



The
Ayrshire
Community Trust

CELEBRATING **20** YEARS

*"The Centre for
Volunteering Excellence"*

ANNUAL REPORT

2018 - 2019

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

OUR YEAR IN PHOTOS

“TO DELIVER PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE’S LIVES BY ENCOURAGING, SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY ACTION”



MESSAGE FROM CHAIRPERSON

I would like to take time to acknowledge the achievements of our company over the past year, a year in which we are now realising the benefits of our move to these premises. Our reduction in overheads places us in a slightly improved financial position however with contract funding there are always risks.

TACT now employs 20 staff and oversees 5 projects, they all bring their own demands and issues but in essence they completely fit with our main purpose of helping people improve their lives.

As you can see in this Annual Report our staff do amazing work and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their efforts. Most projects are overseen by Kaileigh our Operations Manager, Kaileigh has worked hard with staff in our Community Garden at Eglinton and our community digital hub at Trinity Church Irvine to work on business plans and funding applications to help further develop these initiatives. We hope to have success this year in securing funding.

TACT also has a remit set out by the Scottish Government to support the third sector; the outcome of the review of this remit has given us a more strategic position in relation to the role the third sector plays within community planning.

We still have a long way to go but our Outcome Framework gives us a stronger mandate to seek acknowledgment of the contribution the sector makes to our local economy and the improvement of people's lives by the services they provide.

Our service is evaluated on an annual basis, this provides us with data for areas for improvements and also to understand how the third sector rates our service. Thankfully our feedback has been very positive but there is always room for improvement so staff do take on board any comments or suggestions. The outcome of the evaluation is shared with the Third Sector Unit of the Scottish Government and on our web site which demonstrates openness and transparency.

As stated our financial position is becoming more secure however we realise two of our projects require an injection of funding, this is why in the coming year we will put every effort into securing external funding to further develop these projects. Our focus is always to have a person centred approach and to serve the community well, from the range of activities and level of engagement with our communities over the past year we have managed to achieve our goal of improving people's lives.

Mike Nellany

Chair of The Ayrshire Community Trust

"North Ayrshire Council value highly the work of The Ayrshire Community Trust both directly and in partnership with the Council providing invaluable support and services to our communities as part of our overarching ambition to make North Ayrshire 'Fair for All.'"

- Craig Hatton

Chief Executive (North Ayrshire Council)

MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

It's an absolute pleasure to be part of The Ayrshire Community Trust and to witness the outstanding achievements the company has made. We are a very small company with a huge remit with an even bigger desire to deliver projects and programmes which improve people's lives.

We employ 20 staff who deliver 7 specific areas of work, these range from a Community Garden, a Community Digital Hub which is now developing Virtual Reality work; an employability programme in partnership with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, two Link Up projects in partnership with Inspiring Scotland, an IT drop in facility and provide a range of support and guidance to volunteers and third sector organisations. I don't think staff quite appreciate the level of knowledge and expertise they have, but I do.

Staff are inventive and creative in the work they do so every day can be different. Our doors are open to anyone and if we don't know the answer we won't let you leave until we know where you need to go.

We have strong values about who is important in our work and it's not us, it's you. So if you haven't visited us please do, but in the meantime enjoying reading our annual report and gaining an insight into our success. We hope to see you soon.

Barbara Hastings

CEO of The Ayrshire Community Trust

PLANS FOR COMING YEAR

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE:

- Arrange and facilitate a new Chief Officers Forum
- Implement and promote a new Volunteering Strategy for North Ayrshire
- Attract Funding for Trinity Studios and Eglinton Community Garden

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS YEAR



Interviewed and supported **156 individuals**



Successfully placed **144 individuals**



Supported **100 3rd sector organisations**



Carried out **46 Independent Examinations**



Organised and held **5 Funding Surgeries** supporting **54 3rd sector organisations** in the process



Offered **Training** including Basic IT, Volunteer Management and Basic Book-Keeping



