

## Growing our Greenspace – Polytunnels and Plots



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The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of being outdoors and accessing greenspace. A survey by NatureScot found that 34% of Scottish people now access nature daily compared to 22% prior to the first Covid-19 lockdown.

Greenspace exposure can enhance all aspects of health (physical, mental and social) and has been associated with a greater psychological connection to the natural world, which encourages pro-environmental behaviour. With this in mind, we developed a project proposal in 2021, built on the principles of Realistic Medicine, that would increase the potential for greenspace to deliver better outcomes for health, nature and the climate. In addition to this, we wanted to see further engagement with the local community and primary care across the islands to deliver and develop social prescribing pathways that use greenspace. We also anticipated there would be a focus on increasing the opportunity for older people to use greenspace to maintain personal independence and quality of life by preventing or delaying the onset of frailty and slowing frailty progression. With established links between green space exposure, human health and wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours, we wanted to demonstrate that the project would benefit NHS Orkney patients, staff, visitors and the environment.

Following a competitive process, the project was successful in gaining funding from The Realistic Medicine Value Improvement Fund, NHS Orkney Endowments and the Green Exercise Partnership. And so work began...



**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU**

NHS Orkney are building three polytunnels in The Balfour Hospital grounds.

The polytunnels aim to improve health and wellbeing.

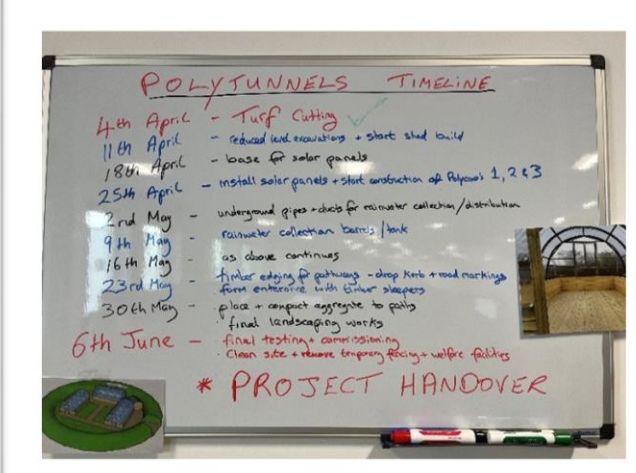
We welcome everyone's feedback.

Complete the survey using the link below or scan the QR code.

<https://forms.office.com/r/K58yhkVntF>




  



**POLYTUNNELS TIMELINE**

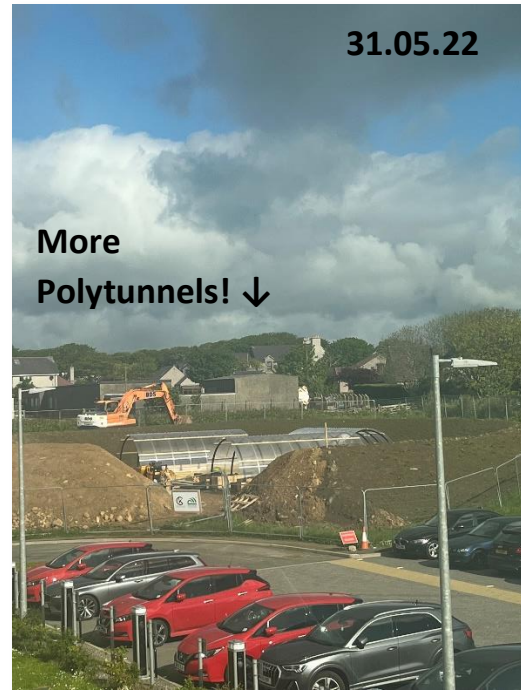
- 4th April - Turf Cutting
- 11th April - reduced level excavating + start shed build
- 18th April - loose for solar panels
- 25th April - install solar panels + start construction of Polypos 1, 2 & 3
- 2nd May - underground pipes + ducts for rainwater collection/distribution
- 9th May - rainwater collection barrels / tank
- 16th May - as above continuous
- 23rd May - finish edging for pathways - deep kerb + road markings
- 30th May - form entrance with timber sleepers
- 6th June - place + compact aggregate to paths
- final landscaping works
- final testing + commissioning
- clean site + remove temporary fencing + welfare facilities

**\* PROJECT HANDOVER**



## The Process

Ground was broken on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022





## The timetable

### *How are people given space and time in the polytunnels?*

At the moment NHS staff contact myself (Sharon) or my assistant to book a plot.

There is an online booking system for staff groups/workshops/therapy/patients etc. We have a dedicated email address for members of the community to book a space [ork.nhsorkneypolytunnels@nhs.scot](mailto:ork.nhsorkneypolytunnels@nhs.scot) and anyone can drop in just to enjoy the surroundings, have lunch or enjoy a relaxing cup of tea.





## Feedback

The feedback received from people has been heart-warming, and has not only reinforced the positive benefit that can be gained from greenspace exposure, but absolutely demonstrates the ethos of Realistic Medicine and Value Based Health and Care.

*“It has been a very busy time lately at work, meaning I have only managed to snatch short spells at the polytunnels. However, I have enjoyed being in the space a great deal, even ten or fifteen minute spells leave me feeling more relaxed and re-energised. Returning to work feeling fresh and positive. I have managed to have my lunch there on one occasion and really enjoy being within the space. I look forward to spending more time there during my breaks as well as before and after work in the future. I was so chuffed to see all of my little seeds sprouting and growing.  
Leigh - Health Visiting Team”*

*“I thought the polytunnel would give me somewhere to go at lunchtime where I might become part of a community at work and also get me into the habit of leaving my desk at lunchtime and actually taking a lunchbreak. So far it has been really helpful in that direction and everyone is very friendly and helpful, and I am looking forward to many positive experiences and feeling more connected at work.*

*Carole - Speech and Language Therapist”*

*“What can I say? I think I am privileged to be able to have two plots - not only for growing plants but also for the whole ambience of the place. My husband, 92, has restricted mobility so we often bring over a sandwich lunch to eat on one of the outside benches. And both of us can “dig”, weed and marvel at the speed of growth of everyone’s plants. It is a delightful space and I’m so looking forward to the dark days of winter. Well done to you for having the vision and determination to see the project through.*

*Thank you so very much. Liz”*

*“We’re thoroughly enjoying having our wee plot, it’s been good to get my partners’ 5-year-old daughter planting fruit and vegetables, to properly understand where all these things come from. It’s so great to have something like this at work, we’re very lucky 😊*

*Many thanks, Nicola”*



## **The future**

Our official open day was in July this year and all our plots have been fully booked for some time now. We will open up plots for booking again at the beginning of next year. We are hoping to start a 'Friends of the polytunnels' group and we already have over 50 names mainly from members of the public who would like to be involved in this.

We are now looking at further greenspace areas within our estate which we can develop. We have already had a member of the public who has developed some spare ground into tattie patches and the gardening company, Ewen McKenzie Gardening Services, and Robertson's FM (who are our partners for the new build hospital) have offered to provide services and funding to further develop the polytunnel greenspace.

Given the relatively short time in which this project has been visualised, developed and completed, the response from NHS Orkney and the wider Orkney community has exceeded all expectations in term of involvement and positive feedback.

This will help shape the continuing evolution of the Polytunnels and adjacent green spaces, developing them and determining the possibilities for their future use and role in helping promote the Greenspace concept as a successful and functional part of Orkney community life.