

Methil Annual Update 2024

About Methil

On the east coast of Scotland, you'll find Methil – a coastal town once known for its coal mines, textile factories, and the Methil Docks. Of course, there's so much more to Methil than this. It's also home to the 50-year old Methil Parent and Toddler group, has an expansive history of long lost railway lines and dancin' into the wee hours at midnight balls. Most importantly, there's an active community made up of community leaders working to create positive change in Methil. In this update, you'll find stories from the community about what they've been up to in 2024, why community leaders do what they do, and plans for 2025.



CORRA
FOUNDATION
voice • power • change

Methil's timeline

Corra's work alongside the community in Methil began in 2017. You can delve into the detail in each annual update, but here's a taster of what the community has done since 2017. For more information on each year visit www.corra.scot/methil

A winding grey path with dashed white lines leads through the 2017-2020 section. The path starts at the top left, curves down and right, then loops back down and left, ending at the bottom left. Illustrations include a person walking, a pop-up shop, children playing, a group reading, and people at a table.

2017

Corra spent time meeting local residents, meeting organisations working in the area, and running activities such as a pop-up shop, consultation with secondary school pupils, and supporting ideas in action.

2018

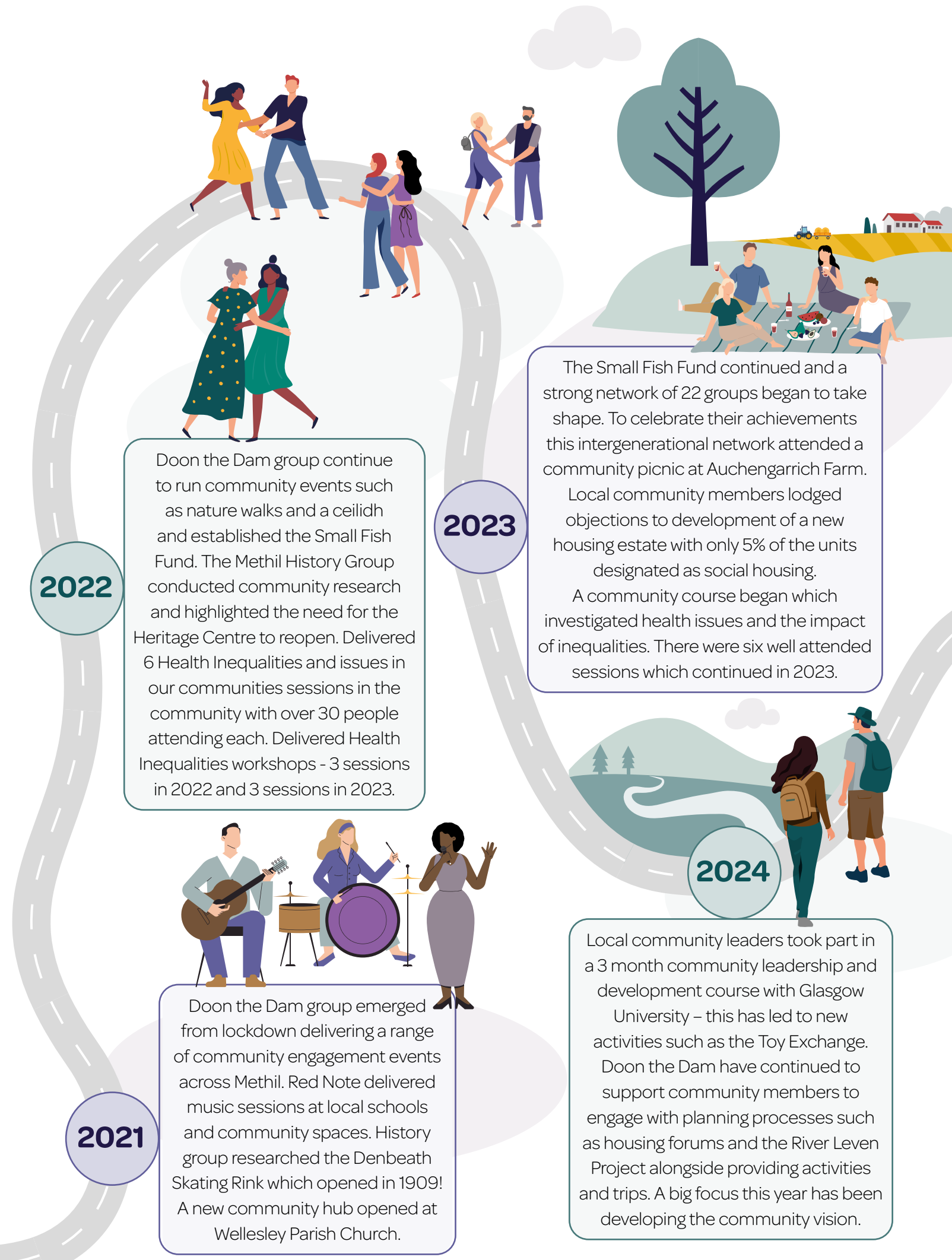
Corra supported activities through funding room hire and creche costs. A wellbeing and craft group helped design a sensory garden and sculpture. The Connect Friends group grew to support over 30 people per session.

