



Melvich Community SCIO

JANUARY 2023 UPDATE



Portskerra in the snow. Photo credit: Andy Cole



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1. INTRODUCTION

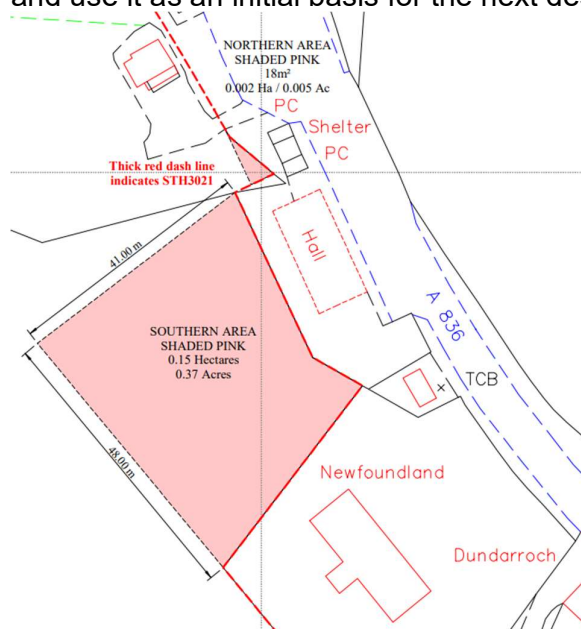
Happy New Year to everyone. Thank you to everyone who attended our consultation activities and participated in the various events of 2022. It was a busy year and none of this would have been possible without the help and support of all of our wonderful Volunteers – a huge thanks to each and every one of them! We hope that this update brings you up to speed in case you missed anything, and we have some information on upcoming activities for your diaries.

2. STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION FOR MELVICH COMMUNITY HUB

At the end of September 2022, we held two in person engagement events at the Halladale Inn. We were pleased that so many people took the time to come and see the various building shape design options proposed by our architect team. The written feedback on options was really helpful and it was great to discuss the design options with members of our community. We followed this up with an online survey to capture the thoughts of anyone who was unable to attend but wanted to provide their feedback.



There are pros and cons with each of the options. Option C (shown above), which was a L-shaped building with an enclosed courtyard at the rear, came out as the preferred option as a result of this consultation. We have prepared a report ([available on our website](#)) which summarises all of the feedback received. Thank you to everyone who participated. We have reviewed the feedback given on the various options with our architect team and this will be taken into account going forward. The final design of the building will not exactly match the model of option C shown above however now that we have a preferred building shape we can take this forward as a proposal in a pre-planning advice application to the Highland Council and use it as an initial basis for the next design phases.



We are delighted to announce that the conveyancing stage for the land purchase is now complete. The areas shaded in pink on the map (to the left) are now owned by Melvich Community SCIO.

Thanks go to the previous landowner for being prepared to sell some of their land to us. We are also thankful to the Caithness North Sutherland Fund (CNSF) and the SSE Strathy North Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund who collectively funded the majority of the funding required to make this purchase.

The land purchase has been on the critical path for the project and now that it is complete, we can progress through the next stages.

At the start of December 2022, we held a meeting in Inverness with the architect team to discuss the feedback on the design options. We then submitted a preplanning advice application to Highland Council on 22/12/2022.

On this basis, we hope to receive feedback on the proposal from the Highland Council by around the end of February 2023. A key issue that we need advice from them on is the quantity

of car parking provision that we need to cater for. Once the advice is received it should help underpin the decisions taken in the next stages to deliver the Melvich Community Hub project.

We look forward to updating you on further progress with this project in our next update.

3. MELVICH PUBLIC TOILETS

A Community Asset Transfer request for the Melvich Public Toilets has been with the Highland Council for consideration for just over 6 months. There is no new information to report at this stage. This process typically takes anywhere from 6 to 12 months to complete.

Melvich Community SCIO do not want to take over the Melvich Public Toilet building until there are new public toilets available for use in our new community hub. The intent at this stage is to have a firm agreement in place that the existing toilet building will be transferred over to Melvich Community SCIO when we are ready for it.

Some members of our community had expressed concern about the provision of public toilets in the hub building. The intent is that the public toilet provision will be completely segregated from the main community hub facility and in normal circumstances will be operated completely separately of the hub's toilet provision.

4. '100 CLUB'

Thank you to everyone who has signed up to the '100 Club' for the 2022/23 Session. **If you are not already a 100 Club Member or if you wish to purchase additional tickets, then please get in touch** for a form as we would love for you to have an opportunity to potentially win one of three cash prizes paid out every month. It only costs £5 a month for a ticket. 60% of this money goes to the prize fund and 40% goes to Melvich Community SCIO to help us deliver our charity's objectives.

5. PORTSKERRA PLAY PARK



Thank you to everyone who completed our consultation survey in relation to the Play Parks in the Melvich Community Council area. We had a great response and a [report has been published on our website](#) summarising the feedback received.

