

Edible trails in Kincardine and Mearns feasibility report (draft)

May 2017

1. Introduction

This reports assesses the feasibility of three proposed edible trails – in Portlethen, Inverbervie and St Cyrus. It suggests that all three pose different challenges and may develop at different times and in different ways but they can all be fantastic spaces in their communities for people to walk, eat and enjoy. Some significant development time with communities has also taken place in the process of this study, exploring how these communities might take the trails forward. This means that there is a good basis for the trails to be developed by local groups with support from other organisations as appropriate.

Th report gives an introduction to the idea of an edible trail and an outline of how this report has developed. It then looks in some detail at each proposed trail with recommendations for how they can be taken forward before concluding with some more general issues such as funding and promotion.

2. Background

Edible trails are public spaces full of plants that produce fresh food each year. People can pick and try this food. The food growing can include fruit trees, berry bushes, herbs, wild foods, perennials and salads . A trail of food growing spaces provides an opportunity for those in the community to try different foods whilst out walking on a specified route which can include urban areas e.g. window boxes. In addition these spaces can provide a focus for community activities including volunteering and education.

Promotion of a local edible trail in Huntly sparked interest with the K&M Community Wellbeing Network in 2015. The group contacted Norma Hunter, the artist involved in the development of the trail, and invited her to attend an information session in K&M. The session was well attended by a range of volunteers and professionals with a number expressing interest in the concept. The group met on several occasions and initial discussions centred on the creation of a coastal trail which might attract

tourists and visitors to the area as well as being a focal point for the local community. It soon became apparent that although the desire to create similar trails in K&M was evident, there was not the capacity to take this forward at the time. In 2016 £2000 was allocated from the Health Improvement Fund to do a feasibility study into edible trails in K and M.

The benefits of walking and healthy eating are well known and need no support here. It is, however, the additional benefits of edible trails that are equally interesting. They provide a focus for asset based community development. Feedback from Incredible Edible Todmorden suggests it is this community development that has been the most significant outcome of this project which has seen a whole community go edible. It has made links between people and different parts of the community, increased skills and confidence and created business and tourism opportunities.

The educational and awareness raising potential of an edible trail are equally important. Norma Hunter mentions allowing people to become aware of where food comes from as a key aim of the Huntly trail. The information on the trail is as important as the plants themselves. In a broader context encouraging community food growing is part of the Sustainable Food Cities movement which looks to create food networks and provision that better meet the emerging demands of environmental change and social justice.

3. The process

A steering group was established to advise on the development of the project. This consisted of Carolyn Lamb (NHS Grampian), Jane Mitchell (Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action), Nikki Lorimer (Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network), Caspar Lampkin (Tangleha Artists).

A community meeting was held in Stonehaven in January 2017 to look at how and where to develop edible trails in the area. This meeting was attended by 24 people from across the area and across sectors with community groups, voluntary organisations, the council, NHS and schools all represented. Community gardening activity and existing local walking groups and paths were mapped (see appendix for more detail here). Based on this level of existing activity and on other criteria of community interest, sustainability, making a difference and inclusion it

was agreed to focus the feasibility study on two areas: Portlethen and Inverbervie/St Cyrus.

As well as working in communities with existing levels of activity in community gardening and walking groups it was agreed that this focus represented an interesting contrast in terms of a town and a more rural context. It was also agreed to build on the interest in local community food growing across the area by producing some guidance on setting up an edible trail and looking more broadly at local food across K and M.

4. Issues common to all edible trails

There are a number of issues that any trail needs to consider:

4.1 Insurance

Insurance is a big consideration for groups developing edible trails. As long as the trail is risk assessed regularly and the group managing the trail do not lead walks on it, people using the trail do so at their own risk and there should be no need for the group managing the trail to take out insurance to cover this. They will need insurance, however, to cover any staff or volunteers working on the trail.

4.2 Environmental health

Discussions with Environmental Health at Aberdeenshire Council were held. The trails would not come under their remit as they are not selling or providing food directly. However, it is advised that any information (brochures etc) relating to the trails should contain appropriate food advice such as washing any food picked before eating.

4.3 Grading of paths

It may be sensible for groups managing paths to grade and sign paths. Paths for All have developed a toolkit for path managers to grade and sign paths appropriately. This is a resource that could be used by the groups managing the trails.

