



Knocknagael: a Green Hub for our Community

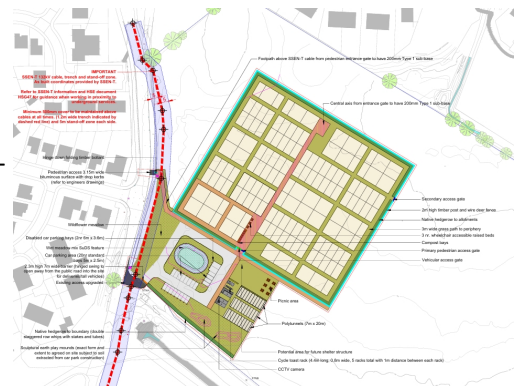
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Newsletter 2026/3

In our last newsletter (which can be accessed [here](#)) we attempted to address the question *The Smiddy Field is in Community Ownership, so what happens now?* To summarise, we have been successful in our planning application for a change of use for the Smiddy Field from agricultural land to a Green Hub with allotments. Full details of the application, and the approval can be viewed [here](#) on the Highland Council's Planning website. As we stated last time, we own the Smiddy Field, and we have planning approval to create the necessary infrastructure. All we need now is the money to make it happen!

We shared in the last newsletter that we had been successful in a bid for funding from the Highland Council through its Community Regeneration Fund to let us commence work in the months ahead on the necessary infrastructure for the project, including access routes, car park and drainage schemes. Although this substantial funding boost of almost £90,000 was a major milestone, we are clear that more funding will be required to complete the planned development of the allotments and associated infrastructure, and we are delighted to be able to share with you that we have been successful in bidding for grant funding from both SSE Renewable's Highland Sustainable Development Fund and from the Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation. These grants will allow us to progress with the required infrastructure over the coming months. More on both these developments overleaf.



Activity at the Smiddy Field



In addition to the grant funding described above, and overleaf, funding from the Nature Restoration Fund has allowed us to progress with planting a flower-rich grass meadow and the Field has been turned in preparation for planting. Prior to improving the fencing round the Field, some members volunteered to cut back some of the scrub on the fence line on two evenings in Spring and we are most grateful to those that turned up and contributed to what was a great team effort!

Date for your Diary

**Living Good Food Nation Lab Grassroots and Community Unit Forum 2:
Community Land and Growing: experiences from the grassroots!**

The second [Living Good Food Nation Lab's](#) Grassroots and Community monthly Forum is on **Wednesday 17th June 12-1pm on Teams**, when we will be hearing from two fantastic community organisations, [Knocknagael](#) and [Get Growing Scotland \(Grow Green\)](#). We will start with both organisations sharing an overview of their work, and then open to a collective discussion. We will be talking all things community, land and growing. We hope to see you there! Register [here](#):

The Highland Sustainable Development Fund

The following **Press Release** was shared with media contacts on 1st June.

SSE has awarded £2.1 million to 17 projects across the Scottish Highlands through its Highland Sustainable Development Fund. Backed by the company's onshore wind farms, the Fund provides support to community and charitable initiatives across the region, with funding decisions made by an independent expert panel.



Knocknagael Ltd has been awarded over £89,000 from the Highland Sustainable Development Fund to support the development of the Knocknagael community growing project in Inverness. Maria de la Torre, The Knocknagael Ltd Chair said:

"We are delighted to receive the support from SSE Renewable's Highland Sustainable Development Fund — this award is a huge boost for the Knocknagael Green Hub project. Having recently taken ownership of the Smiddy Field, the project is at a critical stage. This funding will enable us to deliver essential infrastructure, including the access road and car park needed to establish an exciting new community hub for Inverness, featuring allotments, an orchard, and shared growing spaces for local people. We are very grateful to SSE and the Highland Sustainable Development Fund for their support in helping make this project a reality."



We have also been fortunate in the award of a £15,000 grant from the Highlands & Islands Environment Foundation (HIEF). The following text in relation to this award is what will be uploaded to the HIEF website (<https://hief.scot/grants/>):

As part of the wider development of allotments on community-owned land in Inverness, this project will establish a species rich wetland.

Rapid growth and urbanisation of Inverness over the past 20 years has led to the loss of farmland and green spaces, leaving many residents feeling communal spaces are lacking. This unique project will ensure the community retain land for future generations within an urban setting, delivering diverse social and environmental benefits, while serving as an inspiring model for other places.

The charity Knocknagael Ltd completed the purchase of 'the Smiddy Field' in January 2026. This was a landmark step, enabling the team to begin the creation of an allotment site which will provide allotments for individual and community use, and training space; a community orchard, areas for biodiversity enhancement, recreation, and food growing. The site will provide an important green space in an area that is becoming increasingly urbanised and serve as a wildlife corridor linking to adjacent areas of wildlife value. A central feature of the development will be the creation of a species rich wet meadow. This will be planted with a mix of wildflowers, creating a diverse habitat that will benefit a range of pollinators and birds. The wet meadow will also act as a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS), incorporating an infiltration basin and drainage channel to store rain water and runoff, thus reducing flood risk.

Membership Survey 2026

All members of Knocknagael (of which there are now 140) have recently been distributed with a link to our membership survey. We are keen to hear your views and aspirations in relation to issues like allotments, community growing, volunteering and participation, and we want to hear your feedback as well as any suggestions that you may have.

Follow us on



**Knocknagael
Green Hub**

Learning Exchange visit to 'The Field', Dunkeld Saturday 23rd May

A learning exchange visit to 'The Field' in Dunkeld took place on 23rd May. The visit was open to all members and was organised by Ged Church, one of our Directors. The travel and lunch costs were kindly covered by the Scottish Community Alliance.

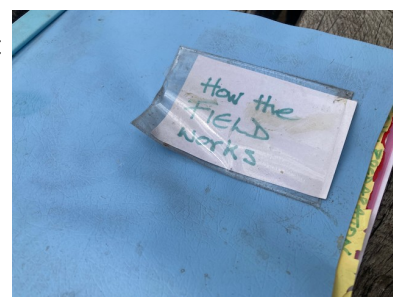
Ged's report on the day is as follows:

On Saturday 23rd May in pleasant weather eight of us made the rail trip to visit Dunkeld & Birnam Community Growing project. We were met by secretary, Alan Dobie, who guided us the mile to the three acre "Field" where we were saw 10 to 12 volunteers busy at various tasks. Linda and Raymond Simpson showed us round and answered our questions. Their landlord is The Soil Association, the organisation is a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) with a board of 10 trustees.



The three acre site is very productive. Volunteers can take what produce their households need. Much produce is sold by other volunteers at market. There is a "help yourself" stall at the gate with an honesty box. Their five-bed crop rotation system has been developed and refined over the years. Horse dung and council produced compost are used and fallow beds are rested under a green manure crop which is eventually ploughed in with the dung dressing. An idea of the productivity may be gained from the fact that 6,000 leeks per year are grown. Income from produce is £4,000 - £5,000 p.a.

We were made very welcome, There was plenty of exchange and all agreed that it had been a worthwhile visit. A longer report is available to members on request, and more information is available on 'The Field' website - <https://www.dunkeldfield.co.uk/> where an excellent manual can be accessed.



We are most grateful to The Community Alliance Scotland for the grant funding that supported the visit