2019

Local groups were involved in the CLIMB participatory budgeting process. Local history workshops, history cafes, and exchange visits across Fife Coalfield areas took place. The History Group secured funding for heritage information display boards in Memorial Park.

2020

The community engaged in the River Leven development project offering insights. Groups responded to the national lockdown by meeting in outside areas and through weekly group conference calls, expanding art groups, the history group, and established the Friday Coffee Crew.

A winding grey path with dashed white lines leads through the 2021-2024 section. The path starts at the top right, curves down and left, then loops back down and right, ending at the bottom right. Illustrations include people dancing, a couple walking, a picnic, a band playing, and hikers.

2021

Doon the Dam group emerged from lockdown delivering a range of community engagement events across Methil. Red Note delivered music sessions at local schools and community spaces. History group researched the Denbeath Skating Rink which opened in 1909! A new community hub opened at Wellesley Parish Church.

2022

Doon the Dam group continue to run community events such as nature walks and a ceilidh and established the Small Fish Fund. The Methil History Group conducted community research and highlighted the need for the Heritage Centre to reopen. Delivered 6 Health Inequalities and issues in our communities sessions in the community with over 30 people attending each. Delivered Health Inequalities workshops - 3 sessions in 2022 and 3 sessions in 2023.

2023

The Small Fish Fund continued and a strong network of 22 groups began to take shape. To celebrate their achievements this intergenerational network attended a community picnic at Auchengarrich Farm. Local community members lodged objections to development of a new housing estate with only 5% of the units designated as social housing. A community course began which investigated health issues and the impact of inequalities. There were six well attended sessions which continued in 2023.

2024

Local community leaders took part in a 3 month community leadership and development course with Glasgow University – this has led to new activities such as the Toy Exchange. Doon the Dam have continued to support community members to engage with planning processes such as housing forums and the River Leven Project alongside providing activities and trips. A big focus this year has been developing the community vision.

Methil's big ideas for positive change in 2024

Building community leadership

Being a community leader is about belonging, wellbeing, being listened to, and creating positive change in your community. In 2024, local people developed their leadership skills through an accredited course called 'Activate' with Glasgow University. This course supports community leaders to reflect on what they do, and why they do it exploring ideas of power and participation, values of community work, and equity and inclusion. 9 local people took part and graduated in 2024 – congratulations!

As part of the course, a group of participants designed a new solution to address community need – a toy exchange! Through the course, the group explored how to take this idea into action – and since graduating – have set up a monthly Levenmouth Toy Exchange in Methil – more on

this later in the update! Other initiatives including a local warm space project, and action to make sports more accessible to young people and the wider community..

Throughout 2022 – 2023, the Doon the Dam group co-designed and co-lead a participatory grant funding scheme – called the Small Fish Fund. In previous updates, you can read all about the approach of this and how the community built the funding programme around trust-based grant making. In 2024, the group and network reflected on this process through an evaluation and delivered a further reflection to other communities in November 2024. Community leaders shared how unique the experience was, how it has led to stronger connections across groups, and how this process built confidence and leadership.



