

**Buckie Community Hub
: an opportunity for a Just Transition?**

Scoping Report

Summer 2023



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This report has been compiled by the NB Planning team. Photographs by author unless otherwise stated.

(Cover and rear photos courtesy of Moray Council, Buckie Past and Present, and I'm Fae Buckie).

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Executive Summary

This report is an initial exploration into the concept of a new Community Hub for Buckie and captures how and why it is needed in the town. It also considers whether it could provide an opportunity to assist Buckie move successfully away from using fossil fuels and help to maintain a fair and well society.

Buckie is a priority area for support from the Moray Community Planning Partnership (MCP) due to its statistics of disadvantage, and a Buckie Locality Plan has been prepared through community consultation to record key actions required. This Plan documents a new Community Hub as a 'high priority', and it has strong support from the MCP partners.

Buckie already has a 'Hub', albeit a small one. This came about during the pandemic/cost of living crisis and involved the voluntary takeover of a former ice cream shop in the high street, leased by Buckie Area Forum. The Hub's services have been well used and continue to expand and develop. Whilst The Hub has been a recent success story, it is limited in the long-term by (a) terms of private lease; (b) size of property; and (c) quality of accommodation.

Since the effects of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis are still being felt, the need for hub services in Buckie remains high. This squeeze on the community is heightened by the closure of various venues and/or meeting places throughout the town, which has diminished opportunities for regular community interaction.

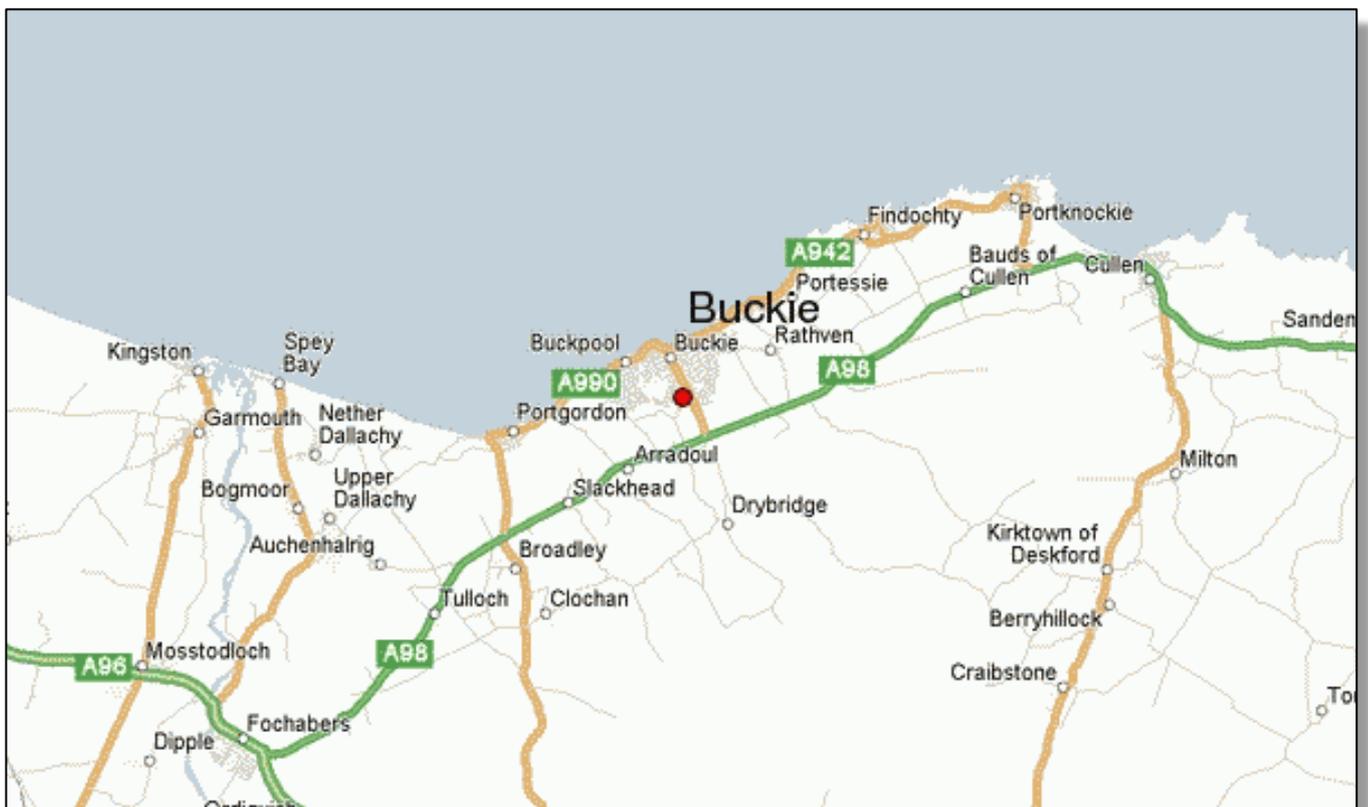
However, it is envisioned that Buckie will continue to grow, with more housing planned in the south-west of the town, and a new masterplan to reinvigorate the harbour area in the north-east. This will put further pressure on the need for hub services. There are, of course, examples of community hubs elsewhere in the north of Scotland, and further afield, where Buckie can learn lessons from, especially in relation to sustainability. However, it must be recognised that the needs and requirements of communities will differ from place to place, so there is not one size that fits all circumstances. There is a need for Buckie to fully consider what its hub will provide and what accommodation is required.

Meanwhile, there is a global and national imperative to tackle the climate change emergency and a community hub in Buckie should play a vital role in raising awareness and promoting low carbon activities; for example, in fostering behavioural change and/or acting as a focal point for giving and receiving low carbon goods and services.

Any new hub in Buckie should be as close to the town centre, so that it is accessible to as many people as possible. There are various vacant premises in the area that could potentially be used for hub services, and these require further exploration as a next stage.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to explore the concept of a new Community Hub for Buckie and to consider whether it provides Buckie with an opportunity to increase its contribution for a 'just transition towards a well-being economy'.



Buckie is a small town situated on the Moray Coast on the north side of the A98 with a catchment area between Spey Bay in the west and Cullen Bay to the east. Source: Facebook

2.0 Background / History

This section reviews how the concept of a Buckie Community Hub has come about, and why it could/should play an active role in a just transition towards a well-being economy.

2.1 Moray's approach to Community Planning

The Scottish Government's *Community Empowerment Act 2015* requires each Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to produce and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). A Community Planning Partnership is the name given to all those services in any local authority area that come together to take part in community planning. Each CPP focuses on where partners' collective efforts and resources can add the most value to their local communities, with particular emphasis on reducing inequality. CPPs are, at their heart, about collaboration and working towards the best outcomes for a place.

CPPs are responsible for producing two types of plans i.e., *Local Outcomes Improvement Plans*; (LOIPs) which cover the whole council administration area; and *Locality Plans*; which cover smaller areas within the CPP area, usually focusing on areas that will benefit most from improvement. Each CPP should produce at least one Locality Plan and some CPPs will produce many, depending on circumstances.

The LOIP is a key element in the delivery of public service reform at local level. It provides a vision and focus, based on agreed local priorities, towards which CPPs and community planning partners can (a) ensure pace of change and decisiveness in impact for communities, (b) develop new and different ways of working and behaviour, (c) take a more systematic and collaborative approach to performance improvement, and (d) apply strong governance, accountability and operating arrangements. In all of this, the LOIP provides a shared and explicit plan for local communities in each CPP area, which duly binds its signatories.

The *Moray Community Planning Partnership* (MCP) comprises Scottish Government, Moray Council, NHS Grampian, Highland and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, UHI, TSI Moray, HITRANS, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Moray Integration Joint Board, and Moray Community Engagement Group.



