



We aim to advance the health of people living with neurological conditions



We can't guarantee refreshments as scrumptious as this at all our events but there's always good company, chat, and therapies at our meetings in Stirling and Auchterarder.

Some of what's in our autumn newsletter

- A BIG THANK YOU to Heather
- The Ben Nevis Ultra
- Auchterarder Afternoon Tea Fundraiser
- Living Well with Neurological Conditions - Stirling
- Gillian's Spanish Cycling Adventure
- Meet Your New Trustees

What is Neuro Central?



Neuro Central is based in Central Scotland and we are here for anyone living with a neurological condition, and for their families, carers and friends.



Our mission is to ensure that people in Scotland who live with neurological conditions, their carers and families have access to high quality services and therapies, information, and support in a friendly, relaxed environment, so no-one has to feel alone.

We encourage diversity and welcome everyone regardless of ability, race, gender, age (although those under 16 must be accompanied by an adult), religion, identity, and sexual orientation.

If you are affected by a neurological condition, why not consider coming along to our drop-in sessions in Stirling or Auchterarder?

Our friendly qualified therapists will be available offering therapy sessions at no cost to you (subject to availability). We also have refreshments, and there are always people up for a chat!

And, if you like what you find, please join and support us as a member. This can give you access to our members' weekly email and Facebook page where we post regular information about our events.

For more information about us, to find out about volunteering, or to donate and support us, please get in touch by:

- Visiting our website neurocentral.org.uk
- Emailing us at hello@neurocentral.org.uk, or
- Telephoning 07526 281747.

We look forward to meeting you.

THANKS HEATHER



Before there was Neuro Central, Fiona Graham organised meetups for people with Multiple Sclerosis at Dobbies Garden Centre near Stirling. In 2015 and after a few of these meetups, Heather Wilson suggested we needed a support group in Forth Valley. This would be open to people with **any** neurological condition. And so Neuro Central was born!

Over the next few months, a group of friends, who were all living with MS, formed the foundation of Neuro Central. With the help of Lee Stevenson and Joanne Rae from Stirling Voluntary Enterprise, we managed to become a registered charity in only one year. Everyone worked hard to achieve this but, safe to say, had it not been for Heather's vision and enthusiasm, the rest of us might have given up.



Now, after eight years as Chair of Neuro Central, Heather has decided to step down to, as they say, spend more time with her family and, particularly, her two gorgeous granddaughters, Rosa and Niamh. Fortunately for us, she intends to stay as a member of the committee. She'll be

helping with grant applications and fundraising and will remain a key part of the Auchterarder team. Hopefully, there will also be more fantastic gingerbread houses!



**Thanks for everything, Heather, from everyone at
Neuro Central**

The Ben Nevis Ultra



We are extremely grateful to Julia Dunn, Sandy Dunn, Elspeth Kirkpatrick, Grant Roberts and Donna Toher for raising funds for Neuro Central in a most extreme way. Julia, who lives with Multiple Sclerosis, suggested supporting our charity. Grant suggested doing this by entering The Ben Nevis Ultra along with Elspeth and Sandy. Julia and Donna were part of their support team.

The Ultra features remote Scottish glens, technical single track, airy ridges, and high mountain passes. It is run over 52km and includes a height gain of 4,000m. It attracts top runners from all over the world with demanding cut off times for all competitors. The objective for all three of our supporters was to finish. They prepared a tough training plan which was rigorously adhered to for any chance of completion. Even so, it was a tall order for Sandy (67 years old), Elspeth (53 years old) and Grant (27 years old but only been running for just over a year). And they were wearing specially made EMK Fitness race tops in recognition of Elspeth's coaching skills!

This year The Ultra was held on Sunday 17 September and the weather was not at its best. Here's some of what Sandy had to say about the event.

