

Methil

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING - WHAT WE'VE LEARNED



SNAPSHOT

- Participatory community fund and 'Small Fishes' network
- Doon the Dam activities
- Summer community trip
- Housing development and green space – the Leven and People's Park
- Local history activities and community forum
- Activate course from the University of Glasgow begins in Methil!

Participatory community fund & 'Small Fishes' network



During 2023 the Doon the Dam (DTD) Group continued to support the development of community led grantmaking in Methil and the Levenmouth Area. In Spring, three



community information sessions were held, aimed to equip community groups with the information they would need to be able to fully participate. These sessions provided open Q&A opportunities to address any questions and gave groups direct support with filling out applications. Later, a community forum was held for the 22 community groups who received funding, to support an array of exciting events during the Spring and Summer.

These community groups developed multiple relationships within the Small Fish Network and grew from strength to strength during their own and other community events, projects, and visits 'doon the dam'. There was a final evaluation event in the Rosie Hall, East Wemyss, on September 30th.



"We have come on leaps and bounds, developed new friendships, and built our confidence in the last 6 months."



It is hoped community led grantmaking can continue in the future. DTD believe community-led grantmaking can make miracles happen – small amounts of money can make big changes and increase access to funding for grass roots community groups – many of whom have never received funding before. There are multiple opportunities for collaboration – people working together for the good of their communities.



"Through these processes opportunities emerge. Leadership already exists within community members. At Corra, we are not claiming to have developed or even encouraged leadership. There are individuals who have natural leadership - in spades. They simply need the opportunity to use it."

Debbie, Corra

Doon the Dam group activities

The DTD group visited the Small Fishes during the summer of 2023 and saw first-hand all the exciting projects! There were also lots of opportunities to learn from our communities across the generations – at the galas, at music festivals, strawberry teas, gymnastic sessions, knitting groups, bowling matches, fruit, and vegetable fairs, harvesting urban crops, and craft sessions.

The DTD group's experience of leading the Small Fish Fund for the second time was also an exciting opportunity.



“We did not feel intimidated this time as we were prepared. But the forum this time was a lot busier from ten groups in 2022 to twenty-two groups in 2023!”

Summer community trip

As a special thank you to all the Small Fishes and the DTD Group a community picnic was organised to Auchengarrich Farm near Comrie. This was a special thank you and celebration of our summer of small fish events the over past 2 years! A 60-seater bus brought families, carers, and children along with a minibus of 10 community members who wanted a shorter day excursion. It was a beautiful day – a traffic free, green park, all outside - play areas and various sheds and green spaces to interact with the animals! There was also a mud slide much enjoyed by Methilhill Community Children's Initiative (MCCI) young people and adults!



The DTD group chose a Summer Trip to celebrate their Methil and Levenmouth heritage. In the past these were regular events for children and families during the Summer months through church groups, local workplaces - steelworks, pits, miners' welfare, co-op guilds etc.



“this had been the best day of the Summer socialising with other children and engaging with the animals and landscape while having a bus trip with friends”

Summer community trip contd.

The DTD Group held an Eighties fundraiser for MCCI in November. A fun night was had by all at Methilhill Bowling Club and £500 was raised.

The DTD group held a summer picnic 'doon the dam' to raise awareness for a people's park. The DTD group believes stronger community engagement is crucial to achieve a project that meets community expectations, and a unique opportunity to create a vibrant, inclusive community park which enhances the existing natural beauty and recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Housing development and green space

the Leven and People's Park



In 2017, The Wemyss Estate submitted a planning application to Fife Council for a substantial housing development on the periphery of Levenmouth. The proposed scheme between Buckhaven and Methil is situated in 3 different spaces - on farmland off Percival Road, a field south of Levenmouth Academy beside Starkies Wood and an area of land beside Sea Rd close to the police station. This development aims to construct 1,850 houses over a 3 phased construction period, of 15-20 years.

The proposal generated significant discussion within the community. While the plan offered a potential solution to housing needs, concerns arose regarding affordability, lack of social housing and loss of green space. The community expressed its concerns about an inadequate allocation of low-income rental housing and the need for a more equitable approach to address present and future housing needs. The Wemyss Estate proposal had only designated 90 units as social housing (5%). Furthermore, anxieties exist regarding the loss of green spaces vital to Methil's character and wellbeing.

However, during Summer 2023 community members organised themselves and lodged objections to the first stages of the planning process.



Local history activities and community forum



The history group meets on a regular basis in Methil. They have continued to study and research the development of Kirkland through the last few centuries. They had a few conversations with Archeology Scotland and visited the site of the Manor House and Kirkland School. Undoubtedly, they will continue to ask questions and work out the rich social history of the area! They have been studying old maps and analysing changing population density within the local region.



The make-up of industry, the environmental and social impacts, is also very interesting. The group never fails to ask more questions and tries to find answers, which is not always easy! During the summer the history group visited Fife archives in Glenrothes and had a great time looking at the Poor House Records from Kirkcaldy, information from Methil's social and cultural organisations from the past as well as old maps of mine workings under Methil docks! As always we came up with more questions and will visit again in 2024. A visit to St Andrews University archives is also on the agenda.

