



ANNUAL REPORT YEAR 6

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
HIGHLAND GREEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
2023 - 2024



INTRODUCTION

“

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

”

OUR VISION

[Think Health Think Nature](#) is the public-facing work programme of the multi-agency Highland Green Health Partnership. Our aim is to encourage more use of the outdoors to tackle physical inactivity, mental health issues and health inequalities.

In September 2023, the Highland Green Health Partnership met to agree a new Sustainability Action Plan aimed at ensuring the integration and continuation of Green Health initiatives in Highland beyond the initial pilot period 2019-2023.

The plan sets out the priorities for the partnership in the years ahead across four main themes:

Theme 1 - Building Capacity, Skills and Understanding

Theme 2 - Adding Value Through Collaborative Working

Theme 3 - Embedding & Integrating

Theme 4 - Sustainable Funding

The action plan can be viewed [here](#)

The following report presents progress in year one of implementing this plan.

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THEME 1: Building Capacity, Skills and Understanding

Build on the Guidance and Support available to community groups, link workers and health practitioners in our toolkit and promote these further.

Advice and Guidance Resources

As part of Public Health, Health Improvement Team, the [Health Improvement Resource Service](#) provide access to a range of health improvement-related materials to people living in Highland and for use by health professionals. Think Health Think Nature materials are available to order for free through this service. Below is the total number of resources accessed in the last year.

Our Natural Health Service Leaflet - 91

Tree ID - 200

Shells ID - 175

Birds ID - 191

Health Walk Journal - 311

Nature Apps - 290

Think Health Think Nature Postcard - 405

Think Health Think Nature Almanac - 426

Your natural pathway to recovery and health (A4 poster) - 28

Your natural pathway to recovery and health (A3 poster) - 43

Caithness nature prescription booklet - 21

Resources continue to be of value and are used. Some printed material will be discontinued and funding will be sought for a re-run of those most popular resources.



Events & Presentations

Members of the Highland Green Health Partnership regularly present to groups, at public events and shared practice events throughout the year. Below is a summary of events attended in 2023/2024.

- Public Finance Live Conference – 14th September 2023 – joint presentation with NatureScot around the context, policy, development and contribution of Green Health Partnerships
- Realistic Medicine Conference – 17th November 2023 – team presentation around Social Prescribing, featuring Cairngorms 2030 Nature Prescriptions project, Growing the NHS Green Estate, and wider social prescribing opportunities. Think Health Think Nature poster also displayed with links to wider work.
- Workshop on Climate, Nature and Health at NHS Highland Medical Education Conference: “Striving for Sustainability” – 30th June 2024 – 2 separate workshops (1 in person, 1 online) delivered to discuss healthcare practices in relation to climate impact, active and passive experiences of biodiversity, and how to signpost and support patients to the benefits of nature-based therapy and wellbeing opportunities.
- An Online Seminar – Natural Solutions to Health Inequalities was delivered to public health staff and to approximately 100 members of the public. The presentation can be viewed [here](#).
- We collaborated with Highland council on a public display during Clean Air Day in Inverness at Falcon Square

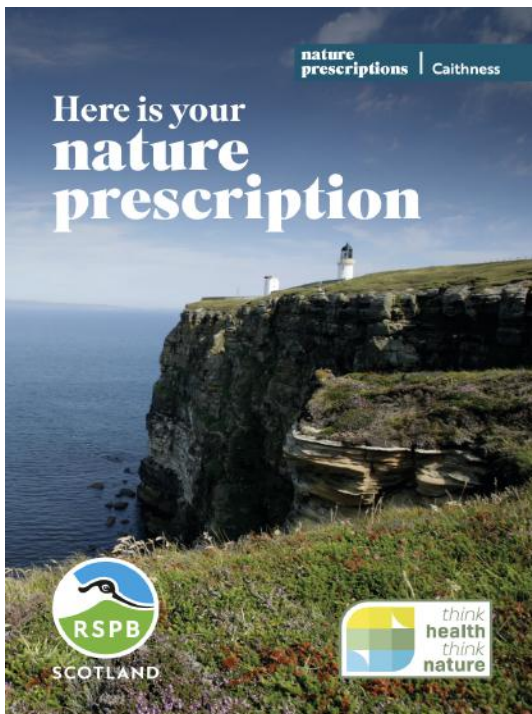


Provide person-centered training tools to those referring to nature-based health improvement interventions.