**Moray
Community Planning
Partnership**

The MCPP has a 10-year plan (2016-26) that provides a vision and focus for the Partnership. It aims to tackle the greatest differences in outcomes between, and within, Moray's communities. It also seeks to focus on where there is greatest value by working in partnership. Within its 10-year plan, the MCPP has identified four main priority areas to guide this work and deliver the vision:

1. Developing a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable economy
2. Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray
3. Empowering and connecting communities
4. Improving wellbeing of our population.

In 2018, the MCPP recognised that it cannot achieve everything at once, so - based on an assessment of a range of evidence and linking with the overarching priorities - it decided to focus upon the region's vulnerable communities. MCPP consequently chose to target New Elgin East and Buckie Central East for the most urgently needed locality-based work.

For *Buckie Central East*, it proposed a focus around the priority of 'building a better future for our children and young people in Moray' - with (1) an increase in attainment, (2) increased employability, and (3) a greater voice in community affairs, being the three key outcomes.

MCPP has subsequently committed to address its priorities through a combination of Local Outcomes Improvement Plan actions and the development of Locality Plans with the community.

"Each of our communities does well with a good sense of community spirit, high employment, and good health. But within some communities, it appears that many of our residents are facing different challenges yet lack the confidence, skills, or capacity to turn that into collective action to address those challenges or work alongside services to assist in tackling some of the inequalities that exist."

MCPP 2021

2.2 Buckie Locality Plan

Having established a Local Steering Group for Buckie, MCPP conducted 'a Better Buckie' consultation process during 2018 to develop a Buckie Central East Locality Plan. In the autumn, 1500 properties were leafleted, and face-to-face conversation took place at various venues across the town. Approx 600 conversations took place (including 100+ with young people) and a further 180 survey questionnaires were completed. This impressive level of consultation



'image courtesy of BLPMG'

was led by the community and supported by the Council's Community Support Unit and MCPP partners.

Three common themes emerged during the process, i.e. 'Mental Health and lack of confidence'; 'Public Transport'; 'Appropriate Childcare' and, in 2019, four action areas were duly identified: 1. 'Young people', 2. 'Learning and Life Skills', 3. 'Connectivity', and 4. 'Community Voice'.

Sadly, however, the Covid 19 pandemic caused a significant hiatus to proceedings and threatened to stall the positive momentum that the community consultation had built up. The significance of the pandemic was such that the Local Monitoring Group decided to re-run its consultation process to review the proposed Plan. In the context of Scottish Government post-pandemic operational guidance, this involved social media, hard copy distribution and collection, survey monkey, and some limited face-to-face engagement. A further 480 responses were received online in addition to the face-to-face conversations. Individual comments and ideas were collated into a '600 suggestions' catalogue.

In early 2022, the MCPP approved key changes to the original Plan, i.e. the geographical scope of the plan was extended to incorporate all of Buckie, and the sole focus on children and young people was removed. The key themes were also reduced from four to three. This provided revised focus upon the issues of 1. 'Welfare and Well-being', 2. 'Place', and 3. 'Economy' – which is more aligned with Partner themes.

Amongst suggestions on how to improve the theme of *Welfare and Wellbeing* in the community were (a) 'provide more youth facilities and targeted activities', (b) 'more community groups and public events', and (c) 'more support groups'. There was also a strong response on creating a dedicated space for young people that could offer activities and events of interest to them.

In relation to the theme of *Place*, the community of Buckie envisioned a resilient and inclusive place where people have access to the facilities and services they need. Respondents suggested that there should be a better balance between new housing developments with improved amenities and infrastructure, including shared green spaces such as allotments, better roads, paths, and parking along with more local services.

Regarding the theme of *Economy*, the community of Buckie want to develop a more diverse, inclusive, and sustainable economy. When asked to rate the importance of certain factors in relation to the economy, a good range of shops /cafes, help for new businesses in the area, and the availability of apprenticeships and jobs for young people were ranked as most important.

The revised Locality Plan, meanwhile, also reported (as feedback from the original Locality Plan) that "MCPP is *working in partnership with other community groups to establish a Warm Bank / Community Hub to help address the impact of poverty on our community*" (p.7) and that, "*MCPP will work to build a confident, skilled and self-reliant community where expectations and aspirations are raised and achieved*" (p.13).

Yet, to provide even more focus to the revised Locality Plan, two prioritisation exercises were conducted in Buckie in July 2022. In these exercises, participants were tasked to identify actions that were (a) needed now, (b) realistic and deliverable, and (c) highly beneficial and impactful upon the local community. The results of the exercises were clear, with a

'Community Hub' receiving the highest number of votes at both sessions (see Appendix section).

Consequently, 'Establish a Community Hub' in Buckie is currently Priority 1 in the *Place* theme of Buckie Locality Action Plan (item 2.1).

In Feb 2023, the Local Monitoring Group hosted a Partners' needs and desires exercise around the concept of a Community Hub in Buckie. The session was very well attended by Partners, who were respectively asked to discuss and express their organisational perspectives on the hub concept. The session indicated that various Partners are prepared to commit their time and energy to developing the concept (it being too early in the process to commit funds).

Responsibility for taking the concept forward is now identified within the current Buckie Locality Plan Action Plan. The Findochty and Buckie Development Trust (FAB DT) is charged as 'lead', with support from 20 others from MCPP organisations. FAB DT's charitable status enables access to a wider range of funds, the potential for rates relief, and keeps resources in community control. The ongoing progress of the Buckie Locality Plan, including progress with the Community Hub priority, is being monitored by the Moray CLD Strategy Group, and is reported to the MCPP.

"In Buckie Central East, we are fortunate to enjoy not only a substantial commitment from front-line staff, but also a tremendous contribution from the community and community organisations."

MCPP, 2019



Image courtesy of BLPMG

2.3 'The Hub'

In 2022, responding to the impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis, Buckie Area Forum, in partnership with FAB DT, decided to lease an empty town centre ice cream shop in East Church Street. The purpose of this was to provide a single meeting room supporting people through times of crisis and offering a warm place over winter. The initiative proved to be very effective, and its services have been in considerable demand. Consequently, the initiative has received strong backing from the local community, external partners, and funders, and has been developing with time.

Among the many services 'The Hub' (as it is called) now aims to offer are: help to access information and support on anything from housing, money and finances to family, relationships and health; signposting people to advisors about benefits, debt and housing; connecting people with local services to resolve problems they may face; providing references to the local food bank and community larder; connecting people with the local employability team. It is currently offering IT drop-in sessions and the Moray Wellbeing Hub utilises it to run drop-in mental health sessions, using their 'Pathways to Wellbeing' toolkit. Moray Firth Credit Union staff are present one morning a week, staff from Public Health are available weekly, and the Peoplehood Project are regular users. The Hub is run by volunteers and has extended its opening to five days a week from 10-4pm. It is also open on a Saturday from 10-12 and on Tuesday evenings from 6-8pm to be more accessible and in recognition of the needs of those experiencing in-work poverty.

One senior member of The Hub has observed the virtuous circle that '*Good things happen here because we are here!*'

Whilst The Hub has been a recent success story, it is limited in the long-term by (a) the terms of private lease; (b) size of property; and (c) quality of accommodation.



Courtesy of The Hub



2.4 New nationally supported concepts

The following are three relevant new concepts that are being promoted by the Scottish Government:

2.4.1 Twenty-minute neighbourhoods

The Local Living/20-minute neighbourhood concept aim to create places where people can meet most of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, by walking, wheeling, or cycling. The concept – based on the idea that people can meet their essential needs within a 20-minute walk – is now popular in cities and towns worldwide. For 20-minute neighbourhoods to work, walking (or cycling or public transport) needs to become easy, and services need to be on hand. 20-minute neighbourhoods are at the heart of Scotland’s fourth National Planning Framework. It is widely believed that the concept has the potential to provide solutions to a range of problems, such as the climate emergency, health inequality, and the decline of town centres.

