

REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2024



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A WORD FROM THE CHAIR



I have pleasure in introducing the first annual report on the work of Borders Community Action (The Scottish Borders Third Sector Interface).

Borders Community Action was formed on 1 April 2023 and brought together The Bridge, Berwickshire Association of Voluntary Service and Volunteer Centre Borders together into a single organisation. This followed an intensive review on the work of the TSI with Scottish Borders and recommendations that the Third Sector would be better served if the three organisations amalgamated into a new single body. The Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber, a historical partner in the Borders Third Sector Interface had already opted out of this process. The Board recognised the important role of the legacy partners in the Borders Third Sector Interface as well as Beverly Francis, Karen Moore and Duncan Dunlop, for their support during the transition period.

Progress in the first 12 months has been extensive. New governance structures have been put in place, staff have successfully been transferred from the legacy organisations into the new body and a staffing structure fit for the future has been agreed and is currently being implemented.

A Borders Community Action strategic plan has been agreed and is beginning to be implemented and good partnership working is emerging both with the range of Third Sector organisations throughout Scottish Borders and with our key partners Scottish Borders Council, Borders Health Board, Scottish Government and South of Scotland Enterprise.

During the first year, we have consolidated our budget position and are grateful for the support from our funders, particularly the Scottish Government and Scottish Borders Council.

As well as consolidating our service to our membership we have hosted a range of new initiatives resulting in over £100,000 of new money being distributed to local community groups and organisations.

My grateful thanks to the Borders Community Action CEO and her team of committed staff who have worked tirelessly to make sure this first transition year was successful and thanks also to my fellow directors who have committed time and energy to supporting BCA in this initial year.

Colin Easton
Chair of the Board of Trustees

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



It is with great pride and a sense of accomplishment that we celebrate our first anniversary. This past year has been a remarkable journey for Borders Community Action,

filled with transformation, growth, and exciting milestones.

As we created a new offer for the third sector in the Borders, a greater understanding of needs and flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing and evolving landscape was a fundamental element of developing our new plan. We embraced new ways of working. We adopted innovative tools and practices that have enabled us to work smarter and more efficiently. Our teams have demonstrated tremendous adaptability, ensuring we remain productive and effective in delivering our mission.

A crucial component of our success has been the formation of a dynamic and cohesive team, consolidating a single port of call for the third sector across the Borders and fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity.

Our team embraced new approaches and came together in their shared dedication to achieving positive outcomes for the third sector in our region.

The first year was also an opportunity to build new and consolidate key partnerships, combining strengths with key third sector organisations and statutory partners. This alignment is now evidenced in our new strategic plan, setting the foundations of our work and commitment to shared agendas.

Our new strategic plan, developed with input from our members and partners, sets the course for our future. It outlines our vision, mission, and objectives for the coming years, focusing on community impact. This plan will guide our efforts and ensure we remain aligned with our core values.

We secured significant investment to support our sector, a remarkable achievement for the first year of any organisation.

The steady increase in our membership in year one reflects the trust and confidence that our community has in our organisation and we return the trust placed on us, with our commitment to serving our members with excellence and ensuring that their needs are met.

As we look to the future, we are filled with optimism and excitement. The foundation we have built this year sets the stage for allegiance to the third sector in the Borders and our obligation to uphold the highest standards of integrity, continual improvement and service to our community.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to our supportive Board of Trustees, our dedicated team, our valued partners and our loyal members. Without your support, none of this would have been possible. Together, we will continue to promote and develop a vibrant third sector.

Juliana Amaral
Chief Executive Officer

OUR KEY PRIORITIES

Borders Action is proud to be the Third Sector Interface (TSI) for the Scottish Borders. A one-stop point for the third sector, working with charities, community groups, development trusts, social enterprises and the volunteering sector.

Our vision is to create thriving, resilient and inclusive communities and our mission is to empower the third sector in the Scottish Borders to create positive change in communities by providing leadership, sharing knowledge and promoting collaboration. Borders Community Action has 4 key priorities of work, they are:

► PRIORITY 1

Support and develop volunteers, Third Sector Organisations and social enterprises via a responsive range of services, including training, information, advice and access to resources.

► PRIORITY 2

Be a catalyst for community empowerment enabling a culture of collaboration that maximises the influence and impact of the third sector on communities.

► PRIORITY 3

Amplify the voice of volunteers and third sector organisations representing their collective needs locally, regionally and nationally.

► PRIORITY 4

Be an exemplar third sector organisation with its members at its heart.



