

Balvonie Park
Proposed Development of Land Adjacent to Braes of Balvonie
Review of Community Feedback and Options



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1. Executive Summary

In early 2022, the BPA undertook a community consultation survey. This report outlines its main conclusions and offers options for future use considerations for the area of land.

Of the several options considered the one receiving most support and the one we are pursuing is the planting of a new native woodland, with accessible paths for community use. We have identified and are in detailed discussion with a potential source of funding, which would cover the capital costs of creating the woodland and maintenance for the next 20 years.

Though this option would likely take up much of the area, it would still leave space for other community-led developments.

2. Introduction

Scotland's first ever Housing Expo took place in an area to the south of Inverness throughout August 2010 and showcased innovative, sustainable housing and placemaking. With the exhibition backed by funding from Highland Council and the Scottish Government, the Expo land, and land between the estate and the A9 was owned by social housing property developer and property management company Highland Housing Alliance (HHA).

The area of land between the Expo site and running adjacent to the A9 was offered by HHA to Highland Council for £1 if the local community, through a constituted organisation, could demonstrate an appropriate community use for the area of land.

It is still owned by HHA, and it is currently earmarked for community use within the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan.

Initially this offer was considered by Inverness South Community Council who elected not to take the project forward and encouraged the formation of a new body who might progress this on behalf of the local community.

In 2013 a new Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) called the Balvonie Park Association (BPA) was established with some members of the community council and one or two other interested individuals. Various studies were undertaken, including a small community survey, but no actions were formally taken forward before the BPA fell into abeyance.

Recent years have seen renewed community interest in the land and an evolution of the BPA. A new BPA committee are taking this interest forward, and members have joined representing residents from across Milton of Leys.

Highland Council have made it clear that they will not be in a position to adopt this land in future, and funding sources are limited. Any development therefore needs to be community-led and managed.

There remains an opportunity for the community to take ownership of the land through the Community Asset Transfer process, and use it for the benefit of Milton of Leys residents.

The BPA are investigating ways to make the best use of the land, improving the biodiversity and ecological value of the and while being financially sustainable and offering benefits for the whole Milton of Leys community.

This report seeks to review the feedback received through BPA meetings and community survey responses in order to identify options for community development that could be utilised, investigating their suitability and practicality, in order to provide an asset to benefit the local community.

The main aim of the report is to:

- consider the views obtained through the community consultation survey and public meetings
- review the options for benefits, weaknesses and potential viability
- identify possible funding streams and grant aid that the Balvonie Park Association could secure to fund any development options
- create a body of evidence that could be used by the Balvonie Park Association to support identified options.

Following a community survey consultation process in early 2022, social media engagement and through a number of BPA meetings open to the public, a number of options have been raised for consideration.

The most pertinent and applicable of these have been considered in this study and are as follows:

- Community woodlands
- Outdoor open space – developed and suitable for a range of environmental passive leisure activities
- Allotments
- Outdoor low-impact recreation facilities

3. About Balvonie Park Association

The Balvonie Park Association (BPA) was established to lead on acquiring and managing the development of land between Braes of Balvonie (the estate at the top of Milton of Leys in Inverness previously known as Highland/Scotland’s Housing Expo) and the A9. The Highland Council have designated these two fields in the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan as an area that should be for the benefit of the local community.

The BPA is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with the following members:

	First Name	Surname
1	Kim	Thain
2	Nicolas	Scroggie
3	John	McNally
4	Jean-Paul	Kowaliski
5	Lesley	Gallagher
6	Danny	Gallagher
7	Peter	Watson

8	Rachel	Limbrick
9	Laura	Ashley
10	Sam	Lennon
11	David	Ord
12	Gemma	Macleod
13	Kirsteen	Adams
14	Lorraine	Bell
15	Megan	Westmoreland
16	Craig	Cameron
17	Aga	Gajzler
18	Heather	MacDonald
19	Greg	Adams
20	Paul	Macleod
21	Danny	Mackenzie

The BPA previously benefitted from having Carolyn Caddick, member of Highland Council and Depute Provost, supporting the committee, but she has since retired. The committee is now seeking a replacement following the recent council elections.

4. About the Location

Braes of Balvonie

In August 2010, Scotland's Housing Expo was opened at Braes of Balvonie in the Milton of Leys area of Inverness. A total of 52 sustainable house designs were created as part of the exposition, all following a sustainable development remit. Following the formal element of the exposition, the houses were occupied by owners/tenants who now form the community of Braes of Balvonie.

Since the Housing Expo, further developments have been completed on the estate, doubling its size.

The location of the site of community interest

The site of interest to the community lies alongside Braes of Balvonie, to the west of the A9 at the top of Drumossie Brae on the south side of Inverness. Between the housing area and the A9 lies an area of land owned by HHA but designated by The Highland Council in the Inner Moray Firth Local Area Development Plan as an area that should be retained for the benefit of the community.

The site is currently a disused farmers field, consisting of grass land, with some older trees (mainly ash, and beech, some of which are mature and subject to Tree Protection Orders) and gorse on the surrounding borders, this boundary and the adjacent land owned by the residents of BPA is species rich with several Annex 1 species including raptors and bats roosting and feeding in the existing woodland.

Access by vehicle is via a gated entrance to a single-track haul road which runs from the top of Braes of Balvonie down one side of the to an area of hard standing. This haul road and parking area was installed by Bancon Construction as a work site when a portion of top field was used as a depot by the construction company when the new Albyn Housing extension to the Braes of Balvonie development was being developed.

There is also access required in the top field for SSEN as there are some power lines running along its southern edge.



Milton of Leys

Milton of Leys lies within the council ward of Inverness South. Inverness South is one of 22 wards within the Highland area and is served by 4 councillors. Although mainly a rural ward it contains the main Inverness expansion areas of Westhill, Inshes, Milton of Leys and Slackbuie.

Inverness South is one of the fastest growing areas of the Highlands. The area's population grew by 25% over a 10-year period between 2010 and 2020. In this period over 1,600 new homes were constructed in the area. Inverness South now has a total population of 16,188. Milton of Leys as a locality has around 3,160 residents (2020 NRS figures)

Although there has been rapid expansion in housing areas in the Inverness South ward this has not been reflected in the development of community infrastructure and facilities needed to support this growth. Too much emphasis was placed on the development of housing at the expense of community

infrastructure and services, leaving these expanded communities severely lacking in these commodities.

Within Milton of Leys there now exists a primary school accommodating around 300 pupils and with associated community facilities including two bookable indoor spaces and an outdoor all-weather surface multi-use games area (MUGA), a local co-op grocery store, two takeaways and a small local pharmacy. A new nursery/pre-school and care home are currently both under construction.

A number of children's play areas have been constructed by housing developers however none of these are what might be considered extensive and cater for a predominantly younger age group.

There are currently two designated sports pitches in Milton of Leys, a rough "kick about" area beside Cedarwood Avenue and the school MUGA.

A small 'kick pitch' is included within the Tulloch Homes planning application for their Leys Green development, but despite promises and the first phases of housing being complete, work on this does not appear to have commenced. There are no community facilities specifically for older members of the community.

The recent COVID pandemic has further highlighted the severe lack of useable outdoor space in the Milton of Leys area. This proposal has recognised these deficiencies and intrinsic function of the proposal is to create a long-term accessible woodland offering opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and wellbeing.

