

# UNITING FOR A CIRCULAR SCOTLAND



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**CIRCULAR  
COMMUNITIES**  
SCOTLAND

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# WELCOME

## Foreword from Circular Communities Scotland CEO Michael Cook, supported by Chair of the Board Naomi Johnson.

Circular Communities Scotland has long had a focus on unity – whether bringing our membership organisations together, supporting our communities to share or encouraging the development of partnerships that help meet our circular economy goals, we want to see an ecosystem that makes better use of resources for us all.

In our focus on 'Uniting for a Circular Scotland' we want to continue to build on our work to support both people and planet. We want to protect our environment and help our people and communities to thrive.

In this Impact Report, you'll read stories about the public, private and third sectors working together, money making enterprises collaborating with the arts, and diverse groups mixing with a common goal for greater reuse, repair, and recycling.

You'll be inspired by the work of our members, who continue to provide innovative, engaging environmental projects under increasing pressure of the cost of living, cost of running and housing crises.

We believe that there is the will, from all sides, to make a more circular economy in Scotland, and strongly urge our policy makers to look beyond short-term disagreements and find the courage to join forces to bring real environmental and social justice to our planet and communities.

Together, we can unite for a circular Scotland.



Michael Cook  
Chief Executive Officer



Naomi Johnson  
Chair of the Board



Lorna Slater  
Minister for Green Skills  
Circular Economy and Biodiversity

## Statement from Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, Ms. Lorna Slater MSP.

I congratulate the Circular Communities Scotland network on another year of delivering positive social and environmental benefits for communities across our country.

The work of Circular Communities Scotland and its members could not be more important given the challenging financial situation that so many households face. It is great to see the work you continue to deliver through your reuse and repair projects, whether it involves furniture, tools and bikes or other items.

You've identified collaboration as an important aspect of your activity this year and I firmly believe in the importance of everyone working together if we are to make progress on the circular economy.

Collaboration is a theme that the Scottish Government has also picked up - both in the Circular Economy Bill, introduced into Parliament in June, and in the Circular Economy & Waste route map, which will be finalised in the first half of 2024.

I thank you for your contribution to the consultations on these documents - it's important that your voice is heard alongside others as we seek to deliver a truly circular economy in Scotland.

# INTRODUCTION

## About Our Work

Circular Communities Scotland's vision is for a thriving circular economy, with local communities benefitting from the social, environmental, and economic impacts.

We support and represent over 250 repair, reuse and recycling charities and social enterprises across Scotland, who prevent materials from entering landfill, create local jobs and economic opportunities, and help promote and create social and environmental justice in their communities.

## About Our 2023 Impact Report

Our 2023 Impact Report 'Uniting for a Circular Scotland' encourages unification across all political, social and economic divides to advocate for a more circular economy in Scotland.

As the climate crisis deepens and the cost of living continues to rise, it's more important than ever that we come together to make meaningful and impactful change.

Our Impact Report celebrates amazing examples of partnership working that show the strength and power that comes with cooperating for a greater cause, and showcases our members' incredible work in Scotland's circular third sector.

Take a look through our report for a snapshot of the circular third sector in Scotland this year; explore partnership working across different sectors discovering how they are enriching our communities and tackling some of our society's most pressing issues.



# OUR MEMBERS AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN SCOTLAND

We are pleased to present our findings from our 2023 membership survey.

Every year, we ask our membership key questions about their operations and their first-hand experience tackling climate change and supporting their communities.

The results give a picture of their impact, the tonnes of carbon they've saved, their contributions to the economy, the creation of green jobs, and the crucial environmental and social benefit they bring to our communities.

## Our Member's Expertise



## Supporting People and Place

We now support over 250 circular charities and social enterprises in Scotland. This represents a 7.7% increase in membership from last year's Impact Report.

We can see a strong increase in staffing and volunteer levels across our members' organisations, of 35% and 34% respectively. This might suggest a continued post-pandemic bounce-back across our sector as members are able to re-invest in their people.