A Play Park sub-committee has been established which Natalie Bird is chairing and Sarah Kerr is acting as the secretary on. The sub-committee have decided to focus on addressing the Portskerra Play Park as their immediate priority.

A Community Asset Transfer (CAT) request has been submitted to the Highland Council for ownership of the land that the Portskerra Play Park was located on. Transfer of ownership of the land typically takes between 6 and 12 months. The CAT request also asked for an interim lease for the land to try to accelerate the timeframe in which improvements can be made. There are legal costs associated with getting a lease agreement in place and taking over ownership of the land. A grant funding application was submitted to the SSE Strathy North Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund to help cover these initial anticipated costs and this funding application was successful.

The children at Melvich Primary School have produced drawings of what they would like to have at a replacement Play Park and the sub-committee are starting to prepare specifications for gathering quotations from potential Play Park equipment providers/installers.



As a community we need to fund raise to build up funds to contribute towards the cost of a replacement Play Park. The first fundraising event ran by the Play Park sub-committee took place on 3rd December 2022. Over 70 people attended the event, and 20 children undertook a sponsored run (this is about half the total number of children at Melvich Primary School). There was also a beat the goalie opportunity and some folk did manage to score a goal. Thanks to Rowan Anderson for being the goalie at the event.

On the day £443.55 was collected from sponsorship monies submitted, donations received for hot drinks plus baking, and for chance to try to beat the goalie. More sponsorship money is still to come in and it is estimated that in excess of £1000.00 has been raised for the Play Park project from this one event. Thanks to everyone who participated and to all those who sponsored a child or made a donation. This is a great start to the fundraising needed.



Additional fundraising initiatives will be needed in the coming months to help bring in more money and show support for the Play Park project.

In the meantime, if you would like to make a donation specifically for the playpark project then please scan the QR code to the left or go online to <http://easydonate.org/NTPN04>, or to donate £5 text NTPN04 to 70970, or to donate £10 text NTPN04 to 70191.

6. COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Melvich Community SCIO have been engaging with Melvich Community Council on this topic as the delivery of the community hub project will require to draw down significant levels of funding from one, or more, of the community benefit funds for our area (in addition to match grant funding from other sources).

An Invitation to Tender (ITT) has been drafted to put out to suitable independent consultants to get a Community Action Plan produced for our area. Aspects of the draft ITT were discussed at our most recent meeting at the end of November 2022, and it is intended that this will be finalised and released shortly.



Once we have tender returns for this work, they will be evaluated, and a contract awarded. This work will require grant funding support (available through Local Energy Scotland) and we were pleased that two representatives from Local Energy Scotland came along to our most recent meeting to engage with the steering group and other attendees.

7. MELVICH COMMUNITY SCIO AGM

Thanks to everyone who turned up to our second AGM which was held at the end of November 2022. It was a well-attended AGM, and it was a good opportunity to give an update on the

activities of Melvich Community SCIO over the last year. The accounts for the period ending 31st March 2022 were approved and have now been submitted to OSCR.

Six Melvich Community SCIO members were elected to the board at the AGM. They were Eric Cameron, Debbie Smith, Trudy Perry, David Hodge, Suzanne Mackay and Bob Kerr. Mike Bryant has also joined the board from 10th January 2023.

Claire and Andy Mills decided to step down at the AGM and we would like to thank them for all of their work whilst they were on the Board.

8. PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION FOR 2024 CALENDAR

We are delighted that our call for volunteers to help with a photography competition and calendar competition have been answered by Janet and David Southard from Wild Arena Ltd at Forsinard Lodge. They have a wealth of experience with professional photography, running similar competitions and producing calendars. A huge thanks to them for taking the lead on this.

The competition brief is simple: We are looking for images showcasing the local area (within Melvich Community Council area boundaries) and its natural beauty. You can include people, wildlife, and landscapes. We are looking for uplifting pictures to carry us all through the year!

Photographs will be broken into monthly categories of the 4 seasons.

Spring: March / April / May;
Summer: June / July / August;
Autumn: September / October / November; and
Winter: December / January / February.

All the winning images will then be published in a Melvich Community SCIO 2024 calendar, which will be available for purchase to help raise funds for the local community.

Prizes

There will be 12 category winners (one for each month) and then, an overall winner, selected from the 12 category winners.

Each monthly category winner's image will be published in the corresponding month within the competitions published calendar and the winners will receive a free copy of the calendar and a category winner certificate.

The overall winner will be selected by a 'people's choice' vote and will have their image printed on the front of the calendar. The overall winner will also get a free copy of the calendar, an overall winner certificate and trophy.

The monthly category winners will be contacted via e-mail on 8th September 2023 and then the results announced on the Melvich Community SCIO website and social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) on 15th September 2023, the community can then vote for the 'people's choice' overall winner between the 15th and 29th September (details of how to do this will be released closer to the time). The people's choice winner will be announced on 2nd October 2023.

