

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



**ECONOMY, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WEALTH BUILDING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

THIRD SECTOR AND WEST Lothian COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

**REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EDUCATION, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the joint Annual Report produced with the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian. The report gives an overview of the partnership working between West Lothian Council and the Third Sector in West Lothian including funding, partnership activity and support provided during the financial year 2023/24.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that panel:

- Consider and notes the contents of the report; and
- Notes the activity undertaken by the Third Sector and West Lothian Council in partnership.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Open, honest and accountable; and collaborate, inclusive and adaptive.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Appropriate assessments of projects will be carried out as required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Supporting the Voluntary/ Third Sector and the activity delivered by the sector is aligned to the four key pillars of the CPP's Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Various Council budgets detailed within appendix one.

VII Consideration at PDSP

Regular reports are provided to PDSP on the Vol Orgs budget.

VIII Other consultations

Third Sector Working Group

D. TERMS OF THE REPORT**D.1 Background**

The annual report aims to bring together an overview of the partnership work and activity between the Council and Third Sector with a focus on the overall financial value of the various methods of support from the partnership. This includes the Council's ongoing investment in the sector, as well as how this work has met the priorities and needs of West Lothian Communities.

The report aims to provide and present the collective work and investment of the Third Sector and Council in one report rather than being viewed through the work of thematic areas of funding or service delivery in isolation. This is the fourth joint annual report.

Three areas have been highlighted in the report:

- Participation in decision making and planning;
- Investment and funding support for the Third Sector; and
- Third Sector and Volunteering

D.2 Annual Report – 2023/24

The 2023/24 Annual Report is attached as Appendix one, it presents a wide overview of West Lothian Council's and partners engagement highlighted some of the funding supporting the Third Sector during 2023/24. It is designed to give an overview but to provide detail on all the funding. The report features case studies from Third Sector organisations which demonstrate the impact of activities on West Lothian communities and residents.

The format is similar to previous versions, with the inclusion of additional information on the impact of the partnership activity through forums and networks and the positive results this has had.

In 2023/24 West Lothian Council invested in West Lothian 4 Communities, a funding website that supports the Voluntary and Third Sector to search for funding. The website is accessible for West Lothian based organisations to easily search for funding opportunities across the UK. The site will pull together a list of possible funding sources based on the type of organisation and what activities are being delivered or what will be achieved from the provision. The functionality of the website significantly reduces the amount of time spent searching for funding and increases access to funding that organisations are aware of to apply too.

Whilst it is too soon to see the impact in terms of additional funding, feedback from the sector has been positive to date. The financial benefits are likely to materialise in 2024/25 and will be reported in next years annual report.

The panel is asked to note the content of the report and highlight any areas they would like included in future reports.

E CONCLUSION

West Lothian Council recognises that the third sector plays a hugely important role in complimenting and adding values to the work of West Lothian Council in delivering support within communities. It is vital that our partnership working continues.

The annual report pulls together 12 months of activity, and provides a good opportunity to reflect on the work being done collectively and plan for future activity.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Voluntary Organisations PDSP, 24 September 2020

<https://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=46334>

Voluntary Organisations PDSP, 4 November 2021

[West Lothian Council Committee Information - Submission Documents](#)

Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building PDSP, 8 November 2022

[West Lothian Council Committee Information - View Committee Document](#)

Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building PDSP, 6 June 2023

[West Lothian Council Committee Information - View Committee Document](#)

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1: Annual Report 2023/24

Contact Persons:

Clare Stewart, Community Wealth Building Manager, email clare.stewart@westlothian.gov.uk

Douglas Grierson, Regeneration Team Leader, email douglas.grierson@westlothian.gov.uk

Elaine Cook

Head of Education, Planning and Economic Development

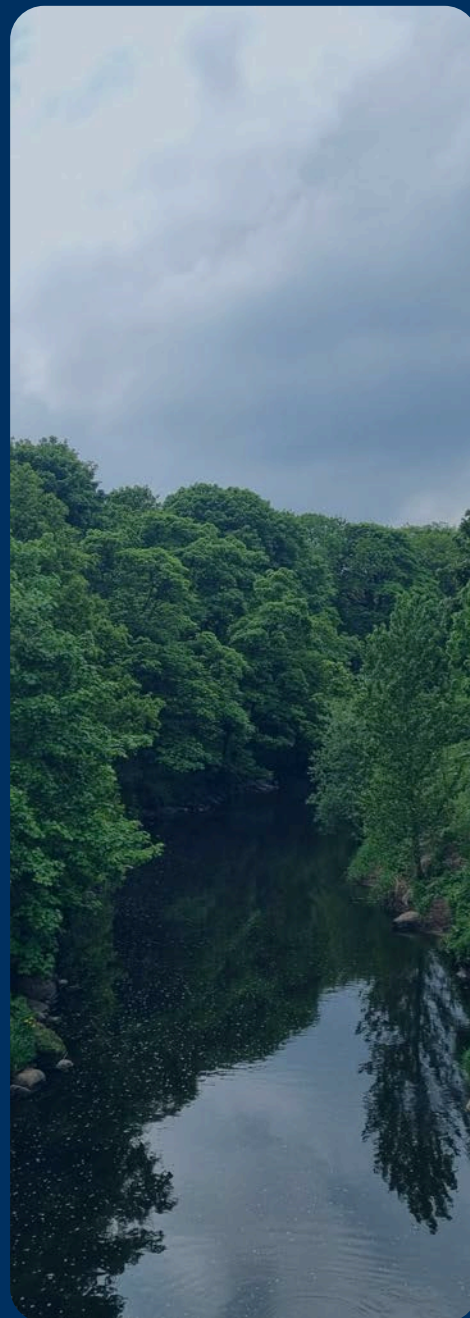
6 June 2023

THIRD SECTOR ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Size and Scale of the Sector Across Scotland	05
Size and Scale of the Sector in West Lothian	06
Working Together – Partnership & Strategic Working	09
How key Services and Partners Have Worked with the Third Sector in 2023/24	15
Conclusion	28
Case Studies	29
Appendix: Summary of Third Sector Annual Report 2023/24	40



Introduction

This is the fourth annual report produced by West Lothian Council and Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) covering 2023/24. The aim is to provide an overview of how the sector, West Lothian Council and other Community Planning Partners worked together to deliver vital support to communities.

In 2023/24 activity contained within this report has been developed and delivered against the backdrop of a cost of living crisis which is having a significant impact on local communities, their residents and local volunteers. This has been coupled with further reduction in public finances. It is therefore, even more important that partners work together at a local level to address the issues that communities are facing.

West Lothian Council, Community Planning Partners, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) and the wider Third Sector continued to work together positively to provide a coordinated response to help and support vulnerable individuals and communities across the local area.

As in previous reports the changing landscape continues to see innovative ways of working to ensure services are delivered in a way that meets our community's needs. This continues to be the way of working that underpins the activity within this report and is highlighted by some of the case studies.

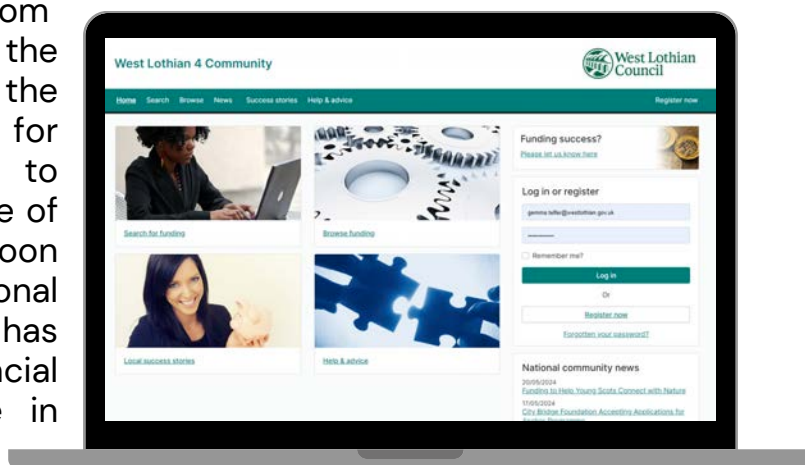
Contained within the report is information on the size and scale of the Third Sector, both in terms of the Scottish context and West Lothian. The information highlights the number of organisations, the number of staff employed and the spend in the local economy. It aims to show the scale and impact of the sector and highlights that the sector within West Lothian is a predominantly locally grown sector.



The report pulls together a wider overview of the overall investment, support and partnership working that takes place across a number of Council Services and other Community Planning partners. It is not meant to be an in-depth analysis, as the

detail of the activity is reported and scrutinised within the lead area for delivery. It is however, an attempt to show the range of partnership work that goes on and a wider understanding of the funding that helps support the work in our communities. It is not a complete picture as links, networks and partnership working take place all the time and is not always captured easily. Similarly, with funding, there is much more investment that supports the Third Sector and Council to deliver than the investment that goes into the Third Sector through Council and partners. The key importance of how the Third Sector is able to draw down funding from external funders is recognised and how that ability helps to deliver key support to our local communities whether geographically or thematically.

In 2023/24 West Lothian Council invested in West Lothian 4 Communities, a funding website that supports the Voluntary and Third Sector to search for funding. The website is accessible for West Lothian based organisations to easily search for funding opportunities across the UK. The site will pull together a list of possible funding sources based on the type of organisation and what activities are being delivered or what will be achieved from the provision. The functionality of the website significantly reduces the amount of time spent searching for funding and increases access to funding that organisations are aware of and can apply too. Whilst it is too soon to see the impact in terms of additional funding, feedback from the sector has been positive to date. The financial benefits are likely to materialise in 2024/25.



The report highlights over £42.4 million of funding going into the Third Sector from West Lothian Council, Health partners and some external funding managed by West Lothian Council in 2023/24. The figure shows the level of investment but it is not a full list as Partners and organisations are aware of more investment not captured within the report summary. The figures used in this report are rounded up or down for ease of reference.

