

THE SCOTTISH SHEDDER

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SMSA

Edition 37 | March 2024



SCOTTISH
MEN'S SHEDS
ASSOCIATION

In Scotland, For Scotland



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Global Intergenerational Week 2024

There are people and organisations across the world forging vital intergenerational relationships through a range of fantastic and creative projects. From schools and colleges, care homes to nurseries, sports groups to housing providers, local authorities to national governments and of course, in Men's Sheds!

We are all working hard to connect people of all ages together in mutually beneficial ways. We don't however, always share our impact with the wider world and that's where [Global Intergenerational Week](#) (GIW) comes in! GIW shines a light on projects highlighting their intrinsic value and providing them with the recognition that they deserve.

It is vital that we are proactive in our approach to connecting generations; to combat social problems such as ageism and social isolation, to improve educational outcomes in all ages, and to build sustainable and



cohesive communities, where people of all ages can flourish.

Too often intergenerational practice is considered a 'NICE' add-on to existing practices. This is a narrative that needs to change. Intergenerational practice should be deemed an 'ESSENTIAL' for upstream health policy, an essential practice within social care, an essential component of educational curriculum and an essential consideration in urban planning and development.

Why? Because intergenerational practice makes a difference in people's lives!

As in previous years, the SMSA will be celebrating our intergenerational stories and achievement and urge your Shed to do the same using the hashtag #GIW24

The Scottish Shedder (the official FREE magazine of the SMSA) promotes the latest news from Men's Sheds across Scotland to showcase their successes and challenges—in addition to highlighting projects, opportunities and personal stories—to inform and inspire Men's Shed volunteers across Scotland. Each issue is sent digitally to over 3,700 Individual Member subscribers and supporters of the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement.

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Submit a contribution to The Scottish Shedder Magazine
Next Issue Deadline: Friday 17th May 2024

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Support the Men's Sheds Movement in Scotland, follow the SMSA at:



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comms@scottishmsa.org.uk | www.scottishmsa.org.uk



TALKING SHEDS

by Jason Schroeder

Well, to say we have some news for you would be an understatement! This edition of The Scottish Shedder is totally bursting at the seams with updates and announcements from the SMSA and Scottish Sheds.

To keep abreast of these new developments, please ensure you get yourself a large cuppa and chat about the articles with your fellow Sheddors and trustees next time you're in the Shed as they might have missed it. We put a lot of work into each issue to keep our members informed on the key matters affecting the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement so if your Shed members and Trustees are not receiving the magazine, then please remind them that it is [free to join online](#) or use a join leaflet in your Shed to become an individual member of us. Our members receive a welcome pack, SMSA pin badge and the magazine straight to their inbox to enjoy at their leisure. Spread the word and help us grow the Scottish Shed family and the impact we have in creating a healthier way of life for so many across Scotland.

For the past year, we have diligently been creating a new internal digital support structure for our Shed members to have greater capacity and control over their information. We anticipated Scottish Government once again wanting to stop our core funding for the 2024/25 year after our successful 38 Degrees campaign and 40+ cross party MSP's signed our letter to the First Minister last year. So we have had to develop new technology to be able to continue our support to you with less staff and less core funding (Scot Gov accounted for 50% of our core funding). Unfortunately, despite our best efforts and many meetings they have decided to not financially support us in the new financial year.

Our new website and database will launch next month, fingers crossed. Shed Members, for the first time, will have their own online SMSA Shed account. In order to do this, the two Shed contact members who will update the Shed's profiles and [Find a Shed map](#) etc will also need to be

registered as individual members of us. Hence why we have asked for the new contact data form to have been completed and returned to us by the 25th March. Another big change will be to access all our research, policies etc in the online resource library will now only be available through your Shed member account. Individual members will have access to all past Scottish Shedder magazines once logged in. The majority of you already are recognised as members, however if you have not already done this, you can [sign up for free here](#).

Secondly, it is the launch of our [Survey on the Impact of Scottish Men's Sheds](#). Why is it so important for you to take five minutes to be involved and complete this form I hear you say? Well, this tool will not only aid the SMSA, as your national support hub, but will also provide Scottish Men's Sheds with statistics, reporting and analysis on the impact of the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement for the first time.

The questionnaire to be completed by the individuals that attend our member Sheds includes: the reasons why people attend; their personal experiences, thoughts and feelings on attending sessions; activities they voluntarily choose to take part in; and the impact it has on their life. The findings will also provide invaluable insight and guidance to the SMSA and Sheds on which areas we prioritise on and aid funding applications and strategies.

Next, we are delighted to announce a new partnership between the SMSA and [Morrison Construction](#). We are in the process of developing a memorandum of understanding with them for their superfluous building materials and anything else Sheds might need support with where they are building across Scotland. This not only supplies you with raw materials but keeps the carbon footprint down and out of land fill and helps your running and development costs. Watch this space.

We have had quite a few requests and interviews recently which is a part of the service we offer to other organisations who want to know about Scottish Men's Sheds and access our services. This included a very productive meeting with the CEO of Langstane Housing Association. As a result of this, we will provide them with leaflets for the many single men in their accommodations and they will

do some awareness training with their support team around what Sheds can offer and can't offer and use our animations as part of their training.

When the news broke of King Charles III's cancer diagnosis in early February, we were contacted by the media to promote the Men's Sheds Movement and the importance of men opening up to talk about their health issues and concerns and potentially save lives. Our Chairman David Gardner did a great job of conveying that message and encouraging men to check out their local Shed.

Other joint working includes supporting research requests with the University of Stirling, producing an awareness-raising video prepared for a new Unforgotten Forces training webinar and our Development Officer Tim Green delivered a SHARE webinar. I also met with Emma Law, the Strategic Manager for the Neuroprogressive and Dementia research network (NDN). [Click here for more info](#) and if relevant to you, please take a few moments to share your thoughts with them.

The SMSA and Scottish Sheds celebrated International Women's Day on the 8th March. See [page 18](#) for St Andrews Men's Shed's special tribute to three ladies instrumental in creating their Shed.

We are delighted to be working with Inverclyde Shed to create Social Prescribing guidance ([see page 5](#)) and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy for our Shed members will be available in April. This will be sent with your 2024/25 Shed member certificates to put into your SMSA Shed folder and available in the online Shed Resource Library.

Lastly, some more good news. After lots of hard work, Theatre Director and Writer Clare Prenton secured funding to tour ['Men Don't Talk'](#) play across Scotland in 2024. Some of us saw this pre Covid and loved it and now you can too. We will publish the tour dates and venues when we get them.

Spring is here, let's get to it!

Jason Schroeder
SMSA Chief Executive Officer





The new SWSA website has almost landed!

The SWSA has listened to members' feedback to deliver a cleaner, sleeker site with:

- 👍 Enriched content
- 👍 Enhanced members' area
- 👍 Brand new look
- 👍 Refined design & user features
- 👍 Polished payment & renewal process
- 👍 Boosted device compatibility & search engine ranking
- 👍 Improved Shed membership & map management system



KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR INBOX FOR LAUNCH DATE!

COMING TO A DEVICE NEAR YOU IN APRIL 2024

scottishmsa.org.uk

Figures as at end of February 2024

Survey: The Impact of Scottish Men's Sheds

Probably the most important consultation you will complete all year!

The SMSA has devised a [consultation](#) to measure the impact of Scottish Men's Sheds.

The survey will analyse Sheddors' personal experiences of the Shed model and ethos and evaluate some statements on the benefits to health and wellbeing.

This important research will not only support the SMSA to report on the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement but will also aid Scottish Sheds to share these findings with their local communities to attract and reach more men. The statistics will also

be key when applying for funds to promote the vital work taking place in Scottish Men's Sheds.

For the purpose of this vital project, the SMSA obtained a license from the internationally-recognised [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale](#) to enable the measuring of mental wellbeing and the evaluation of a project which aims to improve mental wellbeing.

Please take 5-10 minutes to complete the survey, you can remain anonymous if you prefer. Thank you in advance for your support for the SMSA and the Scottish Men's Sheds Movement.

[Click here to take our survey](#)



Social Prescribing: New Dual Guidance for Scottish Sheds and Social Prescribers

On the 14th March 2024 on Social Prescribing Day, the SMSA recognised and celebrated the impact Social Prescribing (SP) can have on people's health and wellbeing and the social prescribers, community groups and organisations championing this work in their local communities.

Social Prescribing to Men's Sheds can be life-changing for many in our communities but only if delivered correctly and if it is right for both parties. It is

important to stress that SP may not always be do-able in every Men's Shed.

To aid Scottish Men's Sheds to make an informed decision regarding the SP process and if it is the right path for them, the SMSA also announced, on Social Prescribing Day 2024, that the Association is working in co-production with The Inverclyde Shed on SP guidance for Sheds.

The new guidance will: explain SP and the opportunities; assess capacity - Shed size and ethos; explore better ways to work with link workers and social prescribers (through Shed visits, SP network meetings, communications and training); and manage the risk to help overcome the challenges of SP and the best practise way to tackle this.

The guidelines will also serve as a dual document which Sheds can share with their local doctors, health partners and professionals before they consider prescribing individuals to their local Men's Shed. Watch this space.



152

SMSA SHED MEMBERS

3,709

SMSA INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS



138

OPEN SHEDS

65

DEVELOPING/ PROPOSED SHEDS



32

LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS



UPDATE YOUR DETAILS WITH THE SMSA



New email address? Moved house?



Change of Office Bearers? New Chair?



Not sure if you are a member or not?

If any of your information has changed, don't forget to let us know

[Click here to notify the SMSA](#)

MOT4MEN

BODY TESTING STATION

A Tried-and-Tested Preventative Health MOT Initiative for Men

Tips and advice from the SMSA to keep your body and mind in great shape

Today's stark men's health statistics highlight the need to prioritise men's health and address male help-seeking behaviours.

The MOT4Men programme educates and informs on key men's health matters including diabetes screening, heart disease, alcohol, smoking, blood pressure and cancer (testicular, bowel, breast, prostate and skin) – enabling men to increase their awareness and prioritise their health needs.

Did you know?

- Men of working age visit the GP 50% less than working women
- 1 in 5 men will die before they are old enough to retire (age 65)
- Men are more likely to engage in risky behaviours, such as heavy alcohol use, and are more prone to poorer mental health and higher suicide rates

Electrics

Don't get your wires crossed—learn about the risk factors and ways to reduce your risk of diabetes

Fuel additives

Excessive alcohol intake can throw a spanner in the works. Find out how to run at optimal performance

Oil Level

Don't blow a gasket—discuss ways to keep your blood pressure healthy

Shock absorbers

Stress is a bumpy road—discuss coping skills and contributing factors to mental health issues

Timing belt

Be aware of the risk factors and symptoms of prostate cancer

Exhaust Fumes

Reasons to quit smoking

Manifold

Bowel cancer screening could save your life

Paintwork

Rust on your paintwork? Check your skin regularly

Spark Plugs

Keep your spark plugs firing—check your testicles



Scottish Men's Sheds, that are Shed Members of the SMSA, now have the opportunity to have this innovative men's preventative health programme delivered in their Shed FREE OF CHARGE as yet another benefit of membership with the national association. Sessions are delivered in the safe environment of the Shed and aim to develop a health and wellbeing culture in Scottish Men's Sheds by empowering Shed members to be open and talk about health matters whilst increasing their knowledge and control over their own health and determinants. The SMSA is fully licensed and trained to deliver MOT4Men and provide feedback and information in a way that does not constitute medical advice so that participants are encouraged to consult their own GP and seek further medical help or relevant professional services if required. Be well, stay well and support others through MOT4Men!

