



Supporting The Orkney Community

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023

[www.vaorkney.org.uk](http://www.vaorkney.org.uk)

# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



## Sheila Garson

As ever VAO has had a busy year and you will find details of both our core work as Orkney's Third Sector Interface and the work of the projects we manage, within the pages of this Annual Report.

During this financial year we have faced new challenges brought about by huge increase in energy costs and the knock-on effect of this on the cost of living. Against this backdrop VAO administered the Third Sector Cost of Living Crisis Fund, the first tranche of which saw 25 local organisations benefiting from a total of £225k, with subsequent tranches adding another £70k. We also administered Round 2 of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, which allocated £75k to projects in Orkney.

Our core work is primarily funded by the Scottish Government and Orkney Islands Council, while a variety of grant funders contribute to our projects.

We are grateful to our funders for their continued support in what is financially challenging times for us all.

The huge range of work VAO delivers during the year is only possible because of the support of our members, partners and funders as well as the commitment and hard work of the staff, volunteers and Board. As I step down from the Board at the AGM, I would like to say a big thank you to each and every one of you. It has been a real privilege to work with you all over the past years.

## VAO BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023

SHEILA GARSON.....	CHAIR
GERRY O'BRIEN.....	VICE CHAIR
JAN JUDGE.....	TREASURER
IAN CARSE.....	DIRECTOR/TRUSTEE
JANICE ANNAL.....	DIRECTOR/TRUSTEE
LINDA LENNIE.....	DIRECTOR/TRUSTEE
MALCOLM GRAVES.....	DIRECTOR/TRUSTEE

# ABOUT US

## OUR VISION

Orkney has sustainable, resilient, inclusive communities with a thriving third sector at their heart.

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our goal is to embed effective collaborative working to create preventative, joined-up pathway of support. We will develop a sustainable infrastructure for shared decision making, strengthened partnerships and networks thereby building community resilience and ensuring the sustainability of our approaches.

## OUR CORE FUNCTIONS

As a Third Sector Interface our core functions are:

- **Building Capacity:** Developing the capacity of volunteers, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprise to achieve positive change.
- **Source of Knowledge:** To be a central source of knowledge about the Third Sector locally
- **Connecting partners:** Providing leadership, vision and coordination to the local third sector, to better respond to local priorities, including through partnership and collaboration.
- **Voice of the Local Third Sector:** Ensuring a strong local third sector voice at a strategic level within local planning structures and nationally.

# DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



The Community Development Team has had a busy year supporting a wide range of third sector organisations and communities across Orkney. A key part of our work is to respond to enquiries and requests for support, whether that be help to navigate setting up a charity, advice about fundraising, training for committee members or resolving challenges that organisations are facing.

? 21 organisations advised about legal status

? 31 organisations helped with their governance

104 organisations over 200 requests

? 52 organisations were given general support:

- insurance
- safeguarding
- community events
- signposting to other third sector or statutory services

VAO were also instrumental in assisting with the Climate Action Hub's Climate Festival facilitating the start up of the Orkney Network and brokering connections between the Islands Hub and our local Third Sector.

🌐 [www.nhclimatehub.co.uk/orkney-climate-festival](http://www.nhclimatehub.co.uk/orkney-climate-festival)

As a member of the Support For Communities Framework (2022-2026) managed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, we delivered a large scale project development contract for a Community Association wanting to improve their community hall to be able to provide a shop, café, and heritage offer for those visiting their local marina. The project included devising a business plan and funding programme alongside partners who delivered architectural drawings and a wider project plan.



12 monthly Newsletters were sent to over 730 contacts

12 monthly Training & Funding Updates were sent to over 480 contacts

# FUND MANAGEMENT



## COMMUNITIES MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FUND ROUND 2

This year 12 organisations shared a total of £74,000. The highest grant awarded was £10,000 and the lowest was £608. Spread across the Orkney Islands, this fund supported arts and crafts projects, fitness groups and Mens Sheds, therapeutic and counselling work for adults and more.

## REMEMBERING TOGETHER

VAO was a key local partner alongside Orkney Islands Council in the delivery of the Scottish Government's community covid memorial project, managed on their behalf at a national level by Greenspace Scotland. We used a co-creation model to work with communities across Orkney to identify what communities want – and don't want – from a memorial. This work was undertaken by AinsleyPhilips Projects, a local art collaborative who will support communities and artists to deliver the memorials between now and June 2024.

## SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

Funds from the scheme, which is supported by Repsol Sinopec and Liam McArthur MSP, were awarded to:

- Sanday Afternoon Club
- The Peedie Retreat
- Westray Parish Kirk Youth Group
- Orkney Arts Society
- Orkney Men's Shed
- Cromarty Hall Trust
- Longhope Lifeboat Museum
- Greener Orkney
- Hoy Heritage Centre (Friends of Hoy Kirk)
- Stenness Community Association
- Sanday School Parent Council - Sanday Playgroup
- Sanday Duke of Edinburgh Open Award Group

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



## YOUTH AND PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE (YPI)

Our Youth Development team are regional facilitators for The Wood Foundation's national, Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) in Orkney. All pupils in S3 at Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy were supported to produce presentations on local charities whose work addressed social issues here in Orkney. The presentation deemed best in each school is awarded £3000 which is then handed over to their chosen charity after a school showcase event. The participants make a real difference whilst building their own confidence.

This year the group representing THAW Orkney came out on top in Kirkwall Grammar School and at Stromness Academy, the pupils supporting ORSAS proved successful.



## YOUTH AWARDS



Every year, VAO work with partners from the Youth Workers Forum to hold the Orkney Youth Awards. A total of 84 Saltire awards were made including five prestigious Summit awards.



It feels good to be rewarded for the time you've spent volunteering, as it helps you recognise that your time spent volunteering is valuable and you are making a difference. This type of recognition is very important because it raises awareness of volunteering, and can encourage more people to get involved.

Daisy Golder (17 years old)





## ROAR

The ROAR project supports young people to organise and run charity events in the community. It also provides a creative outlet for young people, with many making their first public performances at the events.

This year the group put on a big music event in the summer, featuring 6 bands and a charity auction. Thanks to generous match funding from Edrington and the Robertson Trust, this raised an incredible £7980 for local charities Orkney Rape and Sexual Assault Service (ORSAS) and Orkney Samaritans.

“ Samaritans have been in the heart of Kirkwall... for 25 years. Fundraising events help us to continue our work within the community and help us to train more volunteers who support our vital listening service.

Tricia Urquhart, Samaritans



“ ORSAS were very grateful that ROAR chose to support our small charity. The topics covered by our charitable aims are sometimes considered taboo. So, to have young people in Orkney prioritise a service that supports survivors of sexual violence and delivers prevention sessions in schools and youth settings, speaks volumes about young people's concerns and experience.

Zelda Bradley, ORSAS

## GROUP VOLUNTEERING

For the past year, a group of volunteers aged 15-18 have met after school on Thursdays to organise and run activities for the older people in Stromness. This intergenerational group is highly valued by volunteers and the Hamnavoe attendees alike, helping to reduce isolation and give a sense of remaining part of the community. Starting at the Eventide Club, and then moving onto Hamnavoe Care Home, the group have enjoyed various activities and fun with the older folks, including cards, dominoes and boccia.

“ Any intergenerational work is of great importance to our residents and they gain lots from the activities.... it is great to see how the residents respond to the youngsters...The activities provide physical interactions as well as conversation and time away from their normal daily routines.

Anna Davidson, Hamnavoe

# VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES



VAO supports volunteering by raising awareness, providing advice on volunteering good practice and supporting organisations in their recruitment process.



“When I retired, I had some free time and I wanted to continue to contribute to the community. I enjoy the variety of roles I volunteer in. People who volunteer also often say that they get as much out of volunteering as they put in, and I’ve found that to be very true. I’ve met lots of really nice and interesting people, I wouldn’t have otherwise got to know. I’ve also learnt a great deal, particularly about the environment and nature, through the work with RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and Greener Orkney.

Sandra

“Last March I had a severe stroke, it left me with limited use of my right hand and my speech was also impaired... I needed to focus on the mobility of my affected hand and arm and practice speaking as this has been affected by the stroke. I found out about volunteering through my neurotherapy worker who contacted VAO on my behalf. After meeting with Alison, their Volunteer Development worker on a video call, we talked through what I might enjoy doing. This led to me starting to work at the Clan shop in Kirkwall... sorting and pricing donations... then with Parkrun. This is something I enjoyed taking part in before my stroke, so I was familiar with the set up. Now I could help as a volunteer, checking in the runners on a Saturday morning.

“My mobility is improving, and I am getting better and more confident at speaking. The best thing about volunteering for me is getting out of the house and speaking to people. It has really helped me with my mental wellbeing and recovery. I would say to others out there wondering if it’s for them. Definitely do it.

Colin



# TECH PEER MENTOR PROJECT



Increasing digital inclusion, either through support with digital skills or through the use of technology that does not require the user to make use of any digital skills, has led to significant benefits for individuals and often their family members also.

The Tech Peer Mentor project receives funding under the Transforming Local Systems (TLS) Programme. The overall aim of the Tech Peer Mentor project is to promote awareness, understanding, and uptake of Technology Enabled Care, in Orkney. It promotes solutions in service delivery and offers peer mentoring support to organisations that are developing services incorporating digital and TEC solutions, to meet the health and social care needs of Orkney's citizens.