Nature Prescriptions Calendar

An RSPB Nature Prescription is a guided conversation between a healthcare professional and their client to encourage and support them to connect with the natural world to benefit their mental and physical wellbeing. Complementing other health interventions, this conversation is supported by a prescription leaflet and a seasonal calendar of ideas and suggestions to enable people to explore ways of connecting to nature that are personal and meaningful to them.

Think Health Think Nature have worked in collaboration with RSPB in producing a Nature Prescription Calendar for Caithness. Training was delivered to Caithness health practitioners. The event saw 30 various participants from Mental Health Teams and Green activity providers working in the area. Online training to support the role out of Nature Prescriptions has been launched on TURAS. More information can be found [here](#)



“ ' It is rewarding, as a professional, to observe how Nature Prescription could help some clients overcome their problems by improving their well-being and giving them some sense. Nature can really help people to evolve and become a better version of themselves' ”

COMMUNITY LINK WORKER

Nature Prescriptions Cairngorm 2030 Project Updates

Referrals to this project are increasing, and it is becoming an established pathway across health and social care practitioners. A [press article](#) during Green Health Week led to a live interview and feature on Radio Scotland's Good Morning Scotland programme.

GP Link Workers

A Community Link Worker is a member of the wider GP practice team that can provide support and advice on many social issues that may be affecting health and wellbeing. They have a wide range of knowledge on local services and community-based groups and activities. Between the 1st May 2023 to 30th April 2024 there were 1535 referrals over that period and 2097 social prescriptions were made.

Top reasons for referral were:

1. Mental Health and Wellbeing
2. Loneliness and Isolation
3. Social Isolation
4. Financial Advice
5. Housing and Essential Needs

Think Health Think Nature have been working with Community Link workers to promote the use of our resources and to encourage consideration of referral into nature-based activities. As of July 2024, there were 15.5 FTE Community Link Worker posts covering 29 practices with some vacancies. Expansion to the remaining 33 GP practices in Highland is currently being progressed.

For more information and to access the year 1 report click [here](#)



Active Health - Velocity Cafe & Bicycle Workshop

Active Health is a free and confidential one-to-one advice service for people (aged 16+) living in the NHS Highland area who would like to become more active.

They support people to become more active as a way of improving their health and wellbeing. People can be referred to the project via their GP or self-refer. Around 70% of those participating opted for outdoor activities to improve their physical health. You can learn more about the project [here](#).

Apply behaviour change quality improvement methodologies to our communications work. Extend engagement work to include NHS Greenspace.

Website, Socials & Newsletter

Between 2021 and 2024 the Highland Green Health Partnership had a Communications and Engagement Officer in place leading on the delivery of coordinated key messages aimed at raising awareness of the benefits of connecting with nature and encouraging participation. In June 2024, the funding for this post ended. Below outlines the reach of communications work in 2023/2024 compared with previous years.

- Facebook - The Think Health Think Nature currently has 1296 followers. This is an increase of 54 (4%) increase over last year
- Instagram - Has 442 follows an increase of 39 followers in the last year (8%)
- X - Our account on X has 630 followers. An increase of 6 (1%)
- Newsletter - Our newsletter has 222 subscribers. An increase of 73 (33%). The open rate on the newsletter is averaging 73% of subscribers each month.
- Website - In the year 2023-2024 our [Think Health Think Nature](#) website had 9564 views. This is a decrease 41% over the previous years. The greatest engagement took place in the month of May, coinciding with Green Health Week. Aside from Green Health Week the page seeing the most traffic is the one describing green prescriptions. Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey and Lochaber are the directory pages viewed the most.
- A dedicated page for [NHS hospital greenspace work](#) has been created on the Think Health Think Nature website and hospital green space continues to feature in the monthly Think Health Think Nature e-newsletter.