Understanding our history

The Methil History Group continued to explore Methil's rich cultural and social history in 2024. This has included work researching the local Poor Houses and investigative work to find factory workers houses associated with the textile factories. The group have worked to uncover information about Kirkland – a local industrial village that has virtually disappeared. A local historian supported the history group's work this year obtaining newspaper and archive material to help with the investigations. Four History Cafes were run exploring maps and the social history of the area. These were a great way to share knowledge and spend time learning together as a community.

This year the group have also collaborated on a film in partnership with the National Galleries of Scotland to capture local knowledge, community wealth, and collective memory. A small group of Methil community leaders shared their insights on growing up in Methil alongside their knowledge of the history – schools, dancing, arts, work, marriage, childhood, and reflections on power in the area. The film should be released in 2025.

Supporting children and families

2024 saw the 50th birthday celebration of the local baby and toddler group. Running twice a week, this group offers a safe place for parents and children to play, learn, and explore. Families travel from across Fife to attend, valuing the sense of community and care that community leaders Joyce, Denise, and Sharon have created. There's always lots of fun toys – cars, motorbikes, puppets, slides – alongside crisps, snacks, and a cuppa for the adults.

After completing the Activate course this year, Sharon and Denise, alongside Joyce, launched a monthly toy exchange – providing an environmentally friendly and cost-effective way to share and get new toys. It runs every month, and regularly has over 40 families attend. Plans for the future include expansion, work alongside the primary schools, and potentially a new home!



Working together across the community

After the success of the Small Fishes Network, and Small Fish Fund, work across the community has continued to grow. This includes Doon the Dam running a range of Dog Cafés, sports days for young people, and foraging and nature walks. The community came together to amplify community voices in the Leven Project (a development project for the River Leven area). There are plans for benches and tables for doon the dam which will make the dam area more accessible to people across Methil.

The community have worked alongside Corra to develop a community owned and designed vision for the future. 10 community members have been involved, sharing their insights and ambitions for the future of community activity in Methil. Work continues on this, but you'll find the most recent version of this vision earlier in this document.

METHIL COMMUNITY PLAN

Methil's people and community wealth, past and present, are the enablers for leadership, intergenerational collaboration, inclusivity, equity and community-led change for the future

Get involved

Contact:
doonthedam2@gmail.com

Community designs and implements participatory budgeting and community-led grantmaking initiatives

- Continued support and resource to community grantmaking initiatives - the Small Fish Fund
- Community members leading on fund design, implementation, evaluation and decision making
- Support grassroots projects and ideas
- Research various approaches of community-led and community owned funding initiatives

**Funding
and
Investment**

History

Promote and support further research, learning and documentation of local history

- Local history research projects and community cafes
- Facilitate ongoing events and skills building opportunities to uncover social and family history
- Publicise history and current examples of community wealth - culture, art, community organisations and leadership
- Community and education sector partners share history research and experience

Co-develop intergenerational community learning and leadership opportunities

- Co-Design and facilitate community-based learning opportunities
- Support community-led development and advocacy initiatives
- Community forums on local planning, climate change, saving and creating more green space

**Learning
and
Leadership**

Space

Establish a community hub

- Create a community shopfront space (multi-purpose meeting and cafe space, IT and internet access)
- Establish a community information and resource centre
- Equity and human rights approaches guide hub design and activities

Achievements

- Small Fish Fund: Participatory grantmaking led, designed, managed, and facilitated by Doon the Dam community group. £20,000 distributed to 23 unconstituted community groups within a year (approx. 75% women-led). The Small Fish Fund network has supported multiple community activities since 2022
- Creation of local history and community board at Memorial Park: Research and design of boards by community members
- Community history cafes: Wealth of local history uncovered. Topics include family histories, museum trips, map research, the pits and docks, Byron Park, Kirkland and Methil's Industrial and social history
- Leadership Courses: Activate Leadership Course, Health Inequalities in Our Communities course. 40 community members/learners across generations. New and expanded community initiatives grew from courses such as Levenmouth Toy Exchange and Warm spaces-cafes
- Community forums: Explored hall closures during covid; expansion of greenspace and more social housing in proposed housing development in area.
- Community network emerged advocating the inclusion of Methil communities in the Leven Project/ River Park. This became the Doon the Dam Group who since 2020 have led a series of community events advocating for an inclusive, community-based design of the river park.

