

It's all about Methil

I took the opportunity of all that lovely sunshine during June and July to talk to lots of Methil people about their town. I also asked people to tell me what kinds of activities they might be interested in trying.

I set up a stall at (1) Methil Gala Day on 16th June, (2) BRAG Here Comes Summer event on 6th July, (3) Sailor's Rest Sausage Sizzle on 17th July and (4) Methil Community Centre's Welcome Day on 19th July. I had a free prize draw to attract people to my stall – a big thank you to everyone who took part. I've learned loads from your responses and I hope the results will help me to encourage more people to take part in community life in Methil. I'm continuing to gather people's views so, if you haven't had a chance to contribute and would like to, please let me know (my contact details are at the foot of the page.)

Why was I doing this? I work in a small team of community development workers in the Corra Foundation. We get alongside communities, building on what people like about their area, what their thoughts and ideas are and what they'd like to see happening in the place they live in. Here are some results ...

A total of 137 people took part, lots of families completed the form together. I asked people,

- What do you like about Methil
- What's your favourite place in Methil, and
- What would you most like to see happening in Methil.

What we like about Methil ...

1. The top response with 43 comments was **Nice, friendly people**
"friendly people" "everyone is friendly" "my family" "my friends" "good neighbours"
"there are lots of happy people here" "a friendly place" "the people are lovely" "the friendly buzz" "a lot of friendly faces."

I think we can assume that the people who made the comments above are well connected in Methil. If you are isolated and don't have family or friends in Methil or don't have good neighbours, you'll probably see the town very differently. Many more people live alone these days and our families are scattered about the country, often to find jobs or housing. In these circumstances, it's all too easy to become isolated and when you're isolated you feel vulnerable.

Life is better when we are connected to other people and that's why we have community initiatives like lunch at St Agatha's and St Giles church hall on Mondays, the Café Connect at the Foodbank on Tuesday mornings, lunch at Wellesley Parish Church Hall on Tuesdays, and Connect at Wellesley Church Hall on Friday afternoons to mention a few. Everyone is welcome at these gatherings.

Getting involved in community initiatives as a volunteer is a brilliant way to overcome isolation. Volunteers make new friends, have a strong sense of belonging, develop new skills and increase their confidence. Volunteers are the happiest people I know in Methil.

I've also heard very good things about the people in Methil over the past year from people who have worked here for a long time. Two head teachers told me they wouldn't work anywhere else because the people are so supportive and kind. A manager in the Council told me that this is a rewarding place to work because people are very appreciative of any help given.

2. Second top response with 28 comments was **Community Spirit**

"Nice community" "If anyone needs a bit of help they get it" "How everyone sticks together" "Community comes together in a crisis" "Community atmosphere" "Great community spirit but would like to see more people involved"

Countless numbers of Methil people have told me how much Methil had changed and many would love to go back to the way it was when 'coal was king' and the docks were thriving. Methil people didn't have a lot materially but had lives that were rich in family, friends, work, shops and social opportunities. People went out in the evenings to clubs, dance halls, pubs, fish and chip shops that had living rooms for customers to sit in. Everything happened in Methil and people were proud of their town. That pride, sense of belonging and community spirit has survived to this day, despite Methil's ups and downs, and is particularly strong amongst older people and their families.

3. Third top response with 28 comments was **It's where I live / have lived / where I belong**

"Stayed here for 67 year – quite happy in Methil" "I like Methil because it is my home town, where I have grown up" "Just living here – been here all my life, wouldn't live anywhere else" "It's my home town" "It's my little world" "Grew up in Methil"

What struck me most about the people who gave this response was their sense of belonging to Methil, mostly because they were born and bred here. Many were older people with a pride in the heritage of Methil and a desire for Methil to find a positive future.

4. Fourth with 8 comments was **A great place to live, quiet, fun, nice, feels safe, clean**

"Small community" "A friendly place to come to"

These responses are testament to welcoming people and good public services in Methil, despite huge austerity budget reductions. Some of the responses reflect the views of people who are visitors to Methil during the Gala Day and have family here or who live in streets that are not affected by anti-social behaviour. If you are fortunate to live in a quiet place where the external areas are kept clean and tidy, Methil will feel safe and a good place to live. If you are not so fortunate and live in a street where less care is taken or you don't feel safe for whatever reason, you are more likely to want to keep yourself to yourself and stay indoors. The organisation CLEAR loves to organise litter picks and that's a great way to meet

other people who feel the same way you do and then you can do something together to improve 'your bit'.

5. Fifth with 6 comments was **My home / my street**

"The house where I live and playing in the local area on my scooter" "My home"
Six people said what they liked about Methil was their home and Methil has lots of good quality public sector housing and some very good quality new build social housing. (See also the responses to the next Question about Favourite places in Methil)

6. Joint sixth with 5 comments was **The Heritage**

"I'm a Heritage Assistant" "The history"
Lots of people in Methil are very interested in Methil's rich heritage. Methil Heritage Centre was formed by members of the Lower Methil Community Association to protect and raise awareness of that heritage. Fortunately, we have Friends of Methil Heritage to continue this important work.

Joint sixth with 5 comments was **The views**

"Views over Edinburgh and green areas" "View from my house across the Forth to the Bass Rock, Berwick Law and, at night, the lights right to Edinburgh" "Pretty nice views"

Methil has a beautiful location with sea, beach and mountain views to the south, east and west and peaceful views of the countryside to the north.

What now?

We can't go back in time, we can only go forward, but we can choose *how* we go forward. Methil is rich in places to socialise – Methil Club, The Institute / Methil Community Education Centre, Sailor's Rest, Wellesley Church Hall, Memorial Hall, St Agatha's and St Giles Church Hall, Methil Heritage Centre and the new venues of Magnificent Methil Community Garden and Expressions School of Dance (people can hire it for events).

Have we gotten out of the habit of going out? Days and nights watching telly is the norm now and indeed all that many people can afford. Some great volunteers are helping Methil to get out more by organising events to bring people together, to enrich our lives, sometimes to raise funds e.g. Rotary Club of Buckhaven and Methil, CLEAR, Wellesley Parish Church volunteers, Friends of Methil Heritage Centre.

There are things we can't control in our lives but there are also lots of things that we can influence. We can choose to go out more and we can choose to join in. We can get information to you but only you can take the next step. In Methil there are lots of opportunities to join in – if we choose to.

Iyaah Warren, Community Coordinator for Methil working for the Corra Foundation

Based at Methil Community Centre, iyaah@corra.scot 07860855023

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