

**Introduction**

2019-20 has most certainly been an interesting year with the COVID pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, forcing most of us into reflection and contemplation. The impact has been felt across all sectors of our global community. Backbone CIC has grasped the moment to sharpen our focus on the work we have done and continue to do.

**What we do**

Provide opportunities to “Entice & Excite” all communities to experience the WOW factor as they connect with and learn about nature. Increased understanding provides us with a platform to build a relationship based on respecting our environment, enough to protect it and take advantage of all that it has to offer.

**How we do it**

Reaching out to isolated and disengaged communities and individuals, we take them by the hand so they can experience the power of the natural world. Opportunities for nature visits where we discover the benefits of being in nature - open to all communities, all abilities and all ages. Train local environmental ambassadors with skills, qualifications and resources to connect with local environmental agencies so they are equipped to develop community led initiatives. Celebrate diversity in the sector through our Outdoor Festivals and events  
Provide consultation services to the environmental sector

**Who we are**

Directors	Funders & Delivery Partners 2019-20
<p><i>Founder &amp; Director:</i> Pammy Johal  <i>Director:</i> Dexter Duboulay  <i>Director:</i> Jenny Isherwood</p> <p>Supported by at least bi-annual consultations with community groups and environmental organisations across Scotland.</p>	<p>Aberdeen shire Council Ranger Service            Cairngorms National Park Authority            Forestry &amp; Land Scotland Grampian            Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland            John Muir Trust            Nature Scot            North East Transport Training            RSPB Scotland</p>

### Constitutional purpose

We provide tailored environmental activities to 'marginalised communities'; excluded communities who cannot access mainstream opportunities due to any of and not limited to: religious, cultural, racial, social or economic reasons and for those who lack confidence. Our initiatives build personal and community confidence to enable effective participation in today's multi-cultural society.

We have created a network of Backbone initiatives, led by our leadership alumni, centered on our core value of partnership working based on:

- Genuine intention and trust
- Mutual respect
- Working for the direct benefit of local communities

We develop locally led sustainable environmental projects aimed to *Entice & Excite* everyone to engage with, benefit from and protect Scotland's natural environment. We specifically target Black & Minority Ethnic (BAME) community groups and individuals.

We do this by:

- a. Using outdoor activities and the natural environment to enhance the quality of life of communities and bring communities from different backgrounds and cultures together.
- b. Providing opportunities for communities to engage with nature so they may learn about it and want to protect it.
- c. Introducing the wider benefits of outdoor activities and engagement with the natural environment to marginalised groups, with specific reference to Black & Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities; health, well-being, social, self-confidence, speaking English, educational and family recreation etc.
- d. Building skills and capacity for sustainable communities through partnership working based on genuine intention amongst community groups and environmental organisations.
- e. Developing BAME environmental ambassadors and role models by providing training, skills and qualifications in outdoor/environmental leadership.
- f. Provide enhanced understanding of the natural environment.
- g. Delivering outdoor events to celebrate diversity.
- h. Provide a consultation service to the environmental / outdoor education sector.

### Organisational Structure

Backbone CIC is a project based organisation where we raise funds on a full-cost basis to deliver community environmental projects. Projects are developed as a direct outcome of our consultations with community groups and environmental organisations. Each project will meet the unique needs of our user groups and the communities we serve.

Backbone CIC maintains a streamline and action orientated approach with an efficient decision making process involving all directors.

Backbone CIC maintains the following structure:

1. Directors 3 min – 5 max working on a voluntary basis.
  - a. Existing Directors will nominate new Directors as and when required.
  - b. Directors will be legally responsible and accountable for the organisation in accordance with Companies House rules
  - c. Directors will be responsible for the governance of the organisation based on integrity and ethics as stated in our policies
  - d. Directors will meet at least 3 times/year
  - e. All Directors will be accountable to Companies House, stakeholders and service users.
2. Community and environmental partners inform our delivery through consultations with the Operations Director. This will ensure:
  - a. Projects meet the specific needs and cultural considerations for each community.
  - b. Backbone CIC supports the equality and diversity objectives of our environmental partners/stakeholders.
3. Outsource all delivery to approved providers who meet our standards including our approach and ethos.

