



Grassroots Growth: Understanding the Community Repair Movement in Scotland



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Figure 1 Volunteer at Linlithgow Community Development Trust

Introduction

A community repair project is a not-for-profit local venture that provides a service for members of the public to have their household items repaired, rather than having to send them into the waste stream.

This report offers insight into the status of the community repair movement in Scotland; its impact, trends in growth, challenges facing the sector, how the sector operates, and where further support is needed.

This report draws on data collected through a survey of community repair projects conducted by Circular Communities Scotland's Share and Repair Network in June 2026, alongside analysis of membership data held by Circular Communities Scotland.

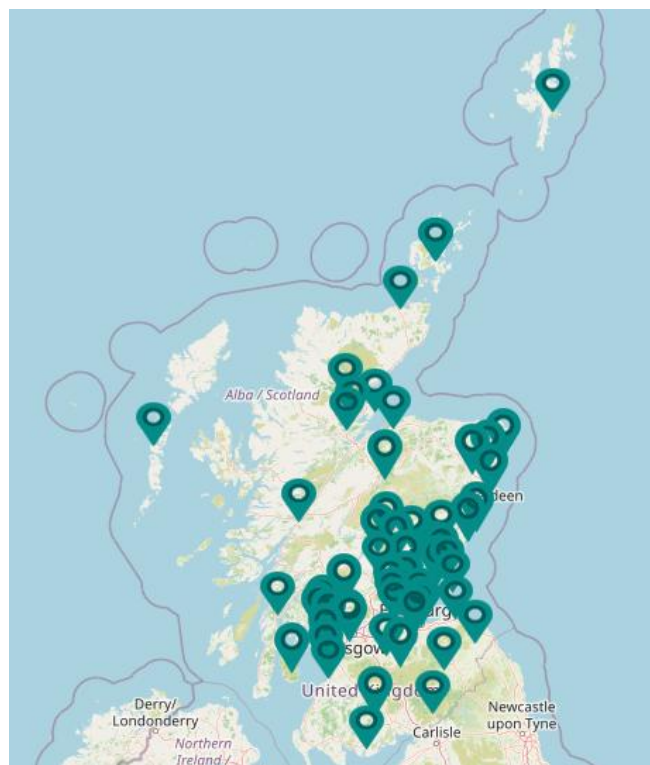


Figure 2 Map of Community Repair Projects in Scotland - July 2026

The defining story of community repair in Scotland over recent years has been one of remarkable growth. From just a handful of projects before 2020, the movement has expanded to encompass 63 community repair initiatives across the country, stretching from Shetland to Kirkcudbright and from Uist to Aberdeenshire.

This trend reflects the pattern of growth across Europe and North America, most of which can be traced back to the launch of the first Repair Café in the Netherlands in 2015; Repair Café Glasgow was Scotland's first repair café, which launched in 2018.

This growth has been supported by Circular Communities Scotland's Share & Repair Network, established in 2022 with funding from the Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland.¹ The network has played a key role in developing community repair activity across Scotland and is now an integral part of Circular Communities Scotland's membership support services.

