

## Branching Out Argyll Newsletter January 2017

### The Story So Far

Development work for the project took place in 2015 involving ACT, Forestry Commission Scotland and Community Woodlands Association to bring Branching Out to Argyll. We would like to thank Di Oliver for all her hard work scoping the project and achieving the successful funding applications, which have allowed the project to take place.

ACT set up a steering group representing all the stakeholders, and Sara Maclean was appointed project coordinator in May 2016 to take forward the rollout of 3 years of funding.

Achievements to date:

- 3 years funding
- 16 Leaders trained
- 3 Programmes completed in Mid Argyll, Cowal and Bute
- 1 Programme underway in Oban
- 23 Participants achieved John Muir Awards
- 9 Leaders completed shadowing
- Leaders Day held
- Short film completed



### Participant feedback

*"I never expected anything could have had such a profound effect upon my daily outlook and attitude."*

*"Personal level – this is the best thing that's happened in the last 2 or 3 years for me. "*

*"I look forward to Thursdays so much – keeps me active and off the booze."*

*"I don't get up any other mornings, it makes me feel that I'm worth something – I love it".*

*"I am with people who I feel comfortable with"*

*"I feel accepted"*

### Spotlight on Partnership working

With ACT as the umbrella organisation, each programme involves the set up of a locally-based, integrated team comprising staff from **NHS Highland** Community Mental Health Teams, support workers, Branching Out Leaders, Community Woodland groups and other Third Sector organisations who provide services.

The Mental Health professionals are key individuals who have provided excellent support to and engagement with the project.

One stated, *"Branching Out ticks every box in an Occupational Therapists calendar of goals that can be achieved with our clients with the support of all our support staff and Leaders combined. I am also loving this experience on a personal level - getting to be involved in teaching, encouraging and facilitating development in people's personal lives."*

**Interloch Community Transport**, based in Kilmun, Cowal has also been a key partner in the Bute and Cowal programmes providing a supported door-to-door service for clients who might otherwise struggle with travel. They remarked on the 'transformation' in the outlook of clients over the 12-week programme.

## Project Blog

Something magical happens when you take a group of people into woodland. Labels, anxieties and worries melt away as everyone works together to fulfil the basic needs of shelter and food. These activities underpin every session and we have learned that apparent 'down-time' - like when we all stop for tea - is one of the most valuable and sociable aspects of Branching Out. It is truly rewarding to work with and see a real difference in people; we all learn new things from each other and the sense of camaraderie puts a smile on everyone's faces.

We have made a short film, available here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXE1Pb2xeCs&feature=youtu.be>



## The Strategic View

A lot of work goes on in the background to promote Branching Out and get buy-in from all the partners. Each locality presents its own challenges to find the right location, bring on board the organisations and put the paperwork in place. We have some fantastic resources in Argyll & Bute and amazing people taking the project forward in every area. Branching Out Argyll is a fine example of best practise in service integration, meeting the outcomes of every partner.

### Aims

The aim is to build enough skills and capacity across the region to make Branching Out sustainable so that it can be taken forward at a local level long after the funded period is over.

### Monitoring Outcomes

For consistency we will be using the Edinburgh Warwick scale to evaluate the programmes, and have systems in place to incorporate learning as we go.

### Planned for 2017...

- **Bute and Cowal** – 4 programmes
- **Oban, Lorne and the Isles** – 3 programmes
- **Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay** – 4 programmes
- **Helensburgh and Lomond** – 3 programmes
- **2 Participants gatherings**
- **1 Leaders Event**
- **Continued development of "Moving On" for participants**

## Newsflash!

**Shadowing opportunities** available for Leaders now.  
Tuesdays – Oban and Lochgilphead.  
Get in touch to book your date.

### Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust

[www.act-now.org.uk](http://www.act-now.org.uk) 1 Kilmory Industrial Estate, Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8RR

Email: [branchingout@act-now.org.uk](mailto:branchingout@act-now.org.uk) Tel [ACT]: 01546 602755 Sara Mob: 07788 289537

With thanks to all our partners and funders.



**Branching Out**  
Positive Mental Health Through Nature



**Forestry Commission Scotland**  
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

