

RECOVERY AND NATURE POST-EVENT REPORT

1ST APRIL 2026; KINNING PARK COMPLEX GLASGOW

EVENT OVERVIEW

This one-day, collaborative event brought together practitioners, researchers, people with lived and living experience, and stakeholders from across Scotland to explore how nature-based approaches can support recovery from drugs and alcohol. The day highlighted the well-evidenced physical, mental, and social benefits of spending time in nature and showed how these approaches can provide purpose, hope, and positive change throughout recovery journeys.

We heard powerful personal stories from people who had taken part in nature-based groups and their reflections on the role these experiences had played in their recovery. We also heard from providers who gave us insight into the importance of immersing ourselves in nature and practical examples of how sessions had been delivered successfully in a range of settings. Across the day we heard how meaningful activities can be created without significant cost or complexity. Research presentations at the start of the day reinforced the scientific evidence base behind these approaches and their value within recovery services.

After lunch, despite the wet weather, we were able to experience a range of 'hands-on' taster sessions including qi gong, campfire cooking, yoga, nature walks, outdoor fitness, and aromatic woodland pot creations. Thank you to all the providers here (please see the final page for their details). We also had structured discussions which aimed to connect people attending in different roles/from different organisations to consider realistic actions for expanding access and embedding nature-based recovery approaches within future alcohol and drug strategies.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

1. Show the scientific backing behind nature-based approaches and how it maps onto current policy priorities.
2. Share lived experience stories demonstrating the positive impact of nature in recovery.
3. Present practical, affordable ways to deliver nature-based activities in different settings.
4. Allow for cross-sector networking between people from different organisations, with different roles, and with different expertise.
5. Identify realistic actions to widen access and embed approaches within future strategies.
6. Provide attendees with guidance manuals, ideas, next steps, and new contacts for enhancing access to nature, particularly for people in with experience of drug and/or alcohol dependence.

REPORT OVERVIEW

This post-event report has been developed as a collation of discussion group feedback and wider event feedback. The purpose of it is to highlight the key priorities identified for moving this approach forward, and practical suggestions of 'what we can do now, within the current landscape'. We hope that you find some inspiration from this document, and please use the information and resources on pages 4 and 5 to stay in touch and continue building this network of positive change and action.



Thank you to ESRC (IAA) funding which allowed this event to happen, thank you to all the contributors, and thank you for attending.

PRIORITIES



- Prioritise training and explore the potential of skill sharing/paying it forward. More champions = more capabilities

- Collaborate and strengthen networks

- Show that this approach maps onto policy and meets policy priorities across sectors

- Identify who has the power to 'push change' and include them in our conversations

- Increase awareness and education: inform the public, GPs, service providers, and wider of the benefits and potential

- Emphasise the need for more visible and sustainable recovery support approaches that have a physical, mental, social and spiritual perspective

- Further expansion across rural areas

- Prioritise evaluation (even at a very simple level) to continue to build evidence, and share this widely

- Continue funding discussions to identify what's feasible e.g. could there be activity-based funding specific to services and/or small pots of ringfenced funding for nature-based approaches as groups can be very low cost with big return

- Communicate this approach is prevention and early intervention, as well as maintaining/supportive recovery

Next steps/What can we do now?

JOIN AND BUILD EXISTING NETWORKS

Join existing networks like Green Health Learning Network and Sustainable Healthcare Network Hub (see page 5), and share other networks with attendees so they can join/network. Add group/organisation info to ALISS (see page 4) to help build a directory of what is already available in your area to signpost to/join.

SHARE RESOURCES TO BUILD EVIDENCE BASE

Share examples of evaluations, case studies, testimonials, implementation plans, cost analyses, etc. Use/share existing resources (see page 5 for links) e.g., guidance manuals/risk assessments shared at the event; nature prescription calendars/other public green prescribing docs; Healthy Outdoors Guide, and explore resources shared on the Green Health Learning Network Teams page (and upload your own). Include experiences of nature in social media posts to show success stories.

IDENTIFY TRAINING NEEDS/HOW THESE COULD BE MET

Explore if one person could be trained and then train others/explore if multiple people attending groups could be trained to then lead others. This 'pay it forward' approach aids sustainability. Explore free/low-cost training like walking leader training; bushcraft skills training; basic first aid; as well as naloxone training; suicide awareness training; and trauma-informed practice training to further 'skill up' staff.

HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH

Invite team leaders/management to brief taster sessions so they better understand the approach. Clearly explain (perhaps with evidence - see page 5) what benefits attendees will get (service users *and* staff), why it is 'for them', and find out anxieties/barriers to participation. Create 'pathways to participation' for each interested person (consider buddy systems, using a map to show where local greenspaces are, or supporting with public transport). Show examples of existing work to colleagues (e.g., Recovery Through Nature; Plant Baby Plant; Boots and Beards; etc. - see links on page 5) to show what can be done.

