

YEAR 5

#thinkhealththinknature

WORK PLAN REPORT

Think Health Think Nature is the work programme of the Highland Green Health Partnership. Below are some of the highlights from the 5th year of the programme (2022-2023)

1 Our Vision

Funding support through Our Natural Health Service ended in September 2023, but the Highland Green Health Partnership have committed to continue to meet their renewed vision which states that:

"By 2030, the natural environment will be 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"

2 Highland Showcase Event

A one-day showcase and planning event was held at the University of the Highlands and Islands in Inverness on May 18th, 2023. It was aimed at demonstrating and celebrating the joint successes in Years 1-5 of the project as well as gathering commitment to continue support of Green Health initiatives in Highland.

The event attracted 45 delegates from a wide spread of organisations and sectors and led to the development of a Sustainability Action plan to further embed the work of the Highland Green Health Partnership.



Check out this great video from High Life Highland Healthy Minds group [here](#)





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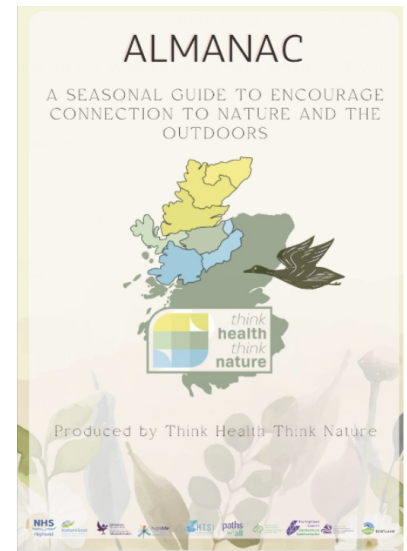
Green Health Small Grant Funding 2023

In May 2023, we awarded funding to 18 highland groups through our small grant fund, aimed at sustained green health action and tackling inequalities. This brings the total number of funded projects to date to 61. A summary of the 2023 projects can be found [here](#).

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Think Health Think Nature Almanac

The Think Health Think Nature Almanac was launched in 2023, and this seasonal guide was developed to provide inspiration to connect with nature for health and wellbeing all year round. Each month has a handy calendar and checklist of things to do and look out for, as well as seasonal recipes, gardening tips and space to note reflections. 3000 copies have been distributed via Highland Libraries, Health Centres and Primary Care staff. An online version can be viewed [here](#).



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Caithness Nature Prescription

Through collaborative working the RSPB, a prescription was created for Caithness, tailored to the flora and fauna that can be found in the area.

A Nature Prescription is a free to use, non-medical approach to self-led activities that people can do anywhere, that aim to create lasting connections with nature.

Community Link Workers will use this resource in conversation with patients in Caithness to encourage them to connect with nature for improved health & wellbeing.



- ❑ On a clear dark night you may see the Aurora Borealis. Find a place with a clear open view looking north. If you have a smart phone, you can download an app that will tell you when you are most likely to see this phenomenon. Go to www.aurora-alerts.uk
- ❑ Find somewhere green to linger at lunchtime or sit beneath a tree and take a break in nature.
- ❑ Go for a walk and look out for different fungi in the woods and elsewhere – remember that some fungi are poisonous and so don't eat them but look for more information about the different species and where they grow.
- ❑ Notice how many types of wildflower are still in bloom and record what you see at www.bsbi.org/wildflower-hour
- ❑ Go for a sound safari and listen out for the curious sounds of nature.
- ❑ Build a bug hotel: rspb.org.uk/buildabughotel
- ❑ Sit outside in the dark and take deep breaths – what can you smell?
- ❑ Go for a walk with a friend through Achvarasdale Woods and share how you feel as you walk through the trees.
- ❑ On a windy day go to a harbour or coastline and watch how the gulls and fulmars effortlessly glide, hover and swoop and dive for food.
- ❑ Take a trip to Achanarras Quarry Nature Reserve, and discover the world-famous fossil fish of this former quarry. If you want to collect fossils, follow the guidelines provided by NatureScot. www.nature.scot/doc/collecting-fossils-achanarras-quarry-leaflet

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GP Community Link Workers

The Change Mental Health Community Link Worker project collaborates with 29 GP surgeries across Highland. They promote the use of Think Health Think Nature resources and encourage connection with nature. More details can be found [here](#).

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Cairngorms 2030 Nature Prescriptions Pathway

Over the last year, the partnership between Cairngorms National Park Authority, NHS Highland and local community networks (and supported by Heritage Lottery Fund) has completed the structures and pathways that enable people to receive more formal but flexible support around connecting with nature for their health and wellbeing. In Badenoch & Strathspey, people can be referred to a Green Health Link Worker by any health and social care professional; or they can be supported to self refer through their own GP practice website.



