

## Community Briefing – 30.01.26

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

Welcome to the fortnightly Community Briefing delivered in collaboration with the Highland Community Planning Partnership and Highland Council, containing information about funding, training, support, resources, and news for Highland wide and local communities.

If you have anything you want included in a future Briefing, please e-mail: [policy6@highland.gov.uk](mailto:policy6@highland.gov.uk)

To join the mailing list complete this short form: <https://forms.office.com/e/rSS3hXbGTa> or scan the QR Code:



FUNDING	NEWS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Climate Action Fund:</b> The Highlands &amp; Islands Climate Hub is delighted to offer its members small grants for new community organisations or to launch a new climate action project. The Fund is available to existing and emerging community groups who are members of the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub.  We have a small funding pot available for funding applications up to £1,000. Applications are assessed on a rolling monthly basis. We close our funding on the last day of every month. For more information, click <a href="#">here</a>.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Highland Alcohol and Drug Support:</b>  The logo for Highland Alcohol and Drug Support, featuring the text "withyou anywhere" in blue and green, with "Highland Alcohol and Drug Support" and "Funded by NHS Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership" below it. It also includes a QR code and the text "Scan me for more info".</li></ul>

- **Tesco Stronger Starts** funds thousands of local community projects across Scotland and the UK. Eligible Tesco stores in Thurso, Wick, Ullapool and Tain. Applications welcome from groups and projects that support children and young people with a stronger start in life. A wide range of projects fit the bill - improving school playgrounds, biodiversity, growing and food projects, outdoor play and adventure, community arts projects and purchasing kit for healthy activities. Projects that include a food element (e.g. providing healthy snack or lunch) are currently being prioritised.

The scheme provides grants of up to £1500. To find out more or to apply, please visit the Tesco Stronger Starts page [here](#).

- **Highland Council Educational Trusts:**

The Council's educational trusts cover specific areas of the Highlands, and offer opportunities for children and young people, schools and community groups to access funding for a wide range of grants to support education, sports, travel and other activities.

Open until 28th February for grant applications

More details and applications [here](#).

- **BeConnected Highland – Put your community project on the map:** The Highland Council is piloting BeConnected, a new digital platform to support community organisations and groups in accessing funding, in-kind support, and opportunities to collaborate across the region.

Traditionally, community funding has been accessed through open calls for projects. While this approach has enabled many successful projects and initiatives, short competitive funding windows can also lead to oversubscription and disappointment for groups unable to secure support. In response, the Council is evolving its approach to ensure that funding decisions

- **Directories:** The Highland Community Planning Partnership website now has a page dedicated to Directories, here you will find links to ALISS, Highland Directory of Services and Highland Mental Wellbeing. Click [here](#) to find out more.

- **Highland Hospice – No one Dies Alone:**



- **Winter Heating Payments:** Information on the winter heating payments due to benefit over 720,000 pensioners across Scotland. Any pensioner with an income of less than £35,000 will receive these payments. You can find more information [here](#).

- **Armed Forces Covenant: Education Health and Housing:** Highland Council and NHS Highland holistically support our Armed Forces and Veterans community and deliver the Armed Forces Covenant Duty. More information can be found [here](#).

- **Highland Repair Directory:** The Highlands and Islands Climate Hub is pleased to welcome the Highland Repair Directory to their list of projects supporting communities in Highland. The Repair Directory is an online resource which makes it easier for people to share or repair items, instead of sending them to landfill and replacing with new. For more information, click [here](#).

- **How do you feel about climate change?**

are better aligned with local priorities, particularly those identified within Area Place Plans, and to make support more accessible to groups at all stages of project development.

BeConnected is an interactive online map that allows community groups to highlight priority projects they are working on in their area. By doing so, it provides funders, including the Community Regeneration Fund, with a clearer picture of grassroots activity across Highland and enables them to track the progress of emerging proposals. Community groups are encouraged to explore the map, familiarise themselves with their Area Place Plan and add their projects to ensure they are visible to funders and potential partners. For more information please visit - [BeConnected Highland](#)

- **CARES Community Solar Fund:** You can apply for the [CARES Community Solar Fund](#) by visiting the [CARES project portal log in](#) page. Select 'Begin a new project' and complete the expression of interest form. Make sure to select the 'Community Solar Fund'.

The Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) is supporting community and faith organisations to install solar PV and battery storage in their buildings. This is a short-term pilot, funded by the Scottish Government and Great British Energy, with funds needing to be spent and claimed by 31 March 2026.

Demand is expected to be high for this funding, with many communities already in a position to mobilise projects very quickly. Funding will be allocated on a first come first served basis. If you are developing a new project, read the guidance and self-assessment checklist carefully and prioritise seeking a quote if you think you are eligible.

- **Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund Panel:** People living and working in the Cairngorms National Park are being invited

Through writing a story about climate change, you can help shape new research at the University of Glasgow into what people in Scotland think and feel about the changing climate and whether this has an impact on their mental health or emotional wellbeing.

You don't need to have previous writing experience or be an expert on climate change – just an interest in sharing your perspective through creative writing.

- Stories can be up to 1,000 words
- Fiction or nonfiction welcome
- Open to anyone aged 18+ currently living in Scotland
- Deadline: 28 February 2026
- Learn more about the research and submit your story: [www.climatestories.co.uk](http://www.climatestories.co.uk)
- **Free Period Products** are available in Highland to everyone who needs them. They can be accessed at community locations, through a home delivery service and are also available to pupils in schools. For more information and how to access products, click [here](#).
- **NHS Highland Young People's Sexual Health Needs Survey:**



- **Ewen's Room Gambling Support:** Ewen's Room is currently able to offer a few extra counselling spaces to Lochaber-based young people under the age of 30. These spaces are available especially to anyone impacted by gambling - either personally or through another significant person in

to design an exciting new community fund worth £1 million.

The new Cairngorms 2030 Community Fund is an investment in communities – with a twist. People who live in and love the National Park will design the whole process of handing out £1 million in funding from start to finish.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority are looking for 18 people representing a diverse range of community interests to join a paid panel to shape the fund.

Independent charity Involve will review all expressions of interest and ensure a reflective group of people are selected, ensuring that a wide range of ages, backgrounds, experiences and views will be part of the panel. They will then support the group to come up with ideas and make decisions on how the grants process will work. This will take place in the first half of 2026 with a view to the fund being launched in summer 2026.

Panellists will be paid for their time, at an hourly rate of £20.17, and must be available to attend panel meetings on the below dates:

**Wednesday 25 March, 6 to 8.30pm (online)**

**Saturday 28 March, 9.30am to 5pm (in-person at a location in the National Park)**

**Saturday 25 April, 9.30am to 5pm (in-person at a location in the National Park)**

**Wednesday 6 May, 6 to 8.30pm (online)**

**Wednesday 13 May, 6 to 8.30pm (online)**

**Wednesday 20 May, 6 to 8.30pm (online)**

**Saturday 30 May, 9.30am to 5pm (in-person at a location in the National Park)**

**Wednesday 17 June, 6 to 8.30pm (online)**

Express your interest to join the panel [here](#).

their life.

A counsellor can meet you face to face in Strontian, Mallaig and Fort William, or online. To arrange an appointment, please email [info@ewensroom.com](mailto:info@ewensroom.com) and they will get back to you within 2 days.

If you are over 30 and are struggling with the impact of gambling in your life, please still get in touch with Ewen's Room as they have other support options available through our workshops and groups.

More information can be found in the flyer attached.

- **The Step Outside Project:** Ewen's Room is launching [The Step Outside Project](#). It is a 5-month hillwalking club designed to build confidence, connection and skills over time, and eventually feel more comfortable and capable in our local Scottish Hills. This project is aimed at everyone! Whether you have never worn hiking boots or a proficient walker – we welcome everyone!

The project will be running every other Wednesday from the 4th March until the 1st July. Every month there will be guided hike and a more gentle group walk, with opportunities to meet and walk together in between.

Please only sign up if you are able to commit to the entire 5 month programme. There are only a few spaces left so don't miss your chance.

You can sign up for the project [here](#).

- **Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Quarterly:** The January 2026 Green Freeport [newsletter](#) highlights major 2025 milestones, including approval of the Full Business Case and a new Memorandum of Understanding. It reports growing investment interest, expanding team capacity, and outlines future benefits from retained business rates, expected to fund community infrastructure, skills, housing, and regeneration from 2026 onward

- **The Planet Youth Highland Community Fund:** This is a really exciting opportunity for the 13 Planet Youth partner communities, and it will allow the NHS Highland Health Improvement Team to work closely with Third Sector Organisations across Highland to collaborate and work in partnership to develop and support the Planet Youth model at a local level.