Corra supported the history group to engage in various discussions on developing local heritage trails with various stakeholders from the Leven Project and the Tourist Association. The group members also look forward to the Methil Heritage Centre opening soon as a local asset, recorder, promoter, and instigator of local history celebrating a people's history of Methil and Levenmouth across generations and boundaries.



The history group held a community history forum at Bayview Stadium Lounge – 'Who do you think you are?'. This event had two guest lecturers from the University of St Andrews and the University of Glasgow giving short presentations while local people mapped, shared, and learned about where their ancestors came from and went to – in Fife, Scotland, the UK, Europe and the world! It was a great session. We thought about why people came here and why they left their homes and families in other places. Through this discussion we began to see the fluidity of place and how people have always been on the move – not a new phenomenon!



Activate Course

from the University of Glasgow begins in Methil



In early November a group of nine community members began their learning journey at Methilhill and Denbeath Parish Church Hall. They embarked on a community education program with the University of Glasgow which will finish in Spring 2024. There are many vibrant and creative conversations every week on issues of inequality, power, community



development, racism, discrimination, human rights, and community assets, despite only being halfway through the course. The group are also doing small projects on local issues with plenty of opportunities to meet and ask questions. It is an inspiring experience felt by all.

Opportunities for community members to realise their own power and share leadership skills are important for local leadership to grow and influence community planning and development in the future.



“Education does not change the world... people change the world”

Paulo Freire

What have we learned?

Effective support for Scotland's communities requires funders, including the public sector, to be responsive. There is intrinsic value in community-led grantmaking approaches for community groups, emergent leadership, and the wider community. Resources and support structures need to be adaptable to the needs and aspirations of each community. By investing in community-led approaches we can unlock positive change.

Our work alongside Methil has shown the power of investing in community-led ideas and actions for change. Supporting community-led networking forums has created space for smaller community groups to access funding, share ideas and collaborate on positive change. This approach ensures resources are used effectively to address the needs and aspirations of Methil communities.

At the heart of strong communities are dedicated community members and leaders who strive for the wellbeing of others around them. By working together and ensuring diverse voices are heard, community groups can drive change within their communities.

What have we learned? contd.



Corra and community members have identified the importance of supporting and creating nurturing, reflective and critical spaces within Methil. This approach has also centred a historic context to understand community challenges and successes in the past and present. These opportunities allowed community members, groups, and partners to learn from one another while identifying possible solutions. Such situations and spaces recognise, value and respect community members role in creating and sustaining positive change.

What happens next?

- Support community leadership courses, spaces, and opportunities for mentoring for all ages.
- Aspirations to co-create a designated community hub where the community can learn, lead, and engage in collaborative projects and activities, which advocate for inclusion and human rights.
- Designated space and programmes for young people's leadership to grow and possible mentorship by community leaders – informal and formal. Young people co-design this space/programmes (linkage with education and health).
- Co-create a community plan focusing on immediate concerns and future possibilities the community desires.
- Bring community partners together to share this plan and support actions - community members are facilitators of this process.
- Dissemination of information relating to the proposed housing development, working with Planning Aid Scotland alongside community members, leaders, groups, and partners to create opportunities for the community to advocate, participate in and respond to proposals ensuring community voice is amplified and central to the planning processes.

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Partnership Funding

This year, investment from Fife Council's Community Recovery Fund helped to support Corra's work alongside Methil community. This is a welcome contribution to our long-term partnership and important step in resourcing communities.

Moving Forward

Since 2015, the Getting Alongside Communities programme has been helping to create the conditions for communities to deliver powerful, long-lasting change.

In the early years of the programme, there was a strong focus on listening, capacity building, widening community participation, and supporting ideas into action. This long-term, relational approach has established deep knowledge, trust and connections with local people and partners – and resulted in increased community leadership, voice, ambition and action.

The final delivery phase of the programme is focussed on supporting communities to establish clear priorities, plans and partnerships that can drive and sustain community-led change – beyond an ‘on the ground’ presence from Corra which will end by March 2026.

Each community is currently working to agree their priorities and the format of a community owned plan by March 2024, and to identify the partners required to achieve it. There will be an event in September 2024 to ‘launch’ each plan followed by an agreed timeline to transition to community leadership in each place.

To help each community share learning and connect with community members across the Getting Alongside Communities programme, a community network has been established. Plans are also in place to develop a Community Leadership Collective to accelerate learning, leadership and positive change within and across communities.

The end of Corra’s work on the ground will mark the start of a new relationship between Corra and communities. This legacy phase will be co-created by communities and Corra and include a focus on: celebration and connection; community leadership and infrastructure; financial resources; knowledge & skills; learning & evaluation. Necessary conditions for success include:

- Community owned plan being delivered by local people and partners.
- Local community leadership – with connections to local and national networks.
- Community infrastructure (spaces and organisational structures).
- Long-term resourcing in place (funding, learning, relationships).



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