## Protecting the Planet

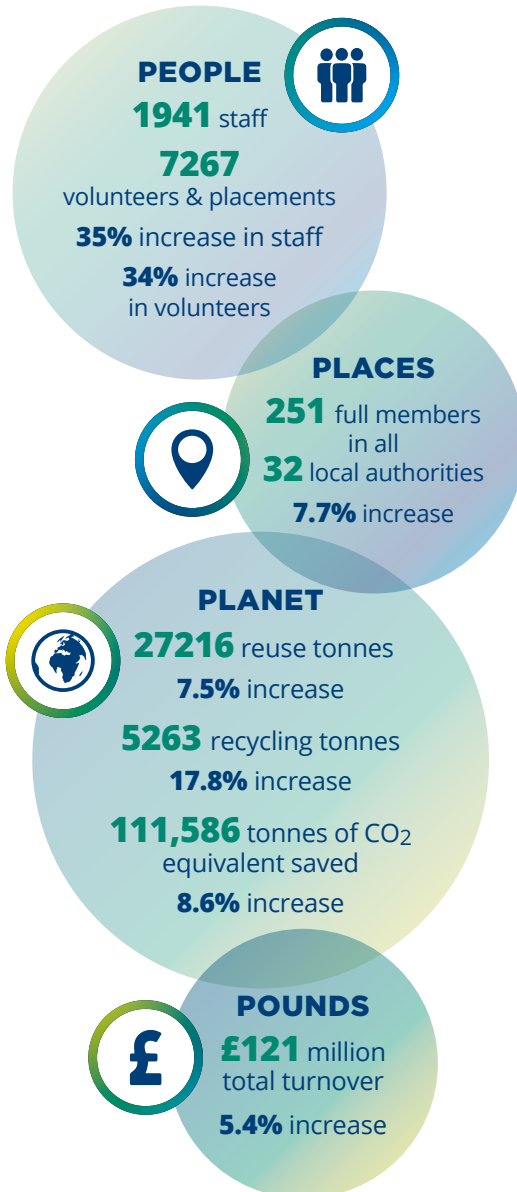
It's encouraging to see a 7.5% increase in reuse tonnage and a 17.8% increase in recycling tonnage, suggesting that reuse and recycling activities are still the core work for many of our members. The estimate of an 8.6% increase in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved mirrors the equivalent increase in reuse and recycling tonnage figures.

Awareness of the impacts of our members work on CO<sub>2</sub> savings and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, at an individual, community and society level is crucial. We are currently undertaking a carbon literacy project with some of our membership which we look forward to developing in 2024.

## Increasing Pounds

A 5.4% increase in member turnover is encouraging to see and reflects the wide range of projects and services our members are continuing to deliver. This is tempered by the ongoing cost of living crisis. Funding and sustainable finance continues to be the most significant challenge our members tell us they face.

## Our Member's Impact



# OUR MEMBERS CHALLENGES AND THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The cost-of-living crisis and increasing running costs continue to impact our members and their communities across the country. We asked how these issues were affecting them and what challenges they face.

**77%**

of members (who responded) said that despite the cost-of-living crisis they were confident that they would be able to deliver their projects and services effectively over the next 12 months. This is a 7% increase from last year.

“

Our electricity bill has gone up to over £600 per month. This is a staff cost essentially. Everything costs more (materials, energy, people's time) but we do not charge more so we are struggling to find ways to stretch budgets and keep resources as rich as they were previously.

“

We are facing similar issues to the rest of the sector with regards to pressure on resources and a challenging fundraising landscape. While some funds are available to support environmentally friendly initiatives, few include activities such as ours which focus on diverting goods from landfill by encouraging people to reuse/repair/recycle unwanted goods and donating them to us to help others.

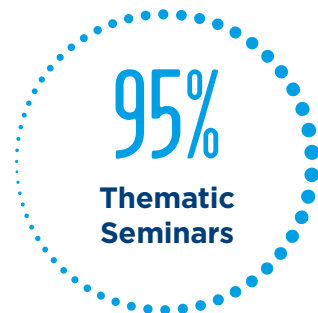
“

We are focusing on building our reserves but this is taking quite a lot of time. We can't keep up with customer demand but can't afford to hire more mechanics. We want to improve staff wages but will struggle to do so, the bikes are expensive to repair, often costing more for us to sell than we make.

# OUR MEMBERS REVIEW OUR SUPPORT

## Events

Rated Excellent or Good



## Communications

Rated Excellent or Good



We asked our members what they value most about Circular Communities Scotland membership.

“

The staff are so approachable and welcome questions and feedback at any time. There are always opportunities to learn or share knowledge at their events and you feel part of a professional, but friendly organisation. We don't feel so isolated. The events are always well organised, and I feel more knowledgeable and confident after attending.

