

SOUL OF THE JUNCTION SCIO



Annual Report for the First AGM –1 December 2025

Scottish Charity Number: SC053656

Address: 1 St Charles Avenue, Carstairs Junction, Scotland

1. Introduction from the Founder and Trustees

The past year represents the first full year of operation for Soul of the Junction SCIO, marking a transformative period of community action, regeneration, creativity, and climate-ready innovation in Carstairs Junction. Since our establishment in September 2024, the organisation has grown from a vision into a driving force for local development, community wellbeing, inclusive support services, and environmental awareness.

2025 has been a year defined by **courage, creativity, and community spirit**. We have made major advances in restoring the community hall under the Community Asset Transfer, cultivated partnerships locally and internationally, provided meaningful activities for residents of all ages, and positioned our village as a model for rural climate-ready planning and socially inclusive design.

3. Highlights of 2025

3.1 Community Hall Regeneration (Community Asset Transfer Project)

This year marked a major step forward in the long-term transformation of the Carstairs Junction Community Hall. We formally appointed an architect to develop professional drawings and prepare planning applications for two significant enhancements:

- (1) the extension and upgrade of the kitchen into a full commercial facility, and**
- (2) the creation of two additional function rooms to expand community capacity.**

Alongside this strategic design work, extensive practical progress was made on the building itself.

Achievements include:

- Full roof replacement planning, procurement, and partnership contributions.

- Preparation for brickwork and structural repairs supported by volunteers and in-kind donations.
- Quotes gathered and planning underway for the installation of energy-efficient improvements (insulation pathway, window planning – including replacement, resizing, and upgraded efficiency – and heat/smoke alarm compliance across the site).
- Ongoing interior renovation and modernisation, safety planning, and pre-renovation layout work.
- External storage solutions secured through partnerships (including donated containers).
- Full documentation and compliance preparation for funders and regulators.

These improvements mark the beginning of a long-term, phased regeneration, aligning the building with the needs of a growing rural community.

3.2 Climate Ready Places – Community Engagement & Climate Action Programme

This year we continued to expand our Climate Ready Places and wider Climate Action work, strengthening Carstairs Junction’s resilience and environmental awareness. Our efforts span education, practical community initiatives, and long-term sustainability planning.

In addition to our funded programme, we secured a further **£250 microgrant from Volunteering Matters** to support community-led environmental actions and volunteer involvement.

Achievements include:

- Hosting the **Climate Ready Places Workshop** on 23 August 2025, delivering interactive learning, mapping activities, smoothie bikes, nature crafts, and family-friendly engagement.
- Producing an extensive **1.80m × 1.50m illustrated floor map** of Carstairs Junction, highlighting climate issues, drainage and flooding challenges, historical context, and future resilience planning.
- Delivering climate-themed community activities across the year: food-waste workshops, preserve making, pumpkin revival, sharing surplus produce, and community gardening preparation.
- Deepening partnerships with Carstairs Junction Primary, Crawford Primary, the Scottish Flood Forum, Community Energy Scotland, and the Lanarkshire Climate Hub.
- Continuing work on our **Climate Action Project**, which will remain a strategic focus through 2026, including plans to establish a **Community Garden Project** to promote local food growing, biodiversity, wellbeing, and intergenerational volunteering.
- Strengthening community understanding of localised flooding risks and supporting residents to become more climate aware and prepared.

Our Climate Action work has become a cornerstone of Soul of the Junction’s identity, helping make Carstairs Junction a model for rural resilience and community-driven environmental leadership.

3.3 Children, Families, and Learning Support

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – EXPANSION SUCCESS

In partnership with **The Story Club Lanark**, we are proud to report:

- **131 children enrolled (ages 0–5)**
- **Coverage expanded to the entirety of Lanark**

This is a major achievement that gives every child in our area access to free monthly books, supporting early literacy and family bonding.

Preparation of Reading for Wellbeing Sessions

This advent we are holding regular reading-centred wellbeing activities for families, promoting calm, connection, and literacy. Integrating vinyl stories and Yoto Playe stories.

Seasonal Children's Events

- Halloween & Christmas community events featuring free treats, free activities, and local business support.
- Smoothie-bike challenges, nature-based crafts, and environmental education activities.

3.4 AI-Enhanced Sensory Rooms Project

We have been pioneering an innovative sensory-room initiative integrating adaptive AI technology to support neurodivergent children and adults.

