

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

Community Asset Transfer

The Community Asset Transfer was clearly dominating the time since the Summer Newsletter.

The Trustees used the summer to prepare the official Community Asset Transfer request of the Mill of Benholm from Aberdeenshire Council and all the needed supporting documents, including a business plan. The Board met with many local organisations to build the foundation for future collaboration and to evaluate the interest in the Mill of Benholm by the Third Sector. The response was strong and overwhelming, showing huge interest of all kinds of charity groups from the Scouts to Pillar Kincardine (Charity promoting positive mental health), from Milltown Community to the Guides, as well as Primary Schools, Aberdeenshire Community Mental Health Team and HM Coastguard to only mention a few. It laid bare the tremendous lack of sites, like the Mill of Benholm for groups and organisation to use in the South of Aberdeenshire.

On the 25th of August the completed Community Asset Transfer Request was submitted to Aberdeenshire Council, and has been validated on the 1st of September, starting the six months period for the Community Asset Transfer to reach the decision by Aberdeenshire Council in line with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

In September the Board of MoBE negotiated a License to Work with Aberdeenshire Council to bring the electrical system back to safe working order in line with current regulations, install a new hot water cylinder and repair the plumbing for the toilets, and repair or replace the wastewater pumps, which are pumping the wastewater from the septic tanks to the reed bed for final filtration so that the toilets can be used again. Furthermore, the mill pond will be cleared of all excess vegetation, the access from the car park to the Mill will be made safe.

Volunteers will help to get the overgrowing vegetation under control and make the footpaths safe and accessible once again.

All this work is scheduled over the winter months while the Community Asset Transfer Request is going to the decision-making process.



Some of the Work has already started...

From September until the beginning of October the public consultation period for the Community Asset Transfer was open, which resulted in an overwhelming 63 supportive representations being submitted to Aberdeenshire Council. No objections have been submitted. Thank you to everyone!!

The Asset Transfer Steering Group of Aberdeenshire Council is evaluating all submitted and other available information, including the outcome of the public consultation and will complete a report either in support or opposition of the Community Asset Transfer, depending on their findings and the sustainability of our proposal. The Councillors of the Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee will vote on this report. If the report and vote are both in support of the transfer, the Mill of Benholm will finally be handed back to the community. If they are in disagreement, the request will be referred to the Business Services Committee for decision, and if the report and vote of the Area Committee are both opposing the request, the Community Asset Transfer would have been unsuccessful. MoBE would have the right to appeal against the decision in this case.

Conservation Plan

Over the last few months Sonya Linskaill, RIAS Advanced Accredited Architect and Heritage Consultant, has worked on a Conservation Plan for the Mill of Benholm, funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund.

The Mill of Benholm



Conservation Plan



This conservation plan is the foundation for future restoration work at the Mill of Benholm, but it goes much further and is a wealth of information about the history of the Mill of Benholm and the heritage of our community. You can see the full Conservation Plan on <https://millofbenholm.scot/conservation-plan/>

Funding and Costs

The planned work during the License to Work period is expensive, legal fees for preparing the lease for the Mill Brae woods are high, insurance cover is needed, electricity will be used, only to name a few. The work needed to restore the Mill of Benholm, in particular the water infrastructure, after successfully taken ownership has been estimated with approximate £500,000. Also, professional advice will be needed from architects before restoration of a Grade A listed complex can be undertaken.

We have successfully applied for funding to cover some of the costs for the work during the License to Work Phase. The Kincardine & Mearns Area Committee will fund £5,000 towards the upgrading of the electrical installation and reinstating of the toilets. TAQA will pay from their Community Fund £900 towards the costs of clearing the mill pond of the excess vegetation, and COSS (Community Ownership Support Service) will help with £1,000 towards the legal costs of the lease for the Mill Brae Woods. And the SOLOS

Running Club St Cyrus has donated £200. We would like to thank Les Anderson for donating an outstanding amount of gardening tools and Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network (MCHLN) for passing some of their tools on.

Costs not entirely or not covered at all by the mentioned funders, will need to be paid for from our own funds, which are limited. Also, costs like insurance, website, printing, accountancy and other admin costs are not covered by funders, nevertheless the further we are progressing with the Community Asset Transfer the higher some of those cost will become. Just to enable our volunteers to work on site the required insurance is over £800.

At the moment the Mill of Benholm needs your help more than ever...

If you would like to support the Mill of Benholm, please visit

www.millofbenholm.scot/donate

and give as little or as much as you can.

You can also help by signing up for Easyfundraising, either by going to

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/millofbenholmenterprise>

or using this QR code



With this, every time you shop online a small donation will be made to the Mill of Benholm, without extra costs for you. Though the support of everyone who has signed up already we have raised £52.77 over the last 30 days. This could be much more, so please sign up and support the Mill of Benholm while you are shopping online.

