

The Wee Blether

Summer 2023



1993 ~ 2023

Improving lives throughout the Highlands for
the last 30 years, through the
power of friendship...

Message from Keith Walker, Convener

Friday 9th June 2023 was an evening which will live long in the memory. We're so grateful to Highland Council and the Inverness Common Good Fund for hosting us at the Inverness Town House for a civic reception to celebrate our **30th anniversary**.



We were joined by some of our partners and funders as well as staff members and directors, but what made the evening so special was that many of our volunteers and friends were there to celebrate with us, along with some of our founders and people who've been with us for a great many of those 30 years.



In 1993 the Inverness Action for Mental Health group set up the first mental health befriending scheme in Scotland. It's grown to become a wonderful pan-Highland organisation which brings friendship to so many people. We were, without doubt, the friendliest gathering of people anywhere in the Highlands that night, and I think we would have a strong claim to be the friendliest organisation too.

It wasn't announced in time for us to celebrate with him at the Reception, but we're all overjoyed that **David Stallard**, one of the founders of Befrienders Highland and for many years our Convener, was recognised in King Charles III's birthday honours with the British Empire Medal for services to mental health in the Scottish Highlands. **Congratulations David, it's such a well-deserved recognition of everything you've achieved!**

Earlier in the year, we started our 30th anniversary celebrations with a 30km run/walk/jog event organised by Jo, one of our directors. Her energy, enthusiasm and considerable organisational skills shone throughout the whole day.

Our sincere thanks go to Jo and to all the wonderful volunteers, participants and supporters who made the event such a success, to the businesses who gave so generously for the participants' goodie bags and especially to An Talla for hosting us on the day.



There will have been many sore feet and aching limbs the next morning, but many happy memories too!

Keith

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or call us on 01463 712 791

Memory and Carer Update Summer 2023

Most of you will be aware that Allana unfortunately left Befrienders Highland at the end of March. We were all very sad to see her go, but as she now works for Connecting Carers, we are delighted that she still gets to keep in touch with us. Allana will no doubt be busy working hard to help Carers across Highland and we all wish her the best of luck in her new role.

As you can imagine it has been a very busy time on the Memory & Carers service with a reduced staff team, and also with Carol taking on some of Susan's responsibilities alongside Alison. This has also meant there has been less time to get out and about to meet people but hopefully things will settle down soon.



Other than that there isn't much really to report from the Memory & Carer service. Carol would just like to wish you all a peaceful Summer and hopefully we'll get some nice sunny weather too.



Sutherland Friends Call joins forces with Befrienders Highland...



During the first pandemic lockdown Voluntary Groups Sutherland started a small befriending project. The project was called **Sutherland Friends Call** and offered telephone befriending across Sutherland for anyone aged over 18 who was lonely or isolated. Sutherland Friends Call continued beyond the pandemic as the need was there.

However, a few months ago Voluntary Groups Sutherland approached Befrienders Highland to discuss the service moving over to us, as it fits more into the Befrienders Highland remit. So we are delighted to say that as of June 2023 Befrienders Highland will now manage, and continue to provide, the Sutherland Friends Call service across Sutherland.

The Friends and Volunteers who moved over to Befrienders Highland shouldn't notice too much difference, except perhaps a change in Coordinator, and the weekly telephone calls and support will remain the same.

For Befrienders Highland it is a great opportunity to work more closely across the Sutherland area. Coordinators Carol Summers and Catherine Patterson will lead on this and are looking forward to taking things forward.

Befrienders Highland staff would like to extend a very warm welcome to all the Friends and Volunteers from Sutherland Friends Call and welcome them to the BHL Team 😊



We are always grateful for any help with fundraising - if you're interested, we'd love to hear from you 😊

Hi everyone!

I hope you're all keeping well and enjoying the summer weather. If the nice weather has inspired you to get fit and active, we have lots of opportunities to get involved in fundraising at Befrienders Highland whilst you take up a new fitness challenge!



We still have spaces available for the [Baxters Loch Ness Marathon 2023](#) taking place on Sunday 1st October 2023. The event follows a stunning scenic route with charity entry having a reduced cost to normal entry.

We would love to have you join Team Befrienders Highland, so please get in contact if you would like to get signed up!

We are also still in our [30FOR30](#) fundraising challenge year, if you would like to start your own challenge whether that be a fitness challenge, baking challenge or something completely different we would love to hear from you!



