



To our members and volunteers having a birthday this month, we wish you a very

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

One of the December birth flowers is the narcissus.

They represent hope, wealth and good fortune for the new year.

Community Connections

North Berwick Coastal

December 2023



'Winter scene taken from a train speeding away from North Berwick' - Ruth

Welcome December

As we step into the final month of the year, our hearts are filled with a blend of excitement, reflection, and anticipation. December, a month synonymous with festive celebrations and the warmth of the holiday season, brings with it a spectrum of emotions for each of us. In this December edition, let's embrace the magic of the season, share in the joy of connection, and extend our hearts to those who may need it most. We share highlights from our To Absent Friends Festival and a heartfelt farewell to Carol as she moves on to new adventures mid-December.

Community Connections would like to wish you a December filled with warmth, understanding, and memorable moments. We'd also like to take the chance to thank you for all the support you have given us throughout 2023. We are incredibly grateful for the support NBCCC receives.

- Ruth Fraser



Celebrations in December

- **Advent Begins - 1st**
The 24 days leading up to Christmas
- **International Day of People with Disabilities - 3rd**
A day to recognize and value the diversity of our global community, and cherish the role we all play
- **Elf Day - 6th**
A festive fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Society
- **Christmas Jumper Day - 7th**
Organised by Save The Children to raise money to help children around the world
- **Hanukkah 7th - 15th Dec**
The Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem

North Berwick Coastal Community Connections

Creating compassion, companionship, and confidence in our community

Our mission is to have a community where no-one need feel isolated or lonely, by connecting people to local networks, activities and friendships.



Scone but not Forgotten - Farewell from a Friend

“...because dead ordinary people live on in the memories and stories we share”

And so, we look back on the [To Absent Friends Festival](#). Held every 1-7 November it's a series of community events across Scotland to help remember those we've lost. This year, our new colleague Kerry masterminded our best-ever collaboration with North Berwick Compassionate Communities volunteers. Our events were moving, engaging, sometimes heartbreaking, but always uplifting. My heart is full. Yet nearly five years on from the beginnings of Community Connections – in tandem with a host of wonderful, devoted folk, many still involved – I'm moving on. These have been years of intensively local, emotionally demanding but incredibly rewarding work on my doorstep. The pandemic brought about our development of remote befriending, then our sustained one-to-one work to rebuild social and physical strength. After-effects included heightened anxiety and diminished confidence (for me too). But The Scone Lives On! We have a brilliant team in place, an office, charitable status, decent funding, devoted Trustees, the newsletter. You're in safe hands.

I am drawn to look outwards and explore more of Scotland, while I still can. I have a 'parallel career' in heritage, stemming from my degree in Scottish Folklore, plus a sideline in storytelling and

lectures about our traditions. So, when a friend wrote to highlight this new opportunity in my much-loved field of oral history (still storytelling!), with lots of Scottish travel, I couldn't resist. The role is to deliver oral history training to people involved in Scotland's community ownership movement and support them to build local community ownership archives. I'll travel the nation in a vintage camper van – a new challenge! Envious, yes - but I'll keep an eye on the forecast, fear not. I'm going to miss you all greatly. Many of you I've seen every week for years, sharing many a Scone Café, Coffee Connections, Music Night, or Beacon Lunch. But even if we've not met in ages, or only conversed by phone or email – you matter to me. You're part of this Community Connections family.

I can't thank you enough for your patience, your kindness, your support to this endeavour and to me personally over the years.

It's my last blog and my last Nelly cartoon. I will still see you around town, I still bide here with my husband Neil and son Finlay.



Carol with son Finlay and husband Neil

So, we will bump into each other now and then. When we do, tell me your news and let's reminisce. I may be a sort of absent friend for a while - but you'll all be in my heart forever.

So please - keep connecting.

Carol Stobie, Connections
Coordinator (until 14 December)



The Board and NBCCC team would like to say a fond farewell and good luck to Carol Stobie as she leaves us to move on to pastures new. We would like to recognise the contribution that Carol has made to NBCCC over the past few years. As Carol says herself, she is moving on to follow one of her passions but will still be around North Berwick for a wave and a chat. Stay connected Carol!

We had a wonderful week of events to celebrate Absent Friends Week, the people's festival of storytelling and remembrance between 1st – 7th November.