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Velocity Active Health Project

Think Health Think Nature continue to work closely with the [Active Health Project](#) who support people to become more active as a way of improving their health and wellbeing. They received 343 referrals in the last year, 70% of which opted for outdoor activities to improve their physical health.



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Think Nature Health Walks

[Find Out More...](#)

The Think Nature Health Walks project supports a network of walking groups throughout rural Highland. Our walks help you to connect with nature, meet likeminded people and socialise, and to enjoy being more active outdoors. Some highlights for 2023 included:

- Community Tree Planting Event, Uig, Skye, with Woodland Trust. (walk and tree planting). Number engaged - 25
- Community Health & Wellness Winter Learning Event (health walk). Number engaged - 20
- Health Walks during Green Health Week, 8 walking groups took part – Tongue, Portree, Kyle, Castletown, Golspie, Camore Buggy, Assynt, Wick, Lochinver (John Muir Trust). Number engaged - 140
- Tongue Walking Group video. Number engaged – 1,000s of views on social media & YouTube
- In 2023, we welcomed new Health Walk Coordinator Isabel McLeish

Check out this great video from Tongue Walking group [here](#)



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Arts in Nature Project Launch

Charlotte Mackenzie took up the position of Arts in Nature manager in 2023. Her role aims to develop creative projects which will inspire and motivate people to take part in meaningful activities associated with the arts outdoors in nature, creating opportunities for adults and children to engage in outdoor learning using creative methods. We work collaboratively with a range of organisations developing arts projects and events that are designed to enhance wellbeing and creative experiences using a varied programme of activities including arts, crafts & design, music, drama and literature.



[Find Out More...](#)

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Green Health Week 2023

Give Nature a Go – Saturday 13 to Friday 19 May 2023. We worked with partners across Highland to promote 27 events for Green Health Week. We also ran a campaign that received 5000 individual views and hosted our showcase event.



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Website and Social Media

149 people subscribe to our monthly e- newsletter

Our website has had 16,000 unique visitors in this year. Our facebook page has 1242 followers (25% increase) , twitter has 624 (10% Increase) and Instagram 403 (37% Increase) **www.thinkhealththinknature.scot**

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Influencing Others



The Highland Green Health Partnership ran a tabletop discussion as part of the North East Symposium on Place Based wellbeing. We presented to South Ayrshire Green Health Group and shared our learning.

We shared our experiences with European partners at an event held at the British Embassy in Berlin and at the CIPFA Scotland Public Finance Conference (CIPFA stands for Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy)

We participated in research exploring Blue Health prescription pathways being led by Glasgow university and were one of three partnerships involved with PHIRST (Public Health Interventions Responsive Studies Team).

14 High Life Highland Countryside Rangers Service

The High Life Highland Team have been working hard to promote health & wellbeing through their services during 2023 including:

- **49** conservation volunteering events across Highland including volunteer beach cleans wildflower meadow creation and litter picks amounting to a total of **831** volunteer hours.
- **52** hours of youth volunteering in conservation was logged in 2023
- Short walks in to nature have seen **114** engagements
- Delivering walks in Dingwall with Connecting Carers
- Delivered online training on nature interpretation to ten volunteer health walk leaders
- **274** green health events organised across the region
- Healthy Minds & Branching out programmes

[Read their annual report here...](#)

"Improving our connection with nature brings a whole host of benefits - reducing stress, improving sleep and boosting immune system to name just a few"

Linda Birnie, Training Officer, Connecting Carers



15 Tools & Resources

In addition to those highlighted above 2023 saw the publication of new guidance documents.

- Stepping Stones - A model for community supported green health pathways
- Nature, Climate, Health - A guide for Community Partnerships
- Green Health & Community Resilience

16 Developing A Green Health Charter

Our priority in 2024 will be to develop a Green Health Charter for Highland organisations, to ensure continued commitment to promoting the benefits of nature connection for health.

We will embed the work further within the health sector and align with with regional efforts on climate change, greenspace enhancement and staff health and wellbeing.

To date we have integrated green health principals into **24** regional plans and strategies.

The Partners

The Highland Green Health Partnership is made up of representatives from NHS Highland; NatureScot; The Highland Council; The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA); Highlife Highland (HLH); The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), The Highland Environment Forum; The Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI); Paths for All; Forest and Land Scotland and practitioners in health and social care.