MAKE SIMPLE CHANGES WHERE POSSIBLE

Consider what small changes could be introduced, such as walk & talk sessions outside. Explore the potential for moving existing inside sessions/groups outside, if feasible. Think about if there is existing greenspace you could use/develop (e.g., with bedding plants or vegetable patches). If not, could planter boxes be created in existing space? Consider if voluntary posts (including for those using the services) could be created or linked to nature-based activities to boost numbers of supporting individuals.

ADD IN NATURE WHEN UPDATING STRATEGIC PLANS

If nature-based approaches are not currently part of what you offer, consider how they could be written into plans/strategy/funding applications. Look at funding options (e.g., Greenspace Scotland funding page linked on page 5). Ask people using your services and staff what they would like to see added. Look at how other organisations have integrated nature. Consult with our network and ask questions of others re. 'what works'.

REMEMBER: THE ONLY WAY TO REMOVE RISK COMPLETELY IS TO NOT DO IT AT ALL. BE AWARE AND PLAN FOR CHALLENGES, BUT 'JUST DO IT' → ACTION CREATES CHANGE.

Contact Details From Event

The following contact details are from some of the speakers through the day and the experiential session facilitators. The ALISS information is also included at the bottom with a link. Please do explore this and add your own information if you run a group/service. Additionally, please see the email for an attachment of contact details of attendees who consented to their information being shared.

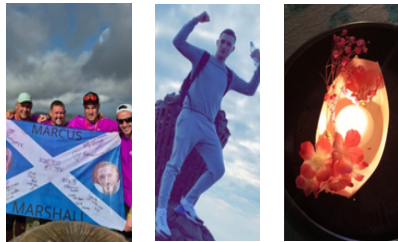
Gerry Ward - Fire and Peace



Fire & Peace brings people together through nature, fire, and connection, creating safe, grounded spaces where individuals can slow down, open up, and strengthen their connection to themselves, to others, and to nature through our unique approach.

Contact Gerry on gerry@fireandpeace.co.uk to find out more

Heather Love - Love Blossoms from Marcus' Mountains



Heather's new business offers reiki/Shamanic and sound healing, Qigong, Shinrin-Yoku, yoga and firewalking. Heather will be offering activities as 1:1 and as groups.

Contact Heather on 07523132505 to find out more

ALISS

ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) is a national digital programme funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), to help people and professionals find and share information on health and wellbeing resources in their local communities and online.

ALISS lists a wide range of support and services, including alcohol and drug services, recovery communities, and nature-based activities.

You can access ALISS here: <https://www.aliss.org/>

Any questions can be directed to Cameron MacFarlane on Cameron.MacFarlane@alliance-scotland.org.uk

Tom Gold - Men's Outdoor Group

The Men's Outdoor Group is built around two things; community and experience:

Community: The company of other men.

Experience: Productive, empowering and relaxing time spent in the outdoors



Contact Tom to find out more on tom@mensoutdoorgroup.co.uk

Cath Brannan - YES Your Entire Self

YES Your Entire Self CIC merges wellbeing with nature: with a reminder that life is so unique and so short. We support you to live your life your way, irrespective of your journey.



Contact Cath on cath@yesyourentireself.com to find out more; or click on this website link: <https://www.yesyourentireself.com/>

Abby Boulton - Branching Out

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) runs Branching Out programmes across Edinburgh and the Lothians to support mental health and wellbeing in the outdoors, including groups with people using substances or in recovery.



Programmes are by referral and subject to funding. For more information please contact Abby Boulton abby@elgt.org.uk



To contact the research team at the University of Stirling, please email wendy.masterton@stir.ac.uk; d.c.falzon@stir.ac.uk; or josh.dumbrell1@stir.ac.uk

To contact Tracey McFall (CEO of SRC), please email tracey@scottishrecoveryconsortium.org.uk



RESOURCES

These are a small selection of resources that were shown/discussed during the event, particularly in the discussion groups.

Website with guidance manuals for aiding with service delivery and evaluation

[GUIDANCE MANUALS](#)

Documentary film showing nature-based groups across Scotland (this can be shared as examples/evidence)

[DOCUMENTARY](#)

Scientific evidence re. 'what works and why'

[EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK](#)

[RECOVERY CAPITAL LENS](#)

Examples of existing approaches discussed during event

[PLANT BABY PLANT](#)

[BOOTS AND BEARDS](#)

[PHOENIX FUTURES RECOVERY THROUGH NATURE](#)

Risk assessment/safety plan examples

[RISK ASSESSMENT](#)

[SAFETY PLAN](#)

Resources/documents mentioned in this report

[NATURE PRESCRIPTION CALENDARS](#)

[GREEN SOCIAL PRESCRIBING TOOLKIT](#)

[HEALTHY OUTDOORS GUIDE](#)

[GREEN HEALTH LEARNING NETWORK](#)

[SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE NETWORKS HUB](#)

Funding guidance/ideas

[FUNDING FOR NATURE-BASED APPROACHES](#)