



Caithness Voluntary Group
SUPPORTING THE THIRD SECTOR

Caithness Voluntary Group 2024/2025 Annual Report



Prepared by
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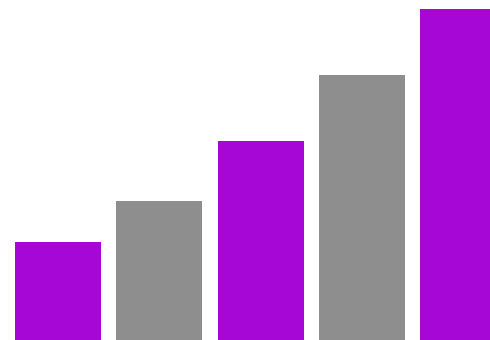
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Mission Statement



Caithness Voluntary Group exists to support the voluntary sector and to assist organisations in coming together for common purposes and local people in gaining access to the decision-making progress which affects their community.

It aims to present to the outside world the common policies and concerns of the voluntary organisation and to develop new ways of responding to need in partnership with statutory health, social work, education, housing, employment, environmental and recreation agencies in the social and economic regeneration of the area.



**HIGHLAND
THIRD
SECTOR
INTERFACE**



Annual Reports

Chairpersons Report

I would like to thank my fellow directors for their continued support and the staff and volunteers for their commitment and dedication to CVG.

This year has been challenging, especially with our move to new premises, which turns out has not been for the better, however our staff have managed to work through many of the issues this move has created, and have not allowed it to disrupt the service that CVG delivers.

I am pleased to acknowledge the continuing support of the The Highland Third Sector Interface and the Scottish Government Third Sector team which helps meet our core costs.

I would also like to thank the many other funding bodies and organisations that support our projects, which enables us to deliver first-class services to the communities that these projects serve.

CCF and LL&C Halsary Fund Report

Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2025, one CCF application round and one panel meeting were held during this period. Thirty-two applications were received, with £68,078.90 awarded in grants.

Between 1 January and 31 December 2025, one LL&C Halsary application round and panel meeting took place. Fifteen applications were received, with £38,822.64 awarded, reflecting underspend carried forward from the previous period.



Chief Officer's Report

It has been a busy but challenging year as we continue working with many groups in Caithness on a wide range of issues, such as governance issues, crisis intervention, financial management, funding, policies and procedures etc. Our move to new premises with a shared open-plan office has not been without its problems, and has continued to present problems throughout the year.

I am impressed with the range of work we are undertaking and the fact that we are operating in every corner of Caithness. We continue to support the Community Planning Partnership as they deal with issues arising from the cost of living crisis. Our Development Officers covering east and central Caithness continue to do outstanding work within the communities that they support.

We provide vital support to many community organisations and are well respected with Third Sector Organisations and Local Authorities alike. The Halsary Windfarm Benefit Funds are going from strength to strength, with the Caithness Community Fund now oversubscribed at each funding round. Our Befriending and Rural Transport teams are doing some amazing work, but see an ever-increasing need for their services. Our Aspiring Communities Team have done sterling work as our communities battle the issues caused by the cost of living crisis, but sadly we have been unable to secure funding to continue this project, so this activity had to end in April 2025.

Deputy Chief Officer's Report

The past year has been exceptionally busy, with continued support provided to Third Sector organisations across all core services, particularly in securing funding to sustain activities and projects. Demand remains strong for support from unincorporated groups seeking to transition to SCIO status, with significant time dedicated to advising and assisting with the preparation of constitutions for submission to OSCR.

CVG has continued to face funding challenges across its projects but has successfully secured ongoing support for Community Development Officers and funding for a new bus for Caithness Rural Transport.

The Caithness Community Fund (CCF) and the LL&C Halsary Fund, both of which we administer, continue to grow in popularity. Demand for the CCF remains particularly high, with the fund substantially oversubscribed. A significant proportion of staff time has been dedicated to supporting applicants to these and other funding programmes, as well as to the assessment of submitted applications.

HTSI Report

Quarterly reports are sent to HTSI, with some of the important highlights recorded below.