5. Community Consultation Survey

It has always been clear that the local community of Milton of Leys would require to be consulted as fully as possible to ensure that a democratically agreeable solution was arrived at. The land runs adjacent to the Braes of Balvonie development, and those residents must be consulted fully. But the land is designated for the benefit of residents of the wider Milton of Leys area, so it was equally important that those residents' views were represented.

Due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, in-person events and physical survey sheets were not seen as practical. There were also issues with gaining access to the BPA bank account from the previous committee due to changes of address and restricted bank opening hours. As a result, it was decided at online BPA meetings that an online survey was both more practical, safe, and affordable.

This was set up using a paid subscription to SurveyMonkey, allowing anyone with the link to be able to complete the survey online.

The survey link was shared to contacts using email via the committee, but the focus was on sharing via social media, specifically Facebook. It was reposted on neighbourhood pages such as Milton of Leys Residents and Braes of Balvonie Residents, the BPA Facebook page, and sent to local Councillors and the Milton of Leys Primary PTA and local Community Council to share.

In total, 197 responses were received, which represented approximately 6.2% of Milton of Leys residents. The quantitative outcomes of the survey are detailed below with the qualitative comments being illustrated in Appendix One.

Q1 How important is it to you that the land at Braes of Balvonie is kept for community use? –

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

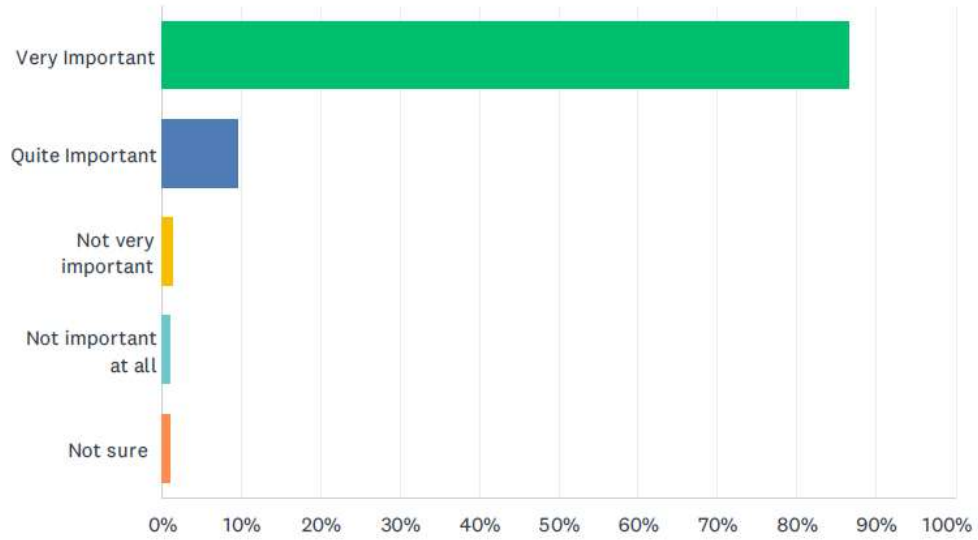


Figure 1. How important is it that the land is retained for community use

Most respondents were clear that they wanted the land retained for the community. Only 5 respondents answered, “Not very important” or “Not important at all”. Two respondents were unsure.

Q2 Would you support a plan to use much of the land to plant a native woodland with accessible path network for community use?

Answered: 195 Skipped: 2

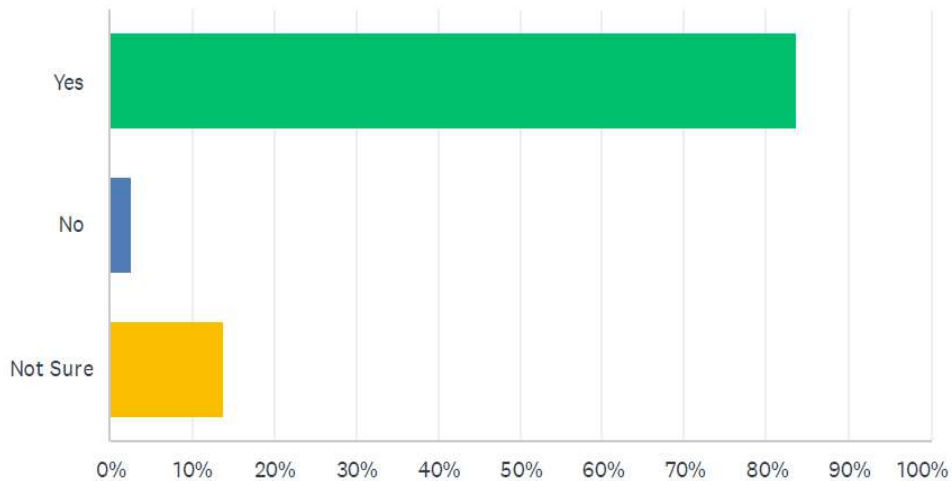


Figure 2. Support for planting of native woodland and accessible path network

The vast majority (163) of respondents indicated that they supported plans for planting a native woodland. Five people were unsupportive, 27 were unsure, and two skipped the question.

Q3 How often do you visit the land at Braes of Balvonie?

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

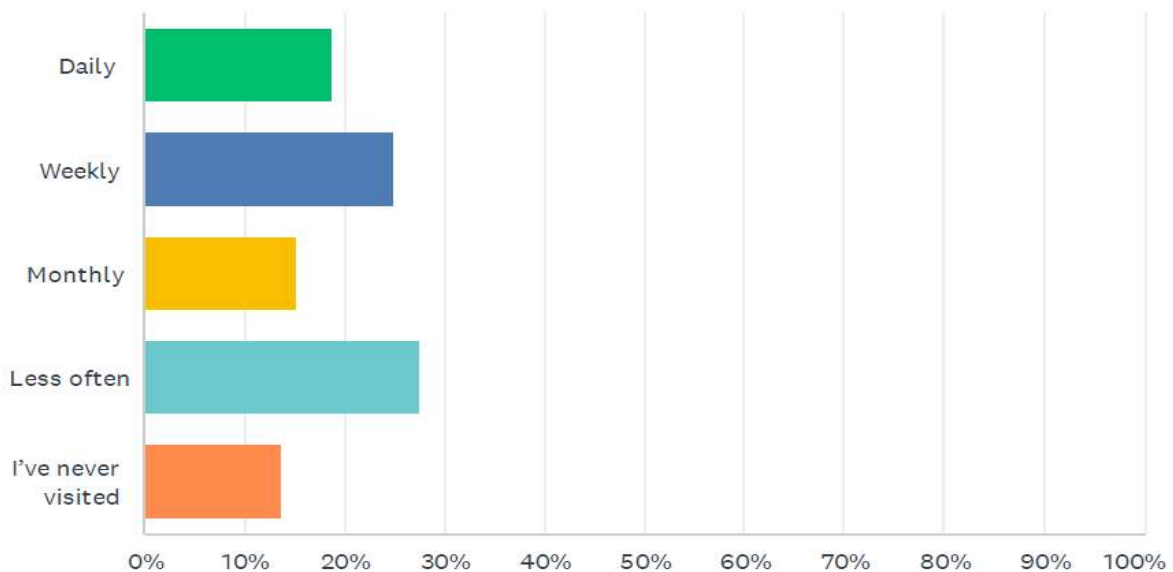


Figure 3. Current frequency of visiting

There was a real range of current visits to the area, but most visiting monthly, less often, or never having visited at all.