"At 7:40, the race director briefed us that the route back from Glen Nevis may change as the bad weather front was arriving much earlier than forecast! At 7:45, we are off, Grant disappearing at a faster pace, all as planned. The start was straightforward over a mountain pass before ... reaching check point 2 as the rain started. Heading on, the skies were darkening..."



we climbed the steep rise up to the CMD /Seang Anoch Mor Bealach... There began the steep ascent over rock slabs and boulders following a ridge all the way to the summit!... After discussion with Elspeth, we pressed on, but our pace was dropping ... Nearing the summit things had deteriorated... we decided to get off the hill to safety asap... Then as if by magic, course sweepers appeared... They soon identified the best route off was over CMD summit at check point 5 where mountain rescue would then walk us all off... The two sweepers disappeared over the Arete towards Ben Nevis . . . Elspeth and I can't praise these guys highly enough for their knowledge and helpfulness.



Great news from home that [Grant] was doing amazingly! Grant's partner Donna saw him finish in a fantastic 9 hours 26 minutes. This was even more incredible given a heavily strapped ankle having twice gone over on it on the slippery rock scramble up Ben Nevis! It was so brilliant to hear Grant was safe. He should be so proud of his achievement and so earned his medal.

Did we enjoy it? You bet every step a challenge, . . . But Elspeth and Grant and I regret nothing and learned a lot about ourselves . . . importantly we made the right decisions when necessary.

Lastly, we will never forget all your kind comments and generosity in supporting our chosen charity and we are so heartened, and gob smacked by that! Thank you all so much from all at EK Fitness!"

Statistics:

- Grant 31.3 miles 9,600 ft 9 hours 26minutes,
- Sandy and Elspeth 17.75 miles 7434ft in 5 hours 53 minutes albeit walking the last four!

And once again, thanks to you three from Neuro Central. You have raised a staggering £1,600 for us. These funds enable us to continue supporting those not only with Multiple Sclerosis but anyone with a neurological condition.

A Windy Day on Dumyat

Many people in Stirling like to think of Dumyat as their local hill. With a height of 418 m (1,371 ft), many people walk it from Sherrifmuir Road. Most do it on a fine day to get views of the Wallace Monument, Stirling Castle and the Forth Valley and the Carse.



Neuro Central is very fortunate that a group from the Forth Valley Royal Hospital Neurology Team chose to do this again as a sponsored walk for us. The team includes David Thomson, a specialist neurology nurse and one of our trustees. They went up on

19 August when you'd expect the weather to be kind. As you can see from their pictures, it wasn't the best of summer conditions, and it was surprisingly blustery on the way up. Despite the weather, they all made it to the summit although David says that, disappointingly, 'the chap with the burger stall didn't make it up that day!

As a result of the walk, they raised a brilliant £410 for Neuro Central. Thank you all.

Helping Stirling County Cricket Club

Neuro Central members were happy to help Stirling County Cricket Club in supporting their application for a National Lottery Community Fund Grant.



We couldn't wish for a better home for our Stirling meetings. In particular, Jon Taylor, Head of Clubhouse Facilities, along with others, go out of their way to help us. This picture was taken by him to support their application.

Auchterarder Afternoon Tea Fundraiser



Back in March 2020, plans were well in hand to hold a Pre-Mothers' Day Afternoon Tea to raise funds for Neuro Central. But then Covid intervened, and everything was cancelled. That is until 23 September 2023 when we were finally able to host our Afternoon Tea in Aytoun Hall in Auchterarder (see front cover picture). It was a great joint effort from our members and families who are Friends of Neuro Central Auchterarder. Many thanks to all of them for all they did.

We want to thank all the bakers, helpers and sandwich makers for an amazing spread. We are certain that everyone left full, and some even had a doggy bag to take home. We also had excellent



entertainment while everyone feasted. Jenne McClure and Donald Christie provided the music, while Scott St Clair enthralled everyone with his etheric



entertainment and confounded them with his mentalism.

Thank you to all the local businesses and members who donated raffle prizes which contributed to the fundraising. We are delighted to have raised £720, which will be put to good use at Neuro Central.