How we'll work together

We celebrate Methil's strong communities through inclusive approaches which centre participatory design and decision-making throughout our work and initiatives

How we'll know it's working

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| • Range of activities/services hosted in an accessible shopfront space | • Community leadership network emerges in Methil | • Community-led ideas and advocacy initiatives lead to social action and change | • Community members are actively engaged in community fund initiatives, supporting one another through fund network and participatory decision-making processes | • Renewed community pride in the past and inspiration for present and future | • Community exhibits reflect historical memory and celebrate local leadership, development and achievements |
| • Meetings spaces and cafe are well used by local groups and all sectors of the community | • Community members co-design, co-facilitate and co-lead learning opportunities | • New community-led projects and ideas are supported and resourced | | • Linkage to school curriculum and intergenerational projects | |

Hear from some of Methil's community leaders



As part of the annual updates this year, we took time to sit down over a cuppa with a few local people to hear more about what they've been up to this year and plans for 2025.

Eleanor:

is in the Methil History Group and also gets involved in other groups such as Doon the Dam.

"I joined the History Group during COVID. It was great. You knew that on a Thursday morning you'd have a whole load of people to talk to and it was absolutely brilliant. I've been part of the history group for 5 years, but I'm not the longest serving member. At the beginning, I was really interested in the Poor Houses. But, it's the group, coming here and talking to people that's really important. There's a lot of talking and chatting going on and we have heated discussions on our local history. We got some funding and have been on some trips to the maps archive in Edinburgh, and the local archive in Glenrothes. We went to Newtongrange, the Saltworks in St Monan's and to the textile mill in Stanley. In 2025, we still have some places we want to visit, and we still need to find out where the workers lived from the mills in Kirkland, and I've still to finish my research on the Poor Houses.

It's true what they say – people of influence, influence what's written. The history group is about telling the stories of local people and local history"

Introducing three members of the Doon the Dam group who spoke to us about their work. The story below is drawn from a chat over a cuppa with Margaret, Sharon and Elizabeth.

Margaret:

gets involved in everything that's asked of her – be that Doon the Dam, History Group, film group and more!

Sharon:

has been part of the Doon the Dam group and also runs the Methil Parent and Toddler Group and the Levenmouth Toy Exchange, she volunteers at Enigma Gymnastics, and completed the Activate course.

Elizabeth:

is the minister of a local church, and has been involved in the Doon the Dam group and did the Activate course.

As part of the Small Fish Fund, we ran a few trips. Lots of the funded groups that came along are now working together more, they're volunteering and helping at other groups. The connections that the community built through the Small Fish Fund and the trips – it's major. The trips were wonderful ... people were different when they were away. You just saw them blooming. We also went along to visit the funded groups – we visited a local knitting group and had one of the best teas we've ever had!

Doon the Dam has engaged with the Leven Project that is working on plans to develop the area by the River Leven. We've run community days with dog cafes, a picnic, and the bairns had nature walks, it was wonderful. Again, lots of the groups running activities in the community had been part of the Small Fish Network. It's all about getting local people's voices heard in these local development projects. We wanted to get the community doon the dam, engaged in the area, and enjoying the space hoping that this would encourage people to share their views for the development of the area.

With doon the dam, it's been a beautiful place all its days – it's a happy place. We get involved as community leaders because we live here, and we're passionate about the place. If something bothers you, why not do something about it? That's why we get involved in Doon the Dam. It starts with something small, and then you get involved in more and more activities. We're passionate about making a mark in society.

Half of what we've done would never have happened without Marion and Corra behind the scenes – doing the organising and supporting the pulling together of everything. You can approach Marion about anything, and she'll find the answer for you!

The funding that is provided, these small amounts, is so important. Otherwise, where do you get these small pots of money to fund these things? Often, funding puts people off starting things.

Where are the opportunities to make positive change?