Q4 How likely is it you would visit the area if community facilities were available?

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

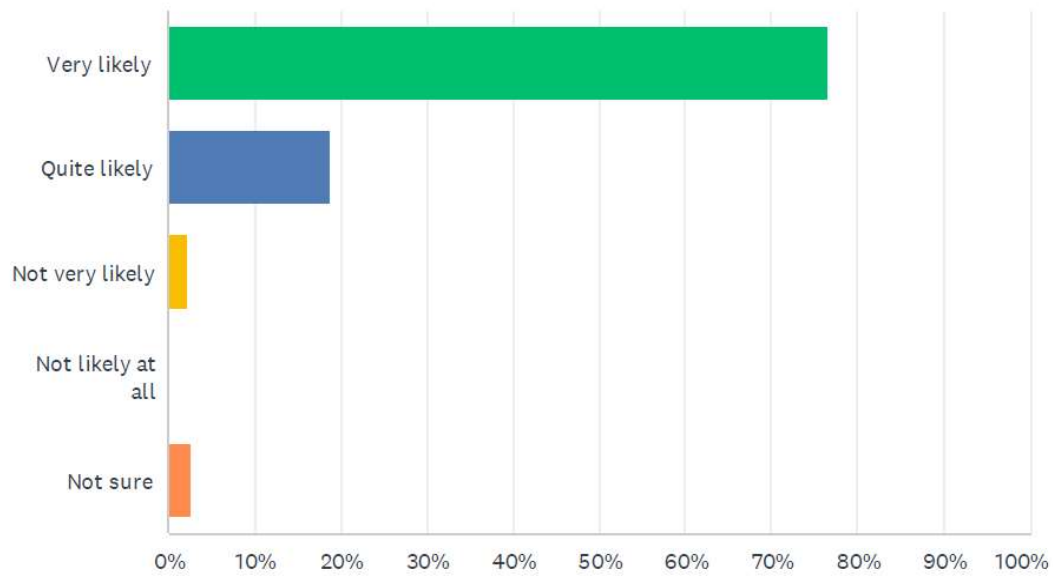


Figure 4. Potential likelihood of visiting

Comparing this to the previous question, it seems that most respondents would be much more likely to visit if community facilities were available.

Q5 Would you be likely to visit and/or use the following? Choose all that apply.

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

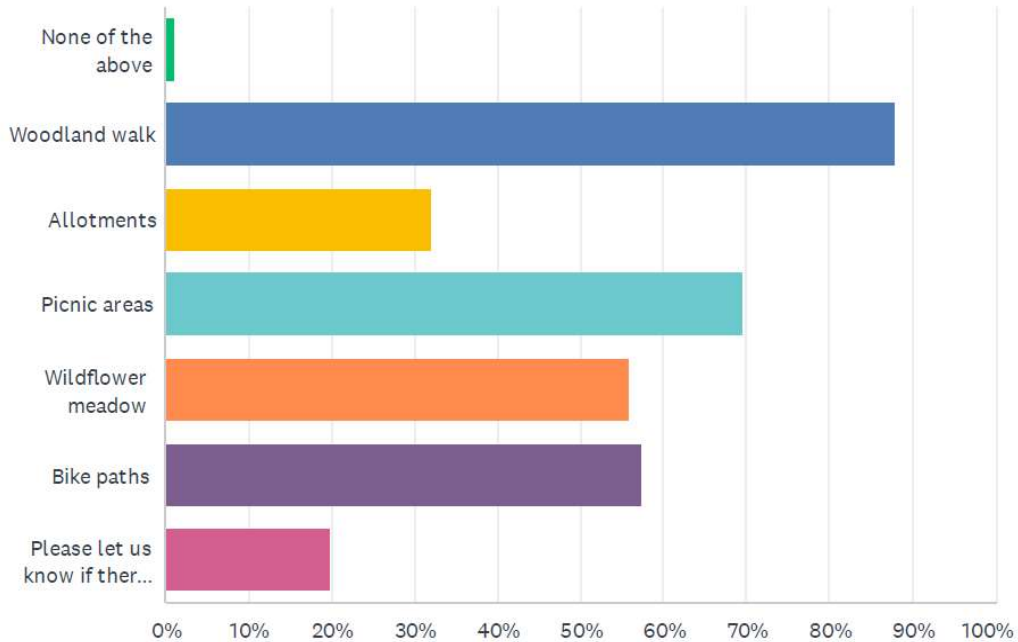


Figure 5. Facilities to encourage visiting

A woodland walk was by far the most popular of the options we offered to encourage people to visit, closely followed by picnic areas, bike paths and a wildflower meadow. We chose these options as they are all low-impact, affordable and sustainable. However, we also offered an “other” option, which opened a text box where respondents could type in their own ideas of what they would like to see. These responses are included in Appendix 1.

Respondents were asked to indicate which facilities, from a list provided, they would welcome in the proposed development area. There was a general sense within the responses to suggest a leaning towards less formal development and more enhancement of the open space for non-structured recreation.

Q6 By what method would you be most likely to visit the area?

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

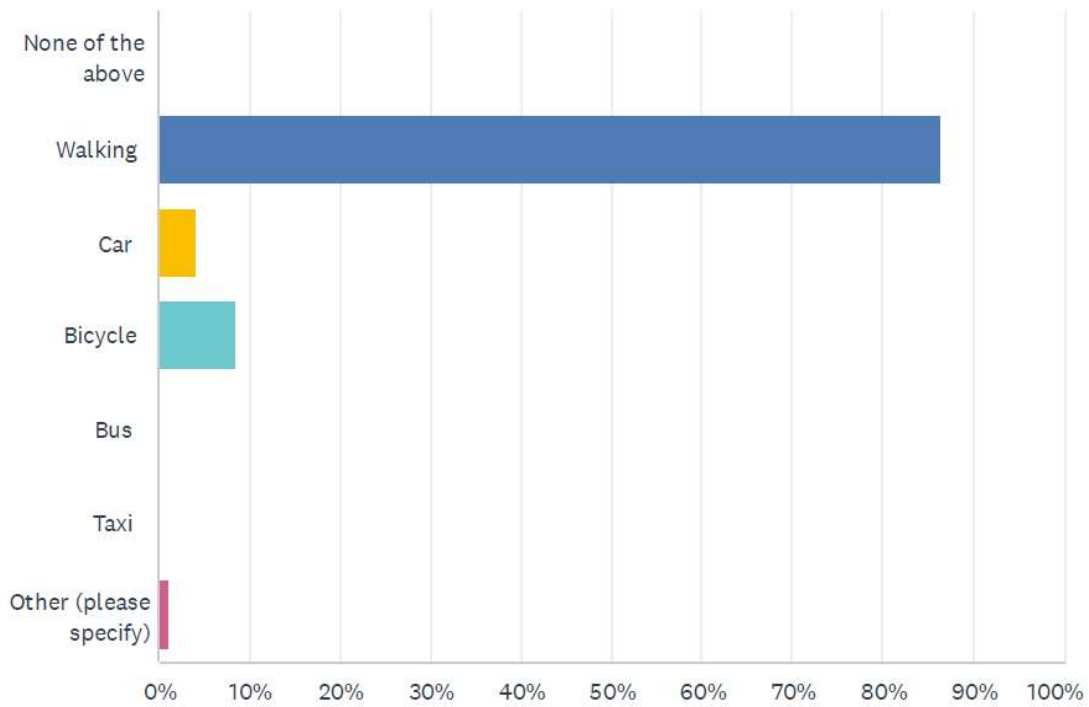


Figure 6. Method of travel

The majority of respondents indicated they would most likely walk to the area, with a small number indicating they would cycle or drive. This may influence how we approach access to the site and future use of the haul road/parking area.