Gillian, one of our trustees, drove to Auchterarder for the tea. She was rightly impressed! She says:

'The afternoon tea in Auchterarder was excellent. Clearly, a lot of planning and work went into this event. I hope it raised a lot of funds. I took along [family and friends]. They all thoroughly enjoyed it... and could appreciate just how much effort had gone into Neuro Central's event. And it was a great opportunity for me to spend time with people that mean a lot to me, plus support a very worthwhile cause at the same time.'

Pottery in Auchterarder

Following on from a popular taster session to establish interest, Sarah Draper ran an eight-session pottery course for us at St Margaret's Hospital in Auchterarder. Our thanks are due to the Co-op who provided the funding that enabled us to run this course.



The sessions were well attended. Participants learned different techniques for working with clay and were impressed with the creations they made. These were displayed at the Auchterarder Open Day in August. These beautiful creations were not the only benefit. One of our members told us it was the most relaxing Neuro Central group they had ever attended!

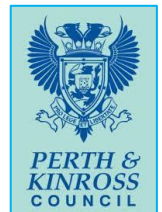


We know that there is sufficient interest in providing a further course in 2024 if we can obtain funding. Please contact Neuro Central if you are interested in taking part.

Growing Our Health Project



As a response to the cost-of-living issues, we had the idea to introduce our members to growing their own vegetables. Funding from Perth & Kinross Community Investment Fund 2022/23 allowed us to offer our members an opportunity to take part in our Growing Our Health project. Mike Hamilton, the garden coach from the Crieff Community Hospital Garden gave us some



hints on getting started. Neuro Central provided everything the participants needed: herbs, salad leaves and vegetables.

Since our members enjoyed the fruits of their labours, we offered a second lot of plants, soil improver and as an extra, some spring bulbs. This allows members to continue growing into the winter and to provide some springtime cheer after the winter blues.



We look forward to seeing their latest harvest. Hopefully our members have now got the growing bug!

Volunteering with Neuro Central

Neuro Central is run completely by volunteers. We have a variety of volunteer roles available. If you have a bit of time to spare and you would like to support us, please contact Sheila Doogan, our Volunteer Coordinator to discuss how you can help us.

Email: sheila.doogan@neurocentral.org.uk

We have in-person opportunities available in Auchterarder or Stirling which is where we hold meetings and events for our members. We need help with registering members as they arrive, setting up the room, and making the tea (and cleaning up afterwards). Could you become a **Friend of Neuro Central**? This is for you if you can help out every now and again but can't commit to a volunteering role on a regular basis.

The success of the Auchterarder Afternoon Tea (page 7) was very much due to the involvement of the **Friends** who came out for the event and overwhelmed us with their response, from baking and sandwich making to setting and clearing up on the day. Thank you!

Living Well with Neurological Conditions



Neuro Central was fortunate to be given a grant of £2,000 from the Arnold Clark Community Fund. This allowed us to hold a *Living Well with Neurological Conditions* course at Stirling County

Cricket Club. It took place over three Mondays in March, April, and May this year. The course was designed to be both informative and entertaining. We were though concerned for our members' welfare. Each session was limited to four hours so as not to tire them. And an excellent buffet lunch was provided to ward off the pangs of hunger.

Several topics were covered, each with a presentation from an expert speaker. We heard from:

- David Thomson, a Specialist Neurological Nurse at Forth Valley Royal Hospital. He told of his role as a nurse, and how the nurse coordinates within the Care Network in Forth Valley.
- Katy Page, a Neuro Physiotherapist who provides regular online exercise classes for Neuro Central members. After finishing her presentation, she then led her audience in a series of exercises. This proved so popular, that one of our members, Brian Summers who attends her exercise classes, was able to lead us in a short exercise session on the other days of the course.
- Lindsay Geddes from Social Security Scotland who told everyone of the changes that were taking place to the way social security payments were assessed and made.
- Rosemary McLellan, a Foot Care Practitioner who provides treatment to our members at meetings in Stirling and Auchterarder. In addition to getting lots of practical advice on how to care for feet, all those present were given free foot care products.



