

Green Prescriptions Pilot Lochaber

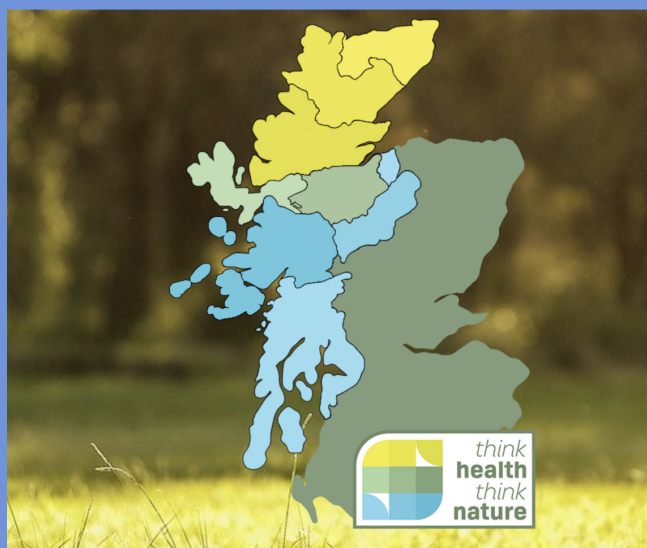


The aim of this project was to develop a green health referral pathway through which patients could be 'prescribed' contact with nature for improved physical and mental wellbeing. A Lochaber steering group was established in 2021 to discuss how best to implement a nature-based prescription programme in the area. It was made up of local voluntary groups, activity providers and representatives from the High Life Highland, NHS and other public agencies. The below summarises the steps that were taken and the outcomes.

1 Map the Services

In 2019, Think Health Think Nature commissioned Voluntary Action Lochaber to identify the opportunities for green health activities in the area through an online survey. Services include walking, cycling, gardening, outdoor learning, sports and volunteering opportunities as well as relaxation and mindfulness activities.

E-bikes from the Kinlochleven Community Trust



2 Build a Directory

In 2020, the activities were added to a Highland - wide Green Health Directory on the Think Health Think Nature [website](https://www.thinkhealththinknature.scot). The directory was expanded to include Argyll & Bute, recognising that for many in the south of Highland, the nearest services may be in the neighbouring Local Authority area. Population of this directory is ongoing.

3 Create a Network

We invited local stakeholders to form a short-life steering group to discuss how to take Green Prescriptions forward in Lochaber. Members of the group included:

- Voluntary Action Lochaber
- Kinlochleven Community Trust
- Darach Social Croft
- High Life Highland
- NatureScot
- NHS Highland
- Active Health Project
- Highland Council
- Fire Scotland
- Think Nature Health Walks
- Lochaber Midfit
- Community Link Workers

4 Promote



Green Health Information Packs on display at the Kinlochleven Be Happy Be Healthy Event

The group identified a need to highlight the green health opportunities to the public in order to encourage the uptake of green prescriptions. Information points were created in Ft William, Caol, Mallaig and Kinlochleven Libraries during Green Health Week. Green Health resources were distributed at community events such as the Kinlochleven Be Happy be Healthy day in 2022, and sent directly to GP practices and Community Link Workers.

Watch the Be Happy Be
HEalthy event video here..



5 Skills and Training

Training needs were identified through a training needs assessment sent to participants of the local network events. Mental Health was identified as an area of training need. Nature 4 Health have delivered a blended course - Using Nature Nature as a Resource to Support Mental Wellbeing. This was an online course followed by a full day held at Kilmallie Community Woodlands.

"Mikeys Line" are a Highland based Mental Health charity that offered free Mental Health First Aid training in Lochaber. A number of the green health steering group attended this two day training course.



The Glenfinnan viaduct

6 Support

Between 2019 and 2023, funding support was provided through Think Health Think Nature to enable the following groups to run nature-based activities in Lochaber:

- Darach Social Croft
- Ewen's Room
- Kinlochleven Community Trust
- West Ardnamurchan Community Garden

We worked to support groups to tap into other additional funding, namely the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and the Ideas fund.

7 Understand

An online Seminar was held with GP's from the Cluster group in Lochaber to gain their feedback. Translatable and printed resources was one of the requests through this. As a result the website now has a translation tab and all pages can be saved as pdf or printed directly from the website. A readiness questionnaire for patients was suggested as a useful tool but has yet to be developed.

With funding from the pilot project, UHI social sciences researcher Sara Bradley is currently conducting interviews with participants referred to Darach Social croft for activities to improve mental health. The results are expected in late Summer 2023.

*Caol Network Lunch
with Lochaber Steering
group Members*



9 Connect

We held a network lunch with stakeholders at the Caol Library in May 2022 where participants learned about the resources available to support green health referrals.

10 The Referral Pathway

The [Active Health Project](#) supports people to become more active through 1:1 work via online calls. They have been working to help patients in Lochaber through GP referrals.

In Lochaber we have engaged with our Community link Workers. Community Link Workers (CLW's) are valuable in making green health referrals a success. They offer non clinical support to patients, enabling them to set goals and overcome barriers, in order that they can take greater control of their health and well-being

Not all areas of Lochaber have access to a CLW. In Kinlochleven, an area of high health inequalities, we tried and failed to establish direct pathways from Primary Healthcare into nature-based activities. Instead a [Community-led pathway](#) was developed, recognising that where capacity in the health service was not available, community support could be a means to accessing new health and wellbeing activities.



Next Steps

Green HHealth has been integrated into the work plan of the Kinlochleven Community Action Group where it is hoped further actions will be taken forward. Discussions with the Lochaber Community PLanning Partnership should hopefully establish a continued dialogue around green health, nature and climate change, thus sustaining action into the future.

This pilot project was made possible with £5000 of funding from [Think Health Think Nature](#). It was led by the Senior Development Officer for Green Health at NHS Highland, as part of the work programme of the Highland Green Health Partnership. The partnership contributes towards "Our Natural Health Service", a programme being led by NatureScot which aims to encourage more use of the outdoors to tackle physical inactivity, mental health issues and health inequalities.