



Building strong, resilient, and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.



Annual Report 2022-23

Our Vision:

MAP exists to support the needs of Marr's communities and third sector organisations, through delivery of high-quality, entrepreneurial, and inclusive support. It is a financially and environmentally sustainable organisation, adding clear identifiable value to projects and service provision across the area, through its dedicated staff and board. It is widely recognised and respected for what it provides to communities and partners.

Our Mission:

To support the Marr communities to improve their quality of life through voluntary action.

**Marr Area Partnership
Annual Report
2022-23**



Contents

	Page Number
Introduction	3
Chair's Report	4
Treasurer's Report	5
Our Team	5
Service Level Agreements	6
Our Work	6
Finances	13
MAP in Partnership	13
MAP Legacy	14
Initiative Grant Scheme	14
Future Plans	16
Summary	17

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Introduction

This report covers the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 and is prepared at the request of Aberdeenshire Council's Community Economic Development Department and Cairngorm National Park Authority. The report aims to reflect the range of activities undertaken by Marr Area Partnership (MAP) staff and volunteers. Marr Area Partnership work to realise the Scottish Government, Cairngorm National Park Partnership Plan and Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership priorities in relation to "supporting communities", particularly the Local Outcome of creating;

"Successful, achieving, inclusive communities with the confidence, capability and capacity to tackle the things that matter to them".

Marr Area Partnership also contributes to several the SOA (Single Outcome Agreements) National Outcomes, principally;

number 11 ***"We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others".***

number 12 ***"We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations".***

number 2 ***"We realise our full economic potential with more, and better employment opportunities for all our people".***

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Chair's Report

The past year has been a massive challenge for some and a massive opportunity for others. We hope that Marr Area Partnership has played a part in alleviating the challenges for some. A great example of this has been the Log Bank which was conceived by director Gillian Needham and has now helped over 90 families by supplying firewood donated by local Estates to those in real need and have the opportunity to burn logs to keep warm. We are looking at securing funding to take the project forward into next winter. We also have a number of very important projects running that will hopefully really benefit our communities involving Food Security, Financial Resilience for Third Sector Organisations and Village Halls. We began an investigation into household and community resilience in the wake of the storms of winter 2021-22, which informed council activity and exposed gaps in resilience planning. We have played a part in distributing grants to local groups through the Initiative Grant Scheme and helping to manage Braemar Community Hydro Fund. We have helped Communities across the Ward as they look at updating or creating Community Action/Place Plans. We have issued regular email bulletins communicating opportunities across a wide range of activities, initiatives and grant opportunities. We have organised Ward Forums to offer information, advise and networking opportunities throughout the year, although the challenges of online conferences and an early reluctance to meet up socially have given us challenges from which we hope to learn for next year. We have played an active part in the Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships Federation and in particular welcomed the planning day run by Karen Derick of Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey. We had hoped to run a seminar for local Paths Groups and Community Resilience but these had to be postponed for a variety of reasons. We hope they can be put on next year. We have also been part of the Cairngorms National Park Cairngorms Nature programme.

My thanks are due to our funders in particular Aberdeenshire Council both Marr Area and Economic Development. Both Janelle Clark and Reid Hutchison have been great allies of ours as we try to navigate through a very challenging funding climate. The support of The Cairngorms National Park has also been crucial and we were delighted to welcome Fiona MacInally as our liaison officer with the Park.

I would like to thank my co-directors for their enthusiasm, energy and above all time to take forward different strands of the work that Marr Area Partnership carries out.

But above all I would like to thank our Development Officers Lindsay Gallagher, Emma Murphy, Kate Redpath, Hilary English, Ana Pena del Valle and Megan Albon for their hard work, commitment and enthusiasm over the past year.

If you would like to hear more about possibly becoming a director or how we might be able to help your community, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of us.