# COMMUNITY LINK PRACTITIONER SERVICE



The Community Link Practitioner service was established locally in 2019, and since then has expanded to cover seven GP practices. Employed by Voluntary Action Orkney, the CLPs are based within the primary care services of NHS Orkney and, work to support individuals to address their non-clinical needs. This is done through linking with appropriate services within the community, with the ultimate aim of enabling people to support themselves, so they no longer need the 'link' support provided by the Community Link Practitioner.



# CONNECT



The Connect Project is an early intervention project that offers young people aged 15-21, who face barriers to learning and engaging in the community, access to a flexible and person-centred learning/training programme, through a strength-based approach. The Connect Project works with partners in Health, Education, Social Work, Skills Development Scotland and the Voluntary Sector, prioritising wellbeing needs and life skills development.

I feel the Connect Project is a valuable and much needed resource for our islands.

Referral partner

Connect gave us a lifeline when there was nothing else they would engage with .

Family member/carer of a young person

Over the past year the Connect Project team have engaged with 24 young people through a range of activities which have included regular group sessions, remote outreach, in person one-to-one sessions, and alongside community partner delivery in shared programmes. We have seen some of our young people move onto positive destinations and all have become more involved in their community

I was nervous about coming but when I came in it just felt right... I give Connect a thumbs up

Young Person

I would not have gone to college if Connect hadn't encouraged me – I didn't think I would manage but I have.

Young Person

Connect still helped me after I left – to make sure I was ok and so I knew I could always ask them for help if I needed to

Young Person



# ADULT BEFRIENDING SERVICE

The Adult Befriending Service aims to reduce isolation and loneliness among older people living in their own homes.

## INTERGENERATIONAL GROUP BEFRIENDING

This year saw a successful partnership form between the Adult Befriending Service and Papdale Primary School. The project brought people together from different generations in purposeful activities which would promote respect and contribute to more connected communities.

The data showed that stereotypical views have definitely changed. 'Boring', 'slow', 'grey' and 'grumpy' have been replaced by 'kind', 'caring', 'cool' and 'fun'. Without a doubt this project has led to a more 'connected community'. It has now continued with a P6/7 class.



## GROUP BEFRIENDING



The Evergreen group continue to enjoy a variety of activities every Tuesday at the Life Centre. This small group of 8 people enjoy participating in fun and active games and activities, gentle exercise, crafts, quizzes, bingo and entertainment. The Games group enjoy cards, dominoes or Scrabble on Thursdays, the numbers attending ranged from 5 to 11 people depending on the time of year. Our group befriendees say they value the opportunity to meet new people and form new friendships as well as feeling less lonely and isolated.

“ I like meeting new people, having somewhere to go. It makes me feel less lonely.

Group participant ”

“ I like the camaraderie, games, activities, companionship, tea and biscuits.

Group participant ”

## ONE TO ONE BEFRIENDING

An ever-increasing waiting list for our free service led to a plea for volunteers and eight new volunteers came forward in January to train with us. We have since been able to match them with people referred to us from a variety of services. We have made and supported 28 one to one matches in the last year.

14 of our befriendees returned their end of year evaluation. 11 of them gave the befriending experience 5 out of 5. As well as helping them feel less lonely and isolated our befriendees say their befrienders help them feel better about themselves and increase their self-confidence. I'm very content with the befriending.

“ I wish I saw more folk like him.

Befriender

“ Lots to talk about. Don't know what I would do without her.

Befriender

“ I would simply say to any person considering befriending that it is one of the most rewarding things you could ever do. There's a sense of closeness and trust that is completely unique to befriending, and each new conversation is so thought provoking and opens up a whole different perspective on life. I would heartily and unreservedly recommend befriending to anyone who might be interested in it.”

Befriender

## THE LUNCH CLUB INNOVATION GRANT

In April 2022, Voluntary Action Orkney with support from the National Lottery's Community Fund, launched The Lunch Club Innovation Grant. Lunch groups in Orkney applied for short term funding of up to £1000 to fund their projects under two key themes, Intergeneration and Community & Strengthening skills. Thirteen lunch groups, 5 of which served ferry-linked island communities, used their funding to deliver activities focused on reducing isolation and loneliness, subsidising food, providing warm spaces, and the cost-of-living crisis.

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S BEFRIENDING PROJECT



The Young People's Befriending Project offered one to one befriending support to 12 young people this year, through the tailored support of our team of volunteer Befrienders. The young people's ages ranged from 9-16.

Our Befrienders give their time to our young people, working to grow their self-esteem and confidence, increase their resilience and coping skills, build a steady and reliable friendship with them, and help them to engage in new skills and hobbies.

In our project reviews, all of young people told us that their Befriender was 'someone they could trust' and was someone who 'made them feel important and worth listening to'. They all also told us that their confidence and general feelings of happiness had increased because of their befriender.

