



# **Business Plan for the Mill of Benholm**

## **By Mill of Benholm Enterprise (SCIO)**

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## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Organisation and Management</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Project Background</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Community Needs</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Project Resources</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Asset</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Project Plan</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Management Plan</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Project Costs</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Financial Appraisal</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Marketing and Communication Strategy</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Policies</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>LTO</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Path Network</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Letters of Support</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	<b>Cash Flow Projection</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	<b>Contractors' Quotations</b>
<b>Appendix G</b>	<b>Funding Report</b>
<b>Appendix H</b>	<b>Condition Report</b>

## Executive Summary

The Mill of Benholm is a historic water mill, dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century set within a sheltered site of approximate 5 acres and separated from the adjoining ancient Mill Brae Woods by the Burn of Benholm. It is a site of cultural and historical significance which is reflected by its Category A-listing and is described by Historic Environment Scotland as an “exceptional and rare survival”.

The Mill is located within the Conservation Area of Benholm and a designated Local Conservation Nature Site.

The Mill of Benholm and its environment, is not only beautiful; with its rare natural and built heritage a visit here is like a walk back in time. The Mill of Benholm is currently owned by Aberdeenshire Council, which closed the site in 2014 and stopped the maintenance of the water structures and wheel in 2020.

Our business plan sets out our strategy to achieve a sustainable solution for the organisation and the Mill of Benholm by using the existing buildings. Benefits will include: environmental improvements contributing to health and wellbeing; educational outcomes; the preservation of this rare Category A listed historic asset; contributions to the local tourism offer by increasing spend and dwell time in the area; enhancement of the whole conservation area of Benholm, especially in cooperation with Historic Churches Scotland owner of the Historic Benholm Kirk; strengthened place based outcomes by improving active links within and from Benholm; and net zero and biodiversity gain through woodland management, path networks and renewables. On successful transfer of the asset, a phased approach will be taken that is both realistic and achievable.

After gaining ownership of the Mill of Benholm we will start a phased approach beginning with a **Preliminary Phase**, working with volunteers to re-establish public access to the site. Paths will be cleared and we will ensure that all walkways and bridges are fit for purpose and the toilet facilities are re-instated to working order. We will apply for additional funding to add to our existing funds to enable us to use contractors to reinstate the plumbing and electrics, assess the reed bed and clear the pond of vegetation. We will also use this initial phase to apply for funding for larger projects. We expect this Preliminary Phase to take around six to nine months.

### Phase 1

The funding applied for during the preliminary phase, will allow MoBE to re-open the Mill building as a heritage attraction, develop and restore the buildings and the wider site. Income will be generated through the letting of space and modest facilities whilst a pop-up café will be established. Activities with partners will be arranged and developed.

Whilst Phase 1 is progressing, applications for funding will be made for the follow-on capital works. We expect Phase 1 to take around 3 years with works funded project by project.



Work for Phase 1 will be mainly undertaken by contractors in line with the Conservation Plan issued in 2023, while smaller scale work will be done by our volunteers together with volunteers from SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings). The Grounds will be maintained during this phase by MoBE volunteers.

This phase would be funded by funds from organisations like the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Architectural Heritage Fund and COF Levelling Up Fund.

## **Phase 2**

Phase 2 will only be initiated after successful completion of Phase 1. This second phase will enhance the Mill of Benholm to make it more attractive to visitors, complete the restoration and increase the benefits for mental and physical well-being, community focus, while becoming a tourist attraction once again.

The work will be split into piecemeal projects to make it more manageable thus reducing the overall risk of the project. A programme of restoration of the buildings and the wider site will be commenced. This will be undertaken by contractors in line with the Conservation Plan 2023 and be funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Architectural Heritage fund and the National Lottery Community fund. Phase 2 is estimate to be completed within 2 years.

A permanent café will be created, and other indoor and outdoor spaces will be developed to be let and used for events. The Mill will be restored to working order, able to be used for demonstration purposes. Workshops and skills training will be delivered by partner organisations and new facilities will be provided to enhance the site for tourists.

We have been engaging with potential local stakeholders - Forest Schools, local Primary Schools, Aberdeenshire Community Mental Health Team, Pillar, Milltown Community, Mearns and Coastal Health Living Network, Guides and Scouts. These groups and organisations have all pointed out the tremendous lack of facilities in the South of Aberdeenshire and indicate their strong interest in using the grounds and the buildings at the Mill of Benholm once access is safe.

MoBE is also working with Historic Churches Scotland, SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Building), NatureScot, SCOTO (Scottish Community Tourism Organisation, Visit Aberdeenshire, Johnshaven Heritage Hub, and with many local volunteers and members.

## Organisation and Management

The organisation looking after the Mill of Benholm at the time of its closure eventually wound up and the funds were held in trust until a suitable body emerged. The Friends of Mill of Benholm emerged as an informal unincorporated group which steered the idea of saving the Mill of Benholm for the community.

Before officially establishing Mill of Benholm Enterprise an initial meeting with consultants was held on site to agree on the approach of the work. The consultants reviewed background information, added online research, and reviewed the economic and social profile of the area. The consultation involved engagement with potential user groups and the community, including open meetings, stakeholder interviews, funding research, open days on site and more.

A feasibility study was prepared, drawing together the findings of the research, working alongside the architect led design team. NESPT supported the friends' group to find the best legal structure to implement the model and the consultants created an outline business case for the project.

The group received some development support and formally constituted as Mill of Benholm Enterprise. In November 2017 MoBE successfully registered as a SCIO with OSCR (SC 047943) with the aim to re-open the Mill of Benholm, halt any further deterioration, make the site accessible for the local community and visitors, and preserve the Mill of Benholm for generations to come.

The organisations main charitable objectives are:

1. To advance heritage by preserving and developing the historic Mill of Benholm within the local unique environment
2. To enhance the enjoyment of art and culture on site and in the environs of the Mill
3. To promote and protect the natural heritage
4. To promote citizenship, community development, and to create volunteering opportunities for the benefit of the community of Benholm, the surrounding area and beyond by delivering a diverse variety of services and initiatives
5. To provide leisure and recreation facilities within the Mill, the surrounding woods, and the wider environment, with the object of improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Benholm and the surrounding area
6. To advance education and learning by providing workshops, training sessions and courses on the site and in the surrounding woodland.

The Board of trustees is highly skilled, determined and well connected within the local community. MoBE is governed by its constitution together with strong policies and safeguards.

MoBE currently has 118 members and of those 89 are from within the community and have voting rights.

The Board of MoBE consists of five Trustees, all elected by the members at the AGM for a duration of three years. The Board can have a maximum of nine Trustees and a minimum of three. The Chair leads the organisation, supported by the Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Minute Secretary and Trustees. The Board directs the strategy and plans of the charity as well as running the day-to-day business of the charity. Decisions are made during meetings with a simple majority where permitted.

The current board is not only strongly imbedded in the local community but has an array of skills amongst the Trustees.

The Chair manages a local arable farm, has a BSc in Agriculture with Forestry and NC in Countryside Skills for Recreation and Leisure. She has been a seasonal Countryside Ranger for the National Trust at Crathes Castle and a Community Farm Links Officer and is the Secretary for the Benholm & Johnshaven Horticultural Society.

The Vice Chair and Secretary has a master's degree in economics and has been managing director for an international raw material trading company. He was involved in contract catering as well as in smaller hospitality settings and online trading companies. He is the key holder for Benholm Kirk.

The Treasurer has a background in offshore shipping, being a board member and Managing Director of the Aberdeen branch of a large Norwegian offshore vessel company for 28 years before retiring. He was a non-executive board member of Peterhead Port Authority for 9 years and held the position as Deputy Convenor. He was also on the Advisory Board for the Aberdeen Maritime Museum. Furthermore, he is a member of the Johnshaven Village Hall Committee and the Johnshaven Fish Festival.

The Minute Secretary studied the diverse ethnology of Scotland at the School of Scottish Studies and combined that with Scottish History and Literature and graduated with a M.A. She has an interest in arts and crafts and an abiding love of songs, stories and music, with excellent connections to the local artistic community.

Our newest Trustee has a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Hons Degree in Marine Operations Management and served as a Deck Officer within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, she is working now at the local Primary School and beside being a board member for MoBE she is also the Secretary for the St Cyrus Solos running group.

The Board issues quarterly Newsletters to its members and in case of major developments, members are informed via a news update. The constitution of MoBE stipulates the involvement of the community and all relevant issues are reported and voted on at the AGM, which is always well attended. This year, more than one third of voting members were present.

MoBE has built up a volunteer base by sending out volunteer questionnaires to all members and distributed the questionnaires throughout the community to non-members.

The board regularly posts developments on social media to inform the growing number of interested followers of more than 1,200. More than two thirds of these followers come from the Mearns and three quarters of all followers reside in the Mearns and surround areas.

As defined in the constitution of MoBE, the catchment area for members with voting rights are the community council areas of Benholm and Johnshaven, Arbuthnott, Gourdon, Mearns, Royal Burgh of Inverbervie, St Cyrus and Catterline, Kinneff & Dunnottar.

All relevant policies are in place and can be found in Appendix A

## Project Background

The Mill of Benholm is a rural water mill complex used to mill oats, the current mill originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and has been altered and rebuilt in 1817, although the origin of the Mill of Benholm go back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A charter in 1492 gives further evidence of the mill when John and Isabel Lundy granted the lands and barony of 'Benhame' with the mill to their son, Robert. The first miller was officially recorded in 1696.

The Mill of Benholm comprises a small 2-storey, L-plan, water-powered, piend-roofed, meal mill with attached kiln and outside overshot wheel. The mill complex is situated on a sheltered site beside Burn of Benholm, below weirs at the confluence with Castle Burn from the Northwest. The site comprises a mill dam and lade, former miller's house, byre (toilets), barn and old grain store, all converted but retaining traditional appearance.

According to Historic Environmental Scotland, the Mill of Benholm is an exceptional and rare survival. While hundreds of water mills across Scotland have fallen out of use or been demolished, the Mill of Benholm has survived in full working order, at least until recently. It was one of very few water-powered meal mills in Scotland still in use in 2009.