The number of Third Sector Organisations that CVG has supported during Q1 is: **113**

The number of different queries/issues that CVG has supported during Q1 is: **256**

This can be broken down to the following categories: Governance - **16**, Crisis Intervention - **10**, Setting up - **8**, Finance Management - **12**, Funding - **39**, Recruitment and Team Management - **5**, Trading - **6**, Other - **160**.

The number of Third Sector Organisations that CVG has supported during Q2 is: **93**

The number of different queries/issues that CVG has supported during Q2 is: **273**

This can be broken down to the following categories: Governance - **14**, Crisis Intervention - **7**, Setting up - **4**, Finance Management - **3**, Funding - **45**, Recruitment and Team Management - **5**, Trading - **2**, Other - **192**.

The number of Third Sector Organisations that CVG has supported during Q3 is: **129**

The number of different queries/issues that CVG has supported during Q3 is: **368**

This can be broken down to the following categories: Governance - **29**, Crisis Intervention - **42**, Setting up - **2**, Finance Management - **13**, Funding - **51**, Recruitment and Team Management - **15**, Trading - **10**, Other - **206**.

The number of Third Sector Organisations that CVG has supported during Q4 is: **108**

The number of different queries/issues that CVG has supported during Q4 is: **314**

This can be broken down to the following categories: Governance - **28**, Crisis Intervention - **14**, Setting up - **16**, Finance Management - **20**, Funding - **90**, Recruitment and Team Management - **17**, Trading - **1**, Other - **128**.

The OSCR charities at risk or defaulting registers for Caithness remains high, and considerable resources have had to be deployed to try to help some of these charities and get them off of the register. Many TSO's are in some form of crisis or needing help with their governance. A large majority of our 1-1s require multiple contacts or meetings with the TSO and sometimes days of accumulated time is having to be spent on individual instances to find a resolution.

Physical and Mental Health statistics for Caithness remain one of the worst in the Highlands. The pressure continues on TSO's to take up the gap left by services that should be getting delivered by local authorities. Mental health and especially men's mental health remains an issue in the county.

Employability continues to be an issue, and in Caithness a lack of child care is a known issue that is preventing people from taking up jobs. Child poverty seems to be on the increase and we are hearing some real horror stories from some communities about the levels of deprivation TSO's are trying to tackle.

Funding as always seems to be the number one issue facing TSO's but issues trying to recruit Trustees is also becoming more prevalent, and recruiting and retaining volunteers is proving very difficult for organisations.



Accounts Verification Officer's Report

Since starting this work, CVG has inspected and verified numerous sets of Third Sector Organisation accounts, some presented professionally, others not so much.

Most sets of accounts have required the verifier to have a face-to-face meeting with the organisations treasurer to clarify information that is being presented.

The accounts verified to date have all been documented differently, some easier to understand than others, but after the meetings and discussions held, hopefully next year this will become more straightforward if provided to us for verification.

There has been positive feedback from all organisations involved, as they seem to have difficulty in getting verifications done locally.

Wick Development Officer's Report

This role was vacant from April to August 2024 and from January 2025 onwards, so the majority of the work and support had to be delivered primarily by the Chief Officer.

Major support was provided to Wick Development Trust in finalising Phase 2 of the Campsite Project and in developing and delivering Phase 3 in time for Wick River Campsite to re-open in April 2025.

Several other projects have been supported for Wick development Trust including the creation of an in depth business plan for the creation of a future transformational project for the town.

The Caithness at war project was finally completed, with a grand opening event held at Wick John O'Groats Airport in April 2024, with the trail being officially opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Caithness, The Right Honourable Viscount John Thurso PC, which was well attended by a number of local dignitaries, representatives from each branch of the Armed Forces, and members of the public.

Additional support has been provided by a number of community groups within Wick this year, as well as considerable time on a potential project to create a new community space.



Watten Development Officer's Report

Continuing work supporting the Watten Community Shop project, has been the mainstay of work for this year, but other support was provided to RHET, Watten Helps Out, Watten ELC, and Watten Primary School Parent Council.