We also have an exciting fundraising event on **20th July 2023** at the Drumossie Hotel in Inverness. Come along for an evening of whisky tasting with **Ardnamurchan Distillery** who will be presenting cask samples from the distillery and the Adelphi archive. There will also be some fantastic savoury and sweet nibbles to accompany the drams!



During the evening we will also be hosting an auction/raffle with some fantastic prizes to be won. The event is £55 per person, with tickets available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/charity-whisky-tasting-with-ardnamurchan-distillery-tickets-657891429977>.

As always, we'd just like to say a **BIG THANK YOU** ❤️ to all our supporters for helping Befrienders Highland to continue its vital work throughout the Highlands. We couldn't do it without you!

Best wishes

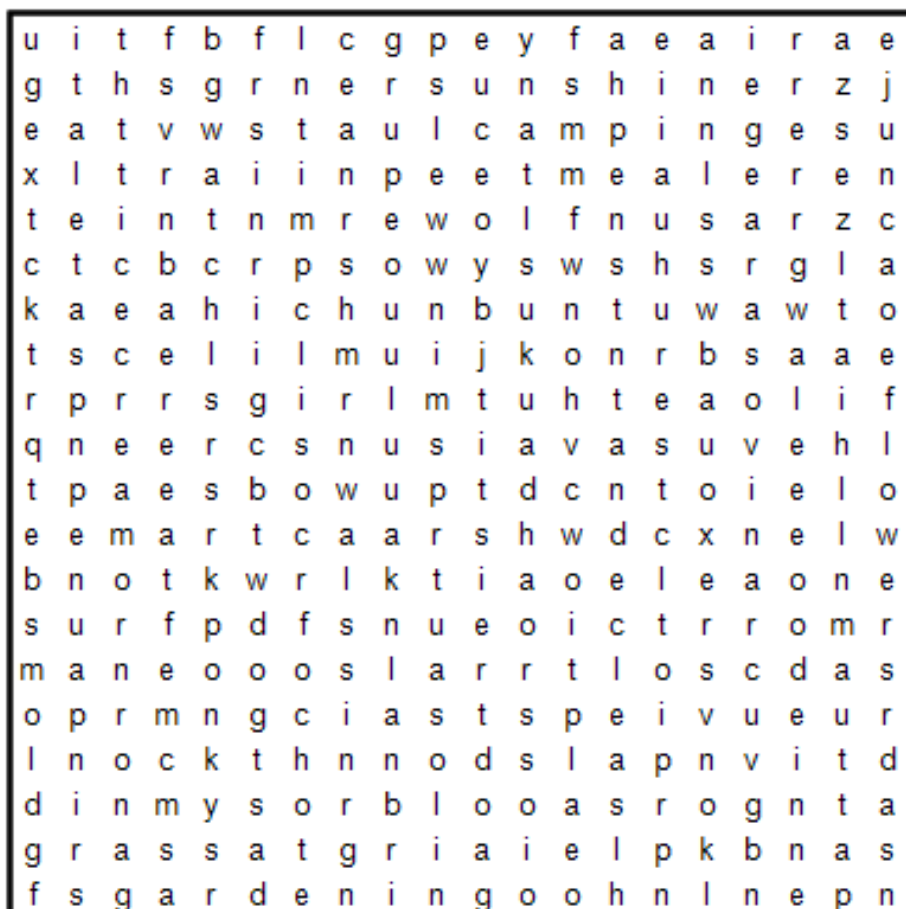
Margaret

margaretgrant@befriendershighland.org.uk





PUZZLE CORNER



BEACH
 CAMPING
 FLOWERS
 GARDENING
 GRASS
 HOT
 HUMID
 ICE CREAM
 OUTDOORS
 SAILING
 SUNFLOWER
 SUNHAT
 SUNSCREEN
 SUNSHINE
 SURF
 SWIMSUIT
 TAN
 TRAVEL
 WATERPARK
 WETSUIT



Try doing these
 mental arithmetic
 sums in your head if
 you can!
 Each answer will be
 a whole number.

Easy										
16	+ 6	x 2	+ 16	÷ 3	+ 6	÷ 2	+ 5	x 4	- 4	?
Moderate										
26	50% of this	x 6	50% of this	x 6	+ 95	- 33	50% of this	- 61	÷ 3	?
Advanced										
37	+ 2	- 19	÷ 2	- 2	x 15	- 39	x 11	- 326	÷ 5	?