West Lothian Council and the Third Sector continue to work closely strengthened existing processes and relationships. In 2023/24 the Third Sector were supported to participate in all Policy Development Scrutiny Panels as members through thematic representatives from the sector. Being able to contribute has enabled the Third Sector to support the scrutiny of Council policy development. Some other areas of partnership activity and alignment are captured within the report under partnership working and are meant to highlight the breadth of activity partners are engaged in.

In terms of defining the Third Sector, for the purposes of the report this includes local community-based organisations groups (mainly charities but some unincorporated), West Lothian wide groups, national charities operating within West Lothian, Community Development Trusts and other social enterprise models).

Size and Scale of the Sector Across Scotland

Key Stats



There are 23,483 charities operating in Scotland



80% of voluntary organisations are local



13% are national

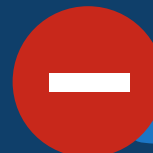


7% are international



INCOME
£7.78 BILLION

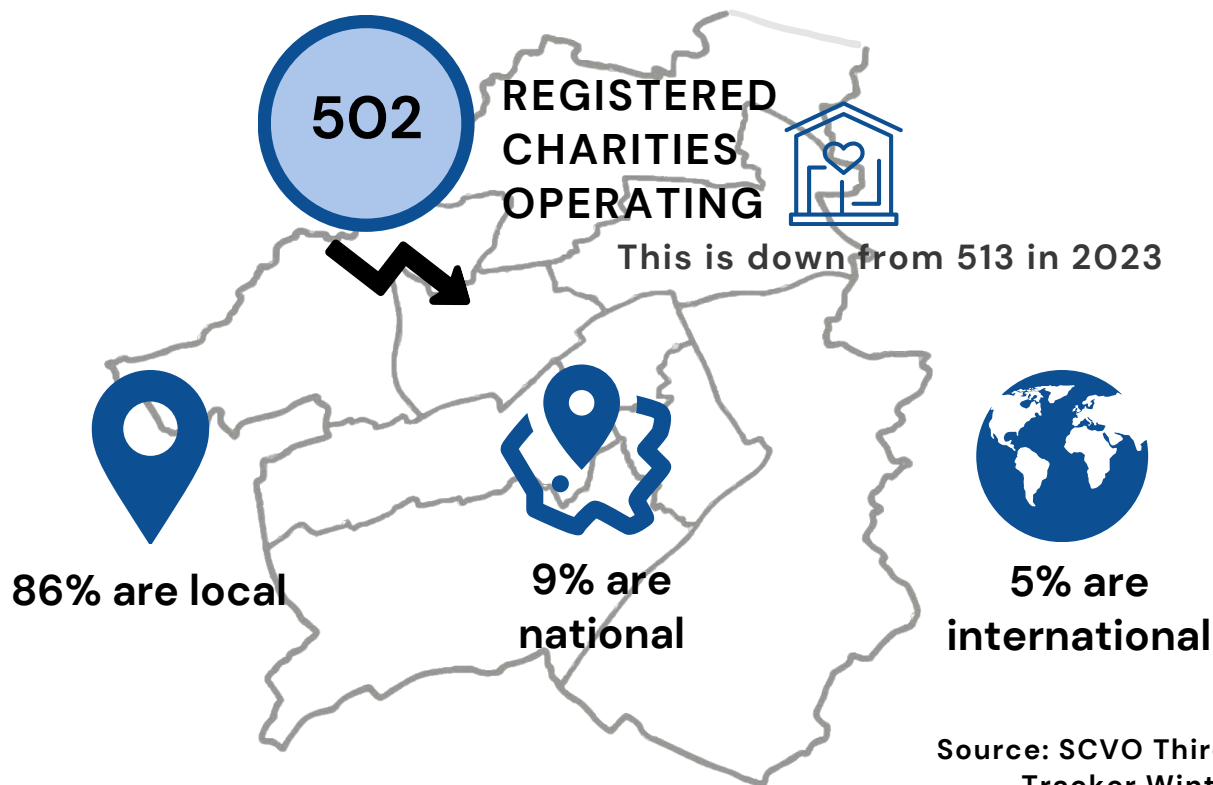
EXPENDITURE
£7.4 BILLION



Employs
115,605
staff

Source: SCVO Third Sector Tracker Winter 2023

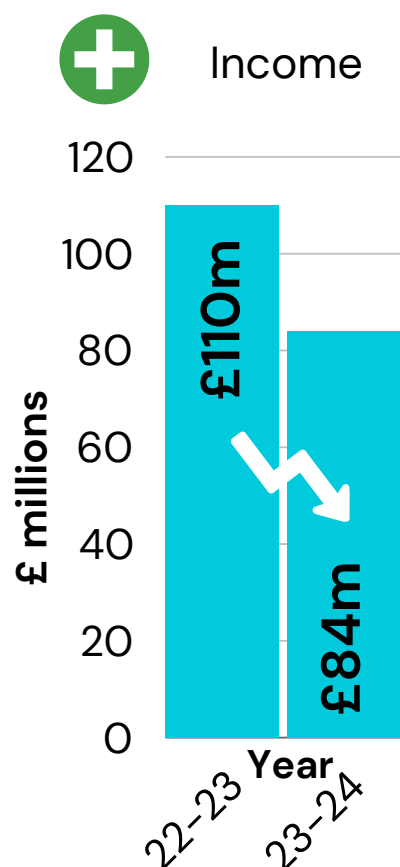
Size and Scale of the Sector in West Lothian



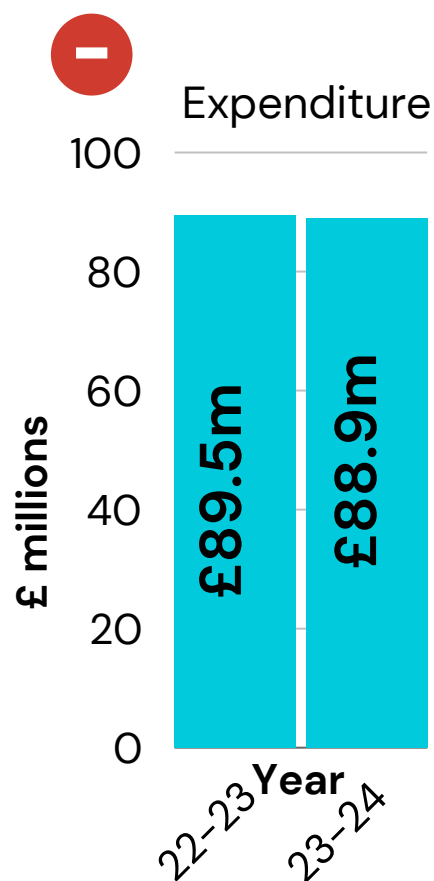
Number of Organisations by Activity



Income and Expenditure



The income for the Third Sector in West Lothian has fallen by **19.1%**.



The expenditure of the Third Sector in West Lothian fell by only **0.67%**.

2023 Income Split

This graphic illustrates the income sources for the third sector in West Lothian.

2023 Income Split

*data from OSCR register



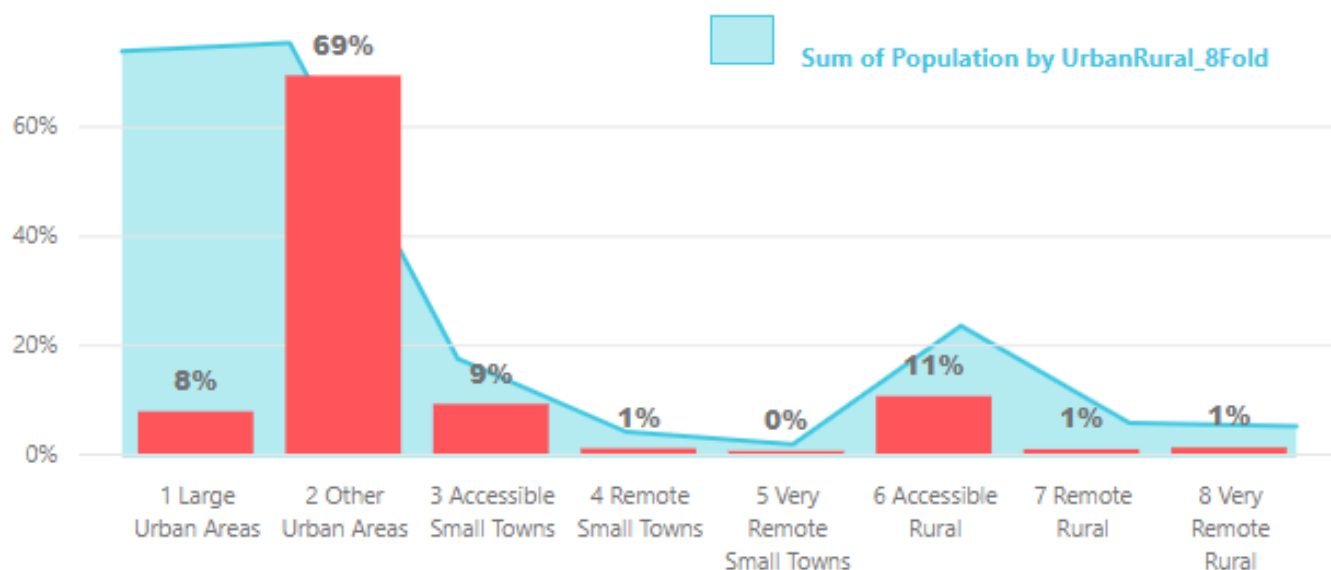
- Donations and legacies income ■ Charitable activities income
- Other trading activities income ■ Investments income
- Other income

Employment

West Lothian's third sector employs a workforce of 1,152 individuals.

