



Oldmeldrum's participation in Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB)

'It's Your Neighbourhood' initiative

2023



Purpose of this document

This brochure has been created in support of Meldrum's participation in Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) 'It's Your Neighbourhood' initiative.

KSB are the charity for Scotland's environment, with a vision for a clean, green, sustainable Scotland. As they say, 'We're lucky to live in such a beautiful country and we want to keep it that way'.

The KSB's 'It's Your Neighbourhood' promotion is their community environmental improvement initiative managed in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) under the Britain in Bloom campaign. It runs alongside their Beautiful Scotland programme and is non-competitive. It is based on the three pillars: community participation, environmental responsibility and gardening achievement.

Specifically, Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group (MAIG) is leading Meldrum's participation in KSB's 'It's Your Neighbourhood' initiative. This volunteer-led enterprise is facilitated through various Meldrum community groups, which, using KSB's mission statement wording, 'are cleaning and beautifying their neighbourhoods, whether through community allotments, after school wildlife clubs, school eco-groups, Friends of Park groups, or adopting pieces of derelict land'. KSB supports and encourages participating groups from across Scotland, and provide rewards through a series of certificates acknowledging the good work being done on behalf of their communities.

In support of the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' initiative, we have gathered evidence from a selection of ten community-led enterprises throughout Meldrum, and present details of these below. These details show the many ways in which the enthusiastic Oldmeldrum community provides the many supportive schemes to the area. These schemes address all three KSB pillars.

It is MAIG's expressed intent to enter KSB's Beautiful Scotland initiative in 2024. We see the work promoted in support of our participation in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' enterprise in 2023 as a steppingstone towards the Beautiful Scotland competition next year. This brochure, while not mandated by participation in 'It's Your Neighbourhood', has been created to aid KSB mentors and assessors to understand the breadth of community participation within Meldrum and to act as a foundation for the more formal submission required when entering the Beautiful Scotland competition next year.

Table of Contents

<i>Purpose of this document</i>	2
<i>Oldmeldrum in context</i>	4
<i>Meldrum’s ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ activities</i>	4
Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group	5
The Community Garden	6
Meldrum Green Growing Space	7
Cycling Without Age	8
Oldmeldrum Community E-bikes – the Meldrum Paths Group	8
Spring Clean	9
Support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award	10
Meldrum Academy Gardens	11
Rewilding Meldrum	11
Meldrum Christmas Lights	12
<i>The Health of Oldmeldrum</i>	12
<i>Appendix A – The Meldrum initiatives and the KSB Pillars</i>	14
<i>Appendix B – List of Photographs/Images</i>	15
<i>Appendix C – Meldrum community initiatives and their internet address</i>	16

Oldmeldrum in context

Oldmeldrum - commonly known as Meldrum - is a small town within the parish of Formartine in Aberdeenshire, in Northeast Scotland. According to the National Records of Scotland, the Meldrum population was 3,120 in 2022.

Despite recent housing developments to the periphery of Meldrum, it retains its rural heritage. The town square, upgraded in 2012, is the scene of various community events including: occasional fairs and food markets, flower stalls, the site of the Christmas celebrations and carol concert. It is decorated from June to September with the joyous floral displays, diligently prepared by the community volunteers of MAIG.

Historically, there is archaeological evidence of a settlement in the Oldmeldrum area dating from the Bronze Age, 3,500 years ago. Excavations in 2002, associated with building the Meldrum Bypass, revealed evidence of the remains of three Bronze Age ring-ditch roundhouses, possibly part of an area of open settlement. Furthermore, there are remains of prehistoric hill forts on Barra Hill, overlooking Meldrum, and a later Pictish Fort dated around 400 CE. A local battle, the Battle of Barra, was fought in circa 1308 between the armies of Robert Bruce and John Comyn, the 3rd Earl of Buchan.

Meldrum is home to one of the oldest whisky distilleries in Scotland, Glen Garioch, established in 1797. Meldrum was a centre of the hosiery trade in the 18th century, and today, local industries are primarily agriculture based and engineering services connected to Scotland's oil industry. A wealth of professional and commercial businesses, located around the town square, actively support the community.

Meldrum has a thriving primary school and a vibrant secondary school, the Meldrum Academy. A skatepark was built in June 2009 within Oldmeldrum Pleasure Park, which also includes tennis courts, and the local thriving bowling club, and hosts the annual Meldrum Sports, themselves dating back to 1930. It is also the home of two popular golf courses.