The numbers in this box add up to the same total in each direction.

Every row, column and diagonal should add up to 111 but there are some numbers missing!

Fill in the missing numbers (they are all different).

		7
13	37	

Suicide Intervention & Prevention Programme Training Sessions

Befrienders Highland recently provided its members with the opportunity to participate in Suicide Intervention & Prevention Programme (SIPP) training sessions. I have completed a few of these training sessions and always found them really useful.

During one of our discussions on the course we talked about the things that could increase our risk of suicide, some of these internal, and some external. We all agreed that there were many things outside our control that could increase our risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation, these included a range of socioeconomic factors and medical conditions.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies, and political systems.

During our discussion it was acknowledged that we can often have very little influence over many of these things. This can make us feel powerless, frustrated, and angry. These emotions can be detrimental to our health if they are held on to for a long time or if we visit them frequently. Acknowledging that a lot of these factors are out with our control is a great place to start to help us to limit the damage that they can cause.

Quite often in our recovery group, we will examine our situations to see what is controllable and what is uncontrollable. We remind ourselves to focus on the controllable, and to try and let go of the emotions created by the uncontrollable factors.



Adopting **protective factors** that help build mental and physical resilience is another way to protect ourselves. It has been well documented that individuals and communities (Blue Zone Study) that adopt protective factors are more resilient and can enjoy a better quality of life.

During our SIPP discussion, our Convener Keith mentioned some of the work conducted by Prof. Rory O'Connor at Glasgow University's Suicide Behaviour Research Lab. Prof. O'Connor found that it wasn't necessarily the socioeconomic factors or stressful events that determined the impact on one's health and likelihood of anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideation (although they do play a role), but he did find the absence of protective factors increased the risk dramatically.

Adopting certain protective factors is something we all have within our control. These are the things we can do to give ourselves the best chance. They may not seem like much compared to all the big things going on in the world or the major stressful events we encounter in our lives but it's these little things that make the difference when it comes to how we handle things.

Befrienders Highland can support you with some of these things, and for the things we can't help you with, we can certainly point you in the right direction and connect you with organisations that can help.

All the best

Malcolm



Helpful resources:



Available for both Android and iPhone



Provides helpful info for those affected in any way by suicide, extensive contact details for services across the Highland area as well as allowing users to create their own safety plan.

If you need urgent help with suicidal thoughts call:

Samaritans on 116 123 or

Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87

REMEMBER –

You are not alone and help is always available...





International Day of Friendship is celebrated on 30th July and encourages people to connect with friends.

Friendships have a huge impact on your mental health. Spending time with friends can reduce stress and depression and bring happiness into our lives. Good friends can provide comfort and joy and prevent loneliness and isolation.

Meet up with a friend

There is no better way to celebrate International Friendship day than spending some time with your friends. You could go out, grab a coffee, go for a meal, do some shopping, or simply go for a walk.

Tell your friends how much you appreciate them

Friends are some of the most important people in your life. A good friend accepts you the way you are - no matter what - so it's important to tell your friends how much you appreciate them.

Send a gift

You could brighten up your friend's day by sending them a small gift such as flowers or chocolates, or even gifting a small item that means a lot to you. If you enjoy being creative, another idea is to make something for your friend – this could be as simple as making a card to let them know how grateful you are to have them as your friend.

Go on a day trip

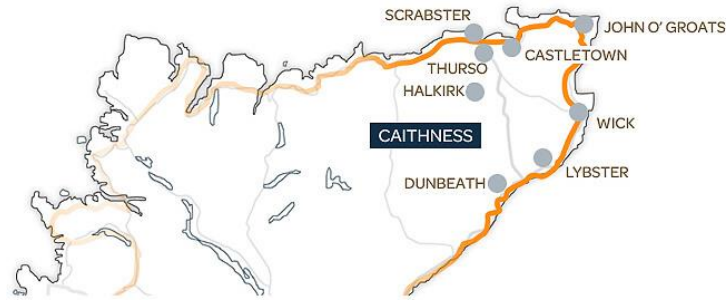
If you get the chance, plan a day out with your friend. You could go to a place where you have memories together or you could spend the day making new memories and having quality time together.