Q7 If a Milton of Leys Residents Association was set up, would you be willing to pay a small annual fee for the upkeep and insurance of Balvonie Park? For example, £10 per annum?

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

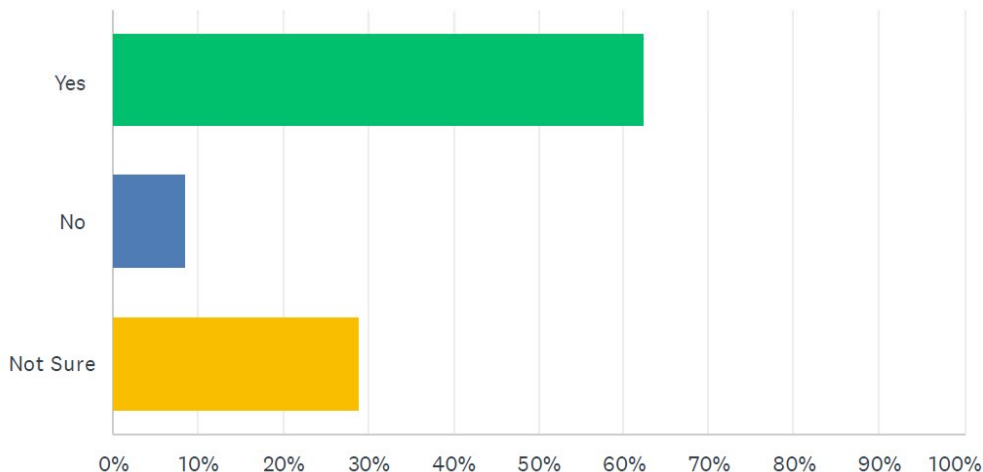


Figure 7. Potential for annual fee

When reviewing how the development could generate income in future, we reflected on a potential fee through a Residents Association. The responses were mixed but generally open to the idea if it was seen to bring value, be transparent and used appropriately. This option could be something reviewed further in future, in consultation with the community.

Q8 Are you answering as a..

Answered: 197 Skipped: 0

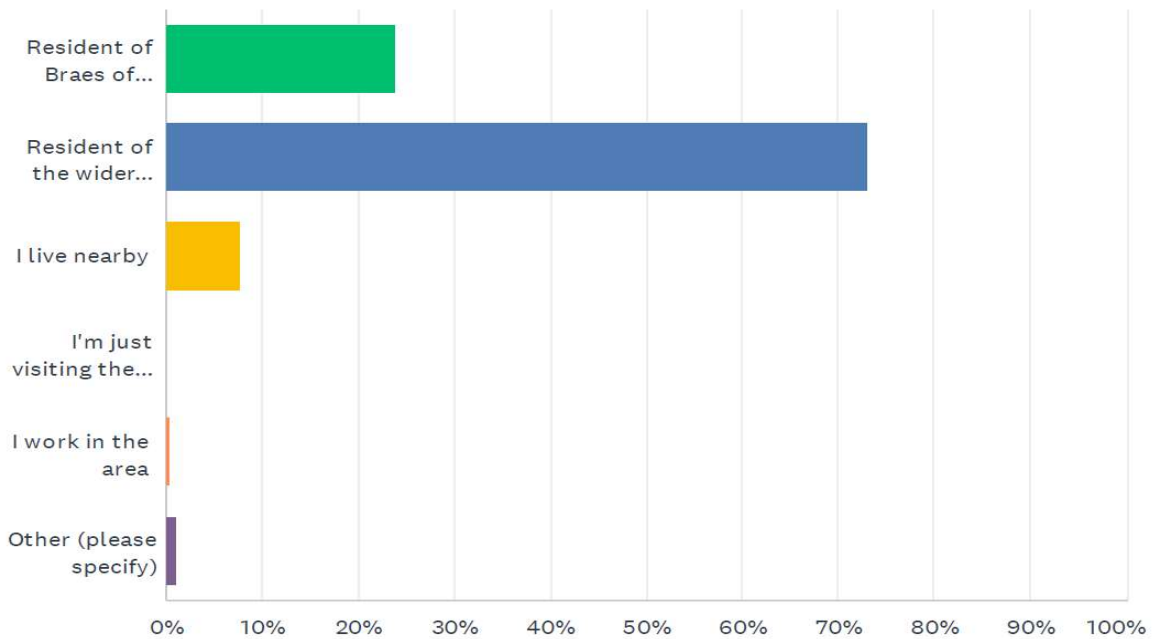


Figure 8. Residential status

The majority of respondents were based in the wider Milton of Leys area, but with a good representation from Braes of Balvonie.

Q9 How old are you?

Answered: 196 Skipped: 1

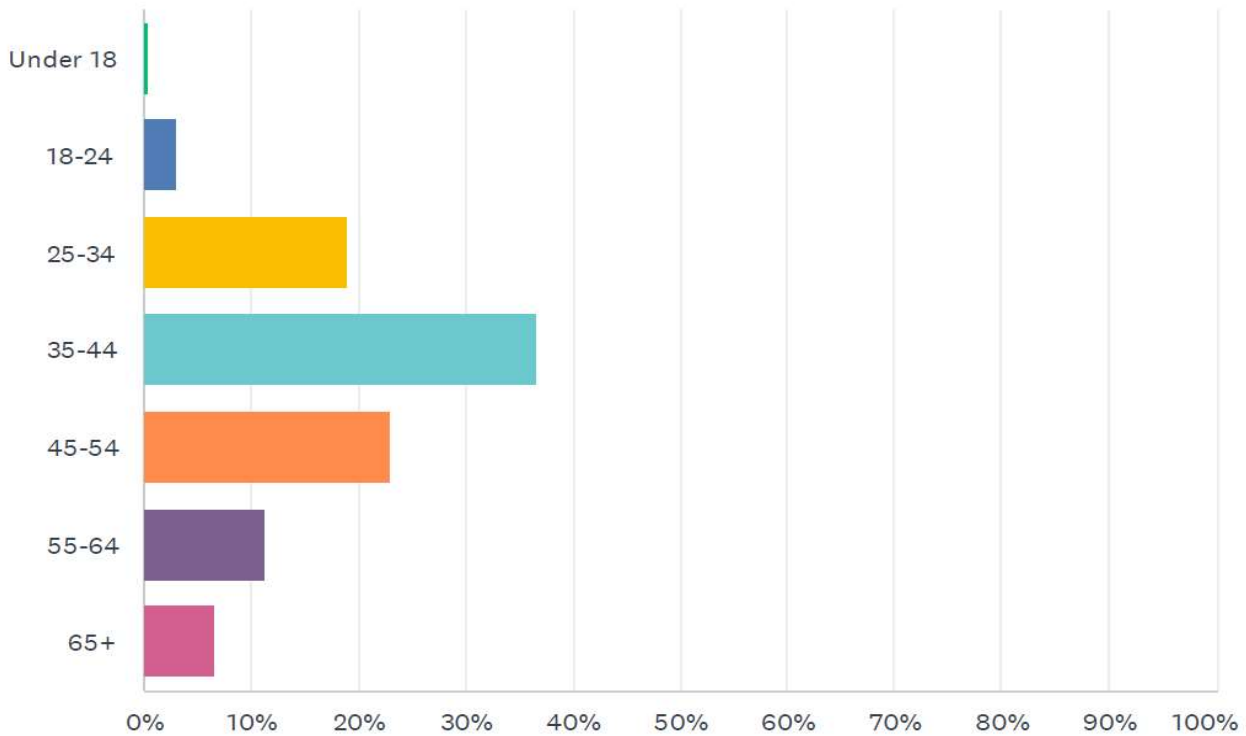


Figure 9. Age demographic

The age demographic of respondents showed a good spread, with all age ranges represented. Fewer under-25's responded, but many of the older respondents requested facilities for children and teenagers, so their requirements are likely included in the responses.