Simon Blackett

Chair Marr Area Partnership

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Treasurers Report

MAP Financial Report 2021-2022

During the 2021-2022 financial year, MAP received an income of £63,407 and incurred expenditure of £55,321, leaving a surplus of £8086.

Grants of £7684 were made to various community organisation via the Initiative Grant Scheme.

MAP continues to be grateful to Aberdeenshire Council for financial support but recognises that the Council's severe budget constraints means that it will have to seek alternative income streams in the near future.

Our Team

Emma Murphy, Communications and Development Officer. Emma was part of the team for 2022/23 and was the backbone to arranging the ward forums. Emma's expertise in social media got our Instagram page up and running along with revitalising our facebook page.

Lindsay Gallagher, Development Officer. Lindsay writes the weekly bulletin, facilitates the Initiative Grant Scheme and signposts community groups to relevant funding streams. Lindsay is admin of the Marr Food Group WhatsApp group, that aims to connect the various pantries and food groups in the area. She also helps the Treasurer with bookkeeping side of the organisation. Lindsay helped Emma with the organisation of the ward forums and along with two of our Board members, has also been running the Log Bank project. Lindsay's role also includes providing all admin support.

Kate Redpath, Development Officer. Kate has been instrumental in updating the Halls Manual. This will be available shortly on the MAP website. Kate is part of the team who helps organise the Community Ward Forums and is here to help with all elements of development work and supporting local groups including a newly formed Tarland Flood Group. Going forward in 2023 Kate will be taking over writing the weekly bulletin.

Ana Pene del Valle. Project Officer. Ana was part of the MAP team from February 2022 – February 2023 and was Project Officer for the CAFE (*Creative Access to Food for Everyone*) and PARTS (*Pathways for Advancing Resilience in the Third Sector*) projects. Reports for these projects will be available shortly.

Megan Albon. Project Officer. Megan joined the MAP team in December 2022 as Project Office for the Halls Federation Feasibility Study. Megan hosted a very well attended Halls workshop at the beginning of March. A report will be available shortly.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



The MAP Board

Simon Blackett, Chair

Nigel Healey, Treasurer

Bill Slee, Gillian Needham, Bryan Begg, George Wordie, Patricia Fraser, Jim Bruce, Margaret McNaught

Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

Marr Area Partnership operates under an SLA with Aberdeenshire Council's Community Economic Development department. MAP also has SLAs with the Marr Community Planning Group, and the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

The SLA process, which MAP is committed to help develop further, provides a good basis for planning, performance management, accountability, and resource allocation.

Elements of the SLA, as described in the "Definition of Service" section are as follows;

- 1. Promoting Community Economic Development**
- 2. Providing a local advice service to groups to help realise opportunities in their communities**
- 3. Providing business and administrative advice to social/community enterprises seeking to develop economic opportunities**
- 4. Supporting community planning within communities**
- 5. Facilitating a two-way flow of information between communities and agencies**
- 6. Supporting and facilitating Community Ward Forums**
- 7. Working to identify outcomes that fit with the Single Outcome Agreement**
- 8. Working with CNPA to bring benefit to Aberdeenshire communities**

Our Work

MAP worked with many community groups across the Marr Area in 2022-2023. The section below highlights elements of MAP's work and demonstrates the scope and scale of local initiatives supported by MAP officers, and how this work fulfils the requirements of the SLA with Aberdeenshire Council.

Marr is the largest area in Aberdeenshire with the smallest population and so our work supporting communities is made more challenging given this spatial dispersion.

**Marr Area Partnership
Annual Report
2022-23**



The projects highlighted below illustrate the outcomes set out within the SLA which MAP has achieved over the reporting period.

It is worth noting that for all the projects and initiatives mentioned below MAP continually work with communities to set appropriate expectations and build the foundations for each committed group that is involved. This is a crucial aspect of our work and often fundamental to success.

MAP also maintains capacity building support for the delivery of community priorities in Eastern Cairngorms. This may be as varied as working to improve the sustainability and resilience of community groups, support for Social Enterprises, to responding to emerging economic opportunities.