This functionality has been lost since 2020 due to the damage to the water structure (especially the lade) connecting the mill pond with its water supply the Castle Burn. The wooden mill structure has suffered woodworm damage and will need to be partially repaired in places to guarantee a safe operation. The wheel, after not being turned since 2020, will need some minor repairs according to a report issued by a water mill expert. In 2020 Aberdeenshire Council ceased to turn the waterwheel, which happened, until then, on a weekly base. This had a significant damaging impact on the lade, the pond and the wheel mechanism.

After extensive renovations in the late 1980s and early 1990s the Mill of Benholm was fully functional and had been open to the public as a tourist attraction and café since 1996 until it was closed in 2014.

From 1996 to 2014 the Mill of Benholm had become a successful hub for community activities as well as for an array of walking and cycling groups, using the mill as start and finish point for their activities or as loved resting facilities. People from the community and visitors enjoyed visiting the Mill of Benholm, with families especially

enjoying the nature walks of the adjacent, unique Mill Brae Woods. The café was in the heart of many and frequently used, as the filed accounts of the former operation show.

The former Miller's house was used as a café until relatively recently, the byre houses the toilet facilities and a shop. There is the old grain store, which was used as an office. The approx. 5 acres of land surrounding the Mill houses community gardens and an orchard planted on the slopes with heritage fruit trees.

The Mill Brae Woods on the other side of the Burn of Benholm is an area of mature non-cultivated woodland with, now, overgrown woodland walks, bridges, viewing areas and an open-air forest school classroom. This land is privately owned by the neighbouring estate, an agreement in principle has been reached to lease the Mill Brae Woods to include them into the Mill of Benholm project.

Since it's closure in 2014 a new future was sought for the Mill of Benholm. During 2016 a team of independent consultants were commissioned to research the need and demand and develop a vision for the site by the then Friends of Benholm. That was successful and presented a master plan for the whole site with a range of services, facilities, partners, and delivery agents. It included opening the Mill and café and creating a new training and visitor centre along with making the woods more accessible. Though the whole site up-grade vision was visually impressive, it not only renovated the existing buildings but developed new facilities at the upper car park and a bespoke training space on the main site. These new facilities escalated the capital cost of the development but also the on-going revenue burden with increased running costs and further buildings to maintain long term.

The new Board of MoBE has moved the project further in the meantime. Additional financial and business modelling has shown that, though potentially useful, these new spaces would give limited added value. This concluded that all core activity can be delivered within the existing buildings and on the open site (with marquees and temporary structures as required).

Informed by input from heritage and business professionals, the Board of the Mill of Benholm Enterprise believes a phased approach will make the project more attainable and sustainable. As a result, an initial smaller phase has been set out that involves the opening up of the site to early activity. This is viewed as a stepping stone to the full site development. During this phase, work parcels will be identified to make the work achievable with the use of local companies.

This plan sets out a new MoBE led development that involves the upgrading of all the listed buildings on the site and gets them active and busy with a café, events, and community activity attracting visitors from the local area and beyond.

The heritage importance of the Mill is significant and the largest demand during the research was for re-opening the café in some form which held a very special place in people's memory, even after being closed now for nearly a decade. Further training and learning, particularly in the open environment would meet a substantial need and opportunity.



MoBE, NESPT and Community Enterprise have conducted several surveys since 2016, including an options appraisal and a business plan. A condition report of the site by ARC Architects was drawn up in late 2022.

Currently Sonya Linskaill, RIAS RIBA RIAS Advanced Accredited Architect and Heritage Consultant is developing a conservation plan for the Mill of Benholm, funded by Architectural Heritage Fund.

In 2022 all former trustees of MoBE, apart from the Chair, stepped down and were replaced by new trustees. With this new, determined, and dedicated board, the project was revised and progressed. The community is very supportive and the membership of MoBE has nearly doubled over the last year.

In 2023, after circumstances for NESPT changed, both organisations decided NESPT should step back from this project and MoBE would apply to gain ownership of the site and to be responsible for all future developments, restorations, and improvements of the site. NESPT is still supporting Mill of Benholm Enterprise and the project.

In August 2023 MoBE submitted the proposal for work for a LTO including all relevant risk assessment and Method Statements (Please see Appendix B), Public Liability and Employer Liability insurance quotes have also been obtained for this phase by MoBE.

The adjacent Mill Brae Woods owned by Brotherton Estate will be leased by MoBE. The path network and outdoor classrooms will be re-instated and the Mill Brae Woods will be connected via the old road bridge from the car park and the foot bridge at the mill with the Mill of Benholm. These will be managed as one unit to create a unique recreational area.

## Proposal

All necessary repairs to buildings and water structures will be carried out to stop any further deterioration. The mill mechanism including all relevant water infrastructure and the waterwheel will be restored to working order to create a fully operational mill which can be used for tours, learning and milling demonstration as well as a background for a busy hospitality setting and events from local theatre groups, musicians and weddings or other celebrations.

The phased approach is planned as follows:

### Preliminary Phase

- Repair the toilets to make them functionable, including the pumping mechanism and the reed bed to allow visitors to use them
- Repairs to the water and electrical system of the buildings to bring them in line with all relevant regulations
- Secure the lease of the Mill Brae Woods from Brotherton Estates and integrate the woods with the Mill of Benholm site via access of an existing footbridge at the mill complex and via the Grade C listed old bridge from the car park

- Reinstating the overgrown paths and ensure the bridges are safe to use and installation of bins and dog poo bins with bags.
- Clear the pond from vegetation overgrowth

## Phase 1

- To conduct all necessary repairs to buildings and site, stop any further deterioration and make the site safe to open it to the public
- Repair the most urgent damages to the water structures (lade, pond and wheel) to prevent the risk of losing the water structures altogether
- Clean the interpretation and signage and replace or add where needed
- To restore the mill mechanism to working order, enabling it to be used for demonstrations, skill teaching, education and the producing of oatmeal.
- Income will be generated through a mobile catering unit, utilising the car park for car boot sales, events in the courtyard of the buildings and the flat grass area beside the pond, camper vans overnight stays at the car park, activities for children and adults in the woods and the Mill site, organised talks about milling, conservation, farming, historic baking.

## Phase 2

- To restore all buildings and develop the indoor spaces, install a new cafe
- Enhance the site to develop tourist attractions for children and adults, increase the learning facilities, provide better facilities for overnight camper vans, install electrical charging points for cars, reinstate the former path from the Mill of Benholm to Benholm Kirk to connect the two sites
- Installing renewable energy sources
- Utilising the site for weddings, private events, skill teaching and community events to give local artist areas to exhibit their artwork, local baking and cooking classes with local ingredients and recipes, with exhibitions in conjunction with the Johnshaven Heritage Hub and the Benholm Kirk
- Setting up Glamping Pods in the grounds.

MoBE will create a recreational area in the South of Aberdeenshire to enable charities and other groups and organisations to have suitable outdoor as well as indoor space to enhance the mental and physical well-being of their clients, as well as for Youth organisation as the Scouts and Guides. This will also be for the benefit of the local community with community gardening areas and picnic spots. As soon as safely possible, a catering trailer will be installed to provide users with refreshments. This will be operated by volunteers. MoBE will provide nature areas and an outdoor classroom which can be used by primary schools and other organisations to teach about natural heritage, biodiversity, and local history.

MoBE will provide toilet facilities, especially important for the many walking and cycling groups but also necessary for volunteers including those of the Mearns and Coastal

Healthy Living Network. Mill of Benholm will function as a hub for walkers and cyclists being located between the Coastal Path and the historic Old Coach Road (See Appendix C)

The existing booklet will be revised to guide visitors together with the interpretations through the Mill of Benholm site.

Collaboration has already been established with Visit Scotland, Visit Aberdeenshire and SCOTO to promote the Mill of Benholm and after completion of the relevant repairs and restorations tours, talks and events will be developed and enhanced. Further platforms to promote the Mill of Benholm will be established

Stakeholders have expressed a keen interest to use the site for meetings, navigating and exploring courses, including night-time navigation, group sessions, learning and skill development courses. Activities like bushcraft, nature surveys (moths, bats, mammals, butterflies, amphibians, and flora), building of bee hotels, squirrel feeding stations and many more nature related activities are of interest. As well, local history exploration is of interest, as many people from the community have dear memories of the mill and miller and would like to pass this knowledge on to the younger generation.

Together with our partners, in particular SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) we shall offer learning courses e.g., lime rendering and other simple maintenance skills for historic buildings. Woodland management and other nature and rural skilled courses will be provided in conjunction with NatureScot and other local groups. This will enhance skills within the community, draw visitors and volunteers to the Mill of Benholm, reduce costs for maintaining the site as well as creating community ownership and empowerment.

To achieve all this, an holistic and organic approach is needed and the restoration of the complete site with working water infrastructure (sluices, lade, pond and wheel) is important to transport the visitor back into time when mills like the Mill of Benholm were a common sight.

As soon as the site can be safely opened to visitors a catering trailer will be installed, to be operated by volunteers at weekends only. The menu will focus on local produce. To enhance the hospitality experience at the Mill of Benholm, MoBE will work together with Pop-Up hospitality groups and entrepreneurs to promote the Mill of Benholm and to draw visitors to the site who would not visit the Mill of Benholm normally. The Grain Store will be used as meeting point, hospitality centre and information hub.

As well as being open to members of the public, the space will welcome small groups such as lunch clubs and a dementia café could be developed during the week. Special opening hours during the week could establish coffee mornings or lunches for isolated people and people just moved to the area, this is particularly important for new residents to the area. The school head teacher has reported that many families newly moved to the area feel lost and find it hard to get to know people in the community. With the 107 bus stopping just next to the Mill of Benholm car park it links the site with the rest of the community.

MoBE has held successful events in the past, there will be more events especially during the summer, during the National Mill Week, and at Christmas. The Kincardine and Mearns Rangers Service has previously hosted open days and green activity events at the Mill of Benholm.