We began with an evening reception at Blackadder Church and a reading of a specially commissioned poem by its author, published poet, Ruth Gilchrist (this is printed here in the newsletter), and the unveiling of our arbour. The arbour is an area where anyone can attach memories or comments that may help them to remember someone or a special time in their lives. We were really touched by how many of you came throughout the week to share your messages and memories of loved ones. The arbour is still available in Blackadder Church, which is also holding a prayer day on 2nd December for anyone who wishes to add any further messages. If you wish to keep your message private, there is also a memory box where you can post it.



We then held a memoir writing workshop with author Catherine Simpson at the North Berwick library where attendees were introduced to the art of writing a memoir or short memory story. On Friday our Labyrinth event was held back at Blackadder Church, a space dedicated to quiet contemplation, connections and next steps. The day was attended by Martin Whitfield MSP who was delighted to spend time walking the Labyrinth, chatting with our volunteers and learning more about the work of NBCCC. The Replacements gave us a roaring gig on Sunday night at the Rugby Club, playing various songs with a connection to celebrating life. Then the North Berwick Choir brought the week to a close with an amazing performance at Blackadder Church, as a thank you to all of those who contributed to the week's success.

If attending NBCCC Absent Friends week has led you or someone you know to wish to find out more about our services then do contact admin@nbc-communityconnections.org

YESTERDAYS FLOWERS ARE IN THE VASE

And my feet creep down the street
to peer, scan for features
I seek a glimpse of the familiar,
a certain soft sweep of Rose's cheek.

Morose, in cafes I listen for
laughter lines behind the eyes.
The face of a lifted teacup
smiles like a Zinia I once knew

that stoop, that hair loop
their position in the posey
could be like someone else
someone like an Orchid I once knew

On days like this, I miss
Hollyhock's warm, ambitious stride,
joyful, generous Chamomile.
I would like to catch again

Sweet William's gaze
or sneak a Honeysuckle hug,
be party to Daisy's cheerful greeting.
Yes, yesterday's flowers are in the vase.

Tomorrow, I will place them in the window
I will dress myself in Iris
press Clematis to my skin
put on the armour of Aster.

I will tip my tongue with Borage
paint my face with Tulip
wear scent of Jasmine
I will place the vase in the window

and I will teach myself to walk
walk how they grew; reaching into the light.
Yesterday's flowers are in the vase
and I will remember them to the bees

RUTH GILCHRIST

Ruth Gilchrist is a Scottish Book Trust Live Author based in rural East Lothian. As well as her own published poetry, Ruth runs a writing mother's poetry group for the Scottish Poetry Library, to support emerging and established writers. You can read more about her work at ruth-gilchrist.com

A special thanks to everyone who helped make the various events happen including Dr Deborah Ritchie, Fiona Watt, Bill Nisbet and Friends, The Men's Shed, Catherine Simpson, Ruth Gilchrist, Felicity Collins, Rev. Dr Neil Dougall, Julie Scanlon, the team at the Rugby Club, the team at the North Berwick Library, The Youth Project and the North Berwick Sings Choir.

Memoir Writing Workshop With Catherine Simpson – Reviewed by Lynn

As part of our Absent Friends Festival, we invited author, Catherine Simpson, to hold a Writing Workshop.

This proved to be very popular and was quickly fully booked. Luckily, I was asked to host the afternoon which meant I also got the chance to participate.

Catherine is a memoir writer, novelist, poet and short-story writer based in Edinburgh. She has been shortlisted for many awards, her work has been featured on BBC radio and she has performed at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Her most recent book, *One Body*, has been selected for World Book Night 2023. She is an extremely creative and highly respected writer, so it was a real honour to have her as a guest of NBCCC.

Not having ever taken part in a writing workshop and unsure of what to expect, it was a delight for all of us to meet Catherine. Considering most of the group had never done any writing before, Catherine's unassuming, down-to-earth approach quickly put everyone at