OUR VALUES AND CHARITABLE POLICY

In order to carry out our mission and meet our ambitious aims, we have adopted the following values to help shape our culture and guide our actions:

- **Bold** - We will be Bold in how we represent the third sector and the communities we serve.
- **Trust** - We will always be open and honest with you.
- **Wise** - We will share our knowledge and nurture the knowledge and skills in others.
- **Inclusive** - We will embrace diversity in our communities and use its strength to create positive change.



The objectives of the charity are as follows:

- a. To advance citizenship and community development by assisting voluntary, charitable, social enterprise and community organisations (collectively referred to as the Third Sector) and volunteers to thrive and develop. This will include working with public sector agencies and operating appropriate projects to deliver services in the local authority area to assist people and communities who are in need to improve the physical, cultural, social and economic infrastructure principally in the Borders (“the Operating Area”).
- b. To relieve poverty primarily among the residents of the Operating Area.
- c. To advance education primarily within the Operating Area through the provision of appropriate training to Third Sector organisations, volunteer involving organisations, public sector bodies,

volunteers, potential volunteers and local citizens.

- d. To advance community development and regeneration primarily within the Operating Area and particularly (but without limitation) through: assisting in the planning of changes to the housing and physical environment as part of a wider strategy for relief of the problems of poverty within the Operating Area; the promotion of trade and industry, for the benefit of the general public.
- e. To advance health (including the provision of health education) and to assist in the relief of ill health primarily among the residents of the Operating Area.
- f. To promote, operate, establish and/or support other similar projects, programmes and/or schemes with further charitable purposes, particularly for the benefit of residents of the Operating Area.

FIRST YEARS JOURNEY

Borders Community Action, established on April 1, 2023, serves as the Third Sector Interface (TSI) for the Scottish Borders region. Our primary objective is to foster the growth and vitality of the local third sector. In June 2023, a fresh strategic blueprint was formulated, followed by a consultation period from July to December 2023 involving strategic partners and member organisations within the third sector. A comprehensive 3-year strategy was refined based on the feedback gathered during the consultation phase.

During year one, despite the development of a draft strategy and the establishment of the new organisation, the core activities started to be delivered. Key strategic partnerships and third sector representation started to be formed. Examples of this work include national networks such as TSI Scotland Network, ESES City Region Deal, regionally via the South of Scotland Regional Economic partnership and in the Scottish Borders via the Community Planning Partnership, Integration Joint Board, Community Planning Partnership, the Local

Employability Partnership and the Community Learning Partnership.

The organisation went through restructuring, team development and delivery model and in December 2023, the team moved to the new office space at Drygrange. This allowed the team to work together and deliver the core functions of the organisation while testing new models and ways of working, such as our place-based approach using community venues across towns in all of the 5 localities in the Borders to deliver our services.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

CAPACITY BUILDING, VOICE REPRESENTATION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Support was provided to 227 organisations of which, 7 were completely new and 3 were social enterprises.

New place-based approach in communities, this resulted in 19 opportunities for interaction with BCA team in communities across all 5 localities in the Borders.

New training programme was launched with 10 sessions delivered to 97 participants.

The community-led planning project started to work across Berwickshire and Cheviot communities with a focus on building community capacity. As part of this work, 13 communities engaged in this process, resources were produced for knowledge and information sharing and networks were created to facilitate learning exchange. Across the pilot area, 83 community activists have been engaged in this process.

Adopted the ABCD (Asset Base Community Development) approach, a stronger focus was placed on the importance of village halls as community spaces. With almost 1 in every community, village halls are a strong resource available in the Scottish Borders. The organisation consolidated the work with the 4 Federations of Village Halls and developed new working plans to support these assets to continue to be the hub of their communities.

First Third Sector Forum and introduction to networks aimed to bring third sector organisations together to learn and share experiences, a total of 10 network sessions were facilitated reaching a total of 119 people.

Creation of the third sector leaders' network also started with 2 sessions delivered to 19 attendees. In building a stronger connection and

voice of the third sector, the first forum brought together organisations and statutory partners to discuss joint work and align priorities under the theme of "Keeping People Well in the Scottish Borders".

New Volunteering Action Plan based on feedback obtained via the strategy engagement and consultation process. Volunteering fairs were delivered and the Saltire Awards programme was re-established. As a result, 52 volunteers were registered with 18 successfully matched, 21 New Volunteering opportunities from registered TSOs – 14 existing opportunities updated. A new, dedicated section on the website was also created.

The Corporate volunteering plan started to take shape with the team engaging with organisations such as South of Scotland Enterprise and Scottish Borders Council. The

team also engaged with 1 contractor as part of their community benefit offer and will focus the work on targeting more businesses to sign up for corporate volunteering.