Green Health Week 2024

Green Health week provides an annual focus on Green Health and an opportunity for joint campaigning across the Highland Green Health Partnership, coordinated with other authority areas nationally by NatureScot. This year Green Health Week ran from the 11th-18th May 2024, with the theme of 'Nurturing the Health of People and Planet'. Green Health Week 2024, coincided with Mental Health Awareness week as well as the launch of the Highland Climate, Nature and Health Charter. Progress has been made over previous years in terms of social engagement and reactions to post:

- Increased interaction on submission forms for events, 2023- 27 events submitted compared with 2024 38 submission for events
- Daily updates were given on social media platforms including Instagram, X and Facebook. Engagement on Facebook increased in 2024, including reach and feedback ,2023 – 1107- 8 Shares Versus 2024 -6027 - 50 shares
- Twitter /X activity was reduced in 2024 compared to previous years, less reactions than Facebook.
- More images and stories were created using Instagram. In 2024, there was collaboration with an Instagram influencer who is a Scottish Based Wildlife Photographer. This created 2885 views, 85 likes and gained 15 followers in one day.
- Four Guest Bloggers.
- Reports back nationally - The Highland Green Health Partnership and Dundee were the most socially active of the GHP Partnerships during Green Health Week.



Review our definitions and language and work with stakeholders to ensure consistency of approach.

A review of definitions was undertaken, and the community guidance was updated to improve understanding and provide for consistency of approach. The document can be found [here](#).

THEME 2: Adding Value Through Collaborative Working

Asking Highland Stakeholders to commit to a Highland Green Health Charter and report progress against this.

Climate, Nature and Health Charter

A sub-group of the Highland Green Health Partnership was formed and agreed that a new charter be launched, aligning with the pre-existing Highland Climate Charter but including health as a key focus. In May 2024, the Climate Nature and Health charter was launched.

The launch was held at The Botanics Inverness. Led by Dr Tim Alison, Director of Public Health, the event saw 50 organisations and individuals come together to pledge their commitment

Signatories' numbers stand at 55 - 32 individuals and 23 organisations as of July 11th 2024. You can read the [Press Release](#) here.

A dedicated channel on Instagram is set up and can be found [here](#). The charter is open to signing by individuals as well as organisations and can be viewed at:





Establish thematic sub-groups of community partnerships that address climate, nature and health and a network of shared practice among these.

Kinlochleven Community Action Group

Work is underway in Kinlochleven where Green Health has been integrated as a priority action within the Community Action Group and Locality Plan. The community have also been undergoing a Place Planning consultation and representatives from Think Health Think Nature have held workshops exploring the opportunity for community supported green health pathways (Stepping Stones) with funding from the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub. A report of the findings and an action plan have been created and will be taken forward and can be viewed [here](#)

Green Health, Active Travel and Greenspace have also been cited as priority areas for action by the [Lochaber Community Partnership](#).

Sutherland Cares

Sutherland Cares is a sub-group of the [Sutherland Community Partnership](#) which met to discuss the [guidance](#) for community planning partners, produced by Think Health Think Nature, highlighting the need to consider nature and climate when working to reduce health inequalities. As a result, the group agreed that Climate, Nature and Health would be discussed through this forum going forward.

The group coordinated a number of workshops for green health providers seeking to develop actions to tackle health inequalities and will host a themed meeting of the partnership during the [Highland Climate Festival](#). This has been made possible through staff support via the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust and funding from the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub.