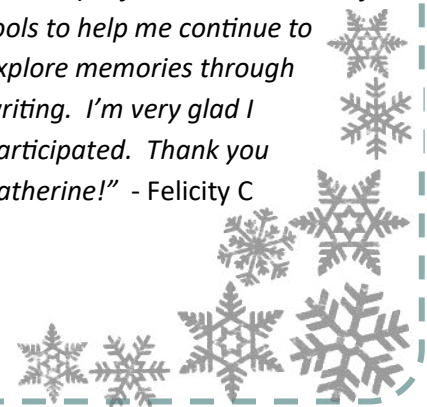
ease, and it wasn't long before pens were flying across the page. Catherine's words of advice, "don't think too much, just write", encouraged everyone to let go of their inhibitions and anxieties and see what comes. For those who wanted to share their writing with the group (and that was pretty much everyone), Catherine's enthusiastic and positive feedback was inspirational. After a short break, Catherine read a few extracts from her book "When I Had a Little Sister" and her debut novel "Truestory" and gave us a brief insight into the process of creating a story. The afternoon closed on a high with everyone feeling enthused and hopefully going home to find a pen and notebook. We must organise another one in the new year.



Here is some feedback from a couple of the participants;

"The workshop was so enjoyable, challenging and enlightening. Catherine inspired and enabled different routes to unlock inspiration and expression in writing of thoughts and feelings associated with absent family and friends. These feelings had previously been suppressed deep within. I would recommend attending one of Catherine's workshops if you ever get the chance." - Anne P

"I thoroughly enjoyed the memoir writing workshop. Catherine guided us gently through various short writing exercises and then gave us supportive and encouraging feedback as we shared our writing (always optional). I feel I have some useful tools to help me continue to explore memories through writing. I'm very glad I participated. Thank you Catherine!" - Felicity C



Beach Wheelchairs is a small Scottish charity that has operated since 2015. Since then, we have hired out our specialist wheelchairs over 1000 times. Our mission is to get people back on the sand enjoying our beautiful beaches. We have a wide range of wheelchairs and equipment for free hire at North Berwick, East Lothian and Portobello, Edinburgh. We want people to enjoy the beach with family and friends. The beach is a special place where people can have new experiences, make long lasting memories or be taken back to their childhood just by the sound of the waves and the smell of salt on the air. We are available for pre booked hires every day and best of all it's free. We can also arrange to have a volunteer accompany along the beach if that is something that you require during the Scone cafe or another prearranged time. To chat to one of our volunteers please call 0300 111 2112 or **email info@beachwheelchairs** for more information. - Melanie Kay





North Berwick Christmas Lights Switch-On Event

North Berwick looked wonderful at the Christmas lights switch-on event last Saturday evening. It was a joyous occasion bringing together the community. A big thank you to everyone who helped make it happen and a special mention to our friends at North Berwick in Bloom for the beautiful display at Abbey Church and Bass Rock Community Group for keeping everyone safe along the path of the procession.



You are warmly invited to our **Scone Café Christmas Party on Wednesday 13th December, 2-3.30pm at Abbey Church.** There will be singing led by Bill Nisbet, scones plus other tasty treats, and much merriment!



When it comes to Britain's favourite bird, the robin, the folklore surrounding it is as colourful as its breast. For centuries, this tiny bird has been the symbol of good luck, happiness, rebirth - and sometimes even as a messenger for lost loved ones. The well-known phrase, 'When robins appear, loved ones are near', alludes to the belief that the robin is a messenger. When robins are seen, some people take comfort that loved ones are at peace, and many believe that their lost loved ones are visiting them. National Robin Day is held on the 21st of December and was created by the charity, Songbird Survival to raise awareness of the challenges that birds, such as robins and other wildlife, face during the cold winter season.

Scone Café Wreath Workshop

We were delighted that North Berwick florist Viv Dooner joined us at the Scone Café this week to run a festive wreath workshop. Everyone who attended enjoyed creating beautiful wreaths ready for the holiday season. A big thank you to Viv for such a very happy, productive session!



NBMovies raises £500 for the North Berwick Harbour

NBMovies is all about bringing the cinema experience back to North Berwick so that local people can enjoy a night out at the flicks. We believe that collective laughter, gasps, and tears create a shared emotional experience and connect people on a deep level which really does help build a strong sense of community.

So, when the recent damage to the harbour wall occurred and North Berwick Harbour Trust launched its crowdfunding appeal, we realised we had a duty to try and help out. What could we do? And how could we make it fun? With strong sales of our November film, Barbie, starting to come through we decided to add an extra screening with the combined proceeds going to the Harbour Wall appeal.

NBMovies committee member, Amanda Sumner, came up with the suggestion of building a Barbie Box prop so that filmgoers could have their picture taken as Barbie.... we didn't realise at the time quite how popular that idea would prove to be! Rather handily, NBMovies projectionist and committee member, Paul Duffney is a dab hand at joinery and as a member of North Berwick's Men's Shed designed and constructed the box.