Borders Community Action also developed its internal structure and systems in order to improve efficiency and to better engage with members. Our CRM system was implemented, and a dedicated communications post was created to develop a strong communication channel across the sector.

New systems for engagement and consultation that are integrated with the current platforms used mean the connection with our sector is stronger and that the voices of the sector are truly represented. This enabled Borders Community Action to develop a more coordinated approach, resulting in key achievements for the third sector such as efficient fund distribution and joint approaches to develop investment bases, as was the case for the Warm Spaces fund.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

£50K in Cost of Living – Energy Support fund

£40K Warm Spaces fund, supporting communities to keep people well during the cold winter months

£30K personalised financial support to build the capacity of town teams as they developed their place plans, this piece of work continues until August 2024.

Finally, in terms of governance, strong policies have been implemented, transparent processes for accountability including auditing and a strong financial plan and process have been adopted.

The Board of Trustees continued recruitment with new members joining the Board based on their skills, knowledge, and expertise which resulted in a more diverse representation of the communities and needs of the Borders.



FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESERVES POLICY

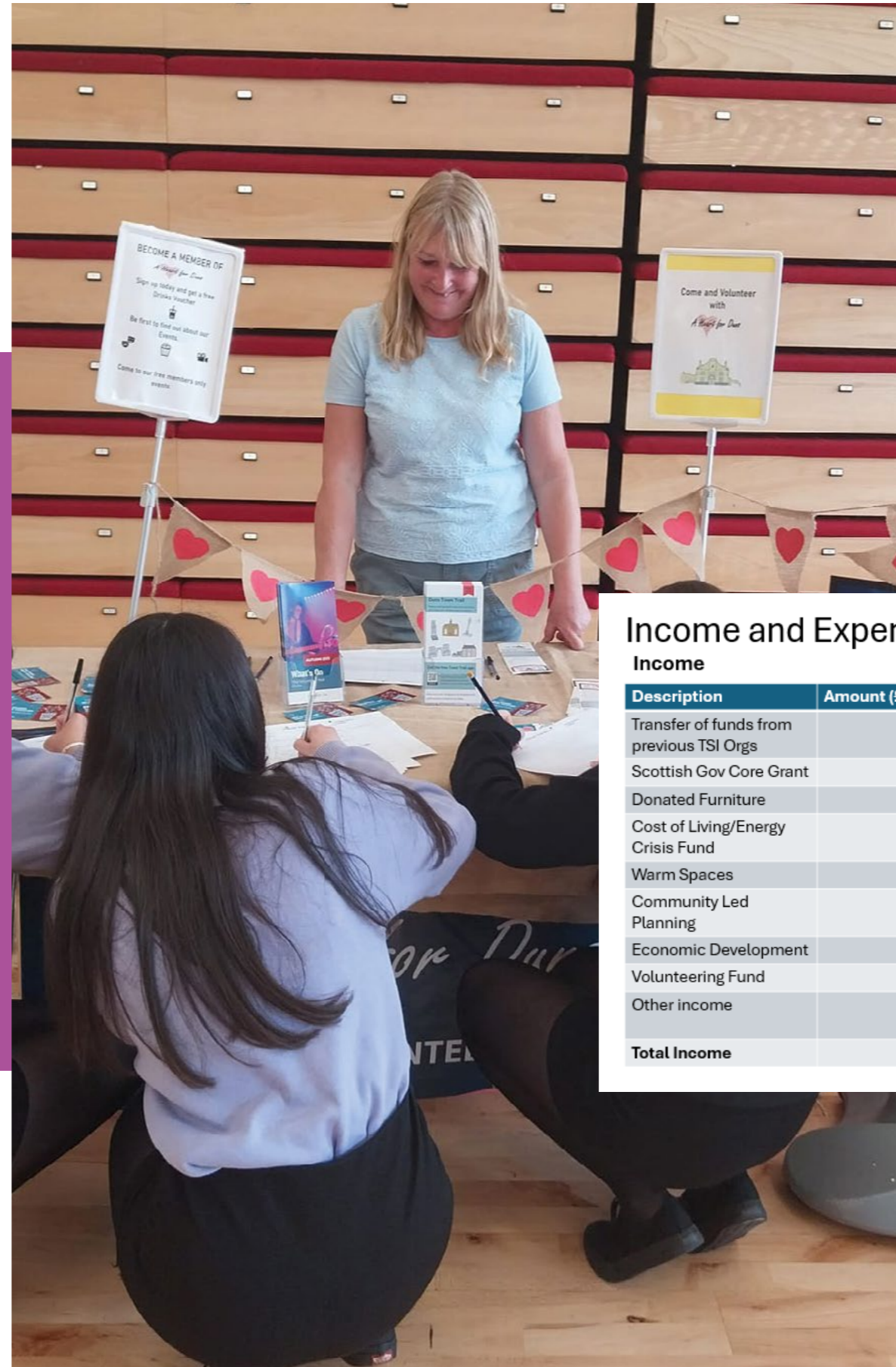
The organisation was incorporated in Feb 2023 but began operating on 1 April 2023 and so the financial results reflect one year. The charity had income in the year of £756,992 which included £130,621 of funds transferred from the previous operators of the Third Sector Interface. The Scottish Government Core Grant of £320,320 continued at the same level as it has supported this work in the previous years but we now have that grant and the activities that it supports in this new organisation.

