

News and Views

From the National Autistic Society
Scotland and our volunteers

Summer 2024

Construction begins at Catrine Bank to install our Chelsea Flower Show Garden!

Work has begun to relocate the National Autistic Society's RHS Chelsea Flower Show Garden to our supported living services for autistic people in Catrine, East Ayrshire.

The garden was selected last year as a show garden for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and it was created by co-designers Sophie Parmenter, of Sophie Parmenter Studio, and Dido Milne, Director of CSK Architects.

Sponsored by Project Giving Back, the garden is designed to explore the experiences of autistic people. The theme of the garden is 'masking', which highlights the way that some autistic people hide their autistic traits in order to fit in and be accepted in society. It won a Silver Gilt Award at the Show in May this year.

The relocation of the garden to our Supported Living Services in Catrine Bank and Daldorch House will allow the 46 supported individuals, their families, and the 257 members of staff working at the services to enjoy spending more time outside in nature. The location also means that it will be accessible for members of the community to enjoy.

Paul Cooke, Interim Head of Services, said:

"We are absolutely delighted that the National Autistic Society Garden is being relocated to our services. The Daldorch Estate where our Catrine Bank and Daldorch House services are based is a really special place, we have picturesque grounds which border the river Ayr and many of the people we support love to spend time outside in nature. Having a new space where the autistic people we support, their families and our staff can take time to relax and connect with one another is such an exciting prospect."



Find out more at:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/acceptance-and-awareness/rhs-chelsea-flower-show>

CONTENTS

PAGE 3

Update from our Director and Embrace Autism Funding.

PAGE 4

The recent Art Reimagined Exhibition, and TV Show recommendations.

PAGE 5

The latest from Autism Support Ayrshire and the Highland Information Service.

PAGE 6

A poem from Robert, a member of our 'Connections' project, and a story from Fiona, a NAS member.

PAGE 7

Fundraising, including a story from Moving Forward's recent Spectrum Walk.

PAGE 8

Meet our staff, including an interview from David, General Administrator, and an introduction to Alexandra, Policy and Public Affairs Officer.

FROM OUR EDITOR

Back in May, the National Autistic Society had a show garden at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Created by Sophie Parmenter and Dido Milne (and sponsored by Project Giving Back), this garden is designed to represent "masking" and how autistic people experience this in various parts of their lives. It does so by having three socializing spaces surrounding a central personal area, with these areas separated by walls of cork and timber. A simple, but effective, idea.

Gardening is an activity plenty of autistic people like doing, as it involves routines and specialized knowledge. Additionally, there is tangible results in one's work in the activity. Although I am not one of those people, I do have respect for those who grow their own plants.

The garden has been moved to one of the National Autistic Society's support living sites at Catrine Bank, in Ayrshire.

Gordon Wallace

Editor



Gordon's illustration of the Chelsea Flower Show Garden

EMBRACE AUTISM

Project secures a further 12 months of funding!

We are delighted to announce that our Embrace Autism Project has secured a further 12 months of funding from Inspiring Scotland.

The Embrace Autism programme was created in partnership with Autistic Knowledge Development (AKD), and it aims to support autistic adults who are looking to explore their autistic identity and learn how to navigate life post diagnosis (formal or self-diagnosis).

Participants can attend an online series of group sessions, where autistic adults will share their experiences and build connections with each other.

A suite of online videos were also created for the project, which provide autistic adults with an understanding of important topics such as identity, masking, relationships, and reasonable adjustments.



Want to sign up or find out more?
Email the team at:
EmbraceAutismScotland@nas.org.uk

update

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Hello everyone, and welcome to the Summer edition of *News & Views*!

I am delighted to see that work has started to relocate the incredible RHS Chelsea Flower Show Garden to our services in Catrine. The garden presents an opportunity for the autistic people we support, their families, and staff, to spend time in a calm, beautiful, and relaxing outdoor space.

The new garden will provide a very versatile space, which can be enjoyed in many ways. The garden is a space for everyone. Whether a person prefers to spend time alone, with a friend, or in a larger group, they will all find somewhere that works for them within the garden.