Question 10 was a free text question, asking respondents for any comments they may have regarding use of the area. A lot of responses were received to this question and these have been included verbatim alongside the other free text responses from the survey in Appendix 1.

A few of the pertinent and recurring issues were for the use of the land for allotments, the ring fencing of the area for low-impact community space such as picnic areas, cycle tracks and space for children to explore, ensuring it also benefits local wildlife, and a strong desire to ensure that the land is not developed for housing.

6. The Options

The area of land at Braes of Balvonie has the potential to be used for a number of community related uses. Deciding on which option best suits the amenity needs of the community whilst ensuring best use of the land and minimal disruption to neighbouring properties requires careful and detailed consideration.

Through the various public meetings and the community consultation survey, the following options for development have been identified as being within the top priorities for most respondents, and have therefore been considered:

- Community woodlands
- Outdoor open and green space e.g., wildflower meadows
- Allotments
- Children's play area
- Community gathering space, such as a community centre and/or cafe

6.1. Community Woodlands



6.1.1. What is a community woodland?

According to the Community Woodlands Association, a community woodland is one partly or completely controlled by the local community, through a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the group, or managed in partnership with a public or private sector landowner.

Community woodlands are extremely diverse, embracing all woodland types from ancient semi-natural woods to extensive conifer plantations, and ranging from less than a hectare to over a thousand hectares in size.

There are around 200 community woodland groups in Scotland, from the highlands and islands to the heart of our major cities; collectively they own and manage tens of thousands of hectares of forest,

ranging from ancient semi-native woodlands to large conifer plantations and recent regeneration on urban brownfield sites.

6.1.2. Benefits of community woodlands

Individuals, groups and their own communities, are increasingly recognising woodland and associated activity as being an important part of their cultural heritage.

Scotland's community woodlands deliver a huge range of public benefits, including:

- Recreation - providing wide-ranging opportunities for outdoor recreation, from informal paths and 'all ability' facilities to mountain bike trails and orienteering courses.
- Biodiversity & Conservation - restoring and expanding native woodlands, and carrying out habitat improvements within other forest types, to conserve and enhance Scotland's biodiversity and contribute to climate change mitigation.
- Economic development - increasing the value of forestry to local communities, creating jobs and developing local processing and markets for timber and non-timber forest products.
- Renewable energy - developing local supply chains and markets for wood fuel, to help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and support sustainable forest management.
- Social inclusion - involving all sections of the community in planning and decision-making and ensuring that the benefits of community woodlands are available to all.

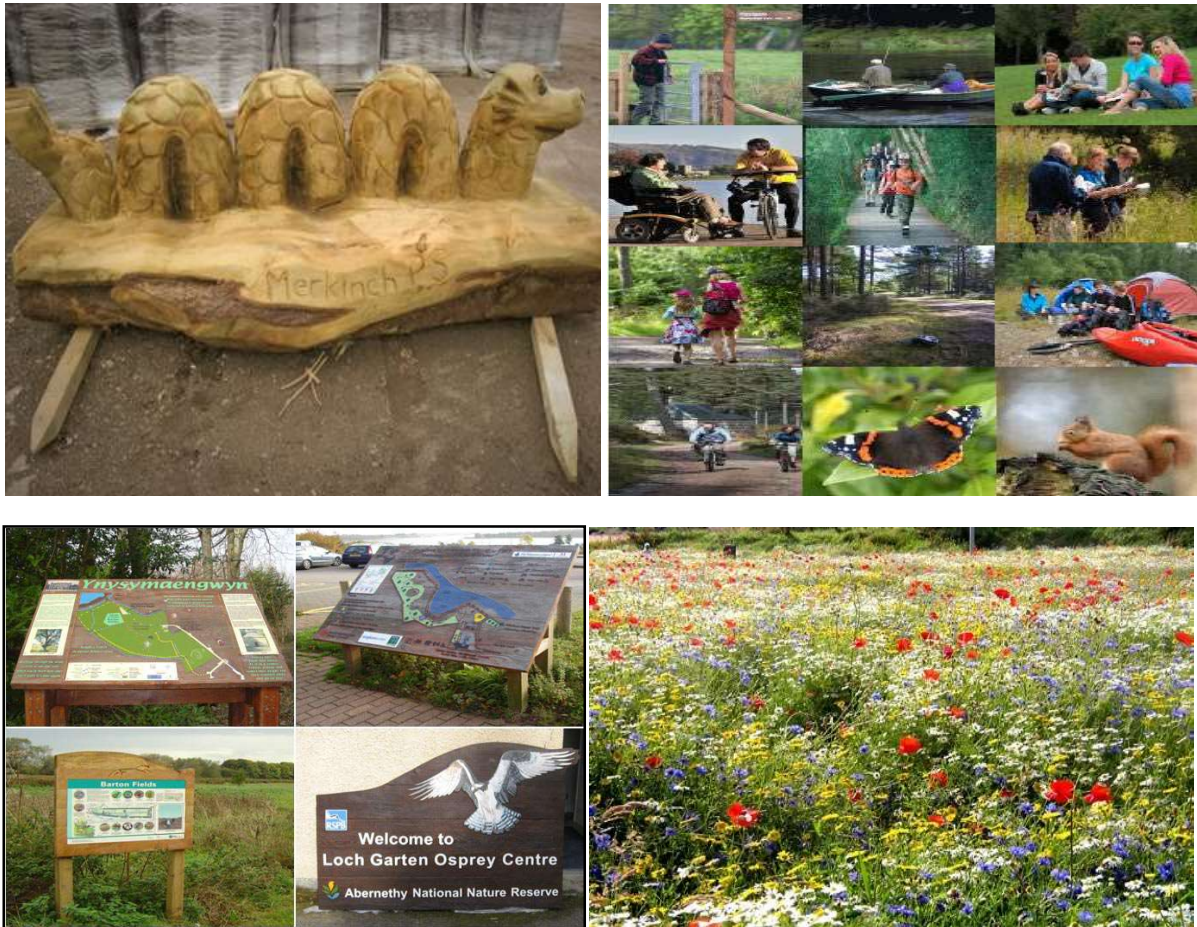
Community Priorities

The qualitative comments from both the community survey and the regular BPA meetings are that local residents want development to be low-impact and have environmental benefits to the area. Community woodlands fit this request.