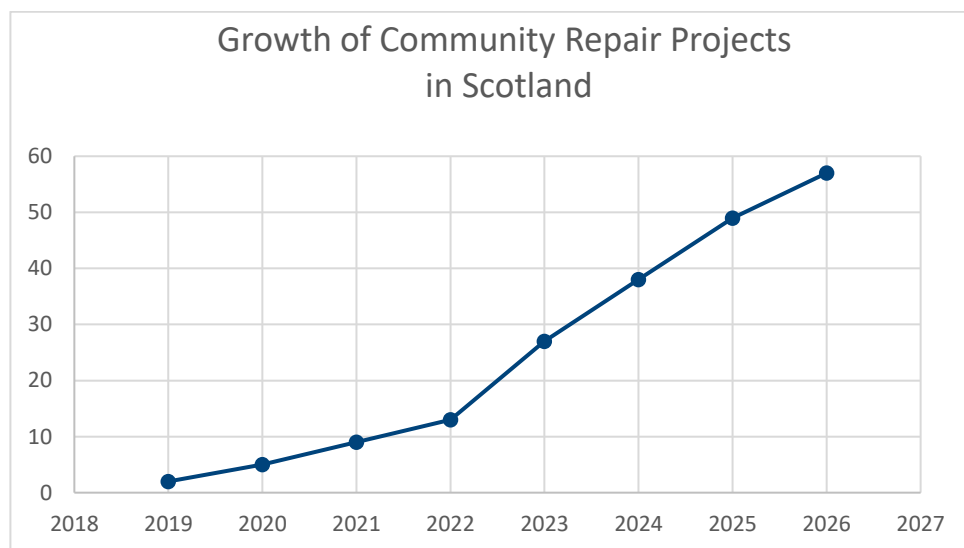


Figure 3 - Growth of Community Repair Projects in Scotland

¹ [Share & Repair Network Impact Report 2022-2025](#)



Figure 4. Repairer and customers at *Fixing for a Future*

Impact

In the year from June 2025 to May 2026:

- 8 new projects were launched, taking the total of active projects to 63.
- 2094 repair events took place.
- 17,202 people visited repair events or used community repair services.
- 727 volunteers repaired 13,319 items – with a repair success rate of 83%.
- That's a carbon saving of 460 tonnes of CO₂e – equivalent to a car driving around the circumference of the world 77 times.²

² Carbon savings calculated using [Farnham Calculator](#) using aggregated data on volume of items repaired from survey of repair projects 2026.

Social Impact

Alongside carbon savings from items repaired rather than discarded, case studies and customer feedback from repair projects across the network show positive impacts on communities and individuals. These impacts relate to community cohesion, skill sharing and cost savings. The increasing number of thriving projects demonstrates their popularity with the public and reflects research that the public are keen to have items repaired when the opportunity is available and affordable.³



Figure 5 Volunteer and Customer at Irvine Share & Repair

“Great to be able to repair items instead of disposing of them. You guys are a great asset to the town!! Wonderful place and amazing work! Thank you so much for your help” Linlithgow Repair Shop Customer

“I don’t need to save up to buy another iron!”
Arran Repair Café Customer

“What an amazing group of people providing a fantastic community service. I am very grateful for your cheery help and also learned some skills. Thank you.” Fixing for a Future Customer

The positive impact of the involvement of volunteers is also clearly demonstrated. Volunteering for repair projects is commonly assessed by those involved as being rewarding, fulfilling, sociable and a valuable way of individuals connecting at a local community level.

³ [Understanding the thoughts and feelings of consumers around Scotland on share and repair community projects](#)

“

“It’s very sociable and I love watching how other repairers tackle problems. I love the wide range of problems we are able to fix and the lovely sociable atmosphere” Dunkeld & Birnam Repair Café Volunteer

“There is nothing more rewarding than using your hands to breathe new life into an item that someone thought was a goner. Watching the owner’s face light up with pure relief and happiness – knowing you just saved a beloved possession from being recycled, or worse, thrown into a landfill – is exactly why we all show up here week after week.”

Black Isle Repair Café Volunteer

“I’m really grateful to be part of this initiative. It’s inspiring to see so many people coming together to reduce waste, share skills, and support the community. Repair Café Glasgow is not just about fixing things it’s about connection, learning, and sustainability.” Repair Café Glasgow Volunteer

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Figure 6 Volunteers and customer at Dairsie Repair Cafe

Growth and spread

There are now community repair projects in all but 6 of Scotland’s 32 Local Authority areas. 6 new local authority areas have been added to the network in the last 18 months.

