



Community support opens doors for Blackburn & Kinellar Shed

Blackburn and Kinellar Men's Shed in Aberdeenshire, a vital community initiative aimed at fostering camaraderie, wellbeing, and skill-sharing among men, has reached a significant milestone. Thanks to the generosity and support of a local business, the group has finally found a permanent space to call its own, launching a new chapter for the recently formed Aberdeenshire Shed and allowing it to expand its positive impact in the local area.

Since its inaugural meeting in June last year, held to gauge interest from the local community, Blackburn and Kinellar Men's Shed has operated with the goal of providing a welcoming environment where men of all backgrounds can gather, socialise, and participate in projects that benefit both themselves and the wider community.

Shed members have been meeting weekly on Wednesday evenings at the Kinellar Community Hall in Blackburn, attracting a steady turnout of 10-12 attendees. The group brings together men from a wide range of backgrounds, including former military personnel, retired police officers, teachers and local Rotary club members—a mix that creates plenty of shared experience, good banter and strong peer support.

The hall's management generously provided free meeting space on the basis that Sheddars might carry out some odd jobs around the building such as tidying up the surrounding gardens, sweeping up leaves—and more recently clearing snow—as well as carrying out community litter picking and helping to plant spring flowering bulbs around the village.

Kinellar Community Centre Manager, Katharina Holzkamp, said: "The community centre was very keen to support Blackburn and Kinellar Men's Shed because we recognise just how valuable it is for the health, wellbeing, and social connection of our local men.

"Supporting local initiatives like this is so important, and we were delighted to help get them started with a free place to gather and give them a strong foundation to build on. It's also been a real two-way partnership between charities—the men have already been helping out around the hall with odd jobs, which benefits everyone and strengthens the sense of community."

After appointing a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary then drafting in another four members to form a steering committee to spread the workload, essential tasks such as obtaining charity status and opening a bank account were successfully achieved. Attention then turned to seeking funding and finding a permanent home.

Given the strong, mutually beneficial relationship with the community hall, efforts initially concentrated on the possibility of acquiring and converting one or more shipping containers which could have been located within the hall grounds. This then branched out to the potential of obtaining either a steel framed and latterly a timber log cabin style building, all of which would have required planning permission and considerable cost.

A vacant unit in Blackburn Industrial Estate, owned by Aberdeenshire Council, was also viewed. However, the annual rent being sought was far beyond what the Shed could reasonably afford—and with very few alternative premises available locally, options were extremely limited.

Christmas came early for the members in December however when responses to a local letter and email drop, seeking support from local businesses, resulted in an offer of premises in the village which will provide ample workshop and meeting space for the new Shed to develop, grow membership and work on projects that will benefit both members and the wider community.

Among a number of encouraging and much-appreciated responses—each offering support in different ways—there was one from long-established family firm H&R Insurance, Aberdeen's only remaining locally established independent insurance broker. They generously offered the upper floor of their two-storey office building in Blackburn Industrial Estate, presenting a particularly promising option for the Shed.

The site will provide a large open plan space which will be ideal for light-touch workshop activities such as woodworking, crafts, modelling or repair shop works, 3D printing or laser etching. There's also an adjoining meeting room come social area/canteen, a fully fitted kitchen (essential for making a brew!), toilets and a further smaller meeting room for breakout activities or for members to enjoy cards, dominoes, board games or just having a chat.

The flexibility of the space means it can easily adapt as interests grow and new projects emerge. The only drawback is that the premises are located on the upper floor of the building and, unfortunately, there is no lift access, which limits use for those with mobility issues—an issue the Shed will need to consider and work towards addressing over time to ensure the space is as inclusive and accessible as possible.

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H&R Insurance partner Ms Shona Robertson (pictured top right) explained that they first became aware of the group after receiving a local drop letter from the Shed and were keen to lend their support. She said: “We recognised the value a Men’s Shed brings to the community —offering social connection, combating loneliness— and realised we were in a position to help.

“It’s important to us to support positive, grassroots initiatives like this. If we can provide a space that allows the Shed to grow and thrive, then that’s something we’re very proud to do.”

Her gesture not only secures a physical base for the Shed’s activities but also highlights the strength of community partnerships and what can be achieved when businesses and local volunteers work together.

Members have already begun transforming the space, measuring the workshop area for the installation of suitable flooring on the existing concrete base, bringing in tools, working out the positioning of workbenches, and planning how to make best use of the facilities to suit members’ needs and activities. While the workshop and meeting space is located on the first floor with access by stairs, members have already identified that a stair lift could be installed to cater for anyone with mobility difficulties.

Another generous offer of support came from long established local fabrication engineering company H&F Moir who donated funds and provided Hi-Vis vests for members undertaking litter-picking or other outdoor activities (pictured above). A further local firm has also promised support in kind.

For the Shed, having a dedicated venue means the group can expand its outreach, welcome new members, and offer a greater variety of workshop activities and projects.

With their new home secured, Blackburn and Kinellar Men’s Shed is poised for growth. Plans are already underway for open days, collaborative projects with local and national charities, and new initiatives aimed at helping men learn new skills and make meaningful contributions to the locality.

Applications for funding support have been sent to the National Lottery and other country-wide and local grant-giving bodies to help the Shed get up and running. The Shed is grateful for assistance already confirmed by Aberdeenshire Council’s Garioch Area Small Grants Fund which is being used to acquire essential items such as a first aid kit and new vacuum to keep the premises clean and tidy.

The group extends its heartfelt thanks to local firms and its growing partnerships for their generosity and vision, as well as to all those in the community who have offered support along the way. Together, they have ensured that the Men’s Shed will remain a cornerstone of connection and creativity for years to come.

Blackburn and Kinellar Men's Shed welcomes new members of all backgrounds. Whether individual interests are in woodworking, gardening, arts and crafts, or simply looking for a chat and a cuppa, there's a place for all. The Shed is currently developing a dedicated website which should go live soon. In the meantime, for more information on joining or supporting the Shed, please [email](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#).