Click here to register interest



SMSA NEWS—DEVELOPMENT OFFICER UPDATE

Lively discussions at recent regional Men's Shed Network Meetings in Ayrshire, Lothians, Perth and Kinross, Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Aberdeen City /Aberdeenshire, Angus and Highlands and Islands include:

- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Safe operating including managing risk in relation to health conditions
- Sale by donation
- Energy costs and environmental sustainability
- Social prescribing opportunities and challenges
- Funding
- Inclusion
- Adult literacy
- The opportunities and challenges of intergenerational work with under 18s including Duke of Edinburgh and school refusers
- Dust extraction systems
- Talks and visits
- PAT testing
- Premises and Community Asset Transfer
- Innovative projects
- Community partnerships



I had the pleasure of attending a breakfast seminar organised by the [Highland Third Sector Interface](#) with [Morrison Construction](#). I met with Jim Johnstone, Head of Communities and Social Impact at Morrison Construction, who was extremely enthusiastic about doing what he could to support Men's Sheds. Morrison Construction can support Men's Sheds in two ways—by supplying superfluous building materials and occasionally infrastructure left over when tasks and projects have been completed. They also have volunteer time where Morrison staff can share their skills and expertise with Sheds. We will be getting a list of contacts across Scotland out to you soon.

In their Inverness Office I also met with Mia Keith, Community Engagement and Social Impact Officer, who is urging Sheds in Highland and Moray to contact her to explore how she can assist them. Morrison Construction's work at Dalmore Distillery in Alness is ending so there will be opportunities for the Sheds in that area.

Finechtly, Stonehaven, Inverness, Dunfermline, Forth Bridges, Bridge of Don, Men of Leith, Nairn, Musselburgh, Kirkmuirhill and Blackwood Men's Sheds have all expressed an interest in an [MOT4Men](#) preventative health session to be delivered by myself over a four-hour workshop with up to eight shedders at a time. The evaluations from the pilot workshops were positive with some participants intending to change their health behaviours and committing to seeking early diagnosis when risk factors and symptoms were identified.

Next month on the 9th April 2024, I will be delivering a presentation about the SMSA and Men's Sheds in a [webinar organised by Share](#)—a provider of cutting-edge learning and development solutions for senior officers and board members in the housing and property sector. I am also looking forward to making presentations and manning a stall at Cowcaddens Fire Station to promote Men's Sheds to Scottish Fire and Rescue Service personnel.

Tim Green, SMSA Development Officer

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Regional Shed Network Meetings 2024

Fife Men's Shed Network will take place at Dunfermline Men's Shed Monday 13th May 2024 from 11.30am. The next round of Men's Shed Network Meetings is in the process of being organised. Keep an eye on the [SMSA website](#).

If you wish to attend a regional Shed Network meeting in your area, please contact Tim Green, SMSA Development Officer on 07493361003 or email Dev1@scottishmsa.org.uk



Get Saving with Axminster!

As a benefit of Shed Membership of the Scottish Men's Sheds Association (SMSA), Sheds are entitled to a **10% discount** through the national association's partnership with Axminster, a market leader in the tools and machinery industry.

The SMSA aims to support Scottish Men's Shed to sustainability. This membership benefit saves Sheds money when buying new or replacing machines from one of the UK's biggest tool providers.

1 APPLY...



To access these savings, Shed members must email admin@scottishmsa.org.uk in the first instance to set up an exclusive SMSA/Axminster account. The SMSA will then provide you with a link to the online application form to action this.

2 SHOP...



Once the application is submitted and approved, the Axminster team will create a Shed account which entitles most Shed purchases to the discount. *All 10% discounted ordering must be done via email or over the phone (*does not apply to online orders*).

3 SAVE...



Whilst the 10% discount applies to the 'Shed' rather than 'Shedders', if the Shed is happy to manage orders from its members, then those orders can be placed through the Shed account so your members can benefit too!

Important terms, conditions and exclusions for Sheds:

**Exemptions: Products that are already on promotion and the following branded power tools—Bosch; Makita; Festool; and DeWalt—are excluded from the discount*

Delivery: Axminster's quality delivery service is free for orders over £75 to Standard UK Mainland (a premium next-day delivery is also available at an additional cost). Larger items and delivery to UK Remote & Offshore may require a specialist carrier service and custom quotation so please discuss this with a member of the Axminster sales team prior to purchasing

SIGN UP TO THE AXMINSTER EMAIL CLUB

- Join the conversation and share your passion with like-minded woodworkers
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- Receive details about upcoming Axminster events and store demonstrations direct to your inbox

axminstertools.com/email-club

SHED IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Livingston
Community Shed



The SMSA takes a peek inside the doors of [Livingston Community Shed](#) in West Lothian which has flourished over the last year and just recently signed a ten-year community lease for the South Barn Garden at Carmondean Community Centre. Shed Chairman David Piper shares their blooming success so far.

David said: “Livingston Community Shed (LCS) is situated in Livingston in West Lothian with a base at Carmondean Community Centre and a workshop at Mosswood Community Centre in Knightsridge.

“LCS is run under the guidance of five trustees, but run on a democratic basis, with all major decisions being put to all members.

“We began our journey back in 2022 when local church café manager Norma Brown noticed four rather lonely men sitting in her café and suggested a Men’s Shed might be just what the doctor ordered.

“The Shed officially launched in October 2022 and its membership since then has tripled. Now standing at 27 members and counting—with an age dynamic of between 40 and 86 years young— there are 12 members who are active on a regular basis.

“LCS is open on Mondays and Fridays at Carmondean Community Cafe, where the focus, apart from the excellent bacon rolls and home bakes, is on the banter and having a laugh.

“On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the Shed is open at our Mosswood workshop from 10am-2pm, with extended hours during the summer months, where we undertake woodwork, photography and garden maintenance.

“During our first year, the projects were restricted as the Shed did not have a workshop. So, we concentrated on garden projects for both local community members and some local care homes and community centre gardens which had been left to overgrowth.

“These were soon cleared and brought back to life with new plants and LCS now has a maintenance role in keeping these spaces tidy for the local communities to enjoy.

Continued on next page...



SHED IN THE SPOTLIGHT (Continued)



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“In June 2023, LCS acquired the use of a 20ft x 8ft container at Mosswood, Knightsridge area of Livingston which we have transformed into a woodwork workshop. Since acquiring this unit, it has been possible to add woodwork projects to the list of projects we undertake.

“We have refurbished several garden benches and remodelled a covered BBQ space at Mosswood. We have taken on some upcycling and refurbishment of furniture for community members and have recently been asked to construct scenery for a local panto performance and are assisting one of the local special needs schools to erect a poly tunnel and some raised beds so that the children can grow plants.

“Last year, our Shed entered the [2023 ‘Helping Your Community Grow’](#) competition through Dobbies Garden Centre and were delighted to win £1,000 of garden equipment. We also applied for and were awarded a grant from the [National Lottery Community Fund](#) which will assist with the complete refurbishment of Carmondean South Barn Garden.

“Various local authority grants have allowed us to expand our workshop and construct three garden sheds. We do not charge our members a joining fee, it is completely free to attend and several local residents support our efforts through the donation of tools and items of furniture to refurbish and sell for funds to keep us running.

“Our Shed has also recently been awarded a grant of £10,000 from West Lothian Council to help deliver mental health support to younger people in conjunction with Youth and community project, [Vennie Knightsridge](#).

“LCS has its own WhatsApp group for informal chats and the exchange of ideas amongst our members. We also have weekly meetings to which all Shedders are invited, and this keeps everyone updated with what is happening and of any projects or grants we have ongoing.

“The Shed has had a huge impact on the lives of its members. In conversations, many of our Shedders tell us that the social inclusion and camaraderie they gain from

participating in Shed activities is a major part of their daily life now.

“Strong bonds have developed, and members do look out for one another and provide help and assistance to any member who has a problem. The participation in projects provides a strong link that encourages and promotes members to be involved in community related projects that provide further aspects of social inclusion for our older members.

“Long-term, our Shed has a bright future ahead as we have become well known and respected by other organisations and council bodies who see us as a good example of what can be achieved when a group of people come together to do things that support the local community.

“Earlier this year, LCS formally signed a 10-year community lease for the South Barn Garden at Carmondean Community Centre. The garden area has not been tended for over 28 years and it provides the Shed with the challenge of restoring it to a functioning space for the local community.

“This is a long-term project as the large space currently resembles a very overgrown jungle which we intend to convert into a community garden with growing poly-tunnels and raised beds for the production of trees and plants to help the environment.”

Follow Livingston Community Shed’s activities through their [website](#) (currently being developed) and [Facebook page](#).





Caledonia, you're calling me and now I'm going to the Shed!

Men who join Men's Sheds come from all walks of life—even a singer-songwriter, composer, multi-instrumentalist and record producer famous for a well-known anthem of Scottish pride!

Dougie MacLean OBE, who wrote the song Caledonia—dedicated to his homeland and a firm favourite for generations—became a member of **Stanley Men's Shed** last month.

Described as 'one of Scotland's premier singer-songwriters', Dougie has performed both under his own name and as part of multiple folk bands since the mid-1970s. The song, Caledonia, was written in just 10 minutes when he was in his early 20s and laying on a beach in France.

After a chance meeting outside Stanley Men's Shed, Dougie is now sharing his passion for restoration with his fellow Shed members.



It was a chance meeting that brought Dougie to the Shed. Alex Cockburn from Stanley Men's Shed said: "I saw a man standing at the door, I didn't recognise Dougie as he was wearing a hat and glasses at the time. I invited the gentleman in to show him what the Shed was all about and he took me up on the offer.

"Dougie spotted a refurbished spade and fork that we had worked on and wanted to reserve them and come back with the money. So, I asked for a name to reserve the items and was flabbergasted when he told me and I, of course, asked if he was going to start singing Caledonia.

"We started chatting and he spent a good wee while telling us about the 30 Singer sewing machines that he is working on at home and would be keen to get into this at the Shed. He also saw our beehive and shared that he is a keen beekeeper with six beehives. Right there and then, he signed up as a new Shed member and is a fantastic addition to our Shed.