2.4.2 Just Transition and a Well-being Economy

The Scottish Government is currently promoting the national imperative, and opportunity, to transition away from fossil fuel energy towards a low-carbon economy in a manner that delivers prosperity benefits everyone. The National Economic Strategy identifies the next ten years as a ‘decisive decade’ for delivering the best economic performance possible for Scotland.

“Our vision for Scotland is to transition to a wellbeing economy: that is, an economic system, within safe environmental limits, which serves and prioritises the collective wellbeing of current and future generations...The vision is for a system that empowers communities to take a greater stake in the economy, with more wealth generated, circulated and retained within local communities, while protecting and investing in the natural environment for generations to come.”

Scot Gov 2021

This should, in theory, provide opportunities for everyone to access fair, meaningful work, and values and supports responsible, purposeful businesses to thrive and innovate. The ‘wellbeing economy’ approach re-emphasises that economic growth should not only be sustainable and inclusive but should also serve as a means – that of collective wellbeing of people and planet – rather than be considered an end in itself. It also views the economy through a broader lens, as a system which includes unpaid work, public services, and infrastructure. This approach emphasises the importance of safeguarding, maintaining, and investing in the ‘four capitals’ i.e. natural, human, social and financial. The wellbeing economy approach recognises that the economy is everybody’s business requiring a joined-up focus.

To support the transition, the National Strategy aims to deliver change by focusing on five key areas:

1. investing in Scotland's world-class culture of innovation and entrepreneurship;
2. capitalising on opportunities created by new markets and the green economy to create new, well-paid jobs;
3. supporting Scotland's businesses, regions, industries, communities and public services to increase productivity and innovation;
4. equipping people with the skills they need at every stage of life, and work with employers to meet their skills requirements; and
5. working to ensure fair work is at the heart of our economy, with high rates of employment and wage growth and better outcomes for families and communities.

The Strategy is focused on delivery and draws on the strengths of people and organisations from all sectors. Consequently, the Government plans to support transformational projects of all kinds e.g. they have already awarded a contract to establish a network of hubs to support high growth tech businesses; launched a £10m hydrogen innovation scheme; and established a Centre of Expertise in equality and human rights.

While the principles of a wellbeing economy are relevant across the country, it is recognised that different localities and regions within Scotland face different opportunities and challenges.

2.4.3 Community Wealth Building

The 'Community Wealth Building' (CWB) approach is a key practical means of delivering on wellbeing economy objectives within the sphere of local and regional economic development. This is designed to harness the economic leverage of local anchor organisations to tackle long-standing systematic challenges and structural inequalities within communities. It seeks to transform local and regional economic systems to enable more local communities and people to own, have a stake in, access and benefit from the wealth our economy generates. The CWB approach seeks to (a) maximise community and business benefits through procurement and supply chains; (b) increasing work that supports the prosperity and wellbeing of communities; (c) growing the value that local communities gain from land and property assets; (d) developing local enterprises that generate community wealth; and (e) ensuring that flows of investment work for local communities.

2.5 Evolving approaches in Moray

Working in sync with the above-mentioned National Strategies, the high-level priority area for action within MCPP's Moray Economic Strategy is stated as integrating an approach to (a) transitioning to Net Zero and (b) pursuing Community Wealth Building.

2.5.1 Transitioning to Net Zero

Having recognised a Climate Change Emergency in 2019, the Moray Council has a Climate Change Strategy for 2020-2030, and now has a 'Route Map to Net Zero', i.e. reducing greenhouse emissions to non-harmful levels. The route map focuses on the Council's own operations (e.g. all Local Authorities are required to move away from using fossil fuels in their buildings) and it shows how the Council will 'lead by example to accelerate action on climate change across Moray...and that taking action can positively impact on communities and help to realise opportunities to reduce inequalities'. The approach taken by the Council is to (a) avoid carbon intensive activities, (b) reduce material use, (c) replace high carbon activities, and (d) offset unavoidable emissions. As well as concentrating on its own actions, the Council will 'support local collaboration and co-ordination of place-based climate action by working to support community planning partners and community groups' (p.4). The Council recognises that the whole Net Zero movement offers a range of opportunities for research and development, new markets, upskilling, and employment.

"No single person or organisation can tackle climate change alone, so we are asking partners, businesses, community groups and individuals to embrace the changes that must take place."

Roddy Burns, Moray Council Chief Executive

The Climate Change Strategy acknowledges a 'Just Transition' and recognises that the Council's work and activities should be undertaken in such a way as to ensure that benefits are widely shared, while the costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay as the economy shifts and changes (p.22).

Moray's approach to taking forward a Just Transition is being financially supported by the Moray Economic Partnership through the Government's Just Transition Capital Fund to diversify the economy away from carbon-intensive activities. For the fund's first year, £1m is subject to participatory budgeting, empowering communities to choose how to spend the grant. A series of projects have been allocated across Moray in the first round of funding. These include a feasibility study of Buckie harbour and an examination of long-term derelict land in Buckie for providing sustainable housing, both led by Moray Council. There are also further studies being carried out by the Council to explore the use of hydrogen and carbon offsetting, as well as a study by UHI Moray, looking at current skills gaps across Moray.

As part of the transitioning process towards renewable energy, consents are now in place for the private sector to build around 400 wind turbines in the Moray Firth. Buckie Harbour, which has commercial port status, is considered to have vast potential to accommodate an onshore operations and maintenance (O&M) base for offshore wind developments. The Moray

Council, in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), has produced a brochure that demonstrates the potential of the harbour and surrounding areas in terms of offshore renewables, and contains facts and figures about existing industrial activity, development opportunities, transport links, infrastructure, and skills. A Buckie Harbour Masterplan, prepared by Moray Council and HIE Moray, contains various options for configuring an operations and maintenance base within the harbour, taking account of key considerations including quayside access, dedicated berthing, lay down area, office accommodation and helipad facilities. The Masterplan is guided by Just Transition principles that include a desire for the supply chain process to reap local community benefits.

Meanwhile, the Council's Active Travel Strategy 2020-27 promotes the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods and aims to harness an increase in walking and cycling to benefit health, the local economy, environment, community safety, and the transition to Net Zero. The Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020 refers to the same concept as 'Walkable Neighbourhoods' (p.103). The Moray Well-being Hub has promoted the similar concept of 30-minute neighbourhoods for rural areas, which face slightly different challenges to urban areas. This nuanced concept encourages the idea that (a) settlements will work together in clusters, (b) partnerships can increase resources and access to facilities, and (c) physical and digital access to towns can be improved.

The Scottish Government is supporting the development of a network of climate action hubs to stimulate local community-led climate action, supporting a Just Transition towards Net Zero living, and driving wider behavioural change. The hubs are intended to provide a coordinated and coherent approach to supporting communities across their region, ensuring communities are informed, connected, engaged, and empowered to develop and implement local solutions to create low carbon, resilient places. The current proposal for a Moray Climate Action Hub is based on the outputs of meetings, events, conversations, and consultations held during 2022-23 and brings together key players spanning the private, public and community sectors, building on Moray's existing, and often long-established, community-led activity, groups, and networks. The proposal envisages a network fulfilling the key functions of a virtual Climate Action Hub through several 'nodes' hosted by a range of existing groups. The Moray Climate Action Hub will focus specifically on: raising awareness of the climate emergency; widening community participation; advancing greater inclusion and diversity; facilitating sharing of knowledge and experience between groups; supporting groups to develop projects that help tackle and/or adapt to climate change including, subject to funding, projects to support a Just Transition, and finally; representing and amplifying community voices to influence and shape local and national policy.

2.5.2 Pursuing Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) in Moray is part of the Moray Growth Deal. The shared vision is 'a distinctive and ambitious place that generates opportunities for everyone, which in turn helps to drive up average earnings, retain balanced demographics, and encourage strong communities to flourish'. Moray, which is among the first places in Scotland to use CWB as part of its whole economic strategy, has appointed a Community Wealth Building Officer based within the Council.