We also benefited from some donated furniture for our office

which we have valued at £4500 for the purpose of the gift. In restricted fund grants are £290,645 of grants split between the various projects listed. Of these, the Development Grant was received at the tail end of the year and carries forward to be spent in 2024/2025.

Other income of £10,906 includes income derived from member services, income generation and bank interest.

Expenditure totalled £498,860 in the year as detailed in the full annual accounts and income x expenditure table.



Over half of our expenses related to direct staff expenditure (£260k). We engaged consultants during the transition into the new organisation and where appropriate for direct project work which covered a further £60k of expenses.

Grants which were paid out directly from our projects such as warm spaces and the energy fund/cost of living grants accounted for £103k of expenses. The remaining £71k of expenses related to the organisation costs such as rent, rates, insurance, IT, accountancy and audit as listed in the full annual report.

Income and Expenditure

Income

Description	Amount (£)
Transfer of funds from previous TSI Orgs	£130,621
Scottish Gov Core Grant	£320,320
Donated Furniture	£4,500
Cost of Living/Energy Crisis Fund	£86,000
Warm Spaces	£40,000
Community Led Planning	£83,600
Economic Development	£50,000
Volunteering Fund	£31,045
Other income	£10,906
Total Income	£756,992

Expenditure

Description	Amount (£)
Staff costs	£260,954
Consultancy/Contracts	£60,773
Direct Project Expenses	£2,327
Office costs (Rent etc)	£17,906
Advertising/Marketing	£5,168
Computer and Phone	£21,441
Travel	£4,719
Audit/Accountancy	£17,400
Board costs	£264
Depreciation	£3,016
Other expenses	£1,612
Direct grants paid out	£103,280
Total Expenditure	£498,860

RESERVES POLICY

At the year end the charity held £156,552 of unrestricted reserves and £101,580 of restricted reserves (the restricted reserves are held for various purposes noted in note 10 to the annual accounts).

Unrestricted reserves of £156,552 equates to around 5 months of expenditure (excluding grants paid out). The charity trustees consider that holding at least 6 months of core expenditure in reserves would be reasonable and so we look to build reserves to that level ideally in the upcoming year.





PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

As we move into our second year, Borders Community Action will be focusing on building on the strong foundation laid during our inaugural year. Our focus is on consolidating our achievements, implementing our strategic plan, and launching two new key initiatives that align with our mission to support the community: our third sector employability project and a stronger support offer to Village Halls.

We will be launching our new Volunteering Action Plan and will be committed to delivering identified outcomes as part of our strategy. The new third sector employability project will be focused on creating opportunities for individuals seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce, building on volunteering as a pathway to employment particularly within the third sector. It aligns with our mission to support community development and provides a pathway for personal and professional growth while championing the third sector as a key player and community wealth building and economic development.

We also recognize the vital role village halls play in community cohesion and engagement. As part of our future plans, we will offer

support to village halls to help them become more efficient. This support may include training, resource-sharing, and best practices to ensure these important community hubs continue to thrive.

Finally, our work in promoting and playing a key role in the fair funding agenda attracts investment to the third sector and ensures that funding streams remain local and meet the needs of volunteers and third sector organisations, meaning communities and citizens' needs are more effectively met. An example of this is our national work with partners across third sector interfaces and SCVO in the development of the fair funding charter. At the local level, we continue to uphold the fair funding principles while playing an active role in strategically securing investment, such as the Place-based investment and Levelling UP fund, as well as bringing the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund to the Borders in 2024.

The future holds great promise, and we are excited about the journey ahead. Our focus on consolidating our strategic plan, delivering on our agreed priorities and launching new projects that benefit the community, emphasises our commitment to making a meaningful impact.

With thanks to our partners and funders:



Funded by
UK Government



Borders Third Sector Interface Ltd, trading as Borders Community Action.

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