Overnight parking for camper vans in one section of the car park will be promoted and potentially extended into an area along the roadside, with the possibility of establishing some services e.g., fresh water, charging points and waste disposal facilities which would generate further income. Camper van facilities at the car park will bring in further visitors to the area, with a small economic benefit for the Mill of Benholm with the further possibility of economic gains for local shops and restaurants.

It is challenging for larger camper vans to drive into Johnshaven, but ideal to be parked at the Mill of Benholm and use either the bus service or the path network to get to Johnshaven.

With control of the site and the right access, safety and other processes and insurance in place, the site will be opened up to local people for walking, resting, and enjoying the wildlife on the site.

Historically a mill is a meeting place in a community and the grounds and indoor space would be promoted for local use. Our plans will maintain the character and heritage of the property

The pond, orchard and gardening space will be used to encourage informal community growing with on-site produce used in the café. A gardening/growing group was previously active at the Mill site and will be encouraged to return. Together with MCHLN, and their volunteers who are already active on site, these activities will be promoted and branched out.

A picnic place will be created, and local people will be encouraged to use the site.

Many groups, including the Over 50s Walking and running clubs have expressed an interest in just enjoying the site. Facilities will be put in place for walkers and cyclists to make this a resting and recuperation point.

Two local forest schools have indicated strong interest in using the site, especially the Mill Brae Woods with its two outdoor classrooms, Scouts and Guides have indicated the same strong interest to use the Mill Brae Woods, for several different kinds of activities, events and meetings.

Additionally, the local branch of a national mental health programme ([Branching Out](#)) noted an interest in using the Mill site and grounds to support their beneficiaries. This is a 12 week programme supported by Forestry Scotland and regional health boards in which participants spend 3 hours a week on outdoor therapeutic activities.



Beside this, the Milltown Community, Pillar and the Aberdeenshire Community Health Team have all visited the site and indicated their interest in using the Mill of Benholm together with the Mill Brae Woods.

During our consultations in the Summer 2023 we have established that the combination of the Mill of Benholm and the Mill Brae Woods together with the Benholm Kirk offers a unique space for all these groups.

As the café was one of the most valued parts of the site when it was open until 2014, to bring back hospitality as soon as possible is one of the main objectives.

Initially income will be generated through a mobile catering unit, utilising the car park for car boot sales, events in the courtyard and the flat grass area beside the pond, camper van overnight stays at the car park, activities for children and adults in the woods and the Mill site, organised talks about milling, conservation, farming and historic baking. Also, through utilising the old shop to house an honesty shop selling produce and merchandise.

In Phase 2, all buildings will be restored, and the indoor spaces developed including a new permanent café, shop, exhibitions and training facilities.

Facilities for tourists will also be enhanced for overnight stays by camper vans, electrical charging points will be installed and the former path linking the Mill to the Benholm Kirk will be reinstated.

Renewable energy sources will be installed where appropriate.

We will host weddings, private events, skill teaching and community events. Give local artists areas to exhibit their artwork, hold baking and cooking classes with local ingredients and recipes. We will have exhibitions in conjunction with the Johnshaven Heritage Hub and the Benholm Kirk and investigate the possibility of setting up glamping pods in the grounds.

A museum will be developed on site to showcase the rural and milling heritage of the Mearns and especially Benholm.

The need for learning facilities for the community with a historical and nature based background has emerged throughout all consultations. MoBE will work together with all relevant groups and individuals to offer a course selection relevant and interesting for the community.

The natural setting next to the pond will be converted into an event and performance arena as the natural landscape offers itself as an amphitheatre.

The Mill of Benholm is well connected by a network of paths and woodland walks such as the coastal path and the historic Old Coach Road. It would fulfil a very much needed role as a hub for active recreation for locals and visitors alike.

This business plan will show how the capital costs and revenue costs of these phases will be funded including a cash flow projection for the first three years. This will highlight the sustainability of the Mill of Benholm, the need of the Mill of Benholm by the

community and the importance to revive the Mill of Benholm. It will add to the attractiveness of this particular area for tourists and with that, increase tourist footfall, length of stay and spending.

The core target area for this project is the area in and around Mill of Benholm though we expect some people to travel to the Mill and benefit will be across the wider rural area. MoBE plans to work together with Dunnottar Castle to divert at least a small percentage of the annual visitor stream from Dunnottar Castle further along the Coastal Road. This would be not only beneficial for the Mill of Benholm, but for the local community as a whole. If only 1% of the visitors can be encouraged to visit this would add 3,000 extra visitors each year to the Mill of Benholm. The full development will certainly create local impact, but it will also be tourism/visitor focussed.

There are multiple outcomes from this development related to local community cohesion, improving the lives of individuals, celebrating, and enhancing knowledge about heritage and encouraging bio-diversity and local growing. In addition, attracting visitors will both celebrate the area and the history of the mill while generating local wealth to protect and enhance it.

This is both a place based project, opening up a crucial local asset to everyone who lives here, (regardless of age, ability, income, and circumstances) and a heritage based visitor attraction open to the public from the Mearns, Aberdeenshire, and further afield.

The following are the core outcomes and targets (established by Community Enterprise);

- The new Benholm Mill will bring 200 local people together each year (500 over three years), (many of whom will be older and on their own), using the community managed asset to make this rural area a better place to live. The cafe and the community events will be a vital bridge to local isolated people
- 100 local residents per year in Benholm and the local area will improve their health and well-being through active contact with the environment including walking, cycling, and simply improving their mental well-being through being on this very special site.
- 5000 visitors in year one growing to 10,000 visitor numbers will visit the site and enhance their understanding of milling heritage
- 50 local people and 250 visitors in three years will learn new skills through attending training courses and workshops delivered by external agencies, especially focussed on the outdoors (including Forest Schools).

## Community Needs

The research conducted as part of this consultation process by Community Enterprise for NESPT and MoBE, has demonstrated that there is significant support for the project from stakeholders, local residents and market analysis.

The following includes data from the research over the previous years updated with new data and primary research from 2022.

### Strategic Fit

- There is a strong fit with a range of national and local strategic frameworks from heritage to tourism, asset transfer to social enterprise and community empowerment to learning.

### Need

- Demographics show an aging population and rural exclusion that drives the need for meeting places to build social capital.
- 77% of survey respondents identified a demand for social activity
- Aberdeenshire has an ageing population, and the area is predicted to have the highest proportion of older people in Scotland by 2027. By 2035, the number of people aged over 85 years is expected to rise by 198% to 14,953. 13% of pensioners live alone, compared with 12% across Aberdeenshire, and 14% across Scotland.
- The open meeting identified a need for “things to do” for all ages to avoid outward migration.
- There is high existing loyalty to the Mill. 28% of survey respondents used the Mill every 3 to 6 months and 27% used it less regularly; 18% used it monthly and 10% used it weekly. One of the biggest issues with the former café was slow service and inconsistent quality. With the elimination of these points the return frequency would be improved.

### Assets

- During the research period there was a range and depth of local assets, gifts and skill that can be drawn on in service development and delivery. This was particularly evident in the open meeting.
- The new board that has emerged is highly skilled and driven with a vision for protecting and enhancing the site for local benefit while understanding the need for financial viability.

## **Heritage Attraction**

- Localism and authenticity to a region is a vital Unique Selling Point for all similar mills to attract visitors.
- Strong support in the open public meeting for a heritage site open to the public. This is a valued place for local people.
- There was overwhelming support from survey responses to retain the Mill as an important heritage asset with 85% supporting this. Comments suggest that it is seen as a unique asset, one of only a few Mills still in existence but the aim should be for the Mill to become self-financing.

## **The Environment**

- 71% of survey respondents identified a demand for walking and cycling routes.
- Enjoyment of the open environment was a strong demand from local people at the open meeting.

## **Learning**

- There is a demand for workshops and visits to be based on milling, local flour, and baking to celebrate local skills and local industry.
- There was also a demand in the open meeting for learning other traditional rural skills.
- There was demand within the open meeting for learning sessions, particularly related to the outdoors including tree surgery, blacksmithing and forest schools.
- Learning links related to the growing area.

## **Sustainability**

- Case studies show that there are a range of working and non-working historic Mills across Scotland which can sustain themselves using a mix of diverse trading, grants, and donations.
- Trading comes from using the site as a heritage attraction but also for other purposes including weddings, conferences, and events.
- Cafes and shops are regularly featured as popular
- 97% of survey respondents visited the café, 47% visited heritage projects 52% visitors centre and 42% learning events. 97% would continue to use the café if re-opened.
- Diverse trading is often linked to milling including heritage skills, milling, and baking workshops.



- There was a high level of support for the café in the open public meeting
- Sales of produce on site from the growing area and orchard in the future.

### **Marketing and Branding**

- This is a relatively hidden area and tourism would need to be stimulated with good marketing and strong place-based branding
- Various target markets require different tones of voice and visual language in the communication techniques.

### **Capacity**

- Volunteers are vital to this and there is a need to develop recruitment, selection, training, support, and placement policies.
- Partnership is key here, with strong existing partnerships and new ones that can be developed across the third and public sectors.
- A formal agreement is required with the Brotherton Estate to lease Mill Brae Wood, which is currently under preparation.

### **Site**

- The mill does not exist in isolation but sits within a local context (e.g. with Benholm Kirk), a regional context (with Johnshaven and the other villages) and the wider Mearns, as well as the proximity to the Coastal Path and the Historic Coach Road.
- An accommodation schedule was driven by the demands in the research which has led to an agreed costed master plan for the site.

### **Funding**

- The funding strategy shows that this is a fundable project within planned budget parameters. The funding of the grand plan was seen to be achievable but challenging and without early success this would create a delay and local frustration.

### **Legal Structure**

- A legal options appraisal showed strong options for a future robust structure which was then implemented.

The Local Area used as a measure within this demographic report stretches along the coast to Inverbervie in the North to St Cyrus in the South. While the project will aim for

a customer and beneficiary base stretching further afield, the analysis of the local demographics is restricted to this immediate area.

