



## **Green Health and Dementia Study Visit: A whirl wind tour of Highland sites!**

**Anthea Innes, 5 June 2026**

During the week of 25<sup>th</sup> May UHI welcomed colleagues from three provinces in Canada: Professor Sharon Kaasalainen and Assistant Professor Marie-Lee Yous from McMaster University, Ontario, and Tim, a registered nurse also from Ontario; from Manitoba, Professor Geneieve Thompson from the University of Manitoba and Kathleen Klaasen, Chief Executive Officer from Riverview Health Care Centre; and from the province of Saskatchewan, Associate Professor Paulette Hunter from St Thomas Moore College, University of Saskatchewan and Associate Professor Abigail Wickson-Griffiths from the University of Regina. Our Canadian colleagues joined us for a green health study visit arranged by Professor Anthea Innes, Dr Anna Terje, Mason McLeod, Dr Steve Taylor, Lesley Mackay and Alan Fleming. Garden, farm, outdoor resource centre, care home, golf course, and community woods all made the programme.



Our programme included many site visits where we learnt together about a range of different programmes and activities going on in the Highlands. We began with a visit to the Grow Project at the Inverness Botanic Gardens, a recent site for a UHI KE challenge fund project where people living with dementia and those with additional support needs spent a day together engaged in gardening and outdoor activities.

## Grow Project, Inverness Botanic Gardens

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We then moved on to be hosted by Sandi, the force behind the amazing Highland Therapeutic Animals near Ardersier and learnt more about the programming that is now being offered to people living with dementia, and other equity deserving groups. As well as those who visit for hen parties!

## Highland Therapeutic Animals





The morning of Thursday 28 May saw us beginning our minibus tour of green health sites further north of Inverness.

We started our day at the Alzheimer Scotland Resource Centre at Badaguish. This centre opened in April 2023, and as far as we know, was the first such centre worldwide to open its doors to people living with dementia to promote green health opportunities both outdoors and inside. Our host, Kenny Wright, demonstrated with an engaging, fun, interactive exercise how important it is to connect the person living with dementia to many services, against the beautiful backdrop of the Cairngorm range.



During the afternoon of Thursday 28 May 2026 our focus turned to golf. Not playing, but learning about the golf opportunities for people living with dementia both in care homes and in the community in Dornoch. We had the pleasure of being welcomed by staff, residents and Sanctuary Care Home Group Regional Manager for the East of Scotland, Joseph Greiner to visit their wonderful care home in Dornoch. The sun was shining and residents sitting in their beautiful garden, waiting for us with cake and drinks, what a beautiful great start to our visit!



Visiting the care home enabled our Canadian colleagues to not only meet residents and see a great example of a Scottish Care Home building, but to ask questions about care delivery, commissioning and provision, which Joseph Greiner was so kind to take the time to discuss while showing us around the building. Indoors the building has many good practice features such as a hairdresser known as the ‘pampering room’ which many in our group wished they could have had the opportunity to join, as well as a ‘pub’, and an area replicating a train carriage. However, our study visit was about green health and the outdoor space was our primary focus. The gardens at The Meadows are beautiful. Raised beds and planters for gardening, an outdoor ‘bubble’ to sit outside when the weather is not so kind as the day of our visit, a play area with boules for residents to play and an array of play equipment, including a trampoline, for visitors to spend time enjoying (including us!), as well as an outdoor bar area, BBQ and sitting area were all features that caught our interest and attention.