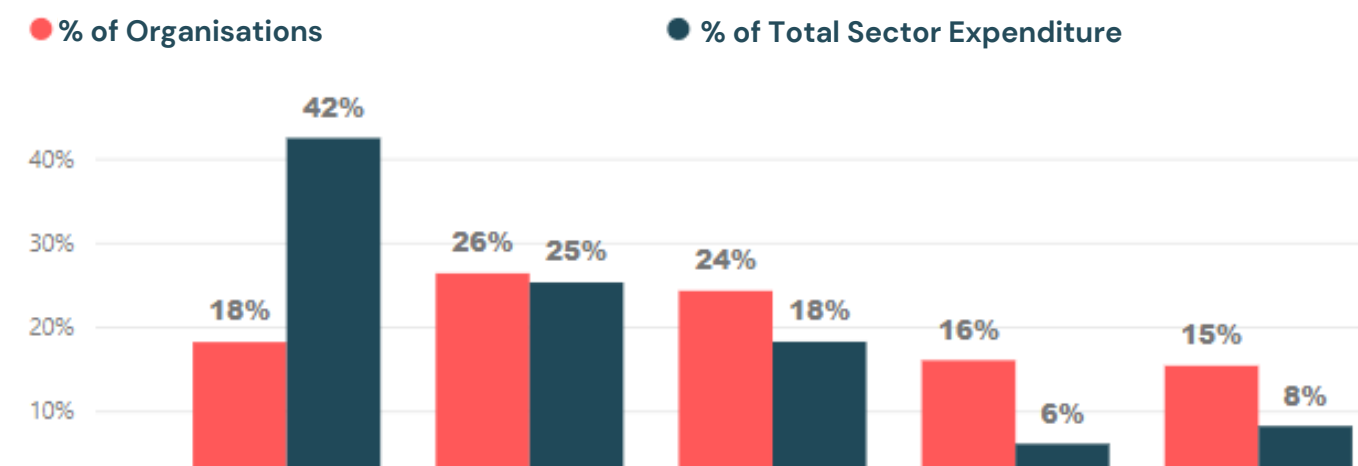


Urban Rural Split



The graph illustrates the distribution of voluntary organisations across urban and rural areas in West Lothian. The majority, 69% of organisations, are situated in 'Other Urban Areas.' Which are areas that have populations of between 10,000 and 124,999 people.

SIMD Quintiles



Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government's standard approach to identify areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland. It can help improve understanding about the outcomes and circumstances of people living in the most deprived areas in Scotland. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.

Working Together – Partnership & Strategic Working

Investment, partnership working and sharing of expertise is vital to both shaping strategy and delivering for communities. The Third Sector Working Group continues to be an important link between the Council and the Third Sector and has been pivotal in shaping policy and funding developments in 2023/24. Below are a number of key examples of other partnership working and strategic working between the Third Sector, West Lothian Council and key Community Planning Partners.



The Third Sector has been a key partner in the development of the six Locality Plans in 2023/24, which are aligned to the Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Locality Plans maximise the ability for limited resources to be best targeted to address the key priorities for our communities.

Representation

The Third Sector and Council have continued to work together to support the Third Sector to represent the sector at all of the Council's Policy Development Scrutiny Panels. The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL), has a seat at all Panels



to support local policy scrutiny. To ensure wider sector representation and voice in shaping policy, it was agreed in 2023 that representatives, with a knowledge of the focus of the panel, would be supported to attend meetings. This has provided the Third Sector with the ability to input in to the Council's governance process. The representatives have set up mechanisms to communicate with

organisations within the sector who are interested in the agenda items being discussed and enable contributions from the Third Sector. The Policy Development Scrutiny Panels are; Corporate Policy and Resources, Education, Housing, Public and Community Safety, Social Work and Health, Environment and Sustainability and Economy, Community Empowerment and Wealth Building.

Themed Forums

The VSGWL coordinates nine themed forums for the sector comprising of Third Sector groups with an interest in the theme of the Forum. It also provides the opportunity for partners to engage with all organisations with an interest and expertise in the theme of the Forum. The Forums are; Children and Families, Partnership for Parents, Third Sector Cost of Living, Third Sector Support and connection, Third Sector Strategy Group, Older People Providers, Ukrainian Support, Third Sector Employability Forum and West Lothian Volunteer Network.

The Forums aim to improve the effectiveness and maximise the contribution of West Lothian's Third Sector to the planning and delivery of services and activities around the themes. Below are four examples of key Third Sector Forums and what their role is.

Third Sector Strategy Group

The role of TSSG is to advise and guide VSGWL about the needs of the sector at national and local policy development level and the delivery of the work plan. TSSG influence policy and planning nationally across the sector. TSSG also facilitates:

- sector reps at forums representing the sector and not just narrow organisational interests.
- the setting up of appropriate systems for the constituencies of organisations in each thematic/geographic group e.g. children and families, local regeneration planning etc
- communications both up and down between forums and the sector and within and across the sector

The TSSG also provides a forum for engagement with the sector in a strategic manner and to enable the delivery of any training and information sharing.



Third Sector Cost of Living Forum

In response to the challenges of the cost of living crisis, the Third Sector Strategy Group agreed to the establishment of a dedicated Third Sector Cost of Living Forum. The forum has considered how the sector can work together to identify ideas, opportunities, and potential solutions to the challenges the Cost of Living Crisis has had on organisations, volunteers, communities and individuals. The Forum provides input to the Community Planning Partnership's Short-life cost of living task force enabling the challenges being faced by the sector to be inputted into the partnership response.



Third Sector Employability Forum

The forum allows employability providers in the area to come together to develop better relationships between the sector and partners, to network, influence local or national decision-making and policy as well as share good practice. In 2023/24 through the forum a consortium of Third Sector employability providers joined together to bid for the contract to deliver Partnership for Parents. This brought £480,000 into the sector to support delivery.



The Forum feeds directly into the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) which has representatives from all the Community Planning Partnerships employability to help shape local employability and volunteering opportunities.

In 2024/25 the Sector will look at establishing other relevant forums to link into gaps in current provision and any emerging themes for example an ethnic minority Forum.

Children and Families Forum

The Forum aims to improve the effectiveness and maximise the contribution of West Lothian's Third Sector to the planning and delivery of services and activities for children, young people and families.

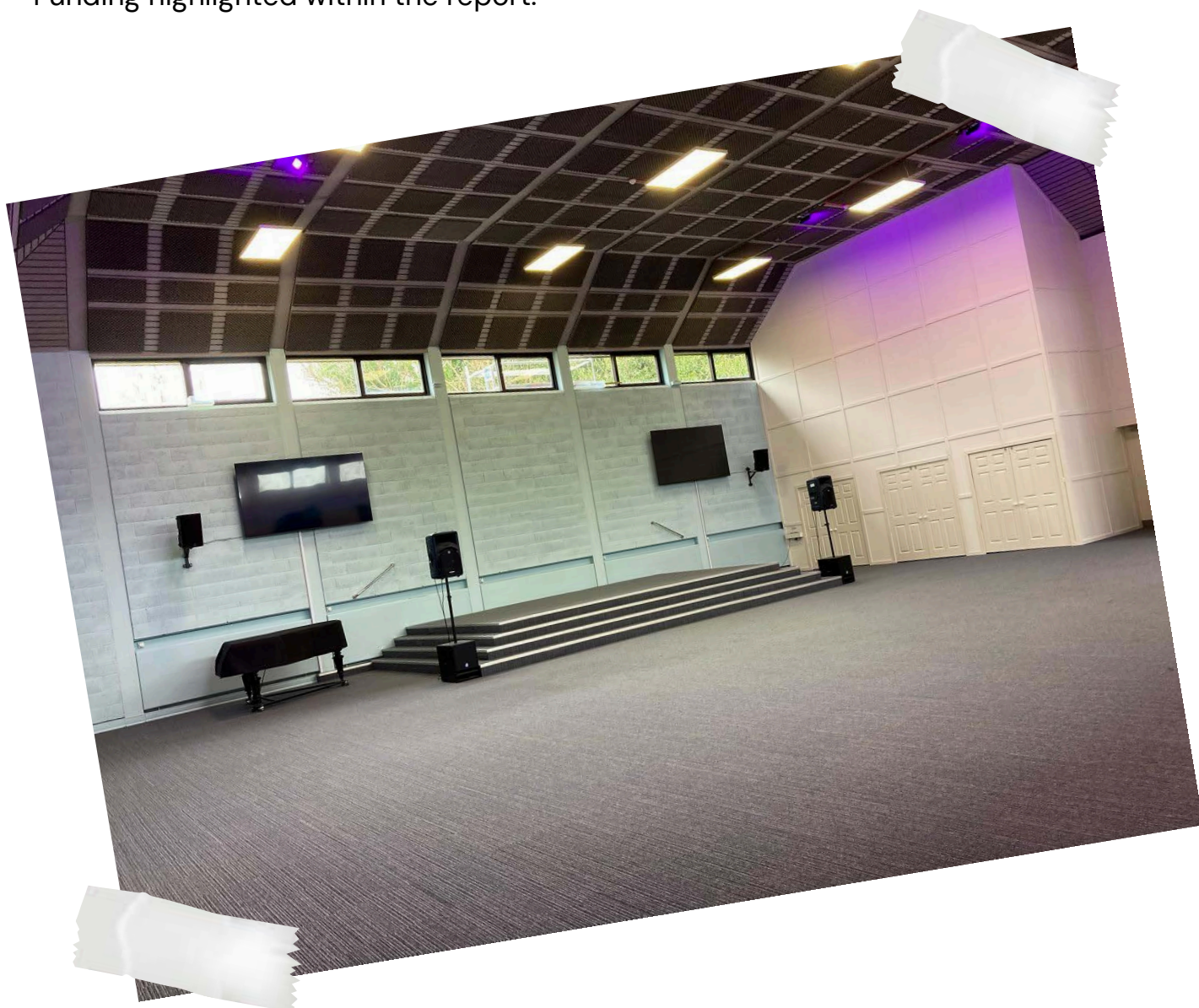
The Children and Families Forum represents the Third Sector's views on a range of key strategic groups and partnerships across West Lothian, and aims to ensure that the Third Sector is represented effectively on key partnership bodies, such as the Council's Children & Families Strategic Planning group. Members of the Forum take on representation roles to take part in these groups and ensure the wide-ranging views and areas of work of the Third Sector are well represented when looking at the provision of services for children, young people and families.