### **Brief Outline of Aberdeenshire<sup>1</sup>**

Aberdeenshire is a largely rural area in the North East of Scotland with a heavy reliance on the offshore energy sector for employment. This complements the well-established farming, fishing and forestry sectors and their respective processing industries.

Tourism and financial services also employ significant numbers, but oil and gas related employment has been the spur to rapid population growth over the past 30 years, with Aberdeenshire's population in 2011 being estimated at 247,6004, this is a 0.7% increase since 2010, and a 9.1% increase from 2001 - 2015.

An increasing and ageing population provides unique challenges in delivering services, additional housing, and the resulting demand in community facilities.

The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan identifies a requirement for 36,000 new households by 2030 with much of the wider development focussed on the Huntly – Laurencekirk and Aberdeen – Peterhead corridors. Alongside this growth, the area will have the highest proportion of older people in Scotland by 2027, and by 2035 the number of people aged over 85 years is expected to rise from 5,009 in 2010 to 14,953 in 2035 (an increase of 198%).

While Aberdeenshire remains a relatively wealthy area, and the employment rate in 2011 was 75.9% (against a Scotland average of 70.7%), there are nevertheless pockets of deprivation and rural isolation. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>10</sup> identifies different elements of poverty in small areas across Scotland, with five data zones (small areas) in the most deprived 15% in Scotland.

### **Tourism**

Aberdeenshire is a relatively popular tourist destination, attracting 1.2million GB tourists and 323,000 overseas tourists annually. Nearby Dunnottar castle attracted 88,300 paying visitors in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

Tourism to Aberdeen City and Shire is worth an estimated £340 million every year. In addition to this, the day trip market is estimated at over £300 million annually.<sup>3</sup>

The A92 presents a rich opportunity to capture passing drivers as potential customers. Annual Average Daily Flow at nearby Nether Knox is 3,641 vehicles per day (2015).<sup>4</sup> The vast majority (68%) of the passing traffic is cars. While it is likely that a considerable percentage of daily flow comprises of local people, and regular users, well-placed signage has the potential to attract a number of visitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Single Outcome Agreement, Aberdeenshire, 2013 to 2023

<sup>2</sup> Visit Scotland

<sup>3</sup> Visit Aberdeenshire; Strategy for Growth, Building on our Strengths – 2013 to 2020

<sup>4</sup> Department for Transport Traffic Counter figures (Count Point ID 30855)

## **Economy**

Aberdeenshire is one of the least deprived areas in Scotland. It consistently ranks highly on SIMD indicators, with deprivation tending to be concentrated in parts of Fraserburgh and Peterhead. Similarly, the Mill of Benholm's local area encounters relatively low levels of deprivation. The area has a median net household income of £482.50, compared to £354.15 across Scotland.<sup>5</sup> 72% of the local population are economically active (compared to 74% across Aberdeenshire and 69% across Scotland),<sup>6</sup> and the area has a relatively dense number of local businesses. The 2011 Census reports 963 business sites per 10,000 people, compared to Aberdeenshire average of 906.<sup>7</sup>

## **Potential Beneficiary Groups**

Levels of benefit claimants are low and are similar to levels of claims across Aberdeenshire. 3.6% of adults claim work limiting illness benefits (via ESA or Incapacity benefits) compared to 4.1% across Aberdeenshire and 7.9% across Scotland.<sup>8</sup> 3.7% of adults claim Disability Living Allowance and 1.2% of adults claim mental health related benefits.<sup>9</sup> There are 1,180 known adults with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire, 5.6 adults per 1,000.<sup>10</sup>

Aberdeenshire has an ageing population, and the area is predicted to have the highest proportion of older people in Scotland by 2027. By 2035, the number of people aged over 85 years is expected to rise by 198% to 14,953.<sup>11</sup> 13% of pensioners live alone, compared with 12% across Aberdeenshire, and 14% across Scotland.<sup>12</sup>

## **Access**

Aberdeenshire experiences relative levels of access deprivation, with a high number of data zones in the most deprived 5% for geographical access to services. The immediate area round the Mill, however, is reasonably well serviced and benefits from good road links. Drive time to a local GP is 3 – 4 minutes, and 8 – 10 minutes by public transport.<sup>13</sup> However the bus services is poor and does not run at suitable times which severely disadvantages those with no cars, particularly older people, and young people.

A considerable proportion of local inhabitant's commute. 42% of local people aged 16 to 74 in full time employment travel more than 20km (12 miles) to work. A further 13% work from home.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Community Insight

<sup>6</sup> Community Insight referencing Census 2011

<sup>7</sup> Community Insight referencing ONS 2014

<sup>8</sup> NOMIS citing Department for Work and Pensions 2015

<sup>9</sup> Community Insight citing Department for Work and Pensions 2015

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Commission for Learning Disability 2014 – this data is representative of adults that are known to Aberdeenshire Council, not necessarily receiving support

<sup>11</sup> Aberdeenshire Single Outcomes Agreement

<sup>12</sup> Community Insight referencing Census 2011







<sup>13</sup> Community Insights

<sup>14</sup> Census 2011

Public transport is poor but there are current plans to develop a community transport scheme. There is significant dependence on cars but there is also an opportunity on site to enhance active travel with links to coastal trail and old coach road with the chance to develop walking and connections with the paths network.

## Education


Levels of attainment at school are relatively strong and 41% of school leavers go into higher education, compared to 36% across Aberdeenshire. A further 40% of school leavers go directly into employment, compared to 30% across Aberdeenshire.<sup>15</sup> In 2011 50% of the working age population had no formal qualifications above Level 1 (equivalent of O Grade, Standard Grade, GCSE, SVQ level 1 or 2). 26% of the population hold qualifications of degree level or higher.<sup>16</sup>

 <p><b>Population</b></p>	<p>There are 5,455 people living in the Mill of Benholm's Local Area. 82% identify as White British. 80% were born in Scotland.</p> <p>(Based on ONS Mid-Year Estimates, 2014; Census 2011)</p>	 <p><b>Education &amp; skills</b></p>	<p>24% of people have no qualifications in the Mill of Benholm Local Area - the same as levels across Aberdeenshire</p> <p>(Based on Census 2011)</p>
 <p><b>Vulnerable groups</b></p>	<p>19% of pensioners are living in poverty in the Mill of Benholm's Local Area compared with 13% across Aberdeenshire</p> <p>(Based on Department for Work and Pensions 2015 data)</p>	 <p><b>Economy</b></p>	<p>42% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in Mill of Benholm's Local Area compared with 44% across Aberdeenshire</p> <p>(Based on Census 2011)</p>
 <p><b>Housing</b></p>	<p>45% of housing is detached, and 72% is owner occupied</p> <p>(Census 2011)</p>	 <p><b>Access &amp; transport</b></p>	<p>14% of households have no car in Mill of Benholm's Local Area - the same as levels across Aberdeenshire</p> <p>(Based on Census 2011)</p>

<sup>15</sup> Community Insight referencing Scottish Government, Analytical Services Unit - Schools, 2012/13

<sup>16</sup> Community Insight referencing Census 2011



 <p><b>Health &amp; wellbeing</b></p>	<p>17% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Mill of Benholm's Local Area compared with 16% across Aberdeenshire (Based on Census 2011)</p>	
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## Project Resources

The restoration and revivification of the Mill of Benholm will be a phased approach and each phase will be divided into smaller projects undertaken by, where it is possible, local contractors. MoBE will be the developer of the site once ownership is achieved, commissioning the contractors, and overseeing the work until completion in conjunction with consultants. MoBE will operate the Mill of Benholm commercially and for the community.

The Board of MoBE has experience in larger projects and will be leading this project, using the commissioned Conservation Plan as a guide.

During the Preliminary Phase most work will be undertaken by volunteers. A volunteer database has been created over the summer 2023 by the Board of MoBE with help of a widely distributed volunteer questionnaire. Only the re-installation of the toilets, including the relevant electrical installations, wastewater pumps and reed bed will be in the hands of specialised companies, as well as the clearance of the mill pond.

MoBE will apply to the Architectural Heritage Fund for the funds to contract a heritage development officer who will undertake funding applications and assist MoBE in the restoration of the Mill of Benholm to take place during Phase 1.

During Phase 1 restoration work will be undertaken by specialised companies in conjunction with the development officer and under guidance of Historic Environment Scotland. Furthermore, SPAB has already asked to host workshops on site with their volunteers and would assist volunteers on work which does not need a specialised contractor. The grounds will be maintained by MoBE volunteers and, if needed, tree surgeons or other specialised landscaping contractors.

The café will be operated by volunteers at the weekend alongside pop-up cafes and hospitality events during the week or evenings at the weekend.

The hospitality data collected during Phase 1 will guide the decision regarding hospitality provision.

During Phase 2, tours, events, learning activities and milling demonstrations will be developed. These will be run by volunteers, local groups or contractors or specialised organisations like SPAB, NatureScot, Forest Schools, etc

The Board of MoBE will be at all times working as executive board during these phases and will ultimately be in charge and control of all aspects of this restoration and revivification as well as the day-to-day business of running the Mill of Benholm.

Due to the increasing financial responsibilities the treasurer of MoBE will work closely together with a chartered accountant from the beginning of Phase 1 in line with the MoBE constitution and relevant policies.

The local community is involved in the decision making and direction of the Mill of Benholm project as a whole. At the AGMs, which are always very well attended, the Board not only presents its own plans, but every attendee will be handed a feedback and thought paper, to be returned to the board. The board uses emails, social media, flyers, our website and posters to communicate with the community, informing about developments, future strategies and plans as well as inviting the community to voice their thoughts and wishes for the Mill of Benholm. The Mill of Benholm is a community project and has already a strong community involvement.

## Partnerships

MoBE, though leading this project will only be able to deliver a strong and sustainable outcome, when working closely together with partners on site. Also, by creating a partnership with other community projects and local attractions to increase the footfall to the area. A long-term sustainable success will be increased by working collaboratively with other organisations.