Amanda then took charge of decorating the box. Amanda has caring responsibilities in North Yorkshire and it was actually in a shop in Northallerton where she came across "just the right shade" of shocking pink material she used to dress the box. *"It was actually my husband, Mike, who came up with the sewing pattern.... I knew making him watch 5 series of BBC's The Sewing Bee would come in handy one day!"*. Mike and I dressed the box upstairs at North Berwick Community Centre in the pottery room, and after the addition of 10 meters of Christmas warm-glow fairy lights and the obligatory Barbie signage, it was complete."

On the day itself, there was a 30 minute window between a screening of Billy Elliot by "This Is Us", a spin-off group from NBMovies - which shows a free movie weekly for people with additional support needs. ("This Is Us" is run by NBMovies chair Jim Conway and is always welcoming to new people.) Those 30 minutes were spent retrieving the Barbie Box from the upstairs pottery room, making use of the 2 lifts in the Community Centre and positioning it safely in the main hall. A few adjustments to the hall's lighting and we were off. Well over a hundred photos were taken on the night with "Barbie" ages ranging from 8 to 80 helping NBMovies raise £500 for North Berwick Harbour Trust. To keep up to date with all things to do with NBMovies, please join our Facebook group. Search for @NBMovies on Facebook and ask to join.



Chippy Barbie



Getting the Barbie box ready



Chairman Barbie



Bass Rocketeers Netball Barbies

December Wildlife Watch by Ruth Fraser



"Kindness is like snow - it beautifies everything it covers."

- Kahlil Gibran

The shorter days and colder temperatures in December mean that wildlife may be more active during daylight hours, providing great opportunities to spot wildlife.

Robin



Robins, with their vibrant red breasts and cheerful demeanour, are not only a symbol of winter but also a favourite among birdwatchers. Despite their association with Christmas cards and festive decorations, robins are year-round residents. These small birds fiercely guard their winter feeding territories, often engaging in melodious song duels to establish dominance. In winter, when insects are scarce, robins adapt their diet to include berries and fruits, showcasing their resourcefulness. The next time you spot a robin in your garden, take a moment to appreciate this pint-sized powerhouse and its vibrant presence amid the winter chill.

Otter



Encountering an otter in the wild is a moment to savour - a fleeting yet enchanting connection with one of Scotland's most endearing residents. Despite their elusive nature, otters are a testament to the resilience of Scotland's ecosystems. Once facing threats from pollution and habitat loss, these captivating mammals have made a remarkable comeback, showcasing the success of conservation efforts. Otters seem to be on the increase in East Lothian. Look out for otter clues by the banks of places like the lake at Pressmennan Wood.

Wildlife Anagrams

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ISOTLEMTE

NOFITSEATI

ORBNI

(answers on page 9)

Get snapping: please send photos of December wildlife you capture for us to share in the January edition.

100 Species Exhibition

13 October 2023 - 15 January
Find out how Restoration Forth is creating a better habitat for the hundreds of important, diverse species that live in the Forth.



To book visit:

www.seabird.org

Family Friendly Beach Cleans

Friday 8 Dec 2pm-3pm and Saturday 16 Dec 9am-10am
Join us to remove marine debris from the coastline.

Coastal Wildlife tour

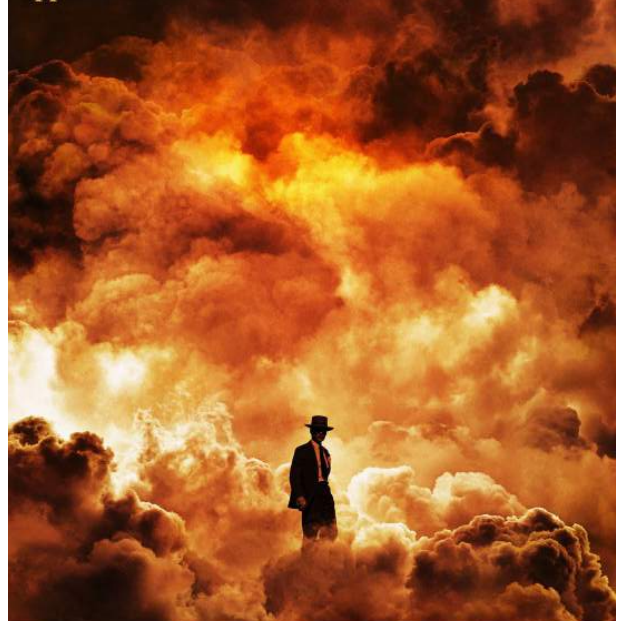
16 December, 11am - 12.30pm
Join our Conservation Officer for a wildlife wander along the coast to find out more about the wonderful shoreline.