"Whilst Dougie is a very busy man with all of his concerts, tours and festivals, he still comes to the Shed once a week and loves socialising with the other members. He thinks that the Men's Shed model is fantastic and just the ticket."



Dougie MacLean sings 'Caledonia'



Inverness Men's Shed marks tenth year

Inverness Men's Shed Chairman Murdo MacIver reflects on their Shed journey so far as they mark their tenth year.

Murdo said: "Enthused by the success of the first Scottish Men's Shed—Westhill & District Men's Shed—and a visit to check out their facilities and speak to their members and trustees, our Founder and first Chairman Alan Michael was determined to open a Shed in Inverness and on the 14th February 2014, we proudly opened our Shed doors.

"As with all Sheds, the first serious challenge was to find suitable accommodation, hopefully free—which was extremely optimistic of us for such a busy city like Inverness—or at least at an affordable price.

"Alan worked tirelessly on every possibility before settling on a commercially rented property on Gordon Terrace. It was by no means ideal but, if we wanted to open at all, it was our best option at the time.

"We will always be grateful to Alan for his leadership in the face of much early discouragement and for carrying through with his vision. Pre-opening, our key focus was on fundraising (as it still is) and the Shed opened on a reasonably sound financial footing. But with the burden of the annual rent, plus all the other running costs, there were times of considerable financial pressure and costs were gradually becoming unsustainable.

"Another, perhaps more important, pressure became increasingly apparent as membership grew and the limitations of space impacted severely on our ability to provide the range and quality of activities which we wanted to provide. In 2018, as a result of the Shed's growing popularity, we were once again in full search mode for suitable premises.

"Still at the helm, Alan followed up leads on 15 other properties and engaged in many ultimately fruitless hours of discussion with interested, and some disinterested, parties. Our aim was to alleviate the financial burden and to have more space for our members. At the same time, we refocused on our fundraising efforts, trying to build up as much of a financial cushion as possible in anticipation of future requirements.



"Eventually, a breakthrough came. The rebuilding of Millburn Academy under the PPI scheme was now complete and there was a sports pavilion on their grounds which was now empty and it was clearly not part of the developer's plan."

Continued on next page...

Pictured top: Popular members' meetings become crowded at the Shed's original premises on Gordon Street

Pictured left: the Shed's current premises in the former Millburn Academy sports pavilion on Victoria Drive

Inverness Men's Shed marks tenth year (continued)

...continued from previous page

Murdo continued: "An initial approach from us was not at all encouraging but we persevered and a second meeting was much more positive.

"Our conversations led to a formal engagement with Highland Council staff and officials who assisted us to take forward an application under the Transfer of Asset scheme. We also engaged with our own legal representative to protect our interests during the negotiations.

"This led in due course to the signing of a 99-year lease with our local authority for a nominal annual fee. We now had a building with lots of space and none of the financial burden of rent. The first part of our mission was accomplished.

"Ahead of us were the financial and project management challenges which we had anticipated. Bills would roll in for legal costs, for the extensive groundworks costs and for significant refurbishment costs.

"We were confident that we had sufficient funds in place or nearly so. We were also confident that within the group we had the necessary experience and the specific skills required to manage the project.

"And then, just to complicate matters and challenge us further, we turned the corner to face COVID. However, albeit at a much slower pace than we had envisaged, we proceeded with our plans.

"Though we had engaged contractors for some key areas of work, a huge contribution was made by a core group of members who came on site working within the limitations of the restrictions in place at the time.

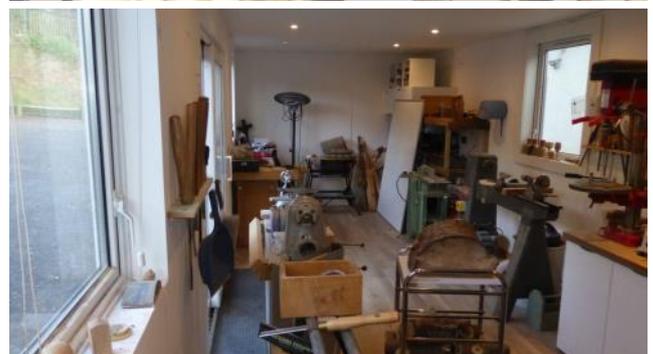
"Their commitment, skills and unpaid labour over many many months greatly reduced our costs and eased any financial nervousness we may have had.

"Building Control inspections were, in due course, followed by final certification and at last a formal opening of the completely refurbished Pavilion took place on the 22nd February 2022.

"Additional space was added when we accepted an offer of a surplus portakabin from a local housebuilding company and it now houses our woodturning lathes. It sits beside the Pavilion and the gap between them has been covered creating a very useful outside working area.

"We have come a very long way in our ten years and, as we now celebrate our anniversary, we can say with confidence that our finances remain sound and that the Pavilion is a quality facility of which members can be and are proud.

"Visit our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for details and on our programme of activities which range from the practical to the purely social. Our Shed is open to all from 9.30am— 1.00pm, Monday to Friday."



Pictured (top to bottom): member facilities and activities at the Inverness Men's Shed premises in the Millburn Academy pavilion on Victoria Drive



Inverclyde Shed inspires green-fingered kids

The Inverclyde Shed has been working with Larkfield Youth Connections on an intergenerational gardening project—funded through Impact Funding Partners—to inspire the next generation to get outside in the fresh air, roll up their sleeves and get growing and learning together!

Bruce Newlands from The Inverclyde Shed said: “Larkfield Youth Connections sits in the heart of one of the most deprived areas in Scotland. They have been providing community engagement and youth work activities for over 25 years with widespread support from agencies, groups and schools. The Youth Connections board is led by young people and supported by sympathetic adults.

“Last year, Youth Connections approached our Shed to work with them on setting up a small community orchard and garden in Larkfield in Greenock to give young and old locals who attend the centre the chance to engage with outdoor working, growing their own and cooking with the produce.

“We brought our knowledge and experience of ‘no dig’ gardening from our community gardens to their site, helping them establish a heritage apple tree orchard and quickly turn a small area of amenity grass into ‘no dig’ beds for growing vegetables. Volunteers from Youth Connections help maintain the garden with assistance from The Inverclyde Shed’s volunteer gardeners and grow tatties, onions, leeks, shallots, garlic, cabbage, beans, cauliflower, beetroot, peas, broccoli, brussels, kale and strawberries. We have also started making compost using some waste streams from the centre.

What is the ‘no dig’ concept?

A no dig garden is a growing method which feeds your soil, helps control weeds and saves your back in the process. You simply add layers of nitrogen- and carbon-rich materials in which to grow your plants in. These layers break down over time to create a rich growing environment above the soil.

“The garden has sparked keen interest from local people passing by, enquiring about ‘no dig’ and how they might do it at home, how to make compost and queries about growing their own vegetables. The produce from the garden is shared by the centre alongside their community fridge so that local people can access fresh, local grown vegetables.

“We also recently supported Aileymill Primary School with their community garden with a ten tree heritage apple orchard, raised planters, growing frames and tattie bags all ready for the growing season. Leeks were transplanted and red baron and giant sturon onion sets sown. St Andrews Primary School’s community garden also received a new growing space with a ten tree apple orchard.”





Clyde Coast & Cumbraes Men's Shed celebrate one hell of a first year!

Clyde Coast & Cumbraes Men's Shed held its first anniversary celebrations—a milestone event recognised by a [motion in UK Parliament](#)—on Saturday 2nd March 2024 and what a year it's been!

Members and supporters of the Largs-based Shed, including SMSA Chairman David Gardner, gathered for the event and were treated to a nice spread alongside some entertainment and an opportunity to tour the premises and check out the projects.

North Ayrshire Provost Anthea Dickson, who supported the Shed to open last March, also returned for the celebrations and to see the progress made over the last twelve months.

Shed Chairman Ian Murdoch said: "To think that we only held two information days last February, which were extremely well attended and successful, and to see how far we have come in just one year is extraordinary.

"We are overwhelmed by the support shown for the Shed. We truly have a fantastic group of members. Membership

now sits at a staggering 88 ranging in age from 18 to 93 from West Kilbride, Fairlie, Skelmorlie, Cumbrae and Largs. I could not wish to work with a better group of trustees and members—it is an absolute pleasure working with them.

"I have watched every single member work hard, work together, support each other and represent the Shed in a magnificent way over the last year. Some with health issues and some with wellbeing concerns or suffering from social isolation. This just proves that the Men's Shed works! I know this one does!"

"This just proves that Men's Sheds work! I know this one does!"

"Recently, we have been delighted to be part of a very exciting intergenerational project and have had two visits from the [Boys Brigade](#)—to share our skills, knowledge and wisdom with the 'next generation' and show them what a Men's Shed does. Last month, we also hosted our first collaboration evening with the [Largs Scottish Women's Institute](#) (pictured below). Both of these initiatives have been a huge success and we plan to continue with these collaborations in the future and look forward to their next visits."

Check out the next issue of The Scottish Shedder where Clyde Coast & Cumbraes Men's Shed will share their full journey in our 'Shed in the Spotlight' feature.





Surprise at Inverurie Men’s Shed’s ‘Soup Wednesday’

Over the cold winter months, [Inverurie & District Men’s Shed \(IDMS\)](#) held ‘Soup Wednesdays’ where members take it in turns to make heartwarming pots of soup—utilising produce from their community allotments—to share with hungry Shedders. They were recently ‘tractor down’ whilst tucking into their recent feast to receive a very welcome surprise.

IDMS Chairman Alex Smith said: “Following the storm damage to our Shed roof, ‘Soup Wednesday’ had to be moved to our summer house at our allotments.

“Whilst enjoying a recent gathering of the members over a delicious bowl of homemade soup with a side of banter, we were delighted to see Morven Mathers and Gladys Thomson from [Inverurie Events](#) pop-by the allotments with a lovely surprise for the lads.

“The Shed had taken part in the [Inverurie Tractor Run](#), a festive fundraiser on the 16th December 2023 with 25 tractors and fire engines adorned with lights and decorations which went on a tour of Inverurie for our community to enjoy. We also loaned the organisers various old fairground type games for the event. To show their appreciation, the ladies generously presented us with a cheque for £325—part of the proceeds from their fundraising.”

Pictured (top to bottom): the Inverurie Tractor Run (photo by [Market Ethically](#)); the cheque presentation at the allotment shed; and IDMS Shedder Henry (Worzel) Wilson with the Shed’s trusty tractor ‘Elvis’ ready to take part in the tractor run.

[Check out](#) more photos from the Tractor Run here.



Winter Warmer Tuesdays are a big hit at Milngavie and Bearsden Shed!

The Milngavie and Bearsden Shedders have been cooking up a storm and tucking in of late as their Tuesday 'Winter Warmer' lunches continue.