Meldrum's 'It's Your Neighbourhood' activities

Though the seemingly inexhaustive support of local community volunteers, in alliance with the Community Council and local business, Meldrum has a wealth of activities that individually and collectively address the three KSB pillars: community participation, environmental responsibility and gardening achievement. We have chosen ten initiatives, each one described below, that reflect the huge community spirit we are so lucky to possess in our town, and embrace the three KSB pillars. To assist KSB assessors and mentors, a table has been inserted in Appendix A, below, providing a summary of where each initiative aligns to one or more of KSB's three pillars. These ten initiatives include: MAIG, The Community Garden, Meldrum Green Growing Space, Cycling Without Age, Oldmeldrum Community E-bikes, Spring Clean, support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Meldrum Academy Gardens, Rewilding Meldrum, and Meldrum Christmas Lights. We have also included a summary of the results from a recent survey by Aberdeenshire Council, titled 'The Health of Oldmeldrum'. This provides an independent evidenced based assessment of a range of Meldrum's public amenities, in which the work done by many of the ten initiatives contained within this brochure is mentioned.

Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group

MAIG was constituted in 2002. Initially, the MAIG committee took the decision to undertake improving the ambience of the town during the summer months. From these early days, when the group started their floral project, has expanded from a few baskets to today's expansive displays decorating the town. In 2023 we have over 200 hanging-baskets, barrier-baskets and other floral displays within the town centre.

Funding for this endeavour comes from various sources. We organise plant sales, we hold a monthly lottery-style draw, and annual events such as Murder Mystery dinners, Race Nights, Doric dinners and local concerts. The Oldmeldrum and District Rotary Club, other public and business organizations support the considerable cost of preparation and provision of the summer floral displays.

The MAIG facility is situated on piece of previous unused land to the rear of Oldmeldrum Golf Club's car park. The Golf Club kindly allowed us to level the area and erect two poly tunnels, install a container, which allows maintenance and storage of the Christmas illuminations, and built a shed complete with concrete base, power and an overhead gantry crane. With this wonderful facility we are able to propagate enough plug plants to plant the baskets and containers for our summer floral display.



Figure 1 - floral displays ready for installation

MAIG raised funding, and provided the volunteers for the recent development of the Meldrum Petanque & Croquet Club which is free to all members of the public. Also, MAIG recently assisted the local heritage society in restoring the iconic Sailor statue located on the approach to Meldrum, and the associated landscaping the surrounding area.



Figure 2 - barrier basket floral display in the town square

With a recently successful grant application we replaced our aged diesel tractor with a utility electric vehicle. This is one example of our contribution in supporting Aberdeenshire Council's Sustainability Charter Action Program which sought and for



Figure 3 - MAIG's electrical vehicle - watering the displays

the whole of Aberdeenshire to be carbon neutral by 2030. Our electric vehicle is charged daily through the provision of solar panels on the roof of one of the MAIG sheds. Power from these solar panels now also provide hot water to the facility, the polytunnel space heater heating to the the four propagation beds. The vehicle provides a platform and the water bowser from which we water the floral displays daily. All our

volunteers are trained in driving the left-hand drive electric vehicle and dispensing the water. We frequently find that, as our volunteers undertake the daily watering function, they often receive compliments from the local public and visitors regarding the colour and vibrancy of the floral displays.

During autumn and winter periods, having collected the floral displays and returned them to the MAIG facility, we empty baskets and save various tubers, then compost everything else using the mechanical vibrating riddle for reuse the following year. Maintenance such as repainting and repairing the wheelbarrows, and care of the facility itself takes place during this time.

The Community Garden

Twenty years ago, the idea of constructing a community garden in Oldmeldrum was first raised. Driven by a desire to commemorate the centenary of Rotary in 2005 by the Oldmeldrum and District Rotary Club, the project developed reflecting Rotary ideals, and benefit and enhance the lives of the local community - the idea of a Community Garden was born.

The once-neglected area on the approach to Oldmeldrum, was selected as an ideal location for the Forsyth Community Garden. It was easily accessible for visitors to walk to and had stunning uninterrupted views of the surrounding countryside. The site is predominantly sheltered and has an elevated south facing view looking towards Bourtie, our iconic Bennachie and Barra Hill – this is the Gateway to Oldmeldrum. It is an ideal place for residents and visitors to walk or sit in contemplation of the garden and the surroundings. Likewise, it enhances the approach, and creates a better impression to those entering our town.