## Strategic Plan 2019-22

1. To maintain our value-based operations and widen our sphere of influence with policy makers to improve how the environmental sector engages with marginalised groups as set in our constitution
2. To further develop partnerships with both environmental and community organisations based on our core values.
3. To provide nature-based projects to “hard to reach” marginalised groups across Scotland, with a focus on new groups in new regions.
4. To encourage marginalised communities to engage with conservation volunteering.
5. To keep operations efficient and effective by delivering what we know works and what we excel at:
  - Community interactive and educational visits to nature
  - Organisation and leadership development
  - Women specific projects
  - Outdoor qualifications
  - Sector consultations

## Delivery 2019-20

Delivery this year was challenging due to the limitations imposed by the COVID pandemic. However, we are delighted to have delivered:

- Community Volunteering Project: Introducing communities to conservation volunteering.
- Lochlomond & Trossachs National Park Authority Consultation on BAME engagement
- Our Natural Heritage Project 2019-22 (year 1): Introducing new groups to nature and developing local environmental leaders in the north of Scotland.

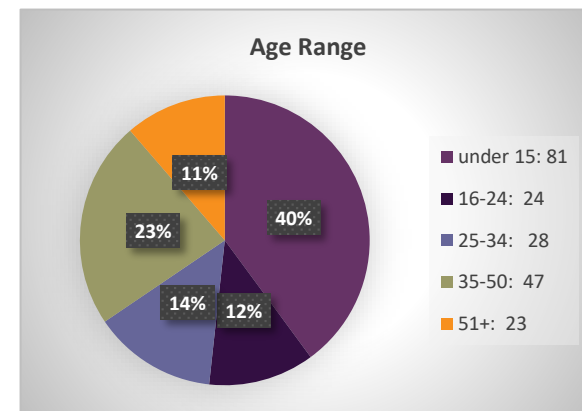
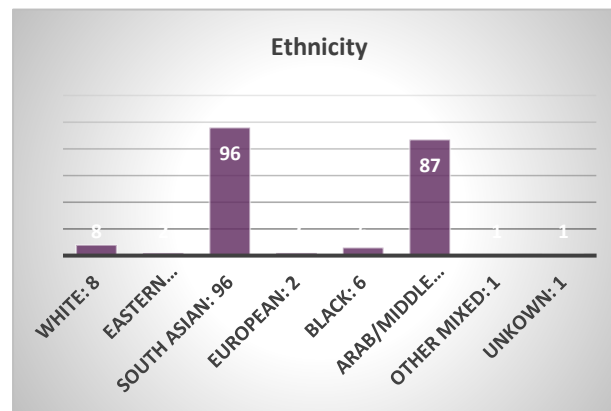
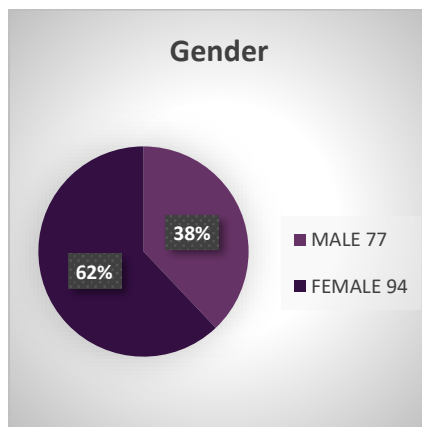
The COVID pandemic forced the suspension of projects for 8 months. This impacted Our Natural Heritage Project, particularly our nature days out, qualification delivery and Outdoor Festival for All events. Our funders/partners Nature Scot, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland have kindly extended the deadline for Our Natural Heritage Project from September 2021 to September 2022. We are confident we can deliver a meaningful experience in that time.