Last month on Shrove Tuesday, the Shed enjoyed pancakes, fruit, bacon and maple syrup. Stephen and Bobby prepared the pancakes outside in the gazebo while John R prepared the bacon inside—a very tasty treat.

Member David R followed suit the next Tuesday with traditional Scottish stovies and fellow Shedder Craig accompanied them with apple crumble and custard. Member Charles then prepared steak bake, chips and beans while Craig added delicious cake and custard.

On the first Tuesday of this month, Sandy made 'the best soup in the world' (gluten free) and members were warned to not be late to avoid disappointment. Member Charan supplied authentic pakora from his shop in Milngavie and a soup and a sweet.

Not only are the Shedders enjoying fantastic food in great company, they are also sharing their culinary skills and family recipes with friends and fellow Shedders to try out themselves at home.



Community Regeneration funding awarded to Glen Urquhart Shed

Glen Urquhart Men's Shed has received a funding boost of £10,000 to refurbish their workshop and office through the Community Regeneration Fund.

The Shed was one of twelve community projects in the Inverness Area that were successful for the £475,773 pot.

Leader of Inverness and Area, Councillor Ian Brown said: "I am delighted that we have been able to approve a

dozen key projects and activities in the area that meet the focus of the funding criteria which is aimed at enabling economic recovery, regeneration, and community resilience.

"There is a diverse range of successful community applications covering age ranges, indoor and outdoor activities and cultural and sporting groups to name but a few."

Community Regeneration Funding is an umbrella term for several funds that are available for communities/ organisations to access in Highland.

It comprises elements of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund along with the Highland Coastal Communities Fund and the Place Based Investment Programme, both of which are Scottish Government Funding streams to support economic regeneration and sustainable development in Highland.

Recognising and celebrating the women behind Men's Sheds

On International Women's Day earlier this month, ***St Andrews Men's Shed***—along with many other Scottish Sheds—took the time to recognise and thank the women that support Men's Sheds.

The St Andrews Sheddors paid special tribute to three lovely ladies from St Andrews who are responsible for the formation of their Shed.

From the beginning back in 2016, Melanie McGill, an Occupational Therapist at NHS Forth Valley, Jill Hewitt, Express Group Organiser and Cath Carter, Parish Nurse at the charity Pilgrim Care, all realised the need for a space for local men to meet and talk to other men that was not the pub or the bookies.

Shed Chairman Henry Paul said: "I believe that a female care worker called Maxine Chaseling was instrumental in setting up the first-ever Men's Shed in Goolwa, South Australia in 1993 as she wanted something for her father to do as he began sinking into depression after having to give up work following a heart attack.



Pictured (left to right): Melanie McGill, Jill Hewitt and Cath Carter

"Three decades on from Maxine's efforts, St Andrews Men's Shed wishes to thank the three ladies that helped us. These women recognised the need for a place where men could feel a sense of worth, make new friends, pass on/ learn new skills etc. Their vision and support helped establish what is now, a thriving hub for men in St Andrews."

SMSA CEO Jason Schroeder said: "It is often the case that women can see the need for the men in their lives and men in their communities and in so doing start the ball rolling to achieve an excellent life-enhancing and saving healthy place for men to socialise with a purpose and become a part of their community. The SMSA welcomes all men and women over the age of 18 who support men's health to ***join us for free and become an individual member of the SMSA*** to keep connected to the 10,000+ supporters of the Scottish Men's Sheds movement."

The Men of Leith Sheddars engage with the Neuroprogressive and Dementia Network to aid research

Dementia is one of the foremost public health challenges worldwide with numbers expected to double between 2011 and 2031. To advance understanding of the disease and new treatments, inter-disciplinary research is crucial. The [Neuroprogressive and Dementia Network \(NDN\)](#) aims to involve and support people with lived experience of neuroprogressive conditions or dementia to help shape future research studies. NDN Clinical Studies Officer Bernie McNally shares his recent engagement with The Men of Leith Men's Shed in a hope that more Men's Sheds will get on board.

Bernie said: "As a 'veteran' community psychiatric nurse (CPN) working in mental health predominantly with older adults for 25 years, I needed no convincing of the health benefits of the Men's Shed model.

"Before retirement, with my CPN hat on, I had directed many of my patients towards their local Men's Shed and, without exception, the rewards for these individuals were often much greater than any medical treatment or drugs I could prescribe.

"I therefore welcomed the opportunity to attend [The Men of Leith Men's Shed](#), based in the heart of the Newhaven Community, with the purpose of spreading the word about the Neuroprogressive and Dementia Research Network Scotland (quite a mouthful, so let's just call it NDN for short) and the benefits of being involved with all its associated teams and affiliates.

"On arrival I was welcomed by Ed (Robertson) who helped arrange my visit and I was quickly welcomed into the group. My official talk was due to take place after lunch, although I had been warned that they 'did not take Powerpoint well' which suited me to a tee.

"Although the NDN's main target audience is those suffering from memory problems, dementia and other neuroprogressive conditions such as Parkinson's disease and this is not the 'main' group who attend the Men's Shed, very quickly into the conversations it was confirmed not only do people with memory problems attend but many are carers for spouses who fit our remit or have family members who suffer from cognitive decline.

"Our conversations also highlighted the concern that exists for folk's own cognition with questions being asked around forgetfulness as they themselves get older.

Pictured: Bernie (sitting down, second on the left) engaging with a group of the Men's Shed of Leith members

"Throughout my talk I felt it was important to get the basics across that research involvement is wide and varied and can include most people. Those suffering from the conditions, and their families/carers, can contribute by completing surveys right up to involvement in clinical drug trials and the best gateway to these is through us, the NDN by signing up through our '[Permission to Contact](#)' (PTC) form (QR code above). Those who have concerns about their memory but have had no formal diagnosis can also sign up to PTC.



"We also recommend registering with [Join Dementia Research](#) through Alzheimer's Scotland and for those with a dementia diagnosis to consider the [Alzheimer Scotland Brain Tissue Donation](#). It's also important to have the man on the streets' (or in the Men's Shed in this case) views and those who have an interest can be involved by contacting [Partners in Research](#) or email TAY.ppipartners@nhs.scot.

"Although those in care homes can be involved in all the areas mentioned, it is recognised that research within care homes deserves more attention and [ENRICH Scotland](#) (Enabling Research in Care Homes) was established for this exact purpose.

"Although this is a register of care homes who wish to be involved in research, [Research in Care Homes \(RICH\) Voices](#), just like [Partners in Research](#) previously mentioned require 'the layman' such as residents, staff, family members who have care home experience and can advise on areas such as document wording and leaflet design.

"I would like to thank the Men of Leith Men's Shed for taking up their time, as well as the Asda daily breakfast sandwich, and hope they at least came away a little more knowledgeable about dementia research."

Everyone should have the opportunity to access and take part in research if they wish to do so. The [Neuroprogressive and Dementia Network \(NDN\)](#) can provide information on research across Scotland via their newsletter and/or one of their team can come along to your Men's Shed to talk to your members. The NDN do not charge for their services and are funded by the Scottish Government.



It's all uphill from here for Lowther & District Men's Shed!

Ever since their successful community meeting in early 2023, Lowther & District Men's Shed (LDMS) have been all wrapped-up with their vision to repurpose a former hilltop ski club building and move it five miles to a new designated site to create their Shed home in the centre of the rural village of Leadhills, South Lanarkshire.

LDMS Secretary Nigel Davies said: "It has been an extremely busy first year since three men from Leadhills—myself, Bob (Chairperson) and George —got together to begin this journey and since then it has been 'heads down, let's go'.

"We heard through the grapevine that a 20m x 5.5m building—2,500ft near the top of Lowther Hill and previously owned by the Lowther Ski Club—was going to become available. We quickly met with Donald Noble, Factor of Hopetoun Estates, and Martin Docherty, Director of the ski club in Wanlockhead, and were given the go ahead. Not only were we gifted the redundant clubhouse, we also received permission to site the Shed next to the telecom building on Ramsay Road in Leadhills. We are extremely thankful to Lord Andrew Hopetoun for fully backing the project from day one and giving us a fantastic parcel of land in the centre of the village with such good access.

"We got all our ducks in a row—formed an excellent and extremely supportive committee and began meeting in my garage. We became a registered charity, got our constitution in place, set up our bank account and then began fundraising towards our ambitious plans.

"We were kept busy working on initial sketches, keeping everyone updated on our [website](#) and liaising with our Architect, Scottish Power, Scottish Water and South Lanarkshire Council's Planning Department. We have been fortunate to have so much support for our vision. Paul Creechan, Men's Shed Development Worker at South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) has been a huge help and assisted us along what could have been a very bumpy road. David Mundell MP and his office also carried out lots of groundwork regarding our application for Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE) funding.

"We are delighted to have been successful with several key funders including the Leadhills Community Council micro grant, The Robertson Trust, the National Lottery Community Fund, another micro grant application from the windfarm through Wanlockhead Community Council and more recently, the Community Led Local Development Fund.

"Scottish Power has been extremely helpful and agreed to move the overhead power lines running across the proposed Shed site to a new underground route at no cost to the charity. We have also been promoting the Shed locally and at community events including Hopetoun Estates' district roadshows. We have been



Pictured (top to bottom): the first LDMS Committee meeting in the Shed Secretary's garage; the ski club building; and the new Shed site in the centre of the village.

delighted with the response—with a great deal of interest and support shown for the project and new members signing up.

"With the winter months now coming to an end, the project can proceed to dismantling the ski club building up Lowther Hill and then re-erect it in the village.

"We have all worked so hard to get to this stage. We have signed the heads of terms with Hopetoun Estates and are now working towards a full 25-year lease. Our architect Amy Knowels-Brown from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has placed planning with SLC and we have even been gifted a trailer, tools and equipment to get us started. The future certainly looks good for LDMS, it's all uphill from here and we are right on track to complete the project and open our Shed by Autumn 2024."

It's all go at Carluke Men's Shed

The members of [Carluke Men's Shed](#) (CMS) have been busy bees as always with woodworking classes, a school careers fayre, social events, partnership working, fundraising and much much more.

Shed Treasurer Tom Kennedy said: "On Saturday 26th January 2024, our members along with partners had a great time celebrating a belated Burns Dinner in our local golf club.

"A few days later, we had a return visit to St Andrew's Church Women's Guild in Carluke on Thursday 1st February 2024. It was also great to see our friends from [Stonehouse Men's Shed](#) there and listen to the performance from their music group, 'Simply Shed'.

"On Saturday 3rd February 2024, we had another successful bucket collection at Motherwell's Fir Park Stadium before the home match against Kilmarnock. We were delighted to raise a three figure sum towards Shed funds.

"Kirsty Whitehead, Ray Elliott and Simon Fuller from Shotts Men's Shed visited our Shed and we all had a really great chinwag for almost two hours and also showed them around our woodworking cabin and facilities. We welcomed them back anytime and look forward to visiting their Shed in the not too distant future. That is a promise.