“

Being a member of Circular Communities Scotland is like a badge of honour. It gives us more clout conversationally with various individuals and organisational bodies.

“

Our membership helps us to stay up to date with other organisations on the mainland. This can help us to think of ways we can incorporate new and exciting ideas and projects into our charity that fit within our ethos of employ, reuse, recycle.

# OUR MEMBERS UP CLOSE

Discover 4 Circular Communities Scotland members, and their incredible work providing meaningful social outcomes for their communities...



**GLASGOW  
WOOD**



# COLLABORATION TO EMBRACE THE POWER OF DIY

## Southside Tool Library's Power Tool Workshops were a collaboration between South Seed's Southside Tool Library and local artists co-op ARC Independent.

Do you know how to use a power saw or drill for your DIY projects at home?

Power tool operation is an intimidating task for the uninitiated, and marginalised groups face increased barriers to receive proper training and access quality equipment.

Southside Tool Library, based in Glasgow, recently collaborated with local artist co-op ARC Independent to make sure its harder to reach community members had the option to learn how to use power tools in a series of popular workshops.

Southside Tool Library, a project of community-led charity South Seeds, is an example of the circular economy on one of Glasgow's busy high streets. The successful tool library offers affordable lending of an array of tools, as well as upskilling opportunities and events. Southside Tool Library's neighbour, Arc Independent, is an artist's co-op with nearby workshops and highly skilled artists, who were keen to help empower people who faced skills barriers to tackling their own DIY projects.

Hosted at ARC, the workshops increased participants' confidence to renovate, create and repair using DIY tools. With 60 attendees, workshop members came from a wide variety of backgrounds, including members of **Amina**, The Muslim Women's Resource Centre, the **Hidden Gardens Men's Group**, as well as other local community groups.

Practising DIY at home can save time, money, and provide meaningful creative outlets, whilst borrowing items instead of buying them new saves waste, is environmentally friendly, and is also cheaper than investing in new equipment.



It means so much to us to be able to support the harder to reach groups in our community, and to do so in collaboration with this inspiring local artists co-op. Reuse, repair skills, tool borrowing... all these things should be accessible to everyone. There's so much social and environmental benefit. People learn a new skill, and in the cost-of-living crisis can save money by borrowing tools and doing their DIY projects themselves. We know people came away feeling more informed, and we're pleased to offer them the opportunity to borrow some tools in the future!

**Jo Hartga**

Tool Library Officer  
Southside Tool Library

# COLLABORATION TO SALVAGE AND SHARE BIKES

**Cycle Hub is a collaboration between Circular Communities Scotland members Stella's Voice, Angus Cycle Hub, Gordon Rural Action 'The Bikery' and funders Nestrans and Smarter Choices, Smarter Places.**

The Cycle Hub 'CycleHub.org' initiative revolves around saving discarded bicycles from landfill and giving them, and the communities they're donated to, a new lease on life.

Serving Aberdeen city and shire, the bike reuse project operates as a network of local partners collectively known as Cycle Hub, made up of Circular Communities Scotland members Stella's Voice, Angus Cycle Hub and Gordon Rural Action's 'The Bikery'.

Cycle Hub's mission is simple and profound - to refurbish donated bikes and offer them for resale or for free, making bikes accessible to local community members who need them most.

Each organisation brings its own skills and resources whilst servicing different areas of Aberdeenshire. Collectively, the hub partners have expertise in community engagement, education and support, bike servicing, recycling, repair, upskilling, hire and sales, humanitarian and human rights advocacy, poverty alleviation and sustainable travel, all while bringing social and environmental benefits to their local communities through improved access to bikes.

Communities across the country are struggling under the cost-of-living crisis. Refurbished bikes are provided to those who may not have the resources to acquire and maintain their own bicycle. Helmets and locks are provided too.

Cycle Hub believes that all children and families should have access to bikes for their health, wellbeing, freedom, quality of life, and of course, for fun.

Approximately 12,000 bikes in Aberdeenshire end up in landfill a year. Cycle Hub is making meaningful inroads into tackling this issue.



Our aim isn't just to salvage bikes from landfill, it's to support bike maintenance, to upskill people to use and care for their bikes, and to improve lives at the same time. The collaboration between the Cycle Hub organisations is what makes this project so special. Everyone knows something you don't, there's so many opportunities to learn from one another, we can offer each other storage, expertise, problem solving. It's a win-win for us, our customers, and our clients.