Asset Transfer

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 provides the opportunity for community organisations to work in partnership with West Lothian Council to make a request for an asset transfer of eligible public land or buildings they could make a better use for. This is a significant tool for the Third Sector to utilise in order to grow.

West Lothian Council has support in place for community organisations that wish to explore asset transfer. In 2023/24 support was provided St John's Church to begin the asset transfer of the Low Port Centre in Linlithgow. A two-year lease is now in place with St Johns Church, as a precursor to Asset transfer thereafter. The Low Port redevelopment project will involve the former leisure space being transformed into a brand-new community facility with auditorium space, available letting rooms for hire and accommodation wing with Dining area. Council Officers worked in partnership with the charity in 2023/24 to create a unique and successful project which will bring the community together. This was supported by the Place Based Investment Funding highlighted within the report.



West Lothian Food Network

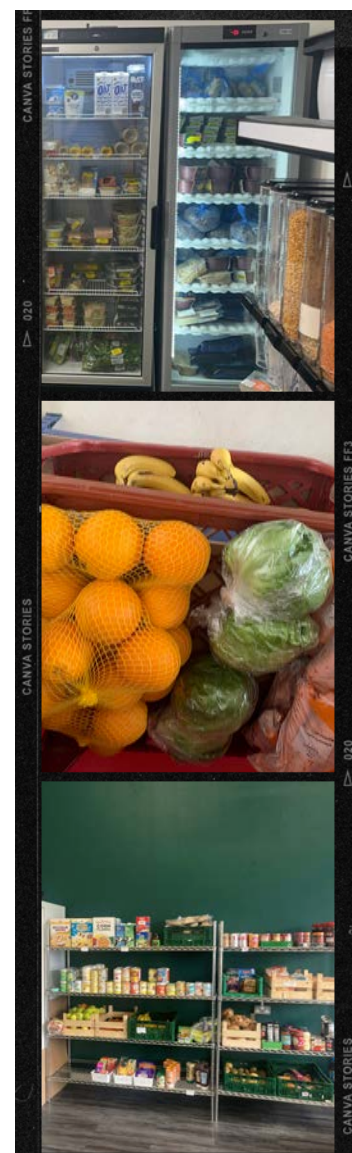
The West Lothian Food Network is a coalition of charities, community groups and social enterprises in West Lothian with the key aim to support food insecurity within the community. West Lothian Food Network is a collaborative of 19-member organisations. Member organisations offer a wide range of support including educational cooking classes, community shops, cafes, larders, drop in pantries, distribute cooked meals, community fridges, debt & welfare advice, Anti-Poverty referrals and food vouchers/parcels within local communities, providing place-based support.

During 2023/24 the VSGWL has continued to support the Food Network and its members, by providing independent governance support to the network. VSGWL receive and pay out funds on behalf of the Food Network in the interim until the SCIO is established as a legal registered entity and has its own bank account.

The VSGWL and the West Lothian Food Network have worked in collaboration with the support of West Lothian Council, particularly the Anti-Poverty Service. In 2023/24, West Lothian Council provided the Food Network with £280,000 of funding to support those most in need.

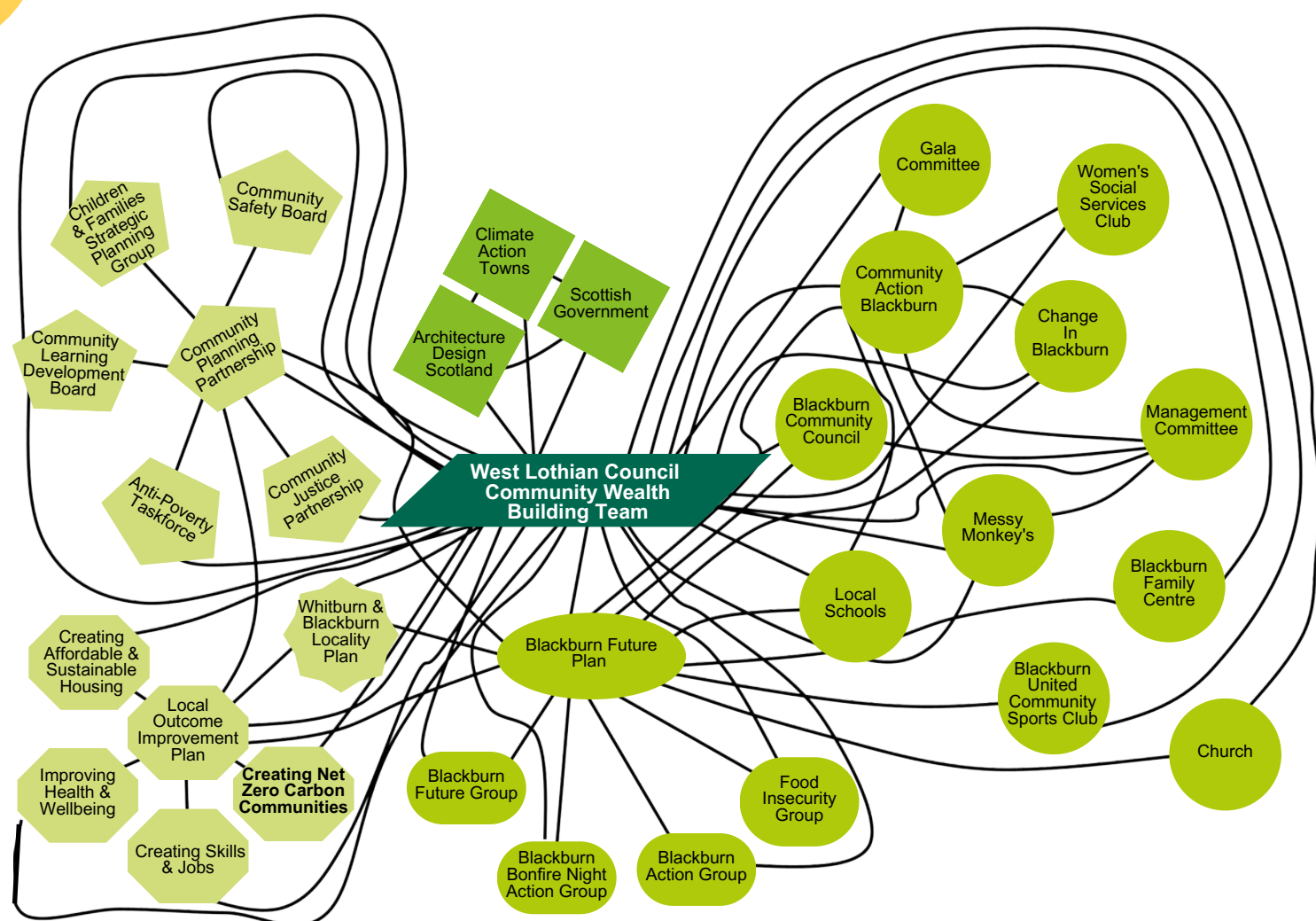
Summary of key Stats 2023/24

- From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 West Lothian Food Network members have provided food support to **73,196 people**
- The average age of those being supported is between 40-50 years
- **62%** of those supported being unemployed and/or on benefits
- **35%** of those accessing food support are single adults, **16%** are a two-adult household



Below lists further examples of current partnership and strategic working groups. Some of these are touched on further in some service updates throughout this report.

Climate Actions Town – Blackburn



The Climate Action Town project in Blackburn was a partnership project that ran in 2023/24 involving West Lothian Council, Third Sector, Community Planning Partners and local community. The project aimed to bring together the community in Blackburn to look at how the community could engage in climate action, taking into account the local circumstances in the area.

The above diagram shows the complexity of partnership working that has been undertaken during the year to support the delivery and to make the project happen. Whilst complex it is one of its many strengths.

How key Services and Partners Have Worked with the Third Sector in 2023/24

Below are some examples of how key service and partners have worked with the Third Sector. The information below is not designed to show all the information but to provide an insight into some of the activity in 2023/24.

- The Voluntary Sector Gateway (VSGWL) represents the Third Sector on the Community Planning Partnership Board and Community Planning Partnership Steering groups.
- THE GATEWAY**
Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian
- The Third Sector are embedded in the Tackling Poverty Network and The West Lothian Advice Network which brings together the Third Sector, Community Planning Partnership and various Council Services.
 - The Anti-Poverty Service co-chair the West Lothian Volunteer Network in partnership with Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian.
 - Third Sector organisations play a vital role in the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and Economic Partnership Forum (EPF). VSGWL and Volunteer Matters have been actively involved in shaping the No One Left Behind investment plan.



The NHS Lothian Partnership and Place Team and the Third Sector work through a range of strategic groups including:

- The Health and Wellbeing Partnership and associated subgroups (Mental Health and Wellbeing Group, The Drug and Alcohol Group and the Whole System Approach Group to prevent Type II Diabetes)
- The Child Poverty Reference Group
- The Mental Health Oversight Group (Children and Young People)



NETS and Land Services work closely in partnership with Third Sector through developing working groups to support the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Access Forum (LAF). The Local Access Forums are statutory advisory bodies which aims to deliver a balanced representation of land managers, participants in outdoor access, communities and public agencies.