"CMS Members Gerry Howley and my wife Wendy were invited to attend the Carluke High School Careers Fayre on Thursday 15th February 2024. This was a fantastic opportunity for us to meet many of the pupils—the next generation—and their parents to let them know exactly how we continue to get involved within the local Carluke community and help where we can.

"Wendy and I, for the fifth year in a row, will be 'walking the walk' at the [Kiltwalk](#) at Balloch, Loch Lomond on Sunday 28th April 2024 to raise funds for the Shed. If you wish to support the Shed and donate, please do so through our [JustGiving page](#). Every penny counts towards our cause.

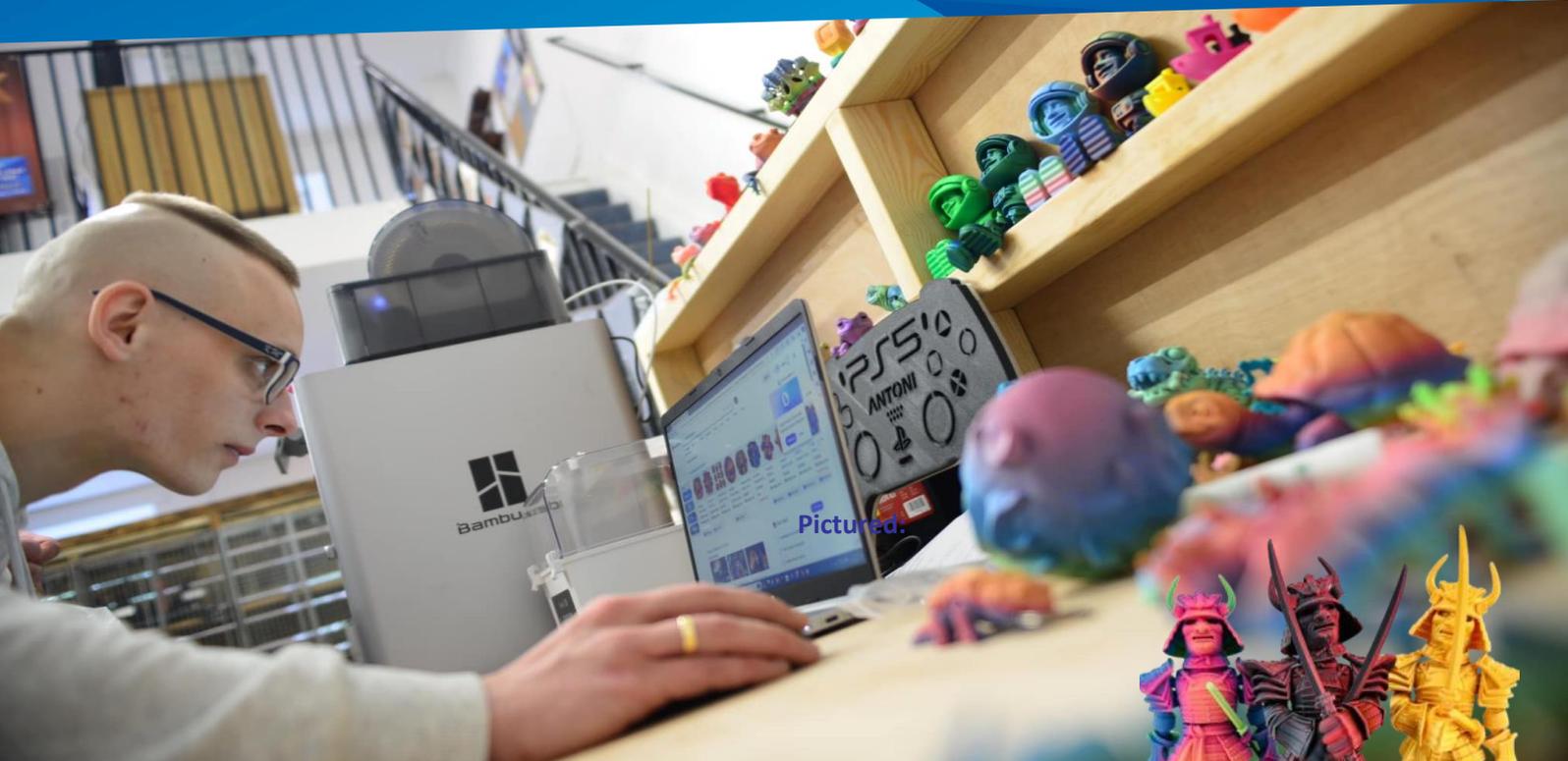
"In between all of our awareness-raising, partnership and community events, we have also been busy with our projects. We are currently in the process of liaising with the High Mill Primary School to procure the required materials—treated wood, screws, wood stain etc—to enable Carluke Men's Shed to build a replacement boat and sandpit for Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) for the young learners at the school.

"And our plans certainly won't stop there. As per our slogan—it is always onwards and upwards at Carluke Men's Shed and always more to come."

Pictured (top to bottom): Kirsty, Ray and Simon from Shotts Men's Shed visit CMS; popular CMS wood turning classes; bucket collection at Motherwell's Fir Park Stadium; Gerry, Wendy and Tom at the school Careers Fayre; CMS Burns Dinner; and CMS at St Andrews Parish Church Women's Guild.



A PERSONAL STORY



Pictured:

The SMSA interviews Krzysztof Malkowski (33) from Lanark Men's Shed (LMS) who is mentoring his fellow members on the creative world of 3D printing.

Krzysztof moved with his family to Scotland from Poland eight years ago and of late has been heading to the Shed every fortnight to deliver training to a group of his fellow members (age 50+) to share his skills and knowledge on how to unlock the true creative potential of 3D printing by making robust and visually interactive articulated prints and creations to sell to raise funds for the Shed.

Krzysztof said: "I always felt like all the people around me had fantastic hobbies and here I was, still looking for an interest to really grab my attention.

"Then, two years ago, I started to learn about 3D printing and I have been hooked ever since. I bought my first 3D printer in December 2022 and get to explore computer programming and the design side and creating something that I am passionate about.

"It took around three months to teach myself what I needed to know to get started and I did a lot of research



and watched a lot of YouTube videos. It was exciting to learn a new skill and do something just for me in my spare time. It doesn't always go to plan mind you but I also love the tinkering side and perfecting the design to get it just right.

"After six months, I felt fully confident and purchased the necessary licenses to sell some of my items commercially. In November 2023, I started selling at the Chatelherault Market which showcases some of the best hand-made products across Scotland.

"Then I met Alan Ross—the extremely passionate Chairman of Lanark Men's Shed. I didn't know about Sheds prior to meeting Alan. Now I can see the impact they make, I so wish the concept was as advanced in Poland as it is here in Scotland for the retired and lonely to go to benefit their health and wellbeing.

"Alan told me that the Shed members would be interested in learning how to use a 3D printer. The Shed had secured funding to purchase one and asked for my recommendation on which one to buy. They bought the top-notch model that I suggested and I went along to set it all up and show it in action.

"I was totally blown away the first time I met the members and ended up coming out of the Shed with more energy than I went in with. I was so impressed that I signed up as a member and offered to share my passion by mentoring my peers on my day off work—every second Friday.

"There is just so much enthusiasm from the members—they are just amazing to be around. Now, when I am at the Sunday markets, I am telling everybody and anybody that will listen about the Men's Shed and how great it is.

Continued on next page...

A PERSONAL STORY (CONTINUED)

Krzysztof with LMS
Chairman Alan Ross



...continued from previous page

"I am hoping to share what I know with as many of the Sheddors as possible. Life at the moment is PRINT, SLEEP & REPEAT but I am just loving it and wouldn't have it any other way."

Shed Chairman Alan Ross added: "Krzysztof is bringing great energy to the Shed. The Shed members are now producing magnificent 3D items including astronauts, dinosaurs, teddy bears, frogs, HMS Vanguard Class Nuclear Submarines and PS5 wall lamps that can be personalised with individuals' names."

"Our printer is the Bambu Lab X1-Carbon Combo 3D Printer and the quality is astounding. It is running like a dream. The items are not plastic, they are printed using polylactic acid (PLA) which is made from the sugar in corn starch. Not only is it easier to

work with, it is also biodegradable and does not emit as many particles as other materials.

"These superb items make fantastic quirky gifts available for sale at the Shed or to pre-order. The members are learning a new skill whilst raising funds for the Shed, but most importantly they are thoroughly enjoying it. The possibilities for items on sale from the Shed are endless with multi-material and multi-colour options to bring creative ideas to life."

Krzysztof concluded: "I am just buzzing when I walk out of that Shed. The impact it is having is mind-blowing and I get butterflies of excitement on my way there every time. Long may it continue."

Check out more of Krzysztof's creations on [Facebook](#) and [TikTok](#).



SHED PROJECTS



Its projects galore at Ellon Men's Shed!

Ellon and District Men's Shed is offering a diverse range of projects and activities to its members to appeal to as many members as possible whilst also attracting new.

Andy Leonard from Ellon Men's Shed said: "With signs of spring popping up all around, the Shed is gearing up for more outdoor projects. Our petanque piste will have its surface 'dressed' and we are looking forward to forming a petanque/boule 'club' for the members.

"The polytunnel and greenhouses will be readied for the main growing season and the members will also be making bird boxes, bird feeders and garden planters. As well as refurbishing garden furniture and bikes, we often get some unusual requests. A recent highlight was a vintage 1960s Triang metal child's pedal car (pictured). It was in a very sorry state but now looks like new again! We get a kick out of making or transforming one-off

items to help people out. Other unique projects include creating wooden playing card holders to help a lad who can't hold cards in his hands, a cart to be pulled by a very large dog and we have also recently produced frames to hold winter tee mats for Ellon golf club.

"We have also been busy of late replacing the dust extraction system in the workshop to ensure we have as much of a dust-free atmosphere as possible. The IT training initiative with Aberdeenshire Council's Community Learning and Development team is also proving popular each week. The drop-in sessions (open to all) take place on Thursdays from 1.00pm-2.30pm and a few of our members are working towards their SVQ qualifications so they can carry on and expand the training to others in the community.

"We are also liaising with the [Rotary Club of Ellon](#) for some of the men to be trained and receive certification in bike maintenance. The training programme to use the CNC router is continuing and we are making chopping boards, plaques, house signs etc. to order to raise funds.

"We offer a mixed bag of hobbies and activities to appeal to as many people as possible. It is important to stress however that whilst we welcome those who want to get stuck into the workshop or garden, we also wish to attract those who cannot or do not want to undertake projects and just want to come along to socialise, play cards, browse the internet or read a book."

Ellon and District Men's Shed will be holding an open day on Saturday 11th May 2024 from 11am-3pm. All welcome. Follow the Shed on [Facebook](#) and check their [website](#) for their latest news and projects.