Silly Science Panto!

28 - 30 December, 1pm - 3pm
Santa needs help with some silly science. Who better to ask than the Scottish Seabird Centre's very own Christmas elves. This pair of silly scientists will use bad jokes, good science and loads of slimy mess to get the job done. Tickets are free for children, adults £5, and Members free.



NBMovies Presents: Oppenheimer



A film by Christopher Nolan

Friday 8th December, North Berwick Community Centre

Cert 15. Adults £6, Minors £3

Details and tickets from NBMovies.co.uk



MONDAYS

ANDY'S MAN CLUB, 7-8.30pm at North Berwick Rugby Club. Going through a storm or just been through one? Andy's Man Club are talking groups to help you through those storms. No need to book or register. Open to any man over 18. No pressure to talk, come for a brew, a biscuit or two and see what goes on.

TUESDAYS

COFFEE CONNECTIONS, 2-3pm, Seabird Centre

Join our small, friendly Community Connections gang and get into the way of enjoying cafés again in this spacious, dog-friendly space full of great baking, lunches etc. Please contact us if you'd like to come along.

SPORTING MEMORIES, 1.30-3pm, North Berwick Rugby Club

Dedicated to bringing together older adults to talk about and remember sport. Everyone welcome to this group. Contact Graham Cross for details at graham@thesmf.co.uk

ABERLADY SCONE CAFÉ, 11.30am, Aberlady Inn

Meet for a cuppa, scone and chat on the second Tuesday and the fourth Thursday afternoon of the month at Aberlady Inn. For further information contact Kathy on 07939 250138 or kathyaberlady@btinternet.com.

WEDNESDAYS

NORTH BERWICK SCONE CAFÉ, 2-3.30pm, Abbey Church Small Hall, Church Rd

Community Connections' weekly gathering for blethers, scones and coffee, making new friends and sparking off new adventures. All welcome - free (donations welcome) and dog-friendly!

SCONE WALKING, 2.15-2.45pm. Group Walk meeting at Abbey Church Side Entrance. Friendly, small group walking at a very gentle pace along Elcho Green and back. Free refreshments afterward!

THURSDAYS

BEACON LUNCHEAS, 11-1pm at St Andrew Blackadder Church, North Berwick High St

Meet Community Connections, other members and guests at the weekly Beacon Lunch – ask for us at the door! We're here to enjoy making new friends over a bowl of soup, cake or coffee. (Donations welcome).

KEEP THE HEID MENTAL HEALTH CAFE, 7-9pm at the Hope Rooms, Forth St, North Berwick. Come along to a safe space to talk about mental health problems. Further information: Emma at +44 7548 136575 or KeepTheHeidCafe@gmail.com

MONTHLY MUSIC NIGHT - TUNES AND SONGS, 2nd Thursday each month 7.30-10PM at North Berwick Rugby Club, Dunbar Rd. Join Eddie and other music enthusiasts for this friendly session - sing, play or just listen! FREE

SATURDAYS

GULLANE SCONE CAFÉ, 10.30am - 12pm at the Gullane Day Centre

Meet for a cuppa, scone, and a chat on alternate Saturday mornings. For more information ring Margaret on 07907 99967 or Di on 07410 448869.

Other community activities...let us know of others and we can include them here!

CRAFT GROUP, Mondays 10.30-12 at North Berwick Library

Pop along this morning with your chosen craft for a natter! Call 01620 820700 if you'd like more information.

GOLF SESSIONS, Mondays 11-1pm with Golf in Society, Gullane (info@golfinsociety.com)

Tailored golf sessions for people living with dementia, Parkinson's, stroke, loneliness or depression.