Within the Integrated Joint Board activity there are strong strategic partnerships around child protection, community safety, alcohol and drug and community justice. This is supported by strategic working groups which have representation from the Third Sector and officers from the partnership. These include:

- Integration Joint Board and IJB Strategic Planning Group
- Integration Joint Board Care and Governance Group
- Carer Strategic Implementation Group
- Self-Directed Support Board
- Alcohol and Drug Partnership Exec Board
- Mental Health Oversight Group
- Children and Families Strategic Planning Group

The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian are also a key partner on behalf of the Third Sector on a number of groups including the Armed Forces Community Covenant Steering Group, Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Community Engagement & Empowerment Group.



Community Wealth Building

Below are some examples of how key service and partners have worked with the Third Sector, around key areas of funding. The information below is not designed to show all the information but to provide an insight into some of the activity in 2023/24.

In 2023/24 the Community Wealth Building Team administered a range of Council and external grants provided to the Council. This saw £2.2 million allocated to 160 projects. This is broken down below:

1. Voluntary Organisations budget – £1 million to support the Third Sector in West Lothian, awarded to 28 groups, through various methods including; Service Level Agreements, Third Sector Community Support funding and Twinning Association grants.
2. Gala grants – £40,000 to 26 organisations
3. Pensioners Christmas Grants – £29,000 to 69 organisations
4. Community Choices Equalities Funding – £25,000 to 6 organisations
5. Linlithgow Common Good Fund Community Grant – £19,000 to 2 organisations.
6. The West Lothian Development Trust windfarm funding allocated – £320,00 to 18 different organisations through 20 grants.



In 2023/ 24 the Scottish Government provided £789,000 of place-based investment funding to West Lothian Council. This was allocated to the Third Sector via two methods. The first was a large-scale capital grant scheme where £600,000 was allocated to six organisations for capital projects over £50,000. The second was a community choices process where £189,000 was allocated to 10 organisations for capital projects under £25,000.



The service worked closely with community organisations to support communities to access external funding and develop project that support our most deprived communities. Two successful applications in 2023/24 were:

Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF)

West Lothian Council was awarded £1.4 million from the Scottish Governments Regeneration Capital Grant Fund to support West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust's Co-Op Discovery centre which will turn a derelict former Bakery into a community space. The total project is estimated at 6.3 million which will be delivered in 2024/25 and 2025/26.



Scottish Government – Investing in Communities funding

Almond Housing Association Ltd. were awarded £297,000 to lead on a three year 'Working Together' project in Craigshill. This is a partnership project developed through West Lothian Council's Locality Planning Steering group. The project created two local posts; a Community Champion, Community Gardener and some sessional activity. The project will help extend and build on the work of services, organisations, volunteers and the local community within Craigshill.



Economic Development

Economic Development has allocated £480,000 from the 'No One Left Behind' employability funding to Third Sector in 2023/24 to support two projects:

- Street League
- Partnership for Parents

Partnership for Parents

The Partnership for Parents project brings together a consortium of third sector organisations (The Larder, Kidzeco, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, Citizens Advice Bureau, Volunteering Matters and Environmental Health CIC) to deliver key support for employment, skills development and income maximisation. By working together, the partnership provides a holistic support framework for; lone parents, parents with a disability, parents with a child who has a disability, parents from an ethnic minority, parents with youngest child under one year old and parents aged under 25 years old.

The service also managed rural funding for Community Garden projects which allocated £110,000 to seven organisations.

- Beachbrae
- Community Action Blackburn
- Kirknewton CDT
- Skolieburn Community Meadow
- West Calder and Harburn CDT
- Loganlea
- Foodbank West Lothian



Business Gateway Third Sector Support

Business Gateway continue to deliver business advice and support to existing and new start social enterprises in 2023/24. Support is tailored around the needs of individual organisations including business planning, social enterprise legal structures, finance raising, grant and loan applications, property, community benefit leases, asset transfers, income generation, governance and sustainability.

In 2023/24 support was provided to 52 social enterprises. During this time, 12 organisations received specialist business support and advice on Community Asset Transfer. In total 11 organisations were supported with a Business Development Review as part of organisational restructuring.

A total of 13 organisations were also supported with £18,000 of local funding available through the West Lothian Employer Recruitment Incentive, West Lothian Low Carbon Grant and the West Lothian Digital Development Grant.

NETs, Land and Countryside Service

NETs, Land and Countryside Service continue to work closely with a number of trusts to help deliver projects across the community. In 2023/24 the following projects were being delivered across West Lothian.

Capital – Sustainable Tree & Woodland Management

Friends of Almondell & Calderwood

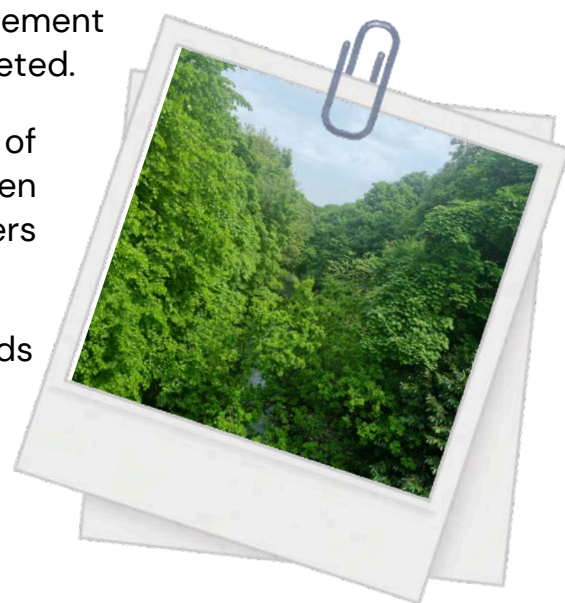
Almondell Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) Project

£5,000

The project started in 2016 involving woodland management and path upgrading work at Almondell, this was completed.

There is now ongoing maintenance, planting of additional specimen trees which is shared between West Lothian Council and WIAT, involving other partners such as the Community Payback Team.

Friends of Almondell & Calderwood Almondell Woods and West Lothian Council won the Tim Stead Community Woodland Award which included £1,000 prize money.



Nature Restoration Fund

This is funding directly allocated from the Scottish Government for projects that restore wildlife and habitats on land and sea and address the loss of biodiversity and impacts of climate change. NETs, Land and Countryside Service supported organisations to access the funding available. Including the following projects in 2023/24:

Forth Rivers Trust

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and Water Related Projects

£61,000

The Trust is delivering INNS and other water-related projects, involving community engagement in carrying out practical habitat enhancements e.g. wetland creation and river bank protection; monitoring and mapping invasive species; carrying out invasive species control; training up community groups to control invasive plant species.



Forth Rivers Trust
River Almond Fish Pass

£20,000

River Almond Fish Counter project sees the installation of a fish counter at River Almond fish pass to monitor fish and the effectiveness of other activities.



Green Action Trust
Black Moss

£70,000

The project has focused on the felling of non-native conifers from Black Moss bog, restructure of woodland, associated surveys and native tree planting in the Nature park.

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust
Greening the Shale Trail

£6,000

The project is a programme of greening the Shale Trail by tree planting, monitoring of Great Crested Newts and implementing an enhancement plan.

The Wildlife Information Centre
Local Biodiversity Surveys

£12,000

The Wildlife Information centre is carrying out a Local Biodiversity sites survey / condition assessment of local biodiversity sites to inform the future management and strategy for them.



Operational Services works in partnership with the West Lothian Litter Pickers as well as other schools and individuals with an interest in cleaning up the environment. In 2023/24 the Service provided bags and equipment as well as arranged for the uplift and disposal of the litter and waste collected. The West Lothian Litter Pickers have been supported by 3,500 volunteers with around 200-400 active volunteers every week.



Social Policy

In 2023/24, Social Policy provided a total of £33.5 million to Third sector organisations for grants and commissioned services.

Within Adults and Older People Services, a total of £25 million was awarded, £22.9 million was paid to providers of direct care and support, to adults with disabilities and older people. There was a further £2.1 million paid for other indirect support such as advocacy and other services.



Within Children and Justice Services a total of £8.5 million was awarded. In total £5.4 million was paid to providers of external placements and supported accommodation, £1.3 million for direct care for children with disabilities and £1.8 million for other support for families, mental health services, and other required provision.

Housing

In 2023/24 funding was provided to support the Councils Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. The projects supported were:

- Action for Children – Young Persons Emergency Prevention Service – £38,000
- Rock Trust – Nightstop Service – £50,000
- Rock Trust – Housing First – £52,000
- Rock Trust – Upstream prevention of homelessness in schools £27,000



Education

Sports

The Active Schools & Community Sport service supports a wide range of community sports clubs to deliver impactful positive outcomes for local communities.

In total 47 clubs currently hold Active Assured Accreditation, these clubs access a range of benefits such as bespoke club development support as well as opportunities to attend club network and professional learning events coordinated by Community Sport staff themed around the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.

Funding support was provided during 2023/24 to 16 accredited clubs via the Sporting Grants scheme with £34,000 awarded for projects related to the development of volunteers and young leaders. A further £6,000 was awarded to three clubs to support care experienced children and young people.

The service supported 12 community sports clubs to access council's Summer Programme Fund in 2023 and assisted with the identification of targeted children and young people from low income families to support their access the provision.

The service works in partnership with Clubsport West Lothian, the voluntary voice of sports clubs, organisations and individuals within West Lothian. Clubsport is a consultative partner, they received £5,000 to disburse to their member network of over 600. The organisation now supports 28 clubs that have a combined total of over 400- 600 participating members.



Nursery and Early Years Provision

In 2023/24 a total of £20,000 was provided to 11 playgroups.



Primary and Secondary Schools

Within Schools some pupil equity funding (PEF) provided directly to each school is awarded to the Third Sector to deliver specific interventions. As a snap shot around £20,000 PEF monies in 2023/24 was awarded to Third Sector organisations.

