



North Ayrshire Green Health Strategic Framework

2024 – 2030



Contents

1	Foreword	3
2	What is green health?	4
3	Where are we now?	4
	3.1 Background	4
	3.2 North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership key achievements	5
	3.3 Green health activity	8
	3.4 Strategic context	11
	3.5 Evidence review	13
	3.6 Scope	14
	3.7 Challenges	16
4	Where do we want to be?	17
	4.1 Our vision	17
	4.2 Our goals	18
	4.3 Our principles	18
5	How do we get there?	20
	5.1 Our key themes	20
	5.2 Wellbeing: improving health and wellbeing	22
	5.3 Work: volunteering, active citizenship, learning and employment	25
	5.4 World: addressing climate change, carbon reduction and protecting the natural environment	28
	5.5 Partners and next steps	31
6	Annexes (separate documents)	32



1 Foreword

The North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership (NAGHP) are delighted to share this Green Health Framework 2024-2030, serving both as a legacy for the partnership but also a vision for the future.

The benefits and value of spending time in nature and enjoying the greenspaces around us was clear during some of the most challenging times we have faced in recent years. Evidence continues to grow around the benefits of green health activity but often our own experience and that shared from others, resonate most.

There is a huge volume of green health based activity already being delivered in North Ayrshire by a variety of partners and community groups. Many groups that the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership has had the pleasure in supporting through participatory budgeting and small grants over the years, recognising the dedication and commitment from the staff and volunteers who deliver these activities. Despite the challenges we face green health can support and deliver across a range of themes making it cost effective, good for our health and the communities where we live and work.

So please take the time to read this Framework and consider how you can embed green health in your workplace, to improve your health and your community across the 3 P's of:

Policy Integration – green health activity can contribute across a range of policies e.g. staff wellbeing activity such as walking meetings, opportunity to support nature based volunteering or contributing to climate change and a sustainability policy through active travel opportunities.

Placemaking – how can we increase access to greenspaces and improve biodiversity? We can contribute to local consultations around local development plans, advocate for better access to good quality green spaces and transform spaces to engage people and improve biodiversity e.g. the Scottish Fire and Rescue Community Gardens, NHS Greenspace developments and local community gardens.

Participation – through participation in green health activity people connect, learn new skills, stay active, give back and take notice of the world around them.

As the Leader of North Ayrshire Council and Chair of the Community Planning Partnership I would encourage you to consider where you can use this Framework to support the ongoing vision.

Councillor Marie Burns

July 2024



Our Vision

North Ayrshire people get outside and active in good quality, nature filled greenspaces that improve their wellbeing, build their skills and benefit our planet.

2 What is green health?

Green Health is spending time in nature and greenspaces to improve your health and wellbeing.

It includes taking part in nature-based activities like walking, cycling, outdoor learning and play, environmental conservation, gardening or growing food along with the restorative and relaxing benefits of being outdoors in nature.

It brings together the wellbeing of people and the environment. In our communities greenspaces like local parks, gardens, woodlands and nature reserves connect people with the environment and create places to relax, exercise, work, travel actively and play together.

Green health can be used to maintain good health, prevent ill health and treat health problems. Studies have shown that there are many green health benefits (section 3.5 and Annex 5 cover this in more detail) they include:

- Having a better mood and overall well-being
- Being more active physically
- Improved social connection and feelings of belonging

3 Where are we now?

3.1 Background

North Ayrshire Council on behalf of the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership commissioned greenspace scotland to develop a Green Health Strategic Framework for North Ayrshire.

During the development of this Framework greenspace scotland worked closely with the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership Steering Group, Community Planning Partners, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and other key stakeholders. The Framework was informed by research and consultation around the impact of the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership (NAGHP) since its inception in 2018, consultation methods included meetings, workshops, online surveys and interviews

The work was commissioned at the point when the pilot NAGHP was coming to an end. The NAGHP began in summer 2018 and funding ended in Mar 2024. It is one of four Green Health Partnership's in Scotland within the [Our Natural Health Service](#) (ONHS) programme. A national, cross government initiative led by NatureScot which aims to create a step change in how the natural environment can be used, valued, and protected as a precious resource which supports our health and wellbeing. There has been a substantial amount of work to date enhancing delivery and promoting green health activity in North Ayrshire from the grassroots and

embedding green health within existing systems and services. **The purpose of this Framework is to:**

- form part of the legacy of the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership bringing together local and national learning
- to provide a vision for the future of green health in North Ayrshire



3.2 North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership key achievements

The North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership (NAGHP) has over five years of experience, collaboration and some data to inform the next steps.

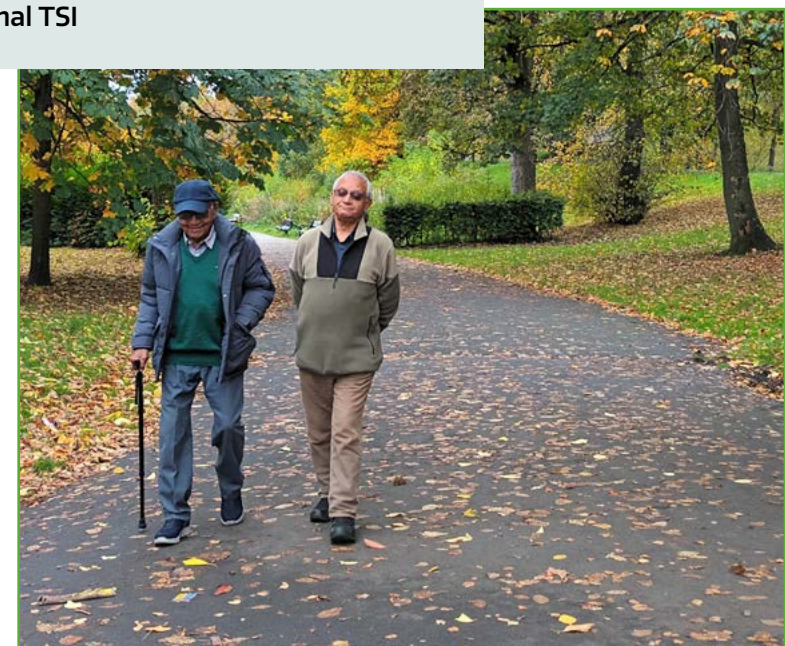
Many of the Partnership members have been involved throughout this period. The NAGHP Senior Project Officer role (hosted by TCV) has been funded from the start in summer 2018, funding for the role ended in March 2024. Over this period Partnership members have changed (Annex 3 shows wider Green Health Stakeholders), a consistent core group has included the following:

Organisation	Sector	Organisation	Sector
Arran CVS	Regional TS	NHS Ayrshire & Arran	Regional Health Public Body
Ayrshire College	Regional Education	North Ayrshire Council	Regional Public Body
Health & Social Care Partnership	Regional Public Body	Paths for All	Third sector national environment
KA Leisure	Regional Public Body	The Conservation Volunteers	Third sector national environment
NatureScot	National Public Body	The Ayrshire Community Trust	Regional TSI

As a result of scoping at the start of the NAGHP it was recognised that there was a substantial amount of green health activity already taking place in local communities, mostly delivered by regional third sector and local community groups. This was seen as a strong foundation that the additional resources of the Partnership could build upon, looking to ensure sustainability at the end of the project. The delivery of a Green Health Development Fund, and development of a Green Health Network were priorities in the first years. Momentum was interrupted by Covid-19. Developing referral pathways was one of the NAGHP's key themes. From the beginning, the NAGHP worked with KA Leisure to embed and

expand the outdoor green health options within the already established Physical Activity Referral Programme managed by KA Leisure, known as [Active North Ayrshire \(ANA\)](#).

Thereafter, communicating the benefits of green health activities and promoting services available to all stakeholders took place through creating a NAGHP website with a range of general and Locality based information including an Events calendar, and simple information videos – all targeted at both the public and health professionals. The NAGHP promoted and facilitated ever wider involvement of green health groups and activities in the annual Green Health Week.