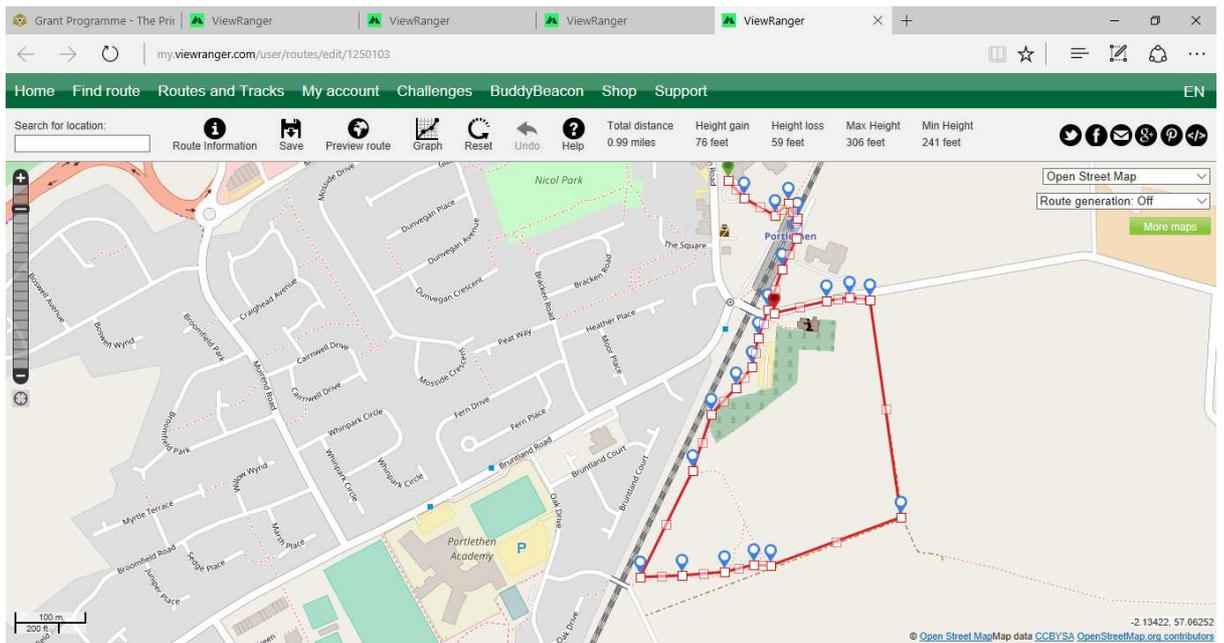
5. The proposed trails

Each trail is introduced and the feasibility discussed under various criteria, including community support, sustainability, access and budgetary considerations

Portlethen trail

5.1 The proposed trail

The trail will begin at the railway station where a local community gardening group are already looking after the planters. It will take in Portlethen primary school before moving over the bridge past the health centre. Past the church it will go through the community woodlands. There will then be an option to go beyond the woodland and down a lane and back past the church. For those with more limited mobility the trail could go back through the woodland to the train station. See map below



5.2 Community support

The trail has good support from local community groups. The Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network(MCHLN) gardening group already work with the local primary school and at the railway station and are

keen to be involved. This group consists of 9 volunteers supported by a member of staff. The Portlethen Moss group manage the community woodland and are keen to be involved in developing edible elements here. Portlethen primary school already work with the MCHLN: the school garden will be part of the trail (once access issues have been resolved – there has been problems of vandalism here before). Pupils from the school may also volunteer on other parts of the trail.

5.3 Support from other organisations

The Aberdeenshire Council ranger, Helen Young, is keen to support the trail. She is involved with a project planting wild pollinators across Portlethen, including edible herbs, and this could be part of the trail. She can also advise on the wild edibles on the trail.

The trail fits in with a range of other walking and physical activities in Portlethen coordinated by the community sports hub and supported by Aberdeenshire Council Active Communities. It could form part of the proposed physical activity website Go Portlethen and could link in with the recently completed treasure map being done by the North Kincardine Arts Project.

Portlethen has been designated an Integrated Travel Town. The trail could fit in with this development supported by Aberdeenshire Council.

Graded medal walking routes are being developed out of each health centre in Aberdeenshire. Supported by NHS Grampian and the Ramblers Association this trail could link in with these routes.

Community Council through member Paul Melling said they are happy to support.

5.4 Ongoing maintenance and sustainability of the trail

The path and its edible elements will be supported primarily through the Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network , Portlethen primary school, the Portlethen Moss group and the Aberdeenshire Council ranger service.