“ Having a Befriender has helped me meet new people, try new things and has grown my confidence.”  
Befriender

“ He is a very calming influence, always smiling, very engaging and he has built a very strong relationship with my son, who always looks forward to his time with him.”  
Parent of a Befriender

“ Befriending has been great – not only has it made a difference to the young person, but I also feel it has impacted my life greatly and built up my confidence.”  
Volunteer Befriender

## Case Study

Martha and 11-year-old Rosa were matched this year. Rosa has quite a complex disability so she needed a special Befriender to support and enable her to safely join in with activities. Martha is a volunteer with a sibling who has a similar disability so she had a wealth of experience. They hit it off from their first meeting and have built a mutually beneficial relationship together. They take part in various activities within the community from soft play to pottery, from board games to coffee dates. Martha really enjoys her time with Rosa and knows that she is making a difference to her life, and Rosa sings Martha's praises. She has already reported a rise in confidence and self-esteem since her match began only a few months ago.



# ISLAND WELLBEING PROJECT

The Island Wellbeing Project is a partnership between VAO, Island Development Trusts, OHAC & HIE and has been in place since 2019. It is currently funded by Esmée Fairbairn and The Tudor Trust.



**Outcome 1:** Local people exert more influence over the decisions that affect their lives and their communities.



**Outcome 2:** There is an increase in the number of preventative community-led wellbeing initiatives residents in Orkney's ferry-linked isles access.



**Outcome 3:** Partnerships between community, voluntary, public, private and cultural organisations are strengthened within and across the isles.

Over the last 12 months, the project has reached an increased number of residents both through community-led group initiatives and one-to-one support to those experiencing a range of challenges.

Our Community Wellbeing Coordinators helped:



Rousay and Egilsay to find funding for a 'seated Yoga' class instructor and to set up regular sessions for residents with mobility issues.



Shapinsay to establish 'Play Piece' a group for 12 year olds during the school holidays.



Sanday to set up a Nutrition Course, re-established their regular Health Walks and working with the local school and the Men's Shed, purchase and install outdoor gym equipment.



In Hoy after training a chair-based exercise instructor a class which is socially prescribed by the GP was established.



In Stronsay isles residents were trained to become aqua aerobics instructors, funding for additional equipment was secured and a group set up.

# ISLAND SELF MANAGEMENT GROUP



The Island Self-Management Group (ISMG) is a cross-island, virtual self-management group for people with long term physical health conditions. The funding for this project was provided by the Self-Management Fund for Scotland administered on behalf of the Scottish Government by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE).

The group ran regular weekly sessions from December 2022 with average attendance of around 3 people over 8 sessions. Monthly speaker presentations recommenced from January 2023 with Diabetes Scotland and Footsteps Festival Create taking part.

We regularly issued information and links to potential support resources (e.g. NHS sleep apps, Cost of Living information, Patient Advice and Support Service, Skills for Work, Home Repair assistance, etc) and welcomed feedback on activity and speaker planning.

## FINANCE

The charity had total incoming resources of £821,396 for the year compared to incoming resources of £1,488,019 reported in the previous year. Unrestricted funds at the balance sheet date stood at £277,934, including £48,918 of designated funds, while restricted funds totaled £522,641.

The Board are committed to build an adequate reserves account to allow for organisational contingencies and to demonstrate good financial management and has implemented a reserves policy





# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



## Morven Brooks

At the time of writing this report, I have had the utmost pleasure to have been with Voluntary Action Orkney for 8 months. Since my appointment I have come to realise the extent of outreach VAO has with all communities across Orkney and the ferry linked Isles. I am in admiration and awe of the commitment that our employees, trustees and volunteers offer to ensure our communities are safe and the wellbeing of our most vulnerable are at the heart of their dedication.

I would like to express my thanks to Gail Anderson previous Chief Executive, for all that she did for VAO and I just hope I can continue on building on those foundations for VAO.

I would also like to pass on my sincerest thanks to Sheila Garson, Chair who will be stepping down at this AGM. Her years of service and support to VAO is greatly appreciated and she will certainly be missed by all, but I am sure won't be a stranger.

## OUR FUNDERS

- Scottish Government
- Orkney Islands Council
- Youth Philanthropy Initiative (The Wood Foundation)
- British Science Week
- Hugh Fraser Foundation
- Mollie Lind
- Co-op
- Children in Need
- The Robertson Trust
- The Rotary Club
- Peoples Postcode Lottery
- Christina Mary Hendrie Trust
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Souter Charitable Trust
- NHS Orkney
- Tudor Trust
- Esmee Fairbairn
- Health and Social Care Alliance
- Inspiring Scotland
- Repsol-Sinopec
- Liam MacArthur MSP



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