Delivered Volunteering and Saltire Workshops with **over 200 young people**



Organised and delivered V in the Park where **over 750 local individuals** came along to participate in games and activities arranged and hosted by **over 30 third sector and statutory partners**



Drop In **Job Club open 50 days** throughout the year for anyone requiring support



Workshops organised:

- General Data Protection Regulation Events
- Basic Book Keeping
- Funding Surgeries
- PVG Session
- Let's Talk about Community Justice
- Volunteer Management Training



84% of responses rated our TSI as excellent or good



75% of people who engaged with the TSI went on to actively volunteer



82% of organisations say that as a result in taking part in networks and forums or networking activity they feel more connected

OUR PROJECTS

POSITIVE STEPS WITH PARTNERS

Positive Steps with Partners is part of North Ayrshire's Employability Pipeline and our aim is to deliver personal development training to help increase motivation and inspire people to explore voluntary work placement opportunities that will help them gain new skills and experiences that will in turn support progression towards future employment.

The project works in partnership with local services such as Ayrshire College, Adult Support and Protection, Advance Life Coach, British Red Cross, Cancer Research, Cross Reach, CEIS Ayrshire, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Mindfulness in Ayrshire. Collectively the services bring together a variety of opportunities for beneficiaries to choose from in support of their professional and personal development. The project is a voluntary project and beneficiaries can select the opportunities/services they wish to engage in.



The Project has supported;

- 88 beneficiaries have completed 4 days of STEPS to Excellence.
- 38 engaged in one to one Life Coach sessions.
- 34 completed Adult Support and Protection Training.
- 15 beneficiaries completed Mindfulness course.
- 15 beneficiaries gained accredited qualifications.
- 40 beneficiaries completed 3-6 months in work placement.
- 4 beneficiaries have progressed into employment.

OUR PROJECTS

LINK UP - SALTCOATS

- 66 new people joined and participated in Link Up Groups.
- 14 new people were supported to take on and maintain volunteering roles in Link Up Groups.
- We successfully ran the Activate Course from April to July. The Activate Course is an introductory course in community development aimed at local people who are active or who would like to become active within their communities, and it was delivered by staff from the University of Glasgow. 10 people successfully completed the course.
- In August, the project developed and expanded to incorporate a new model of working, known informally as Link Up+.
- This new model builds on the existing work of the project, and has received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.
- A new Men's Group was set up in October, and approximately 12 men participate in this group on a weekly basis.
- A new full-time Community Development Worker was employed in December – this has increased the capacity of the project to maintain existing groups, develop new groups, and carry out wider and more frequent structured community engagement.
- Saltcoats Community Action Group hosted a very successful Christmas Lights Switch On Event in December. This event consisted of a parade, Santa's Grotto, a dance exhibition, a fun fair and it culminated in Santa abseiling from the tower of Saltcoats Town Hall to switch on the Christmas Lights in the town with local children. It's estimated that approximately 4,000 attended the event on the day.
- We provided a Student Placement and Learning opportunity for two Social Work students from the University of the West of Scotland in the period January – March 2019.
- A new Gardening Group was established in March 2019 which meets twice a week and is currently involved in a number of gardening initiatives at the Argyle Centre and Saltcoats Library.

"The way in which we at Saltcoats Link Up work with people is such a powerful approach. It enables people to do things that they want to do in a way and at a pace that they want to do it, without any preconceived agendas or expected outcomes. We simply provide the tools for people to do things for themselves. As a worker, it is a joy to play a part in people's self-determination - it's the essence of community development."