The garden is named after William Forsyth, born in Oldmeldrum in 1737, reflecting our proud local history. Forsyth, a gardener of renown at a time of great achievements

in horticulture, became one of the founders of the Royal Horticultural Society. In his honour the plant Forsythia was named, varieties of which are planted within the Forsyth Community Garden.

The Oldmeldrum and District Rotary Club and the Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group joined together to form the Meldrum Community Garden Project. In, June 2006, planning permission was granted, and work commenced. By 2008, the Meldrum Community Garden Project was



Figure 4 - The entrance to the Meldrum Community Garden

registered as a charity in Scotland, and funding was donated by the Mushroom Trust.

The network of paths is designed to be suitable for wheelchairs and prams. The seating areas are located at strategic points to take in the outstanding views. Seasonal bulbs and hedging have been planted in order to give a stunning seasonal ambience to

the southern approaches of the town.

The creation, and now the upkeep and further development of the Forsyth Community Garden involves the whole Meldrum community. Weekly attendance to address weeding, plant maintenance and ensuring paths remain suitable, are some of our continuing activities. Our latest venture is the consideration of a new entrance to the garden.

Meldrum Green Growing Space

The Meldrum Green Growing Space team are a further group of enthusiastic locals from within the town of Oldmeldrum that have come together to establish the first green growing Allotment space in the town.

This exciting enterprise is the largest new volunteer-led undertaking in Meldrum in 2022/23. The aim of the group is to bring the local residents and their families together to grow and learn all about fruit, veg and flowers as well as the importance of looking after the land and environment around us.



Figure 5 - plan of Meldrum Green Growing Space - allotment site

When completed the allotment facility will provide 26 allotments, each with an identical shed, a poly tunnel, raised beds and car parking spaces.

To date, much needed funding has been provided by local benefactors and the Rural & Island Communities Ideas into Action (RICIA) fund during 2022-23, part of the Scottish Government's Rural Development Programme. The funding will enable the team to deliver the groundworks, materials and structures needed for the allotment facility.



Figure 6 - groundworks commence at the allotment site

Cycling Without Age

Introduction of the Oldmeldrum Cycling Without Age (CWA) was a MAIG initiative and through various grant applications established the Meldrum CWA Chapter. The first first Cycling Without Age trishaw was received in May 2021 and after some initial



Figure 7 - the then Prince Charles shares a private moment with one of the trishaw pilots

training for our volunteer pilots the scheme was launched at an event in the town square, in glorious sunshine - in June. The trishaw is named Meldrum Meg, after the steam engine of the same name that used to ply its trade between Oldmeldrum and Inverurie before the branch line was removed.

A visit to Oldmeldrum by King Charles III, at the time the Prince of Wales, included a demonstration of our Cycling Without Age trishaw. Clearly, he is enjoying the discussion with one of our volunteer pilots and the Lord Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire.

The trishaw is proving extremely popular within the Meldrum community, especially with the elderly and those with limited mobility. It is often accompanied with another cyclist who ensure the trishaw can move safely with other road users and pedestrians.

The trishaw is frequently seen around Meldrum, and made a visit to the Meldrum Sports in June 2023 where it provided transport around the arena and proved an attraction to visitors and dignitaries to the annual event.

Oldmeldrum Community E-bikes – the Meldrum Paths Group

The E-bike project began in April 2021 with an initial four-week trial. This proved remarkably popular, and the Meldrum Paths Group now has several E-bikes for weekly hire. Feedback from customers allows the group and their funders to gauge how the project is progressing – very positively by all accounts. Positive feedback and uptake on bike usage led to the increase in bike numbers available, and succeeded in attracting support from the council to further improve bike-storage, bike-parking and



Figure 8 - e-bikes and storage facility

bike-maintenance facilities in the town. In addition, Meldrum Paths Group is now looking to provide bike-hoops in the town square making it more likely that cyclists will be prepared to park their bikes when visiting local shops and cafes. This should encourage folk to use their bike more when visiting the town centre and will be great for cyclists using local cafes.

There are lots of lovely quiet roads and tracks within easy reach of Oldmeldrum on an e-bike. The hills are no problem, the battery takes the strain. Meldrum is within easy reach of the outlying towns and villages, and a full charge lasts for at least 30 miles and usually more.

The intent is to use the bikes to replace local car journeys and to increase health and mental wellbeing through outdoor activities. The group's scheme is all about encouraging sustainable local active travel and leaving the car at home for relatively short journeys and leisure rides. The bikes are primarily available to adult residents of Oldmeldrum, Bourtie and the surrounding local area.

