

Voluntary Action Orkney Strategic Plan: 2026–2029

Chair's Introduction

As Chair of Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO), I am pleased to introduce our Strategic Plan for 2026–2029. The voluntary and community sector in Orkney is central to community wellbeing, inclusion, and resilience. This plan reflects our shared ambition to enable and empower the sector to thrive locally and in alignment with Scotland's national priorities.

Over the next three years, we will focus on building capacity, enhancing collaboration, strengthening our voice, and ensuring community needs drive action at both local and national levels. Our plan aligns with national and local outcomes and reflects the role VAO plays in supporting people and organisations across Orkney. We also contribute to the national Volunteering for All Action Plan, strengthening participation and inclusion. We will also invest in VAO's own internal resilience so that our organisation remains strong, responsive and well-equipped to support Orkney's communities.

I extend sincere thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, directors, and partners. Their skills, insight, and energy are fundamental to delivering this plan and strengthening Orkney's voluntary and community life.

Chair, Voluntary Action Orkney

About Voluntary Action Orkney

VAO supports and develops the voluntary and community sector in Orkney. As a Third Sector Interface (TSI), we provide a single point of access for support, information, and representation, helping local organisations to thrive.

We provide:

- Practical support for voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises
- Volunteer development and placement
- Partnership working with public, private and third sectors
- Advocacy for sector interests at local and national levels

We also deliver projects and services that meet community need beyond core TSI functions.

Our Mission

To support a thriving and dynamic voluntary and community sector that drives positive change, strengthens communities, and enhances quality of life through inclusive and sustainable initiatives.

Our Vision

A resilient, inclusive Orkney where individuals and organisations work together to create stronger, connected and sustainable communities.

Our Values

- **Integrity, Honesty and Quality** – Acting transparently, delivering to high standards, and making accountable decisions based on reality and fairness.
- **Collaboration** – Working in partnership to achieve better outcomes
- **Kindness and Respect** – Valuing every person's contribution
- **Inclusivity** – Ensuring opportunities are accessible and equitable
- **Productivity** – Improving how we work to maximise impact

Our Organisational Structure: Delivery of our Plan

Our governance and delivery structure ensures strong leadership, accountability, and collaboration across all areas of our work. It connects our Board's strategic oversight with the teams delivering day-to-day impact in communities.

Board of Directors

The Board provides governance, strategic direction, and accountability for VAO. It ensures that our vision, values, and priorities are delivered in line with our charitable aims and in the best interests of Orkney's communities.

VAO's structure then comprises five key teams working together under the leadership of the Executive and Senior Management Teams:

- Executive Team – provides overall leadership and direction.
- Senior Management Team – coordinates delivery across all functions.
- Finance Team – manages financial planning and support.
- Partnerships & Engagement Team – leads communications, research, and collaboration.
- Development Team – delivers volunteering, youth, and community development programmes.
- Office & Facilities Team – ensures smooth day-to-day operations and administration.
- Projects - Projects sit within our wider team structure and contribute to our strategic priorities

VAO's delivery relies on the skills and commitment of our:

- Board, who guide governance and strategic oversight

- Staff team, who deliver services and innovate
- Partners and funders, who help shape and resource our work
- Strengthening our internal resilience is essential to delivering this plan. This includes investing in our people, systems, evidence processes, and internal communications so VAO remains adaptive, accountable, and able to support the sector effectively.

We will:

- Develop dedicated teams for volunteering, resilience, and sector support
- Streamline services to ensure responsiveness and quality
- Invest in digital infrastructure and shared tools
- Ensure support prioritises members, while encouraging wider engagement

Our Strategic Priorities

VAO will focus on four interrelated priorities:

1. Building Capacity

Strengthening the skills, sustainability, and resilience across organisations and volunteers

- Provide training, governance and funding support
- Encourage adoption of Fair Work and inclusive practice
- Promote volunteer development and wellbeing
- Explore ways to integrate environmental sustainability and Net Zero ambitions
- Support pathways into volunteering, including supported volunteering
- Strengthen VAO's own internal resilience through improved systems, communication, workforce development, and organisational learning

2. Central Source of Knowledge

Position VAO as a trusted central source of information, insight and evidence for the voluntary and community sector, and to local regional and national authorities.