The extensive news coverage of the garden has brought attention to the garden's important theme of 'masking', promoting understanding of the experience that many autistic people face. It is great to see that more awareness is being drawn to the topic, due to the way it was represented within the garden's design.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Holland".

Rob Holland
Director of National Autistic Society Scotland

Fantastic artwork showcased at the Art Reimagined Exhibition!

The exhibition for our Art Reimagined project took place between the 1st and the 6th of July. The project provides autistic young people the opportunity to attend group sessions where they learn a variety of different art forms such as collage, printmaking, illustration, painting, and sculpting. The sessions take place at the Project Ability art studio in Glasgow City Centre.

For each member of the project, between 8 to 10 pieces of artwork were displayed. The exhibition included many art forms, including drawing and mark-making, still life painting, collage, lino printing, poster design, sculpture, zine illustration, and individual interest workshops.

Many people attended the opening event, including funders, NAS staff, friends and family of members, and Project Ability staff.



Emily in front of her artwork

Well done to all the young people involved!

Some great TV show representation!

Autism representation in TV shows can be very hit or miss, but two shows have stood out to us this year for offering realistic portrayals of the autistic experience.

Back in April, the first season of 'Dinosaur' launched on BBC. 'Dinosaur' features Nina, an autistic palaeontologist, as she navigates change in the build up to her sister's wedding. The show is set in Glasgow and features familiar locations such as Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Both adults and

young adults will love this light-hearted comedy drama.

Later in the month, the highly anticipated second season of 'A Kind of Spark' released. 'A Kind of Spark' is based on a novel by Elle McNicholl, an autistic children's book author. The show follows 'Addie', an 11-year-old autistic girl as she campaigns for what she believes in. Whether it's Season 1's witch trial memorial, or Season 2's restoration of an old bookshop, Addie gives her all to the things she cares about. The show is a delight to watch, for children and adults alike.



A Kind of Spark

New team, same great service

The Autism Support Ayrshire Team have been through a few changes recently, having secured funding from North, South and East Ayrshire Health and Social Care partnerships for the next three years. The team have also seen a change in staff, moving to a team of three.

Patsy Devlin (left in photo) is our new Manager. Patsy has worked for the National Autistic Society for over five years supporting the Branches network across Scotland, prior to joining the ASA team. Georgia Haygreen (centre of photo) is our new Project Co-Ordinator. Georgia previously worked for our Catrine Bank Service and was a Project Worker for the Autism Support Service. Lynsey McCabe (right in photo) completes the team as our new administrator. Lynsey comes with a wealth of experience from the NHS.



Autism Support Ayrshire Team

The new team provide free and confidential information, advice and guidance to autistic individuals, parents & carers and professionals across Ayrshire. (no diagnosis is required).

For further information please email the team at: autismsupportayrshire@nas.org.uk

Highland Information Service



Our Highland Information Service (together with partner charity Thriving Families) run regular online training events. Although the livestreams are limited to those living in Highland, all of the events are filmed and can be watched afterwards by anyone across Scotland. The recent May session was very informative, covering important topics such as Education Law and Rights.

Past events can be watched here: <https://www.thepineshighland.com/archive-recordings>

Robert's poem: Understanding Autism

A member of our 'Connections' project, Robert, wrote this poem about being autistic.

'A 44-Year-Old Man Who was Diagnosed at an age when Life was to Begin

Whose Knowledge of the Autism Book is still a bit Thin

My Communication Skills at the moment are certainly not the Best.

The 100mph Troubles that take over my head never seem to Rest.

Until a Monday Afternoon at 3 o'clock

I no longer feel like I'm in court sat at the Dock.

The feeling of Judgment and Worry leaves, the calmer felt tone.

My Voice may remain silent, but I don't feel alone.

The Importance of understanding autism is massively underrated and hard enough in the world we live, so if there's opportunities such as an Online Connections Group, that helps autistic people connect with each other, to help us release and talk about our week in the most relaxed environment, then that's something that needs to be here now, tomorrow and many more days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

I Appreciate every Second.

