

# Think Nature Health Walks

## Newsletter Summer 2023



Welcome to the summer edition of the Think Nature Health Walk's newsletter

### PROJECT UPDATE

The Think Nature Health Walks project has been running for 3 years now and it has been an absolute pleasure to have been part of such a brilliant project. I have met and worked with some very inspiring, dedicated and wonderful people and it has been lovely to see the project grow and flourish. However, at the end of August I will be moving on to start a new role, managing an exciting new project, Arts in Nature, within HTSI.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved with Think Nature Health Walks and a huge special thank you to all of the wonderful Walk Leaders who do an amazing job within their communities! The walks they lead and the friendships formed within groups make such a difference to so many people.

We are currently in the process of recruiting a new Health Walks Co-ordinator for the TNHWs project, who will be working along with me and in post by autumn. Details can be found here: [Third Sector Vacancies | HTSI main \(highlandtsi.org.uk\)](https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk) Please share with anyone who may be interested.

Many thanks again! Very best wishes,

*Charlotte*



## Welcome to our new walking groups!

### **Around Quinag Mindful Walks, with John Muir Trust**

Various Thursdays at 4pm, Little Assynt All Abilities Path and around Lochinver

[www.johnmuirtrust.org/aroundquinag](https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/aroundquinag)

### **Thurso Dementia Friends Walk, with Cycling UK & Alzheimer's Scotland**

Fridays at 2pm, Thurso Community Cafe, Thurso Harbour

### **Dunvegan Mindfulness Walks**

Mondays at 1pm, Dunvegan Community Café, Lochside, Dunvegan - starting in autumn

For further details and how to book:

[Health Walks | Paths for All](https://www.thinknature.org.uk)

### **COMING SOON! - Helmsdale Heritage Walks, with Timespan**

### **CHANGE OF DATE:**

Kyle and Lochalsh Walks now meet on Thursdays.

(1st & 3rd Thursdays of every month in Kyle of Lochalsh at 11am - 12 noon)



# Tongue Walking Group Video

During Spring of this year the Tongue Walking group created a wonderful video capturing exactly what a health walk group is all about. It's great to hear everyone's thoughts, the backdrop is stunning too!

The video premiered at the Highland Green Health Partnership conference during Green Health Week in May and was shared by Paths for All, Highland Third Sector Interface and Think Health Think Nature, receiving high praise.

Thank you very much to all members of the Tongue Walking group for taking part in this inspiring video. A special mention to Pete, for the filming and production, and to Ruth for co-ordinating.



Above is a screenshot of the short film, which can be viewed here on our website:

[Health Walk Groups | HTSI main \(highlandtsi.org.uk\)](http://highlandtsi.org.uk)

Pictured right are some of the Tongue Walking group on a recent visit to Dunbeath Castle Gardens



## Words from our Walkers

It's great to hear what being part of the walking groups means to our walkers. Thank you for sharing these lovely quotes.

"getting out into the countryside with other likeminded people"

"enjoying the company and friendship of the group"

"doing your bit towards keeping yourself healthy and active"

"you get to walk in the most beautiful landscapes in the safety of a group - places I wouldn't be able to walk alone due to the nature of the terrain"

"a varied range of walks offered means that everyone is catered for and can challenge themselves at times"

"the walking group has been, for me, a single elderly woman, a bright light in an otherwise lonely week"

"I found it is be such fun, companionship and everyone so friendly and encouraging"

"having a regular commitment and making new friends"

"taking time to walk and talk together and discuss anything from local issues to history and wildlife"

"improving our mental health and staying physically active"

"explore the countryside in agreeable company – enjoying exercise, companionship and generally having a good time"

"learn the names of wildflowers and enjoy being part of a friendly community"







## Walk Leaders Workshop on Skye

In May, Charlie and the Skye U3A walking groups held an excellent event at Earlish aimed at walkers leading groups and prospective leaders.

The aim of the day was to encourage people to get out into the outdoors with more confidence, also to encourage participants to consider becoming a walk leader, exploring the basics of what is needed to do this on the Isle of Skye.