Schools, from their core budgets, also procured services from a number of third sector organisations over the year including:

- S.M.I.L.E. Counselling – £155,000
- The Larder West Lothian – £36,000
- West Lothian Youth Action Project – £14,000
- Wellbeing Scotland – £160,000



Summer Programme

West Lothian Summer Programme 2023 was co-designed by children, young people and families, with West Lothian Council services, third sector and community partner providers offering a successful varied and diverse range of opportunities for children and young people throughout the six-week school summer holiday period. Participants enjoyed activities which were fun, engaging and educational; including sports, arts, team games, outdoor learning, cooking skills, environmental projects and trips away. In total 4,815 children and young people benefited from the summer programme, a significant part of this was through services provided through 32 Third Sector partners who were supported through grants totalling £209,000.



Youth Work

A total of £14,000 was allocated the detached youth work in Livingston North by the Vennie and youth work in Linlithgow and Bridgend to cover provision in areas where CLD Youth Services does not currently operate.

Anti-Poverty Service

Funding

In 2023/24 the Anti-Poverty Service provided £330,000 to support the West Lothian Food Network; £50,000 of this funding was from West Lothian Council's Shared Prosperity Funding.



Finance and Property Services

Property Services has supported Third Sector groups with inquiries about asset transfer and community benefit leases. The example of Low Port is referenced earlier in the report. Another area of focus in 2023/24 was around Community benefit leases or Asset Transfer of local sports pavilions, community gardens and centres. A number of community benefit leases were put in place resulting in social benefits being realised by Third Sector and community.



NHS Lothian Partnership and Place Team

In July 2023 the NHS Partnership and Place team allocated Health Improvement Funding to two separate projects. The funding was to deliver a programme of work which helps to achieve the outcome of shaping healthy, safe and vibrant places and communities in West Lothian.

The projects that received funding were:

- £100,000 to a Child Poverty Project which is a collaboration between Kidzeco, Citizens Advice Bureau and West Lothian Council. The Project is designed to help parents cope with their perinatal journey, prevent crisis situations, and foster positive physical and mental health for themselves and their children. It will also address finance, housing and employability issues if required.
- £100,000 to Carers of West Lothian for their early intervention project to support those waiting on or newly received dementia diagnosis. The project focuses on developing coping mechanisms, helping the person with dementia and their carer/family to get the best support and put plans in place for the required support.

West Lothian Climate Action Network

In 2023/24 the West Lothian Climate Action Network (WLCAN) was established, led initially by the Joint Forum of Community Councils', support was provided by West Lothian Council Officers to develop the project and successfully secured three years funding from the Scottish Government. Year one funding was initially £149,000 for three members of staff, a Senior Development Officer, a Development Worker and a Communication Worker, and for a community-based ECO Fund of £46,000.

The ECO Fund aimed to help grassroots groups to develop projects spanning food growing, energy efficiency measures, environmental training and conservation. WLCAN members were able to bid for the two levels of grants; a small grant of £2,000 and a large grant of £5,000. In total 17 projects were awarded funding.

In 2024/25 a total of £160,000 will be made available to the WLCAN for staff costs, project delivery and another ECO fund.



Conclusion

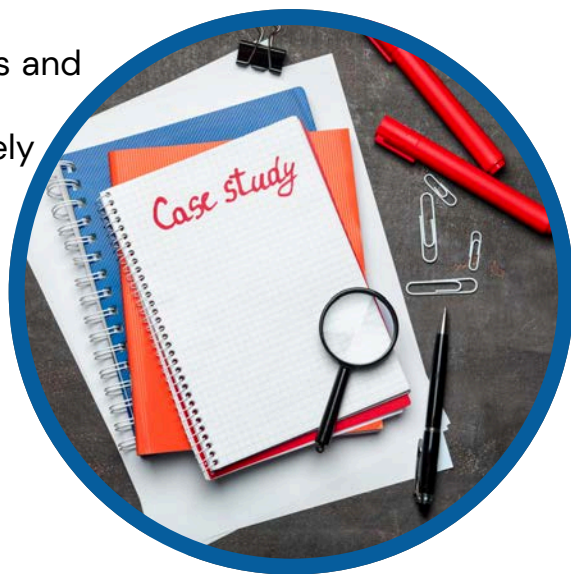
As evidenced by this report, the partnership work between West Lothian Council, Community Planning Partners and the Third Sector is well established. It will be vital to continue to consolidate and build on this partnership going forward in 2024/25.

The importance of Community Planning Partners, including West Lothian Council and the Third Sector, working as strategically as possible to deliver for West Lothian communities remains key. This will help make best use of constrained resources in future. For example, encourage more consortium or collaborative funding applications that clearly address strategic priorities.



Case Studies

The report has provided a range of high level facts and figures about the sector nationally, locally, funding and partnership working. However, what is ultimately important is what this actually looks like in practice. Below are a number of case studies that highlight some of the activity that has been delivered by key areas of funding highlighted in the report.



Partnership for Parents

Partnership for Parents is a unique collaborative consortium of Third Sector organisations in West Lothian, comprising The Larder, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, KidzEco, Citizens Advice Bureau, Volunteering Matters and EnvironMentalHealth CIC.

Led by The Larder, Partnership for Parents provides targeted, tailored support and outreach employability provision for West Lothian parents within the community. It offers a unique opportunity to combine the work of the third sector in working towards alleviating poverty and targets those furthest from the labour market who are less likely to engage with mainstream provision. Working within local communities, the partners are in an ideal position to promote upskilling and employment as a sustainable route out of poverty

Funded by West Lothian Council's share of No One Left Behind (NOLB) funding, and facilitated by the Local Employability Partnership, Partnership for Parents compliments existing employability provision and builds on the partners' current work with communities, empowering parents through focused support and guidance. Supported by the Pathway Coordinator, parents have the opportunity to review their own aspirations, barriers and commitments and a progression plan is co-developed based on their individual circumstances.

The support gives parents access to income maximisation advice and guidance, wellbeing and confidence building, core and vocational skills development and qualifications, supported work experience, employment support and in-work mentorship aiming to equip parents with the tools, resources and support they need to thrive in the workforce. Recognising personal challenges, and empowering parents to realise their full potential in a way that meets their individual and family needs is fundamental to the Partnership for Parents provision, ensuring a positive and sustainable pathway to employment.

Partnership for Parents is pivotal in harnessing the strength of the Third Sector locally through collaborative partnerships, local community engagement initiatives, and facilitating work experience opportunities.

This collective effort ensures parents don't need to struggle on their own, they can now enter into new or improved employment or training at a pace and in an environment that meets theirs and their family's unique needs, confident in the knowledge that they have a support network cheering them on every step of the way.



The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian offers invaluable support to the consortium with social media management, marketing support and secretariat services, accommodation provision and strategic input and support.



West Lothian Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund



West Lothian

COMMUNITIES MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING FUND



In 2023/24 the Voluntary Sector Gateway supported the distribution of the West Lothian Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund to the local Third Sector. This was the second year of funding provided by the Scottish Government. Organisations applied to the Voluntary Sector Gateway for a maximum award of up to £50,000. A multi-agency panel comprising of representatives from the Health and Social Care partnership, West Lothian Council including the Community Regeneration team, Voluntary Sector Gateway and community members with lived experience. The following organisations were successful in securing funding:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefly Arts • The Bridge Community Project • West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust – Good Connections • The School Bank West Lothian • MIST: Memory Information Support Team • S.M.I.L.E Counselling • Carers of West Lothian • West Lothian African Women's Network • Artlink Edinburgh and the Lothians • The Brock Garden Centre SCIO • No Limits • Team Jak Foundation • Blackburn United Community Sports Club | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Lothian Food Train • Sports & Well-Being for All Trust SCIO • Volunteering Matters • Dedridge Good Neighbour Network SCIO • Young At Heart (Blackburn) • Roots Partnership • Livingston United Parish Church • Winchburgh Community Development Trust • Beechbrae • West Lothian 50+ Network • Kidzeco |
|--|---|

Below is a case study on one of the projects that received funding through the Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund. The project was also supported by the West Lothian Council Community Choices equalities pilot that was delivered in 2023/24.

West Lothian African Women's Network

The West Lothian African Women's Network aims to support deprived and marginalised African women, children, and families as well as other ethnic minority women who are facing cultural isolation, inequality, loneliness, racial rejection, and poverty here in West Lothian.

The Mental Health Funding provided in 2023/24 has been vital for African/Minority women and their families in West Lothian, offering vital assistance in overcoming cultural isolation, loneliness, and recovering from the impact of the profound challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic to the community.

The funding has enabled the following:

Mental Health Sessions: The funding was utilised to organise training sessions that served as a safe haven for women and their families to connect, share experiences, and combat feelings of isolation, fostering a sense of community.

Community Engagement: The funding facilitated community engagement activities that encouraged social connections and provided a sense of belonging, reducing feelings of isolation and creating a supportive environment conducive to recovery and well-being.

Promoting Healing and Recovery: The funding was used for healing and recovery initiatives, including trauma-informed care signposting and resilience-building workshops, guiding women and families on their path towards mental well-being and emotional healing. There has been a focus on long-term support, the funding has ensured sustainable mental health support for the women and families engaged by the network, emphasising the importance of long-term recovery strategies, ongoing access to mental health services, and providing valuable self-care tips for continued well-being.



Celebrating Equalities Community Choices Fund

In 2023/24 the West Lothian African Women's Network secured funding through the Celebrating Equalities Community Choices funding towards the African Scottish Diversity Expo event. This Expo serves as a transformative community initiative, bringing together diverse communities to foster unity, celebrate diversity, and promote cultural exchange and integration. The event helps to nurture positive relationships among individuals and families from varied backgrounds and cultures within the local community. By addressing challenges such as loneliness, isolation, and post-pandemic recovery, the initiative plays a vital role in facilitating community healing and cultivating a more inclusive and resilient society.