5.5 State of path

The trail is in part along roads and through the station. The path through the community woodland is in good repair and maintained by Portlethen Moss group. An extension of the trail could take in the road going past

the top of the woodland and then down a track past the church. This track is in rougher condition.

5.6 Ownership

The MCHLN have adopted the train station planters and beds from Scotrail.

Helen Young is discussing with the church putting wild pollinators at bottom of drive up to the church.

Portlethen Moss manage the community woodland in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council.

The ownership of the track is unknown and could be explored.

The other elements of the trail should be unproblematic.

5.7 Edible elements

The school already has a community gardening group and discussions with the deputy head, Laura Watson, suggest that access to parts of the school grounds should not be a problem though previous problems with vandalism do need to be considered

The gardening group at the station have already started to plant edibles for this season. They could build on edible planters at Laurencekirk station.

There is the possibility of edible plantings in health centre grounds though this needs to be worked on with the health centre.

Helen Young is involved with a project spreading wild pollinating herbs in the church grounds.

There are lots of wild edibles in community woodland, including trees, berries, wild garlic. There would also be the scope to plant some fruit trees in the woodland.

The road at top of community woodland has berries and gorse.

5.8 Accessibility

The trail should be largely accessible for all groups. The footbridge at the railway station can be avoided by going over the road bridge. The track coming down from the top of the woodland is rougher and would be difficult for some people. This could be avoided by completing a round of the woodland.

It would be good to explore how the trail could be made dementia friendly and link in with proposed walk developments through Dementia Friendly Portlethen. Kate Gray from Dementia Friendly Aberdeenshire has said that she is willing to discuss making the trail dementia friendly.

5.9 Budget for development

There should be no major costs attached to the actual development of the trail since the trail builds on existing activities. A full budget will be put together by the group applying for funding to develop the trail. Costs may include:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Plants | £500 |
| Signage | £2000 |
| Publicity | £500 |
| Development worker time | £2000 |

5.10 Next steps

The proposed trail is well supported, there are no ownership issues apparent and the budget for development should be relatively small.

Since the proposed trail here is a partnership project between various groups a decision needs to be made on a group who can take on the management of the trail and apply for funding. A group of key partners should continue to meet to coordinate development of the trail. Elements of the trail are already developing and the trail as a whole could launch in spring 2018. MCHLN have indicated they may be able to take this lead role though this needs to be confirmed.

There may be a need to employ a development officer to coordinate this work. The group could work with AVA and KDP to identify and apply for funds here.

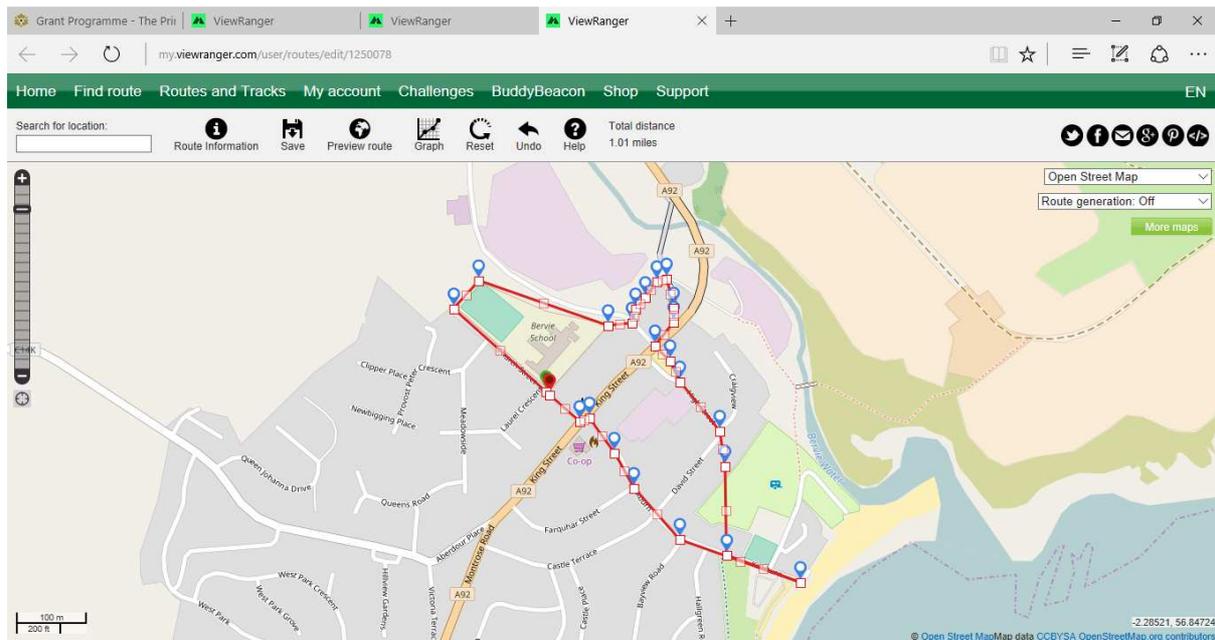
Work should continue with CLD and Portlethen Academy on involvement of pupils in development of an app for the trail.