The partners we are or will be working together with on the site of the Mill of Benholm and Mill Brae Woods include

- Embark Forest School
- Kincardineshire District Scout Council
- Stick and Stone Forest School
- SPAB
- Nature.Scot
- Bervie Guides
- Milltown Community
- Johnshaven Primary School
- Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network
- Pillar
- Aberdeenshire Community Health Team

Partners we are working together with to strengthen this community

- Historic Churches Scotland
- Nature.Scot
- Grassic Gibbon Centre
- Johnshaven Heritage Hub
- Brighter Bervie
- Arbuthnot and Kinneff Churches
- Wyldecrest Holiday Parks

Partners we are working together with, outwith the local community

- SCOTO
- Visit Aberdeenshire
- Visit Scotland
- SPAB Mill Section
- Historic Churches Scotland

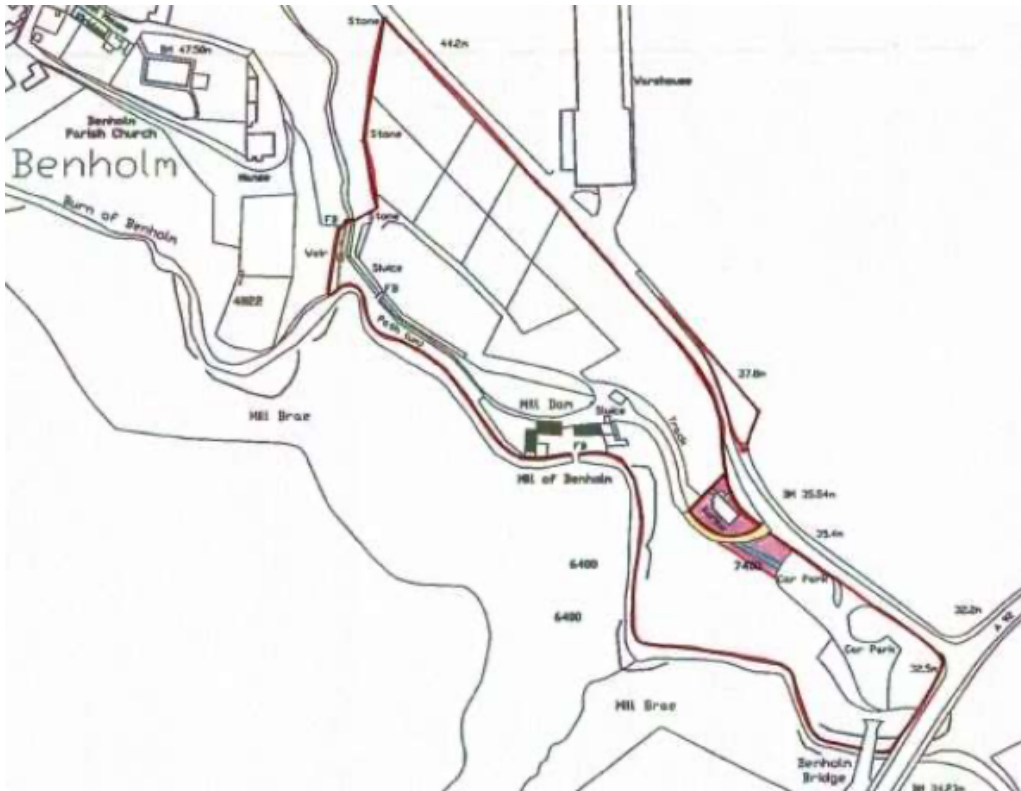
Please see Appendix D for letters of support

## Asset

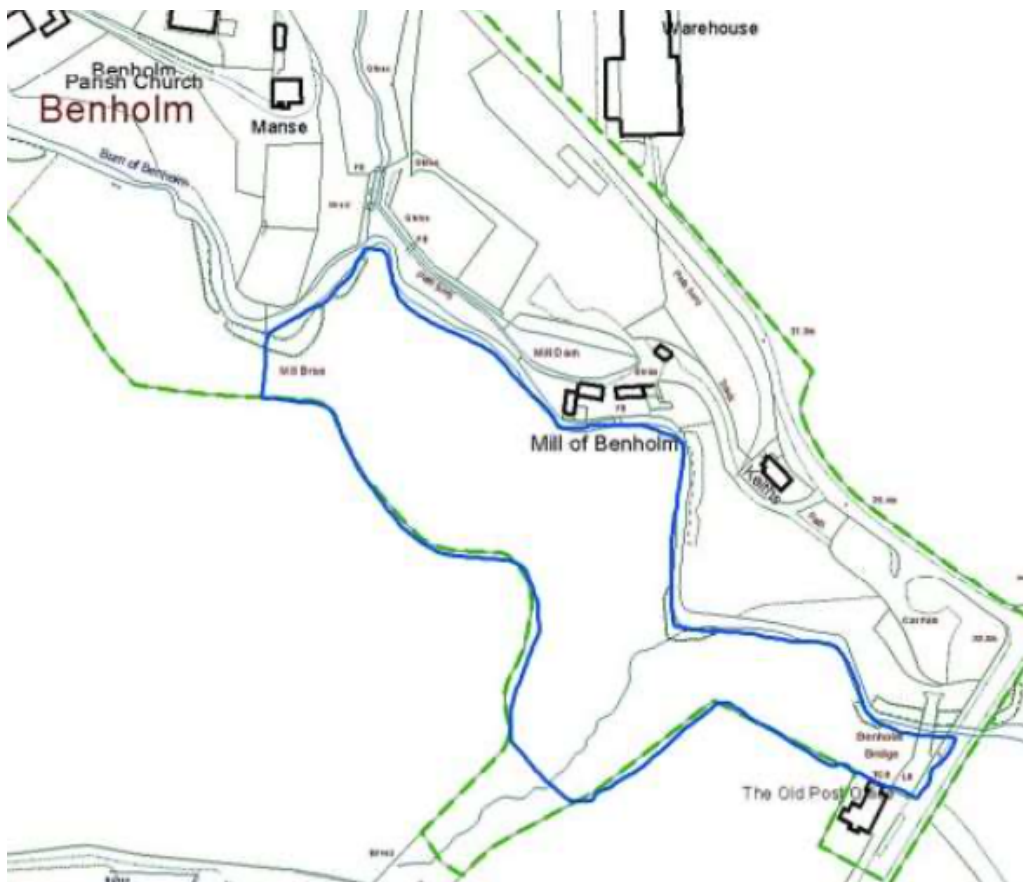
The Mill of Benholm comprises of Category A listed buildings and site with its historical water structures. The site is located in the designated Conservation Area of Benholm and the Local Nature Conservation Site Benholm. Historic Environment Scotland and Aberdeenshire Planning Department will be involved from the very beginning. To ensure the plans are in line with conservation regulations, a conservation plan for the Mill of Benholm was commissioned.

This Business Plan has been developed under the assumption that MoBE will gain ownership of the of the Mill of Benholm site from Aberdeenshire Council via the Community Asset Transfer in line with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for £1 and the assumption of a long-term lease of the Mill Brae Woods from Brotherton Estate Ltd for a nominal amount.

The project involves clearing the site of overgrown vegetation and re-instating all paths and community garden areas, restoring the sluices, lade, pond, trowse and waterwheel, back to working order and re-instating the toilets back to working order. The internal walls of the grain store, which have been put up without planning permission will be removed and restoring the grain store back to its original state, to be used as information and meeting hub, with a mobile catering unit beside it. The mill building will be used as visitor attraction, exhibition space and meeting space. The byre will, as it does now, house the toilets and shop, while the former miller's house, will be used as a meeting and learning space.



The Mill of Benholm Site



The Mill Brae Woods

## Risk Assessment

Risk	Impact	Probability	Controls	Action Required
Demand is lower than expected from local people	High	Low	Previous customer base and previous accounts combined with in person communication and feedback through social media	<p>Early promotions for local community, meeting expectations for catering</p> <p>Strong branding, locally sourced good quality produce</p> <p>Detailed communications and marketing strategy</p>
Demand lower than expected by commercial customers	High	Medium	Feedback	<p>Strong Marketing</p> <p>Partnership plans with strategic commercial partners</p>
Loss of Key Personnel, Volunteers and Board Members	Medium	Medium	<p>Motivation for Volunteers</p> <p>Training and support</p> <p>Broaden the membership base and the pool for trustees</p>	<p>Accession Plan</p> <p>Good working conditions and training</p> <p>Good volunteer support and policies</p> <p>Giving 'Ownership' Feeling to community and volunteers</p>
Capital costs higher than expected	Medium	Medium	<p>Estimates from QS and contractors up to date</p> <p>Build in contingencies</p>	<p>Robust planning with experienced consultants</p>



			for increasing costs	Built in allowance for increase in funds Further fundraising Savings
Insufficient reserves to manage cash flow	High	Low	Strong financial controls in place Reserve Policy	Strong Reserve Policy Loan for working capital
Lower passing trade from visitors	Medium	Medium	N/A	Strong Marketing Points of Attraction Array of Activities Good Signage

## Project Plan

As there had been some deterioration in the condition of some areas of the site over the years of inactivity, surveyors and architects were re-engaged in 2022. The development was surveyed again, and the estimates below are based on costings by Tom Morton, Director of Arc Architects Ltd in the Options Appraisal and reviewed and revised in 2022 by Angus Simpson of R. A. Ogg & Partners, Chartered Quantity Surveyors.

The project will be phased including an initial phase, would be funded from existing MoBE funds, to get the deteriorating site re-opened for community use. The focus will be on upgrading the existing site and to engage and train volunteers to do much of the ongoing work on site as well as engaging contactors where appropriate.

**Preliminary Phase:** Early intervention to get the site operational.

**Phase 1:** This involves a basic upgrade to the roads and paths and making the whole site safe and accessible. Repairs will be made to the Mill lade and sluice gates. The utilities will be made safe, and the toilets reconnected. This will enable a pop-up café to be arranged. This phase would cost approximately £270,000 (including 20% contingency and fees) and would enable safe and widened access. This work is envisaged to run over three years.