Sinclair's Bay Development Officer's Report

Supported Sinclair's Bay Trust with various projects during the year, with their biggest project this financial year being the completion of the Caithness At War Trail. Village notice boards were also erected at Keiss, Reiss and Reiss Beach. There was an underspend from the 2024 Social Spaces events, so the funder allowed for this money to be used to run sporting events for local children during the October holidays. The 2025 Social Spaces events were a great success and were well attended by residents of Keiss, Reiss and Staxigoe/Papigoe.

Staxigoe Hall Net Zero Upgrades were carried out and completed by January 2025, making a huge difference to the village hall. The upgrades have been welcomed by all users, and the new underfloor heating system is working a treat. Sorting out all of the funding for this project was challenging to say the least, due to the percentage of total costs requirements set by some funders as the project came in under budget. Funding for new tables and chairs were also sourced for Staxigoe Hall, and these were procured from an online company.

Support was also provided during the year to Reiss Gardening Club and Keiss Amenities.



Thrumster & Tannach Development Officer's Report

Support was provided to Thrumster Community Development Association for the refurbishment of the village tennis court. The court was resurfaced, and new lines added, and a new Palas Fence erected around the court. Lower palas fencing was also erected along the village playpark, providing protection to children using the playpark with a busy road. Additional support was provided regarding the planning and development of a new village Hall for Thrumster.

Plans were drawn up to replicate the very successful warm spaces project of Sinclair's Bay across the Thrumster and Tannach area, and this is a project that has not been delivered yet but can be initiated as soon as a suitable organisation is willing to bring it forward.

Support was also offered to Tannach and District Community Council, with discussions about support with a future potential project.

Meetings were held with Yarrows Trust to discuss support in the future with business plans and the building of a new visitor centre, as well as work on the Yarrows Trail

Dunbeath & Berriedale Development Officer's Report

Most of our time with Dunbeath and Berriesdale a=has been taken up by core staff trying to stabilise what was the imminent collapse of Laidhay Croft Museum and trying to locate a new organisation to take over the charity.

Despite a couple of promising meetings with local organisations, eventually a new SCIo has had to be set up to take over Ownership of Laidhay, and work is ongoing to try transfer the assets across to the new SCIo as soon as possible.

CVG established an MoU to look after the affairs of Laidhay until the new SCIo was established and had taken over.



Lybster & Latheron Development Officer's Report

Several groups were supported through initial discussions regarding various projects, but all projects were on hold for this year due to various reasons.

CVG will continue to support any organisations in this area providing guidance during the 2025/2026 financial year, but physical support will be limited moving forward.

Halkirk Development Officer's Report

Much of the Development Officers time was spent working on proposals from various Halkirk area based organisations, and helping with several organisations in crisis.

Assistance was provided to Halkirk Highland Games and the Caithness branch of the RDA on their constitutions to become a SCIOs.

Halkirk Youth Club has been in crisis due to a lack of trustees or committee, so action has been taken trying to support them.



John O'Groats Development Officer's Report

Staff retention for this position has proven to be difficult, with a Development Officer in post up to October 2024, however during their time in post they managed to secure funding for a community electric mobility scooter for John O'Groats, and delivered this project to the John O'Groats Development Trust. Work also continued trying to identify potential funding sources for the John O'Groats playpark project.

For the remaining 2 months of 2024, the Chief Officer had to support his role with the previous Halkirk and Watten Development Officer taking over in January 2025. Since November 2024, funding was secured to deliver the John O'Groats Hall project, and this was started in December 2024 and completed by early February 2025.

Work has continued on the John O'Groats playpark projects, with several major funding bids being submitted, which have been successful, pledging over £120,000 towards the project.

Other projects being looked at have included the creation of a coastal path from John O'Groats to the Ness of Duncansby for John O'Groats development Trust, and a Beach Wheelchair to be sited at Dunnet Beach for the Caithness Disability Action Panel.