Lanark Men's Shed stands up to cancer

Lanark Men's Shed takes great pride in being part of a novel art project as they were approached to create stands to showcase beautiful cancer tapestries designed by artist [Andrew Crummy MBE](#) at an exhibition launch marking [World Cancer Day](#) in Edinburgh last month.

Artist Andrew is renowned as the designer of The Great Tapestry of Scotland and has been creating tapestries since 2009—each tapestry telling many a story of history stitch by stick, story by story, panel by panel.

In 2017, Andrew went through treatment for throat cancer which inspired him to do the Cancer Tapestry to share and stitch so many moving stories. Andrew said: "As a designer and community artist, I felt I could give something back to the NHS for the amazing treatment I received."

Lanark Men's Shed was asked to make the wooden stands to support the tapestries on their tour around the UK. Alan Ross, Chairman of [Lanark Men's Shed](#), said: "We are privileged to be a part of this project for such a worthy cause expressing many cancer journeys.

"These beautiful tapestries may even be on display down at UNESCO New Lanark World Heritage Site for everyone in Lanarkshire to visit and view.....watch this space."



SHED PROJECTS

Pitlochry Shedders' pew revamp

Pitlochry & Moulin Men's Shed (PAMMS) was recently approached by the committee of Pitlochry and Moulin Heritage Centre, located within the Moulin Kirk which closed in the late 80s, to discuss a collaboration to produce a historical souvenir from the piles of timber stored in their building.

PAMMS Chairman Peter Aitken said: "The kirk closed to worship in 1989 and was then subsequently sold off by the Church of Scotland and re-opened as the Heritage Centre in 2005. Amongst the timber in storage, were the old pews from when the kirk was in use and they had been carefully dismantled and stored away.

"The wood is from the 1874-75 rebuild, following a fire in late 1873 at the kirk so it is at least 150 years old—probably the oldest timber that any of PAMMS members have worked with. It was agreed that the Shed would rebuild a short section of a church pew as a historical keepsake at the heritage centre to show the building's original use.

"PAMMS members thoroughly enjoying rebuilding and refurbishing the pew and took immense pride in delivering the finished unit back to the centre."

Marigold Massie, Treasurer of the Pitlochry and Moulin Heritage Centre, said: "We have really enjoyed working with the Men's Shed on this project, which will allow visitors to the Centre to sit on an original pew from 150 years ago.

"Many of our visitors have local connections from across the generations and this will provide a unique opportunity to connect with the past. We look forward to more collaboration with the Men's Shed going forward."



Pictured (top to bottom): PAMMS Chairman and Treasurer seated with trustees on the heritage centre behind; and the finished pew.



Model vehicles at Barrhead

Barrhead Men's Shed has been utilising their wood stock to create decorative model vehicles for locals.

Robert Humphrey, Secretary Barrhead Men's Shed, said: "Our wood is often kindly handed in from local sources and we recently received a

generous quantity from the Co-op. The members are thoroughly enjoying producing the models and we are also taking bespoke orders and can finish in the customer's choice of paint or wood stain colours.

"With the wood being recycled, we only ask for a nominal donation in return towards operating the Shed."



HMS Victory

Enthusiastic modeller George Clarke was taken with the idea of building a large model of HMS Victory.

Sadly, before he could finish the model he took ill and died. His son Wayne

had promised to see the model completed and on display. His search for help found two modellers at [Inverurie and District Men's Shed](#) willing to help.

John Stewart and Syd Lyth spent many hours finishing off the model and now it's ready for display.

SHED PROJECTS



Weather vane Wind Animation

Milngavie and Bearsden Shedder Sandy has been exercising his artistic talents to create a model for display outside the Shed.

The propellor blades were cut from a broken waste

bin and the remainder constructed from small offcuts of wood.

When the wind blows the figure vigorously sands the wooden block in true Shedder style.

The model will form a feature over the Shed's new sign which is also under construction.



Orkney Men's Shed play house

In mid-January, Orkney Men's Shed went along to Evie Primary School to erect a pair of colourful wooden playhouses built at the Shed over the last few months.

The playhouses will give the children a dry and safe outdoor environment to develop key role-play, social and storytelling skills.



St Andrews Men's Shed supports wildlife education with local school

A small team from St Andrews Men's Shed flocked to Kingsbarns Primary School and delivered a one-hour bird box building session with all the kids to enhance their wildlife education experience and provide birds with a safe place to rest and breed.

A representative from St Andrews Men's Shed said: "What a lot of fun we had and hats off to all the wonderful kids on their focus, banter, intrigue and all-round good behaviour. A true reflection on the amazing staff at Kingsbarns Primary.

"In total, 24 bird boxes were built, and many will be placed in the woods around Kingsbarns. A big thank you must go out to Niven Roofing who donated all the sarking wood for the bird boxes.



SHED-TO-SHED VISITS

Inverclyde Shed visits Lanark

On the 16th February 2024, a group of [Inverclyde Shedders](#) hit the road on a mission to connect, learn and share with [Lanark Men's Shed](#).

The visit, endorsed by the SMSA Shed Member partner benefit scheme and fully-funded through the [Scottish Community Alliance's Learning Exchange programme](#), saw 15 members from Inverclyde Shed and ten from Lanark gather to share their experiences and knowledge of many shared issues and goals including 3D printing, Community Asset Transfers and the 'growing pains' as membership numbers increase.

Inverclyde Shed Trustee Bruce Newlands said: "We had a great visit to New Lanark/Lanark Men's Shed and wow, what a setting for a Shed! It was the first time that many of us had visited the spectacular UNESCO World Heritage site and the welcome and hospitality shown to our group was first class.

"There was lots of shared learning on Shedding experiences of Community Asset Transfer, dealing with landlords and utilities and their 3D printing setup is exceptional, with member [Krzysztof Malkowski](#) mentoring other Shedders on the technology. The potential for 3D printing is huge but our Shed has found it difficult to get members engaged with it as the software and design processes are acting as barriers so it was inspiring to see the LMS Shedders in action with Krzysztof and the amazing items they are making.

"It was also heartening to see the son of their eldest member (91), supporting his dad and the Shed by taking cracking photographs of the day for everyone to cherish. We have agreed to donate some spare equipment to Lanark Men's Shed and hope they will visit us soon."

Chairman of Lanark Men's Shed Alan Ross said: "We were delighted to host a visit from one of the biggest Sheds in Scotland, the Inverclyde Shed, who have just recently hit a celebratory milestone of 400 Shed Members—possibly one of the largest Shed Memberships in the world!?"

"Of course we could not host them all, but 15 attended and ten of our own members met up in the spirit of Sheds to hear what each other are doing. We all had a fantastic and productive day of learning followed by a delicious lunch in the New Lanark Cafe who kindly provided the catering which was again simply fabulous."

[Click here](#) to see more of Lanark Men's Sheds 3D printing projects.



SHED-TO-SHED VISITS



Barrhead Men's Shed heads to Lanark

On the 8th February 2024, several members from [Barrhead Men's Shed](#) embarked on a learning visit to Lanark Men's Shed (LMS) made possible thanks to funding through the SMSA members benefit partnership with the [Scottish Community Alliance's Learning Exchange programme](#).

Robert Humphrey, Secretary of Barrhead Men's Shed, said: "Our Shed was invited to visit the new premises of Lanark Men's Shed at The World heritage Centre in New Lanark and, as a Shed member of the SMSA, we applied for and was successfully awarded £223 from the Scottish Community Alliance to fund the trip.

"The Chairman of our Health & Safety Committee Graham Murdoch, our Workshop Supervisor Toni Capriotti, Freda Hood from our Health & Safety Committee, Shed Supervisor and joint leader of our sewing group Fiona Currie and I all attended this invaluable opportunity.

"LMS Chairman Alan Ross greeted us with open arms and we were delighted to be welcomed through the door to immediately see the bunting produced by our sewing group proudly on display on their staircase. Like the bunting at our Shed, LMS can take this to fairs

and events that they attend to advertise who they are.

"Our attention was then grabbed by their wood turning lathes and their impressive 3D printer and the display of items they have created. Our Shed is very interested in obtaining a 3D printer for ourselves so we were delighted to see a great variety of 3D printed objects that had been previously made by LMS members.

"LMS members showcased their clocks made from disused bicycle parts obtained from local cycle hub Lanark Cycles, who also have a donated clock on display. We also make many clocks for sale but making them from old cycle parts was certainly an idea that we plan to explore. We are hoping to speak with the Cycle repair Hub in Barrhead to see if we can use their discarded parts.

"LMS used the hosting fee, as part of the Scottish Community Alliance grant, to treat us to a lovely spread at lunch time which was most appreciated by both sets of members.

"We thoroughly enjoyed the visit, and learnt so much to take back. We would like to thank the Scottish Community Alliance for the grant to pay for the visit and the SMSA for approving the request and of course the LMS members for inviting us."



Empowering Shedders with dyslexia to reach their full potential

Following recent discussions with Dyslexia Scotland, the SMSA wishes to raise awareness of dyslexia and how the Men's Sheds Movement can better support our fellow members with dyslexia to reach their full potential. The SMSA talks to three Scottish Shedders with dyslexia to highlight their experience in their local Men's Shed.

Simon Spoor from the developing Sanday Men's Shed in Orkney said: "Dyslexia has a spectrum of symptoms ranging from almost unnoticeable to the very challenging. Dyslexia is not just about issues with reading and writing—these individuals may find it hard to listen, maintain focus, concentrate and can become mentally overloaded. They can struggle with organising their thoughts or being given multiple instructions at once.

"All of these things can lead to embarrassment leading to anger, closure or shutdown. As far as I understand, this is due to much faster processing speeds and thinking in images more than words. It is important to remember this in the Shed context—especially in the workshop environment and social areas.

"Everyone is different but with proper diagnosis and support, people with dyslexia can live a normal positive life. I grew up experiencing difficulties with reading and maths but verbally, I am extremely confident and eloquent, due to having help at a young age, and have been able to write articles for many newspapers and also wrote and performed poetry. I tried to hide my struggles with maths and would become embarrassed and go into 'fight or flight' mode. I still struggle with this though I'm more likely to ask for help than I used to.

"As was common at the time, my school did not pick up my dyslexia and my parents paid for a private diagnosis and tuition when spotting some signs. With the majority of the age demographic of Men's Sheds being older retired men, many may have unidentified or undiagnosed dyslexia which can result in low self-esteem, stress, frustration, behavioural issues and underachieving—although they also might be the more creative guys in the Shed in terms of ideas and/or practical skills. I feel that the Men's Shed is a positive place for men with dyslexia to go especially with the right awareness, understanding and support.

"For me, my journey has been extremely positive. I consider my dyslexia an incredible gift. When I think of a project, I visualise it and design it in my head in 3D and then get to it. In the Shed, dyslexia may affect, measuring or calculating something, or remembering instructions or the way information is delivered. However, where we lack in one area—we often make up for in others and can be a great asset to the Shed owing to our fast creative 3D thinking. Give us a seed idea and we will create a forest!"