6. Inverbervie trail

6.1 The proposed trail

The trail would essentially follow the route of the existing sculpture trail which has been developed by Brighther Bervie. Starting at the Voyage of

Life Garden it passes the school and health centre, takes a path round the back of the village, through to the Cutty Sark garden and then down to the beach via the RNLI garden. There is a garden down at the beach. The trail would then come up again to its starting point, past the care home and fire station both of which have potential for edible plantings. See map below:



6.2 Community support

The trail would be developed and maintained by Brighter Bervie, a community gardening group. It would add to its existing sculpture trail.

Inverbervie primary school is also happy to support. Its garden backs onto the trail and could form part of it. Children could also be involved as volunteers. Links have been made between the school and Brighter Bervie here.

The community council was supportive of the project as presented at a community council meeting on 10th April.

6.3 Support from other organisations

The council ranger, Helen Young, is happy to support with identifying wild edibles and has met with the group.

Graded medal walking routes are being developed out of each health centre in Aberdeenshire. Supported by NHS Grampian and the Ramblers Association this trail could link in with these routes. Brighter Bervie are exploring links regarding a joint leaflet.

The care home is keen to get involved, both in terms of using its outside space but also in terms of the residents there being involved in the project. This is something that could be taken forward with the Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network.

The fire station is happy for its forecourt to be used for tubs with edibles as long as there is some flowering interest involved.

6.4 Ongoing maintenance and sustainability of the trail

The trail will be maintained by the Brighter Bervie group with support from other local groups such as the primary school. The Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network might be able to help with working with the care home and make links between the trail and its gardening group and gardening service and a possible new health walking group in the village.

The council already maintain the path going past the health centre round the back of the village.

6.5 State of path

The trail is in large part along roads and tarred surfaces. It would be good if the trail could go through health centre rather than round the side as this lane seems to be used by the local garage to park cars. However, this seems unlikely to change as this would result in a loss of carparking space in the health centre. An alternative is for the path to go round to the left of the garage. The path round the back of the health centre which runs past the back of the village is generally good. The council have committed to prune trees along this path. The path from the RNLI garden down to the beach is again uneven and involves steps. An alternative would be to follow David Street along to the road going down to the beach.

6.6 Ownership

As the trail is already used as a sculpture trail it shouldn't present any ownership issues

6.7 Edible elements

The Voyage of Life Garden already has herbs and some fruit trees.

The school garden can be planted with edibles.

The heritage garden, Cutty Sark garden, RNLI garden and beach garden could all be planted with edibles.

There could be edible plantings at the care home and in the forecourt of the fire station.

Helen Young can assist in identifying wild edibles, including edibles at the beach. There are wild cherries on path round back of village.

6.8 Accessibility

The trail is not fully accessible at the moment. The path from the RNLI garden down to the beach needs significant work for this to happen. This could be built into funding application if possible. Alternatively another route could be found by David St along to the road going down to the beach.

Brighter Bervie have met with Kate Gray to discuss how to make all of their projects more dementia friendly.

6.9 Budget for development

With Brighter Bervie behind this trail and the route already established there should be no major costs in developing it. Brighter Bervie are developing a detailed budget. Some costs may be:

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| Plants | £500 |
| Signage | £2000 |
| Equipment | £500 |

6.10 Next steps

With good community support, a group ready to lead on the project and an existing sculpture trail already in place, this trail could be developed fairly quickly and launched in spring 2018.