Poverty Action Officer's Report

During the period, despite dwindling interest (post-COVID) from many of the larger agencies CPAG pulled together funding to provide direct support to those struggling with the cost of living. This took the form of providing food vouchers, delivery of warm items and energy saving devices, and a number of other initiatives, all developed and delivered through our partners (mainly charity and 3rd sector groups).

CVG's community training initiative continued with a number of courses being run including first aid, food safety and another SIA security course. We were heartened to learn that almost all of those trained under the latter scheme have found employment, and that community groups really valued the courses aimed at improving resilience in localities, especially our more remote outposts.

Further assistance was provided to groups striving to improve energy performance in their buildings, and attendance at the EAS conference ensured the Caithness voice was heard in the clamour for help with the ever-worsening energy crisis.

I took on the role of secretary of the Caithness Drug and Alcohol forum, in the absence of any other volunteers, continued helping the Rumster Outdoor Centre group attain their aim of developing a forest retreat, joined Caithness CAB as a director (as they had no other volunteers and were at risk of collapse) and stepped up for the Thurso Community Development Trust.

Another busy period for CVG Development Officers.



Caithness Cares Report

A review of the Caithness Cares Plan/Strategy in line with HOIP was carried out at the beginning of the year, and the Caithness Cares Officer was instrumental in getting Vaccination Clinics set up in the county.

Work has continued liaising with the Highland Council and NHS Highland around various family wellbeing issues, as well as numerous community support and mental health areas of concern.

Considerable work has been carried out supporting and promoting new and existing community groups that have a focus on mental health and family support in Caithness, as well as attending community support pop-up hubs around the county.

Work has been undertaken to improve collaboration from community support organisation working within Caithness where possible.

Admin support was provided throughout the year to the Caithness Community Partnership.

Unfortunately moving into the 2025/26 financial year, no further funding is available for this project so it came to a close on the 31st of March 2025.

HERE for Caithness Report

A **HERE For Caithness** Website was created and consistently updated to ensure that the information it provides is relevant and up to date.

Support has been provided to small local organisations focussing on Mental health issues who have yet to set up a website, to provide a webspace to ensure that we maximise every opportunity to all within Caithness to receive the information that they need.

The updates have also allowed for a Friday Bulletin to be added to the site each week which had increased the footfall visiting and also provided information for organisations from outside of the County who were looking for information or seeking advice about a number of different options.

The Friday Bulletin appears to have been well thought of by other organisations, and from increasingly supportive and positive feedback was a useful resource for information and signposting. Most have found it to be extremely beneficial to their work and some have raised it as a 'gold standard' to other areas to aspire to, but unfortunately, moving into the 2025/26 financial year, no further funding is available for this project so it came to a close on the 31st of March 2025 and there was real sorrow at its demise due to a lack of continuation funding.



Befriending Caithness Annual Report

During 2024/2025, the Befriending Service supported 87 adults across Caithness experiencing loneliness, isolation and reduced independence. Referrals became increasingly complex, reflecting needs including bereavement, experiences of abuse, long-term health conditions, reduced mobility and social isolation.

Befriending focused on older people and those with long-term health conditions, promoting positive messages around ageing, making new friendships and staying socially connected. One-to-one Befriending matches provided regular companionship and positive social interactions helping individuals rebuild confidence and maintain independence.

To meet demand, five group activities were delivered each month. During winter, three craft sessions gave Befriendees and Befrienders the chance to get out and about, reducing isolation and celebrating shared interests.

Volunteer recruitment remained a challenge; however, 49 volunteers were fully committed, achieving a 100% retention rate through strong support including a buddy system and regular reviews.

Caithness Rural Transport Annual Report

CRT has 318 members at the end of our year 2024-25. Many members travelling numerous times a week.

We have no Highland Council School Contract runs this year but thankfully our schedules are now full at these times with group runs, college runs etc.

Members attending hospital for renal treatment are fewer than we have had but we still have a handful of these which gives us a regular/guaranteed income.

We had a few fundraisers to help boost our funds, Jive afternoon, Quiz etc and we also received donations from funerals for a couple of our members who sadly passed away during the year.

We had one new bus join our fleet 2024/25. Which has helped reduce our repair costs but unfortunately these cost still remain high due to overall increases on labour, parts etc.