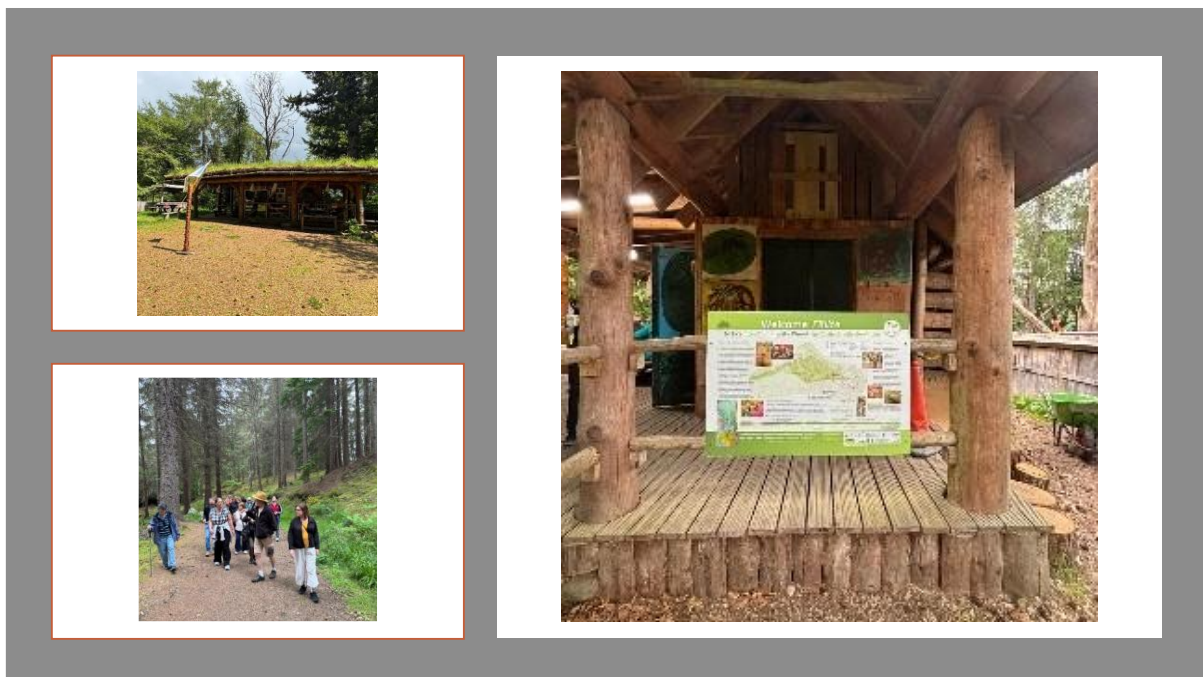
Lesley Mackay from the UHI NWH Centre for Golf has been working closely with staff and residents from The Meadows as part of an innovative golf project for the last couple of years, where students on golf degree programmes and residents from the care home come together for golf activities promoting intergenerational connection, a reconnection with golf for the residents and fun and skill building for all. A recent UHI KE Fund project has been exploring the perceived benefits of dementia inclusive golf and it was great for the UHI team involved to visit the care home location as well as our Canadian visitors. We also visited the Centre for Golf where residents would come on a weekly basis on the home mini-bus to play golf in the state-of-the-art simulation suite at the University campus.



We had the pleasure of being hosted by the Royal Dornoch Golf Club. We heard about the 'Gerries' a self named group of older golfers who meet every Wednesday to play together, and who have found ways to accommodate those living with dementia to continue to play, or in the winter months to meet in the Club House. And we were also treated to a grand tour of the new Club House as well as a walk up to the 17<sup>th</sup> Green with spectacular views.



Our final site visit on the 29 May, was to Evanton Community Woods where we enjoyed meeting members of the Future Fridays group, a group ran for the community by community volunteers. The weather held for us to walk through the woods together with members of the group, and for of those keen to see the gorge (which featured in a Harry Potter movie), we had an extended walk where we also managed to get lost...



We would like to extend our thanks to all the sites we visited for welcoming us to your beautiful settings with such warm Scottish Highland hospitality! We would also like to take the opportunity to our colleagues who helped out 'behind-the-scenes', Moira Prentice, Rachel Phillips Doig and Tanya Hendry.

During the visit colleagues from nursing at UHI met Canadian nursing academics to share and learn about how nursing education is delivered in Scotland and Canada and

we also hosted a one day ‘Rural, Green Health and Dementia Day’ in collaboration with the NHS Education National Centre for Remote and Rural Health Care. Of course, we also made time during the visit to have fun and to share food and beautiful scenery together, and a highlight for our Canadian visitors, a search to find highland cow photograph opportunities!



Ongoing research relationships were extended to include other UHI colleagues and we will continue to work together to take forward discussions we had during the visit to establish an International Green Health Community of Practice.