**Mark Morgan**  
European Director  
Stella's Voice



# COLLABORATION TO MAKE HOUSES INTO HOMES

## **Four Square's Edinburgh Furniture Initiative works in collaboration with Housing Association LINK to provide fully furnished accommodation for people and families experiencing homelessness.**

As homelessness in Scotland continues to grow under the cost of living and housing crises, Four Square's Edinburgh Furniture Initiative and LINK Housing's services are proving more valuable, and vital, than ever.

Four Square, an Edinburgh based charity, supports people who are, or who are at risk of becoming homeless. It's subsidiary, Edinburgh Furniture Initiative, is a circular social enterprise that sells affordable, quality used furniture and white goods.

Edinburgh Furniture Initiative helps fund Four Squares services, which include: accommodation for homeless young people and victims of domestic violence, advice for those looking to access benefits and housing, support for those recovering from trauma and living in unsuitable accommodation, and learning and employability services.

LINK Housing Association is one of the largest social landlords in Scotland, providing quality housing management services to over 10,000 tenants in social rented accommodation.

Brought together through the Circular Communities Scotland Reuse Consortium, the Edinburgh Furniture Initiative and LINK work collectively to provide welcoming, well-furnished homes for people and families experiencing homelessness.

For The Edinburgh Furniture Initiative, this means saving furniture from landfill, and providing quality furniture to those who need it most. From April 2022 - March 2023, 500 tonnes of furniture and waste was diverted from landfill due to its operations, equal to 29,003 items saved.

For LINK, buying from Edinburgh Furniture Initiative to furnish its properties means tenants receive unique pieces of furniture that are theirs to enjoy. It also means making less environmental impact through procurement, and saving money, as pre-loved furniture is better value than new.



We work diligently to ensure the tenants at LINK have a comfortable home to move into. It's really an ideal partnership. They provide safe, secure social housing, and we help them turn that housing into homes. We're hoping to work more with them in the future for Private Sector Lease tenants too. Together, the more homes we furnish, the more furniture is saved from landfill, the more people we help. It just makes sense for us both.

**Jane Devine**

Chief Executive Office  
Four Square

# COLLABORATION TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE SANCTUARY

**GLASGOW  
WOOD**

**Gro Garden is a collaborative project with Circular Communities Scotland member Glasgow Wood steered by environmental design studio erz, with artist led group Art Pistol Projects and The Conservation Volunteers.**

Gro Garden is a sustainable, biodiverse art and wellbeing greenspace located at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow.

The project is a thoughtful collaboration with Circular Communities Scotland member Glasgow Wood, led by award winning landscape architecture studio erz. With the creative addition of artist led group Art Pistol Projects and help from The Conservation Volunteers, the garden has been designed by erz to offer a peaceful and welcoming oasis for staff, patients and visitors to find sanctuary from the bustling learning hospital

Charity and social enterprise Glasgow Wood is known for its, stylish stripped back items made from salvaged, quality timber that is saved from landfill, reused and rehoused at its riverside workshop. The team built the sustainable timber modules and outdoor furniture which was designed by erz, lending their circular credentials to the sustainable space.

The team's collaboration with the architecture studio dates back to 2008 when the two organisations designed and built the first modular community garden in Possil, Glasgow – **'The Concrete Garden'**. Glasgow Wood strives to support its local community and supporting the creation of communal greenspaces, fitting with their mission to help create a healthy, sustainable population and planet.

Gro Garden boasts the creation of wildlife to flourish within the wildflower meadows, planted by The Conservation Volunteers. A large mural plus the curation of approximately 10 artworks was completed by Art Pistol Projects, and the surrounding grass area is ideal for hosting outdoor workshops. The space has also been incorporated into wildlife walks and wellness activities which help people learn about different tree and plant species, and practice mindfulness.



“

Gro Garden stands as a testament to the impact that diverse talents and organisations can have when they unite to create something meaningful. It serves as a haven of art, wellbeing, and environmentalism, enriching the lives of the people who visit. We are extremely pleased to be able to provide items made of timber that would otherwise have been sent to landfill, to help the garden live up to its modern, climate aware design.

**Peter Lavelle**

CEO of Glasgow Wood

# OUR WORK UP CLOSE

Discover Circular Communities Scotland's ongoing projects, which represent our ambition to lead by example, and create a more circular economy in Scotland. Each project has its own scope, sector, and successes.



