



**COMMUNITY
LINKS**

INVOLVING COMMUNITIES



Annual Report
2023 / 2024





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RESPECT

INNOVATION

VIBRANCE



UNITY

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Welcome to our Annual Report!

This year, our team's enthusiasm, passion, and resilience have made a significant impact on the lives of people in our communities. With the support of our funders, partners, and especially some incredible community volunteers, whose boundless empathy, energy, and dedication have been nothing short of inspiring, we continued to address the cost of living crisis, tackling high energy costs and food poverty while promoting climate awareness.

These volunteers, everyday heroes who pour their hearts into helping others, embody the true spirit of community. Their selfless acts remind us that people looking after people is the foundation of a thriving society. They breathe life into our initiatives, bringing not only their time but also a deep sense of care, ensuring that no one is left behind.

By involving our communities in evaluating our services, we are developing innovative well-being, creative, physical, and mental health initiatives. We focus on harnessing people's strengths to create activities they want, fostering positive social interactions and supportive relationships. Through active involvement, learning, sharing new skills, and volunteering, people build confidence and self-esteem.

Despite the increasingly challenging funding environment and rising demand for community support projects, we have had notable successes. Our participation in the 'Keep The Beat Alive' campaign has been a particular highlight, raising awareness and showcasing the impact of our work, and the third sector as a whole. Third sector organisations are the heartbeat of South Lanarkshire's communities, providing vital services to those in need. Our campaign encourages key decision-makers to collaborate more effectively with us. We value our partnerships, especially with the Third Sector Chief Officer's Group.

In the following pages, we highlight our community engagement, development, and service delivery efforts to address income inequality. We also have exciting plans to involve our communities in Climate Action to protect our environment.

As always, we are grateful for your support and look forward to another year of building stronger, resilient communities together.

Morag Pinion
Chief Officer

Julie Dunn
Chairperson

About Community Links

We are an independent Lanarkshire-based Community Anchor organisation, established in 2002. Our mission is to empower and uplift our communities through three key roles:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, where we facilitate dialogue between communities and service providers to enhance local services and outcomes.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, where we provide professional support to help residents transform their ideas into impactful projects.

SERVICE PROVISION, where we deliver essential services to address income inequality and stay connected with the communities we serve.

We are a value-based organisation, and this is reflected in how we deliver our services and interact with the communities we serve.

Our values are:

INCLUSION

COMMITMENT

RESPECT

INNOVATION

VIBRANCE



Julie Dunn
Chairperson



Jim Reid
Vice Chair



Anna Shanks
Director



Robert McKean
Director



Emma Horrell
Director



Chris Thompson
Director



Morag Pinion
Chief Officer



Anne Marie Lyons Neil
Business Support Officer



Iain Macdonald
Operational Lead



Liz Armour
Community Development
Officer



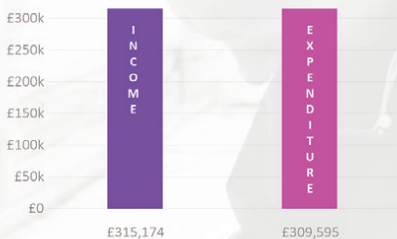
Sally Pritchard
Community Development
Worker



Colin Duff
Business Development Officer

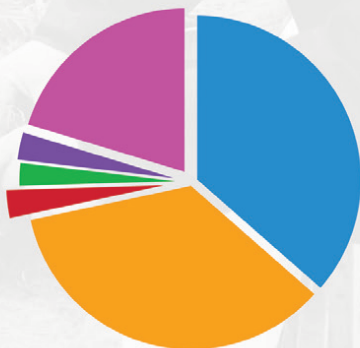


Income and Expenditure



Community Links free reserves, i.e. those not tied up in fixed assets, nor relating to restricted funds, as of 31st March 2024, amounted to £149,444. These reserves are in line with the policy of maintaining a minimum of six months' running costs, including potential statutory redundancy payments.

A full copy of the certified accounts- prepared by our accountants, Kilbryde & Co. can be obtained on request.



- Scottish Government Investing in Communities- £114,951
- SLC Community Engagement Team- £110,896
- National Lottery Awards for All- £9,011
- Hamilton Health and Social Care Forum- £7,450
- Spirit of Lanarkshire Wind Energy Cooperative- £8,829
- Self-Generated Income- £64,037



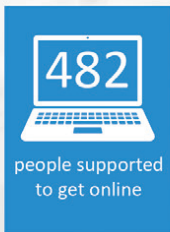
Community Hubs

Our Community Hubs are... well... the hubs of our work in communities. They are the places where people meet and where they can find out about, and access, other services and opportunities. Services like Money Matters, Citizens Advice Bureau and the NHS Health Improvements Team attend regularly to make sure that local people can access their services without the costs and inconvenience of travelling to town centre locations.