Throughout the programme the Partnership worked with Community Link Workers based in GP practices, and in the latter years the NAGHP Senior Project Officer was able to develop awareness raising, networking and collaboration with NHS Health & Social Care practitioners including those from NHS Pharmacy Prescription team, NHS Realistic Medicine team, NHS Health Promotion Dietitian, Dietetics team, NHS Physiotherapy Team Lead, and NHS Cardiac/Multimorbidity Rehabilitation. A green health prescription project was piloted, with some success, but lost momentum in its expansion.

Annex 1 gives more detail on the activities and key achievements of the NAGHP. It summarises findings from reports commissioned nationally by NatureScot for the Our Natural Health Service (ONHS) pilot Green Health Partnership (GHP) programme. A summary of key activity and achievements, split across the two phases of NatureScot funding is given in **Table 1 within Annex 1**.

The NAGHP has raised awareness of green health amongst individuals and health practitioners; it has increased participation in green health activities and has started the path toward mainstreaming a nature-based green health approach. As reflected in its **Aims**, the NAGHP has 'worked with existing groups to increase provision for vulnerable groups, identifying gaps and supporting activities where there is most need'. The extent to which it has

It has in broad terms achieved its own aims and those of the national pilot GHP programme. It has achieved this through:

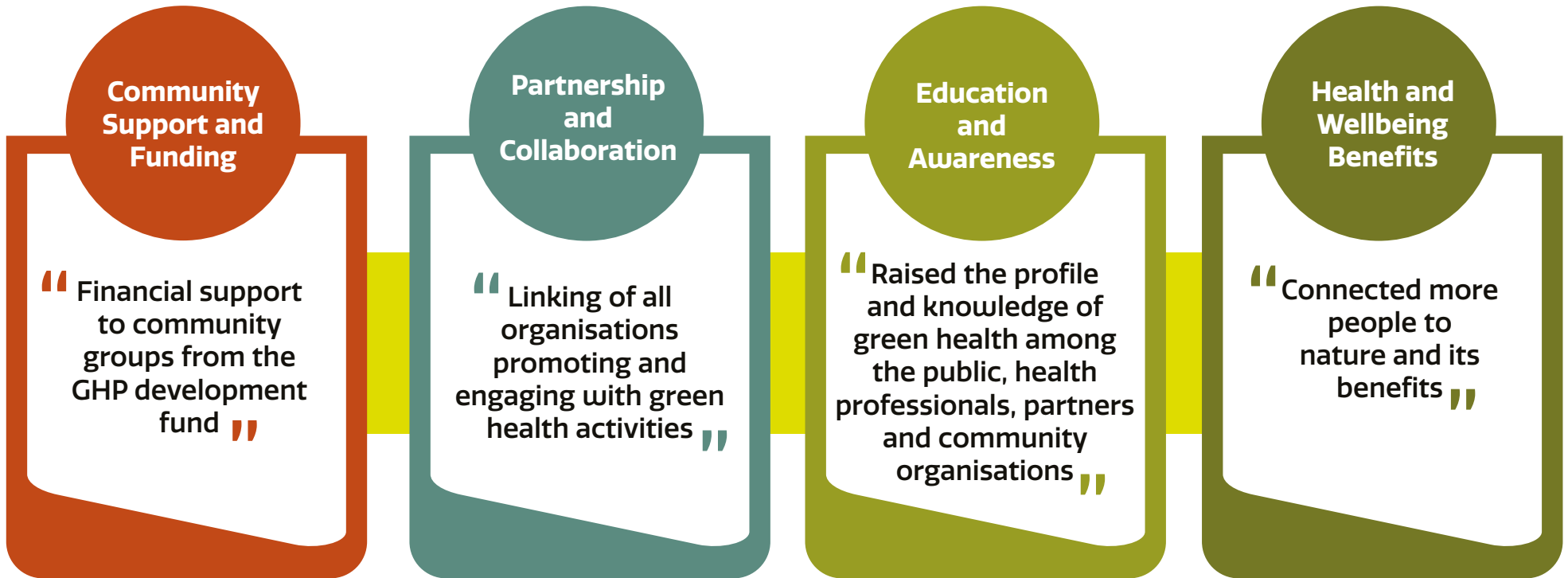
- > effective collaboration
- > partnership working
- > inclusion of the NAGHP and green health interventions in local policies and plans
- > building on resources that were already in place (local community groups and larger charity delivery partners)
- > building on structures that were already in place (KA Leisure Active North Ayrshire Referral process, the Community Planning Partnership, Community Link Workers)
- > consistent, committed personnel at Partnership Steering Group and NAGHP Senior Project Officer levels

“effective at facilitating green health opportunities, awareness, and capacity-building activities across sectors”



Figure 1: Key achievements seen as most significant by the NAGHP Steering Group.

**Feedback from the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership Steering Group workshop:
What has been achieved and what are we most proud of?**



3.3 Green health activity

There is an extensive and diverse range of green health activities currently taking place across North Ayrshire – in community gardens, woodlands, parks and other publicly accessible greenspaces.

There is activity on the estate of public bodies such as the library and fire service and green health infrastructure developments on Ayrshire Central Hospital allows woodland walks for patients staff and visitors. The NAGHP has brought together a broad range of stakeholders from across all six localities in North Ayrshire to lead, promote and co-ordinate green health initiatives.

Engaging with stakeholders, through surveys and workshops, has enabled an overview of current green health activities. Information was also gathered through the Green Health Partnership website events calendar and previous evaluation work. **Annex 2** provides the full list of organisations and activities.

Information is provided for 155 different activities listed by 64 different organisations. This includes 35 gardening and growing activities, 31 conservation activities, 29 health walks, as well as Nordic Walking, and other green health activities. Although there are lots of growing, gardening and

conservation activities offered, the activity that is offered most frequently each week is walking. The majority of the green health project providers are third sector organisations but local public bodies also deliver a wide range of activities with more frequency. The funding for many of the third sector projects (and indeed the organisations themselves) is often short-term and, in some cases, precarious, impacting on planning and promotion each new year.