Whole Families Wellbeing Programme

The Whole Families Wellbeing Programme sits within the structure of the Integrated Children's Service Planning Board and reports to the Highland Community Planning Partnership. The aim of the programme is to tackle inequalities and improve the wellbeing of all family members, reducing the likelihood of families reaching a point of crisis or breakdown by ensuring families can access the support they need, where they need it, and for as long as they need it.

Think Health Think Nature have been working with locality coordinators particularly in the Lochbroom & Ullapool area seeking ways for community to support families through nature-based activity. This work is supported by the local GP practice and following a series of workshops, a report was drawn up and actions will be steered by the newly formed Community Wellbeing Working Group chaired by the Lochbroom & Ullapool Community Trust. The report can be found [here](#).

Make links with all relevant committees and strategic groups on Highland. Seek new opportunities to embed Green Health Principals into new regional plan development.

Mental Health & Wellbeing Delivery Group (MHDG)

The MHDG is one of 5 thematic sub- groups of the Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP). The Highland Community Planning Partnership 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 overarching aim of this group is that all people in Highland will benefit from good health and wellbeing. For The Green Health Partnership feedback progress to the Highland Community Partnership via this group including indicators on the Increased accessibility and engagement with greenspace activity. The rationale behind this includes the understanding that being in the natural environment is shown to have a positive impact on our mental health and wellbeing. More information on the [MHDG can be found here](#).

NHS Highland Sustainability Board

A strategic board that provides governance for all NHS sustainability work streams. Receives regular reporting on NHS greenspace work and wider green health work via the sub-group report, increasing the reach to decision makers and board level engagement in NHS Highland.