This fund aims to:

Support the delivery of the Planet Youth model in the 13 Planet Youth Highland Partner School cluster communities across Highland.

Enable third sector organisations to employ or allocate a part-time worker (up to 0.2 WTE per school community) to support the function of local Planet Youth Community Action Groups. **This is two-year funding.**

Strengthen community-led, data-informed action planning to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families.

Enhance collaboration between statutory services, third sector organisations, and communities.

Please be aware - applications will close at 5pm on Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> February.  
To apply, please complete [this](#) form.

More information can be found in the documents attached.

- **The Robertson Trust** provide funding to third-sector organisations that help people and communities in Scotland living with poverty and trauma. Information on who and what they fund, useful links and resources and FAQs can be found [here](#).
- **HTSI** produce a monthly Funding Bulletin for their [members](#), which details current funding opportunities in Highland. They can provide workshops for staff or volunteers in Highland's third sector, to address some of the challenges they're

aware of when it comes to applying for funds. They also distribute funds to third sector organisations on behalf of agencies in the public sector, find out more information here: [HTSI Funding](#).

- **Inverness Winter Payments Scheme:** People on low income can apply for a one-off payment of £115 from The Highland Council's City of Inverness Area Committee 2025/26 winter payments scheme to help them with their winter fuel bills. For more information, click [here](#).

- The [National Lottery Community Fund](#) has a number of Funding Programmes available including Awards for All, Community Action Scottish Land Fund, Climate Action Fund and more, many with a focus on Scotland. Find out more information [here](#).

- **S4GI Community Benefit Fund:** S4GI partner Cellnex UK has grants of up to £2,000 available to support initiatives focused on digital projects, community wellbeing, learning & development and more. The fund will prioritise projects located near any of the 55 S4GI mobile masts.

Communities and organisations interested in applying can find further information about eligibility criteria and a link to the application process on Cellnex's website: [S4GI Community Fund Additional LP - Cellnex](#).

- **Winter Resilience Aid** - Highland Council is urging community groups to 'apply now' for its Winter Resilience Programme if they want grit bins in their local communities.

The Highland Council's winter service started Tuesday 14 October and the Council is ready to treat - according to its policy - the 6,787km of roads for which it has responsibility. More information can be found [here](#).

## Gritting Routes

- Primary Routes
- Secondary Routes
- Other Routes
- \*by priority

[www.highland.gov.uk/gritting](http://www.highland.gov.uk/gritting)



## TRAINING/EVENTS

- Money Counts Brief Conversation:** This module is aimed at all staff and volunteers in the public sector and third sector organisations and community groups that work with individuals and who could have a brief conversation about income maximisation and what support is available. You can access the module [here](#). You can also find more information in the flyer attached.

- Flip of the Coin CIC and REALITIES Conference:** Welcome to the Flip of the Coin CIC and REALITIES Conference! Join us for a day where we can disseminate the results of our co-participatory research in Easter Ross.

February 2026 marks two years into our three-year research project, and we wish to share all the highs and lows of our journey so far.

You will hear from Lucy Campbell and community members about the impact we are having on the health and well-being of our community.

## EMPLOYABILITY/VOLUNTEERING

- Connecting Carers:** A Highland based Charity that provides support to unpaid carers (Carers) – people who look after a loved one, friend, or neighbour due to illness, disability, mental health conditions, or age-related needs. Please see attached flyer and poster for further information.
- The Highland Adult Learning Development Group** have published their first bulletin. Use this link to access the bulletin: [HALDG Newsletter](#) or scan the QR code:



- Volunteer Academy:** The Highland Volunteering Academy is dedicated to sparking and nurturing a movement of engagement through volunteering, tailored to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century with our evolving and diverse

With guest speakers Dr Marisa de Andrade, Dr Katharine Jones, Associate Professor Gill Buck and Cecile Taylor.

The event is taking place at the Alness Bowling Club. A buffet lunch will be provided.

Sign up [here](#).