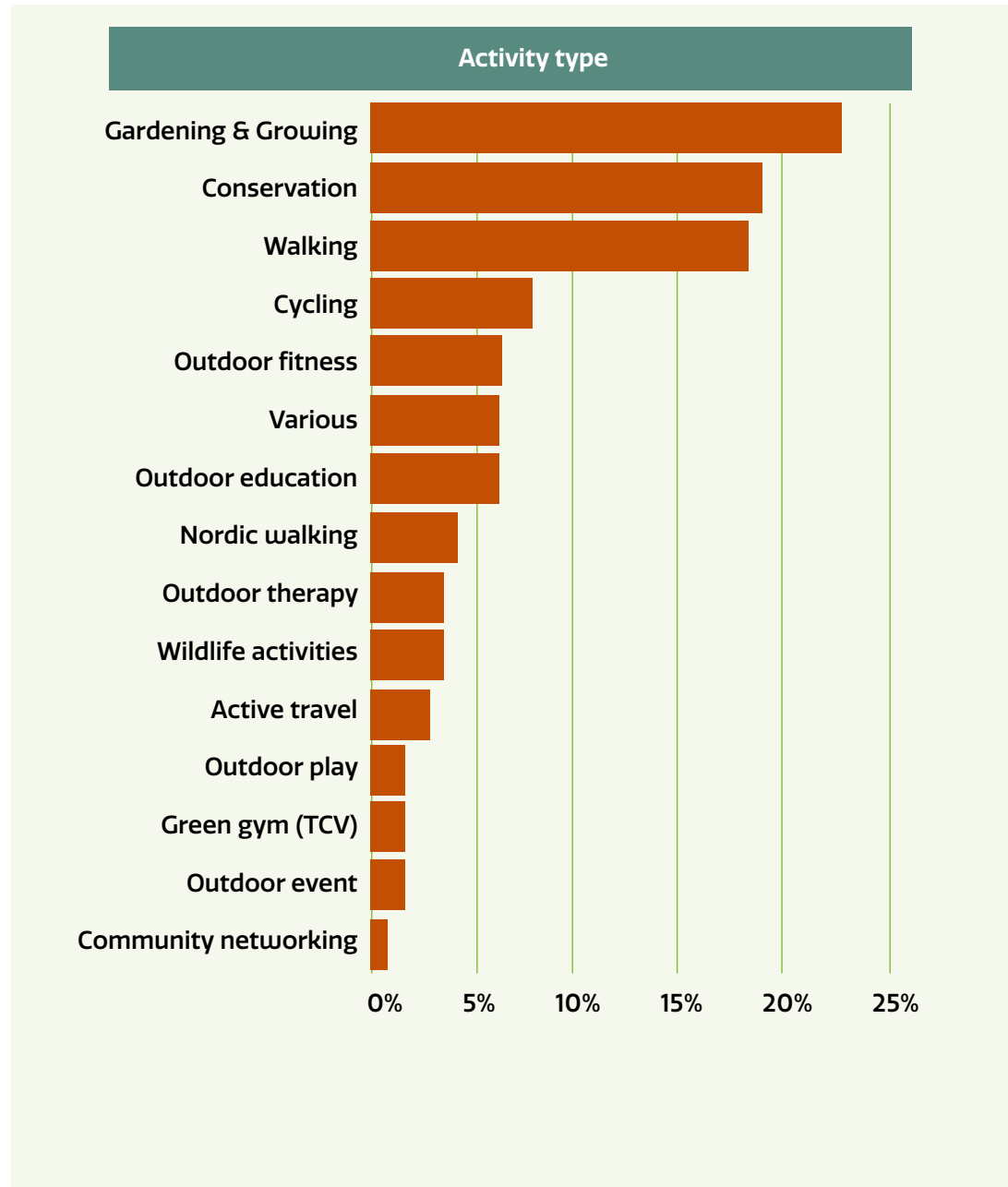
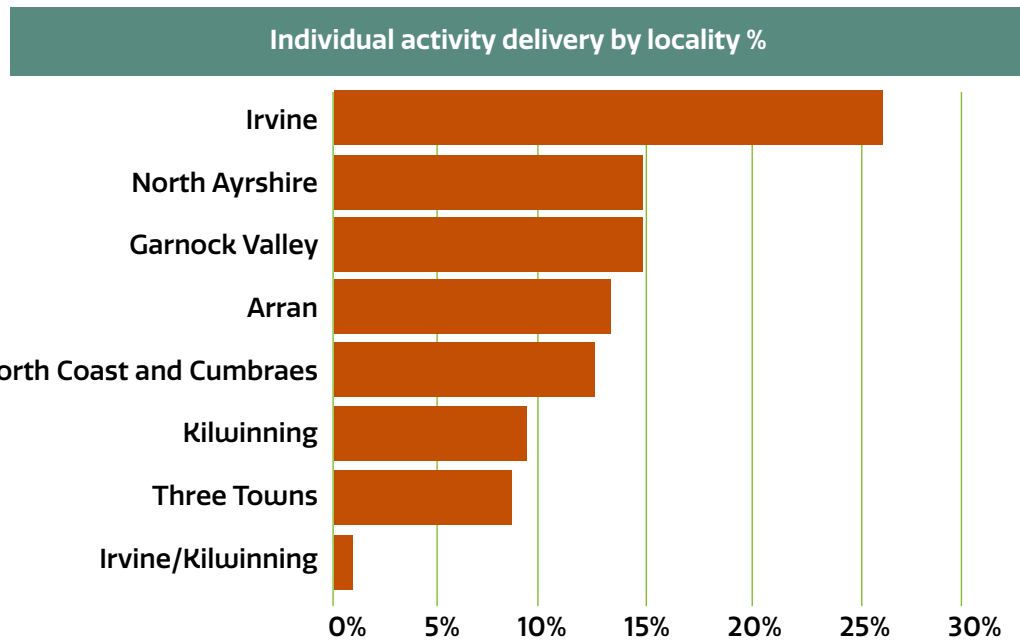
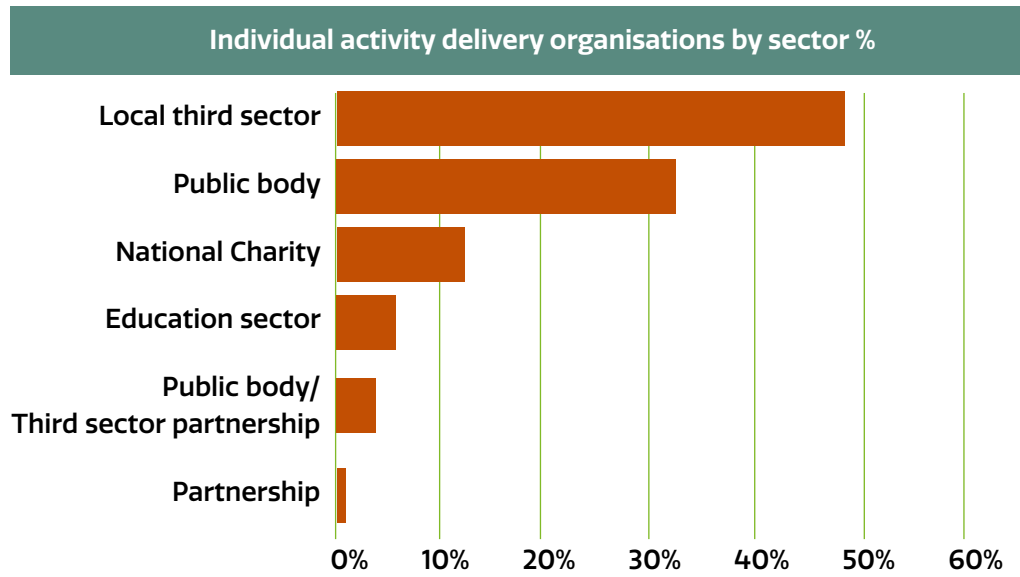
Green health activity takes place across all six localities in North Ayrshire, with just over a quarter being on offer within the Irvine locality. As Irvine

has the largest population this represents a good spread (see **Table 2**). Irvine also has **Championing Green Health and the Natural Environment** as one of its locality plan priorities. The geographic distribution of activity could be improved by developing more green health initiatives in the Three Towns locality of Saltcoats, Ardrossan and Stevenson where locality plan priorities include improving community wellbeing and regenerating community facilities which green health can help to achieve. For addressing health inequalities it is important to note that The Three Towns and Irvine locality areas are the most deprived communities in North Ayrshire.

Table 2: North Ayrshire Community Planning Six Localities (in order of most to least deprived from 2020 SMID data).

Locality	Three Towns	Irvine	Kilwinning	Garnock Valley	North Coast and Cumbraes	Arran
Population (2017)	33,000	40,000	16,200	20,000	22,900	4,600

Figure 2: Data from the activity audit. Annex 2 provides the full list of organisations and activities.



Workshop sessions with the Green Health Network identified the key ingredients for developing and delivering successful green health activities and services (see Table 3 for summary). **Annex 7** provides a full summary of the outputs from the Green Health Network workshop.

Table 3: Ingredients for successful community group green health activities and programmes

Theme	What is needed
Partnership and networking	<p>Strong and effective partnerships between local community, groups and organisations</p> <p>Joint working enabling resource or venue sharing</p> <p>Networking opportunities to share knowledge and build partnerships</p>
Visibility	<p>Community visibility – use of physical signage to explain what people are doing if say gardening near public space encourages conversations and awareness raising</p> <p>Local communication – groups use local social media and noticeboards</p>
Supported and staffed	<p>NAGHP Senior Project Officer role for sharing of funding and local opportunities is valuable</p> <p>Reliable pool of willing volunteers that are well-supported and appreciated</p>
Accessibility and flexibility	<p>Flexibility and adaptability to meet needs of different users</p> <p>Providing a range of activity types and seasonal activities</p>
Inclusive	<p>Meaningful engagement with a broad spectrum of users, clients and stakeholders</p> <p>Inclusivity by providing local and free activities</p>
Funding	<p>Longer term funding to provide time and security to deliver</p>

3.4 Strategic context

Since it started in 2018, the relevance of the collaborative work of the NAGHP to help deliver policy at all levels has grown.