Reach out to an old friend

Why not reach out to a friend you have not seen for a while? You could call them and catch up on their lives, have a laugh and recall memories you have together.



Celebrating 30 years!



Another Grand Day Out in Caithness!

After the last activity day in Caithness where friends and volunteers were invited to take part in a sushi making masterclass, we thought that experience couldn't be beaten, but once again, members of Befrienders Highland in Caithness enjoyed a lovely day out...

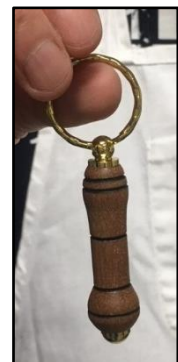
This time, the group headed to **Castlehill Heritage Centre** where they were greeted by Castlehill volunteers, Muriel and Jane. After an informative guided tour, everyone participated in a woodturning workshop provided by the **North Highland Woodturning Association**, who kindly provided everyone with materials to carve their own unique key ring. The one-to-one tuition meant everyone could participate and take home their own creation - it was both educational and great fun!



8 members of Befrienders Highland with Coordinator, Catherine [in blue coat] enjoying the walled garden at Castlehill Heritage Centre



Work in progress on the lathe...



The masterpiece is finished!

After lunch, the group ventured up to **Dunnet Head** to view the puffins and enjoyed an impromptu ice cream from the mobile ice cream van. Although they experienced typical Scottish weather, spirits were not dampened and the entire day brought a breath of fresh air to everyone.



This trip was funded by the TESCO Community Fund in Caithness specifically for social trips for Befrienders Highland members.

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or call us on 01463 712 791

Fascinating facts about...



Did you know that on a hot day in Paris, the Eiffel Tower grows taller?

The tower is constructed from iron and when this is warmed it expands, causing the structure to grow by up to 17 cm.

On 2 June 1975, **snow** showers forced the abandonment of several cricket matches across the country!

The coldest temperature ever recorded in summer in the UK is -5.6 °C recorded on 9 June 1955 in Dalwhinnie, and again on 1 and 3 June 1962 in Santon Downham in Norfolk.

The word 'Summer' comes from the Old English name for the season "sumor" and Roman politician and general Marc Antony named the month of July, in honour of Julius Caesar.



Laughter is the best medicine...

What do sheep like to do in the summer?
Have a Baa-Baa-Cue!

Why do owls prefer summer to winter?
Because it's too-wet-too-woo!

Where do bees stay when they're on holiday?
Air Bee & Bee!

What do you call a sun-burned librarian?
Well red!

Why do lemons wear sun tan lotion?
Because if they don't, they'll peel!



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Mental Health Service Update



We've been enjoying some lovely warm weather over the last few weeks which will hopefully continue for a while. Good weather and longer days tend to lift people's mood and I sincerely hope that has been the case for you.

The Mental Health side of our service continues to be in great demand with referrals coming in all the time. We are trying to process these and match people as quickly as possible but as you know this all takes time and we can only apologise to those still waiting. However, if you are waiting for a Face to Face match (which is the most popular in Inverness) we may be able to offer you a Distance match while you're waiting. Just get in touch with your coordinator if you want to consider this.

In addition to the referrals, our coordinator Allana left at the end of March to pursue a change of job. In the current financial climate, the decision was taken not to replace her, so her referrals and matches have been shared among the existing coordinators thus increasing their workloads. However, we are all dedicated to providing the best service possible and will continue to strive to achieve this for all our volunteers and friends.

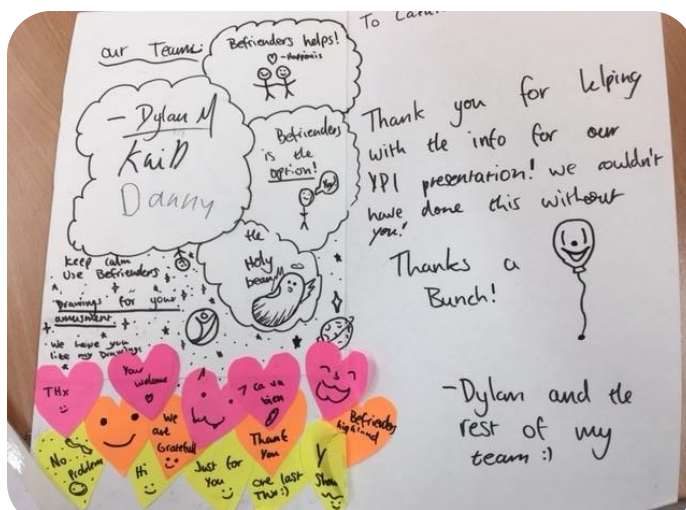
We were also involved with the **Youth and Philanthropy Initiative** again this year. This project is run for S3 pupils throughout Scotland as part of their English studies. Students pick a charity to support, find out what it does and do a presentation to their school with the hope of winning £3,000 for their chosen charity.