How to Enter

Entry to the competition is completely free. To enter simply send your pictures (as a JPEG file no larger than 5Mb please) to us via email at photo-competition@melvichcommunityscio.org, you may submit up to 4 images in total, one per season. Please also state where the photo was taken.

Competition Rules

- Open to all residents of the UK, except members of the Melvich Community SCIO board.
- By entering the competition, the participants agree that their name and nearest town of residence may be published if they win.
- All entries must be the original work of the entrant and must not contravene the rights of third parties.
- All images must be taken during the last 2 years in the local area. We may not be able to verify everyone's images, so we are expecting you to be honest.
- Technical spec: images must be entered as .jpg files no larger than 5Mb.
- Entrants grant Melvich Community SCIO the right to place their entry onto the website and social media in relation to the competition, print in the calendar for resale and print in publications associated with the Melvich Community Council area.
- Entries must be submitted by 25th August 2023.
- The winning entrants will be the ones that in the judge's opinion are the best.
- Once photos are submitted, they cannot be changed.
- The judges' decisions are final.

9. FORTHCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

EVENT	DAY, DATE AND TIME	LOCATION	COST
COFFEE MORNING Strath Halladale Hall Committee are now hosting this event.	1 st Monday of each month. 10:30am – 12:00	Halladale Hall, Strath Halladale	Set by organiser
HALLADALE FILM CLUB www.facebook.com/HalladaleFilmClub/	2 nd Saturday every month. Doors open 7pm.	Halladale Hall, Strath Halladale	Set by organiser

Melvich Community SCIO are still planning events and looking at locations and dates that would suit the community, so please bear with us and we will have a completed schedule for you in the next update due in April – hopefully by then the weather will be a little kinder and we can get outdoors. 😊 Running events will be much more straight forward when we have our new community hub ready for use.

If anyone has anything particular they would like to see as an activity or if you would like to volunteer to help run an activity – get in touch or give us a call.

The events currently being considered to be delivered in the coming year include:

BINGO – a few smaller sessions perhaps more regularly	
POKER RUN – family event for young and old. Car needed. Maximum 4 to a team.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FIND the mystery locations, 2. Complete a CHALLENGE at each location, 3. PICK a card for completing the challenge
Boot Sale/Table Top Sale	Grab a table and come and sell your unwanted stuff – time for a clear out!

Photography competition	Open Days with refreshments for anyone wanting some photography tips!
Sponsored Mountain Walk	Perhaps an ascent of Ben Hope on the evening of 21 st June (Summer Solstice)
Adults & Kids Easter Egg Scavenger Hunt	Some egg decorating and maybe a tombola
Nerf war	Fun activity for various age groups
Whist nights	Always a favourite – Newbie's welcome
Pub Quiz nights	These have been well attended and lots of laughter. Halladale Inn is closed for the season but when they reopen we hope to run some more quizzes.

We look forward to seeing you at some, or all, of these community events in the coming months. Other events may be added in the coming months (e.g. for Community Action Plan consultation sessions, fundraisers for the Play Park, etc) so please keep an eye on our website, social media channels and our noticeboard for additional event information.

10. THANK YOU

2022 was busy year indeed but we managed to hold our annual Mega Bingo in November and the wider community really stepped forward and provided us with some great bingo prizes. **We would like to say a massive 'Thank You' to all the organisations who have supported us** – if possible, let's *Support Them Back* and keep the money flowing round our communities for the benefit of all.

PRIZES FOR THE ANNUAL MEGA BINGO RECEIVED FROM:	
Buds N Bloom (Thurso)	Cancer Research Charity Shop (Thurso)
Dunnets of Thurso	Factory Shop (Thurso)
CO-OP Thurso	Portskerra Harbours Association
New Start Highland (Thurso)	Andy Mills (Wooden table)
The Wee Shop (Shebster Road)	Susan Imlach - Highland Hospice (Thurso)
North Coast Candles (Thurso)	Driftwood (by Geddes, Thurso)
Laura Jardine (Psychic, healing)	GMG Biofuels Ltd (Little Big House)
Charity Shop (Princes St) Thurso	Tesco (Thurso)
North Coast Butchers Thurso	Lloyds Pharmacy (Thurso)
Rembrandts (Thurso)	Mad Coo'z Craftz (Reay)
Harper's Fly-Fishing of Thurso	A2C Mountaineering (Melvich)
West End Stores (Melvich)	



Lest we not forget



Joining in and having a Say



More laughter



Coffee Mornings at Halladale Hall are back!



New Friends and Old



*Coming Together for Christmas
or a nice hot coffee at
Coastline Cafe*



Laughter



Sponsored Bike Ride



Generations mixing



Volunteers working hard on your Community Garden