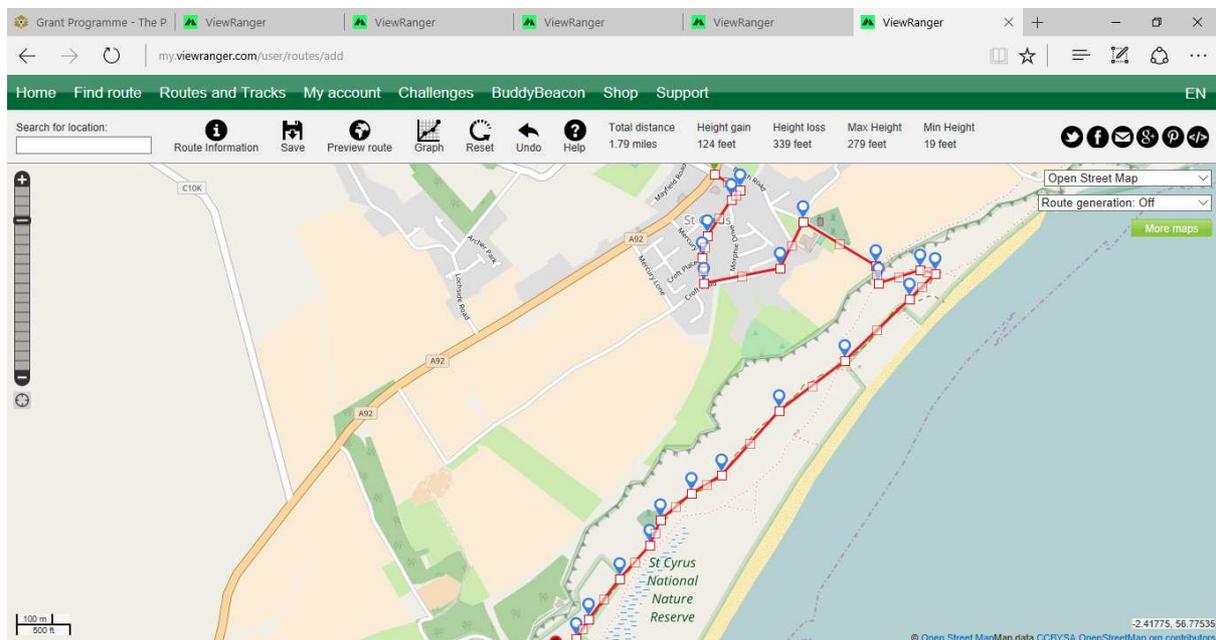
Brighter Bervie will take on the management of the trail and are already in the process of applying for funding. This process can be supported by AVA and KDP.

Links are already established between Brighter Bervie and MCHLN and other various partners who can support the trail. A working group could continue to meet in the development of the trail.

7. St Cyrus trail

7.1 The proposed trail

Given the community growing activity in St Cyrus and existing routes in the National Nature Reserve (NNR) it was decided to look at a trail linking the village with the visitor centre at the NNR. The proposed trail would start at the bus stop opposite the village hall, go through the community garden and old railway line, back round past the school and down to the clifftops. Here the trail would go down the cliffpath or alternatively down the more accessible donkey path. It would then follow the path through the NNR towards the visitor centre. It could take in the flowery meads trail already established near the centre. It would finish at the visitor centre. See map below.



7.2 Community support

The trail is supported by the Tangleha Artists and Embark Forest School, as well as other community members involved in the community garden.

The school is not able to be involved in the trail at this stage.

7.3 Support from other organisations

The NNR is supportive of the project and willing to be involved in a trail that includes part of the NNR. It is also happy to do an edible plantings bed near the visitor centre and support community activity in the village.

The council ranger is happy to support the project, particularly with identifying wild edibles.

7.4 Ongoing maintenance and sustainability of the trail

The trail could be maintained by the NNR and the Tangleha artists group with support from other community members.

7.5 State of path

The trail through the village is in mixed condition. Through the old railway line it would need some work to be fully accessible, particularly at the far end going onto Morphie Drive. The cliff path down to the beach is to be walked with care, even for those who are fit. The donkey path is more accessible though this would involve some walking back across the sandy beach. The path through the NNR is good but uneven in places and the flowery mead trail is off the main track and quite uneven.

7.6 Ownership

There may be some issues of ownership here.

It is unclear who owns the community garden or the old railway line though they are clearly used by the community.

7.7 Edible elements

At the bus stop there are already edible plantings, including rosemary.

The community garden is large with lots of opportunity for edibles.