Website, Bulletins and Social Media

The MAP bulletins are distributed weekly, sometimes more often if there is urgent information to share, to over 550 subscribers. The bulletins continue to provide a vital, accessible resource to groups and individuals across Marr. The Marr Area Partnership website is undergoing a revamp and the Facebook and Instagram pages are growing with a wide reaching following of community groups and individuals.

Marr Food Group

MAP organises and hosts monthly meetings of the Marr Food Group, a gathering of food banks, pantry's and food initiatives across the Marr area to bring together everyone to network and share challenges and information. We are also the administrators on the Marr Food Whatsapp group.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Community Ward Forums

It was good to host the first couple of face-to-face ward forums since the pandemic. The MAP Community Ward Forums, organised on behalf of the Marr Community Planning Group (MCPG), are now a mix of online and face to face meetings with a steady attendance from Community Councillors, MCPG partners, members of community groups, and other 3rd sector groups. Chaired by Councillors, topics in 2022-23 included personal and community resilience including presentation from the Marr Log Bank, food security, Health and Social Care partnership in relation to the Aberdeenshire Food Strategy, AVA's Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing fund, a halls workshop including informative talks from Aberdeenshire Council's licensing department and emergency planning department.



Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Marr Log Bank

This innovative project was established by MAP with funding support from The MacRobert Trust, Cairngorm Trust Community Led Vision fund, and Aberdeenshire Council's Small Grant fund. Using a local wood processing yard to log and bag donated timber, and volunteers to distribute to individuals and hubs across Marr, we have received referral from Trusted Referrers from a wide range of sources – schools, foodbanks, community and elected Councillors, pantries and larders, Citizens Advice Bureau, faith groups etc. In our first season the project has delivered almost 1000 bags of seasoned firewood to hubs and homes across all corners of Marr. We had a lovely chat with Kraftwork in Aboyne who generously shared some kindling with us too. We aim to continue for the 2023-24 season, building on our hubs in Huntly, Tap O'Noth, Torphins, Braemar and Tarland. The project is grateful to the following Estates for their generous donation of timber:

- Invercauld
- Glen Tanar
- Mar Lodge



CAFÉ Project

Creative access to Food for Everyone was a project funded by Aberdeenshire Council's Economic Development department with the intention of supporting the Council's work with partners, including communities, to deliver the Aberdeenshire Food Strategy across Marr. Led by a Project Officer and with an expert Steering Group, the project ran from February 2022 – February 2023 and a final report is in-progress. Working closely with the MAP-hosted Marr Food Group, outputs have included:

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



- Contemporary mapping of the range of food outlets across Marr;
- Analysis of distribution of food outlets and access to value food;
- Commentary on food insecurity and food poverty;
- Future-proofing access to local food and information platforms.

A final report will be available soon.

PARTS Project

The project was premised on the understanding that for a number of reasons the third sector in the Marr area and elsewhere is facing challenges inter alia relating to funding, demand for its services, maintaining service quality and volunteer fatigue. It is recognised that even with similar organisations there are very large differences in the performance of third sector groups with some rather more robust and resilient than others.

Three background papers were written and are available to interested parties. They comprised:

- Defining the third sector
- Financing third sector bodies
- The Scottish policy to support the third sector

A fourth on Community Wealth Building is under preparation.

The study adopted a capacity development process will enable change and transformation through the designing and facilitation of solutions, based on capacities and knowledge, which are relevant in the local context.

Two drafts of a final draft report have been produced and a final report is awaited which will provide the information for a manual.

Braemar Hydro

MAP are administering the Braemar Hydro Community Fund, liaising with the chair, panel and applicants and organising the awards ceremony.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Halls Project

In 2009, the Marr Area Partnership held the 'Love your Hall' event, and launched the 'Your Hall Manual'. MAP is currently working on a long over-due update of the manual, which will be available shortly on the MAP website. The information will also be sent directly to halls, and will be highlighted in the MAP Bulletin. MAP will keep the new on-line document regularly updated. On-going feedback from hall committees and hall users will be important in this process. Support for voluntary groups is widely available, but this guidance aims to focus on information regarding all the specific aspects of running a village hall or community building.

