



Knocknagael: a Green Hub for our Community

www.knocknagael.org.uk

Contact: grow@knocknagael.org.uk

Newsletter 2026/1

Hot off the Press!

We are thrilled to share with you the wonderful news that as of today, 26th January 2026, the Smiddy Field is now under community ownership! We have this morning issued a press release, which is copied below. You read it here first!

The local charity Knocknagael Ltd formally takes the Smiddy Field into community ownership.

After a decade of sustained effort, the local charity Knocknagael I Ltd has today taken delivery of the Smiddy Field at Knocknagael Farm into community ownership. This was undertaken as a Community Asset Transfer through the provisions of the Community Empowerment Act (2015).

A Ministerial decision to support a request to transfer ownership of the Smiddy Field was made almost three years ago, following a review into an earlier decision to refuse a request to transfer ownership of the Field. Following a detailed and lengthy process, an independent panel recommended that the original decision to refuse the asset transfer be overturned, subject to a number of conditions, and Scottish Government ministers accepted this recommendation. A further detailed and lengthy process ensued, and the conditions have now been agreed, and the negotiations finalised.

An application by Knocknagael Ltd to the Scottish Land Fund to support the purchase of the field was successful and the purchase has now been completed. Knocknagael Ltd now looks forward to working with the local community to progress its ambitious plans for the Smiddy Field.

Smiddy Field Planning Application - more good news!

In our last newsletter we provided an update on our planning application for change of use from agricultural land to a Green Hub with allotments. This was submitted to Highland Council in May 2025 and in early November we were informed that the planning application was successful. Full details of the application, and the approval can be viewed [here](#) on the Highland Council's Planning website.

Our AGM was held on Tuesday 21st January, relating to the year from August 2024 to July 2025. We were delighted and grateful that 25 of our members attended with an additional number who would have liked to have been involved, but were unable to attend. As well as the usual business element of the AGM we had two speakers; Stuart Malcolm from Iglu Studios, the land architects who led on the Phase 1 design that gained planning permission in November, and Lou Evans from Grow Green Scotland talking about community growing.

One decision that was made at the AGM was to move from a membership subscription model to a membership donation model. More on this in due course.



Knocknagael Limited
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Reaction to the news of transfer of the Smiddy Field to community ownership includes:

Our Chair Maria de la Torre said:

"We are absolutely delighted to take ownership of the Smiddy Field after many years of work. We are looking forward to developing our ambitious plans, and to see the benefits of the site for the community for generations to come.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us on this journey, in particular, our members, and the Scottish Land Fund for their support with the purchase of the field. Community ownership of land assets is important, and we hope our project may inspire others.

Looking to the future, there is still some way to go. We look forward to working with others that would like to support us with raising the funds to build the allotment and core infrastructure."

Local Councillor Alasdair Christie said:

"This is a fantastic outcome for all local residents and shows what a community group can achieve. At a time when interest for allotments and in community gardens is at its peak this project is coming on stream. I would like to thank all the dedicated community volunteers that have given up their time to make this all happen."

Arianne Burgess MSP said:

"I'm delighted to see the Smiddy Field finally transferred to the Knocknagael community at last. The group has shown real determination to get through the long and sometimes difficult community buy-out process, and they deserve huge credit for sticking with it. We need to make it easier for community groups to take on land like this in the future.

I'm excited to see the site come to life with community growing. It will be a real boost for local food and for bringing people together. I'm looking forward to visiting and hopefully joining in with some of the growing myself."

Angus Macdonald MP said :

"Having been impressed by the commitment, professionalism and sheer effort that the Knocknagael team has put in to take the project forward, I am delighted to hear that the Smiddy Field has finally come into community ownership.

This is an exciting community-led initiative that will bring real benefits to local people. By creating a shared green space with allotments and a community hub, the project will help people come together, build skills, and improve health and wellbeing. Opportunities like this are especially valuable when many communities are facing social and economic pressures."

So, what's next?!

Our challenge is to move from a campaigning group, the purpose of which was to achieve community ownership of the Smiddy Field, to managing the asset, and ensuring that the community benefit that we aspire to is achieved. In this we will work with statutory organisations, with other community organisations, with grant funders, and most importantly with you, our members.

We will be looking for feedback, input and volunteers! It may take some time to develop the infrastructure required to provide the allotments as described in our planning approval, and a lot depends on successful income generation. We are already tapping into potential grant funders!

Nonetheless, we are keen to know what you wish for, and we will be surveying our membership in due course. We would be very keen to hear from you! **Contact us at grow@knocknagael.org**