



# Spotlight

## Developing the Black Isle Library of Things (BILoT)

March 2025



### Background

Sharing items is a vital part of the circular economy by saving from buying things new and making better use of things that are only used a few times throughout their life. Sharing resources with others in our community not only saves residents and community groups money, it also reduces our environmental and carbon footprint.

Here's one you've heard before: the average drill is used for just 13 minutes in its lifetime. Yet many of us possess our own drill. (Emma McArthur Foundation)

What a waste! But what if we could share our resources? [Transition Black Isle](#), as part of the [Highland Community Waste Partnership](#), explored what this would look like and collaborated with other community groups to develop a [Black Isle Library of Things](#) (BILoT). Informal sharing was already happening between community groups in the area but there was no process in place or tracking of assets which meant they were not being used to their full potential.

So we worked on gaining public opinion and support through holding discussions with the community at community events and with other Black Isle community groups



### Resources and community feedback

We worked closely with [Circular Communities Scotland Share and Repair Network](#) to learn from other sharing libraries in Scotland. We used their sharing library set up guide to ensure we had all the information required to take the initiative forward. And met with MyTurn lending library software to explore the capabilities and suitability for the BILoT and gained a demo version to explore the software and its capabilities with the community.



Having built up resources to support the initiative and those involved, we gained insights from the community at community meetings, local events, and the monthly Black Isle Repair Cafe. We consulted the community through publicity and online channels gathering information through an online form. We held a meeting with interested individuals to explore the idea in more depth, listened to and answered any questions attendees had. We received responses and interest from representatives from Transition Black Isle, Culbokie Community Trust, Black Isle Mens Shed, Black Isle Repair Café (BIRC), Cromarty Community Trust, Black Isle Bicycles and Muir Hub

The feedback gathered provided great insights to shape the initiative going forward:

**Support for the Idea** - The initiative received positive feedback, with several people calling it a great or excellent idea.

**Location Considerations** - The distance to the library or libraries was noted as a potential barrier to accessing items.

**Community Pooling Suggestions** - Some suggested creating a system where less frequently used tools or equipment could be jointly bought and owned for communal use.

**Offers to Contribute** - Individuals expressed willingness to donate or lend items, like power tools or a wheelchair, and suggested potential partnerships, such as with the Inverness Tool Library, especially for pooling gardening tools.

**Management & Maintenance Concerns** - Questions were raised about how items would be looked after, what happens if they get damaged or lost, and how borrowing durations are managed.

The resources we pooled such as The Share and Repair Sharing Library Set up Guide was an excellent resource to help answer any concerns and provide examples to help work around barriers identified. MyTurn also provided excellent resources and a demonstration trial version to explain how the lending library software worked and support the library volunteers.

We then held a second meeting at Inverness Tool Library (ITL) with area managers and volunteers to gain learning from a local successful, sharing library. This enabled them to see a lending library in action and ask questions of ITL volunteers on systems such as MyTurn and day to day processes.

Working closely with Inverness Tool Library has enabled us to set up bespoke training for BILoT volunteers, providing 1-1 sessions and telephone support to help use MyTurn in the initial stages of the area setting up. This has also built a good working relationship between the initiatives so we can support each other, share donations and learn with each other going forward.

## Inventory and donations

Items in the BILoT include Gazebos, Hanging Rails, A mug Library for events, Apple Press, Display Boards, A projector, stand and screen, Trailer, Party Kits, Fruit Dryers, Medial aids and more. Donations include a wheelchair and medical aids, tools and child and toddler equipment. We aim to



create themed sections of items based on what people have said would be useful and what we receive in donations. Suggestions for the community saying there's a need for items for when grandchildren or young people are visiting. Garden equipment was also noted as useful. We also received feedback on the idea of community ownership, where people band together to purchase a more expensive item so it can be added to the BILoT. Buying new feels wasteful, in terms of usage and cost, so the 'library of things' aims to provide the items people find useful.

## Outcomes and next steps

We have **three sites** under the Black Isle Library of Things. This includes two bike and Ebike projects, at Longhouse Cottages (Hillockhead Black Isle Yurts site) and at Fortrose Leisure Centre. The Fortrose site is currently finalising partnership agreements with High Life Highland and the Highland Council. We were also successful in our application to Highlands and Islands Enterprise for their Cycle Tourism Fund which will provide match funding and enable us to provide storage for both sets of Black Isle Bicycles bikes.

Transition Black Isle have taken on the lease for the upstairs part of 18 High Street, Rosemarkie with some downstairs space. Securing this site in Rosemarkie will provide a library of things to share TBI's assets and will also provide a space for donations to be added to the BILoT. Having this area in place will provide a working sharing library to inspire others to join or start their own in their area.

We have a **working group** in place to steer the BILoT forward, with the first planning meeting on the 18th of April, 2025 being held at the Rosemarkie site. With over 11 local residents joining to steer the initiative forward and volunteer, the Black Isle Library of Things is set for success.

### Feedback and resident quotes:

*"Perhaps there's a partnership we could set up, or we could even share some of the donations. We get a lot of gardening tools come in as donations, it might make sense to have a conversation about pooling resources." - Inverness Tool Library*

*"We would be happy to flag up that we have a wheelchair that is available to be borrowed. We may well have more equipment." - Findon Hall Culbokie*

*"I think it's an excellent idea, particularly lending gardening equipment." - Black Isle Resident*

*"I have some power tools that will be surplus to my requirements. I'd consider donating or lending them." - Black Isle Resident*

*"... great idea. Maybe could have a system where folks who want something less often used, like a log splitter, band together to jointly buy and own it for communal use." - Black Isle Resident*

**To learn more, visit:** <https://blackislelibraryofthings.myturn.com/library/>

### The Highland Community Waste Partnership (2022-2025)

Funded by The National Lottery Climate Action Fund, and coordinated by Keep Scotland Beautiful, the Highland Community Waste Partnership brought together eight community groups in the Highlands to reduce waste and promote more sustainable consumption.

Learn more here: [www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/](http://www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/)