- Brian Keenan

Link Up Co-ordinator (Saltcoats)

LINK UP - KILMARNOCK

- We are now working with over 70 people on a weekly basis as part of 8 groups we support.
- We moved our base to the Nwkleus Community Centre in Onthank where we have been able to work and build relationships with a wide variety of members of the local community.
- In partnership with the Kilmarnock North West Community Partnership (KNWCP) we successfully obtained nearly £30,000 of funding for a volunteer coordinator for Nwkleus - this has been hugely successful bringing over 15 new volunteers into the centre and allowing KNWCP to make significant progress in developing the centre.
- Worked with the board of KNWCP to create their new vision statement.
- In Partnership with Menu for Change we worked with a local group of people to set up a Community Larder in response to their experiences of using Foodbanks. The Food bank opened in May and now has over 100 members.
- We recently opened a Men's Shed which is attracting lots of interest in the community - it has nearly 10 members at the moment and has begun working on its first projects.
- We provided our first Student Placement opportunity for a Community Work student from Ayrshire College - a previous participant in Link Up she has now passed her HNC and has been accepted to the Community Education Course at University of West of Scotland.

Our vision is to be...

A confident, professional, well-managed Partnership providing a fully inclusive central point bringing people of North West Kilmarnock together to socialise, learn, share, connect and support the Community.



"Link Up plays a really important role in North West Kilmarnock helping local people to create groups and activities which enable them and others from the community to realise and develop their own strengths and abilities...one of my favourite parts of the job is seeing people becoming part of what's happening in a group and the area, building their connection to their community and ultimately their confidence and wellbeing"

- Neill Patton

Link Up Co-ordinator (Kilmarnock)

OUR PROJECTS

TRINITY STUDIOS

Based at Trinity Church Hall in Irvine, our digital media hub continues to explore ways in which technology can help communities engage with our cultural heritage and improve our health and mental wellbeing.

With a focus on using virtual reality, our dedicated team of volunteers have been researching and developing applications that provide 360° immersive experiences.

In November 2018, we designed and created a VR short film to coincide with the centenary marking the end of World War 1. We held an Open Day and exhibition in the studio and visitors came to experience VR, watch films and see a range of WW1 memorabilia.

We have also created a VR experience designed to help people de-stress and reduce anxiety levels. The environment features a beautiful sandy beach with lapping waves and palm trees swaying in the breeze - the perfect place to feel relaxed!

We're currently working on a range of different environments and aim to offer visitors the opportunity to experience VR therapy and the benefits it can provide.



EGLINTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

Over the last year there have been many improvements to the garden. We now have two polytunnels which will help us increase the amount of produce that we are able to grow and have a new cabin which is supported with a generator which allows us to boil kettles and have heating and light on a dark winter's day. This cabin is also suitable for holding information sessions or training that the volunteers may need.

We have also welcomed North Ayrshire's learning disability team to join us to provide a space to work with their service users to develop a green health activity. This came about due to them having to relocate from their base at Hazeldene. They have settled in well and are working closely with our existing volunteers.

We have a regular attendance of 12-15 volunteers each day and each one is growing in confidence. Below are some quotes from our regular volunteers:

"The park gives me the opportunity to forget all my troubles for a few hours and I get to have a blether with some great people"

"I like coming here because I get to learn how to grow things and have even started growing tatties in a bag at my house"

"I get very anxious around crowds so this place lets me go and work on my own if I can't face talking to anyone but I also know that there is someone there to help if I need it"

As part of the Green Health Partnership we have been included in their referral process for anyone looking for a green health activity as opposed to the traditional route of attending a gym based activity.

This year has also seen the garden produce a business plan which will be used to guide us for the next three years. This process has helped us focus on not only the needs of the volunteers but also the needs of the beneficiaries and the wider community. We are hoping that as we move forward we can increase the yield and range of produce and deliver our produce to the wider community. This would be achieved through the use of an electric van which we will be in possession of by the middle of summer.

In order to fulfil the outcomes of the business plan we have been looking at funding to support the activities planned and we have submitted a proposal to the Tudor Trust and are considering other options.





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 @TAyrshireCT

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN YOUR COMMUNITY!**

We have a wide range of volunteering opportunities, whether you want to make new friends, develop new skills or give something back to your local area. **Get in touch today!**