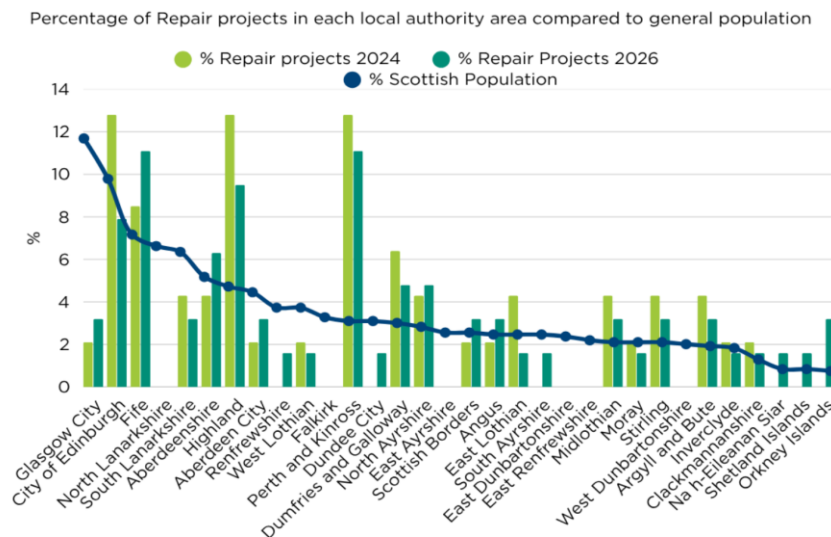


Figure 7 Percentage of community repair projects in each local authority area 2024 and 2026, compared to percentage of Scottish population

The geographic spread of projects shows a lower density in areas within the 20% most deprived communities in Scotland as defined by the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#). This trend has evened out slightly in the last 18 months but is still clear. These projects are heavily reliant on volunteers, so it is perhaps no surprise that the geographic spread reflects general trends in volunteering levels.⁴ This may go some way towards explaining the lower percentage of groups in the most deprived communities, but does not explain a similarly low level in the least deprived areas.

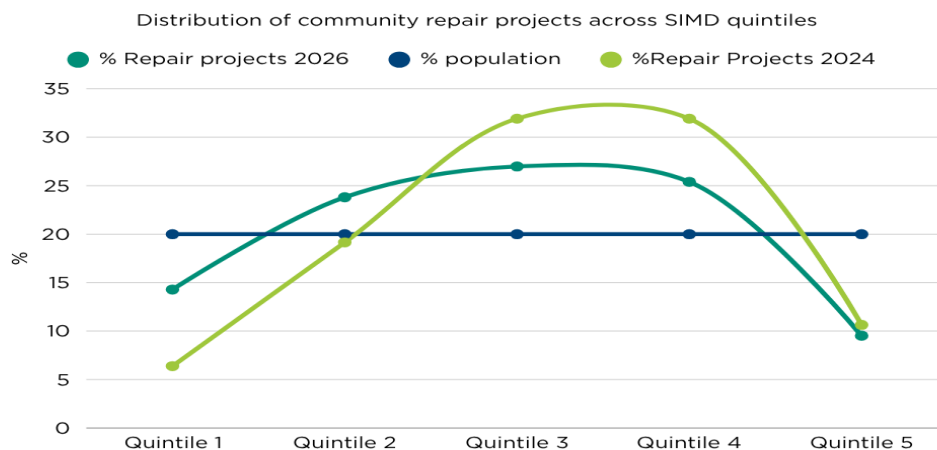


Figure 8 Percentage of repair projects in each 20% of classification of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2024 & 2026. 1 represents the 20% most deprived communities, 5 the least deprived

⁴ [The State of Scottish Volunteering](#)

The Lend & Mend Hub projects⁵, based in Local Authority Libraries represent a significant proportion of projects in the lowest 20% of the SIMD. This is perhaps an indication that additional targeted support from policy makers is required if projects are to reach a wider demographic, more representative of Scotland's communities.