The bikes come with all necessary lights, charger, repair kit and a helmet and a lock, but the group asks riders to wear their own cycle clothing including hi-vis where necessary.

Spring Clean

On the morning of Saturday 15th April, the Meldrum community engaged with KSB's 'Spring Clean Scotland'. Our band of hearty volunteers met outside the town's Veterinary Centre on Station Road for a brief introduction, safety talk and allocation



Figure 9 - Spring Cleaners ready to go

of areas. All the necessary litter bags, litter picks and hi-viz tabards were provided, and Aberdeenshire Council delivered a waste skip for our use - it was full at the end. We managed to fill 25 bags of refuse over a period of about 5 hours, focussing on the Play Park, the Town Square and the bypass. During the morning we found a witch's hat, and pair of

prescription glasses and some foreign currency. The good weather also helped make the task fun.

The Spring Clean was an important event for the town, as it helped reduce litter levels in our neighbourhood, it certainly helped protect the environment and wildlife, and our own health and wellbeing. We also completed and submitted a litter survey, helping KSB gather data on common litter items and behaviours from across Scotland, and moving towards our vision of a clean, green, and sustainable Scotland.

As the KSB webpage says, 'we've been bitten by the litter picking bug', and so another litter picking event is planned for mid-August, where we hope to attract even more helpers.

[Support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award](#)

MAIG also supports young people looking to get involved in the Volunteering Section of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (DofE). With Meldrum Academy actively promoting DofE participation by the academy pupils, it is a simple task to work with the school and provide access for volunteering opportunities.

Each year several academy pupils will join us in the daily watering and upkeep of the town's floral displays. We take one pupil per day. This way we can focus on their safe participation. Recording the name of the DofE participant and the tasks performed enables one of the MAIG Committee members to endorse the activities at the end of the volunteering period. This helps provide supporting evidence for the pupil's DofE award.

The DofE website states the idea of volunteering is, 'about choosing to give time to help people, the community or society', and we are grateful for the pupil's participation. Likewise, we have chosen to be an outlet for DofE throughout the summer, and the pupil becomes a valued volunteer-member of our team.

It is encouraging to record that some pupils choose to remain with MAIG after their DofE involvement, expanding our volunteering network and bringing a complementary youthful enthusiasm.

Meldrum Academy Gardens

In 2018 Meldrum Academy created a brand-new community school garden. Development of this initiative has led to the establishment of a poly tunnel, some raised beds and a tool shed. They have tools, gloves and even picnic benches to sit outside on. The garden is run by the pupils of Meldrum Academy throughout the year. They produce vegetables and soft fruit: leeks, peas, onions, strawberries, tomatoes, and occasionally brussel-sprouts and sweetcorn. The development has all been made possible by funding from the Scottish Government 'Food for Thought Initiative' and local fund raising. A 1000L water tank provides sufficient water to maintain the garden. Topping up the water is done by town's Fire Brigade. During the summer holidays, MAIG steps in to water, maintain and occasionally harvest the produce.



Figure 10 - Meldrum Academy pupil-inspired garden

Rewilding Meldrum



Figure 11 – rewilding available land

The initial site for the rewilding initiative can be found at the roundabout on the approach road to Meldrum from Inverurie. The area measures approximately 100 square metres. Once the roundabout had originally been built, the soft landscaping had been initially seeded with grass but then abandoned. This meant the land had become choked by weeds, was unloved and was not welcoming for traffic approaching Meldrum.

MAIG volunteers grasped the opportunity to improve this area and over the course of several evenings weeded the area and sowed wild flowers from seed.

Our rewilding initiative ties in with the Beds for Bees exercise being supported by Keep Scotland Beautiful. We endeavour to ensure enough native wildflowers exist in Meldrum, while ensuring the wildflower area is kept tidy. Using a careful selection of wildflower seeds we anticipate the area will become highly attractive to pollinators and a much welcome sight to the local community.

Meldrum Christmas Lights

Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group was originally constituted to provide a few Christmas Illuminations for the town centre. The first funds were raised through various community events, and a modest display of six lighting motifs. In the intervening years the Christmas light illuminations now consist of over fifty illumination features decorating the town square and the main approach roads into the town. Each Christmas, the Oldmeldrum Golf Club donate the Christmas Tree which is erected with the assistance of local farmers. The installation and decoration of the tree, and the installation of all the Christmas Lights is undertaken by MAIG and our wonderful volunteers.