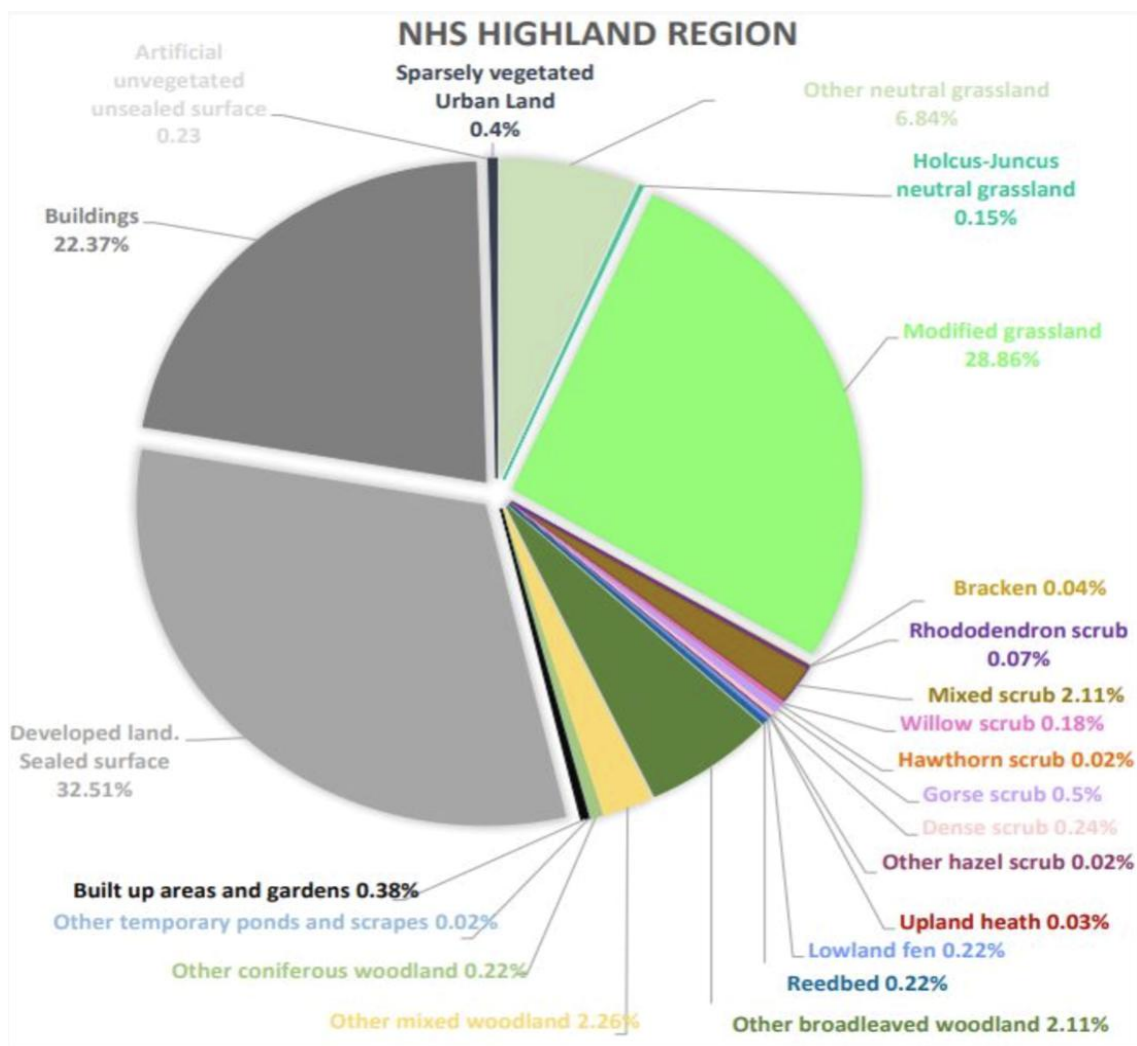
NHS Greenspace & Biodiversity Sub-Group

A recently established sub-group of the NHS Environment & Sustainability Board that meets monthly. This group aims to bring together NHS colleagues and relevant community partners to explore ways of improving NHS greenspaces for people and nature. The objectives of the group include mapping NHS Highland greenspaces and current activity and identifying short- and long-term objectives for improvements.

Continue to gather and build on the shared evidence base, including qualitative case studies that demonstrate the impact. Link with new areas such as pharmaceuticals, climate change and blue health.

NHS Greenspace

A habitat survey was completed for 34 NHS Highland sites. This project was supported and funded by NatureScot. This survey is based on draft estate boundaries and so all figures are approximate. Of the sites surveyed, 44.8 ha was greenspace (about equivalent to 45 football pitches) with nearly 30% of the estate currently considered of low value to nature. This mapping work will be used to create short- and long-term objectives to improve NHS greenspace for people and nature. A [summary](#) of the report can be found on the website.



Case Studies

Qualitative case studies continue to be gathered and a selection of new case studies and personal stories have been added to our website [here](#)

University of Stirling - Supporting people with problem substance use

Members of the Highland Green Health Partnership have been taking part in an advisory panel discussion and interviews with Wendy Masterton from Stirling University, who together with her team are developing best practice guidance on working with those with addiction and substance use issues on nature-based interventions for recovery.