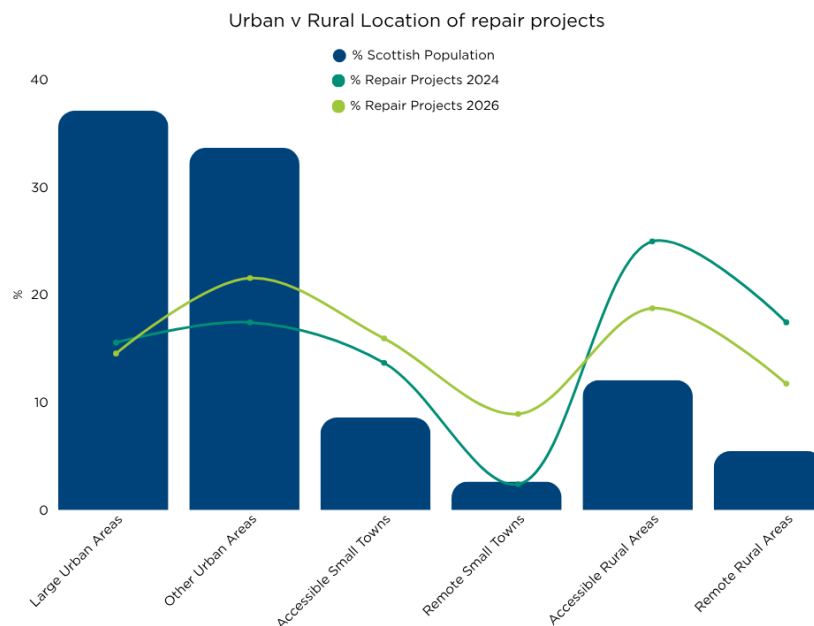


Figure 9 Percentage of repair projects 2024 & 2026 in relative Urban v Rural locations compared to % of Scottish population

This is further supported by tracking project locations against relative urban and rural location⁶. There are fewer projects than could perhaps be expected based on population size in large and other urban areas, and more in rural areas. Growth over the last 18 months shows little change in the percentage of projects taking place in large urban areas.

There is limited evidence on geographic differences in attitudes towards community climate action, making it difficult to explain regional variations in the distribution of community repair projects. However, two local authority areas, Highland and Perth & Kinross, stand out for having a higher than expected concentration of projects.

In Highland, growth has been supported by the Lottery-funded Highland Community Waste Partnership project (2022-25), which helped establish several repair initiatives.⁷ Highland Council has also continued this

⁵ [SLIC Lend and Mend Hubs](#)

⁶ [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022](#)

⁷ [Supporting communities to reduce, reuse and recycle - Highland Reuse and Repair Fund - Highland Council](#)

momentum and is currently the only Scottish local authority to offer a dedicated fund supporting community efforts to build a circular economy.⁸ Perth & Kinross, meanwhile, is the home of the Climate Café movement⁹, which has fostered grassroots engagement with climate issues across the region. This existing culture of community action may have encouraged the development of volunteer-led repair projects.

While these examples suggest that targeted investment and strong local climate engagement may play an important role in supporting community repair, further research is needed to better understand the factors influencing the establishment and spread of projects across Scotland.

Climate Hubs as Potential Catalysts for Growth

Scotland's 24 regional Climate Hubs¹⁰ each have their own priorities and areas of focus. To date, 9 hubs have actively supported the development of community repair initiatives. Through the Share & Repair Network, Circular Communities Scotland has worked with these hubs in a variety of ways, including participating in community engagement events, delivering local training, and providing specialist support to emerging projects.

Evidence from the past year suggests that Climate Hub activity can play an important role in stimulating the growth of community repair projects. For example, community engagement initiatives led by the North East Scotland Climate Action Network (NESCOAN Hub)¹¹ and Fife Climate Hub¹² have coincided with an increase in local repair activity in those areas. In addition, seed funding offered by some Climate Hubs has helped community groups meet the start-up costs associated with establishing new projects.

While the extent of this influence warrants further investigation, the experience of several hubs suggests that community climate infrastructure, targeted support and access to small-scale funding can all contribute to the successful development of community repair initiatives.