SWOT Analysis: Community Woodland

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve ambience and aesthetics • Significantly improve biodiversity in area • Adds to national biodiversity and net zero targets • Supports native planting • Access for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliant on limited funding sources
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community ownership and management scheme • Community planting scheme • Woodland walks and paths network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive species • Vandalism and damage to plantings e.g., litter, fires • Wildlife e.g., deer (which can be mitigated against with appropriate fencing, planting and tree guards)

6.2. Outdoor open and green space



6.2.1. What is Green and Open Space

Open and green space can be very diverse in the types of land and areas it encompasses. The Scottish Government, in their Scottish Planning Policy: Open space and physical activity, define open space as a term which;

"consists of any vegetated land or structure, water or geological feature within and on the edges of settlements, including allotments, trees, woodland, paths and 'civic space' consisting of squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function."

For the purpose of this report, we have focused this section on open spaces, and shrub/flower planting, as both woodlands and allotments are considered in separate sections.

6.2.2. Benefits of Open and Green Space

Open and Green space is an essential ingredient of successful neighbourhoods and it provides a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities. There is huge national demand for better quality open spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime reduction and the quality of life in every neighbourhood.

Open and Green Space: Health Benefits

The following are some of the key issues that have been raised with regard to benefits to health and well being associated with green space;

- The proximity and accessibility of open and green spaces in relation to residential areas appears to affect the overall levels of physical activity/exercise. This has been found to be especially true for children and young people as well as older people.
- Physical exercise in open and green spaces is generally positively associated with promoting wellbeing and recovery from stress.
- There is evidence that some behavioural or emotional problems in children, such as attention deficit disorder, can be improved by exposure to open and green space. Exposure to open and green spaces can also help tackle other health issues affecting children such as childhood obesity.
- Open space provides a wealth of opportunities for outdoor play, which is known to have developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people. Open and green space areas provide challenging environments that can help to stimulate children and help them develop motor skills.

Open and Green Space: Social and Community Values

Open space affords opportunities for social interaction between people of different communities, fostering social inclusion and community development;

- Open and green spaces can often act a central focus for community activity, involvement and capacity building. This can lead to positive developments in citizenship and local pride and reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Open space provides opportunities for communities to get involved and to an extent take ownership in creative and cultural activities by supplying a venue for cultural events and festivals, outdoor events or public art installations.
- Open and green space plays a significant role in providing places for social interaction for all groups found in communities due to the diversity that can be found in these areas. As people move from one life stage to another, this leads to changes in how they perceive and use open and green spaces.
- Research has shown that individuals who have some nearby vegetation or live closer to an open space seem better prepared and more effective in managing major life issues, coping with poverty and performing better in cognitive tasks. This applies to both adults and children, and is especially relevant to those living in difficult social or economic circumstances.
- Open space can function as an 'outdoor classroom' offering formal and informal learning opportunities for schools and communities thereby contributing to lifelong learning and helping to improve educational attainment.

Open and Green Space: Economic Impact

This section addresses the key issues identified on how green and open space can provide an economic impact in communities;

- Quality open and green space is known to have a significant positive impact on house prices, supporting the creation of more stable housing markets.
- Good quality open space contributes significantly to urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal and development projects by improving the image of the place and attracting investment.
- It improves investor and resident perception of an area by raising confidence in the area.

Open and Green Space: Environmental Impact

The inclusion of open and green space in communities can have several positive environmental impacts;

- Well designed open space contributes towards ecological diversity and supports environmental sustainability.

- Green and open space areas improve air quality and can reduce noise pollution and the visual intrusion from traffic.
- Within urban open space, varied habitats help to relieve the monotony of the urban landscape with different colours, textures and sounds and help to bring the delights of the countryside into urban areas.

Shrub and flower planting

Specific references within both the survey and public meeting discussions about creating wild spaces with either natural or intentional planting were also raised. The following should be considered if a tree, shrub and flower planting programme was to take place:

- Shrubs and flowers are only planted where they would enhance the make-up
- Any shrubs and flowers are not planted at random but within a planned design
- Species used are appropriate to the Balvonie Park location and be native to Scotland
- Planting should be carried out under optimal conditions for plant establishment and survival using methods to ensure maximum seed germination, plant growth and survival.
- A comprehensive management plan should be put in place

SWOT Analysis: Shrub and Flower Planting

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve ambience and aesthetics • Improve biodiversity in area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest from community
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community ownership and management scheme for tending flowers and plants • Community planting scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive species • Vandalism and damage to plantings • Wildlife e.g, deer (which can be mitigated against with appropriate fencing)

Wildflower meadow

The further potential development of wild and open space is the introduction of a wildflower meadow. Wildflower meadows offer a diverse and typically attractive habitat that can be appreciated and enjoyed by young and old alike. During the last century, 97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been lost due to changes in land management. The introduction of a wildflower meadow in an urban setting can offer several advantages:

- Plant diversity attracts insects and other invertebrates, birds and animals
- The range of flowering species housed in these meadows add a changing palate of colour to urban environments as the seasons progress
- Community ownership can be fostered and encouraged around the meadow through active involvement in activities. This can include maintenance and mowing of the area through to the collection of the seeds produced in the meadow to be sold
- A wild flower meadow can provide opportunities in terms of both education and recreation, from nature lessons to art lessons

- A wildflower area can have a significant role in developing the ambience of an area; bring a little piece of the countryside to an urban environment

Introduction and Management of Meadow

If the introduction of a wildflower meadow was to happen consultations would have to take place with local wildlife bodies to ensure that suitable species are introduced in the meadow. Factors that would have to be considered include pedology, hydrology and the region's climatic conditions. There would also need to be an appropriate management regime in place to ensure the sustainability and long-term success of the meadow. Annual mowing and grazing would have to be carried out when plants set and shed seeds.

Strategic Context

Scotland's Biodiversity: it's in your hands

This is a strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland. It represents Scotland's response to its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the European Union's 6th Environmental Action Programme and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, along with the Scottish Government's stated desire to put biodiversity at the heart of our national identity and culture. Delivery of the strategy is pursued through partnership working (Scottish Government, NatureScot, Forestry Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, etc). The strategy sets out three main areas of work:

- Species and habitat work which are also part of a UK plan
- Existing work on National Nature Reserves etc
- Biodiversity Implementation Plans

Highland Council: Local Biodiversity Action Plan

A variety of different groups have been identified to assist in delivering the actions and these groups are; community groups, businesses, classrooms, land managers, the local authority and other agencies. The main aims of the action plan are to:

- raise awareness of biodiversity
- identify particular habitats and species which are considered important
- suggest projects and actions that could be undertaken by individuals, communities and agencies

Meadow Issues

Despite bringing floral and faunal diversity and an aesthetic benefit to urban areas, Wildflower meadows present some negative issues and complications:

- These areas can be perceived as being untidy; with perceptions of the areas being a wilderness, waste ground or an abandoned area
- The physical height of the meadow when in comparison with mown grassland areas can be seen to impede access for humans
- Management of a wildflower meadow is a long-term commitment. Meadows need time to become established and flourish. If the support is not in place these areas can become overrun by grasses, brambles, weeds and shrubs.
- Wildflower seed is more expensive than grass seed and this would have to be considered in the management regime for the meadow

Several of these issues could be overcome at the community level through engagement and education events, signage and interpretation around the meadow site or even fencing.