Jim MacFarlane, who has links with several Scottish Sheds, said: "I am passionate about furniture restoration and cabinet making, and unfortunately, time after time I have personally had bad experiences and felt failed by the education system trying to pursue this and it really knocked my confidence. I have severe dyslexia, which is a very frustrating disability as it is not visible and I often feel doors are closed in my face when I ask for support—it is an awful feeling.

"I am not computer literate and often these skills are required to undertake the courses I want to do so this is a huge

Be Dyslexia Aware in the Shed

It is estimated that 1 in 10 people has dyslexia. Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and backgrounds. Dyslexia often runs in the family. There is no 'cure' but lots of practical things can help overcome some of the barriers. Dyslexia is a learning 'difference', which means that the brain can approach things in a different way to other people.

Dyslexia can affect the way people communicate, and is different for everyone. It is not just about reading and writing and it has nothing to do with intelligence. Dyslexia is classed as a disability under the Equality Act.

[Dyslexia Scotland](#)

obstacle for me. I have made some great friends at the Sheds and opened up to a select few about my difficulties. It is great to have a place to go to share my passion for woodwork and pass on my skills. If there is anyone that knows of and has worked with a good literacy software package that could help me pursue my courses, then [please get in touch](#)."

Simon Fuller from Shotts Men's Shed said: "After a difficult time in the education system, connecting with the Shed has been a godsend. My fellow member Ray supports me to 'measure twice, cut once' and we work together as a team. Being a perfectionist, I like to check and check again and am proud of the fabulous work I have created. I am also involved in the Shed's local radio show and have become confident with operating the slides, fading the music or talk out and preparing the music tracks. I even delivered the show independently when Ray was off ill. I really feel like a valued part of the Shed team."

What changes can you make in the Shed to support new and existing members with dyslexia?

- Consider updating your membership form/review to ask the question if members have any health conditions you need to be aware of including dyslexia. The SMSA has a [template membership form](#) which includes this.
- Ask members which way they need information to be presented to them. For example, safety posters beside machinery or the Shed induction book might be better complemented with a talk or a health and safety animation/film for instance and regular reviews.
- Raise awareness of dyslexia in the Shed environment. Dyslexia Scotland offers support and resources for adults with dyslexia in Scotland including [information leaflets](#) for the Shed, [newsletters](#), an [assessment pack](#) for adults, [career guidance](#), [taking part in research](#) and [Adult Network Meet-ups](#) to share experiences and get support.
- Applying for some funding for technological aids such as computer literacy software packages may also be something that the Shed wishes to implement to support neurodivergent members.
- If you notice a member struggling, make the time to have chat with them to see if they require any additional support.

Whilst the SMSA researched this article, it was clear that this is just the tip of the iceberg and we could cover a series of articles on this topic. We will aim to work with Dyslexia Scotland to raise awareness in Scottish Men's Sheds and to complement the health sections of our publications and new and improved SMSA website. If there are any other health matters that you feel the SMSA should be highlighting that we have not already, [please let us know](#).

'WHAT'S COOKING?'

Bridge of Don Shed cooks up a fine feast for Regional Shed Network Meeting

It was empty plates all round at [Bridge of Don & District Men's Shed](#) last month when the Shed hosted the gathering of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Sheds for the SMSA regional Shed Network Meeting.

Shed Secretary Eric Bisset compiled the menu for the event and was also head chef along with fellow member Jim— who was in the Army Catering Corps for nine years—as his trusty sidekick.

The Shed had every avenue covered including a veggie rowie option for Shedders on arrival to go with their fairtrade coffee served in recyclable paper cups.

With a very busy agenda and far-ranging topics discussed including health and safety, engaging socially, the impact of the transgender movement on single sex groups and activities, the rising costs of electricity and the new SMSA Shed member online account and map systems—the attendees had certainly built up a huge appetite for lunch!

The delicious meal consisted of an oven-baked 'Buchan' chicken breast filled with Deeside Haggis (or plain option) with a peppercorn sauce, potato wedges and cheesy cauliflower and broccoli florets (which was also served as a vegetarian alternative).

The feast was followed by a hearty bowl of fruit trifle served in recyclable dessert cups with another serving of coffee and Scottish Blend tea with Grampian Petticoat Tails Shortbread for the session round-up in the afternoon. It's a tough life being a Shedder but somebody's gotta do it!



'Buchan' Chicken

Ingredients

- 4 x skinless chicken breasts
- 130g Haggis (slices or bung)
- 4 slices smoked bacon
- 30ml olive oil
- 20g butter

Serves: Four hungry Shedders

- ⇒ Preheat oven to 180°C (356°F)
- ⇒ Slice the haggis into small pieces and then slice down the side of each chicken breast to make a pocket. Fill the pocket with the haggis
- ⇒ Wrap each chicken breast in a rasher of bacon and secure with a toothpick
- ⇒ Heat the oil and butter in a non-stick frying pan. Sear the bacon wrapped chicken breasts for approx. 2 minutes on each side
- ⇒ Place in an oven-proof dish and transfer to the oven for 35-40 minutes until cooked through and piping hot
- ⇒ Serve with the peppercorn sauce, along with a selection of vegetables, rice or mashed potato

Peppercorn Sauce

Ingredients

- 2-3 tsp peppercorns (crushed slightly with pestle & mortar)
- 60g butter
- 1 shallot (finely diced)
- 1 clove garlic (finely diced) *optional*
- 100ml brandy *optional*
- 180ml beef stock
- 250ml double cream (room temp)

- ⇒ Melt the butter in a saucepan over a medium heat. It would be good to use the same pan used to fry the chicken for maximum flavour!
- ⇒ Add the shallots and sauté until soft (approx. 3 mins). *You can also add garlic at this stage if you like garlic*
- ⇒ Add the brandy and boil for 3 minutes. Take care when adding the brandy as the liquid may ignite. This burns off the alcohol in the brandy
- ⇒ Add the crushed peppercorns and beef stock and boil for another 3 minutes
- ⇒ Finally, add the cream and reduce the heat to medium. Heat through, but don't allow the sauce to boil. Once the sauce is at your desired thickness, test for seasoning and serve and enjoy!

OPPORTUNITIES

Showcasing community conservation

The [Scottish Wildlife Trust](#) reached out to the [SMSA](#) to announce the launch of their [new community-focused website](#) designed to inspire and support communities to take action for nature.

Developed as part of the National Lottery-funded Nextdoor Nature project, the site includes a series of immersive case studies showcasing some of the best examples of community-led conservation taking place across Scotland.

The case studies – which are a mix of written, audio and video content – range in scale from a group of residents in the Ayrshire village of Symington, who are boosting habitat for their local pollinators, to the population of Eigg, who purchased the island more than 26 years ago and have managed it for both wildlife and people ever since.

Pete Haskell, the Trust's Head of Communications and Engagement, said: "The new website features some fantastic stories and examples of communities acting for nature. There's also a growing resource library full of ideas and information for those wanting to start taking action. We're very keen to hear from any Scottish Men's Shed members with ideas or suggestions for additional resources that they would like to see listed.

"Many of these projects begin with just one or two determined individuals wanting to see change happen but communities can and do rally behind a cause. We hope that the inspiring stories presented on our new website will give more people the confidence to start the proverbial ball rolling where they live."

Through the [Nextdoor Nature project](#)—which is made possible thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund— the Trust has worked with more than 30 communities across Scotland so far through its Pioneers Programme, designed to give participants the necessary skills required to lead action for nature where they live.

Thanks to an extension of the project to the end of October 2024, a fourth cohort of individuals will now be supported through the programme. From April to September, the project team will work with people from communities in Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian. Past participants of the programme have gone on to create community wildlife gardens, design local nature trails and support people in becoming more connected with local wildlife.

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "I am delighted that The Scottish Wildlife Trust has worked so successfully with over 30 communities across Scotland on a range of projects, from protecting marine habitats to creating a thriving community hub.



**Scottish
Wildlife
Trust**

THE SCOTTISH SHEDDER | MARCH 2024

"Nextdoor Nature illustrated how important it is that local communities take an active role in caring for and connecting to nature, and this website will provide inspiration to others and show how local communities can get involved. The Nextdoor Nature programme furthers our vision for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future."

Check out the Trust's new website at community.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk where you will find [opportunities](#) for volunteering your time to help Scotland's wildlife and a growing resource library designed to support communities in delivering action for nature.



Bridging the Digital Divide: An Introduction to AbilityNet and BT's Partnership for over 65s



In an age of ever-evolving technology, a widening digital divide threatens to leave some behind. Thankfully, initiatives like the partnership between AbilityNet and BT Group are stepping up to ensure that everyone over the age of 65, can reap the benefits of a connected world.

This collaborative effort is a beacon of hope, empowering older generations to embrace technology and bridge the digital gap with confidence.

Understanding the Need

For many over 65s, navigating the digital landscape can be daunting. Fear of the unknown, unfamiliarity with devices, and anxieties about online safety can create a formidable barrier. This digital exclusion not only limits access to crucial online services like healthcare and banking but also isolates individuals from social connections and valuable information.

Empowering Senior Skills

Recognizing this urgent need, AbilityNet, a leading digital accessibility charity, and [BT Group](#), a prominent telecommunications giant, have joined forces. Their innovative partnership, aptly named the 'Senior Skills Programme' aims to equip the over 65s with the digital skills and confidence they need to thrive in the modern world.

Tailored Training, Accessible Delivery

The program offers a unique blend of personalized and accessible training delivered in a format that resonates with older adults. Individuals can choose between one-on-one sessions or group workshops conducted in familiar community settings like cafes, libraries, or even their own homes. This flexibility ensures individual needs are met while fostering a supportive learning environment.

Demystifying the Digital

Training sessions cover a spectrum of essential skills, catering to diverse interests and comfort levels. From mastering the basics of smartphones and tablets to navigating the internet safely, exploring email and social media, and even accessing online public services, the program empowers seniors to conquer their digital fears and unlock a world of possibilities.

Beyond Functionality, Building Confidence

The partnership goes beyond mere technical training. Recognizing the emotional barriers hindering digital adoption, the program fosters a supportive environment where anxieties are addressed, and confidence is nurtured. By emphasizing a 'fearless' approach to technology, the program empowers seniors to embrace learning and celebrate their achievements, no matter how small.

Impact Beyond Individuals

The 'Senior Skills Programme' extends its impact beyond individual empowerment. By equipping the over 65s with digital skills, it contributes to a more inclusive digital society.

Seniors can stay connected with loved ones, engage in their communities, access crucial services, and even contribute their valuable skills and perspectives online. This digital inclusion enriches society as a whole, fostering intergenerational connections and bridging the digital divide.

Looking Ahead

The AbilityNet and BT partnership, currently operating in select UK cities, serves as a vital model for bridging the digital divide across generations. To request a place, call AbilityNet on 0131 376 3020 or visit the [website](#).