The Share & Repair Network now facilitates a quarterly meeting of interested Climate Hubs to enable sharing of ideas and initiatives to support Community Repair and Sharing projects.

⁸ [Highland Community Waste Partnership](#)

⁹ [Climate Café® - Welcome to the Climate Café® Hub](#)

¹⁰ [Climate Hubs Scotland | Climate Action Across Scotland](#)

¹¹ [HOME - NESCAN Hub](#)

¹² [Home - Fife Climate Hub](#)

Barriers to Growth and Development

Barriers

Whilst overall growth of the sector is positive, there have been some projects that have closed and some planned projects that have not come to fruition. Whilst it is difficult to get precise data about this, the Share and Repair Network can give an overview of the key barriers that lead to project closure or lack of progress.

- **Project Management Time**

The Network Coordinator has not come across any projects that have closed or failed to progress due to lack of volunteer repairers. It is the loss of, or initial inability to identify, an individual to act as organiser and volunteer manager that is key to the success or progress of projects. Some projects are fortunate to have volunteers who take on this crucial role, whilst others use grant funding to pay for part-time staff hours. If there is no volunteer within a community willing to come forward to lead a project, or no funding available for staff time, a planned project will not progress. If a key volunteer leaves and cannot be replaced, or if funding for staff time ends and cannot be replaced, a project is likely to close.

- **Changing Priorities**

Some repair projects do not progress due to re-prioritisation within an organisation. Funding, resource issues, or other strategic constraints may mean that the appetite for running or developing a repair project becomes less of a focus, and repair events may become less frequent or removed from the agenda entirely.

Challenges and how to address them

In a recent survey conducted by Circular Communities Scotland¹³, organisations running repair projects expressed concerns in common with the rest of the third sector relating to the increasingly competitive and challenging funding landscape and the impact of increasing costs. Some expressed the challenge of wanting to expand and grow in response to demand, but felt financial and funding pressures hindered this possibility. Groups also shared frustrations about built-in obsolescence making some repairs impossible, particularly for electrical items.

¹³ [Key Challenges Facing Scotland's Circular Third Sector](#)

A more supportive national policy framework that prioritises repair over recycling and puts communities at the centre of the transition to a circular economy is needed to help overcome challenges and ensure a thriving community repair sector.

At UK level, Right to Repair legislation should be extended to cover more products and make it easier to repair.

In Scotland, the Circular Economy (2024) Act¹⁴ and subsequent Circular Economy Strategy for Scotland¹⁵ provide a clear vision for using resources efficiently and transitioning to a circular economy. We now need to see meaningful action to prioritise repair, embed it as a local easy and affordable choice, and empower the community repair sector to be more resilient.

Action can be funded through expanding existing Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes to new sectors and for product stewardship schemes to include incentives for repair.