The Halls Manual update work linked closely and productively with the MAP PARTS project and led to the decision to undertake a feasibility study into forming a federation of village halls and community buildings in Marr. The feasibility study was made possible by funding from the Rural Partnerships Challenge Fund. A final report will be made available by 31st March, but early indications suggest that targeted support from MAP for village halls in Marr would be welcome and would help to sustain and grow vibrant village halls. Supporting village halls, at the heart of communities, addresses all 5 Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership Priorities.

New Project

MAP is supporting a group in Tarland who are looking at flood prevention measures on a landscape scale to protect houses and businesses in the village.

Resilience Workshops

MAP had arranged personal resilience workshops in November. They have been postponed and we will update our website with new dates. These will build on work already undertaken.

Footpaths

MAP is helping connect groups and communities, by being on the Marr Community Paths Forum sharing paths closure information and highlighting relevant funding streams. A good footpath network across Marr is also seen as important for attracting visitors to the area.



Walking Festival

MAP have been working along with Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership to arrange a walking festival. This was organised for June 2022 but has been postponed until 13th May 2023. The festival is planned to 'celebrate walking', from looking at where people can go walking in Marr/Aberdeenshire, who is mapping walks and where people can go for information about local, accessible walks. This will include the Marr Paths Groups and organisations nationally/locally involved in walking. The aim is to highlight what's available in our area and show that low level walking is accessible to all.

Strathdon Community Development Trust

Strathdon is a scattered rural community of around 500 permanent residents and is one of Aberdeenshire's most remote communities. It stretches from the Lecht in the west to Glenkindie in the east. Despite its small size and remote location some essential services remain, including a shop and Post Office at Bellabeg, a dispensing GP surgery, a primary school, a church, 3 active village halls, a newly re-opened pub, sheltered housing, a cafe and shop at Corgarff, Corgarff Castle, the Lecht Ski Centre, plus a wide range of holiday accommodation.

Strathdon Community Development Trust, a company limited by guarantee, was established in September 2017, as a result of the Community Action Planning process. With the on-going support of MAP, the Trust is helping to realise the aspirations of the action plan and to coordinate local activity.

The Trust has developed capacity for a wide range of community activities including;

- holding local meetings to engage the community and identify priorities for action.
- supporting production of the local community newsletter (Fits Gan Doune) with aims to secure a sustainable future for its production;
- supporting community action such as litter picking work and restoration and maintenance of local facilities include the tennis courts, a garden and footpaths
- installing and maintaining the Lecht snow gate webcam.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Finances

Marr Area Partnership receives income from Aberdeenshire Council Community Economic Development and the Marr Community Planning Group. It also has an agreement with the Cairngorms National Park Authority to continue to support the delivery of actions highlighted through the Community Action Planning process, helping to facilitate project development. The office of treasurer is held by Nigel Healey and Lindsay Gallagher provides support as part of her Development Officer duties. MAP is registered with Companies House, and as a registered charity MAP is also accountable to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and submits an annual return and annual accounts.

MAP in Partnership

MAP plays an integral role assisting in the development of partnerships formed around issues, initiatives and projects, and is also a significant stakeholder in several formal and informal partnerships at a national, regional and local level.