Outcomes achieved by the Network as a result of the funding secured in 2023/24:

Improved Mental Health: Women and families reported enhanced mental well-being, reduced feelings of isolation, and improved coping mechanisms.

Stronger Community Connection: The creation of strong networks among the women/families, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Enhanced Resilience: The women exhibited increased resilience in dealing with challenges, showing improved emotional strength and ability to bounce back from adversities and also to seek help when needed.

Increased Community Engagement: The support resulted in improved engagement and attendance by the women to local community events organised by the network and others.

In total 87 women and families have been supported.

The outcomes of the interventions and initiatives have been overwhelmingly positive, contributing to the overall well-being and resilience of women in the community.



West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust

The Trust has received funding from a range of sources through the Voluntary Sector Gateway and a number of elements of West Lothian Council funding highlight above.

Good Connections, which is funded by the Communities Mental Health Fund, is a community wellbeing social prescribing service available to people living within the range of West Calder Medical Practice.

Good Connections service uses local knowledge to help connect to services and opportunities available in West Lothian that will improve residents health, wellbeing and social connections. The funding has made a positive difference by ensuring the provision of a person-centred service of support that has helped vulnerable and marginalised individuals access services, social groups, local activities, volunteering opportunities and assistance to liaise with statutory services. Contribution from the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund has made a difference through the continued development of a programme of wellbeing activities which run in partnership with third sector organisations throughout West Calder. For example, the continuation of a professionally facilitated Arts for Wellbeing Group which provides an outlet for allocated individuals to nurture their personal development through creative expression. Delivery of a new 'by-donation' Wellbeing Yoga Group; bringing together members of our community to engage in healthy and wellbeing-focused exercise. The project enhanced the provision of a wellbeing-focused resource hub in the centre of the West Calder community, which provides a self-led training tool for staff and community members on an extensive range of experiential topics. The funding has also made a positive difference by guaranteeing the provision of a weekly men's peer support group, facilitated by volunteers with lived experience and a fully trained counselling therapist.

In the past year, the Good Connections project has created new groups and enhanced the offer within existing groups. For example, the inclusion of the Link-Worker within groups such as Men's Peer-Support to provide wider support for those engaged. This has helped to meet the deepening needs of clients and offer supervision to volunteers. Although volunteers are now receiving greater supervisory support within the project to offer their help, the demand and capacity ask on these volunteers has increased.



How many people have benefited from this Good Connections project?

122 individuals, which is 110 families, have benefited from the Good Connections project in the year period of 2023 to 2024.

Community Woods & Garden: Polbeth & West Calder, has received funding from the Rural Community Lead Local Development Fund, the garden is a 17 acre site which is accessible 24/7 and has a secure space where the Trust can provide volunteering and educational opportunities to a wide range of the community. The services and activities of Good Connections are firmly rooted in the site and offer additional support to the Trust's volunteers who include some of the more excluded and vulnerable members of the community. The Trust has been improving the site infrastructure over the last few years and funding secured in 2023/24 has allowed the provision of a new workshop container, purchase of new tools and equipment, replacement of polytunnels and the construction of new accessible raised beds. The garden has also installed new signage making the site more visible and safer to access.



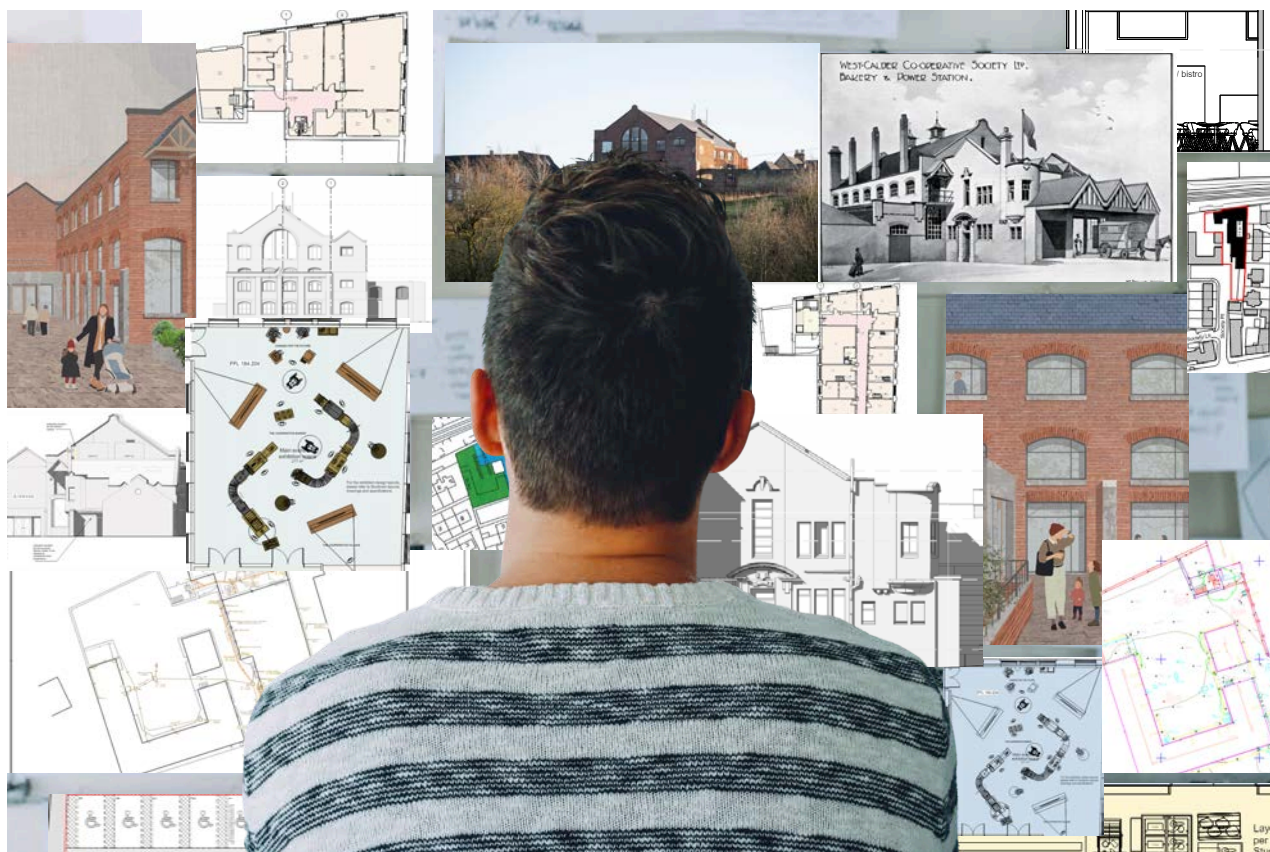
Examples of activities delivered at the garden include: regular volunteer activities, zero-carbon workshops, composting, community workshop, Pride Outside, informational and educational workshops (Mothy Coffee, Fungi Foray, Working with Clay, Lino Printing for example), open days, plant sales, zero waste refill station, scouts base, school group visits, corporate volunteer days and veg and flower growing. The Community Garden provides produce for the Trust's Brunch Club, Community Café. Shop at West Calder Hub and to Polbeth Community Hub.



The Scottish Co-operative Discovery Centre is a large-scale capital project to renovate the old co-operative bakery building, formerly West Calder Workspace, to create a new hands-on, fun and educational heritage attraction based around the local and Scottish Co-operative heritage. A total of 1.4 million of funding from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Growth Fund was secured in 2023/24 with support from West Lothian Council. The funding has been key to leveraging in substantial funding for the £6.3 million project and enabling the project to progress. A further £258,000 of the Place Based Investment Funding allocated by West Lothian Council in 2023/24 was secured to support specific elements of the capital works.

The development has been designed by the local community to deliver a range of local priorities that align with a range of West Lothian and National strategies including Community Wealth Building. It will provide jobs and opportunities for those normally excluded and from disadvantaged areas, boost trade and footfall in the village, celebrate the villages local heritage, provide amenities and facilities to a growing population, house a new café/bistro, provide training and work experience to local young people and showcase local makers in its shop. The Community Garden will provide crafts and produce for the café and shop and augment the training provision while Good Connections will add wellbeing support and volunteer development within the project.

It is anticipated that the main capital work will start for the project in late 2024.



Place Based Investment Fund 2023/24 – Community Choices

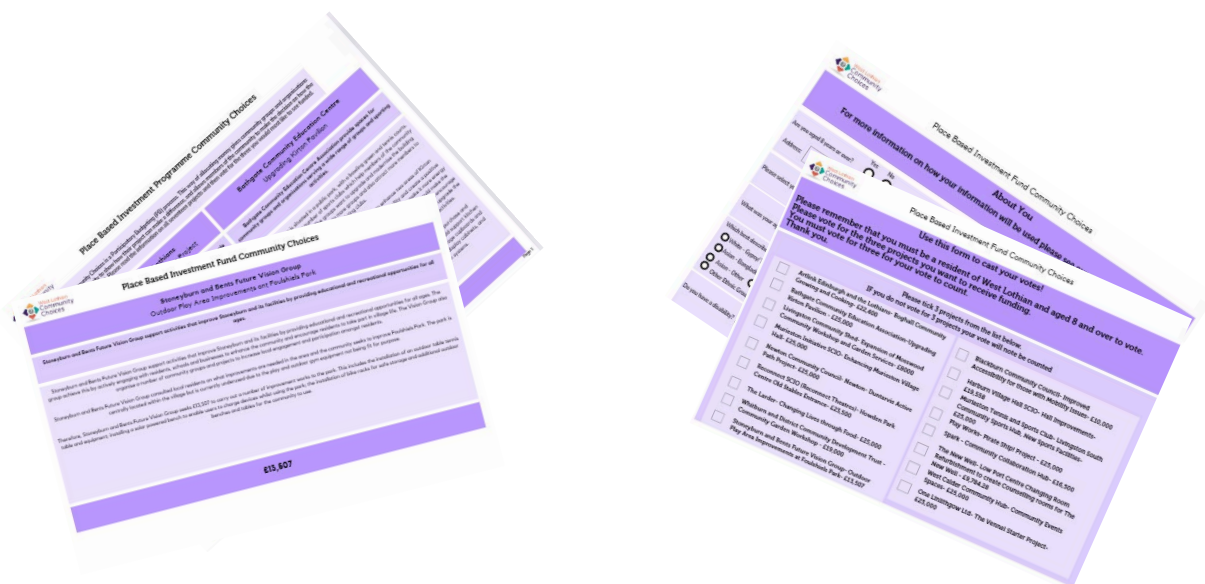
In 2023/24 West Lothian Council allocated £189,000 of its Place Based Investment Programme Funding to a Community Choices exercise for local Third Sector Organisations. Community Choices is West Lothian's version of Participatory Budgeting, a democratic process which empowers people and communities to have a greater say in how public money is spent. This way of allocating money gives groups and organisations an opportunity to show how their project can make a difference, and allows members of the community to make the decision on how the money is spent.