Figure 10 Black Isle Repair Cafe

Operations

Format & Structure

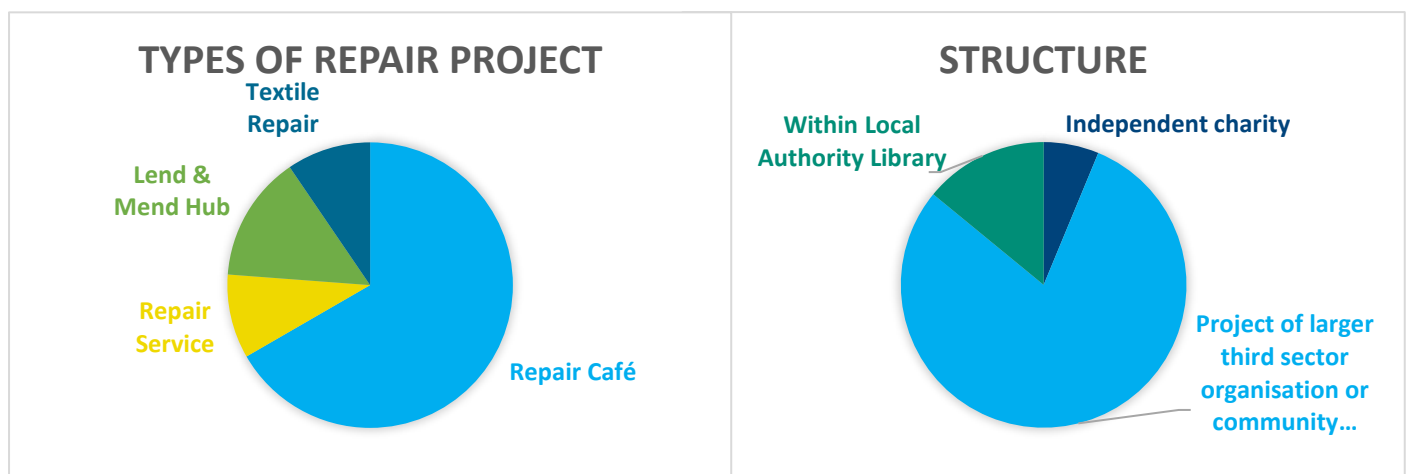
The majority of projects follow the Repair Café model – a regular, free, informal community event (monthly or weekly), with refreshments for the public while they wait for volunteer repairers to fix their household items.

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2024/13>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/circular-economy-strategy-scotland/>

Other formats include the 9 [Lend & Mend Hubs](#) based in public libraries managed by SLIC, and social enterprise models that offer a repair service which operates a fee-based drop-off and pick up basis¹⁶.

Most repair projects will tackle all types of small household items whilst others specialise in one product type such as clothing, IT, or furniture. These different formats offer different points of access to the public.



Only a small handful of projects are independent charities or community groups. The vast majority are projects of either larger community organisations such as Community Development Trusts or community halls; third sector reuse or sharing organisations; environmental charities such as Transition Organisations.

Finances & Funding

For repair projects that follow the fully volunteer-led repair café model (approx. 49% of repair cafes), the costs can be relatively low once the project is established. Some projects manage to cover basic running costs (e.g. hall hire, insurance, volunteer expenses, basic materials), from donations received at each event, sometimes supplemented by small grants.

All other projects rely on grant funding, or a mix of grant funding and income from social enterprise activities, to help cover staffing and overhead costs. A report¹⁷ in 2023 commissioned by Circular Communities Scotland into the sustainability of community share and repair projects examined different models of financial sustainability and concluded that impact-focused funding is required to support the sector.

¹⁶ Such as [The General Store Selkirk](#), and [Linlithgow Repair Shop](#)

¹⁷ [Share and Repair Sustainability Report](#)

Working with the Commercial Sector

Some projects operate as social enterprises and their repair services are designed for income generation. The majority operate on a free or donation basis. Far from being in competition with commercial repair services, most projects are sensitive to the local repair economy. There are examples of repair cafes adjusting the types of items they repair to ensure that they do not undercut or unfairly disadvantage local repair businesses. Repair Cafes repair items that would not be feasible to mend on a commercial basis. It is also common for most repair cafes to maintain a list of local commercial repair services where they can signpost customers for more complex skilled repairs or items they are not able to cover.

Summary

Community repair projects are popular with the public and relatively low-cost projects to run. They provide a local, affordable and community-focused alternative to sending small household items and clothing into the waste stream. They provide an opportunity for behaviour change both in the work they deliver directly and by promoting a wider culture of repair.

All indications suggest that Scotland's community repair movement will continue to grow. However, without stronger national policy support and funding to support part-time staff to coordinate and manage projects, growth is likely to remain concentrated in areas where volunteering rates tend to be higher, rather than in communities experiencing greater levels of deprivation.

There is also a need for further research to better understand the barriers and opportunities associated with developing community repair initiatives in cities and other large urban areas. Such research could help inform the design of targeted support and investment, ensuring that the benefits of community repair are accessible to communities across Scotland.