Outcomes of the above projects, including year 1 of Our Natural Heritage Project:

- 203 participants on 12 different visits to a variety of nature sites to include:
  - Muir of Dinnet NNR
  - Tentsmuir NNR
  - Forvie NNR
  - St Cyrus NNR
  - Haddo House Country Park
  - Hermitage NTS
  - Loch Leven NNR
  - Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park
- 150 hours of conservation volunteering
- Qualifications:
  - 21 successfully completed ITC Outdoor 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Award
  - 18 enrolled on Sports Leaders Level 3 Certificate in Lowland Walk Leadership and currently undergoing training

Demographics

- Participants came from Aberdeen, Alness, Dundee, Inverness, Glasgow, Falkirk, Edinburgh
- 102 Refugee and Asylum Seekers, from Syria and Lebanon
- 3 participants with disabilities



## Message from the Directors

*Pammy Johal: Founder and Operations Director*

I continue to be proud of the relationships Backbone CIC has developed with environmental organisations and BAME communities, together we are striking out and offering life changing experiences to those who most need it; the isolated and marginalised groups across Scotland. Now more than ever, we must continue our work, offering a lifeline during these challenging times imposed by COVID pandemic.

2020 an exceptional year with both COVID and the global Black Lives Matter movement, the latter triggering a person and public response:

### *Celebrating Diversity.. are we?*

*I have been asking this question of the outdoor education & environmental sector for over 30 years and the very reason I founded Backbone CiC: Celebrating Diversity Through Adventure.*

*I am the Operations Director at Backbone CiC, an experienced and qualified outdoor education practitioner, my chosen profession since 1979. I deliberately use the words **experienced** and **qualified** as they are credentials that are highly regarded in our profession. However, for me that has not always been the case. I am going to share some **Experiences** of my time in the sector so that we may learn from our past:*

- *"I will never hire one of you again!". Admittedly I was late for work after a day's climbing and deserved a reprimand... but?*
- *"You are like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole." Feedback after a job interview. To this day the organisation has not validated that statement.*
- *"How do we know it wasn't just you and a group of mates having fun!". An appraisal after delivering a very successful and groundbreaking project developing outdoor leaders in the BAME community. The first of its kind in the early 90's.*
- *"What is your understanding of Asian Women?". A question asked by a white male at an interview. (I am an Asian Woman)*

*I could go on, but I won't.*

*These experiences are one of the driving forces behind the making of Backbone CiC. It was set up to directly remove inequalities allowing everyone access to the great outdoors and all it has to offer. A place where people come together to share commonalities and celebrate uniqueness.*

*Today, triggered by the Black Lives Matter movement, I continue to ask the question; has our sector learnt from the past? In my job as the Founder & Operations Director of Backbone CiC: Celebrating Diversity Through Adventure, I continue to be disturbed by some of my recent experiences of inequality. Backbone CiC supports the sector to develop an inclusive approach. When engaging with organisations we believe and trust organisations to have a genuine intention to action change. However, this has not always been the case, like many BAME organisations, Backbone CiC continues to be taken advantage of to tick the correct diversity box, to access funding and to use our expertise to develop in-house solutions.*

*Despite the inequalities Backbone CiC is a leading BAME organisation recognised and acknowledged on a national and global platform for successfully addressing diversity and inclusion in the sector. The key to our success is partnership working based on our values of:*

- *Genuine Intention, trust and integrity*
- *Mutual respect*
- *For the Direct Benefit of All Communities*

*Together with our partners we are making a difference in the sector, striving to celebrate diversity through adventure... And we have lots more to do!  
Are you ready to join the movement to **ACTION CHANGE** in the sector?*

I am delighted that Dexter, Jenny and myself have agreed to start the process to **Action Change**. We have secured support from our partners: Nature Scot, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Lochlomond & Trossach's National Park Authority to take this forward through a **Symposium**. Very exciting and a huge responsibility to influence The Sector and BAME communities. We are ready.. join us!