**Phase 2:** A more significant investment will be sought at this stage. Work will include upgrading to the road and path network and further site clearance. The café and toilets will be fully refurbished to ensure full time commercial café operation. Crucially, this will focus on heritage to ensure the site is attractive to local people and visitors with a focus on the Mill itself. This phase costing approximately £600,000, with 20% contingency/fees included.

**Final Phase:** The final phase will complete the Mill restoration and upgrade all the ancillary buildings. It will also complete the landscaping of the whole site.

### **Income Generation and Financial Viability**

Grants will be applied for during the life of the project, particularly for project-based activity. Income will be generated from various sources including the following areas, which are set out in detail in the cash flow projections.

- Café sales
- Rent from groups and organisations using the site (see stakeholder info)
- Rent from training providers
- Direct income from training sessions
- Donations and fundraising
- Revenue from parking and car park activities
- Sales of merchandise and honesty shop sales
- Tours of the Mill when refurbished.
- Income from weddings and events

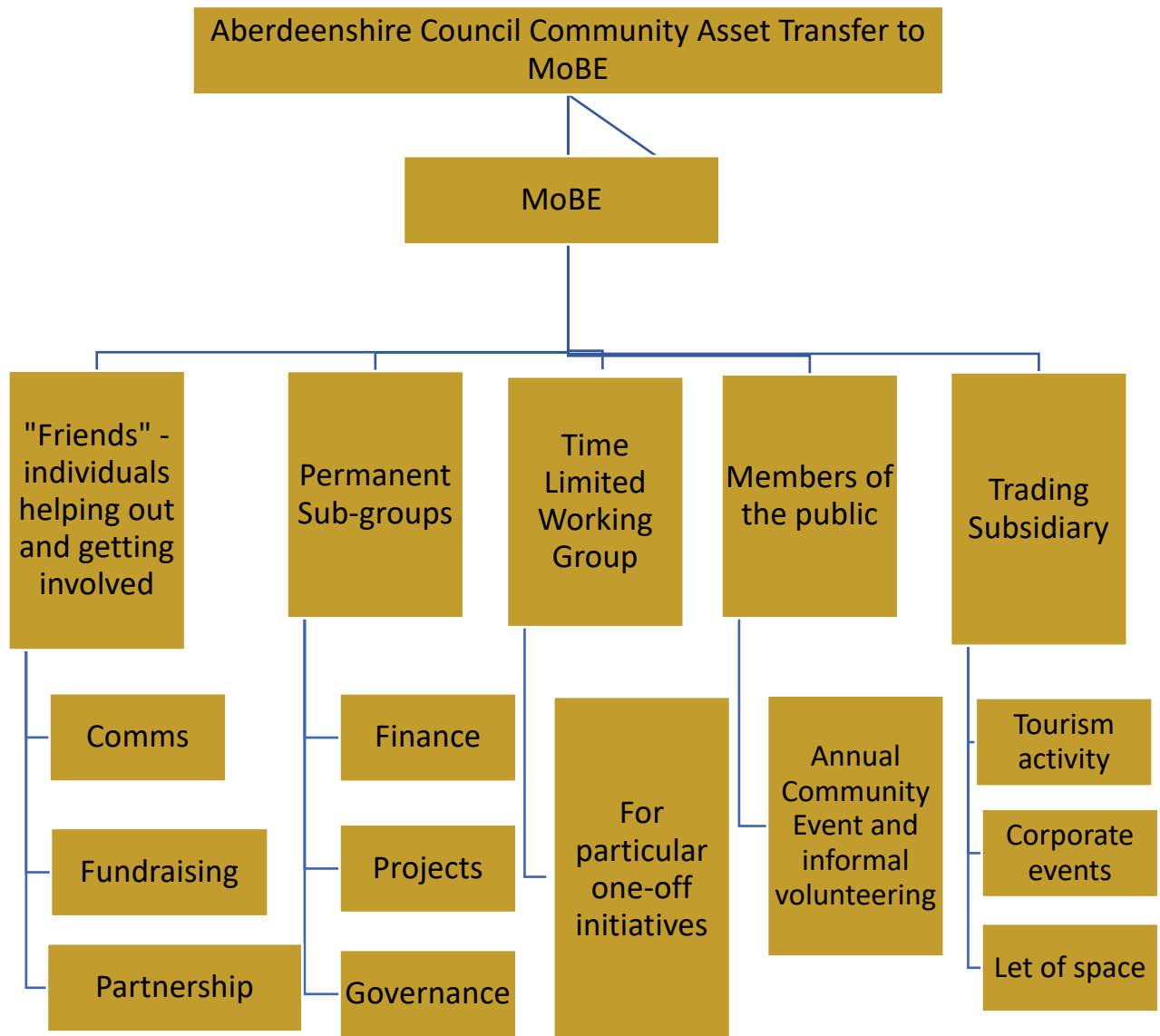
Full and detailed cash flow projections can be seen at Appendix E. The cash flow projections have not included revenue grant funding however, if anticipated income falls below expectations in the initial period, funding would be sought.

We are keen to develop income streams as quickly as possible and our supporters are excited to get involved in all aspects of the running of the Mill. This will also encourage a community spirit and sense of pride within the project.

### **VAT :**

A full VAT assessment will be undertaken, though charitable usage can lead to zero rating or VAT exemption. This will be considered as the project develops, so, VAT implications have not been fed into the cash projections.

## Management Plan



On taking ownership MoBE will then begin to raise funds from a variety of heritage and asset based funders. An experienced Development Officer will be contracted to assist with this work. MoBE will then commission professionals to draw up plans for the site and oversee the works completed.

Most activity will be allowable within the SCIO framework and will constitute primary purpose trading under charity law and regulation. The café may fall under ancillary trading as it would be the gateway to the heritage. However, where there is non-primary purpose trading, such as renting space or tourism activity, a trading subsidiary may need to be set up to manage certain elements of the work.

The Mill of Benholm project will deliver a unique place to be used by many locals including many organisations as laid out in the business plan, as there is a tremendous lack of peaceful recreational areas in the South of Aberdeenshire. A café focusing on local ingredients will provide the refreshments the community have asked for and will add to facilities for the ever-growing camper van community.

Prior to Phase 2, consideration will be given to part-franchising the café out rather than running it directly, but this will be governed by results obtained during Phase 1.

The site will give local artists space to showcase their art, will be the background for community cultural events and an ideal place for kids and teenagers to learn more about the local nature and heritage.

Members of the community and community groups will be able to use the site for celebrations and other activities. The concept of a Friends Group will be re-imagined and re-established. This will be responsible for fundraising, promotion, event management and celebrating and promoting the site locally and regionally.

Green activities will play a huge part in the future of the Mill of Benholm. The Kincardine and Mearns Ranger Service have previously been involved in open days and there is an ongoing willingness to explore how the Service could utilise this location and tie-in to a wider festivals and events in Aberdeenshire.

To achieve the long-term sustainability of the Mill of Benholm an holistic approach is needed. The Mill of Benholm cannot be seen as standalone project but as an embedded project within the cluster of attractions within the local community.

Between Dunnottar Castle in the North and the river Northesk in the South there are many attractions of different kinds, and the combination of these visitor attractions makes this area worthwhile for visitors from near and far to come to this area, where one stop could be seen as too minor, the combination of a few makes the trip worthwhile.

The strong involvement and ownership of the community together with the collaboration of national active organisation will make the Mill of Benholm unique in many ways and attractive for many different people and groups

## Project Costs

### Preliminary Phase

The costs associated with this phase will largely come from existing MoBE reserves. Volunteer input to stem the ingress of vegetation will be complemented by specific contractors tasked with larger works. Re-establishing power to the site is being quoted for, as the site is disconnected from the grid currently. The testing of the electrical installation has been quoted for with £864. To enable the plumbing to function again, a quote of £1,706 has been received and to clear the pond using a Truxor amphibious vehicle, a site visit is being scheduled by Sustainable Water Company who also assess and maintain reed beds. The clearing of the pond is being funded by TAQA UK.

### Phase 1

All costings in the table below have either been quoted directly from the Condition Report (Appendix H) or from actual quotes received. Further quotes will be sought prior to the commencement of works to fulfil best practice. Fees and contingencies (20%) will also have to be factored in when applying for funding for this phase.

A quote of £206,400 (inc. VAT) has been received to complete the majority of the Phase 1 works (Appendix F) by a local builder/landscaper and other quotes will be sought for further electrical and plumbing work. The wheel repairs, described in the condition report and included below, will be carried out by a specialist.

#### Mill Building

2.1.5b Replace rotten timber lintol 75x125x1400mm	600
2.1.5b Repoint failing mortar with lime, nom 6m2	600
2.1.5b Local consolidation of masonry over lintol	1,000
2.1.5c Consolidate quoins at high level	800
2.1.5c Rake out failing mortar and re-point with lime 9m2	1,100
2.1.5c Consolidate stone lintol bedding	400
2.1.5d Consolidate lintol lime mortar.	400
2.1.5d Repair stone cill, remove iron fixings and repair with resin.	450
2.1.5d Drill timber lintol above 12 pane light.	600
2.1.6 Replace cement bedding for hips & ridges with 3.5m hip & ridge tiles	6,000
2.1.8 Allowance for further joinery repairs of decayed sections	1,500
2.1.11 Test integrity of internal lintol.	60
2.1.5a Wheel Repairs etc including main contractor's uplift and attendance	25,000