- Develop and maintain the Orkney Community Directory
- Share relevant information, advice, and research to inform good practice
- Promote awareness and access to sector opportunities
- Strengthen community insight and data collection to inform decision-making

3. Connect

Enhancing collaboration and partnership across Orkney and beyond

- Coordinate partnerships and networks across public, private and voluntary and community sectors
- Strengthen the VAO membership community
- Facilitate shared learning and collective action

- Contribute to local priorities through partnership work, insight and project delivery

4. Voice

Championing the voluntary and community sector locally and nationally

- Amplify the voices of the voluntary and community sector
- Represent sector views in policy and decision-making spaces
- Share impact stories and case studies that influence policy
- Ensure Orkney's community needs shape national conversations

Our Outcomes Framework: 2026–2029

Our Outcomes Framework shows how VAO's local priorities connect with the wider work of:

- [Scottish Government's Third Sector Interface Outcome Framework \(2018\)](#)
- [Third Sector Interface \(TSI\) Network](#)
- [Volunteering for All Action Plan](#).
- [The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(LOIP\): Orkney Community Plan 2025-2030](#)

This framework is created to make it clear how our local work in Orkney contributes to Scotland's national goals for a strong, inclusive, and community-led third sector.

It helps us tell two stories at once:

1. **Our Local Story:** How VAO supports people, groups, and communities across Orkney through capacity building, volunteering, collaboration and advocacy.
2. **Our National Story:** How we contribute to Scotland's shared goals for participation, inclusion and community wellbeing.

The national TSI Network Outcomes and Indicators Framework identifies 17 short-term outcomes. VAO focuses on the 10 outcomes that best reflect our role, capacity, and local priorities. These connect directly to the 6 TSI medium-term outcomes and Scotland's National Performance outcomes, ensuring our work aligns from local delivery to national impact.

Strategic Priority	VAO Short-Term Outcomes	TSI Network Medium-Term Outcomes	National Performance Framework (National Outcomes)	LOIP (Local Strategic Priorities)
Building Capacity	1. Third sector organisations are better governed and managed.	• Third sector organisations are better able to lead and develop	• We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered,	• Cost of Living • Local Equality

	2. Third sector organisations are able to start, sustain or grow their services. 3. People in the third sector have improved skills. 4. Third sector organisations have increased resources. 5. People using TSI volunteer centre services have better volunteering experiences.	shared agendas. • Third sector organisations are better able to respond to local need. • People are more involved in their community.	resilient and safe • We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally • We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society	
Central Source of Knowledge	6. Third sector organisations have better access to information. 7. Partners have a better understanding of the sector and its impact.	• Improved cross-sector collaboration. • Third sector organisations are better able to contribute to shared agendas.	• We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe • We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination. • We are healthy and active	• Sustainable Development • Local Equality • Population Health
Connect	8. There are better relationships between public and third sector. 9. Third sector organisations better support each other and share resources.	• Improved cross-sector collaboration. • Third sector organisations are better able to contribute to shared agendas.	• We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe • We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally	• Sustainable Development • Population Health

			• We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society	
Voice	10. The third sector is better able to influence decision-making.	• Key decision-making includes third sector input. • Third sector organisations are better able to lead shared agendas.	• We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe • We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally • We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society	• Local Equality • Population Health

How We Will Use This Framework

This Outcomes Framework guides how we plan, measure, and communicate our impact. Each short-term outcome will have agreed indicators, supported by case studies and data gathered locally.

Our work is underpinned by a Theory of Change approach, which helps us understand how our activities lead to short-term outcomes and long-term impact. This ensures our delivery is:

- Person-centred
- Strengths-based
- Inclusive
- Evidence-informed

By linking local delivery to national outcomes, VAO can demonstrate how we strengthen Orkney's voluntary and community sector while contributing to Scotland's vision for empowered, fair and sustainable communities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Quarterly staff reviews aligned with our Operational Workplan
- Qualitative evidence including stories, feedback, and case studies
- Annual impact reporting

- Board-level review of strategic KPIs

Our approach focuses on learning and reflection, not always numerical targets. Strategic KPIs will be monitored by the CEO and Board, with operational teams contributing through insight and narrative reporting rather than individual KPIs.

Our Commitment to Fair Work

VAO is committed to creating a workplace where everyone is respected, supported and treated fairly. All staff are paid above the Living Wage, and we are proud to be an equal and inclusive employer.

We know that many local organisations face funding and resource challenges. That's why we actively support local groups to understand and adopt Fair Work practices, not just to meet funder expectations, but to help build a stronger, more resilient sector for the future.

Learn more about Fair Work at: www.fairworkconvention.scot

Language and Terminology

This plan uses “voluntary and community sector” to describe our stakeholders. This term is more widely understood than “third sector” and better reflects our inclusive remit. Where sector-specific terms are used, we explain them to ensure accessibility.

Conclusion

This Strategic Plan reflects VAO's shared vision and values. It provides a high-level framework for coordinated meaningful work that will:

- Support Orkney's voluntary and community organisations
- Empower individuals through inclusive volunteering
- Strengthen community resilience, wellbeing, and innovation

This plan was developed through consultation with VAO staff, board members, and wider sector stakeholders. We thank everyone who contributed their time, insight, and ideas to shape our shared direction.