To prepare for the cost of Phase 1 of the restoration of the Mill of Benholm after MoBE has taken ownership of the Mill of Benholm, we have already submitted our Expression of Interest to the Community Ownership Fund and the UK Share Prosperity Fund successfully, and for the latter the full application has been submitted already. Expression of Interest has been submitted to the Aberdeenshire Place Based Investment

Programme. Further funding application to the Architectural Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, National Lottery Heritage Fund and other National Lottery funding programmes will be considered in due course.

Volunteer Workdays and Work at the Mill of Benholm

After some delays due to adverse weather on the 18th of November volunteers started to work on site, and though it was a start, a lot was achieved on that day. We would like to thank the volunteers who showed up on this very grey and wet Saturday afternoon very much and hope even more will make it to our next Volunteer Workdays.



The next Volunteer Workday will be very different, as we are meeting from 1pm on Saturday the 9th of December in Benholm Kirk to decorate the Kirk for our fundraising event *Christmas in Benholm* on Sunday the 10th of December (details on page 8)

The next Volunteer Workdays at the Mill of Benholm will probably be

Saturday the 13th of January 2024

Saturday the 27th of January 2024

But please check our Facebook page or <https://millofbenholm.scot/events/> for updates.

Furthermore, A.J. Carnegie Electrical Contractors, Montrose have already undertaken a check of the electrical installation and will carry out the needed repairs to make the electrical installation safe and bring it in line with current regulations over the next few days. This will enable Ferrier Pumps, Aberdeen to check the wastewater pumps and to repair and/or replace them if needed. George Milne, Plumber, Montrose will then in December repair the plumbing at the Mil of Benholm to bring the toilets back to working order.

Either in December or January the Sustainable Water Company, West Lothian, will clear the mill pond of all excess vegetation, as in the current state the mill pond would not be able to supply the waterwheel with the needed water.

Local Place Plan

Aberdeenshire Council has approached us to develop a Local Place Plan with an initial meeting in December. This is our chance to shape the future of the Benholm Area. The first meeting with Council Officers will be in December.

BBC Radio Scotland

Mark Stephen from BBC Radio Scotland's Out of Doors programme visited the Mill of Benholm in October and his interview with our trustees was broadcasted in two sections on the program on the 21st of October.

He is planning to come back in the future after the Community Asset Transfer of the site.



Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

Lucy Stewart and Jonny Garlick from SPAB visited the Mill of Benholm beginning of October to assess the site for one of their Volunteer Work Parties. This is planned for the Summer of 2025 with the focus on the mill infrastructure.



Owen Bushell a millwright and SPAB Fellow visited the Mill of Benholm in September to look at the mill mechanism and the water infrastructure of the mill (sluices, lade, pond, wheel, etc)



Here pictured with Sonya Linskaill, RIAS Advanced Accredited Architect and Heritage Consultant

Christmas in Benholm

Together with Historic Churches Scotland we are holding a fundraising event in Benholm Kirk and hope to see you all there.

Christmas in Benholm



The Mill of Benholm Enterprise and Historic Churches Scotland would like to invite you to join us For a musical Christmas Afternoon in support of Benholm Kirk and the Mill of Benholm in

Benholm Kirk
from

3 to 5pm on Sunday the 10th of December
(Doors will be open from 2.30pm)

Join us in singing Christmas Carols and enjoying the musical performances of Christmas tunes from the Primary Schools in Johnshaven and St Cyrus and the Senior Choir from Lathallan School.

Before and after the musical part plenty of Seasonal refreshments will be available. This year we also shall have a small Christmas Fayre with stalls from the Schools and Milltown Community selling their handmade items.

For more information, please contact us on secretary@millofbenholm.scot or 01561 362607

Last but not Least

The Mill of Benholm Needs (Still) Your Help

Please support the Mill of Benholm Enterprise and become a member. Let's make this story a success story of the community of Benholm and Johnshaven.

To help us in our efforts to not only revive the Mill of Benholm with its Category A listed buildings, described by Historic Environment Scotland as “an exceptional and rare survival”, but also to stop further deterioration, before it is too late, please write to your local Councillor, your MSP and your MP to draw their attention to this important project for the local community and visitors and harness their support.

We have come a long way, but we still need the support of all Councillors of the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee to vote for this Community Asset Transfer to make it happen.

So please, if your relatives, friends or neighbours are interested to support us and become members, ask them to get in contact either through

Facebook - Mill of Benholm Enterprise @benholmmill

Instagram - @millobenholmenterprise

Email – secretary@millobenholm.scot

Or visit our website www.millobenholm.scot