The old railway is already planted with some fruit trees and has wild edible trees and berries.

The trail through the NNR mainly consists of medicinal plants, some of which would be edible as well. As an NNR people couldn't pick these plants in the reserve but the NNR has said they could make a bed of plants next to the visitor centre which people could sample.

7.8 Accessibility

There would be various points at which this trail could be inaccessible to various groups. The path through the old railway line needs improvement for wheelchair users. The cliffpath would not be accessible to anyone who is not quite fit and sure footed. The alternative route down the donkey path is still quite uneven and involves crossing the sandy beach. The path through the NNR, particularly through the flowery meads trail, may not be accessible to some groups. The NNR part of the trail may best be approached from the visitor centre end.

7.9 Budget for development

The NNR side of this trail could go ahead with few additional resources with the NNR happy to create a new bed next to the visitor centre and promote the trail along existing walks. The village side would need some more investment, particularly looking at the path through the old railway. As said above for the ongoing sustainability of the trail it would be good to get more community involvement in its development so there is a case for some further development time here. An accurate budget would need to be developed by the group managing the trail.

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Development time | £2000 |
| Path improvements | Await audit of path |
| Plants | £500 |
| Signage | £2000 |
| Publicity | £500 |

7.10 Next steps

There's great potential in a St Cyrus trail linking the village and NNR, with further long term links along the coastal path up to Inverbervie. However, there is a need to do further community engagement work in the village to find out what people would like to see and get more people involved in the trail. Otherwise there may be problems with the ongoing

sustainability of the trail. There's also the need to clarify some ownership issues and look at access issues, particularly along the old railway line.

It would be good to seek funding for some community engagement work in St Cyrus. This could be taken forward by Tangleha Artists who are already involved in the community garden in the village. Support could also be found from Living Streets (<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/>) who work with communities to look at ways in which their environments can be made as pedestrian and cycle friendly as possible.

Local groups involved in the trail should continue to meet supported by other organisations.

A group should be identified to manage the trail and apply for funds.

8. Branding and marketing of trails

It would seem sensible to promote the trails under a common brand which could then include any new trails. This promotion could be managed by the different group involved coming together or through an organisation which covers the whole area such as KDP or MCHLN.

9. Use of technology

The trails provide opportunities to use technology to add to the experience of people walking the trails. As well as information boards at various points on the trails an augmented reality app accessible through a smartphone could add further background and information. Exploratory discussions have been held with a design company in Aberdeen, Creative Core, and they would be interested in being involved, working alongside communities and schools in particular to develop the app.

As with the branding and marketing it would seem sensible for one organisation to take this forward across the area.

10. Gathering evidence of benefits of the trails

Obviously different funders may ask for different evidence regarding the impact of the trails. However, smartphone technology could provide a useful way to capture some of the use of the trails, either through recording of numbers using augmented reality above described above or through other walking apps such as the medal routes app.

11. Possible funding sources

There are a range of possible funding sources for the development of the trails. The trails will contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes as well as environmental, community development and heritage outcomes. Groups developing the trails should work closely with local support organisations such as AVA and KDP to identify sources of funding as these are changing all the time. In particular there may be local sources of funding through community funds, the area committee, health improvement, participatory budgeting and community planning.

Some potential sources of funding at the moment are:

Paths for All Community Path grants up to £1500

<http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pfa/support/community-path-grants.html>

North East Scotland Fisheries Local Action Group (for Inverbervie/St Cyrus)

<http://nesflag.org.uk/>

Climate Challenge Fund

<http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainability-climate-change/climate-challenge-fund/>

Scottish Community Food and Health

<https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/funding/cfhs-funding-opportunities/annual-development-fund/>

LEADER

<http://salag.org.uk/>

Big Lottery Awards for All

<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/awardsforallscotland>

Heritage Lottery Fund

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/what-we-fund>

12. Recommendations and next steps

Recommendations for what happens next regarding each trail are contained within the section on that trail.

Other broader recommendations for next steps are:

Explore how a partnership of trails or one overarching organisation might take on the promotion, branding, design and technology issues related to the trails.

Link in with cookery demonstrations and teaching – for example Confidence to Cook. Carol Shea who runs a local cookery business has also offered to help with showing how the produce on the trail can be used to make a meal.

Explore how the use of perennial edibles and permaculture design can make the trails more sustainable and easier to look after.

Working with groups involved in trails produce information for other communities who may want to set up a trail