The Moray Local Action Group (MLAG) has an approach to CWB based on the community-led local development model associated with LEADER programmes: a bottom-up approach to rural development that aims to improve the quality of life, sustainability, and prosperity in rural communities through locally driven initiatives and projects. During 2022/23, MLAG aims to clearly articulate a vision for a community-led wellbeing economy for Moray through best use of its Moray Local Action Fund.

“Our communities, and our planet, are facing serious issues and can no longer accept the status quo. We know, for example, the effects of the climate emergency won’t be stopped or mitigated by doing just one thing. We also know that rising social and economic inequality, deepened by the Covid-19 pandemic, is impacting all of us. These challenges are complex and tightly interconnected. They are not solvable with one action, one institution, one group. What we do know is that to respond to these challenges, to make positive change, and to find solutions, we need multi-layered approaches that are unique to individual communities and led by communities. And that includes all of us. Community led local development is not a new approach - but its time has certainly come”.

Moray Local Action Group 2022

In summary to the above, taking strategic guidance from national strategies and priorities, the Moray LAG, Moray Council and its MCPP Partners all recognise (a) the imperative of decarbonisation towards Net Zero; (b) the opportunities involved in the transitional change process; (c) the potential to distribute wealth more fairly; (d) the potential for improving community well-being; (e) the potential, and indeed obligation, for Buckie to play a key role in a just transition towards net zero and a well-being economy.



Buckie has historic dependence upon its harbour and a new masterplan for the area envisages prosperous times ahead through diversification into renewables energy.

Image courtesy of The Moray Council

3.0 Aim and Objectives

The key aim of a Community Hub in Buckie, as expressed by the Local Steering Group (LSG), is: *'To provide an accessible and inclusive facility that sustains a focused range of services and activities to meet the expressed needs of the local community'*.

Main objectives are understood to be:

1. Address current lack of provision within the town
2. Provide a safe, social space for people of all ages and abilities
3. Provide space(s) for community planning partners and other key organisations to have a stronger presence in the town
4. Provide space(s) for services that support issues of mental health, low self-esteem, loneliness, poverty, confident parenting, and childcare
5. Provide space(s) for services that support issues of learning, skills development and training, with potential to lead to further learning and/or employability
6. Provide space(s) for services that support issues of sustainable living, respect for the environment, community safety, active citizenship, and neighbourliness
7. Develop the capacity and confidence of local volunteers and community groups
8. Generate income, where possible and sustain financial viability.

In citing the above, the LSG recognises that the vision for a Community Hub in Buckie is 'not fully determined and is necessarily evolving'.

4.0 A Community Hub in Buckie – what's the need?

This section explores the needs and requirements of a new community hub in Buckie, and identifies how its own needs could be compared to other similar examples elsewhere in the north-east.

4.1 Evidence of need

Buckie is nationally and regionally recognised as a place in need. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) figures identify the town with relative disadvantages, particularly in Buckie east and parts of the west; hence the MCPP has earmarked Buckie as a priority area for Partnership support. Buckie is a traditional Scottish fishing community, and its profile indicates high proportions of older people, low level adult qualifications, low attainment at S4 and FE, and an economy based around wholesale/retail, skilled trades/motor repair, and harbour activities. Following the decline in the fishing industry, many fishermen moved into oil and gas, and they are now being impacted by changes in that sector and the transition to Net Zero.

Following the pandemic, denial of public access to several meeting spaces and the demise of several operations in the town and/or changes to previous occupancy arrangements (ref 4.5.) have conspired to make the need for facilities and premises more acute, e.g. childcare issues have come to the fore with the Teddy Bears Nursery and Rainbows said to be 'desperate' for space c.2 adults and 10 children. Community groups no longer have access to free meeting space, so either must continue to meet online or find funds to hire commercial premises.

The Climate Emergency, war in Ukraine, energy crisis, and dramatic rise in cost of living have all conspired to create a rapid increase in the number of people requiring support services. This is evidenced within the current Hub (ref 2022-23 Activity Report) and within the respective Partner organisations. The 3 Food Banks serving the town are all struggling to meet demand and appeal regularly for donations, the Baby Bank is being well used, and the free monthly Community Lunches have been attracting 90+ diners each session. Organisations such as Social Security Scotland, NHS Grampian Health Improvement Team, Moray Firth Credit Union, Moray Pathways, Peoplehood and Moray Wellbeing Hub are using these lunches along with The Hub to connect with local people and deliver their services.

The Moray Local Development Plan, meanwhile, identifies Buckie as an area for housing growth, particularly to the southwest of the town, and it also identifies the harbour as having significant potential for freight operations and maintenance for offshore renewables. Unless providing new services of their own, these new developments will likely increase the pressure for community facilities in the town.

Buckie Harbour Masterplan anticipates new economic activity through offshore renewable energy development and onshore hydrogen storage, with a rejuvenation of some boatbuilding and supply chain spill out. UHI Moray supports the Masterplan and has interest in the training opportunities around new technologies, such as solar energy, heat pumps, and hydrogen.

The attendance of most MCPP Partners, and their expressions of interest in the concept of a Community Hub in Buckie, indicates a fundamental belief in its need and purpose, and perceives Buckie as a place that would benefit from input to improve its health and wellbeing. In general, the requirement for having a high-quality community hub in Buckie serving contemporary needs and future demands is understood by many to be a 'given'.

4.2 Locational needs

In order to meet principles of equality and inclusivity, any future Community Hub facilities should be highly accessible, i.e. within 20-minute walking; on a bus route (there is no longer a rail network in Buckie); and with disabled parking and ground floor access.

An examination of the town's streetscape and topography indicates that a 'diamond' area between (a) North High Street bottom end, (b) West Church Street/Queen Street, (c) High Street/Midmar Street in the south, and (d) East Church Street/Cliff Street is the acceptable geographical zone for locational consideration. (See map). Focusing on this area, also helps to support the Council's Buckie Improvement Plan aims and objectives.



Image of Buckie town centre showing extent of zone under consideration. Source: Google maps

4.3 Accommodation needs

The following is a list of the anticipated accommodation requirements:

- Foyer/reception area – e.g. 1 staff member at desk
- Ground floor cafeteria – operated by the hub (not a franchise) and providing customer care training
- Ground floor kitchen – operated by the hub, and providing food prep training
- Ground floor retailing space – small in area, and selling locally-made items
- Ground floor ‘community bank’ – small in area, provisioning food, clothing, and toys
- Ground floor childcare/nursery space – for 2 adults and 10 children, including outdoor space for summer activity programme
- Possible ground floor space for innovative business start-up
- Interview rooms (2) – for 2-6 people, e.g. for counselling, training 1-2-1
- Medium meeting room(s) – for 4-12 people, e.g. workshops, crafts
- Large meeting room (with conference tech) – for 10-30 people, e.g. community meetings, first aid training, health lectures/advice
- Activity room (with hub link) – for 30 people, e.g. for yoga/pilates, dance exercise
- Hot desks – for 4-6 people, e.g. for ‘homeworking’, tech training, itinerant STEM facilities
- Office space – for staff/volunteers, with office equipment, e.g. 3D printer
- Repair shop – an outdoor ‘men’s shed’ for maintenance and repair/manufacturing
- Storage space – of adequate provision for equipment and sundry items
- Ground floor toilets – male/female/disabled, with ability to function as a ‘public toilet’
- Circulation space – adequate for full accessibility, with stair and lift, if facilities on more than one floor
- Outdoor space for food growing – e.g. provision for 4-6 raised beds with good sunlight and access to water supply and storage for gardening equipment.

It is envisioned that the hub should function as a one-stop-shop for information and signposting to public services and community resources, and that some of the rooms and/or equipment should be capable of hiring out. It is important that the rooms can be multi-functional and adaptable.