Topics such as walk planning and equipment, accessibility and safety were discussed, along with the sharing of practical skills including first aid.

Everyone also enjoyed a walk and refreshments afterwards.



Above: trying out the group shelter and discussing essential walking kit.

Left: walking the route by Earlish.

## Training for Walk Leaders

### Walk Leader Training

Location: online; duration: 3.5 hours

An interactive course designed to give volunteers and staff the skills and confidence to lead safe, welcoming and enjoyable Health Walks in a community setting.

### Dementia Friendly Walk Leader Training

Location: online; duration: 3 hours

This course is for volunteer Walk Leaders who have attended Paths for All's Walk Leader training course and are interested in delivering their current Health Walk as a Dementia Friendly Health Walk.

### Strength and Balance Workshop for Walk Leaders

Location: online; duration: 3.5 hours

This workshop is for Walk Leaders who would like to support walkers to stay active and independent throughout their lives.

### All Ability Health Walk Leader Training

This course is for Health Walk Leaders and Coordinators who would like more knowledge and skills in leading welcoming and inclusive Health Walks for people of all abilities. The course is delivered by expert trainers from Scottish Disability Sport and is made up of two parts; an e-learning module and a follow up classroom session.

For further information on any of the training courses above please get in touch: [charlotte@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:charlotte@highlandtsi.org.uk)



Here are some highlights from walkers who completed the diaries at the beginning of the year. Thank you very much to all who completed them and shared what they saw, heard and felt during their walks in nature. It's very inspiring!

## What walkers saw and heard in nature during walks:

### Flowers and plants:

snowdrops  
crocuses  
daffodils  
gorse  
primroses  
heather  
Mosses and lichen  
variety of trees  
coltsfoot  
speedwell  
blossom  
pussy willow  
catkins  
honeysuckle  
fungi

### Wildlife, animals & insects:

seals  
otters  
toads and frogs  
tadpoles and frogspawn  
pond skaters  
Highland cattle  
deer  
red squirrel  
wild goats  
sheep and lambs  
bumblebees  
caterpillars  
butterflies

### Birds:

Robins  
bluetits  
crows and rooks  
oystercatchers  
stonechat  
thrush  
blackbird  
nuthatch  
dippers  
skylarks  
chaffinch  
bullfinch  
chiff chaff  
goldcrest  
geese and gulls  
siskins and wrens

mallards  
curlews and snipe  
buzzards  
woodpecker  
heron  
great tits  
pigeons  
divers  
eider ducks  
cormorant and shags  
gannets  
meadow pipit  
ringed plover  
golden eagle  
wagtails  
sparrows  
hens

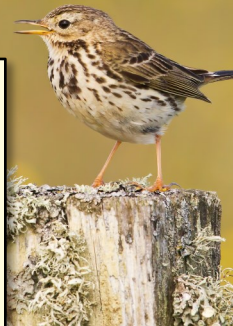
### Other:

- shapes in the clouds
- buds appearing on trees
- the breeze in the trees
- sound of the waves on the beach
- bird song
- lapping of the loch
- fresh smell after rain
- musty smell in the woods
- pine cones crunching underfoot
- clear blue water at the harbour
- mussel and cockle shells on the shoreline
- snow on the mountains
- waves crashing on the rocks
- tracks of a badger
- interesting rock formations at the beach
- glorious sunshine
- icicles and snowflakes

## How walkers felt during and after their walks:

- uplifted
- delighted
- refreshed
- carefree
- content
- energised
- breathless
- relaxed
- calm
- soothed
- anxious
- exhilarated
- happy
- tired
- rushed
- cautious
- slow
- healthy
- proud of how far I walked
- good to be away from stress of work
- happier when out in fresh air
- happy with company
- nicely tired at end of walk
- wet and cold
- enjoying the sunshine
- fit and active
- very much alive!
- in awe of surroundings
- good to be in fresh air
- fortunate to live in this environment
- a bit stiff

*calm*





# Buggy Walking Groups

Our buggy groups love exploring in nature! Both Dornoch and Hilton (Inverness) buggy groups enjoy nature, creative, singing and storytelling activities on their walks.