MAP sits on the following groups;

- **The Local Learning Partnerships.** Community and Learning Development partners deliver positive outcomes for communities and learners. The groups look at learning demand and opportunities across the Shire within the communities they cover. The partnership delivers discrete initiatives meeting those objectives along with Live Life Aberdeenshire.
- **Health and Wellbeing Group.** is a partnership with NHS, the Marr Community Planning Team, MAP and AVA identifying work strands that support wellbeing initiatives in Marr, for example men's mental health.
- **Marr Community Planning Group.** This is a representative body of stakeholders in the community planning arena including NHS Emergency services, CLD and AVA
- **Aberdeenshire Rural Partnerships Federation.** This is a group of six rural partners all supporting community development and operating under service level agreements with Aberdeenshire Council
- **Cairngorms Nature Steering Group.** This is a strategic panel which sets out a vision and five-year action plan of delivery around key environmental outcomes. MAP is the lead partner ensuring community engagement is a key outcome in the plan.
- **Association of Cairngorm Communities.** MAP sits on this body which is a networking and information sharing group of development trusts, community associations and community councils from with the Cairngorms National Park
- **Effective Community Engagement Project.** MAP are members of the steering group for this Cairngorms 2030 project.

MAP is a valued proactive participant in these groups which show the geographically diverse and range of topics engaged in. All these partnerships produce specific packages of work and complement our networking and engagement at the local level.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



MAP Legacy

Aberdeenshire Council have asked Tarland Development Group if they will provide information on their successful community composting scheme, which began in the spring of 2010. The project was greatly supported by Development Officer Mike Powell and received vital funding through the MAP Initiative Grant Scheme. The project celebrated its 10th birthday just prior to the first UK pandemic lockdown, and is still going strong.

MAP Initiative Grant Scheme

MAP manages the Initiative Grant Scheme (IGS) as predominantly a seed corn fund which helps demonstrate confidence in the project to the community and other bigger funders. The MAP board have a rigorous process for determining the grant applications but go to great lengths to ensure the application process is simple, straight forward and appropriate to local need.

2022-2023 Projects supported by IGS

Birse and Ballogie Community Council

The Birse and Ballogie Community Council were awarded money from the IGS to help make their neighbourhood watch scheme more resilient and better equipped to help residents in an emergency situation. Their aim is to equip each co-ordinator with appropriate emergency equipment with additional emergency equipment being made available in public spaces for volunteers to access. This will enable the community to act as first responders and alert emergency services where necessary.

Glass Community Association

Following their hall consultation, it was clear that the local community would like to see more shows and a pantomime to be staged at the hall. The money they received through the IGS helped fund tickets and paid for the local school children to attend the Christmas pantomime matinee. Living in a rural community makes travelling to larger cities to see performances an expensive trip and difficult for families when public transport isn't an option.



Tarland Community Garden

The garden has been running successfully for over ten years with many families and individuals benefiting from having a local space to grow food, socialise and spend time in peace and quiet. With money from the IGS, the committee were able to renovate their raised beds. Wood was sourced from a local timber supplier and the work was carried out by community garden members. Being able to grow fresh, free vegetables is even more important now, given the increasing cost of living. In addition to improving the growing capabilities of the beds, the general upkeep of the garden is also of importance as a well maintained and cared for garden provides a sense of wellbeing.

Aboyne Paths and Tracks Group

The Aboyne Paths and Tracks group received funding from the IGS to help run a one day Emergency First Aid course for up to 12 of their work party coordinators & volunteers. Since they are working in potentially remote locations in the outdoors, it is essential to have at least one qualified First Aider on each work party. In particular one landowner requires this for them to work on their land. This stretch of path is managed for the group by Aboyne Men's Shed so their priority is to train some of their volunteers. Remaining spaces will be offered to their own work party coordinators & volunteers, then volunteers from the other paths groups in the Marr Paths Forum.

Cromar Food Waste Project

Cromar Food Waste Projects initial aim was to reduce food waste in the local area, but as the economic crisis has hit over the last year, they are now also service people who are in food insecurity or poverty. They received food from CFINE/FareShare and donated food from a depot in Aboyne and food waste (end of sell by date) from Aboyne Co-op. Supply has diminished from FareShare and they now have the need to buy basic food to meet increased demand. Initially monthly, they are now open fortnightly as a demand led service as pop up shops in Tarland and Logie Coldstone. They have seen a 5 fold increase in food items used since they started in November. Money from the IGS will help buy packaging for food being split (i.e.coffee/pasta etc.) and fund cooking workshops where they aim to engage with anyone who would benefit from learning about basic food skills.