It is further acknowledged that the team behind operating the hub should ‘walk before they run’ and not be overly ambitious with the scale of the project, especially in relation to staff numbers and general overheads.

At present, no anchor tenant has been identified. It is anticipated that most MCPP partners will regularly utilise the hub, but not necessarily occupy it. It is likely that the hub will need to be developed in phases, depending on the availability of funding.

In setting out the spatial requirements for a hub in Buckie, it is important to recognise that it will likely evolve depending upon local circumstances. Therefore, there needs to be a measure of flexibility and adaptation built into the process.

4.4 Potential lessons from elsewhere

The following documents some of the other initiatives of a similar nature from where lessons may be learned:

Garmouth and Kingston Community Hub

This Hub, situated in a refurbished cottage in Garmouth's High Street, is run by the Community Association SCIO whose main purpose is to support the wellbeing of people in the communities of Garmouth and Kingston and the surrounding area, by providing facilities and activities that promote community cohesion and development and the wellbeing of individuals. The Hub is run by volunteers and is open during limited hours each day of the week. The Hub provides for community meeting space, local craft sales, exhibition space, and a visiting post office facility. The refurbishment was made possible with various grants from local and regional sources.



Source: Grampian Online

Elgin Youth Cafe

The Elgin Youth Development Group was established in 1998 in response to the lack of space for young people to meet and socialise. A café space is now at the heart of various programmes and projects offered to young people from its central Elgin premise. The role of the organisation has changed and evolved over time, and the service has been recognised for several awards. To support the initiative, the group runs The Inkwell as a social enterprise that hires out meeting rooms and a kitchen space that offers catering services. The Inkwell provides a supportive workplace to young people who face barriers to accessing employment.



Source: Bing image

The Vinery, Banff

The Vinery is a brand-new community space situated in a restored historic walled garden in central Banff, which has been regenerated with help from the Scottish Government, and Aberdeenshire Council. Run by The Foyer, The Vinery provides opportunities for people to try new things, develop confidence, learn new life skills, and broaden their experiences in a welcoming and accessible facility. Activities are focused around improving health and

wellbeing through mindfulness, exercise, therapeutic sessions, training, and accredited learning. The aim of the centre is to help alleviate the impact of poverty and support individuals by working alongside them to attain and sustain employment. The Foyer has been working with the DWP and local Job Centre Plus teams to identify and select long-term unemployed people for roles at The Vinery.



Courtesy of Aberdeen Foyer

Macbi, Mintlaw

Macbi (Mintlaw and Central Buchan Initiative) is a community-run facility set up in 2005 and governed by a Board of community representatives who are interested in the health and wellbeing of local people and disadvantaged groups in the area. The facility, which also caters for sport activities, is open every day of the week and provides space for multi-purpose events, fitness, soft play, meetings, café and lounge, reception/foyer, and nursery.



Courtesy of Grampian Online

Pulteney People's Project

Pulteneytown People's Project (PPP) was set up as a community-led charity and social enterprise in 2003. It is run as a business, but all profits go back into the community and the facility. PPP's key aims are to provide services and amenities that will improve the area. By 2012, PPP had developed from 1.5 staff to 15 staff, delivering floating housing support and an after-school club (both regulated by the Care Inspectorate) along with a small training centre and community



Courtesy of PPP

events. A milestone for the organisation's growth was securing £3.8 million from 11 different funders to build the Pulteney Centre. The centre is a multi-purpose community facility, which opened in February 2012, to provide a home for PPP's existing services as well as opportunities to develop new services. Today, PPP employs over 50 staff from within the community; and over 1000 people come through the doors each week. PPP provides support through NHS and CJS contracts and in recent years developed a brand-new care at home service to provide childcare (all registered with the Care Inspectorate). The Pulteney Centre houses a well-used community café and office, meeting, and recreational spaces. PPP is overseen by an experienced board of directors who are also trustees of the charity.

Whilst there is little doubt that the process of conceptualising a new community hub for Buckie could benefit from experiences gained elsewhere, eg governance, service provision, accommodation, finances, operations etc, it must be recognised that the needs and requirements of communities will differ from place to place, so there is not one size that fits all circumstances.

4.5 Relationship with other existing providers

It is important that any proposal for a new community hub in the town does not duplicate and/or compete with other similar provision nearby. The following is a summary of other providers (see also town maps in section 7):

- **Fisherman's Hall** – not quite in the town centre, this Hall is town's main 'big space' for events, such as theatre performances, Academy prize-giving, large funerals, and public consultations. The Hall is now managed by the local community with volunteer Trustees, a part-time paid Hall Co-ordinator, and paid bar staff and cleaners engaged on an *ad hoc* basis, both paid via grants and income generation. Along with the large hall, the premise has a commercial kitchen, toilets, and small meeting rooms (within

dressing rooms). The general success of the Hall under community management has led to some spin-off groups emerging, such as a Friendship Club, and Men's Shed.

- **Buckie Community High School** – the local High School has a tradition of being accessible to the community for general use, but this was abruptly brought to a halt by Covid-19. Outwith school hours, 2 meeting rooms, a kitchen, and a venue hall, along with the swimming pool and gym, have all been available to hire. The facilities within the School have not been available to hire since Covid, but the Community Room should be bookable again after the summer term. There is a long-term plan by Moray Council to replace the existing school with a new campus-style facility to the south of the current premises, which would take the community facilities (if retained) further from the town centre.
- **Town Hall/Library** – situated in Cluny Place not far from The Square, these premises accommodate the local Library (ground floor) and the former Town Hall (first floor) with a couple of smaller meeting rooms. At the rear of the library is the community-run Fishing Heritage Centre, with separate entrance. The overall building is held in Common Good by the Local Authority and, although the Buckie Area Forum terminated its lease during the pandemic and some occupants, such as Desktop Publishing, vacated the building at the same time, the Council later turned down an Expression of Interest by Buckie Area Forum for an Asset Transfer.
- **Lady Cathcart Centre** – situated on the High Street to the east of the High School, this Centre is focused on a Council-run nursery on the ground floor. The upper floor has some useful rooms, previously used by the Quines Club and other *ad hoc* groups. The upstairs is now occupied by the Action for Children AB56 project.
- **The Phoenix Centre** – this is a converted Victorian house, sited not far from the High School, functioning as a Health and Social Care venue, primarily as a day-care centre for teenagers. The property has several useful rooms, but these have not been available for public use since the pandemic. Unfortunately, the property does not have disabled access. Social Work staff (currently housed in Cluny Square) are going to move into Phoenix sometime in the near future. There will be no public access when this occupancy takes place.
- **The Royal British Legion of Buckie** – sited on High Street opposite the Lady Cathcart Centre, the Legion has a sizeable hall and licenced bar, so is often used for small scale shows and events. However, there were no disabled toilets, and the quality of the décor was poor, so there were unfortunately not many bookings in recent years. Consequently, the Legion has lately addressed these issues and duly refurbished their facility.
- **The Victoria Lounge** – this provides a licenced hall premise for up to 100 people, which is available for occasional private hire. The primary use of this venue is for members and supporters of Buckie Thistle FC.
- **Primary Schools** – although St. Peter's and Millbank Primaries provide nursery facilities, Cluny Primary, which is not far from the town centre, does not provide any community facility.
- **Local Churches** – the North Church is located on the north side of The Square and has a sizeable hall available for hire. It is frequently in use, particularly for church-related activity. The Episcopal Church on the west side of The Square has a small hall, which is used occasionally for community purposes. Further to the west is the Baptist

Church; and further west still is the Methodist Church – both have small halls for hire. In all cases, there is a tendency for funeral services to get priority for the hall hires. Meanwhile, the ‘Riverside’ premise east of The Square is principally targeted for use by young people with religious connections.