The focus has continued to move from green health supporting physical activity to its role in health and wellbeing, in being part of healthier, fairer, greener places and neighbourhoods for lives to be lived in, and as part of climate change and sustainability policy. Annex 4 provides the full Policy Review.

What has changed since the inception of the NAGHP that may influence delivering green health in North Ayrshire going forward?

Green health can play an important part in taking forward NHS Scotland's 2022 Vision for Scotland "Delivering Value Based Health & Care" via the principles of Realistic Medicine and person-centred care. Public Health Scotland (PHS) has come into being and its 2023 Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy puts public health and equity at the heart of Scotland's response to the climate emergency. This strategic approach makes provision for PHS to support NHS boards in developing GHPs, with mapping the NHS estate, with linking the NHS estate (as part of the public realm) with North Ayrshire Council's Open Space Strategy and with supporting the NHS National Services Scotland Assure Greenspace and Biodiversity team to support health boards in the development of NHS greenspace interventions.

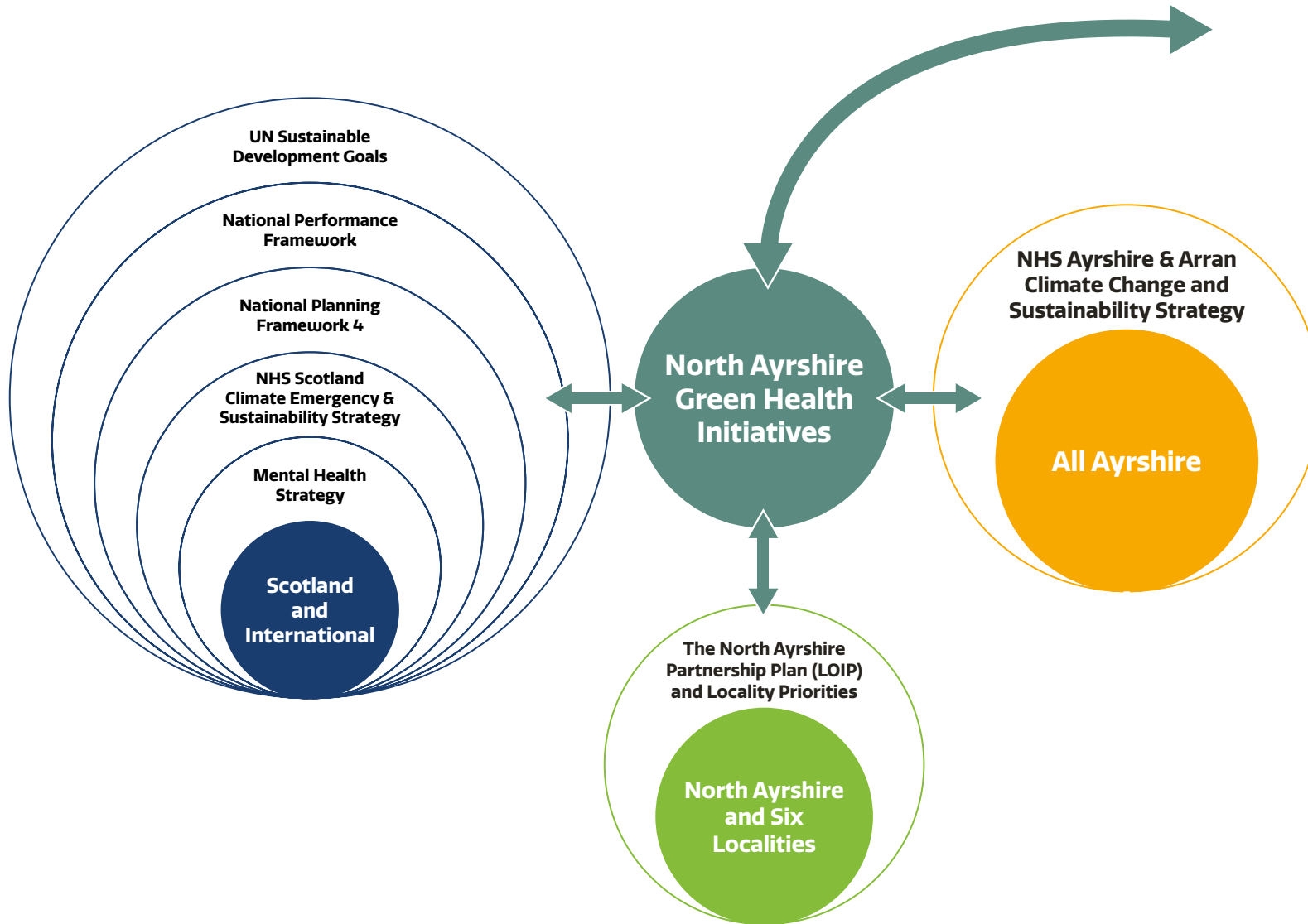
KA Leisure is to take the lead on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership's (NACPP's) Wellbeing strand of work, and a Wellbeing Alliance is in the process of discussion and co-creation to take this forward. The North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership is currently re-designing

their locality planning structure (post covid) and will be developing new priorities across the North Ayrshire CPP Localities during 2024. The discussions across these developments are timely for championing green health collaboration, learning and delivery going forward.

The NAGHP and green health operate within a comprehensive policy landscape. **Figure 3** shows the key policies that green health infrastructure, initiatives and activities can contribute to and can be influenced by.



Figure 3: Key policies that green health initiatives/ infrastructure can contribute to and be influenced by.



Additional Policy Influencers
NHS Scotland Delivering Value Based Health & Care for Scotland
Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act
PHS Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy
NHS Ayrshire & Arran Physical Activity Action Plan
NHS Ayrshire & Arran Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy
NHS Ayrshire & Arran Healthy Weight Strategy & Action Plan
NHS Ayrshire & Arran Anchor /CWB Strategy
Caring for Ayrshire Programme
Caring Together Strategic Commissioning Plan
NAC Strategic Community Learning & Development Plan
NAC Community Wealth Building Strategy
NAC Open Space Strategy
NAC Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy
NAC Food Growing Strategy
NAC Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
NAC Local Biodiversity Action Plan

NAC = North Ayrshire Council

3.5 Evidence review

Early literature reviews from the World Health Organisation through studies on the use of greenspace during the covid pandemic, to current evaluations of the pilot Green Health Partnerships in Scotland confirm a positive link between spending time in nature and positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

Annex 5 gives more detail (with links to reference sources) on the evidence available from scanning key literature reviews and research. For the purposes of this Framework, the benefits from public engagement with the natural environment, and from participation in and delivery of green health activity can be summarised under their contribution to North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership's priorities as follows:

Wellbeing: (improving health and wellbeing)	Work: (volunteering, active citizenship, learning and employment)	World: (addressing climate change, carbon reduction and protecting the natural environment)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > improved mental health and wellbeing, including life satisfaction and happiness > improved social connection and feelings of belonging > stress reduction > the alleviation of dementia symptoms, PTSD and ADHD symptoms > improved fitness and reduced fatigue symptoms in cancer patients > improved outcomes such as cardiovascular disease, mortality, physical activity, social cohesion, pregnancy outcomes and children's cognitive development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > potential to address health inequalities through supported participation (people on lower incomes, with fewer educational qualifications, who are unemployed, or living in the most deprived areas are least likely to visit natural spaces unsupported) > associations with lower rates of stress, anxiety, fatigue and depression were most significant for marginalised groups. > volunteering in conservation can enhance job prospects through gaining valuable life skills – teamwork, communication, problem-solving, self-belief, and self-management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > negative associations found between the level of neighbourhood greenspace and reported loneliness – less greenspace associated with more loneliness > suggestions that exercise in greenspaces may provide more benefits to health and wellbeing than exercise in other settings (such as indoors or on streets) > people living in the most deprived areas were less likely to live near greenspaces and those experiencing higher levels of socio-economic deprivation less likely to visit them at all.