Murray Park Trust

Murray Park Trust is an old unincorporated trust and a relatively new group of trustees want to move to a better, more appropriate legal status. This may involve transition to a two tier SCIO. Murray Park was damaged in Storm Arwen and as trustees they are trying to reinstate and recover the environmental quality of the area. In order to apply for the full range of grants available, they need the SCIO status. Money from the IGS will help with the way forward to achieve this status.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Tarland Development Group

The Tarland Development Group, working alongside MacRobert Trust, RSPB, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Aberdeenshire Council, aim to improve the habitat for butterflies, birds and bumblebees in the area. This will culminate in a walk in and around Tarland, on the existing path network, with information boards and the species and habitats at appropriate places. They will use local companies for the work and have spoken with Kraftwork and Deeside Day services for supply of the bird boxes they require. An outcome of the project will be improved local species of birds and pollinators and educational walks for all ages and groups.

Future Plans

MAP has been looking at ensuring its future as a support organisation to the communities across Marr.

The SLA arrangements with the Council have constantly been a source of uncertainty as they present a significant two-fold challenge to the organisation.

The SLAs allow MAP to work within communities without bias and based purely on issues as they emerge. MAP focuses on supporting communities collectively and transparently to articulate these issues using the action planning process. We then support the communities to establish discreet projects that tackle these issues. This is our core role and we are committed to this. We undertake this throughout Marr and return to communities as priorities and issues change and evolve; the work is a continuous cycle.

The value the council places on the SLA is demonstrated through its praise of MAP and its work and outcomes for communities but not through its annual deliberations around whether the SLA will be forthcoming and its multi-pronged approach to reporting on the outputs embedded in the SLA throughout the year.

The council has emphasised the importance of MAP and its need to be self-sustaining, but it cannot deliver its current output if it is chasing other opportunities to become self-financing. This drive for sustainability will undoubtedly lead to its role and function changing and its long-term approach dwindling to a reactive clambering for funding to support the organisation itself rather than the communities it has been established to serve.

MAP has been investigating investment in Windfarms in the Marr area in order to have more secure core funding that would potentially allow more resources to continue our community approach. This investigation continues and of course faces the challenge of realising resources for investment

MAP's role is to support communities in the Marr area to develop and grow into thriving, successful communities with secure economic, environmental and social futures.

Marr Area Partnership Annual Report 2022-23



Our thoughts for the future comprise some of the following

1. Targeted but rapid responsive support to specific communities wanting to put post-Covid recovery and resilience plans into their community planning.
2. New Partnerships to address sectoral issues such as tourism and setting up of customised support services.
3. Explore emergent issues; who can recover who cannot; where can positives be built on?
4. Building on increased use of local space for recreation, walking festivals/events for locals to build enhanced understanding and appreciation of “our place” “our community”.

As a result of meetings facilitated by Karen Derrick the board has drafted a new strategic vision and work on this is ongoing. Karen will continue to advise us and work with us to ensure that MAP remains a vibrant and effective partnership supporting its rural communities.

Summary

MAP continues to adapt well to the changeable funding landscape with committed and resilient staff. The cost of living crisis and personal and community resilience is forefront in our support to communities going forward. MAP will continue to help new groups and projects build firm foundations and support established groups with on-going governance. MAP will work to ensure community sustainability, inclusivity and diversity across all its activities, in accordance with The Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire Council’s vision for communities.

March 2023

*If you require a larger print version of this document please contact:
lindsay@marrareapartnership.org.uk*

With thanks to our supporters:



CAIRNGORMS
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ÙGH DARRAS PAIRC NÀISEANTA A'
MHONAIDH RUAIDH



THE MACROBERT TRUST