We were involved with a number of schools this year and were delighted when St Clement's School in Dingwall won **£3,000 for Befrienders Highland**. The students put a lot of work into their presentation, which was excellent!

Befrienders Highland was also one of two groups selected by S3 pupils of Farr High School for the YPI initiative. After a brilliant presentation by the pupils, unfortunately they were just pipped at the post and were unsuccessful on this occasion.

However, the pupils generously did some fundraising and presented a donation to Befrienders Highland, for which we were very grateful.

We are hugely thankful to all the students involved for choosing to support Befrienders Highland and for doing such a great job!





'Summertime'

Alison Campbell, June 2023

Summertime again, the weather's so hot,
Sunshine all day, great so we thought.
Although the sun shines in the bright blue sky
Not all of us happy, and not knowing why.

The sun may be shining but inside it's dark,
It's cold and uneasy, life's left its mark
On those who the sun finds harder to reach,
The ones who struggle to use their speech.

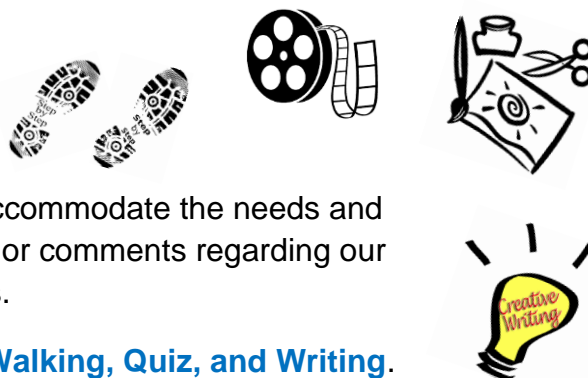
But we are here, we will listen with care,
To all that you say, please know we are there.
You have your safe space to take that first leap,
To use your strength, and courage keep.

It might take a while for the sunshine to come
To shine as strong as it might once have done.
But with talking, caring and empathy there
You will see the sun and people's care.

So summertime is here again,
The sky so blue, no sign of rain.
Smile to yourself for the steps you've taken
The troubles less, and the coldness shaken.
Enjoy the sunshine and how far you've come
And trust and believe in how well you've done!

Other news....

Social and Activity Groups Update



As always, we are trying to develop our groups to accommodate the needs and wants of our members. If you have any suggestions or comments regarding our groups, please contact us and give us your thoughts.

Our current groups are **Cinema, Craft, Recovery, Walking, Quiz, and Writing.**

We also arrange the occasional activity trip, which we are hoping to do more of these in the future.

Communications are one of the challenges we face when it comes to giving out information regarding the groups as things can change week to week so sending updates through the post is not practical or possible sometimes. Email works quite well, but we are aware there are quite a number of people who do not have access to email.

One of the ways we have started keeping people updated regarding the groups is by text message, as the majority of people have a mobile phone. If you would like to be added (or removed) from this text messaging groups update list, please let us know. We can inform you of what's on that week, and if there are any changes.



You will also be able to see details of upcoming groups, activities and events on our Website Notice Board.

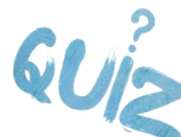
This will show any upcoming training sessions, fundraising events, organised trips, as well as when the next Groups sessions will be held.

<https://www.befriendershighland.org.uk/notice-board>

If you have any questions regarding the groups, please contact Malcolm by phone on 07917 793 131 or via email to malcolm@befriendershighland.org.uk

Online Quiz News...

Most of you will be aware that we've been hosting a regular online quiz, which has proved very popular!



These are hosted in early evening to accommodate the needs of most people. All you need to do is download the free Zoom app and have a pen and paper at the ready! This is a great opportunity to socialize from the comfort of your own home, and meet others in a safe, confidential and informal manner. Our fabulous Quiz Master, Catherine, is taking a break from hosting the quizzes over the summer but will resume again in September.