2.1.8 Timber windows to be refurbished, repainted and mastic renewed.	4,800
2.1.1 Timber repairs	20,000
2.1.9 4 doors to have repairs, paint removed, repainted, with new mastic.	2,400
 <b>Miller's House</b>	
2.2.7 Replace missing slates nom. 12, refix slipped ones.	400
2.2.7 Renew lead flashings to chimneys, nom 4m in code 6.	1,000
2.2.9 7 Timber windows to be refurbished, repainted and mastic renewed.	4,200
2.2.7 Rebed fireclay ridge with lime mortar.	750
2.2.7 Renew haunching to chimneys	600
<b>Byre</b>	
2.3.6 Allow for minor timber roof repairs affected by damp	2,000
2.3.9 3 Repair timber doors, repaint, and new mastic sand to one.	3,000
2.3.11 Replace extract fans.	2,500
<b>Grain Store</b>	
2.4.6 Check ventilation to roof space.	200
2.4.6 Lift and re-bed ridge and hip tiles.	4,000
2.4.7 Fit gully and local drainage to foot of pipes.	2,500
2.4.7 Check discharge in SE corner and adjust to avoid softening ground.	1,500
2.4.7 Refurbish and full repaint 2 windows.	1,200
2.4.9 3 doors to have minor timber repairs, full repaint, new mastic.	1,800
2.4.11 Renew lighting.	4,000
<b>Lade and Pond</b>	
Check water-proofness of retaining wall to building	20,000
Repair & refurbish sluice gates, clear debris.	10,000
3.2.2 Clear road drains	500
3.2.4 Consolidate rubble with hydraulic lime mortar, nom 46m2	18,000
 <b>Grounds</b>	
3.2.4 Remove rust and repaint railing, replace chicken mesh.	2,000
(Not in Condition Report) Foul Drainage	5,000
(Not in Condition Report) Basic upgrade to roads and paths	7,500
(Not in Condition Report) Repair boardwalk and railings	10,000
(Not in condition Report) Remove hanging trees and vegetation	2,500
(Not in Condition Report) Repair and upgrade Footpaths and bridges	18,000
	<b>188,860</b>

## Phase 2

As this phase is potentially four years hence, the figures relating to works to be carried out that are specified in the Condition Report, give our best estimate of the costs involved. The listings in the table below cover work that will be necessary to complete the refurbishment but do not include any upgrades or changes to the buildings. Any building work of this nature would be contingent on Listed Building consent, planning permission, building warrants and engineers reports – all to be dealt with in due course.

## Phase 2

### Mill Building

2.1.5a Repoint in lime mortar, nom 8m2	1,000
2.1.5d Rake out cement mortar, repoint with lime mortar, deep consolidation	6,000
2.1.5e Rake out mortar and cement pointing. Re-point with lime mortar 20m2	2,400
2.1.5e Consolidate rubble at corner	2,000
2.1.5f Rake out mortar and cement pointing. Repoint with lime mortar 10m2	1,200
2.1.5f Refurbish area at door, cut out ferrous fixing, replace with stainless steel	1,500
2.1.5f Remove 10 no. ferrous fixings.	150
2.1.5f Replace 2 concrete sections raising door head in stone.	7,500
2.1.5f Replace ferrous pintols in stainless steel.	600
2.1.6 Replace ventilator to match previous one.	5,000
2.1.6 Reinststate 2 cast iron rooflights, with lead flashings.	5,000
2.1.7 Replace 2 plastic on downpipe legs with cast iron.	2,000
2.1.7 Replace additional 4m pvc rhones & pipes in cast iron.	600
2.1.8 Fit 3 new small cast iron rooflights, with associated lead flashings.	6,000
2.1.9 Allow for additional timber repairs	1,600
2.1.10 Investigate source of water ingress and halt it.	5,000
2.1.10 Rake our cement pointing and replace in lime, 20m2	2,400
2.1.10 Remove modern paint and refinish wall interior with limewash, 30m2	2,100
2.1.11 Rake out cement pointing and replace with lime mortar nom 20m2	2,400
2.1.11 Replace defective cement cill with new stone cill.	600
2.1.11 Remove modern paint and refinish wall interior with limewash, 60m2	4,200
2.1.12 Specialist inspection of mill mechanism.	1,500
2.1.12 Allowance for minor repairs	5,000
2.1.12 Replace missing belts.	5,000

2.1.13 Replace lighting system. 15,000

### Miller's House

2.2.5a Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar 16m2 2,000  
 2.2.5a Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar 16m2 3,000  
 2.2.5c Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar 10m2 1,200  
 2.2.5d Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar 15m2 1,800  
 2.2.5d Sleeve overflow pipe with lead. 400  
 2.2.5d Remove cement haunching where previous building abutted. 300  
 2.2.6 Demolish and rebuild if required in better quality construction 6 x 6m  
 2.2.8 Replace plastic rainwater goods in cast iron. 600  
 2.2.8 Form gully and 2m drain pipe to burn for 1 down pipe. 800  
 2.2.9 Refurbish 3 new cast iron rooflights, with associated lead flashings. 6,000  
 2.2.9 Remove extract fan and re-glaze. 100  
 2.2.11 Remove synthetic paint from walls and limewash. 75m2 5,500  
 2.2.12 Replace extract fan with new one using former chimney. 1,200

### Miller's House Improvements

Lift concrete floor 200mm insulation, dpm, stone floor, uf heating 36m2 21,600  
 Wall lining, timber frame, 200mm sheep wool, boards and clay plaster finish. 17,550  
 Strip ceiling lining , 300mm insulation, dwang to 18mm redwood lining boards 8,100  
 New quality lighting & power, nom 45m2 17,100  
 Furnishings & Fittings - café seating, etc 7,000

### Byre

2.3.5a Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 15m2 1,800  
 2.3.5a Sleeve overflow pipe with lead. 400  
 2.3.5b Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 14m2 1,700  
 2.3.5b Consolidate voids at low level. 400  
 2.3.5b Remove redundant iron fixings. 150  
 2.3.5b Replace quoin, nom 200 x 350 x 600mm. 400  
 2.3.5c Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 4m2 500  
 2.3.5d Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 2m2 300  
 2.3.6 Desirable to reinstate the rooflight, ventilator, appropriate ridges 100m2. 7,000  
 2.3.6 Lift and re-bed ridge and hip tiles. 4,000  
 2.3.7 Realign drain so water does not discharge directly onto ground. 1,500  
 2.3.8 Refurbish 2 cast iron rooflights, with associated lead flashings. 2,000  
 2.3.10a Remove synthetic paint and limewash walls. Nom 35m2 2,500  
 2.3.10b Remove synthetic paint and limewash walls. Nom 8m2 600

2.3.10c Remove synthetic paint and limewash walls, nom 6m2	450
2.3.10d Remove synthetic paint and limewash walls. Nom 6m2	450
2.3.10e Remove synthetic paint and limewash walls, nom 6m2	450
2.3.11 Renew lighting.	2,000
Lift concrete floor install new 200mm insulation, dpm and stone floor	22,800
Wall lining, timber frame, 200mm sheep wool, boards and clay plaster finish.	18,900
Strip ceiling lining,300mm insulation, dwang out to 18mm redwood boards	7,200
Unisex toilets, 3 w.c. and 1 accessible, baby changing, plumbing and heating	30,000
New quality lighting & power	14,440
Furnishings & Fittings	6,000
<b>Grain Store</b>	
2.4.5a Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 15m2	1,800
2.4.5b Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 10m2	1,200
2.4.5c Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 15m2	1,800
2.4.5d Replace cement with new stone, nom 300 x 300 x 200mm.	400
2.4.5d Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar, nom 10m2	1,200
2.4.5d Repair 2 minor cracks with lime mortar and s.s. ties.	300
<b>Lade, Pond and Grounds</b>	
3.2.1 Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar 8m2	1,000
3.2.2 Rake out defective pointing and replace with lime mortar 18m2	2,200
3.2.3 Rake out failed cement mortar and repoint with lime mortar 20m2	2,400
3.1 Replace timber. Fully dismantle and renew lade, to reinstate original	130,000
3.1 Remove silt, check lining, replace overflow pipes with new fireclay pipes	30,000
	<b>478,240</b>

Revenue Budgets	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Advertising/Marketing	£600	£600	£600	
Water Rates	£4,200	£4,200	£4,200	
Electric	£2,400	£3,000	£4,200	
Phone & Internet	£1,200	£1200	£1,200	
Insurance	£2,500	£3,000	£3,000	
Office Exp	£300	£300	£300	
Volunteer expenses and training	£600	£600	£600	
Professional and accountancy fees	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	

Repairs & Maintenance (general)	£4,800	£4,800	£4,800	
Refuse Collection and pest control	£600	£600	£600	
Cleaning Materials	£240	£240	£240	
Misc.	£2,400	£2,400	£2,400	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£21,840</b>	<b>£22,940</b>	<b>£24,140</b>	<b>£68,920</b>

**Total Grant requirement for Phase 1 & Phase 2 Capital Works we estimate to be around £820,000 (inc. 20% for fees and contingencies) although further assessments are to be completed.**

## Financial Appraisals

The costs for the Preliminary Phase will be covered by the funds of MoBE and where possible by core cost funders and capital costs funders. Successful application for the clearance of the pond has already been made to TAQA, while further applications to Benefact and Garfield Weston, are still outstanding. Further applications will be made to Peoples Postcode Trust and Historic Environment Grants Programme amongst others.

During this phase MoBE will apply for grants to enable Phase 1. The fact that both the buildings and natural environment have been statutorily protected widens the scope of funding streams that can be accessed for the Mill of Benholm.

The buildings within the mill complex require investment in terms of repairs to the historic fabric and mill machinery, but also improvements to the facilities and environs itself so that it is fit for purpose and provides the local community and visitors with an increased range of activities. This should be done in a way to preserve and enhance the built and natural environment, contributing to, and securing its special sense of place.

The fact that the Mill of Benholm is a listed building located in a conservation area and in an attractive rural setting with landscape designations offers potential to attracting funds with a focus on building preservation and environment. It will be important to focus on the lack of access to local services and rural isolation (the Mill sits in the lowest decile for geographic access). The Mill should qualify for funding where there is a particular focus on rural communities.

MoBE will continue local fundraising as well as generating income from the site via, rentals, merchandise sales and hospitality as well as events, tours and courses, as the cashflow will highlight.

Based on current funding opportunities the conclusion is that based on current funding opportunities, and grant potential from charitable trusts and foundations, MoBE could



successfully raise funds for Phase 1 and could include funding the refurbishment of the building beyond limited repairs and for later phases, although the greater the target, the greater the difference the project will need to make and evidence accordingly.