- **Local Food and Drink facilities** - the nearest cafeterias are Pozzis in the High Street, and Café Coull in West Church Street. The former has a small café, as part of a diversification within a newsagent/confectioner/retailer shop; the latter is a currently up for sale. Within The Square, there is a Subway fast food outlet, and next door there is a Fry Inn chip shop with some seating. Further along East Church Street is the JJ Ross baker, which also has some seating.

Whilst it can be seen from the above that the Buckie community is served with existing public and private facilities, in relation to a Community Hub, it is observed by the Local Steering Group that ‘there has never been anything just like it in Buckie before’!



5.0 A community hub in Buckie – could it help deliver a Just Transition?

This section examines whether a community hub in Buckie could/should play a role in a Just Transition (ref 2.4.2) and looks at global to local perspectives, as well as what is happening in this field elsewhere in the region.

5.1 Wide perspective

A new global agreement was reached in Glasgow 2021 at 'COP26', when major leaders sought to tackle the worst effects of global warming. The Glasgow Agreement sought to build upon, and help to deliver, the previous Paris Agreement 2015. In doing so, countries agreed to drastically cut their CO2 emissions to keep the rise of global warming below 1.5C, which will mean a rapid transition away from exploiting oil, gas, and coal for energy. The universal goal is to keep cutting emissions until 'net zero' is reached by 2050.

Scotland claims to be at the forefront of this journey and has committed to be net zero by 2045. Reaching net zero means seriously taking on the challenges of decarbonisation. Changing how we travel, how we heat our buildings, how we power businesses, how we deal with waste, and the sustainability of our food supplies are, amongst others, all vital. Scotland is, therefore, accelerating the development of renewable and low carbon energy. Universities are leading pioneering climate change research and businesses are training workforces to thrive in the world's emerging sustainable industries. There is commitment to equality and social justice by working to support communities most affected by climate change.

More than 100 new policies and proposals to support Scotland's green recovery and help deliver a just transition to net zero have been launched. They form part of the Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032, which has been updated to reflect an ambitious framework of climate targets, as enshrined in Scotland's Climate Change Act 2019. Scotland has made significant progress in renewable electricity generation - with the equivalent of over 95% of gross electricity consumption generated from renewable sources, and a target for 2030 for the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland's heat, transport, and electricity use to come from renewable sources. Scotland also hosts a number of world-leading hydrogen demonstration projects, e.g. in Fife and Orkney.

A Just Transition is about making sure that, as we reduce our emissions and respond to a changing climate, the journey is fair and creates a better future for everyone – regardless of where they live, what they do, and who they are. Scotland's National Transition Training Fund is designed to support people who are at risk of being left behind in the labour market, or whose employment has been impacted by Covid-19 to upskill and/or retrain. Through academic and business collaborations, the Green Investment portfolio puts green initiatives in the spotlight, and the £62m Energy Transition Fund aims to help businesses in the oil, gas, and energy sectors adapt to meet the challenge of net-zero.

A crucial part of a Just Transition is about supporting workers and affected communities in the move away from carbon-intensive industries. The national goal is to make the economy work for everyone, so that no one is left behind, whilst protecting our planet. This means the creation of decent, green jobs to support this change, and everyone playing their part in creating a fairer and more sustainable society for all.

Considering the above, a community hub in Buckie could play an important wider role by (a) promoting climate change awareness, (b) educating on CO2 emission reduction, (c) showcasing green projects, (d) supporting workers and delivering and/or signposting training in transition, and (e) playing a vital role in creating a fairer society at the local level.

5.2 Local context

The town of Buckie was formed as a coalescence of several small fishing communities as the fishing industry boomed in the 19th century. When the industry declined in the late 20th century, many of the workforce successfully transitioned into the oil and gas sector. However, the workforce is becoming increasingly aware of the need for another transition towards renewable energies in the years ahead. In March of this year, a 'Future of North Sea communities' seminar was held by concerned volunteers in Portessie, Buckie, which was driven by (a) the cost-of-living crisis; (b) a need for shift from oil to renewables, with the desire for more local share in the profits. At this session, it was noted that 'Buckie is going to need hotel-style accommodation' and that 'Ocean Winds has committed sizeable funds to supply chain development'. It was recognised that local communities should be proactive to try and ensure that local people are able to take advantage of any transitional opportunities.

However, as a settlement founded on industry, Buckie does not have a long track record of being an environmentally conscious community, and there have been few initiatives or businesses (other than the likes of Moray Reach Out who have a long record of recycling and a growing involvement in upcycling) that have had public profile in advancing the three pillars of 'people-planet-prosperity'.

In more recent times, there has, however, been a slight shift and Parklands Group, which has several care homes in the town, considers the importance of the environment in its work and many of its older properties are currently being updated to improve their sustainability. Boortmalt at Buckie Maltings has a new focus on energy efficiency, emissions reduction, and water conservation. Maynes Coaches is working to reduce its carbon emissions by having an efficient fleet that is regularly maintained and uses telematics and the new bus service to Keith is via M Connect electric buses. Associated Seafoods has achieved certification under Best Seafood and Aquaculture Practice schemes, which provide assurances that seafood has been harvested and processed in a responsible manner. A community-driven campaign in 2021 saw a group of locals defend a small woodland on the former rail station at Portessie from housing development. In 2022, a declining rose garden to the west of the town centre was transformed into a community orchard using developer obligation money from Tesco. Blackwood Homes' Peoplehood Project in Buckie seeks to encourage healthy independent living and is promoting e-bikes and e-cars. The BLP

consultation revealed 'clean beaches and green spaces' as a new high priority for the community, as well as long-term recognition by some of need for a community woodland (ref 2.2).

Considering the above, a new community hub for Buckie could:

- (a) assist in concentrating local minds towards mainstreaming low carbon lifestyles;
- (b) build youth capacity and confidence to pursue careers in new technologies;
- (c) act a conduit between the community and public/private sector activity; and
- (d) act as a focal point for volunteer activities to 'green the town'.

5.3 Potential lessons from elsewhere

There are several other examples not far from Buckie where settlements have attempted to commence a bottom-up transition towards 'people-planet-prosperity':

- Findhorn Foundation

The Findhorn Foundation was created by Peter and Eileen Caddy in 1962, who set up on Findhorn Dunes to live self-sufficiently, through necessity following job redundancy. Others quickly followed suit, and a self-reliant 'caravan community' was formed by 1967. The community gradually expanded and became an eco-village by the late 1980s, with its own biological sewage treatment plant and 3 wind turbines providing community power. In 1998, the UN Habitat identified the eco-village as a 'best practice model for holistic and sustainable living', and this was reaffirmed in 2018. The village is frequently now used as a teaching resource for universities and schools from all over.



Image source: Gaia Innovations

- Transition Town Forres

Transition Town Forres was founded in 2008 and is part of the Transition Towns Movement. Its strategic aim is to encourage and promote health, choice, and empowerment for the people of Forres and local community networks, within an ecologically and aesthetically grounded framework. Initial funding was through the Climate Challenge Fund, with a remit to lower the carbon emissions in Forres and increase resilience. Members of Transition Town Forres come



Image source: Forres Gazette

from all walks of life – different ages, backgrounds, qualifications, and nationalities. Most members live in Forres, while others come from the surrounding villages. Current initiatives run by TTF include a Community Garden, Fresh Food Cooking Classes, a Repair Café, and a Well-being Project for the over 50s.

- Huntly Development Trust

Huntly Development Trust (HDT) is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Established in 2009, it has a membership from the AB54 district postcode of over 500 and is managed by a Board of Directors with 4.75 full-time equivalent staff. Its mission is to ‘work with others to build a resilient, inclusive, enterprising community capable of dealing with ongoing change’. The company follows the principles of sustainable development in a way that respects and enhances local culture, social traditions and built heritage, as well as the local and global natural environment. Its projects are focused on 6 headings: 1. Repurposing the town centre; 2. Celebrating heritage; 3. Managing natural outdoors (at Greenmyres Farm); 4. Sport, Health, and Well-being; 5. Active Travel (Co-wheels electric vehicles); and 6. Renewable Energy (HDT now has 3 wind turbines that generate income for the organisation and local projects).