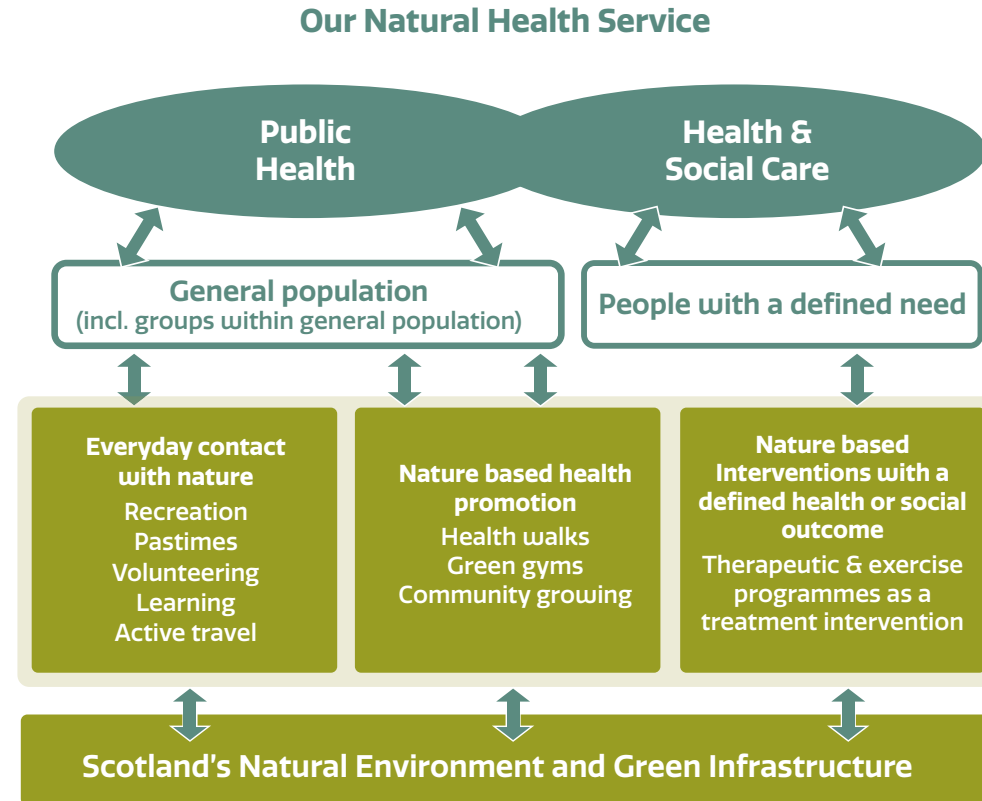
3.6 Scope

3.6.1 Our Natural Health Service

In discussion early on with the steering group the view was that the Framework should aim to cover all the elements illustrated in NatureScot’s ‘Our Natural Health Service’ infographic (Figure 4).

Figure 4: adapted from ‘Our Natural Health Service’ infographic NatureScot

Within the workshops with the NAGHP Steering Group, the Green Health Network, the Community Planning Partnership Officers and Board the scope of both green health delivery and the framework was discussed. An individual exercise was carried out to select which area of the NatureScot’s ‘Our Natural Health Service’ infographic should be highest priority if it was only possible to pick one. The results from this exercise demonstrated that there was a huge variety of opinion on this and certainly there was no clear consensus. This also supported the view that all three areas should be covered. The table below illustrates the outcome of the exercise:



Focus area	Everyday contact with nature	Nature based health promotion initiatives	Nature based interventions with a defined health or social outcome
No of people	12	19	11

The workshop discussions and outputs have had a stronger focus on sustaining green health activities and nature-based health promotion initiatives. The NAGHP has had less influence on the infrastructure required for everyday contact with nature but have been able to focus on communicating the benefits of contact with nature. There has also been a strong view that supporting the delivery of green health activity at a grassroots and community group level across all the localities remains important and that this momentum should not be lost.

3.6.2 The 3 P's

Throughout the development work on the Framework there was also discussion of covering three different strategic areas:

Participation:

increasing the number of people who regularly engage with the natural environment

Policy integration:

the benefits of green health are recognised and integrated into policy and practice

Placemaking:

continuing to improve the supply, quality and accessibility of our local greenspaces

Of these three Participation has been more of a focus and success for the NAGHP, unsurprisingly as this comes out strongly in the NAGHP's vision, aims and objectives. Policy integration was a priority for the NAGHP and they have had some success with this. This is something the partnership would want to continue, particularly related to the Community Planning Partnership organisations' shared plans and strategies. Placemaking and provision of green infrastructure has not been a priority for the NAGHP and should be a green health development area as without this there is no infrastructure support for green health activities and greater risk of inequality of access/provision.

Under the three themes of Wellbeing, Work and World the Framework considers each of these strategic areas in the following priority:

1. Participation, area for continuation

- positive work already delivered, the established networks and momentum should not be lost.

2. Policy Integration, area for growth

- success already, scope to widen influence and support local and national policy delivery.

3. Placemaking, area for development

- future influence around greenspace accessibility, addressing the twin climate and nature crises.

3.6.3 Geography

The Framework covers North Ayrshire. The NAGHP covered North Ayrshire only and not the full NHS Ayrshire & Arran health board area. It was raised in a workshop that regional working with South Ayrshire could be considered.

The option of working with South and East Ayrshire in a one Ayrshire approach should also be considered particularly for communications. This helps to take account of the perspectives of communities and residents who do not necessarily relate to or operate within a single local authority

boundary. A green health in Ayrshire [poster and leaflet](#) has already been produced taking this approach.

It also allows connection with other Ayrshire wide initiatives and networks such as the [Ayrshire Climate Hub](#) where promotion of green health activity in North Ayrshire could be communicated more widely. It helps deliver broader benefits including knowledge sharing, avoiding duplication and developing a consistent approach for anchor organisations within the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership that are already operating across boundaries such as the NHS, the Police, Fire and Rescue. There may also be scope for securing additional funding from a wider variety of funds if wider partnerships are made.

“Potential joint working with South Ayrshire - possibility of sharing Green Health Officer roles across the 2 local authority areas.”

3.7 Challenges

Over the course of the Framework development through consultation workshops and stakeholder conversations the following challenges were identified:

- Green health is increasingly embedded in local policies and plans, but corresponding capacity and resources are not allocated.
- Local government, NHS and social context – budget cuts, cost of living and austerity make providing even statutory services very challenging.
- Risks about the sustainability of funding and volunteer capacity in delivery partners that are community groups and third sector organisations.
- Options for sources of funds to allocate to community projects are more limited without core funding for the NAGHP.
- Short term funding for posts that help deliver and co-ordinate green health delivery, such as the TCV Healthy and Active Journeys Project Officer / TCV Natural Health Senior Project Officer, Paths for All Walking for Health Co-ordinator. The Sustrans Active Travel Workplace Engagement Programme Officer post is no longer funded.
- Concerns about loss of momentum if the activities undertaken by the NAGHP Senior Project Officer are not picked up in a timely and co-ordinated way. The role has been key to co-ordinating community and third sector involvement in green health, and in the latter years has explored pilot projects with NHS practitioners.
- Capacity and engagement levels of local community volunteers can be difficult to sustain.
- Addressing inequalities is challenging and getting engagement from the people that could benefit most is not always achieved.
- The language to communicate green health can be hard to understand and there are many different interpretations of green health.
- There have been barriers to Active North Ayrshire referrals reaching community led activity that are keen to accept referrals.
- Gathering useful data from a wide range of players both inside the health and social care sector and outwith is difficult. Collecting, analysing and using data requires resource, especially to target health inequalities. The useful and cost-effective collection of referral data may be too big a problem to be addressed in one Local Authority or GHP area.
- Green health is one strand of social prescribing, and it may be better to develop a wider social prescribing system that green health is an important part of. Again, this may be too big a problem to be addressed in one Local Authority or GHP area.

