



**COMMUNITY
LINKS**

INVOLVING COMMUNITIES



Annual Report 2024 / 25







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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report, celebrating a year of community, collaboration and climate action.

We are delighted to present this year's Annual Report – a reflection of the collective energy, creativity, and commitment that has shaped our journey over the past twelve months. This report is more than a summary of activities; it is a celebration of the people, partnerships, and progress that continue to drive Community Links forward.

At the heart of our work is a deep commitment to community engagement and development. Over the past year, we have expanded our service provision to meet the evolving needs of communities, offering support, resources, and opportunities that empower individuals and strengthen neighbourhoods.

This year marked a significant milestone in our participatory budgeting efforts. Hundreds of community members came together to propose, discuss, and vote on projects that matter most to them. These grassroots initiatives – ranging from community recreation and growing areas to various after school club activities – demonstrate the power of shared decision-making and the value of inclusive governance.



Our week-long Climate Action Festival was a vibrant highlight of the year, bringing communities together to explore sustainable living and environmental justice. Through workshops, partnership and community-led projects, we sparked conversations and inspired action – proving that local efforts can have a global impact.

As we look back on a year full of energy and connection, we're just as excited about what's to come. With your continued support, we'll keep building on this momentum – creating stronger, more sustainable communities where everyone can thrive.

Thank you for being part of the journey.

Julie Dunn
Chairperson

Morag Pinion
Chief Officer

About Community Links

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

SERVICE PROVISION, where we deliver services to improve outcomes for local people and allow our staff to stay connected with our communities.

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

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

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
Co-Vice-Chair



Emma Horrell
Co-Vice-Chair



Robert McKean
Director



Anna Shanks
Director



Megan Ronnie
Director



Morag Pinion
Chief Officer



Anne Marie Lyons Neil
Business Support Officer



Iain Mac
Operational Lead



Liz Armour
Community Development
Officer



Sally Pritchard
Community Development
Worker



Colin Duff
Business Development Officer

Community Hubs



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Community Hubs are more than just a place for a good cup of coffee or a homemade pastry. They are welcoming spaces – located in familiar community buildings in each of the priority neighbourhoods we serve- where everyone is invited to sit, chat, and feel at home. Our hubs- delivered alongside our partners Burnbank Community Hub, Hareleeshill Community Hub, and S.A.B. Action Group - offer, friendly conversation, good company and the comforting aroma of fresh home-made cooking – the stuff that community is made of!



Beyond the warmth of hospitality and home-cooking, our hubs make a real difference to local people. The hubs offer an opportunity for providers of services to engage with local people where they are, eliminating the practical and other barriers that many people face in accessing services. Laptops and free Wi-Fi are also available, helping people get online and make the most of digital opportunities.

Every week, the café hosts free drop-in sessions with trained financial advisors. Whether you're struggling to make ends meet, want to learn more about budgeting, or need guidance on navigating benefits and savings, there is expert support on hand in a relaxed, approachable and confidential environment. By integrating financial guidance into a familiar and non-judgemental setting, the community hubs help to destigmatise money worries and provide practical help where and when it's needed most.

Hubs also host a programme of health promotion inputs, including smoking cessation, alcohol impacts awareness, improving and maintaining mental health and wellbeing, nutrition and hydration. Health promotion activities are not solely provision of information and advice – the hubs encourage participation in walking groups, gardening groups, active travel options, enjoyment of green spaces, healthy cooking and a host of other activities that link physical and mental health outcomes.



More recently, our hubs have taken on a role in promoting awareness of climate change and the opportunities for local communities to participate in collective climate action. Our hubs are leading by example, offering more sustainable produce options in the café and reducing our carbon footprint wherever possible.

Visitors leave not only with a full stomach, but also with greater confidence and knowledge to improve their wellbeing—making a simple café into a true hub for both social and economic resilience.

YOUR COMMUNITY HUBS

Brew ‘n’ Blether

Chalmers Church
Robert Smillie Crescent, Larkhall- Wednesdays 10:00- 1:00pm

Hillhouse Community Hub

Hillhouse Parish Church
Clarkwell Road, Hamilton - Thursdays 11:00am- 1:30pm

Burnbank Community Hub

Gilmour and Whitehill Parish Church
86 Burnbank Centre, Hamilton - Fridays 10:00am- 1:00pm

Community Corner

Harelesshill Community Hub
21 Howard Street, Larkhall - Fridays 10:00am- 1:00pm





Climate Action



Community Links has been working with communities in South Lanarkshire for more than 20 years. When we began our main role was to facilitate dialogue between communities and service providers with a view to improving services.

We've always moved with the times and have responded to what's going on in the world. There can be few, if any, bigger issues now than climate change. The challenge is figuring out what we can do about it here in South Lanarkshire. When we think of climate action, we tend to think of the things we can do as individuals and households, or to think about what government or industry can or should do.