On or around the first Sunday in December, MAIG organises a party in the town square the culmination of which is



the switching on of the Christmas Lights.

Figure 13 - the Meldrum community and visitors celebrate the Christmas Switch-on



Figure 12 - Kintore Pipe Band at the Meldrum Christmas party

Recently, we have invited the two schools to nominate a pupil to switch on the lights.

Various warm pies, mulled wine and hot drinks are served to the public, who are also treated to a carol concert-accompanied by the school's musicians, and a local pipe band. The visit by Santa and his elves provides a huge thrill for all.

Funding for the Meldrum Christmas Lights comes from various sources: The local Rotary Club, donations from local residents and revenue from the event surrounding the switching on of the Christmas Lights.

The Health of Oldmeldrum

Aberdeenshire Council conduct periodic reports on the status of their towns and villages. In 2022 they produced a report on Meldrum. Among the many different themes inspected under the report was the subject of natural spaces. This specifically investigated the results of the work undertaken by many of the volunteer groups within Meldrum and discussed in the sections above. As Aberdeenshire Council state in their introduction to the report: 'the importance of town centres is widely acknowledged.....they are at the heart of communities, providing a sustainable focus for shopping, business, leisure, services and community life, and shaping their sense of place'.

Below is one of the 40 pages from the report. Specifically, this page address the natural space.



Figure 14 - Meldrum Natural Spaces assessment

It was encouraging to read that the business and local community acknowledge the work done by the volunteers for the environment upkeep and mental wellbeing of the community. MAIG are singled out for specific praise, but it is acknowledged that the positive messages in this section can be levelled at all the ten initiatives discussed in this brochure.

Appendix A – The Meldrum initiatives and the KSB Pillars

The following table maps the ten Meldrum enterprises discussed above with the Keep Scotland Beautiful ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ initiative.

Meldrum Enterprise	Community Participation	Environmental Responsibility	Gardening Achievement
Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group			
The Community Garden			
Meldrum Green Spaces			
Cycling Without Age			n/a
Oldmeldrum Community E-bikes: Meldrum Paths Group			n/a
Spring Clean			
Support for the Duke of Edinburgh Award			
Meldrum Academy Gardens			
Rewilding Meldrum			
Meldrum Christmas Lights			n/a

Key

	Complete alignment with KSB pillar
	Partial alignment with KSB pillar

Appendix B – List of Photographs/Images

Image No.	Image description
1	Floral displays ready for installation
2	Barrier basket floral display in the town square
3	MAIG's electrical vehicle - watering the displays
4	Entrance to Meldrum Community Garden
5	Plan of Meldrum Green Growing Space - allotment site
6	Groundworks commence at the allotment site
7	The then Prince Charles shares a private moment with one of the trishaw pilots
8	e-bikes and storage facility
9	Spring Cleaners ready to go
10	Meldrum Academy pupil-inspired garden
11	Rewilding available land
12	Kintore Pipe Band at the Meldrum Christmas party
13	The Meldrum community and visitors celebrate the Christmas Switch-on
14	Meldrum Natural Spaces assessment

Appendix C – Meldrum community initiatives and their internet address

Aberdeenshire Council – Oldmeldrum Town Centre Health Check Report – Web Page
<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/b2fe204e-832e-4edb-b7d6-1c3d5fad2858/resource/a0821a14-9419-40b2-8b0f-0e4f78224ba2/download/2022-oldmeldrum-town-centre-health-check.pdf>

Cycling Without Age – Meldrum Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/charity-organization/Cycling-Without-Age-Scotland-Oldmeldrum-103145215185940/>

Keep Scotland Beautiful – Beautiful Scotland
<https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/community-and-place/beautiful-scotland/>

Keep Scotland Beautiful – It’s Your Neighbourhood
<https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/community-and-place/its-your-neighbourhood/>

Meldrum Amenities Improvement Group – Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/MeldrumAmenitiesImprovementGroup/>

Meldrum Green Growing Space – Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/OldmeldrumGreenGrowingSpace/>

Meldrum Green Growing Space – Web Page
<https://oldmeldrumgreengrowingspace.org>

Oldmeldrum Community E-bikes: Meldrum Paths Group – Web Page
<https://ebike.oldmeldrum.org>

The Community Garden – Facebook Page
<http://www.oldmeldrumrotary.org.uk/garden.htm>