SWOT Analysis: Wildflower Meadow

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase local biodiversity of area • Improve area ambiance • Access for all • Can appeal to all age groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term management commitment to area needed • Negative perceptions of areas appearance
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of site as an education resource • Develop community engagement and ownership of site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive species • Misuse of area; Grass fires, fly tipping and littering • Lack of interest/commitment from public to site

Enhanced landscaping

The further amenity option identified for this development within the context of a wild and open space was the introduction hard landscaping works and associated low impact infrastructure which would add character and an added dimension to the park. This could be in the form of structured footpaths/cycleways, picnic areas, benches, signs, etc.



6.3. Allotments



6.3.1. Highland Council Allotment Policy

The Highland Council Allotment Policy is likely in need of a refresh, due to the dates it contains. However, its aims are still relevant.

Allotment gardening offers the benefit of a healthy lifestyle all year round that is active, sustainable and socially inclusive. The Highland Council is committed to working with all stakeholders in order to increase the provision of allotments in line with demand across the Highlands. In doing this, the Council aims to achieve the following:

- Aim 1: to increase the provision of allotments across the Highland Council area. Performance towards this aim will be measured by the number of new allotment sites established and the maintenance of existing sites. Our target is to establish at least 4 new sites and have identified suitable land for a further 4 sites by April 2014.
- Aim 2: to improve local environments through increased biodiversity. New allotment sites will provide an increased diversity of habitats. This policy encourages planting of new hedgerows to further enhance biodiversity. Baseline measurements of hedgerow length will be performed on new allotment sites and reviewed annually.
- Aim 3: to promote the social inclusion and health benefits of allotments. To assess performance towards this aim, Allotment Associations will be asked to participate in using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale to measure any difference in wellbeing before and after allotment sites are established. The Council will seek to work with existing community groups to promote the development of allotments in areas of concentrated multiple deprivation.
- Aim 4: allotment sites are well used and effectively managed by empowered community groups. Performance will be measured by the number of interventions needed from the Council regarding site management and by the level of allotment plot usage. Targets are that there will be no interventions needed, and at least 90% of available allotments are in use.

6.3.2. Opportunities for allotments

The south side of Inverness has a very limited supply of allotment gardens, however the demand for such facilities is clearly in existence given the number of references to allotments as a potential development option for the site.

Previous discussions with committee members of the nearest allotments, Blackthorn Allotments in Culduthel, has shown them to be supportive of another area of allotments in the south of the City, not least as they have an extensive waiting list.

The proposed site within Milton of Leys could provide for a number of allotments which would support the sustainable ethos of the Braes of Balvonie development and encourage the uptake of healthy living among all members of the community in Milton of Leys.

6.4. Children's play area

6.4.1. Play Provision: Strategic Context

Play spaces, play services and provision can contribute towards local and national policy objectives across a range of areas. The inclusion of play in law and national policy documents underlines the importance of a play provision which integrates social, environmental and economic objectives.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It values play and states: "the Planning system has a role in helping to create an environment where physical wellbeing is improved and activity made easier. Providing play space and other opportunities for children and young people to play freely, explore, discover and initiate their own activities can support their development."

SPP places responsibility with local authorities to support, protect and enhance open space and opportunities for sport and recreation, which includes outdoor play spaces.

6.4.2. Viability in the current financial climate

As it stands, both HHA and the Highland Council have been clear that any development on the land at Braes of Balvonie must be owned, managed and maintained by the community, or by agents on their behalf. The Council has stated that it will not take over the maintenance of any facilities.

As a result of this lack of support, dedicated children play areas are not within the scope of the BPA's initial plans to develop the area. Funding for such facilities is difficult to achieve, and the BPA cannot afford to undertake construction and maintenance, or insurance costs, itself as it currently has no income.

The promise of facilities nearby has been made by housing developers, but remains unfulfilled.

Child play facilities will remain on the list of potential future projects. But for the foreseeable future, the BPA will focus on supporting community efforts to pressure developers and the Local Authority to fulfil their responsibilities to provide what has been promised elsewhere in Milton of Leys.

7. Risk Assessment

The following risk register considers the various risks associated with developing Balvonie Park for community use. This register considers those hazards and the means by which they may be mitigated against.

Balvonie Park Association				Risk Register		Date: July 2022	
		Risk Categories:		0-8 Low Risk	9-17 Medium Risk	18-25 High Risk	
Risk Area	Risk Identified (Describe the risk to be managed)	Probability Factor (1-5, with 5 being most probable)	Impact Factor (1-5, with 5 being most severe)	Risk Ranking (probability x impact = probability)	Risk Management (how the risk will be managed)		
1.1	Lack of continuity due to a decrease in number of volunteers	4	5	20	Volunteers and community activists in general are decreasing. Balvonie Park Association will require to consider succession planning to bring forward a new generation of volunteers.	BPA Committee	
1.2	Inability to agree on a shared vision of potential development	2	4	8	The community survey and recent meetings seems to have shown a shared vision for the land exists. Ongoing plans need to continue to be communicated to ensure sustained support for the proposals amongst current and any new residents.	BPA Committee	
1.3	Resistance from local residents to see anything developed locally	3	5	15	The consensus from the survey and meetings is for low-impact development in the area. Current support needs to be maintained, especially in light of a lack of promised facilities from housing developers locally.	BPA Committee	
1.5	Securing capital funding to deliver the approved projects	4	5	20	The BPA has verbal agreements of likely funding via SSEN transmission for development of the woodland project. However if this was to fall through for any reason, alternative funding would need to be found.	BPA Committee	
1.6	Identifying the revenue implications of maintaining the approved projects	4	4	16	The BPA has verbal agreements of likely funding via SSEN transmission for development of the woodland project. However if this was to fall through for any reason, alternative funding would need to be found.	BPA Committee	

8. Potential Funding Sources

8.1.1. Funding for community woodland planting

Having reviewed options, we have identified a potential source of funding and support for developing woodland at Braes of Balvonie.

SSEN Transmission (the trading name for Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc), is part of the SSE plc Group, and responsible for the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland. The network consists of underground and subsea cables, overhead lines on wooden poles or steel towers, and electricity substations.

Scotland's transmission network has a strategic role to play in supporting delivery of the UK's Net Zero target. We're already a mass exporter of renewable energy, with around two thirds of power generated in our networks area exported south. By 2050, the north of Scotland will need 33-35GW of renewable energy capacity to support net zero delivery. For context, we currently have just over 6GW of renewable generation connected in the north of Scotland.

SSEN Transmission have committed to ensuring that new projects must not result in a net loss in woodland and are exploring opportunities to work with suitable not-for-profit organisations to fund planting of woodland to meet these obligations. SSEN Transmission has also indicated that the community woodland proposed will also offer opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain.

SSEN Transmission will financially support the development and implementation of planting schemes which meet the requirements of the relevant regulators. Annual maintenance costs for approximately 20 years after initial planting will also be covered. There is an emphasis on schemes planting native broadleaved species whilst demonstrating additional social benefits. A 20-year agreement will be established for any planted areas to ensure the longevity of the woodland.

8.1.2. Additional Facilities

Members of the BPA have had initial discussions with other organisations, such as those who run allotments, are looking to set up social enterprises, and others. These are all in early stages and we have instead decided to focus on the main source of funding currently available, which is for the community woodland.