Across the country, however, communities are taking local, collective action that both improves quality of life and has a positive impact on climate change. Community Links doesn't want to (and wouldn't) try to think of local actions ourselves. We want to support communities to do the things that they want to do. To that end, we've been working with our communities to raise awareness of climate change and to generate ideas and interest in developing small scale local initiatives. We're only at the start of this journey, but there are already great ideas being raised and appraised.



Carbon Literacy Training

The language and concepts around climate change can be confusing and contested. That's one of the reasons why, before we started work with communities on climate action, we invested in training all Community Links staff in the Carbon Literacy training from Scottish Communities Climate Action Network.

Armed with our new knowledge and understanding, Community Links was then able to offer community groups training in Carbon Literacy that is relevant to them and their lives and to the local context.



Winter Warmer Land

Our 2024 Winter Warmer-Land event – which took place on 11th November at Hillhouse Parish Church – was designed to help people save money at the same time as saving carbon.

The Winter Warmer Land event distributed a variety of free energy saving devices including, de-humidifiers, draught excluders and radiator foils as well as providing workshops, information, advice stalls, and opportunities to engage people in learning about climate change, thinking about climate action, and encouraging climate conversations.



Make a Meal Of It

Our Make a Meal of It project partnered up with Dunns Food and Drinks to offer local people a series of opportunities to cook in their professional kitchen with their award winning chef – Donnie Munro.

Menus focused on affordable, healthy recipes that utilise local, low food-mile ingredients while introducing sustainable shopping principles. This project demonstrated how accessible, local food choices can be both affordable and sustainable, fostering healthier habits and lasting community connections.

Participants cooked and ate together and left with a take-home bag with essential ingredients and recipes for meal preparation at home.



Climate Action Festival



In 2025 Community Links embarked on our most ambitious climate action enterprise – a whole festival of climate related activities.

The Community Links Climate Action Festival took place from April 7th to April 12th, delivering a vibrant week-long programme of events that engaged communities and individuals on the theme of climate action in fun, inclusive, and educational ways.

The programme included a wide range of activities tailored to all ages—from early years storytelling sessions to hands-on workshops and outdoor experiences:

- **Bookbug in the Park** – A nature-themed storytelling and singing session for babies and toddlers, offering a soft and joyful introduction to environmental themes
- **Bug Trail** – An engaging event for young children to discover insects, their role in the ecosystem, and how to protect them
- **Build a Wildlife-Friendly Garden** – A creative workshop using upcycled materials to support local biodiversity through bird feeders and bug hotels
- **Community Cook Out** – A shared outdoor meal made from sustainable and locally sourced ingredients, bringing people together over food and conversation
- **Disney's Wall-E Cinema Screening** – A gentle and entertaining entry point into climate awareness for children and families

- Foraging for Food – A guided walk through Morgan Glen woodlands, introducing participants to seasonal wild foods and sustainable harvesting practices
- Garden Eats – A pair of gardening sessions – one in Larkhall, and one in Hamilton- teaching participants how to grow food at home, from large gardens to window boxes, with take-home kits including seeds, plants, and compost
- Glasgow Science Centre Trip – An interactive experience including science exhibits and an IMAX screening, sparking curiosity about climate science and innovation
- Make a Meal Of It – A cooking demonstration featuring affordable meals made with local, seasonal produce
- Upcycle & Repair Sewing Workshop – A hands-on class teaching participants to repair clothes and transform old denims into stylish handbags, promoting sustainable fashion
- Woodwork Would Work – A workshop focused on creating birdhouses from reclaimed wood, promoting reuse while supporting local wildlife



Events were spread across local venues and green spaces, building on existing partnerships and community assets to ensure strong accessibility and local relevance.

Thanks to generous funding from National Lottery Awards for All and Scottish Government Investing in Communities Funds, we were able to deliver a festival designed to raise awareness, spark local conversations, and inspire practical behaviour change around sustainability, biodiversity, and low-carbon living.

The festival's events were well attended, with many selling out in advance, and participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Across the week, residents of all ages engaged in meaningful, practical activities that both celebrated and advanced our shared commitment to climate action.



Climate Action Family Fun Day

Community Links Climate Action Festival culminated in a large-scale Climate Action Family Fun Day on Saturday 12th April, at Glenlee Primary School, Burnbank, Hamilton, where families enjoyed an inspiring mix of climate-themed activities, including:

- Beekeeping and local honey information
- Climate-themed scavenger hunt
- Exotic animal petting
- Glasgow Science Centre exhibits on energy and climate
- Local vendors showcasing eco-friendly products
- Plant potting workshop
- Pledge tree for climate action promises

Traditional fun day attractions like bouncy castles, bungee trampolines, balloon artists, face-painting, and outdoor games complemented the climate-themed activities. Over 300 people attended and over 100 of them made climate action pledges on the pledge tree. All pledges collected during the Climate Action Festival were written on plantable seed cards, which will be sown locally — a symbolic and tangible reminder that small actions can grow into meaningful change.