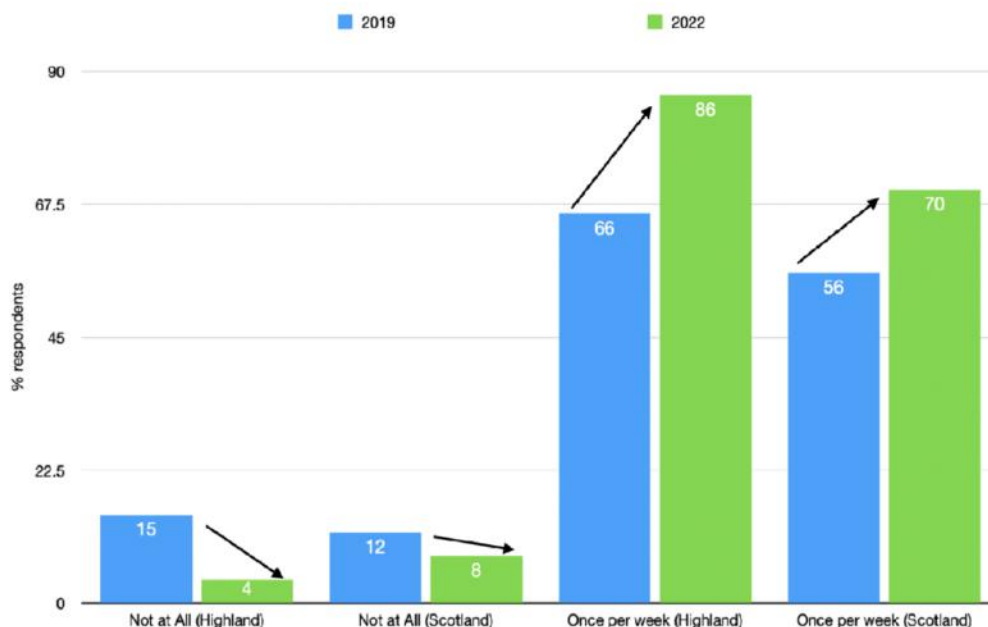
Scottish Household Survey 2022

The Scottish household survey results for 2022, were published showing changes in use of the outdoors between 2019 and 2022.

In Highland, access to the outdoors has increased for both our most affluent and least affluent members of the community. Across all of Scotland there have been gains but gains have been greater in Highland than in other areas.

A short presentation summarising the results can be viewed [here](#).

Frequency of Visits to the Outdoors (Scottish Household Survey 2019-2022)



THEME 3: Embedding & Integrating

Highland Green Health Partnership members to continue to promote workplace wellbeing initiatives around Green Health.

Raigmore Gardens Project

[Raigmore Gardens](#) are a constituted charity with a vision to create biodiverse green spaces that promote nature connection, health and wellbeing, and provide an inclusive and accessible space for connection, exploration, rest and relaxation at Raigmore Hospital. The gardens will incorporate an outdoor education area, a community garden, a therapeutic and sensory garden, a staff wellbeing garden, an outdoor waiting area and orchard.

The staff wellbeing garden at the Birnie/Phoenix Centre at Raigmore Hospital is being supported through a staff post, thanks to funding from Highland Green Health Partnership and the Inverness Common Good Fund. This has enabled weekly staff volunteer sessions to grow aromatic herbs and edibles to supplement staff lunches.



Raigmore Gardens

Partners integrate and embed key messaging throughout the delivery of their work in place of dedicated communications work stream.

Scotlands Mental Health Charter for Physical Activity and Sport

Then Highland Green Health Partnership have now signed up to the SAMH Charter for Physical Health committing to improving equality and reducing discrimination for anyone with a mental health problem. By signing the Charter we aim to commit to ensuring that there are no barriers to engaging, participating and achieving in physical activity and sport.

The Highland Green Health Partnership and **SAMH** have a shared belief in the value of physical activity and sport as a means to achieve both physical and mental wellbeing.

“ Our aim is to encourage more use of the outdoors to tackle physical inactivity, social isolation and mental health issues by reducing barriers to allow more people to be physically every day and in doing so, tackle health inequalities. ”

You can learn more about the charter [here](#)



Key Messages

The Highland Green Health Partnership have created 12 infographics for use across the partnership to ensure consistency and to make it easier for partners to share key messages. This are avaiالبة [here](#)

Ensure Greenspace & Green Infrastructure Projects work to tackle inequalities through the promotion of connection to nature.

Arts in Nature

The [Arts in Nature](#) project is led by Highland Third Sector Interface and work closely with Think Health Think Nature. Their aim is 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. Much of the work is focused on reducing inequalities and reaching those who may otherwise not engage. The work is led by Charlotte Mackenzie and an annual report for September 2023- July 2024 can be viewed [here](#).