HEALTH WALKS with Ageing Well - meet Mondays 1.30pm at Lodge entrance

Friendly group walks. Parvine, Ageing Well Coordinator on pwoodger@eastlothian.gov.uk or 07718 117585

ZUMBA GOLD, Mondays 6pm to 6.45pm at St Andrew Blackadder Church Hall, North Berwick

Low impact Latin-based dance class. Contact Ruth 07785707683 figaroroo@yahoo.co.uk or rhunterpepper.zumba.com

TABLE TENNIS, Mondays 8.30 - 9.30pm at St Andrew Blackadder Church Hall, North Berwick

Join North Berwick Table Tennis Club for their over 50s group on a Monday evening.



Tickets are available from Greens & Blues Gallery on the High Street, North Berwick.



**North Berwick Santa Beach Run 2023
Sunday 24 December 9.30am**

This event is aimed at seasoned athletes, casual runners and families alike. We are therefore offering three race distances along the scenic East Lothian coast line 2k, 5k and 10k. We hope that this will be a fun festive occasion - fancy dress is actively encouraged.

"Christmas is most truly Christmas when we celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who need it most."

- Ruth Carter Stapleton

Santa Claus Is Coming To Town on Friday 15th December



Santa has told us that he will leave from the Sports Centre car park sharp at 5.30pm. He will then follow a route round the town to make sure he gets a chance to say hello to all the boys and girls of North Berwick. We are really lucky that he has told us his route round the town so that you can make sure you see him (see below) and get your little Christmas treat. We are so excited that he has chosen our wee town for a visit!

- Destination / Route Approx arrival time
- 5.30pm Sports Centre Car Park
 - 5.40pm Gilsland Grange Playpark (here for 10 minutes)
 - 6.00pm Stevenson Walk (here for 10 minutes)
 - 6.10pm Meikleham Nook
 - 6.15pm Lauder Rambling
 - 6.20pm Heriot Riding
 - 6.20pm Pilgrims Way
 - 6.25pm Wotherspoon Green (here for 10 minutes)
 - 6.35pm Dal Hallow
 - 6.35pm Millar Garden
 - 6.40pm Grange Road
 - 6.50pm Lochbridge Road
 - 6.55pm Ben Sayers Park
 - 7.10pm Rhodes Park loop
 - 7.20pm Dandara - McLeod Green (here for 10 minutes)
 - 7.35pm St Baldreds Road
 - 7.40pm Sports Centre Car Park

This event is being organised by Beach Wheelchairs, the Bass Rock Community Group and FACE (Fight Against Cancer Edinburgh) who have once again kindly donated their magical sleigh for Santa.

This year collections will be in for the North Berwick Harbour Trust in aid of the harbour wall restoration in North Berwick. Donations will be accepted on the day or can be done here:

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/northberwickharbour?utm_term=vE23qbYJY

Donations on the evening will be greatly appreciated for this worthwhile cause.

Wildlife Anagram Answers:

Ivy Reindeer Mistletoe Poinsettia Robin



The NBCCC team:

Nicky Parker, Operations Manager
email: nickyp@nbc-communityconnections.org

Fay Gourlay, Administration and Communications Coordinator
email: admin@nbc-communityconnections.org

Carol Stobie, Connections Coordinator
07940 203380 (Tuesday - Thursday) email: carol@nbc-communityconnections.org (until 14th Dec)

Lynn Artesse, One-to-One Services Coordinator
07862 694842 (Tue and Wed mornings) email: befrienders@nbccommunityconnections.org

Kerry Kirkwood, Compassionate Community Co-ordinator
kerryk@nbc-communityconnections.org

Ruth Fraser, Newsletter Editor
newsletter@nbc-communityconnections.org

Please send in contributions for the newsletter (we'd love your stories, pictures, recipes, quotes, letters, practically anything you'd like to share with other members!)
Deadline for Jan newsletter: 23rd of Dec



Current NBCCC Services Offered:

- * **Scone Café weekly drop-in**
- * **Scone Walking**
- * **Coffee Connections at local cafe**
- * **Befriending calls or meet-ups**
- * **Buddy Walks**
- * **Chumming to local activities, when available**
- * **'Community Connections' monthly newsletter**
- * **Compassionate Communities** - our project on death, dying and bereavement

Website: <https://www.nbc-communityconnections.org/>

North Berwick Coastal Community Connections has been funded by the North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership, National Lottery Community Fund, North Berwick Trust, East Lothian Council.



'To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake it is necessary to stand out in the cold.'
- Aristotle