- **Sutherland Justice Team Open Day:** On Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> February the Sutherland Justice team will host an Open Day in Golspie, see more info on Facebook: <https://fb.me/e/3kzVw2hpF>

The sessions will take place at 9.30 to 11am and 11:30 to 1pm and will last a maximum of 90 minutes. Anyone interested in coming along is asked to book a place on one of the sessions in advance by telephoning 01408 635369 or email: [CJS.Golspie@highland.gov.uk](mailto:CJS.Golspie@highland.gov.uk). The Sutherland Justice Service is located at Drummui, Golspie KW10 6TA.

- **Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Scottish Highlands Conference:** You are invited by Befrienders Highland and Befriending Networks to join us in Inverness for the Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Scottish Highlands Conference on Tuesday 10 March 2026.

The conference will offer space and time for cross-sector and cross-community discussion, deliberation, and action planning, focused on both policy and practice in the context of social isolation and loneliness. The conference has been inspired by the publication of a Manifesto for Social Connection.

This event is open to all senior practitioners, befriending organisations, community leaders, strategic stakeholders, and policy and decision-makers from the third and community sector, health, housing, public authorities, and the private sector who have an interest in improving health outcomes in the Highlands. You should be working within the NHS Highland health board region or

communities. Find out what volunteering opportunities are available [here](#).

- **MyJobScotland:** for public and third sector [vacancies](#).
- **totaljobs:** for private sector [vacancies](#).
- **Work.Life.Highland:** one-stop support for job seekers, low-income parents & employers in Highland—offering advice, training & employability services. For information on news, events and how to get in touch, click [here](#).
- **HTSI Fellowship Programme:** Designed to advance volunteer practices through targeted learning and collaboration, through grants to undertake study and learning visits. HTSI now four live Fellowships open for application. Full details and application instructions can be found on the Volunteer Academy [website](#).

have a direct connection to services and strategy impacting the population health of this region.

This is likely to be a popular event, and places are limited, so please [book](#) early to avoid disappointment.

- **What's on South Highlands – February:** A range of fantastic provision across the month of February, from Carers Support Group, Reminiscence Group, The power of Sleep with Zuzana and much more. More information can be found in the document attached.
- **Lunch 'n' Learn – Nature Prescriptions with NHS Highland:** Join us for an informal session introducing the Highland-Wide Nature Prescription.

An RSPB Nature Prescription is a guided conversation between a health or social care professional and their client to encourage and support them to connect with the natural world to benefit their mental and physical wellbeing.

We will share some of the evidence backing the promotion of nature connection as a health and wellbeing tool and share information on how to access and use the resource. We will also discuss who may benefit most from such a resource the scenarios where it can be used for most benefit. More information can be found [here](#).

The three drop-in sessions will take place online via TEAMS. Use the following links to join your chosen session.

- [Drop-in 25th February 1.30pm - 2pm](#)  
[Meeting Link](#)
- [Drop-in 18th March 1.30pm - 2pm](#)  
[Meeting Link](#)
- **Webinar - Supporting Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Communities in the UK:** Public Policy Exchange will be hosting a webinar on [Supporting Gypsy, Roma & Traveller](#)

[\*\*Communities in the UK: Tackling inequalities and systemic exclusion and improving outcomes\*\*](#) which will take place on Tuesday, February 10th 2026 from 9:30 AM — 1:00 PM GMT.

The session will look at how to formulate strategies for tackling inequalities and systemic exclusion across key areas; design strategies for tailoring public services to the needs of GRT communities and much more.

To register for the webinar, please see the document attached.

## MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

## COMMUNITY SAFETY & RESILIENCE

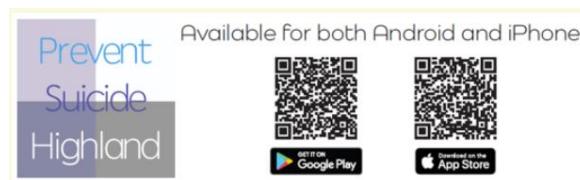
- [\*\*Highland Mental Wellbeing\*\*](#) – this website is a list of services, information and training around the subject of mental health and wellbeing. It also provides information about training and resources for community/service volunteers or paid staff, in a ‘helping’ or supporting role.

The Highland Mental Wellbeing website is accessible on desktop and laptop computers, mobile devices and wherever an internet browser is available.

[www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk)



- **Prevent Suicide Highland App** - This easy-to-use app helps should you ever find yourself in distress, feeling hopeless or suicidal in the future. The app is available on Google Play for Android devices and the Apple App Store for iPhone and iPad.