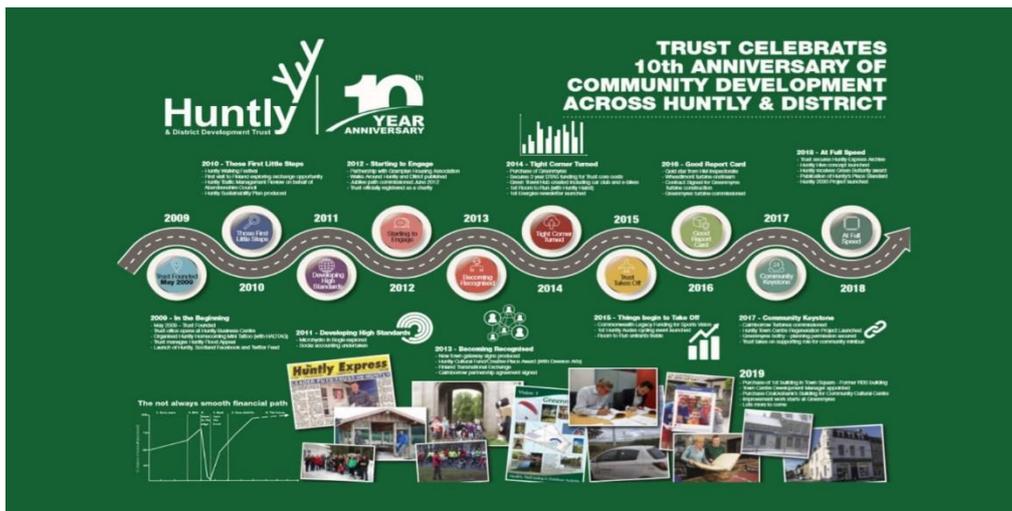


Image source: HDT

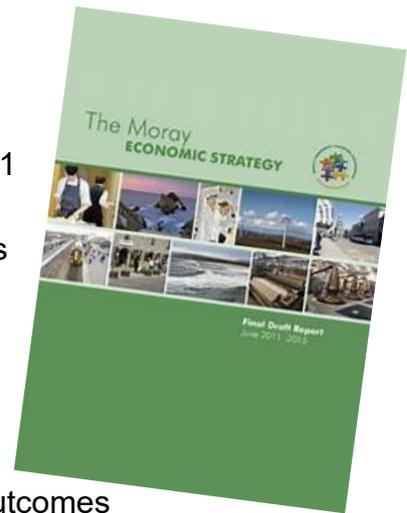
As can be seen from the above examples, Buckie could learn from the experiences of nearby community groups who are developing their own methods of transitioning to a well-being economy. The work in other towns indicates that community-led activities can be impactful and influential towards just transition and a well-being economy.

6.0 A Community Hub in Buckie – what's its potential?

This section examines a new Community Hub's potential to play a strategic role, seize current opportunities, and create tangible benefits, especially at the local level.

6.1 Strategic role

A Community Hub in Buckie would have a strong fit with the National Performance Framework (see Appendix Section for 11 key outcomes) and various MCPP partner strategies, e.g. Moray Economic Strategy, Employability Strategy, Moray Skills Developing the Young Workforce Strategy, Moray Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Moray Drug and Alcohol Action Plan, the Money Advice Service and CAB Support Action Plan, Moray Early Years Strategy, the Child Poverty Action Plan, MCPP's Community Engagement Strategy, Public Health Scotland's Strategic Plan, and the TSI Moray Outcomes Framework. Depending upon how the project develops, it has potential fit with Moray's Social Enterprise Strategy and Moray Pathways. It could also support other strategies, such as MDLP's town centre and regeneration ambitions, and there could be scope for the local Police and Fire Service to engage more proactively and advance their own strategic plans.



A community hub in Buckie is already on the Council's Planning Service 'radar' and is seen as a potential item for a 'Place Plan' (which could assist its delivery) as well as a focal point for future community engagement in Place Plans. A hub could play a role in reimagining and/or helping to repurpose the town centre following the pandemic's negative impact on retail, and it could also function as a base for active tourism, e.g. promoting the Coastal Path and Fishwives Walk.

The Community Hub could function as a nexus between the local High School, town centre businesses, and private sector bodies associated with Buckie harbour. A Community Hub focusing on wellbeing outcomes will also help the local authority, in partnership with stakeholders, to tackle poverty (particularly child poverty), reduce inequality, build economic resilience, and contribute to Scotland's just transition to a net zero, nature-positive, circular economy with fair work at its heart. In the latter respect, a Community Hub could function as a new physical branch or 'node' for the virtual Moray Climate Hub (ref. 2.5).



Mental Health
Pathways in Moray



6.2 Possible opportunities

The existing 'Hub' is working well and proving its worth. The partnership working is impressive, people's capacity enhancement is significant, and The Hub is giving the members of the community of Buckie the confidence to influence matters that are important to them and have their voices heard. A new, larger Community Hub can be an opportunity to build upon this work, enhance the services provision, and roll them out to a wider audience. A Community Hub is clearly deemed important locally - ref BLP consultation (Sect 2 above and Appendix below) – and a new hub could potentially address very many of the ideas and concerns raised during the various consultation exercises...which is probably why the community has made it such a high priority.

As well as the above-mentioned potential (6.1), a Community Hub in Buckie could seize various opportunities that emerge. For example, the new hub could provide spaces for sharing medical advice and conducting assessments through advances in digital health. Looking to the future, the hub could function as a centre of expertise for the next level of literacy involving generative Artificial Intelligence linked to flexible and remote working.

Low-cost space at a new hub could operate as a 'nursery' for pop-up shops and/or business start-ups, with a shopfront acting as a community economic development space and/or an income generator for the hub itself. There is additional potential for a 'shopfront' to act as a tourist information point, provide service training, food and drink, and local sales e.g. arts and crafts. A hub could further boost local tourism and generate income by having some hostelry rooms, and it could build upon the Blackwood Peoplehood Project and operate an e-bike hire scheme to capitalise on the National Cycle Route. In this respect, Buckie could learn from experiences elsewhere in local economic development, such as Forres Horizon, Keith Isla Bank, Huntly Development Trust, and Fraserburgh Enterprise Hub.

A new hub should address the lack of childcare facilities in the town and provide access to high quality, affordable childcare. It could also take the opportunity to provide the town with a care and repair service.

A new hub could further promote biodiversity enhancement throughout the town, both to enhance the town and create some carbon offsetting examples. It could also promote 'garden-to-plate' by growing food in the town, possibly partnering with REAP. Crucially, a new hub could play an educational role in raising awareness about decarbonisation, and it could be a 'vessel' for channelling the take-up of renewables (e.g. solar panels, heat pumps) and energy conservation (e.g. insulation, draughtproofing), as well as helping to roll out electric vehicle charger units as an income generator. Amongst other things, this could involve working with the likes of Buckie Area Forum to increase community-owned energy, possibly involving the administration of community bonds.

6.3 Benefits

Were a new Community Hub to come to fruition, there would be undoubted community benefit. From a learning perspective, through local guides, classes, and roadshows from external providers, the new hub would be a vital base for fundamental education in economics, health advice, environmental care, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A new hub would improve connectivity, confidence, and skills, particularly in digital technology, and signpost access to employment, volunteering, and community activity opportunities. A new hub would provide a locus for intergenerational activities and make people of all ages feel valued members of the community. A new hub would have people working together to ensure that the young members of the community, especially those with additional support needs, including neurodiversity, are equipped with skills and confidence to fulfil healthy, meaningful lives. A new hub would provide disadvantaged members of the local community with a 'safety net' in time of need and enable preventative action that avoids more serious, long-term disadvantage.