In relation to the last three bullet points the March 2024 [NIHR \(National Institute for Health and Care Research\) Briefing Report](#) An evaluation of Green Health Prescriptions across Dundee, Highland, and North Ayrshire, explores how acceptable, practical, effective, and equitable the Green Health Prescriptions are, and whether there are any adverse spillover effects. Seven recommendations that are likely to lead to improvements are given which include data collection and linkage, messaging, staff training, staff capacity, patient support, and accessibility.



4 Where do we want to be?

4.1 Our vision

North Ayrshire people get outside and active in good quality, nature filled greenspaces that improve their wellbeing, build their skills and benefit our planet.

The vision for green health in North Ayrshire is all about working together to enhance the overall wellbeing of the community through an inclusive approach.

Inclusive in relation to both the people who can benefit from green health and the organisations that can deliver green health initiatives, look after, enhance and develop our greenspaces. It prioritises providing accessible and flexible green health activities supported by adequate funding, ensuring the mainstreaming of these initiatives. We aspire to empower local communities to not only benefit from activity in nature but also to actively contribute to and learn from quality greenspaces, creating a healthier, more climate literate and more climate resilient North Ayrshire for generations to come.

Figure 5 shows the vision in relation to the Framework principles, goals, themes and output areas.



4.2 Our goals

Our five goals have been prioritised from the workshop feedback, conversations and meetings with multiple stakeholders. Three align to the themes of Wellbeing, Work and World, the remaining two are cross-cutting across all themes.

Wellbeing

Support the development of green health across North Ayrshire enabling more people to improve their health and wellbeing.

Work

Nurture volunteering, skills development and employment in nature conservation, food growing and citizen science.

World

Ensure green health initiatives and infrastructure contribute to addressing the biodiversity and climate crises.

Continue the Green Health Partnership working approach.
Sustain the current level of communications about green health activities and services.

4.3 Our principles

Collaborative

an approach that supports partnership and networking
align to strategies, statutory plans and resources that are already in place

Inclusive

involving different types of organisations, community groups, third sector and public bodies
delivering and/or supporting inclusive and accessible initiatives
communicating using a shared language which is easily understandable

Realistic

realistic priorities and initiatives that are ambitious and with effort, achievable
expectations are clear and organisations know their role in achieving goals

Innovative

encourage and embrace new ideas and innovation

Figure 5: Strategic vision, principles, goals and output areas



5 How do we get there?

5.1 Our key themes

For the future delivery of green health initiatives and the supporting green infrastructure required for engaging with nature the focus will be on the same three priorities within the North Ayrshire Partnership Plan.

This is the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2022–2030 developed by North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (NACPP). At a policy level, the Community Planning Partnership Board brings together public bodies (North Ayrshire Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, KA Leisure, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Police Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Ayrshire College, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care partnership, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Partnership for Transport, Dept of Work and Pensions and the Scottish Government) with third sector organisations (TACT and Arran CVS). The three priorities are:

Wellbeing, Work and World

These priorities are a very good fit for green health moving forward. The provision of green health infrastructure, initiatives and activities often have multiple co-benefits – social, economic and environmental. They have potential to benefit people, place and the planet simultaneously. They can also help achieve several of the NACPP outcomes under each theme within the [North Ayrshire Partnership Plan](#).

Green Health initiatives are often referred to as nature-based solutions. During workshops with the Community Planning Partnership linking to their priorities was mentioned as one of the ways to embed green health as a strategic priority and secure resources. Figure 6 shows a summary of other ideas mentioned in the Community Planning Partnership workshops.

In the sections detailing each theme we pull out the main green health goal alongside future opportunities to support delivery in the output areas of Participation, Policy integration and Placemaking. Two of our goals cut across all three themes:

- > Sustain the current level of communications about green health activities and services
- > Continue the Green Health Partnership working approach

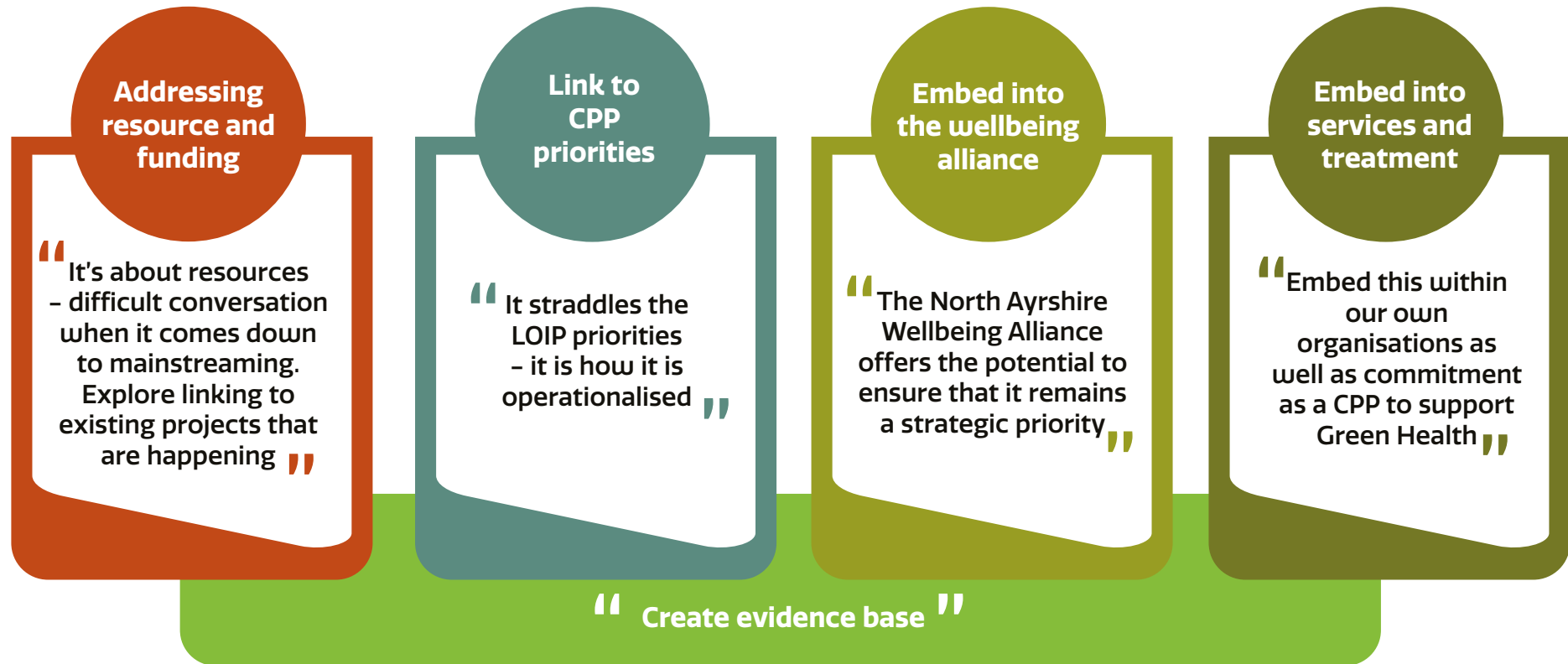
There was a strong view from stakeholders that the impact of the work already done and the momentum gained should not be lost. The NAGHP Steering Group were asked to identify what future success would look like and the following points were seen as highest priority:

- > Continuity of the Green Health Partnership
- > Normalising and mainstreaming green health
- > More people using outdoor nature-based activities to improve health and wellbeing
- > Embedding green health into policies and practice
- > Widening the ownership of green health promotion, sign posting and delivery



Figure 6: summary responses from the Community Planning Partnership workshops.

**Outcomes from Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Workshops:
What is needed to embed green health as strategic priority and to secure resources?**



5.2 Wellbeing - improving health and wellbeing

Green health activity and initiatives' most obvious home is wellbeing.

Improving the health and wellbeing of local communities by getting more people more active more often was the main aim of the NAGHP. It continues to be a priority with a focus on both getting people active along with improving mental health. The Evidence Review (Annex 5) has demonstrated that green health has strong evidence to show it can support good mental health, reduce stress, improve connections and reduce social isolation.