- [\*\*Think Health Think Nature\*\*](#) - Taking time to enjoy local outdoor green space could bring you huge health benefits – getting outdoors is good for your physical, mental, and social well-being. Regardless of age and ability, there really is something for everyone.

- **Police Scotland - Counter Terrorism** Policing is launching its winter campaign, encouraging the public to trust their instincts and report anything that doesn’t feel right to security or the police.

With a winter season full of events in busy public spaces such as Christmas shopping, festive markets, sporting fixtures, pantomimes and concerts, we all have a role to play in keeping each other safe.

They are asking for your support in sharing our important safety messages with your community, visitors and customers so we can reach as many people as possible.

They know that campaigns are a powerful way to use security-minded communications to add an extra layer of protective security. Using our campaign could help deter hostile activity at venues and events across the Highlands and Islands at no cost to your organisation.

Campaigns are based on extensive research and public testing. They are designed to reassure, rather than alarm, the public, and build their confidence in knowing what to do if they see something that doesn’t feel right. We want them to trust their instincts and not worry about

- **Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme:**

**Programme:** This course is available to those who work within the Highland area only. Various dates available.

Who this is for: staff who have patient, client, service user, or public contact and who have had no previous suicide awareness training or last training was more than three years ago.

Course delivery: Please note this course is delivered over two separate 2 hour sessions and you are required to attend both to complete the course. The sessions are usually run a week apart so please check the calendar below to make sure you can attend both Week 1 and Week 2 before booking your place.

Bookable course: [Turas | My Turas | Home](#)

- **Mental health and wellbeing: self-harm awareness - understanding and supporting people who self-harm**

(various dates available).

Who this course is for: This session is aimed at anyone who works with or provides support to people who self-harm or at risk of self-harm. 3hr online session

Bookable course: [Turas | My Turas | Home](#)

wasting anyone's time by reporting their concerns.

The communications toolkit is available on the QR code below or click on this [link](#) at the ProtectUK website. You will find images and animations to use on social media and digital screens, social media copy, posters to print, email signature and suggested content that can be used for internal and public-facing channels.



- **Public Health Scotland:** 2025 flu season has started earlier than usual. Please read the following [blog](#) to find out how you can protect yourself and others by getting vaccinated, practicing good hygiene, and staying home if unwell.

- **SEPA - Flood Risk Management Plans:** People across Scotland are being invited to share their experiences of local flooding issues to help inform how flood risk is managed in their communities, as work continues on Scotland's next Flood Risk Management Plans. To find out more and to take part in the consultation, click [here](#).

- **Home Energy Scotland:** Home Energy Scotland's advisors are true energy saving heroes. They can help you discover practical solutions to reduce your energy consumption, save money, and create a warmer, more comfortable home this year. Whether it's through energy efficiency tips, grants, or tailored support, their advisors are dedicated to helping you to take control of your energy costs.

Don't let rising bills catch you off guard. Reach out to Home Energy Scotland today for expert advice that puts you and your home first. Call Home Energy Scotland's

free helpline at 0808 808 2282 or visit [homeenergyscotland.org](http://homeenergyscotland.org)

- **Home fire safety visits:** Find out what is a Home Fire Safety Visit, who can get one, and how to arrange a visit. Click [here](#) to find out more.
- **Winter Readiness Advice**  
Practical advice on preparing for and responding to severe weather events in Scotland. It covers steps to stay safe during storms, heavy rain, snow, and flooding, including checking forecasts, creating emergency kits, and planning travel. To find out more, click [here](#).
- [\*\*Highland Council Ready for Winter Guidance\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Police Scotland Winter Road Safety Advice\*\*](#)
- **ALLenergy:** Support people who live in the Highlands from all tenures who are struggling with fuel poverty with Energy Advice and support. They can help clients with: Energy bills: how you pay for your energy, how much you pay and how often; Advise on changes to the way you deal with your energy payments that may result in saving you money; Advise on heating controls and the way you use your heating to ensure you are using it efficiently and cost effectively; Fuel vouchers for people who have a PPM and have no funds to top up. In some cases, if eligible, they can apply to funded schemes to help with paying for your energy, replacement of white goods, alleviation of fuel debt. (subject to funds being available). Further information is available on their website: [ALLenergy](#).
- [\*\*Met Office Weather Warnings:\*\*](#)  
Information from the Met Office on weather related matters.