JUSTTRANSITION
PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING FUND

Year 3



***tsi**MORAY's Just Transition Development officer, Rekha Kalia and Jane Benson, Chair, Burghead Amenities Association try out the new swing, a popular addition in the garden, purchased with funds from the Just Transition Participatory Budgeting Fund.*

Growing a Community Space: The Burghead Amenities Association

Looking at the Burghead Station Yard Community Garden, it's hard to believe a rail station once stood on this ground. Long gone are the days when the railway served the local Maltings, and linked neighbouring villages to Burghead.

Decades ago, when the station closed and eventually, when the rail line was abandoned, the land was sold for a token price to the community.

In recent years, the Burghead Amenities Association, a small dedicated group of now just five volunteers, along with the community, has brought about dramatic change by caring for and transforming the land.

In the early days, a polytunnel was erected, becoming a focal point and kickstart for community growing, providing regular crops of vegetables in honesty boxes at the garden's edge. Although the polytunnel was damaged beyond repair two years ago, this has not stopped the garden developing.

It has developed further; improving, beautifying the surrounding ground, and with vision, fundraising and hard graft, the community garden is evolving into a community, social space. In 2024, the Just Transition PB fund awarded £7,000 to the Association to help develop a wildflower space, outdoor gym equipment, and a swing -- the latter a longstanding request from local youth for many years now.



The community garden has a wonderful, publicness about it, maturing almost from the early days of the lone polytunnel. There is a host of new plantings, a sensory garden, a windflower garden, picnic areas, gym equipment, an established, thriving allotment area, as well as more uncultivated spaces further beyond the allotments.



The Community Garden in 2020

On a sunny afternoon, when we meet Jane Benson from the Burghead Amenites Association, we also meet a number of parents and toddlers in the garden space.
A childminder tells us she comes from Elgin to first visit the Burghead beach, then to the garden.



Joan talks about the Garden's development in 2025

Classes from local primary school now visit the garden almost every day. Jane knows their schedule well—it's like clockwork and she knows the children by name. The school's playground is entirely blacktop so the garden offers a much-needed natural space. We meet a P3 class and their teacher at the swing, as pupils eagerly waiting to take their turn. With a concrete playground, the teacher says, the garden has been incredible addition for them. She tells us how pupils look forward to the headteacher's morning announcement when some classes are allowed to come down to the garden for lunchtime too.



Local children also took part in the planting of the new wildflower space. Jane tells us the children made a rocky outcrop in a 'Loch Ness monster' sort of shape, to encourage seeds to catch. Jane thinks it was a good idea, but it might need to be a bigger Nessy for next year. The wildflower space is a significant contribution to environmental improvement by enhancing biodiversity and habitat in a part of the garden that was once just largely barren.



It's clear this garden is fostering social capital and interaction by providing a common ground for people to meet, children to play, and residents to engage in shared activities. For Jane, the future of the garden is about developing the space further to have areas for young people, specifically teenagers.
Jane understands the importance of having a space for teenagers that isn't so formal; a place that they can have both connection to each other and their community but also to have somewhere to be independent - a place to hang out, to be.

Jane says they might be able to use a stage area already in the garden for a teen space area, maybe even make it covered a bit. Jane also knows that young people are crucial for succession of the committee too. It's a very small group of people (of a certain age, she says) that's working to keep momentum..



2024: Volunteer constucting paths to make the garden more accessible

At the end of the visit, we meet local residents Alice and her young children, Theo and Arthur. Alice uses the space regularly and explains it's an important place for adults to get together too. They've decided to celebrate Arthur's first birthday in the garden, inviting she says, over 15 friends and family members to come and celebrate and make use the barbeque picnic space.



Regular garden visitors, Alice, Theo and baby Arthur, making use of the new paths too.



This is a community garden and a community space that fosters the kind of meaningful interactions and physical activity that form the foundation of healthy, resilient communities -- all of which would not be possible without the Burghead Amenities Association and the volunteers, both past, present (and future!)