The Community Choices Place-Based Investment Fund was open to applications from 10th October – 5th November. Community, voluntary and third sector organisations in West Lothian were invited to apply for capital grants of between £5,000 and £25,000 that would help to support place policy ambitions such as town centre revitalisation, community-led regeneration, 20-minute neighbourhoods and community wealth building. The projects also had to meet one or more of the criteria detailed below:

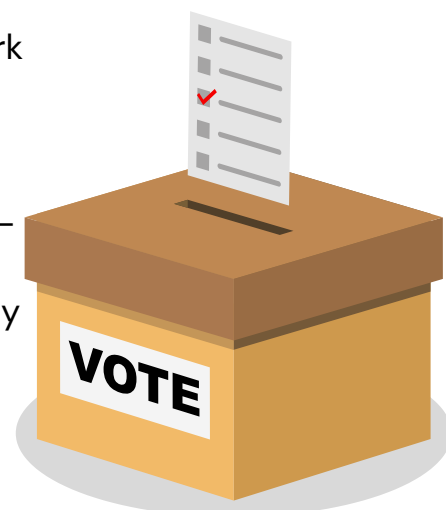
- Accelerate ambitions for net zero
- Wellbeing and inclusive economic development
- Tackling inequality and disadvantage
- Community involvement and ownership

Eligible projects were shortlisted and West Lothian residents were invited to vote throughout November 2023 to decide which projects should receive funding. Voting took place via a variety of methods including an online survey, in-person ballot boxes in key locations and pop up sessions in West Lothian College and in local communities. People were asked to vote for three projects to receive funding. A total of 4405 people voted with a total of 13,215 votes being cast.



The following ten projects received the most votes and were awarded funding:

- The Larder – Changing Lives through Food– £25,000
- ReConnect SCIO (ReConnect Theatres) – Howden Park Centre Old Stables Entrance – £23,500
- Spark – Community Hub Security– £16,500
- Murieston Tennis and Sports Club – Livingston South Community Sports and Wellbeing Hub New Facilities – £25,000
- Livingston Shed – Expansion of Mosswood Community Workshop and Garden Services – £8,000
- Playworks – Pirate Ship! – £25,000
- Bathgate Community Education Centre Association – Upgrading Kirkton Pavilion – £25,000
- Stoneyburn & Bents Future Vision Group – Outdoor Play Improvements at Foulshiels Park – £13,507
- Artlink Edinburgh and Lothians – Boghall Community Cooking and Growing – £22,400
- Whitburn and District Community Development Trust – Community Garden Workshop – £5,093 (Part award)

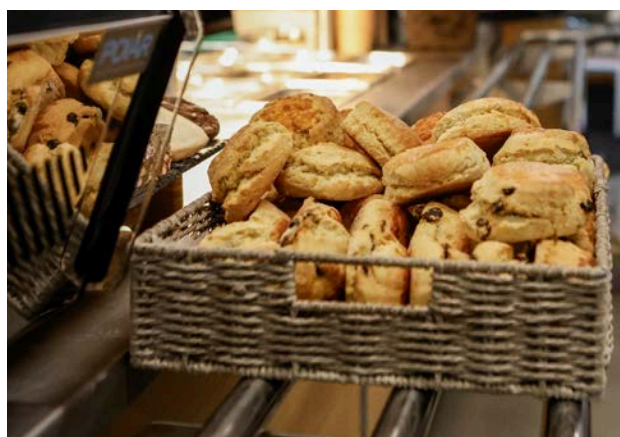


Below is a case study on one of the projects that received funding through the Place Based Investment Programme Community Choices exercise.

THE LARDER

The Larder West Lothian, is a community-based social enterprise that combats poverty and hunger. They provide a range of services, including employability training, food distribution, cooking classes, and community engagement, to support individuals and families through access to learning and good food.

The Larder West Lothian applied to the Place Based Investment Programme Community Choices exercise for £25,000 of capital funding to extend the bakery shop front and café at Brewster Square, Livingston. The bakery shop was opened in August 2022 with the aspiration of providing training, employment and work experience opportunities for young people and adults with Additional Support Needs. The bakery shop front previously only had seating capacity for a maximum of six people.



However, The Larder was seeing increasing demand from customers seeking to sit in. The bakery also provides opportunities for The Larder to host work experience placements for young people and adults within hospitality who are moving towards the job market.

The Larder therefore were looking to renovate the bakery shop front at the Brewster Square cafe, reconfiguring the layout to facilitate a larger serving and food prep area, increase the number of tables for sit in customers and to purchase new equipment. The larger serving area would allow The Larder to install additional equipment to extend the menu, introduce deliveries with their new electric van, grow sales and create additional jobs and training opportunities.

The Larder completed the extension works and refurbishment of the Brewster Square bakery and shop front in March 2024 with the newly refurbished café opening in April 2024.



Annual Report

£42.4 million

across all sectors covered in this report



Voluntary Sector Gateway

£469,000

£469,000

Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund – 37 projects



Social Policy

£33.5 million

Adults & Older People Services



- **£22.9 million** paid to providers of direct care & support.
- **£2.1 million** indirect support–advocacy & other services.

Children & Justice Services

- **£5.4 million** for provision of external placements & supported accommodation
- **£1.3 million** on direct care for children with disabilities
- **£1.8 million** paid for other support including families and mental health



Public Health

£200,000

- **£100,000** paid to Carers of West Lothian – Early intervention Alzheimers
- **£100,000** awarded to a Child Poverty Project– collaborating with:
 - Kidz-Eco CIC
 - Citizens Advice Bureau



West Lothian Climate Action Network

£149,000



including staff and 17 small grants towards grassroots projects

Community Wealth Building

£3.7 million

Voluntary Organisation Budget



£1 million (28 groups)

Place Based Investment Fund



£600,000 Main Grants (6 groups)



£189,000 (10 groups)



Regeneration Capital Grant Fund



£1.4million

West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust

Gala & Similar Annual Events Fund



(26 groups)

£40,000

Celebrating Equalities Fund – Community Choices

£25,000 (6 groups)



Linlithgow Common Good Fund

(2 groups)

£19,000



Pensioners Xmas Fund



towards a meal or event (69 groups)

£29,000

West Lothian Development Trust



(20 grants)

£320,000



Developer Contribution Community Fund



4 grants paid to 3 groups in Fauldhouse and Winchburgh **£115,000**

Please note figures in this report have been rounded.

Operational Services / NETS

£304,000

Sustainable Tree & Woodland Management



Friends of Almondell & Calderwood
– Woods In and Around Towns
Project **£5,000**

Nature Restoration Fund

- 2 grants – Forth Rivers Trust :
Invasive Non-Native Species &
other Water related projects

£61,000

River Almond Fish Counter

£20,000

- Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace
Greening the Shale Trail Project

£6,000

- 2 grants – Green Action Trust:
Black Moss – Total

£70,000

- The Wildlife Information
Centre: Local Biodiversity Studies

£12,000

West Lothian Litter Pickers

Supported West Lothian Litter Pickers **3,500**
volunteers with equipment, uplift and disposal.



200-400

volunteers active
weekly.

Operational Services

£130,000 Paid to Handicabs for
public transports
services



Anti-Poverty Service

£280,000



to support The Food Network & residents to
access food in a dignified way **£280,000**

Housing and Homelessness

£167,000

- £38,000** paid to:
Action for Children – Young Person
Emergency Prevention Service



- £50,000** paid to:

Rock Trust – Night Stop

- £52,000** paid to:

Rock Trust – Housing First

- £27,000** paid to:

Rock Trust – Upstream prevention of
homelessness in schools



Economic Development

£658,000

West Lothian Rural Community Led Local Development Fund

supported **7** groups with
Community Garden projects.

£110,000



Shared Prosperity Fund



- West Lothian Food Network

£50,000

- grants provided to **13** groups

£18,000

Employability

No One Left Behind funding:

£480,000



- Street League

- Partnership for Parents
(consortium of **6** groups)

Education

£3 million



- Detached youth work – **2** groups

£14,000

- Primary and Secondary Schools
core budgets paid to **4** groups

£365,000



- £209,000**

towards summer programmes in
2023/24 – supporting **32** groups

- Support to **11** local Playgroups

£20,000



- Pupil Equity Fund (PEF)
(**35** groups) **£20,000**

- 2023/24 West Lothian Leisure
management fee: **£2.2million**



- Reconnect SCIO – Howden Park
Centre Operating Fee: **£140,000**

Sporting Grants Scheme 2023/24

- 16** Sports Grants awarded to
accredited clubs **£34,000**



- £6,000** awarded to **3** groups
for the development volunteers
& Young Leaders

- £5,000** awarded to Clubsport
West Lothian benefiting over
600 individuals