OPPORTUNITIES

Share your mental wellbeing tips and experience with *Mind to Mind*

For over 50 years, mental health charity [Change Mental Health's](#) mission has remained the same—to help and support people affected by mental illness.

SMSA Chief Executive Officer Jason Schroeder was recently contacted by Kieran Scott, Head of Communications at Change Mental Health, to talk about a new project they are managing for Scottish Government called Mind to Mind. The charity is currently developing content for this national resource with audio/video clips promoting lived experience and the practical tips and support that people have used to improve their mental wellbeing and resilience.



Gone through
a difficult patch?

Share practical tips that have improved your mental wellbeing.
Contact communications@changemh.org

Kieran Scott said: “Hearing about the lived experience of others can help with life’s daily stresses. Change Mental Health is working with NHS Inform and Scottish Government on the Mind to Mind mental health resource, which will feature video and audio of different people talking about how they deal with life’s challenges.

“We have worked with Men’s Sheds in the past, in Fife and Edinburgh, and wish to extend our reach to Scotland-wide Sheds to hear from as many men from as many different communities across Scotland as possible. We’re keen to work closely with Men’s Sheds to capture stories of lived experience from men, parents and carers.

SMSA CEO Jason Schroeder said: “The Scottish Government has stopped core funding to the SMSA for the 2024-25 financial year. However we will continue to try and support their initiatives by working in partnership to raise awareness of the immense wealth of health and wellbeing benefits that attending a Men’s Shed can bring through Shedders taking part in these types of initiatives with key health partners and the government. We know only too well the resilience of our Scottish Shedders and that they have the wisdom to share their experiences and make a great contribution to this new national health resource and in turn we will share these collaborations with Ministers to try yet again turn the tide on this disastrous funding decision.”

Can you share your personal experience for this new national resource?

Have you experienced social isolation and loneliness, mental health stigma and discrimination, or is your mental health being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and/or living in poverty? Then, Change Mental Health is keen to hear from you.

You might want to share the difficult patch you went through and the practical advice, tips and support that helped you through and the things you do to look after your mental wellbeing. You might want to share your ups and downs and the challenges you’ve faced that can help other people engage with relevant and similar mental health support.

Contact Kieran.Scott@changemh.org if you are keen to share your lived experience or know someone or an organisation that would be happy to help out. We want to hear from all communities (LGBTQI+, disabled people, minority ethnic and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, along with young people (16+), carers and parents) and bring us one step closer to our vision—a future where no one needs to face mental illness alone.



'Men Don't Talk' play to tour Scotland

Chats over cuppas and cake in 2020 led to the play 'Men Don't Talk' being realised and now the play is set to go on tour across Scotland this autumn—funded by Creative Scotland and in conjunction with [Peebles and District Men's Shed](#) and the [Scottish Men's Sheds Association](#).

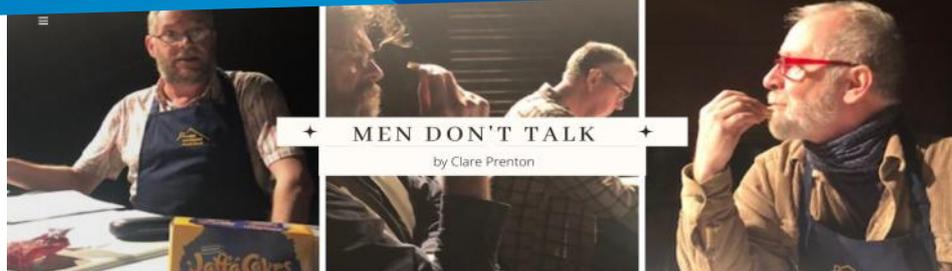
In 2019, Borders-based theatre director and writer [Clare Prenton](#) was asked by her local theatre to work with a local male community group on a health and wellbeing project. Clare had prior experience of creating live theatre from a range of community projects over a 20 year career, developing drama from what she calls 'spirited conversations' with the elderly, or with young mothers and felt she could work on an idea about a group of men in a Men's Shed.

Clare was aware of the Peebles and District Men's Shed and after hearing their Secretary Malcolm Bruce speak on a panel discussion at the end of a Wellbeing Festival called 'Inspiring Life', in conjunction with the Evie Douglas Memorial Fund, a gem of an idea began in her imagination. Clare approached Freda Douglas at the fund, to 'seed fund' a project which would take the lives, hopes, fears and dreams of a group of men into a piece of live drama for the local theatre stage.

The fund was named after Evie Douglas, a passionate and talented dancer, choreographer, photographer and artist who sadly, at the age of 21, committed suicide ten years ago. Her mother, Freda, had launched the charity in her name to support and promote arts and wellbeing for good mental health.

With this crucial financial support in place, Clare led four engagement sessions in early 2020 with the men at Peebles and District Men's Shed. Armed with some notepaper, a music play list and a range of questions, Clare talked to ten men and from there, three imaginary characters emerged, with some verbatim elements from key stories the men told.

As the sessions developed, themes emerged that Clare hadn't anticipated e.g. retirement anxiety, health issues, prostate cancer. By spending time in the Shed and becoming an 'honorary Shedder', Clare observed the banter,



friendship, learning and the skills-sharing support that takes place as well as the wider activities. The sessions were full of biscuits, blethers, banter, tea, tears and sheer joy.

Clare then let her imagination 'play' on top of the stories told, aiming to create an engaging, witty and poignant piece which both honoured the men's experiences and their generous contribution to the work, through sharing their stories and create a good play with artistic merit.

Clare's experience was (as she had suspected) that men certainly *do* talk, if asked the right questions, in the right conditions. Clare said: "The Peebles Shedders talked so much the sessions all overran but I wasn't a bit surprised. All the men in my family are big talkers so my gut feeling was we'd have plenty of material. I recorded the sessions and replayed them again and again to spot themes, ideas, and the script and characters emerged from there. The Shedders were rightfully proud of their contributions which inspired the writing and key messages of the play.

The result is a gentle comedy filled with pathos, humour, warmth, care - all the qualities Clare witnessed and experienced in the Peebles Shed. The camaraderie, the banter, the tensions, the personalities, the back stories, the off-stage characters (late wives, ex-partners, the women and children behind these men) all poured into the script.

Following pandemic delays, in January 2022, the play had its first outing with Artistic Director, Sir John McEwan of the emerging Duns Play Festival in the audience. He loved the play and the audience's reaction to it and quickly invited Clare to bring it to the festival in May 2022.

Clare invited SMSA CEO Jason Schroeder along to the festival. Impressed, Jason offered to help the cause through a [letter of support](#) for the appeal for funding and towards the future plans of the play.

In June 2022, MSP Christine Grahame called a Scottish Parliament [motion](#) praising the play for raising awareness of the health benefits of the Sheds. It was also a battle cry for funding and many other MSPs joined her in praising the Men's Shed movement in tackling social isolation and the play's overall aims.

With further funding from Eastgate Theatre and Inspiring Life, in October 2022, a film of a reading of the piece took place. The Peebles Shed became a film set for the day and Shedders even played extras in a scene. Clare hoped to attract a producer and by May 2023, Michelle McKay from [Genesis Theatre Productions](#), an experienced Edinburgh-based producer was on board to see the play tour. A successful funding application to Creative Scotland's Touring Fund followed.

Helped by a number of stakeholders pledging their support of the play, including the SMSA, Luminare, Scotland's Creative ageing organisation, The Scottish Mental Health arts Festival and several theatres—the characters of Jimmy, Tom and Ken in their fictional Shed are ready to hit the road.

A series of community workshops will accompany the tour and the cast will be mingling with audiences as the play opens in a fictional Shedders' meeting. The play will not just travel to theatres but performances are planned for community spaces in remote and rural settings and the Scottish Parliament!

'Men Don't Talk' will open in An Tobar and Mull Theatre on the 18th October 2024 before touring Scotland until November. Dates and venues to be announced soon—[keep an eye on the website](#) and check out the next issue of *The Scottish Shedder* magazine for more information.

The *Men Don't Talk* team looks forward to meeting Shedders on their travels. Their message is 'please do say hello after the performance'. They'd love to meet you, because [#itsgoodtotalk](#)

CONSULTATIONS

Dyslexia-friendly Scotland survey

[Dyslexia Scotland](#) and the [University of Glasgow](#) are undertaking Scotland's biggest-ever survey of dyslexic adults which accounts for 10% of our population.

The aim of the survey is to identify the areas of Scottish society that could be more inclusive. This important exercise is part of Dyslexia Scotland's strategy to make Scotland a fully dyslexia-friendly country that values and supports its dyslexic population.

Like the SMSA and Men's Sheds Movement, Dyslexia Scotland is committed to supporting health and wellbeing here in Scotland and approached the SMSA to encourage more responses from men.

Dyslexia-friendly Scotland research



Participants (must be aged 16 or over) but do not require a formal identification of dyslexia, they want to hear from those who also think they may be dyslexic.

Link to survey: <https://dyslexiascotland.org.uk/dyslexia-friendly-scotland-survey>

Male participants needed for online survey: Understanding attitudes towards disclosure of childhood trauma



We are looking for males to take part in a short **online** survey exploring **attitudes towards the disclosure of childhood trauma**, to help us find ways **to make this experience easier**. You won't be asked to discuss the traumatic experience itself.

Eligibility Criteria:

- i) people who **identify as male**; ii) aged **18+**;
- iii) currently **residing in the UK**, iv) who have **told a professional** (e.g., psychologist, police officer) **about a childhood trauma***

**For the purpose of this study, childhood trauma is defined as the 'exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence within the first 18 years of life'*

HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

For further details and to take part in the online survey, please scan the QR code



Permissions and approvals have been obtained from the relevant permissions review boards

The SMSA acknowledges and express our sincere thanks to our partners and funders for their support in 2024 for the development and growth of the Men's Shed Movement in Scotland:



Support the SMSA

Want to help make a difference? There are many ways to support the Scottish Men's Sheds Association (SMSA) and our vital work.

Make a direct donation to the Association:



Donate while you shop online, at no extra cost to yourself:



Fundraising and social media events

You can raise funds for the SMSA through fundraising and social media events like Facebook Birthday Fundraisers!

Legacy donation

Become a guardian for future generations of Shedders by leaving a gift in your will to the Association. Start a conversation with the SMSA to discuss the difference this could make

The SMSA is a registered Scottish charity (SC045139), its Board of Trustees—all volunteers that receive no remuneration for their time and efforts—passionately believe in the SMSA's aims and vision for the people of Scotland. The Association's small staff team of passionate individuals work to promote and support the growth of the grassroots movement across Scotland. From speaking to hundreds of individuals requiring support to start their own Men's Shed; creating pathways and documentation specific to Scottish law; and lobbying policymakers on men's health and wellbeing.

Follow the SMSA at