We are still finding our electric bus does not meet our needs due to lack of range and poor charging infrastructure.



CVG Membership

Our membership as of March 2025

- 1st Thurso Boys Brigade
- 1st Wick Scout Group
- 1285 Caithness Squadron Air Training Corps
- Alan Gow Groundworks
- Archie Sinclair Fossil Centre
- Argyle Square Area Association
- Auckengill Hall
- Barnardos
- Befriending Caithness
- Befrienders Highland
- Berriedale Church/Cemetery Association
- Berriedale Portland Hall
- Bethany Gospel Hall
- Bilbster & Thuster Hall Committee
- Bill Fernie
- Bower Busy Bees
- Bower Community Centre
- Britannia Hall Committee
- Brough Bay Association
- Caithness Agricultural Society
- Caithness Amateur Athletics
- Caithness Badminton Association
- Caithness Broch Project
- Caithness CAB
- Caithness Community Connections
- Caithness Disability Multi-Sport
- Caithness Disabled Access Panel
- Caithness District Scout Council
- Caithness District Young Farmers
- Caithness Federation SWRI Show Committee
- Caithness Federation SWRI
- Caithness Field Club
- Caithness FM
- Caithness Foodbank
- Caithness Gymnastics
- Caithness Health Action
- Caithness Heart Support Group
- Caithness Heritage Trust
- Caithness Junior Pipe Band
- Caithness Kayak Club
- Caithness Klics
- Caithness Mental Health Support Group
- Caithness Music Association
- Caithness Pony Club
- Caithness Quilters
- Caithness Retired Teachers Association
- Caithness Rural transport
- Caithness Stroke Group
- Caithness SWI County Show Committee
- Caithness & North Sutherland Junior Golf Partnership
- Caithness & Sutherland Women's Aid
- Castletown Football Club
- Castletown Gala Committee
- Castletown Youth Club
- Clyth Burial Ground
- Connecting Carers
- Diabetes UK Caithness Branch
- Douglas Fraser
- Dunbeath & Berriedale Development Trust
- Dunbeath & District Centre
- Dunbeath Preservation Trust
- Dunbeath Raleigh Motorcycle Club
- Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council
- Dunnet Forestry Trust
- East End Boys Football Club
- Elise Lyall School of Dance
- Enable Scotland
- Enable Works
- Endometriosis UK
- Esme Duncan
- Forss Hall
- Freswick Hall
- Friends of John O'Groat Trail
- Friends of Newtonhill Woodland
- Friends of Older Adult Mental Health Fund
- George Budge
- Girlguiding Caithness
- Halkirk Games
- Halkirk Heritage & Vintage Motor Society
- Halkirk Village Council
- Halkirk & Westerdale Church of Scotland
- Hamilton Optimum Fundraisers
- Healing Hub Oxygen Theray/MS Therapy Centre
- Hearing & Sight Care
- Highland Third Sector Interface
- Home-Start Caithness
- John O' Groats Development Trust
- John O'Groat Trail
- Keiss Bowling Club
- Laidhay Preservation Trust
- Latheron Agricultural Society
- Latheron Hall Committee
- Latheron SWRI