Thank you.

Robert'

Fiona's story: Special Award win!

A NAS member, Fiona, shared this story about winning a Special Achievement Award.

'On Friday the 15th of March, my mum and I went along to the annual Aberdeenshire Sports Awards held at Hailstone Exchange in the evening. We sat down and enjoyed a lovely dinner. We listened to two guest speakers speaking about their sporting experiences, then we quietly listened out as they called out each award one at a time. Then right at the end was my category, and me and mum listened out for my award. To my delight and lovely surprise, they had chosen me for the special achievement award. I got to go up on stage and I got presented with a lovely glass trophy and I made a nice speech thanking everyone who go me this far. I got some professional pictures taken alongside my sponsors.'



Fiona with her award

Spectrum Walk success!



Spectrum Walk

Our Moving Forward+ with Cashback team organised an amazing Spectrum Walk, raising over £600!

The walk took place on the 5th of April, where the Moving Forward team walked 5k around Glasgow Green with some of the young people supported by the programme.

Despite the heavy rain, it was a great morning, and it was enjoyed by everyone involved.

Moving Forward+ supports autistic 10-25-year-olds from deprived areas of West Central Scotland. The programme aims to help participants to develop confidence and resilience and assist them to achieve their goals,

which may include re-engaging with education, moving into employment, training or voluntary work.

Bailey from the Moving Forward Team said:

'Increasing acceptance of autism throughout our society is key to changing the lives of all autistic people for the better, and there are a variety of reasons why we chose to walk for World Autism Acceptance Week 2024. Some of us took part for a bit of fun, while others wanted to fundraise for the National Autistic Society Scotland.'

Meet Our Staff

We interviewed David, General Administrator for our Glasgow office



Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I'm David, I'm 34 years old, and I'm from Fife. I am a smallholder, a traditional musician, and an autism campaigner.

Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?

I'm a very passionate supporter of what the National Autistic Society have been doing, and it is great to be part of such a superb team of people. Everyone in the National Autistic Society Scotland is as passionate as I am about creating a country where every autistic individual feels happy and supported.

Q: What needs to change to make things better for autistic people?

We need to create a society that is truly accepting of every single autistic individual, their needs, and their talents. We need to create a country where autistic people can be supported, happy, ambitious, and successful. We need to celebrate, value, and embrace the talents of everyone who is autistic and ensure their talents are made good use of.

We interviewed Alexandra, our new Policy and Public Affairs Officer



Q: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I'm originally from Leicester, and I moved to Glasgow for university, where I studied Russian and East European studies. I've always had an interest in politics and human rights.

Q: Why did you join the National Autistic Society?

As an autistic person, I know the challenges that autistic people face in Scotland, and I wanted to put my own experience into contributing to the work of the National Autistic Society.

Q: What needs to change to make things better for autistic people?

People need to be willing to listen to what autistic people want, and be willing to do something about it. A big part of this comes from acceptance and understanding of autism, as this is the main barrier to progress being made.

Job opportunities

Do you...

- want a rewarding job that offers satisfaction, variety and flexibility?
- enjoy working with people and want to make a real difference?
- have excellent life skills that you can share?

To find out about our current vacancies and more opportunities with the National Autistic Society Scotland, please visit www.autism.org.uk/jobs or contact our HR team at scotlandHR@nas.org.uk

Are you a member of the National Autistic Society Scotland?

If not, you can join our growing community of over 1,200 people in Scotland and play a vital role in our charity's work. Our package of benefits includes our quarterly members' magazine, *Your Autism*, and discounts on our events. To find out more, please call our Supporter Care team on **0808 800 1050**.

About us

The National Autistic Society Scotland is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

We transform lives by providing support, information and practical advice for the 56,000 autistic adults and children in Scotland, as well as their family members and carers.

Autistic people turn to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.

We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face.

We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

We have come a long way but it is not good enough.

There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the autism spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.