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Community Update

Melvich Community SCIO
(formerly known as Melvich Village Hall Association)

September 2021



1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks for taking the time to read our updates. We hope that you find these updates useful and informative. A lot has been happening in the background since our last update to you in April 2021 and we are pleased to report significant progress on many issues.

2. HALL STATUS

As mentioned previously, Melvich Village Hall Association completed an options assessment process which concluded that we should “Knock down the existing hall, acquire adjacent land and build a new replacement hall on the new footprint”. Thank you to those of you who attended the public meeting to discuss this outcome. The village hall remains closed and will be demolished in the near future.

3. INCORPORATION OF CHARITY

Melvich Village Hall Association (MVHA) was an unincorporated charity and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) have given approval for us to form a new charity called “Melvich Community SCIO”. Melvich Community SCIO is now operating and the transfer of all of MVHA’s assets/liabilities into “Melvich Community SCIO” is underway.

The charitable objective of Melvich Community SCIO is the same as that for the former MVHA which is *“To provide, or assist in the provision of, facilities for the recreation or other leisure-time occupation, in the interest of social welfare in an effort to improve the conditions of life of the inhabitants of the district of Bighouse, Melvich, Portskerra, Golval and Kirkton, all in the Parish of Farr.”*

To deliver our charitable objectives, our primary focus at the moment is to get a new multi-generational multi-functional community hub planned and constructed to replace the old Melvich village hall. Melvich Community SCIO are happy to be approached to assist on other matters within our community should it align with our charitable purpose as our new constitution permits us to have sub-groups which operate under the charity in accordance with agreed terms of reference.

Melvich Village Hall’s title deeds have completed the transfer over to Melvich Community SCIO and Melvich Community SCIO are now responsible for the property. Thanks go to SSE Strathy North Wind Farm for providing us a grant to cover the associated legal fees for this work. The associated insurances have also been changed. It is planned that the formal winding down of MVHA will be completed by 31st December 2021 and going forward we will be operating as Melvich Community SCIO.

4. FUNDING AND HALL DEMOLITION

We have been investigating various potential funding routes in order to obtain capital funding for the design and construction of our new community hub. At a strategic level, we now have a general sense of which funders may assist us with different phases however there is a lot of work to do to get the funds secured. In the last year overall, we have secured more than £50,000 in grant funding to help us progress our activities. Funders have been complimentary about the robustness of the underpinning of our decision making (i.e., the options assessment process followed, use of invitations to tender for placing contracts, etc) and our level of

engagement with the community. We will continue to need your support and input going forward.

Most funders that we have engaged with have indicated that they need to see a “spade ready” project for them to invest in. This means that we need to ensure that we have the site cleared, plans in place and approved, own the land where any construction is to take place and have a firm price for the construction works agreed.

We are pleased to report that SSE Strathy North Wind Farm have awarded Melvich Community SCIO grant funding for the enabling activity of demolishing Melvich Village Hall. A competitive tendering exercise was completed for these works and Norbloc Construction Ltd have been awarded the contract to demolish Melvich Village Hall and appropriately dispose/recycle all of the associated wastes/materials.

This demolition work is due to start imminently now we have the title deeds, a building warrant, funding, and a principal contractor in place. We recognise that the demolition of the hall will sadden some people however when we have a replacement community hub in place, we are sure that everyone will approve. The community in Armadale are now rightly very proud of their replacement hall and we are engaging with them to learn from their experiences and help us achieve a new suitable facility in a timely manner.

5. MELVICH COMMUNITY SCIO WEBSITE

Melvich Community SCIO have set up a website at <https://melvichcommunityscio.org> – we will be posting information on this website periodically in addition to hard copy updates. Many funders look at community group’s websites therefore we are populating it with information that is not only useful to us to operate but also may be of value to potential funders. Please check out the website, sign up for email updates from our blog and let us know if there is anything that you would like to see on it. In the future, the website will be set up so that you can make online bookings for use of our new community hub or parts of it. We also have an associated email address: secretary@melvichcommunityscio.org if you wish to email us.

6. MELVICH COMMUNITY SCIO MEMBERSHIP

We want you and other individuals (who are aged 18 years old or over) in your household to individually become members of Melvich Community SCIO. At this stage, membership will give you the rights to call a special general meeting and give you voting rights at annual general meetings and special general meetings. However, the full benefits of membership will be expanded upon when we have a new community hub established and the charity matures. Joining as a member of Melvich Community SCIO will also help demonstrate to potential grant funders that the community are engaged and involved in our charitable work – without your support then we may struggle to get the funding required for your new community hub. Please sign up now. An application form is enclosed.

7. DESIGN OF NEW COMMUNITY HUB

We have had initial engagement with some members of our community and various clubs/organisations within our charitable area on what they would like to see considered in the design of the new community hub.

We are pleased to announce that SSE Renewable's Highland Sustainable Development Fund and Highland Council's Ward Discretionary Fund have awarded us a total of £5,500 as a contribution towards the costs for developing a design for the new facility.

We have more work to do in this area and in the coming months we will be clarifying the specifications, getting some outline drawings prepared and undertaking further consultation. If you have any views on what we should consider in the specification of the new community hub then please get in touch as we will value your inputs.

The new community hub will hopefully be set back from the main road and work is ongoing to prepare the necessary documentation to present a case for obtaining funding for the purchase of the additional land required. Whilst Norbloc Construction Ltd are on site performing the demolition of the hall there will be some trial pits dug, with landowner's permission, to inform of us of the depth to bedrock on the land as that may significantly influence the layout of the design(s) being considered.

8. 100 CLUB

We can not rely solely on funding from grant funders to build and then maintain our new community hub. We need to raise funds within our community too and we need to have a regular income stream to the charity so that the new community hub can be financially sustainable. As such, Melvich Community SCIO is setting up a 100 club. The 100 club is a small private lottery. Melvich Community SCIO has been approved by Highland Council to operate the 100 Club under the Gambling Act 2005 and our registration number is 32155. More details will be issued on this shortly and it is planned to hold the first monthly draw in October. Please participate as this will help Melvich Community SCIO and you could win one of three cash prize per month.

9. NEXT STEPS

We are continuing to deliver against the forward plan communicated previously and our next key tasks are to demolish the old village hall, acquire additional land, design our new community hub, increase fund raising and bring in grants to help with the construction of our new community hub. During the period of time between the hall being demolished and the new community hub being constructed, we are intending to make use of our land as a Community Growing Project. Funding has been awarded to get the project going and anyone interested in gardening should get in touch as we are looking to recruit volunteers to work with this sub-committee. We will share more information on this in due course.

10. WAYS TO DONATE

If you would like to donate towards the new hall project, then please either:

- Send us a cheque made payable to "Melvich Community SCIO" c/o 2 Sinclair Gardens, Portskerra, Melvich, Sutherland KW14 7YX or drop it off at West End Stores.
- Go to www.easydonate.org/NTPN01 to make a one-off or monthly donation.
- To give £5 text NTPN01 to 70970.
- To give £10 text: NTPN01 to 70191.

Thank you. We will keep you updated on developments as we move forward.