Due to the short timescales, the report by Sarah Kettles Conversation of funders in Appendix G is not an exhaustive list of funding opportunities but seeks to highlight a sufficient range of potential prospect to inform MoBE of the options. Moreover, the prospect to pursue a comprehensive larger project could exclude some potential funding sources which set a ceiling on total project costs.

To secure funding for Phase 1 MoBE has already submitted the Expression of Interest for the Levelling Up Community Ownership Fund and has been invited to submit a full application, as soon as ownership of the site is secured.

A wide range of funds, trusts and foundations were researched for this funding report. Funders were chosen based on their published, which indicated that they could be good potential sources for Mill of Benholm Enterprise community led redevelopment project.

In the first instance, research was focused on trusts and foundations based in Aberdeenshire and the North East of Scotland, before widening out to the whole of Scotland and the rest of the UK. Public funds including those from the Scottish and UK Government's were also explored. The research concentrated on trusts that have a specific focus on projects with a heritage and/or community involvement, identifying funding sources favouring rural communities and older people. Reference is made to the relevant project themes where appropriate, including improving access and the natural environment.

Excluded within the prospects is a range of Landfill Trusts, some of which have a Scottish base, all of which have separate criteria funding scheme for Scotland. This is a tax credit scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute money to Approved Bodies to carry out projects that meet environmental objectives. This type of funding would be suitable for the MoBE proposals BUT requires lease with at least 5 years remaining or ownership of the site. A letter of intent is not deemed adequate. Should MoBE take ownership of the site then there is an option to explore this type of funding.

Landfill Trusts, and increasingly other sources such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, have an interest in environmental sustainability. Therefore, there is merit to ensuring that the works to the building including upgrades to boilers etc that are more efficient and should include sustainable development. Sustainability and measures towards Net Zero are required by most funders and it is for this reason that details have been included for Local Energy Scotland (LES) who could provide professional advice and support for MoBE to consider alternative renewable energy options.

Ownership, or long terms leases are required by most funders and a letter of intent is usually insufficient. Therefore, funders such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund have been discounted for Phase One.

## Summarised Cash Flow Projection

<b>Revenue Budgets</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
Advertising	£600	£600	£600
Water Rates	£4,200	£4,200	£4,200
Electric	£2,400	£3,000	£4,200
Phone and internet	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200
Insurance	£2,500	£3,000	£3,000
Stationery, postage & Printing	£300	£300	£300
Volunteer/training expenses	£600	£600	£600
Professional and accountancy fees	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Repairs & Maintenance (estimate needs firmed up)	£4,800	£4,800	£4,800
Refuse Collection and pest control	£600	£600	£600
Cleaning materials	£240	£240	£240
Misc.	£2,400	£2,400	£2,400
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£21,840</b>	<b>£22,940</b>	<b>£24,140</b>
<b>Total over 3 years</b>			<b>£68,920</b>
Café Income	£7,100.00	£16,250.00	£17,500.00
Merchandise/Shop sales	£1,040.00	£1,200.00	£2,400.00
Lets Income	£3,660.00	£6,180.00	£10,480.00
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>£11,800.00</b>	<b>£22,630.00</b>	<b>£36,180.00</b>
Donations (e.g. at Events, Tours & Car Park)	£2,540.00	£4,200.00	£4,800.00
Fundraising	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£15,340.00</b>	<b>£27,830.00</b>	<b>£36,180.00</b>
<b>Total over 3 years</b>			<b>£79,350.00</b>
<b>Profit over 3 years</b>			<b>£10,430</b>

The full cashflow is in Appendix E

## Marketing and Communication Strategy



A strong marketing strategy is essential for two key reasons: firstly, we need to attract a strong range and scale of local people from Benholm, Johnshaven and the surrounding area to ensure we achieve the social outcomes; secondly, we need to attract appropriate levels of trading income (partly from visitors and tourists) to secure long term financial sustainability. Ideally these should merge but driving usage and

business to the Mill is vital for securing its success.

A branding exercise has already been undertaken and there is a logo and brand identity in place. This will need to be deployed with a strategic communications and marketing plan which will be put together before the facility opens. MoBE is working together with Falu Design who have already designed the website [www.millofbenholm.scot](http://www.millofbenholm.scot) as well as the logo for the Mill of Benholm and Mill Benholm Enterprise with its distinguished colour scheme symbolising grain and water. Colour scheme and logo have been present with a recognisable layout and presentation in all publications since the beginning of 2023. This branding will communicate Mill of Benholm's identity and character. The communications and marketing plan will set out a detailed timetable of activity that can be implemented through the phases. As a result, the marketing plan will be distinct, and outcomes focused, and the following gives a snapshot of the context in which it will work.

There will be three key targets for the marketing plan. These are almost completely distinct sometimes requiring different methodologies. They are

1. Local people (who are isolated or require support) who we want to use and contribute to the facility and will be the main social beneficiaries.
2. Local commercial users who will use the centre for café, learning and heritage/environmental activities.
3. Visitors - Tourists and visitors, many of whom are coming to see the Mill or who are attracted to the quality of the heritage and outdoor access.

### Local Market

We will create a strategic marketing strategy based on the following:

- E-mail news bulletins. We have already created a database of local residents who are committed to the Mill and shall increase this continuously, building up a sense of a community (the Friends) who get regular news updates. Our supporters, members and associates are currently receiving the quarterly newsletter and news updates in between. To strengthen this supportive

community we are using Facebook, the preferred social media platform of our main target group, but as well Instagram, Twitter and Mastodon. Our followers on Facebook have grown organically since last year from 500 to over 1,200, mostly from the Mearns area.

- Poster and flyers, keeping people in Benholm, Johnshaven and the surrounding area informed via shop windows and noticeboards.
- Use of gatekeepers, sending information out to local third sector groups
- Use of social media
- Use of the local press

A conversation will be built to keep people in touch with “their” building.

### **Commercial Customers**

We will work closely with local businesses across the area. These all attract significant visitors to the area, and we want to capture some of that market.

Working with the business community opens up communications with potential commercial customers through on and off-line marketing materials and scattered with campaigns throughout the years. We will work with strategic partners including tourism officers at Aberdeenshire Council, SCOTO and the Chamber of Commerce.

Clear professional publicity material will be designed and developed and distributed to the right publications.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The outcomes and milestones will be fleshed out in more detail in the future and the concept moves towards inception and once agreed, those milestones and outcomes will be what is monitored against. These will likely change depending on what funding is secured as each funder will have their own outcomes. There will be a clear baseline from which we can measure change. We will also monitor for change outwith those outcomes and record any unexpected outcomes, positive and negative.

A report will be structured to be presented to each board meeting outlining progress towards each outcome and whether milestones have been achieved on target, with clear plans to address issues if the milestones are off track. Actions will be agreed by the Board and implemented by the volunteers and/or staff

We will endeavour to consolidate a system whereby reporting become relatively streamlined.

Evidence will be sought from the following:

- Recording numbers of people attending the Mill and for what purpose. The group have used clickers at events to record numbers of attendees and estimate the split of ages and location.
- Numbers of people attending the café and at what times
- Attendees at learning events which will all have evaluation forms.
- Evaluation at events to take views from people as they are there, say on a blackboard or graffiti board.
- The difference this makes to them by having comments postcards on all the tables.
- Testimonials from regular local users about the impact of being on the site and receiving services
- We will use a lot of photography and video interviews to record data in a different way.
- The nature of those people, whether local or visitors
- All learning events will use evaluation sheets.
- Numbers and nature of volunteers.
- User and customer surveys will investigate outcomes and views in more detail
- A confidential bi-annual local survey to record wider benefit across the community
- A regular stakeholder meeting will also gather data
- Numbers of social media followers and the quality of that conversation where immediate feedback can be tracked quickly

The finances will be monitored as noted above, though in phase one envisage surpluses to be minimal and for this to be a grant funded phase to get ideas moving.

The success of activity in the building will be dependent upon the efforts and motivation of existing and new staff and volunteers. Staff will be given the opportunity to report on their perspective of how things are progressing.



## Conclusion

From the data collected and interpreted by Community Enterprise together with our own research within the community and feedback we receive from our social media platforms we concluded that there is the need for the Mill of Benholm to become a community and visitor hub.

The community is longing for an activity hub outwith towns and villages, surrounded by nature walks and combined with catering and comfort facilities to enhance their mental and physical wellbeing.

Local Groups are looking for areas to teach forgotten rural skills, engage children, teenagers, and adults with nature. The site can be used as a background for events, concerts, plays, use the mill as ideal teaching facility for baking and cooking with ancient grains.

Many communities worldwide but especially in Australia and Canada have their roots in Benholm, as Inverbervie harbour was used to ship Scots out of their country in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and many of those have ancestors buried in the graveyard of Benholm Kirk.

Together with Benholm Kirk and a working mill at Mill of Benholm with intriguing nature trails in proximity of the picturesque fishing village of Johnshaven, the aim is to attract tourists visiting the nearby Dunnottar Castle to use the Coastal Route to visit the Mill of Benholm, Benholm Kirk, and the conservation area of Benholm, especially if there is an overnight parking facility for campervans.

The Mill of Benholm in conjunction with Benholm Kirk and the whole of Benholm can draw many visitors into the area if marketed correctly, bringing additional revenue and potential jobs into one of the most deprived areas of Aberdeenshire.

The Mill of Benholm must focus on its heritage as a mill in a rural farming area of Scotland, but as well on its more recent past as a hub for the community and visitors alike. To attract the needed footfall to sustain the future of this 'Gem of the Mearns' the Mill of Benholm needs to be restored back to a working mill, with all water structures working, a catering facility needs to be on site, milling and farming museum established, connection via foot bridge to the Mill Brae Woods and its nature paths and wood walks, using the land for community gardening, the flat area beside the pond for events, plays and music, exhibitions within the buildings and a strong connection with the Benholm Kirk will widen the potential interested visitors

All together the site needs to be developed in sync with the area and its heritage, renovated to a great quality heritage site of a working water mill, without going over the top and to keep the character of the Mill of Benholm loved by so many.