As we come out of COVID, we have clarity of our immediate purpose that informs our revised delivery plan for 2021-2023. This is supported by a fresh re-branding and undated website... we must be growing up!

A huge thanks to Dexter & Jenny for their objectivity, honesty and integrity in keeping Backbone CIC true to purpose and keeping me on track!

*Dexter du Boulay: Director*

As ever, it has been a real pleasure to be associated with Backbone for another year. Backbone has been championing an inclusive approach to the outdoors for a number of years, a lifetime, as you can see from Pammy's address. For me, it is great to see continued engagement of our partners, their genuine intention to be open and responsive to a changing environment, the continued and developing engagement by our alumni as well as the bringing on of new groups, areas and activities. The BLM has been positive in laying bare how many sectors and strata of our society have been reluctant or unwilling to change the status-quo. BLM, Covid-19 and the yet unknown impact of Brexit will really shape what 'normal' will look like over the next few years. These events created a space for us all to re-evaluate where we really are and what we want the 'outdoors' future to look like. Physical and mental wellness and the role it can play in every person's well-being should not be underestimated. The challenge we all face is making it accessible and desirable for everyone to engage with. Backbone's future can be to continue to model a way forward with our partnership working and community engagement activities. Our next step should be a move into strategic development and employment activities whilst continue to encourage day to day use of outdoor facilities.

*Jen Isherwood: Director*

Connections are key to our survival and our ability to Thrive, to shape our future in a way that reflects our core beliefs and values Backbone's commitment to supporting people to make these connections for themselves and their communities helps Scotland to grow and develop as a nation. I am involved with Backbone because I believe that anyone and everyone should connect with nature, with their own self and with their community on a regular basis. Long conversations in a natural environment which create opportunities for dialogue and a deeper understanding of each other, nurturing those involved and encouraging empathy will help us celebrate the diversity of Scotland's people.

We have lots of work to do within our organisation to continue to create these opportunities through leadership training, community projects and influencing strategic decisions at a national level. Pammy is a key influencer in the world of diversity and equality, the real deal! Our energy and time will be spent working to bring people together, to find common ground and focus on what we can change. I will continue to work as part of the Backbone team to respond to the needs we identify and plan ahead for the future.

**Delivery Plan 2021-2023**

<p><b>Key Aim 1</b> Continue to provide opportunities for NEW BAME and marginalized groups to access, experience and benefit from nature. Focus on those who do not have the resources and means to access nature.</p>	<p><b>Key Aim 2</b> Train BAME outdoor/environmental leaders and role models so they may influence the sector at all levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation</li> <li>▪ Volunteering</li> <li>▪ Employment</li> <li>▪ Board/Membership Level</li> </ul>
<p><b>The above aims co-exist in the following projects:</b></p>	
<p><b>Our Natural Heritage Project 2020-22</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leadership: Qualifications and Organisational Skills</li> <li>▪ Nature Days</li> <li>▪ Outdoor Festival for All Events 2021 and 2022</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Leadership Project 1 yr: (CLP 1yr)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leadership: Experience, qualifications &amp; organisational skills</li> <li>▪ Community engagement</li> <li>▪ Volunteering at local nature sites</li> <li>▪ Advisory Group to The Sector</li> </ul> <p>Participants will be introduced to and have access to local volunteering and employment opportunities</p> <p>Participants will be accessible to The Sector to provide the BAME perspective at all levels.</p>
<p><b>Key Aim 3: To provide consultations and events to support diversity and inclusion within the Sector</b></p>	
<p><b>Research</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Impact of our work in the community and The Sector</li> <li>2. BAME barriers to engagement with The Sector. With a variety of different BAME community groups and environmental organisations             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Participation level</li> <li>b. Internal</li> <li>c. External</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Events</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outdoor Festival for All Events</li> <li>2. Symposium: Actioning Change within The Sector</li> </ol>