As outlined earlier in section 3.2 the NAGHP has already laid a strong foundation for this theme, a partnership of organisations are already working together, a green health website has been established with an events calendar and a grassroots network of community led organisations are delivering green health activities within communities.

The two cross cutting goals reflect the importance of sustaining these achievements and keeping up the momentum.

Our main goal under the Wellbeing theme is:

Support the development of green health activities across North Ayrshire enabling more people to improve their health and wellbeing.



5.2.1 Wellbeing - Increase participation opportunities:

Embed green health into the North Ayrshire Wellbeing Alliance – KA Leisure has recently been tasked to lead on the ‘Wellbeing’ strand of the CPP’s three strategic priorities and are in the process of developing a North Ayrshire Wellbeing Alliance. It is a timely opportunity to bring together existing resources, best practice and knowledge; to raise the Wellbeing strand profile and to provide easier ‘one stop’ access to information and services – at partner and at public/community levels. KA Leisure is already part of the NAGHP and delivers some green health referrals through the Active North Ayrshire referrals programme.

Explore sources of funding for community led organisations to continue to deliver green health activities. The [Community Investment Fund](#) administered by the Locality Partnerships mentioned as a possible source of funding, this is not a grant making process but rather it plays a role in facilitating activity that addresses the Locality Priorities. Irvine is the most obvious locality as it has Championing Green Health and the Natural Environment as one of its locality plan priorities. [The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Communities](#) and Place Grant is currently open for 23/24 and has funds for 24/25. The CLLD programme in Ayrshire is [ARIA](#) it covers North, South and East Ayrshire under this banner. Green health projects run by local community organisations would be eligible for this funding.

Ensure that Green Health Partnership and members of the green health network are aware of Green Health Week on 11–18 May 2024 and future Green Health Weeks. NatureScot are currently developing the national plan, there is no confirmation of any funding associated with delivering activity.

Opportunity to consider green health activity being hosted on the new Community Planning Partnership’s [Community Directory](#). The new Directory uses ALISS, the local information system for Scotland. It will have front end that’s focussed on North Ayrshire. This Directory may also be used by health and social care services instead of CARENA, this is currently under discussion. As an example [Glasgow Community Food Network map](#) uses info added to ALISS to build its local food services map.

5.2.2 Wellbeing - Policy integration and putting policy into practice opportunities:

[North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#) – The North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership is in the process of developing new priorities across localities during 2024. This presents an opportunity for green health to be communicated and considered when working with local communities and organisations to decide what these priorities should be.

[North Ayrshire Partnership Plan](#) – green health participation actions could be incorporated into the LOIP Action Plan and Performance Framework.

[Caring for Ayrshire programme](#) – NHS Ayrshire & Arran and the three (local authority based) Health and Social Care Partnerships work together on the Caring for Ayrshire programme, towards an integrated health and care service model. This looks at all aspects of health and care from birth, to end of life, and puts the individual at the centre of care.

[NHS Ayrshire & Arran Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy \(2021–2032\)](#) – Part of the sustainability vision is ‘Improving health outcomes of our citizens ensuring we create equitable green recovery, promote the natural environment, good health, social values, and improve quality of life for all’

Open Space Strategy (2016–2026) – Of the six key strategic objectives, this one is of particular relevance to wellbeing: Promote better health by providing diverse opportunities in open spaces, the natural environment and countryside for physical exercise, sport and recreation.

Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy (2023–2027 Draft) – Actions to promote the positive re-use of sites include empowering communities to develop the land on a temporary basis for example through a ‘stalled spaces’ initiative; exploring end uses that include greenspace creation as well as development.

5.2.3 Wellbeing - Influencing placemaking opportunities:

Opportunity to link in with the preparation of **North Ayrshire's third Local Development Plan**, LDP3. During 2024 the focus will be on the preparation of the Evidence Report. North Ayrshire Council will draft and publish Place Profiles for each locality in North Ayrshire. The Green Health Strategic Framework could be shared with the strategic planning team.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 places a duty on Planning Authorities to prepare and publish an Open Space Strategy and to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in their area. These must form part of preparing an evidence report – the first stage in the preparation of the Local Development Plan. Play is crucial for physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of children with additional benefits gained from being outdoors in nature. There is an opportunity for natural play to feature as part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment for North Ayrshire, the assessment could identify play provision gaps that could be filled with natural play areas to benefit children's wellbeing.

The next North Ayrshire Open Space Strategy, which will be from 2027, will be renewed within the timescale of the green health framework and there are opportunities to embed green health into the thinking. The draft regulations for Open Space Strategies include taking an outcomes based approach, there are six outcomes including Improving Health and Wellbeing. Connected, accessible and good quality green infrastructure enables and encourages green health participation, particularly for the everyday contact with nature strand of ‘Our Natural Health Service’. A report on **Scoping Health Impacts of Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments** is available.

The **Vacant and Derelict Land Strategy (2023–2027 Draft)** has an action, subject to the availability of funding, that the Council will develop a stalled spaces programme to promote the positive temporary use of vacant and derelict sites and will work with landowners to facilitate access to sites which are safe to contribute to open space provision. Other Stalled Spaces initiatives in Glasgow have resulted in the creation of community gardens as one of the main uses of the sites. If the initiative does progress there is an opportunity to get funding for new spaces that support green health activity. From their engagement with stakeholders and communities there is support for this type of development as many respondents expressed how they would like to see vacant and derelict sites in community use, providing greenspace, recreation facilities, community gardens or allotments.

Further enhancing and/or protecting greenspace infrastructure and promoting green health delivery on the NHS Estate has not been a priority for the NAGHP although there is a legacy of NHS greenspace demonstration projects on NHS Ayrshire & Arran estate. This offers an opportunity going forward. The **NHS Lothian Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework** has a focus on the NHS Estate and NHS Fife has produced an **NHS Fife Greenspace Strategy** for its estate. Both strategies provide good examples of how the estate can be developed to widen health and wellbeing opportunities.

Within the **NHS Ayrshire & Arran Anchor/Community Wealth Building (CWB) Strategy 2023 – 2026** there is potential for green health activities to be delivered (by the NHS and external organisations) under commitment 5.3 the Land & assets strand, including – Proactively and positively managing of our land and assets to support current and future delivery of healthcare services.

5.3 Work - volunteering, active citizenship, learning and employment

Green health activities have a ripple effect that can benefit volunteering, active citizenship, learning, and even employment.

Spending time in nature increases your connection to your local surroundings.

This can motivate people to volunteer for park litter picks, tree planting initiatives, or community gardens. Green health activities can be a gateway to new skills and knowledge, encouraging people to participate in citizen science projects or learn about environmental action.

Volunteering with a community garden teaches you about plants and sustainable gardening practices, citizen science projects contribute to real-world research and encourage learning about ecological data collection.

The experience gained from volunteering in greenspaces can also translate into valuable job skills. At a time of both a biodiversity and climate

crisis and with ambitious targets to meet for reducing carbon and nature recovery skills in these areas are needed. Volunteering with environmental organisations also allows you to network with professionals in the field and potentially open doors to future employment opportunities.

Our main goal under this theme is:

Nurture volunteering, skills development and employment in nature conservation, food growing, habitat creation and citizen science.



5.3.1 Work - Increase participation opportunities:

Community Wealth Building at North Ayrshire Council have both a Land and Assets workstream and a Volunteering subgroup under the Fair Work workstream so there are potential opportunities to connect into these.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran outdoor estate such as Woodland View and the Ayrshire Central site can provide skills development opportunities for NHS estates team and clinical staff through the NHS climate change and biodiversity requirements.

Ayrshire College have embedded outdoor learning in their HNC Childhood Practice in partnership with the North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service. Possible option to look at other courses that could do this.

Both the actions being taken to create Nature Networks and the biodiversity actions included as part of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan could have a community focused citizen science, volunteering or learning aspect to them.

The PHS Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach (2023–2026) mentions establishing learning network to support health board to develop Green Health Partnerships. Learning from North Ayrshire could be shared through this once it is set up.