- Harriet Hay, our Counsellor who is available for consultation by Neuro Central members. She spoke about the benefits of counselling and the results you can expect from it.

Unfortunately, the final session of the course had to be cut short because of illness. Nevertheless, the course was well received and enjoyed by those who attended. We are extremely grateful to the Arnold Clark Community Fund for making it possible.



Disability Sports in Stirling

Neuro Central is fortunate to have contacts with Forth Valley Disability Sports and Active Stirling through Graham Harvey who is Sportability Stirling Coordinator. Graham came to our first-Monday meetings in Stirling in April and June with some games and sports equipment suitable for all abilities.



These included boccia, archery and bowls. They can all be used indoors or outside. We were lucky with sun and blue skies at both meetings which allowed us to take the bowls and archery outside. There was enthusiastic participation with everyone enjoying the light-hearted competition.



Gillian's Spanish Adventure

"We leave together, we ride together, we arrive together"

In June, I participated in a cycling challenge, cycling with a Spanish Parkinson's cycling team from Valencia to Barcelona, covering 400km over 6 days. The destination was the World Parkinson's Congress. My mission was to raise awareness of Parkinson's especially young onset Parkinson's, raise funds for research and show that exercise is beneficial for this condition.



Janet and Gary Kerr from Fife also participated in this cycling challenge. Janet lives with young onset Parkinson's and Gary is her husband. We became known as the Tres Amigos. We were delighted to raise over £3500 for Scottish research into Parkinson's.

From broken bikes (punctures, flat battery) to broken bodies (meds not kicking in, immobilised due to symptoms, broken ribs, skint knees and elbows) there was a mishap of sorts on average every half hour! Resilience was key to our success.

Along our route, cyclists with connections to Parkinson's joined us. On the last day into Barcelona, our huge peloton was greeted at the finish line by many well-wishers from across the globe. We felt like superstars!



Thank you to Neuro Central members and everyone else for their kind donations.
Gillian Sharpe

How to find out about Neuro Central

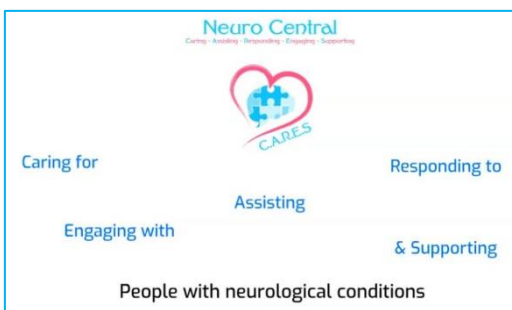
- Would your organisation like to find out about Neuro Central? We are happy to come along and talk to you about what we do and what we have to offer.
- Depending on your requirements, we can hold a one-to-one discussion with some illustrations or, if you want a full presentation, we can do that as well.



In July, our Chair, Heather Wilson, and our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Sheila Doogan, put on a display in Aucherarder Co-op. They are seen here with Alexandra Macdonald, a member of staff from the shop. The Co-op has been one of our strongest supporters in Aucherarder.

This gave us the opportunity to tell the local community who we are and what we do, and for them to find out about us.

If you'd like to hear from us, in the first instance please contact us at hello@neurocentral.org.uk.



If you want a quick introduction, have a look at our Neuro Central animation. This will give you the essential information you need to understand our aims. You can find it on the home page of our website neurocentral.org.uk.

Or you can go directly to the video at youtu.be/31AecMVAbA8.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting was held on Monday 02 October 2023 at the start of the usual Stirling meeting. It was also available to attend by video conferencing through Zoom for those unable to be in Stirling. Thank you to those who joined us that way.

The AGM is preceded by the publication and distribution to members of the trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements. This covers Neuro Central's reporting year which in our case runs from 01 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. The meeting then provides members of Neuro Central with the opportunity to question the trustees on this report or any other matters of interest or concern.

