

Strength and Balance Training for Walk Leaders



Uist and Barra Community Health Walk Leaders were blessed with glorious sunshine for their Strength and Balance for Walk Leaders training on the 2nd and 3rd April.

Laura Mackay, Health Improvement Practitioner and “Walk On Hebrides” Co-ordinator, travelled to Barra on the 2nd to deliver the training for current Walk Leaders Lianne Macinnes and Linda Campbell, who support a Walk on Hebrides Health Walk from Gàradh a' Bhàgh a' Tuath each Friday. (pictured practising the 'Toe Walking' exercise)

The Strength and Balance for Walk Leaders training, gives our Walk Leaders the confidence to demonstrate Otago Strength and Balance exercises to those attending their Health Walks. These exercises are promoted by Paths for All, as they are designed to support adults to maintain the strength and balance needed to walk without assistance and maintain their independence. The exercises feature modifications for those who currently struggle with their balance, including chair-based variations for those who cannot stand.

Laura Mackay continued on to Uist on the 3rd April, to deliver the Strength and Balance training at Grimsay Community Centre, where Anne Wilson and Simon Davies lead a Health Walk each Wednesday. We also welcomed Rosie Moar, Tagsa Uibhist, who leads a Health Walk from The Beacon at Lochboisdale each Monday, and new Walk Leaders to the project Peter Wentz, Sara Stewart and Leanne Fuller. Sara is also the new Community Engagement Officer for the Grimsay Centre, so will be taking a more active role with their walks soon.

Leanne and Simon are already involved in guided walks in other areas of the island, Simon has written books on local natural history, and guides walkers through local Archaeological sites of interest.

Barra Walk Leaders practising the 'Toe Walking' exercise: Lianne Macinnes and Linda Campbell



Strength and Balance training held on Grimsay (L-R): Rosie Moar (Dementia Support Worker, Tagsa Uibhist), Sara Stewart (Grimsay Community Engagement Officer), Simon Davies (Walk Leader) and Peter Dense (Walk Leader).

Marion Matheson, Health Improvement Practitioner, Uist and Barra also attended the training in Grimsay, to introduce herself as a local support for new and existing Walk Leaders of the Walk on Hebrides project. We will be delivering the training to Leaders in Lewis later this month.

Laura Mackay's attendance at a Strength and Balance Train the Trainer course in Stirling, and this subsequent training to upskill our Walk Leaders was made possible from a successful funding bid to the Paths for All – Walking for Health Fund last August. Paths for All have been

impressed with the breadth of Health Walks delivered under the project since its inception in 2006 and have included “Walk on Hebrides” as a Case Study for their work with the Scottish Government to establish the next stage of the National Walking Strategy.

If anyone is interested in becoming a Walk Leader, or would like more details of Health Walks available in their area, please contact Laura MacKay, laura.mackay15@nhs.scot for Lewis and Harris or Marion Matheson, marion.matheson1@nhs.scot for Uist and Barra.