- Latheron Lybster & Clyth Community Council
- Latheronwheel & Latheron Improvement Group
- Laurandy Centre Ltd
- League of Friends of Caithness General
- Learanaich Common Grazings
- Lieurary Hall
- LLCCDC
- Lorraine Bremner School of Dance
- Lybster Community Improvement Fundraising Group
- Lybster Community Association
- Lybster Day Care Association
- Lybster Golf Club
- Lybster Heritage Trust (Waterlines)
- Lybster Junior Badminton
- Lybster Primary School Parent Council
- Lybster and Tannach Fund
- Lyn Ball
- Mackays Hotel
- Macmillan Cancer Support Thurso
- Macmillan Cancer Support Wick
- Mey Hall
- Mey & District Senior Citizens
- MS People Caithness
- Murkle Community Association
- National Sheepdog Trials Caithness
- Norse Stone Ltd
- North Apex Gymnastics Club
- North Coast Parish Church of Scotland
- North Highland Cancer Information & Support Centre
- North Highland Harriers
- North Shore Surf Club
- NOSN Charity Group
- Orlig & District Beekeepers Association
- Order of the Eastern Star
- Ormlie Community Association Ltd
- Pentland Parish Church of Scotland
- Poltney Bellringers
- Pulteneytown People's Project
- Pulteneytown Toddlers
- Reay & District Garden Club
- Reay Hall
- Reay Young-Stars
- Reiss Gardening Club
- Reiss & Killimster Hall
- Reiss & Killimster Park Committee
- Riding for the Disabled Association
- Riverbank Practice Patient Participation Group
- Rotary Club of Wick
- Royal British Legion Scotland (Wick)
- Rumster Outdoor Centre Management Group
- Scallywags Nursery
- SCDA
- Science 03
- Seafarers Memorial Group
- Second World War Air Raid Victims
- Sinclair Bay Community Council
- Spittal Hall
- St Fergus Bowling Club
- Staxigoe Community Football Pitch
- Staxigoe Playpark Project
- Tannach & District Community Council
- Tanya Horne Dancers Parents Association
- The Wick Society
- Thrumster Community Development Association
- Thrumster Game & Countryside Fair
- Thursday Group
- Thurso Community Café
- Thurso Community Council
- Thurso Community Development Trust
- Thurso Heritage Centre
- Thurso Heritage Society
- Thurso Players
- Thurso Squash Tennis & Racketball Club
- Thurso Town Improvements Association
- Thurso West Church of Scotland
- Thurso Youth Club
- Thurso & District Pipe Band
- Tutti Choir
- Volunteering Highland
- Watten Church of Scotland
- Watten Community Council
- Watten Hall
- Wick Accordion & Fiddle Club
- Wick Adult Basketball Club
- Wick Amateur Swimming Club
- Wick Baptist Church
- Wick Choral Society
- Wick Christmas Lights
- Wick Community Council
- Wick Development Trust
- Wick Flower Baskets
- Wick Girl Guides
- Wick Gala Committee
- Wick Golf Club
- Wick Groats Football Club
- Wick High School
- Wick Junior Badminton Club
- Wick Netball Club
- Wick Paths Group
- Wick Players
- Wick RBLs Pipe Band
- Wick St Fergus Church
- Wick Youth Club
- Wick & District Gardening Club
- Yarrows Heritage Trust



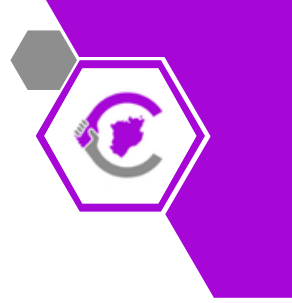
Financial Statements

	2023/2024	2024/2025
Income	£572,212	£479,009
Expenditure	£607,599	£529,512
Restricted Reserves	£178,527	£146,175
Unrestricted Reserves	£247,489	£199,357
Total Available Funds	£426,016	£345,532

Our lower income this year meant that we fell below the £500,000 audit requirement threshold set by OSCR, so our Auditor - Saffery LLP was released from their contract to carry out a 2024/2025 audit. Whilst reviewing our draft 2024/2025 accounts we found mistakes within the 2023/2024 accounts which had been audited which was skewing the figures in the 2024/2025 accounts, so our accountant Victor Fraser and co rectified these figures and recalculated our income and expenditure for 2024/2025.

Whilst every attempt has been made to keep expenditure to a minimum, our income has reduced, which has resulted in us having to use some of our unrestricted reserves.

Securing funding for core operations and projects is proving more and more difficult, and as such difficult decision will need to be made for 2025/2026 to enable CVG to remain sustainable.



Contact Us



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Caithness Voluntary Group is a Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in Scotland Reg No 150015

Caithness Voluntary Group is a charity registered under the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, Scottish Charity Number SC002484

Caithness Voluntary Group's registered address is: The Argyle Suite, The Pulteney Centre, Huddart Street, Wick KW1 5BA