What's Next? Local action, Global Traction

Of course, while the festival was fun and worthwhile in itself, a key reason for doing it was to create opportunities to get people talking about their perceptions of climate change and their ideas for local, collective climate action. Community Links is building up a bank of ideas; there are already more than we can possibly work on. We'll be continuing to collect ideas and we'll be appraising them over the next few months with a view to prioritising those which offer the best balance of achievability and potential impact.

We'll also be looking to secure funding for and deliver a second Community Links Climate Action festival in 2026, building on what we learned about what works and taking on some of the new ideas raised by communities through this festival.

Hamilton Health and Social Care Forum

Hamilton Health and Social Care Forum works closely with communities across the Hamilton locality to make sure their voices are heard in the development of health and social care services, especially when changes are happening at primary care level.

We do this by hosting regular six-weekly meetings, sharing good practice, encouraging open discussion on key issues, and taking part in relevant consultations. Our goal is simple – to give communities a real say in shaping the future of local health services.



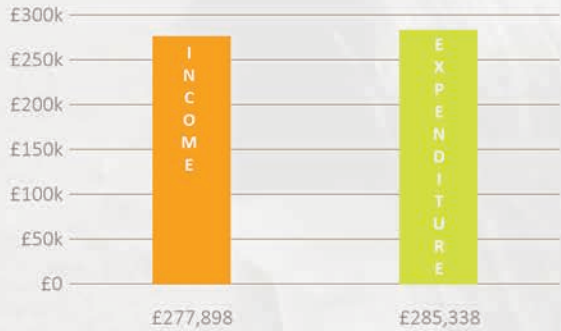
Our Positive Pathway to Mental Health and Wellbeing booklet continues to be a valuable resource for both communities and partners. We're excited to be launching the second edition in August 2025.

Community Links (South Lanarkshire) has proudly held a Service Level Agreement on behalf of NHS Lanarkshire and the Forum since 2008.

Find out more: www.slhscp.org.uk/info/10/get_involved

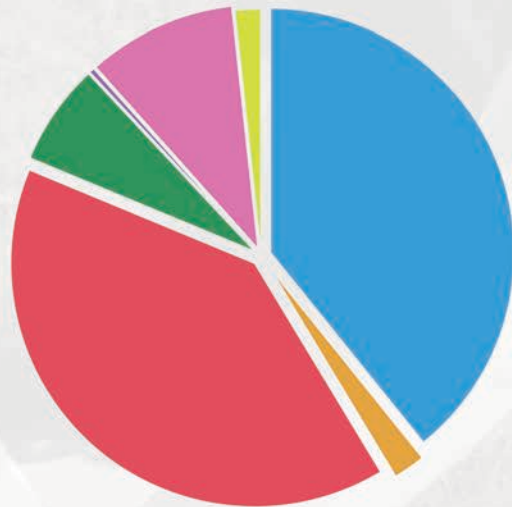


Income and Expenditure



Community Links free reserves, i.e. those not tied up in fixed assets, nor relating to restricted funds, as of 31st March 2025, amounted to £142,004. 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 - £108,994
- NHS Lanarkshire Hamilton Health and Social Care Forum - £5,950
- SLC Community Engagement Team - £110,896
- National Lottery Awards for All - £18,836
- Austin and Hope Pillington - £1,000
- Income Generation - £27,433
- Donation - £4,789

Thank You!

We're so grateful to the amazing supporters of Community Links- individuals, groups, and organisations- for your continued dedication and encouragement over the past year and beyond. Your commitment means so much to us – and even more to your communities.

To everyone who gives their time as a volunteer: your generosity, energy, and kindness make a real difference every single day. You help make our communities stronger, more connected, and more welcoming. Thank you for everything you do!

Our Funders



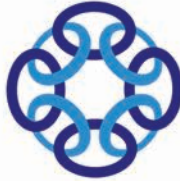
Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



Our Supporters and Partners

ASDA Blantyre and Hamilton Community Champions | ASDA Foundation | Backyard Bees
Buchanan McPherson Colour Printers | Cambuslang Apiary Project | 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 | Heart of Africa
Hillhouse Link Tenants and Residents Association | Hillhouse Parish Church
Home Energy Scotland | Kilbryde and Co. | Lanarkshire Climate Action Hub
Larkhall Community Growers | Larkhall Lighthouse | Lidl Blantyre LDVG | NHS Lanarkshire
Police Scotland | S.A.B. Action Group | 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 | Supporting Our Community (SOC)
Third Sector Chief Officers Group | Turning Point Scotland
VASLan | Volunteers of Burnbank Community Hub
Volunteers of Hillhouse Community Hub





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Community Links
CLIMATE ACTION

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