Scotland's communities need funders, including the public sector, to provide support and resource in ways that work for them. The community in Methil highlight the impact that the community led grant making process – Small Fish Fund – has had on building connections across the community alongside support to wee groups to access funding to deliver their ideas.

Positive change happens when we listen to communities – the people who call Scotland's neighbourhoods home. There are many examples of this in Methil – this year the community have identified the need for a Toy Exchange providing an environmentally friendly and affordable alternative to buying new toys as children grow. Corra provided a small amount of money to support community leaders to design and deliver this in a way that works for them.

Place-based working centres the knowledge of residents to drive positive changes in their communities. Through participation in the Activate course, community members have further developed their skills and ideas in community development approaches and are now taking this learning into action within Methil.

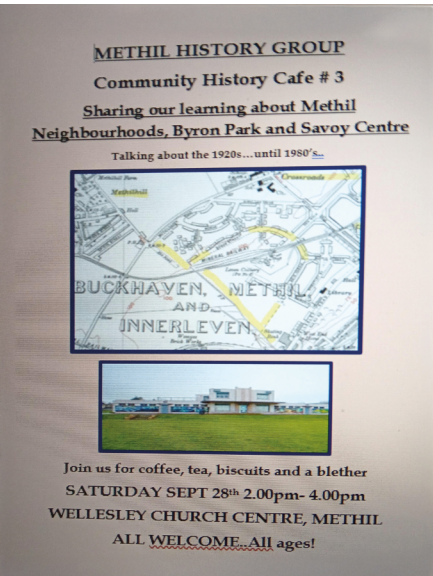
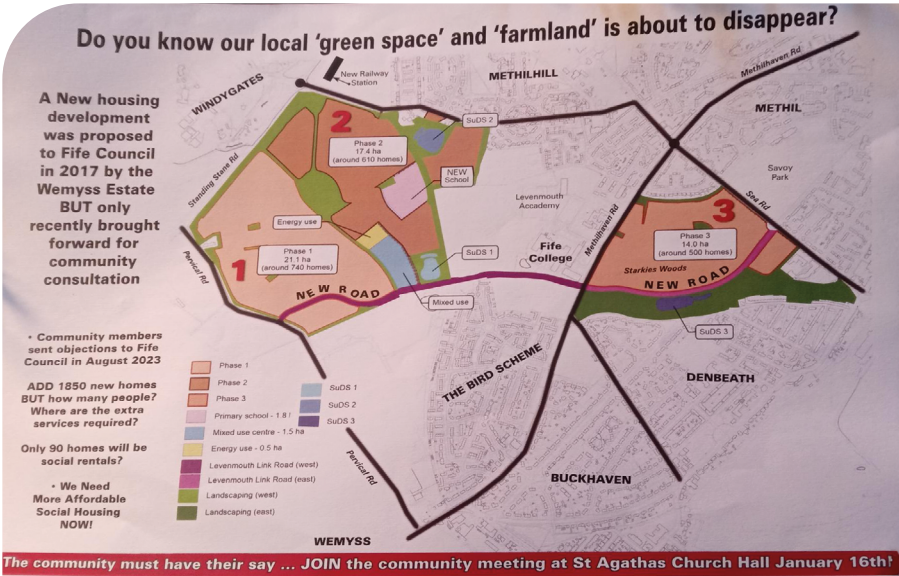
Neighbourhoods, in all parts of Scotland, should be thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of the people who call them home. This includes access to agenda free community space. In Methil, the community would like space that they can access, to do work that is important to them, and provide a space to connect across the communities. The community would like space to organise, socialise, and co-create plans, projects and resources that are important to them.



What next?

From March 2026, our relationship with communities will change. We are supporting community leaders to establish their priorities, plans, and partnerships to sustain community-led change. We will walk alongside community leaders through the Community Leadership Collective ensuring that communities have the skills, connections, and support to take their ideas into action. We will work to ensure that Scotland's communities are supported and resourced in ways that work for them.

- Throughout 2025, we will support the Methil Community to realise their plan, with specific actions including:
- Support the delivery of Methil's Plan on a Page.
 - Support community leaders to develop skills and build networks through Corra's Community Leadership Collective.
 - Support new and existing groups to establish, thrive, and keep going and further develop their ideas.





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