There are North Ayrshire Council staff skills development opportunities through naturalising parks and greenspaces. The park managers forum co-ordinated by greenspace scotland supports shared learning across local authorities on this subject area and organises in-person fieldtrips to learn from other local authorities. Funding is available for naturalising greenspaces through **the Nature Restoration Fund**.

5.3.2 Work - Policy integration and putting policy into practice opportunities:

Strategic Community Learning and Development Plan (2021–2024) – The importance of outdoor learning and its contribution to health and wellbeing is acknowledged, and that across the Council mental health and wellbeing support is embedded within the work with schools and whole communities, with links to employability, staff training and community groups. In light of inequality data NAC increased their focus on child poverty.

Community Wealth Building Strategy (2020–2025) – North Ayrshire is Scotland's first **Community Wealth Building Council**. The strategy sets out how the Council will deliver their economic goals focused on wellbeing and inclusion. Fair Employment and the development of under-utilised assets for community use are objectives within the strategy. Becoming a Wealth Building Council brought a dedicated staffing compliment, there is a CWB Expert Panel and Commission, collaboration with other Councils and an investment fund for green job transition.

Open Space Strategy (2016–2026) – This Strategy will be renewed within the timescale of the green health framework and there are opportunities to embed green health into the thinking. Naturalisation of our parks and greenspaces, along with the creation of nature networks provide opportunities for green health volunteering, staff and community skills development and citizen science.

5.3.3 Work - Influencing placemaking opportunities:

Sharing learning and encouraging the roll-out of more projects that utilise public sector estate for green health learning. On their site at Dreghorn Fire Station the Fire Service at have developed a community garden and learning space in partnership and with funding from Greenwood Academy secondary school. The project is in its infancy but later in 2024 pupils from the school will benefit from learning on the site. They have also made connections with the North Ayrshire group Eglinton Community Growers.

Incorporating volunteering opportunities, citizen science projects and opening outdoor NHS Estate for community use can benefit and transform our local places. Within the [NHS Ayrshire & Arran Anchor/Community Wealth Building \(CWB\) Strategy 2023 – 2026](#) there is potential for green health skills activities to be delivered (by both the NHS and others) under commitment 5.3 the Land & assets strand, including expansion of community access to NHS land and property – for example where appropriate, enabling local groups and businesses to use NHS estates.



5.4 World - addressing climate change, carbon reduction and protecting the natural environment

The greenspaces and green networks required for green health activity and the activities themselves have a huge amount of scope for addressing climate change, carbon reduction and protecting the natural environment.

Local parks, woodlands, nature reserves and active travel routes can be used as places to plant trees, create orchards, host naturalised grassland and wildflower meadows and provide local food growing. Local people can be encouraged to volunteer or participate in these activities to become more environmentally aware. Having easily accessible quality greenspaces also encourages people to spend time locally rather than driving in a car to spend time in nature.

Activities like walking and wheeling promote active travel reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. The creation of rain gardens reduces flooding and creates sustainable drainage. Community gardens promote local food production and create a more sustainable food culture. Activities like tree planting, beach cleanups, or creating wildflower meadows directly improve the environment by restoring habitats and reducing

pollution. Planting using native species provides food and shelter for pollinators and other wildlife. Citizen science projects that monitor wildlife populations or track environmental changes provides valuable data for conservation efforts.

Our main goal under this theme is:

Ensure that green health initiatives and infrastructure contribute to addressing the biodiversity and climate crises.



5.4.1 World - Increase participation opportunities:

Encourage and influence North Ayrshire Council teams to consider the creation of green health initiatives for local volunteers/community groups in work being planned for creating Nature Networks and emerging biodiversity projects, this could be helping with low level maintenance / practical conservation / citizen science etc.

Encourage and influence North Ayrshire Council Streetscene teams that are planning naturalising parks or greenspaces to consider the creation of green health initiatives for local volunteers/community groups in any work being carried out. Dundee City Council has **involved members of the community** in the creation, monitoring and enhancement of a number of their wildflower meadows in city parks.

Green health activities can also be incorporated into sessions planned for community engagement to explain why changes in the management of greenspaces are taking place. During the development of their **Spaces for Nature Action Plan**, Falkirk Council provided a programme of 'Spaces for Nature' activity sessions at various greenspace sites across the Falkirk Council area. The sessions were free of charge and aimed at families.

Funding associated with climate change, local food growing and achieving net zero are great opportunities for local communities group to secure funds for green health projects. TACT and Arran CVS can provide information out to Green Health Network members on these types of funds and support groups to apply.

5.4.2 World - Policy integration and putting policy into practice opportunities:

There are opportunities to widen green health ownership and delivery through other requirements NPF4, Open Space Strategies, Play Sufficiency Assessments and Nature Networks.

North Ayrshire Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2019–2031) – Three central aims of Protect, Connect, Maximise, noting specifically Workstream 3: Quality greenspace for health and education benefits.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (2021–2032) – Part of the sustainability vision is: 'Improving health outcomes of our citizens ensuring we create equitable green recovery, promote the natural environment, good health, social values, and improve quality of life for all.'

The subsequent **NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy (2022–2026)** provides proposals for action to assist in meeting the aims and targets of DL(2021)38.

Published in Sept 2023, **PHS Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach (2023–2026)** 'Working together to build a greener, fairer, healthier future' sets out Public Health Scotland's ambition for strong collaboration and makes the case that addressing the climate crisis has the potential to deliver 'co-benefits' for population health and equity.

5.4.3 World - Influencing placemaking opportunities:

There are placemaking opportunities related to naturalising parks and greenspaces. Funding is available for naturalising greenspaces through the [Nature Restoration Fund](#) and this can include running community engagement and volunteering activities. With support Friends of Parks groups can also take on the maintenance of green health infrastructure.

Making the case that the development of the outdoor NHS Estate connects with Local Authority Open Space Strategies ('to ensure NHS estate is seen as part of the public realm, connecting to local communities and to green networks, thus contributing to the outcomes open space strategies need to deliver for health, the environment and biodiversity.')

Ensuring that North Ayrshire Nature Networks (and wider all Ayrshire) planning and delivery includes consideration of public access to open space/nature and opportunities for community spaces to be created.

Active travel routes have scope to be part of a wider green network across North Ayrshire and beyond the local authority boundary. As an example Glasgow Clyde Valley Green Network created [The Blueprint](#) which is a framework for the creation of both a strategic Green Network, it includes a Strategic Access Network which focuses on the off-road movement of people.

The A&DS Climate Action Towns project that has been taking place in Stevenson may include green health placemaking opportunities and learning. There is a [Climate Action Towns Project Report](#) and a [How to Take Action Toolkit](#).



5.5 Partners and next steps

The current partners that are members of the Green Health Partnership Steering Group agreed to continue meeting on a twice monthly basis during 2024. These partners are:

Organisation	Sector	Organisation	Sector
Arran CVS	Regional TS	NHS Ayrshire & Arran	Regional Health Public Body
Ayrshire College	Regional Education	North Ayrshire Council	Regional Public Body
Health & Social Care Partnership	Regional Public Body	Paths for All	Third sector national environment
KA Leisure	Regional Public Body	The Conservation Volunteers	Third sector national environment
NatureScot	National Public Body	The Ayrshire Community Trust	Regional TSI

The proposed priorities for action that could be actioned are included in **Annex 8**. These were identified and prioritised during the visioning workshop with the NAGHP Steering Group members.

To continue to deliver the activities established during pilot phase and to grow and maximise the opportunities green health a lead or co-ordinating organisation needs be identified. They should co-ordinate activities to continue the partnership, embed green health further and sustain and grow opportunities for residents and public communication about those opportunities.





6 Annexes *(separate documents)*

- 1 **NAGHP key achievements**
- 2 **Green health current activity audit**
- 3 **Green health stakeholder map**
- 4 **Policy review**
- 5 **Evidence review**
- 6 **NAGHP Steering Group workshop and survey feedback**
- 7 **Green Health Network workshop and survey feedback**
- 8 **Priorities for action**

Thanks to the North Ayrshire Green Health Partnership organisations and other contributing organisations for their input throughout the development of the Framework. Framework written by greenspace scotland in May 2024.



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