For more info, you can contact Catherine by phone on 07738 274437 or via email to catherinepatterson@befriendershighland.org.uk

You don't need to be a quiz expert, just a willingness to join in and have some fun!

It's SUMMER Time



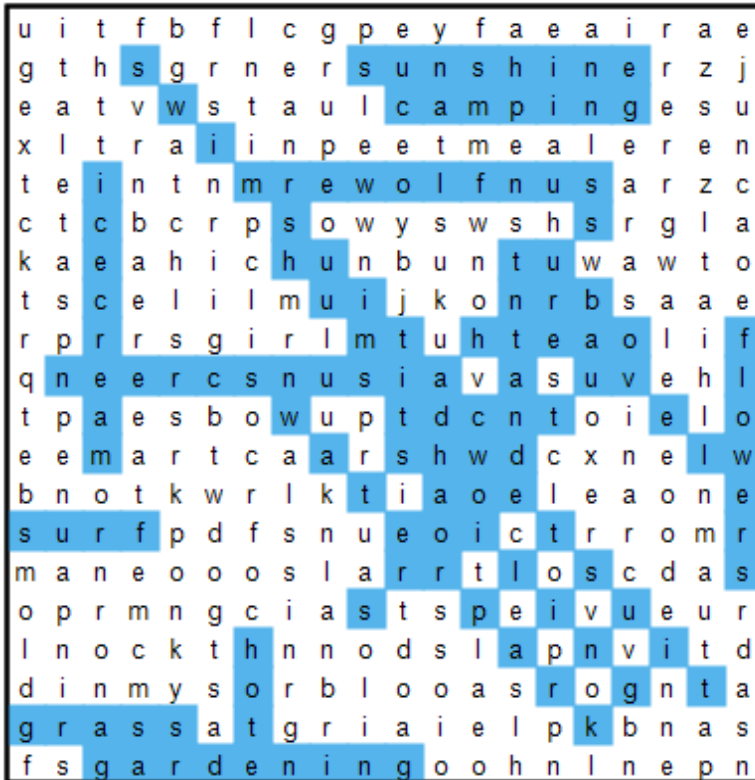
PUZZLE CORNER ANSWERS



If you have enjoyed reading this newsletter and would like more information on how you might get involved and support Befrienders Highland, we'd love to hear from you!

You don't need to commit lots of time but you can help in a range of ways, for example, by volunteering, fundraising, helping us to raise awareness or even providing ad-hoc support at events.

Befrienders Highland is committed to supporting people throughout the Highlands, helping to improve the lives of those who are experiencing mental ill-health, memory loss or dementia, and those who are carers.



31	73	7
13	37	61
67	1	43

Email us: info@befriendershighland.org.uk

Phone us: 01463 712791

Write to us: 1st Floor, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT

Easy										
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Advanced										
37	+ 2	- 19	÷ 2	- 2	x 15	- 39	x 11	- 326	÷ 5	= 113



Annual General Meeting - 2023

You are invited to join us for our Annual General Meeting!

Once again, in addition to the 'in-person' meeting, we will be providing a simultaneous video link, to enable those who live further away from Inverness, or who are unable to attend in person, to join us.

As in previous years, we'll hear updates from staff and Board members and there will be opportunity for you to ask questions.

We will also be celebrating the fantastic achievements of our long-service volunteers.

If you are able to attend in person, there will be a light buffet available during the course of the evening.

Befrienders Highland AGM
Thursday 7th September 2023
6:00pm – 8:30pm

Café Artysans
7 Strothers Lane
Inverness
IV1 1LR

RSVP

In order for us to confirm numbers and to minimise any food waste, please could you let us know, by 31st August, if you would like to join us:

- by phone call to the Inverness office on 01463 712 791 or
- by email to admin@befriendershighland.org.uk

Please also advise if you have any special dietary requirements.

If you're not able to attend in person but would like to join us via Zoom, please let us know by email to the above address, so that we can send you a Zoom link for the event.



Our Convenor's report and financial statements will be available to read in advance. This information can be found on our website.

There will be plenty of opportunity for you to comment or put questions to our Board or staff during the meeting. However, if you would prefer, you can also submit any comments or questions in advance by email or phone, using the contact details above. Please ensure these reach us by 31st August.

We'll look forward to welcoming you at the AGM!