Delivered alongside our incredible partners, Gilmour and Whitehill Parish Church, Hillhouse Parish Church, and Larkhall Christians Together, our Community Hubs are safe, warm places where local people can drop in and always be sure of a welcoming face. People can simply come in for company but hubs also offer free food, including food bank parcels, digital access, and IT support. People come in because they know that Community Links staff and volunteers will almost always be able to help with problems, or be able to signpost them to the agencies that can help them and, often, speed up their contact with these agencies.


In our hubs we also offer other activities that people can take part in. In the past 12 months, activities have included various cooking and crafting classes, upcycling, home energy efficiency advice and, of course, bingo!



Bright Ideas - Our Energy Saving Projects

Through funding from the Spirit of Lanarkshire Wind Energy Cooperative (SOLWEC), we were able to provide FREE domestic energy-saving devices to households in Hamilton and Larkhall, prioritising single persons and families with children. Additionally, funding from Scottish Government and National Lottery Awards for All supported these climate action initiatives through the development of Slow Cooker and Air Fryer courses, aiming to teach individuals how to prepare healthy, nutritious meals whilst reducing energy consumption and costs at home.

Our Winter Warmer Land event, in partnership with local community groups and organisations represented in the Hamilton and Blantyre Network, emerged as a meaningful mitigation to high energy costs, through additional provision of energy-saving devices and information and innovation sessions with partners including Home Energy Scotland, Money Matters, and Glasgow Science Centre.



"I absolutely love the devices given, especially the air fryer and slow cooker, it has made life with 3 young children easier, and I've noticed a difference in my electricity costs. I really appreciate it."

- Device Recipient



500
devices
provided



31
participants
in cooking
courses



141
families
benefitted

"Having arrived in Scotland just two months ago, I'm so grateful that my family has the essential items for our first winter here" - Winter Warmer Land attendee



Our Place Our Plan

Evidence shows that the neighbourhoods of Hillhouse, Udston and Burnbank, and of Strutherhill and Birkenshaw, are places where some people face challenges that affect income, health, and overall well-being.

To help address these issues, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership to create and share plans that set out what the Partners are going to do to tackle these inequalities. These plans, created hand-in-hand with local residents, are called Our Place, Our Plan (OPOP). In each OPOP area, groups of local people, along with representatives from various community partners, come together to decide on actions that will improve opportunities and quality of life.



Community Links has been right there, helping these groups by conducting community consultations to identify and update local priorities - this year 512 people took part in the re-ranking of local priorities in Hillhouse, Udston, and Burnbank, and Strutherhill and Birkenshaw. We also make sure that the local people involved in OPOP feel confident and empowered to work alongside our partners.



One of the key activities that Community Links staff and the OPOP groups work on is the promotion and management of Participatory Budgeting. This is where local people and community groups have the opportunity to pitch their ideas for projects, and then the whole community votes to choose which ones should receive funding. In 2023/24, Participatory Budgeting exercises took place in Hillhouse, Udston, and Burnbank, and Strutherhill and Birkenshaw, with local people casting 3135 votes to distribute £34,000 of funding to 18 phenomenal projects.



Thank You!

We are immensely grateful to the incredible individuals, organisations, and supporters of Community Links for your unwavering support and dedication over the past year and beyond. Your contributions and commitment are invaluable to us, and especially to your communities.

To anyone who gives their time as a volunteer; your generous efforts make a significant difference every day. Your passion, energy, and empathy profoundly strengthen our communities. We are deeply thankful for all you do!

Our Funders



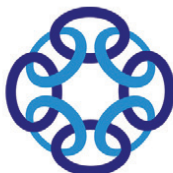
Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Our Supporters and Partners

ASDA Blantyre and Hamilton Community Champions | ASDA Foundation
Buchanan McPherson Colour Printers | Church at the Cross, Larkhall
Community Payback Team | Country Shop, Blantyre | Dunn's Food and Drinks
Earnock Residents' Association | Fareshare
Gilmour and Whitehill Parish Church | Glasgow Science Centre
Hamilton C.A.B. | Hamilton Health and Social Care Forum | Hareleeshill Community Hub
Harvest Church, Hamilton | Hillhouse Parish Church | Home Energy Scotland
Kilbride and Co. | Larkhall Community Growers | Larkhall Lighthouse | LDVG
NHS Lanarkshire | Police Scotland | Sainsbury's Good Food for All of Us
Scottish Fire and Rescue | Social Security Scotland
South Lanarkshire Council Community Engagement Team
South Lanarkshire Council Enterprise and Sustainable Development Service
South Lanarkshire Council Housing | South Lanarkshire Council Money Matters
South Lanarkshire Council Youth, Family, and Community Learning Service
South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture
Third Sector Chief Officers Group | Turning Point Scotland
VASlan | Volunteers of Burnbank Community Hub
Volunteers of Hillhouse Community Hub
Volunteers of Larkhall Community Network
Warm Welcome- Blantyre Old Parish Church





COMMUNITY LINKS

INVOLVING COMMUNITIES

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