You can find a copy of the report on our website at neurocentral.org.uk/annual-reports.

There are two other essential elements of the AGM:

- **Fixing the membership fee for the following calendar year.** The trustees recommended that it be fixed at £5.00. This was agreed by the meeting.
- **The nomination and election of trustees for the following year.** The process for this is laid out in the constitution and as a result, the following are the trustees (in alphabetical order) for the coming year:
 - Morna Blake
 - Jane Logan
 - Paul Rimmer
 - Sally Boa
 - Moira McDonald
 - Gillian Sharpe
 - Lynne Jackson
 - Jackie Paterson
 - David Thomson

They are all here to make sure you can get the most out of your membership of your charity. Please feel free to raise any matters of interest or concern with any one of them.

Thank you also to Heather Wilson (see page 3) and Warren Luke who stood down as trustees this year and decided against seeking re-election.

Meet Your New Trustees



Morna Blake

I am 45 and live in Perth. I grew up in Qatar and went to boarding school in Crieff. After being in the Army I worked in local government agencies in Perth.

After falling ill in 2015 I had to stop working. My mobility and cognitive issues took an extreme toll. It was during this grief phase of illness I stumbled upon Neuro Central. It became my only social life and lifeline. I am a fierce supporter of Neuro Central now. I also garden and have house plants as my hobby, along with two dogs and a cat. Neuro Central has opened up my life again, plus bringing an old friend into it brought us together again.



Gillian Sharpe

I live in Clackmannanshire with my husband, two sons and two Fox Red Labradors.

Diagnosed with Young Onset Parkinson's in 2020, I have a positive can-do attitude, believe in staying as physically and mentally active as possible and can see the benefit of social interaction whilst supporting others. I am a retired Pharmacist and currently a mental health mentor at the University of Stirling.

I very much enjoy attending Neuro Central and as a Trustee, I aim to support the continuing excellent work of such a worthwhile charity.



Lynne Jackson

I live in Crieff with my husband and 2 dogs. I love spending time with my family especially my first grandchild who arrived this year. After leaving school I went to work in social care, working both in the private sector and for the council. I was a manager for an Abbeyfield charity when I had to finish working in late 2019 due to my health deteriorating.

Neuro Central is a fantastic charity and is close to my heart. Not only do I have a neurological condition but so do my mum, niece and my grandmother who was diagnosed in her late 60s with Parkinson's.

Meetings

Details of our meetings are available on our website. You can find a Calendar of Events at neurocentral.org.uk/calendar.

We hold regular in-person meetings at:

Stirling (Stirling County Cricket Club) - First and Third Monday of the month 11.00am – 1.00pm (except for July and August)

Auchterarder (St Margaret's Hospital Outpatients) - Second Wednesday of the month 6:30pm – 8:30pm

Although it is not so much in the headlines, Covid is still with us. Since our members tend to have conditions that can make them more vulnerable, we are still asking you to take precautions to protect both yourself and others at our in-person meetings. Our guiding principle is: - **If you don't feel well, please stay at home.**

There are links to our current precautions, and how to get to the Stirling and Auchterarder venues, on the [home page](#) of our website.

We also offer three online sessions using online video conferencing by Zoom, enabling members to join from the comfort of their home:

Relaxation Session

This is a half hour of guided relaxation led by Scott Montgomery. It's held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm.

Neuro Physiotherapy

Katy Page takes a weekly exercise class on a Thursday morning at 11am. You can also follow Katy online leading some exercises at youtu.be/r21-pG2X4oU.

Mindfulness Session

We're taking a break from our monthly top-up session. It is normally held by our facilitator, Adrienne Hannah, on the last Thursday of each month. We'll be back with it in early 2024.

Details of these three sessions, along with other events, are posted on our members' Facebook page and e-mailed to them each week. If you would like to join in the Zoom sessions but are not sure how, please contact us by email at hello@neurocentral.org.uk. We will then arrange for some help with using Zoom.