A new hub, however, would serve the whole community and provide a focal point for renewed community coherence and responsible citizenship. In this respect, depending upon its final role and scale (ref 6.1 and 6.2), a new hub in Buckie could be transformational and have high impact upon the town's well-being.



Image courtesy of BLMG

7.0 A community hub in Buckie – where could it go?

This section takes a brief review of where a community hub could be housed in Buckie (ref. town map):

- **Option 1 - Virtual**

Buckie Community Hub could take a leaf out of the Moray Wellbeing Hub or Moray Climate Hub book and utilise a virtual model. This could be simple and cost effective, but it would not meet the hub's essential needs of face-to-face service provision. That said, a virtual presence for some services could be very useful too, e.g. online training, helpdesk, etc. and would extend the range of services and maximise the use of staff resources.

- **Option 2 – Multi-locational**

A cost effective, albeit challenging, solution might be to deliver services from more than one premise, such as a high street unit(s) and an existing community facility, e.g. school, public hall. There are a number of recently vacant shopfronts following the pandemic, i.e. M&co, Ice Cream Shop/Hub, Trading Post, Vaping outlet, and now Café Coull (most of which have upper floor flats with sitting tenants). Whilst a dispersed model could reduce risk and provide overall flexibility, the model would not likely respond well to the concept of a one-stop 'hub' as the central point of activity.



Examples of shop premises in the main street closing post pandemic

- **Option 3 – Single unit reuse**

An obvious solution is to concentrate services within a single, sizeable premise. There are several vacant properties within the town centre zone, e.g. the Old Social Club on West Church Street, M&Co on East Church Street, or the former warehouses in Blairdaff Street. It is also understood that the Council is reviewing its properties at the Access Point in The Square, the Phoenix Centre in Queen Street, and the Town Hall/Library in Cluny Place. The Church of Scotland is also likely to dispose of its South and West Church in the High Street, which has been deemed surplus to needs.

There is also the option of a large house, some of which still have a substantial plot of land to the rear. The reuse of a town centre building could be a deliverable option that aids regeneration and avoids the inevitable decay of an empty property. However, such an approach would likely require adaptation of the premises. Whilst this could provide the chance to create bespoke spaces and upgrade building performance, conversion of an existing property could be complex and costly.

- **Option 4 – single unit on brownfield land**

A new building on a previously developed site has the appeal of (a) creating a purpose-made facility and (b) regenerating an existing site. There are a couple of derelict sites within the town centre, e.g. the MDLP identifies opportunity sites at the bottom of High Street/Square and the former Gasworks. That said, these sites have been undeveloped for a long time now, since they have various complexities, e.g. contamination, and are only a few metres above sea level.

- **Option 5 – single unit on greenfield land**

A new building on virgin soil has the appeal of creating a purpose-made facility without the constraints associated with brownfield land. There are, however, no obvious sites within the town centre, other than those protected as green space and/or for recreational purposes.

Whatever option is preferred, it is important that any building functioning as a Buckie Community Hub takes a sustainable approach and is an exemplary of good practice; and perhaps even a test bed for new construction materials and/or techniques.

Buckie Town Centre - West



KEY

1. St Peter's Primary School
2. Methodist Church
3. Fisherman's Hall
4. Buckie Town Hall/Library/Fishing Heritage Centre
5. Baptist Church
6. Buckie Episcopal Church Hall
7. Phoenix Centre
8. Café Coull
9. Social Club
10. The Access Point
11. Pozzis
12. Blairdaff Factory
13. Cluny Primary School
14. Buckie Community High School
15. Victoria Lounge

Buckie Town Centre - East



KEY

1. The North Church Hall
2. M&Co
3. Subway
4. Fry Inn
5. Hub
6. Riverside Centre
7. Vape Centre
8. Trading Post
9. JJ Ross Bakery and Cafe
10. South and West Church
11. Lady Cathcart Centre
12. Royal British Legion of Buckie

8.0 Conclusion

Establishing a Community Hub' in Buckie is currently 'Priority 1' in the *Place* theme of Buckie Locality Action Plan (see 2.1). There is strategic requirement for a hub of targeted community services, as evidenced in SIMD figures and the MCPP priority given to supporting Buckie, so it 'ticks all the boxes' in relation to fundamental need (see 2.2. and 4.1).

The existing Hub, which could be viewed as an unintended pilot exercise, has proven its worth and continues to grow and develop (see 2.3). The existing Hub is an excellent facility in a good location, but its small space limits the group's activities, ambitions, and outcomes. An outline locational zone within the town centre has been mapped out for basing a new hub (see 4.2) and the desired accommodation has been identified (see 4.3), as well as initial options for premises considered (see 7.0).

The key question, therefore, is not so much about 'Should Buckie have a new community hub?' (since the need is somewhat obvious) as rather, 'What should be the focus for a new community hub in Buckie?': in particular, whether it provides Buckie with an opportunity to increase its contribution for a just transition towards a well-being economy.

The answer to this is that, depending upon the support of the MCPP partners and local volunteers -and there is nothing to suggest anything other than strong support - then a new community hub in Buckie could certainly play a strategic role in community wellbeing, seize opportunities to provide inclusive services, and bring about long-term social, economic, and environmental benefits to Buckie and beyond (see 6.1-6.3).

Considering, however, the macro concerns and national/regional strategies around issues such as climate change and the cost of living (see 2.4 and 2.5) and the requirement for everyone to play a part, a new hub in Buckie must play a contributory role in assisting a just transition towards a well-being economy (see 2.4.2 and 2.4.3).

In doing so, it should reflect upon where its greatest impacts might be. Judging by past work done at a regional and local level (see Sect 2), and where potential opportunities may arise in the future (see 6.2), any new hub initiative should place emphasis on raising awareness of the global climate crisis, tackling regional concerns for its young people, and addressing local needs for childcare and crisis support.

In many respects, Buckie can learn from experiences elsewhere, particularly in how to operate and sustain a hub – there's no need to 'reinvent the wheel' (see 4.4 and 5.3) - but any activities and services taken forward by the hub must necessarily be tailored towards the town's local needs and demands within the context of 'high level' issues.

If a new hub in Buckie can successfully address these objectives, then it has the potential to be transformative in developing local resilience and contributing towards wider societal aims.

9.0 Recommendations / next steps

It is recommended that the Buckie Locality Plan Monitoring Group works with local volunteers, and partners who may take the Buckie Community Hub concept forward, on the following next key steps:

- 9.1 Conduct a learning visit(s) to another hub(s) of similar nature
- 9.2 Develop and clarify the role and vision for a new hub in Buckie (incorporating a 'just transition' function - which, in itself, could require a capacity building process to bring all volunteers on board)
- 9.3 Identify specific accommodation space that is 'essential'/ 'desirable' /'flexible'
- 9.4 Explore premises options and identify a preferred option
- 9.5 Seek to identify a potential anchor tenant(s) and/or other means of financial stability.

[note: although not critical, there is a logic to carrying out the above-mentioned steps largely in the order written]

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[Wellbeing economy monitor: December 2022 update - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

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Appendices

Better Buckie Prioritisation results (Theme 2 Place)

PRIORITY	EVENT ONE 09/07/22	EVENT TWO 29/07/22	TOTAL
Appearance incorporating : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Green Spaces- Unused buildings and land- Clean Sea and Beaches- Keeping Buckie Bonny- Harbour area	12	5	17
Walking and Cycling Paths	10	10	20
Establishing a Community Hub	27	16	43
Allotments	5	0	5
Mobile, Wifi and Digital Skills	11	6	17



Scottish Government National Performance Framework – key outcomes

To help achieve its purpose, the framework sets out 'National Outcomes'. These outcomes describe the kind of Scotland it aims to create.

The outcomes:

- reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland
- are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- help to track progress in reducing inequality

The 11 national outcomes are that people:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- are creative and their vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- value, enjoy, protect and enhance their environment
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- are healthy and active
- respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally



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