This term at Camore Wood near Dornoch and Gearchoille Community Wood near Ardgay, families can enjoy a range of fantastic activities and will be provided with a nature pack which includes a diary/scrapbook, bug pots and craft materials.



## Camore Wood, Dornoch

- 21<sup>st</sup> Aug Nature Detectives
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sept Superworm story walk
- 18<sup>th</sup> Sept Making nature crowns & fairy wings
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct Signs of Autumn

## Gearchoille Community Wood, Ardgay

- 28<sup>th</sup> Aug Natural mark-making
- 11<sup>th</sup> Sept Zog story walk (Inservice day, older children welcome)
- 25<sup>th</sup> Sept Spiders and nature weaving



Hilton buggy group meet every Tuesday at 10am at Castle Heather Park in Inverness. Walks include Bookbug sessions, arts and crafts, exploring in nature and feeding the ducks!



# Out and About with Think Nature Health Walks



## Green Health Week Walks



The Tongue Walking group visited Dunbeath Castle Gardens for a walk and a tour of the gardens with the head gardener.



Dornoch Buggy group enjoyed a woodland walk with HLH Ranger Marcia and met Cookie the pony along the way.



The Skye U3A walking group enjoyed wonderful views on the Braes circular route.

In May we attended a showcase and planning event hosted by the Highland Green Health Partnership at UHI. It brought together representatives from the public sector, health & social care sector, and third sector organisations, who have worked together to take forward green health action in Highland.



## Walk everyday this May

Walk or wheel your way through May with our 31 challenges, and your chance to win!



Take a break with a 10-minute walk	Walk with an old friend	Stop and smell the flowers	Walk with someone older than you
Walk to a cafe or restaurant	Enjoy an early-bird sunrise walk	Walk along a pond, river, or the sea!	Take a wander through a park
Spare time? Enjoy a 30-minute walk	Speak to someone new on your walk	Use a paper map instead of a phone	Enjoy an amble at sunset
Explore a new route or path	Walk to your favourite music	Pick up 5 pieces of litter on your walk	Walk to the shops or a market
Go for a stroll in the rain	Look for something red	Invite a new friend on a walk	Spot fun shapes in the clouds
Walk with someone younger than you	Walk with family (furry or human!)	Listen for birdsong as you walk	Look for the stars on an evening walk
Walk around inside for 10 minutes	Look for something yellow	Try to spot 10 birds on a walk	Say hello to passing walkers
Look for 5 different plant species	Walk to (or at!) work/school	Take a photo on your walk	

WIN 1 of 10 £100 Blacks vouchers

For your chance to win visit: [pathsforall.org.uk/win](https://pathsforall.org.uk/win)

[pathsforall.org.uk](https://pathsforall.org.uk)  
#NationalWalkingMonth

Paths for All Partnership is a registered Scottish charity No. SC025535.

## Some of our groups took part in the May Walking Challenge:

- "The May challenge made the walks more interesting".
- "I enjoyed the clouds walk. Everyone spotted something and Christine was particularly funny".
- "I liked the bird and flower spotting. We came up with quite a list between us".
- "It was good fun looking for red and yellow flowers".
- "The challenge made us more aware of our surroundings. It became competitive and fun".





Golspie Bothy Walking group teamed up with Clyne Heritage Society in Brora to enjoy some fascinating guided walks and presentations as part of their 'Walk, Talk & Ride into History' programme of events this summer. These photos show the group on the Brora Heritage Trail.



# Photo Gallery

Left: Kyle & Lochalsh walking group on one of the coastal paths at the Plock. What a view!

Below: a wonderful collage of photos from the Skye U3A walking group at Glen Hinnisdal.



## CONTACT

Please get in touch if you would like any further information or support. Once the Health Walk Co-ordinator has been appointed, I will share their contact details with you. Thanks again!

*Charlotte*

**Charlotte Mackenzie, Health Walks Project Manager**

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