9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix One – Free Text comments from Public Consultation Surveys

9.1.1. Please let us know if there is anything else you would like to see the site used for? (please specify)

Mini festival site, outdoor learning for the children, community hall such as Farr Woods

Football pitch or Astro turf park for ball sports

Doc surgery school senior

Skate park

Or Leave it as it is

A woodland playground like at Abriachan

Den building and playing

Fields to walk my dog with my little ones

Community cafe /tearoom

Dog Park

Kids play park

Community beehives? Or an orchard?

Real proper park with decent swing, climbing areas for children
Community hall

Adventure play park

Park with exercise equipment or dog park
Dog waste disposal bins are critical to such a development.

Picnic area with tea/coffee van

As an owner of dogs I sometimes find it hard to find anywhere in Milton of leys to let my dogs run around to stretch their legs. With lots of people owning dogs in the area there is nowhere that has enough open space to let your dog play fetch. I find that there is so little space that all the dog owners are clumped in a tight area which can cause problems. there are plenty of kids parks but not anywhere local to let a dog run around. it would be nice to have some cut fields with trees and paths. it would be nice to see a wildlife pond somewhere in the future in MOL that ducks might visit. sometimes it's just nice to have fields of grass for people to play on or they can sit down for a picnic. At the moment the best place in Milton of leys to let your dog run around it a farmer's field which you can use all year round.

Pub/restaurant

Skate park for scooters

Kids playing park/ all weather football pitch or basketball court

Dog exercise area

A fitness trail.

A wee café
Community Hall
Pram accessible
Community hall and a decent children's park
Infants play park, outdoor adventure area
Football pitch
Dog run secured area
Community hall
Pump track/skate park
Shops, amenities, pub
Basketball court, play Park
Community forest classroom / versatile space that could be used for birthday party/exercise classes
Climbing equipment for kids
Play park, football pitch

9.1.2. Do you have any other comments regarding the use of the area?

I think this would be a wonderful use of the space instead of more houses being built. I would use this area regularly for walks with the dog and with my family. Delighted to see this, this is what the community needs.

Not to be used for housing

No more houses please. I was gutted with Milton Greens was developed

Tree planting would help provide a barrier to the A9 road noise

Really important to keep this area. Thank you for all of your hard work on getting it to this stage, much appreciated.

It would be great for an area like this to have a native woodland and wildflower meadows. The importance of more traditional flora is important for pollinators including honeybees. Honeybees and other pollinators require a diverse range of plants to provide all the nutrients required to help them thrive and survive the winters. A development like this will be good for the local fauna as well as the local community.

I would like to see more for kids to do with a larger park or skate park possibly with a roof or even better indoor with would provide funding for upkeep and could repay any investment needed

The wildlife are still coming to this area even after the new houses being built further down in the fields. It's their home too and they deserve to keep their safe place too

Need to be kept as green space for community use. I loved the area especially when the trees were there. I love wildlife and trees and nature.

I really think that creating allotments would be a great idea

Would love for it to be kept for community use as it's the only area I can go with my little ones and dog on my own that's safe away from roads etc!

Well done to the team that are trying to make this happen

Love to keep for the upkeep however I won't be giving. Already I pay £230 for nothing being done on front of my house.

Allotments would be a great addition

It would be great to have a place for people to visit that isn't over-developed. A nice walk for local residents, and somewhere the local wildlife like deer are safe with all the new housing developments going up too. Nature trails, wildflowers, a place to attract and enjoy all sorts of wildlife.

I really hope we can have one day a decent community center (something like Charleston community complex) we do need a place for sports, entertainment, recreation.

A community hall available for groups and gatherings is definitely missing from the area, also a small coffee shop could provide some rental income for the upkeep

Some play equipment for toddlers would be great. I also think some involvement of the local teenagers would be good. They don't seem to have any facilities here and might reduce the wild camping litter if they had something for them?

Yes, we have lived here for 26 years. walked in Balvonie before houses. Keep area safe and secure for wildlife and humans. Wee bit of freedom.

Park picnic benches are needed around the whole area.

This community needs this

I think having allotments would be a fantastic use of some of the area as It would bring the community together in a great way and it can also involve all ages working together

It must remain in community use for the local residents to enjoy

We are in need or a community centre, a local restaurant or café

Community space is much needed as the school park is so poor. Any options for outdoor activities are welcome Don't let Tullochs get ahold of it...

Good luck. Sounds like a great project!

Going by past experience I wonder if the residents of Balvonie would be willing to share the land, instead would they police it in the same way they tried to police the play park and refuse kids from any area other than Balvonie? They wouldn't even let me join their Facebook group 😞 I literally live right next to Balvonie but that clique clearly don't like outsiders 😊

Dog walking area with lots of poo bins lol

Thank you.

What was it wrecked in the first, whole place looks sh*t now. It was a popular, if somewhat rustic walk, cycle and dog walking route. Please don't build more houses on it, leave some green, I miss trees. Thanks.

I feel Milton of Leys really lacks areas for children, the current park is a mess and there are very little cycle paths, tracks for kids. A community hall if this was at all possible is a thing I feel Milton of Leys so badly needs, we have no toddler group now the school is full and how lovely for groups to be able to have a place to run from. Children is Milton of Leys really lacks a decent children's play park and with hundreds of children living in Milton of Leys, I really feel this land would be a massive asset to be used to be a space for kids

Keep it as wild as possible. The deer and birds are struggling with the removal of their homes to make way for more houses. Deer are frequently seen on roundabouts and crossing roads so anything we can do to stop anything being built would be amazing.

To avoid more housing at any cost, the family's and teenagers need something to do up here.

Tree planting is great news. However, would it be possible to consider the area currently under hardcore to be developed as a caravan/mobile home park? The project would require funding but on completion it would be a continuous source of income. There are additional benefits.

Would be great to see something made of this current scrub land, which would benefit residents and future generations.

Why are residents now expected to pay for the upkeep of every bit of land around the housing estate. Residents don't own the land so why do we need to pay for it? Money making scheme and not for the good of the community at all.

Love the idea of allotments alongside wooded area and paths etc

I think it's important to minimise any extra vehicle access to Balvonie - both for safety and environmental reasons.

A wee community cafe would be good

Park would be a great buffer from the A9

Planting trees would be a help as there rapping the land everywhere else.

Should be kept out of housing developers hands at all costs

A space for families would be great. Daviot is accessible for running and cycling but there isn't anything nearby for young children. The park by the school is very poor. Having space to cycle, picnic and explore would be wonderful

Paying an annual contribution would depend on how the governance of the area was set up and clear accountability for funds/responsibilities

We live at Balvonie Brae and would love this idea. Even to grown so community veg would be an amazing idea. Happy to help further

Incredible Edible are a fantastic charity that support communities in preserving land for nature based activities. See example in Holm community

This should have been done years ago immediately after the expo. It was delayed by HHA and Highland Council not transferring the land to community use

Please note that the highland council rejected plans for allotments about 10 years ago as too untidy for tourists to see as they enter the highland capital. The site is also extremely exposed for this use.

An area for the children to play ball games away from houses would be ideal. Planting of a community Christmas tree within that area that could be used each year at Christmas and help to increase the community spirit by having a big switch on each year

Bike pump track/skate park, allotments & cafe would be so lovely