Think Nature Health Walks

The Think Nature Health Walks project supported a network of walking groups throughout rural Highland with a Health Walk coordinator hosted by Highland Third Sector Interface. Sadly, funding ended in June 2024. A report of the final year of the project can be found [here](#).

The Highland Green Health Partnership will work with Paths for All and local stakeholders to seek ways to continue to maintain and support existing walk groups in rural Highland.

Velocity/Forensic Services

The NHS Highland Mental Health Forensic Team have acknowledged the value of Green Health opportunities for patients and have been open to suggestions involving outdoor-based activities. This has included working with Velocity to run a cycling group for forensic patients and outdoor based volunteering . In the future there is ongoing discussion about a Greenspace hospital group at New Craig's for both inpatients and community based patients.

During the past 12 months connections have been made with The Community Justice Partnership to seek and embed Green Health opportunities for those in contact with The Criminal justice system.

High Life Highland Countryside Rangers

In 2023/24, the [High Life Highland Ranger Service](#) successfully organised **69 volunteer events**, a **28% increase** from the previous year. Our dedicated volunteers contributed **1,227 hours** of adult volunteer time and **355 hours** youth volunteer time, reflecting strong community commitment to nature. All in all the rangers had **11, 875** engagements connecting people with nature across Highland.

Collaborating with NHS Highland, we built relationships with **New Craigs hospital**, delivered at their summer community fete, and provided mental health interventions such as **Branching Out** sessions at Evanton and the **Healthy Minds project** in Badenoch and Strathspey.

We also delivered sessions for the **Brora Macular Support Group** in Sutherland. HLH Rangers engaged in activities such as hill walking with High Life's Adult Learning team and Afghan **Refugee groups**. Staple events like family reading in the woodland, short walks to nature, and **Connecting Carers** nature walks continued. Ranger led craft events in libraries and other local outdoor venues thrived.

The social prescription pilot study of nature and culture activities with **UHI/Edinburgh University** concluded.



THEME 4: Sustainable Funding

It has not been possible in 2023-2024 to secure any strategic partnership funding to allow the delivery of partnership work in the same format as previously. As such there has been no small grant fund distributed, nor any match funding of projects.

Funding opportunities have focused on collaboration with community groups and have been locality led. In 2023 - 2024 the following funds have been utilised:

- Community Mental Health Fund
- Highlands and Islands Climate Hub
- NHS Endowments Fund
- Scottish Government NHS Greenspace Development Seed Fund
- Inverness Common Good Fund

Work to encourage, support and increase social enterprise around green health activity has yet to commence.

The Year Ahead

A number of longer-term actions in the Sustainability Action Plan have yet to be picked up and further focus on the following areas in the coming year would be desirable:

- Gathering of more on infrastructure projects & workplace wellbeing initiatives
- Encourage more signatories to Charter and promote progress
- Promoting website & resources
- Pick up work on funding packages
- Engage or re-engage link workers
- Focus on Green Enterprise

It is anticipated that Public Health Scotland will initiate a national shared learning network around greenspace, green health and place based wellbeing and the Highland Green Health Partnership look forward to contributing their learning to this and joining the discussions.

The Highland Green Health Partnership partnership meets quarterly, and is chaired by the Head of Health Improvement within the NHS Highland Public Health Team. The workplan is coordinated by the Senior Development Officer for Green Health, employed through NHS Highland. The work has been funded through the Our Natural Health Service programme, led by NatureScot for an initial period of 5 years from 2018 – 2023. Although centralised funding has ceased, the partnership continues to meet with dedicated support from NHS Highland staff and is made up of the following organisations:

- NHS Highland
- NatureScot
- High Life Highland
- Highland Third Sector Interface
- Paths for All
- The University of the Highlands and Islands
- The Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- The Highland Council
- Representatives from the Environment, Health and Social Care Sectors.



www.thinkhealththinknature.scot

Think Health Think Nature is the work programme of the Highland Green Health Partnership which is part of "[Our Natural Health Service](#)", a national initiative being led by NatureScot.