation
- Creation of Networks.
- Gathering of and sharing of relevant information
- Shared learning, training and skills development.
- Showcasing best practice
- Demonstrating the advancement of equality and fairness through :
 1. Eliminating discrimination
 2. Advancing equality of opportunity
 3. Fostering good relations between different people when carrying out activities.

On the 11th April 2023, five assessors reviewed 18 applications against a set of criterion. 15 projects were selected for funding totalling £ 19,091.49 Funding was issued in May 2023 with the expectation that projects would be completed and funds would be spent by September 2023. Due to the limited

number of applications from the Cairngorms National Park Authority area by the original deadline we extended the deadline for projects from this area until mid-May. The panel reconvened to assess a further 4 applications. 3 additional projects were selected to be funded totalling £2,300. This brought the total number of projects funded to 18 projects and total fund distributed £21,391.49 (the remainder covered the administration of the fund).

The 18 funded projects were requested to submit a short evaluation of their projects with the first round due to submit by end of September and the second round by end of October.

To date, 14 of the successful organisations responded by submitting their evaluations. 3 organisations have not yet responded and 1 project has been granted an extension to September 2024 due to challenges they faced with wider project delivery. HTSI will continue to follow up the 3 outstanding agencies however due to staff changes in some of these organisations the contact information we have is out of date and further work is required.

Some of the areas the projects covered within Highland:

Mid-Wester Ross, Badenoch and Strathspey, Caithness, Braemar, Sutherland, Skye Lochalsh and Wester Ross, Nairn.

The project activities included:

Nature walks, mindfulness sessions, forest bathing, woodland conservation, training, eco-therapy, windowsill gardening –microgreen kits, a nature connection day, taster sessions and fittings for adaptive bikes.

Client groups included:

Primary and secondary school children, people who are housebound, those experiencing social isolation, living in poverty, living with chronic conditions, people with reduced mobility including hip replacements, and people with visual impairment. Health Conditions such as Parkinson's and Dementia.

Legacies

Wester Ross Growers and Seed Savers

"We have purchased and open pollinated seed for Gairloch and Sheildaig Primary School and hope that we can help students learn to grow prepare and save seeds from plants during 2024."

Insh

Legacy included a forest management plan and equipment that will help for years to come.

Highland Quietlife

Have established a forest bathing group in Grantown meeting on the first Sunday of the month.

Sutherland Girls on Boards

"A pool of qualified instructors that creates connections to Sutherland's nature assets and nature via paddlepower."

Darach Social Croft

"We have created a website www.natureconnection.guide displaying a map of Highland with Pins showing where public greenspace's have been mapped.

Feedback from organisations

N4H

" A great project , well attended, received by the community .These days help to keep the general awareness of local greenspace and nature benefits in people's minds and encourages them onto further action"

Highland Quidlife

"Two of the attendants have come via the Green Prescription and their doctor talked to them about getting outside more "

Able to adventure

"This has been a very successful project to the extent that we are confident that the community wants us to continue this service "

Feedback from clients

Befrienders Caithness

"Never thought I could walk like I did, I enjoyed coming , meeting others , lovely trip in the sun, different from others , didn't think I was fit enough to come .Everywhere I go I am sitting, this was good for me "

"I don't go out in my garden, can't believe I have done this "

"What a wonderful day, filling a need for lonely people, thank you "

Wildthings

"I'm happier outside now- there's more to the outside than meets the eye"

"It made me happier because I made friends along the way "

Insh community Holdings

"This is great, you do so much for the village and I appreciate the firewood at the time of rising costs"

"I feel part of the community now and grateful for the firewood"

"There is a real community feel about the project, many of the volunteers give lots of their time to making it work and with the increased energy cost the firewood is most appreciated ".

Wester Ross Growers and Seed Savers

"Great Event to bring likeminded people out of the woodwork "

Thurso Community Café – Wave Water Wellness-Blue Health

"Water wellness has been great; it has given me something to focus on in a difficult time in my life".

Summary

Having received the feedback from the evaluations, the evidence suggests a positive impact for our communities from the funding . These projects are looking to be sustained and ideally further opportunity to deliver more sessions would be a great outcome. People are reporting significant benefits from these projects which are enabling people to improve their wellbeing, become socially connected and experience nature in accessible ways. In a time when accessing health care may take longer for some, these projects are enabling people to keep well.

If we consider the Green Health Partnership Model 2023:

Vision

By 2030, the natural environment is valued as essential for the health & wellbeing of the people of Highland. We will work together to support individuals and communities to connect with and enjoy nature, while safeguarding our natural spaces and promoting inclusion and biodiversity'

Activities

Increase and sustain opportunities for nature based health initiatives with a particular focused on tackling health inequalities.

Long term outcome

Sustained increase in the numbers of people realising the health and wellbeing benefits of connecting with nature.

Reduced Inequalities through improved access and inclusion.

Highland outcomes

Activities that encourage participation and social inclusion and purpose, supporting improved wellbeing

National Outcomes

Contribute to the six Public Health Priorities for Scotland

Next Step: Back to Activities

Work collaboratively to secure ongoing funding to support nature based health improvement initiatives and enhances our greenspace.

Increase stable funding for nature based health initiatives.

Thank you.