# THE REUSE CONSORTIUM

The Reuse Consortium brings together a partnership of community-based and fully accredited reuse and recycling organisations across Scotland. They offer quality reuse furniture at affordable prices to public sector organisations such as Housing Associations and Local Authorities, who provide homes to people and families facing barriers to access accommodation.

We know many public sector organisations want to increase their circular and local procurement. The Reuse Consortium aims to make sustainable procurement from a local social enterprise both easier and more impactful.

**We are delighted to see that the Reuse Consortium impact has grown again this year.**

## STATISTICS FOR 2022/2023

**3,174**

Low-income households helped

**5,659**

Items of reuse furniture provided

**681**

Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved

**256,970**

Kg of waste diverted from landfill

**£682,969**

Value of purchases from local social enterprises

**£342,745**

Approximate budget savings over buying new

**21**

Local Jobs provided



“

In addition to providing reuse furniture items to North Ayrshire Council Scottish Welfare Fund Clients through the Reuse Consortium contract, Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company (CFRC) also offers free additional household items to make their homes more comfortable. In a six-month period in 2022, CFRC gave away 280 items totalling £7,170 in value to Scottish Welfare Fund Clients which was double the value of the previous year.

**Jordan Easton**

Operations Supervisor, Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company



# THE SHARE AND REPAIR NETWORK

The Share and Repair Network has gone from strength to strength this year. Funded by Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland, the Network aims to support and represent both new sharing libraries and repair projects to get set up and existing projects to grow their impact.

This year we held our first Share and Repair Gathering bringing together network members from across Scotland to meet in person. We completed set-up guides to equip groups with the information they need to set up a project. Videos were produced to showcase some of our members and a social media campaign was run, #ShareRepairAware, to raise awareness of share and repair in Scotland. Research conducted included market research to help groups learn how to better engage the public, and a sustainability report into how groups can be more self-sufficient.



“

The Share and Repair Network has been a huge source of support and knowledge for us. We have faced a number of hurdles in getting Clachworks up and running but the support we have been given, from linking us with Transition Stirling for peer support, to having an accessible network of organisations to contact for best practice advice, has made it all a little easier to navigate. The Share and Repair Network is our first point of contact for any issue or ideas we want to run through for new projects and we have never been let down.

**Lisa Wardlow**

Volunteer Coordinator  
with Clachworks



# THE AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO BIKES PROJECT

The Affordable Access to Bikes Project, enabled by Cycling Scotland, supports and connects organisations working in bike reuse across the country. The project works with local, national and strategic partners to overcome barriers to reuse and has been making progress this year in key areas such as data standardisation, skills development, funding and viability, and e-bike refurbishment.

The provision of free or low cost refurbished bikes through community-based bike projects helps more people to cycle, which cuts carbon, promotes active travel, supports public health and facilitates social justice. Bike reuse sees skilled mechanics carefully and safely refurbish bike donations from the public, Household Waste Recycling Centres and a range of other sources to keep them in circulation for as long as possible. In close collaboration with bike reuse organisations, the project has identified and actioned priority areas, coordinated online and in-person workshops and helped to establish a more complete picture of bike reuse across Scotland. It has also worked in partnership with the Social Enterprise Academy to make available to bike reuse organisations a bespoke learning programme on developing sustainability.

Photos courtesy of Rob Conroy, FEL Scotland.



“

This is exactly what the bike reuse sector has been needing for a long time.

**Neil Lovelock**

Project Manager  
Glasgow Eco Trust and  
De'il's on Wheels

“

We've found the Affordable Access to Bikes Project to be welcoming and supportive from day one; our views and contributions have been encouraged and valued, and we're very much looking forward to participating in the sustainability programme.

**Tim Bowden**

Director  
Tyred n Cranky

# THANK YOU

A sincere thank you to our membership, for making this Impact Report possible by completing our survey, featuring as case studies, and continuing to engage positively with our network. Most importantly, thank you for the valuable work you do, supporting your communities and contributing significantly to our collective aim of making a more circular economy in Scotland.

A big thank you also to our hardworking board and staff members, as well as our wider stakeholders and supporters.

If you would like to talk with us about our work or anything featured in this report, please email [info@circularcommunities.scot](mailto:info@circularcommunities.scot).

Circular Communities Scotland is grateful to Zero Waste Scotland, the Scottish Government and Cycling Scotland for their continued funding support.



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