Key milestones:

- Prototype design project together with students from the
University of Strathclyde (Group 22) through IGP
- Development of a structured plan covering protocols, technology integration, user needs, literature reviews, and clinical practice research.
- Creation of an inclusive use-case strategy recognising children as unique sensory learners.
- Presentation of the concept at the **AI for Good Global Summit 2025** in Geneva.
- Engagement of local schools and ASN bases to incorporate their expertise.
- Working closely with

This programme has the potential to become a flagship example of Scotland's fusion of community care and advanced technology.

We are privileged to have the guidance and support of Dr Gerwin Schalk, Ph.D., whom we met at the 2025 AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva.

Dr Schalk is a leading neuroscientist, neuroengineer and entrepreneur whose work spans brain-computer interface (BCI) research, neurotechnology and clinical neuroscience.

About Dr Gerwin Schalk (in brief):

- He holds a Ph.D. in Computer and Systems Engineering (from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, USA), plus Master's qualifications from the Graz University of Technology, Austria, and RPI.
- He has made significant contributions to neurotechnology: his work includes basic research in human intracranial neurophysiology, translational brain-computer interface research, and development of the widely used BCI software platform BCI2000.
- Dr Schalk has authored or co-authored over 130 peer-reviewed publications, contributed to numerous book chapters, and holds an international reputation in neuroscience and neuroengineering.

With his expertise, Dr Schalk is helping us to identify and define the user-cohort for our sensory-room initiative – ensuring that the design of sensory spaces is informed by neurodevelopmental, neurodivergent, and clinical-informed perspectives.

Through Dr Schalk's guidance, our sensory-room project positions itself not just as a community care initiative but as an evidence-informed, science-guided endeavour – a pioneering model for combining community service with advanced neurotechnology and inclusive design.

3.5 Community Cinema Development & Membership Programme

This year we laid the foundation for an exciting new strand of community life: the creation of a **Soul of the Junction Community Cinema Programme**. This initiative aims to bring accessible, family-friendly film experiences to Carstairs Junction, supporting social connection, cultural enrichment, and regular community gatherings.

Achievements and progress include:

- Launching the **Community Cinema Membership Programme**, inviting local families and individuals to become part of a growing community film network.
- Developing plans for **regular community cinema events**, including children's afternoons, family film nights, seasonal features, educational screenings, and wellbeing-themed projections.
- Securing initial equipment, partnerships, and venue planning to enable indoor and outdoor film events.
- Preparing licensing, scheduling, and projection arrangements to ensure a compliant and sustainable community cinema offer.
- Beginning the first phase of delivery with **Christmas film projections in December 2025**, marking the start of what will become a year-round programme of screenings.

- Integrating the cinema project into the wider regeneration of the Community Hall, ensuring future dedicated projection space, acoustic planning, and accessible seating opportunities.

The Community Cinema initiative is designed to become a long-term cultural asset for the village – offering affordable entertainment, intergenerational activities, and new ways for residents to come together.

3.6 Establishing the Foundations for a Community RePaint Point (Dulux Partnership)

This year we also took important steps toward establishing a **Community RePaint Point**, in collaboration with the **Dulux Community RePaint scheme**, which redistributes leftover, reusable paint to local groups and households at low cost. By laying the groundwork for this project, we are creating the conditions for a long-term, sustainable resource that supports community regeneration, creativity, and affordability.

Progress includes:

- Beginning discussions and preliminary requirements checking for joining the **Dulux Community RePaint network**, ensuring our village can benefit from affordable, good-quality paint for community projects.
- Identifying suitable storage options in line with safety and environmental standards, supported by our newly secured external storage units.
- Incorporating the RePaint concept into the wider hall regeneration and community development plan, ensuring that future painting and refurbishment activities can be delivered more sustainably.
- Preparing to use the RePaint Point to support low-income households, local creatives, and community groups while reducing waste and promoting circular-economy habits.

This project aligns closely with our environmental values, climate action commitments, and vision for a resource-rich, sustainable village hub.

3.7 Community E-Bike Initiative & Bike Shed Installation (GearUp Partnership)

In November 2025, we began an important new sustainability project in proposed by **GearUp**, aimed at improving active travel options and supporting low-carbon mobility in Carstairs Junction. Together, we initiated the planning process for the installation of a **dedicated community bike shed** at the front of the community building at **1 St Charles Avenue**.

Progress and intentions include:

- Joint planning with GearUp for a secure, weather-resistant bike shed designed to house a community e-bike. Fully provided by GearUp.

- Identifying the most suitable outdoor location to maximise accessibility and visibility for community users.
- Integrating the shed into the wider climate and sustainability goals of Soul of the Junction, supporting low-carbon travel and encouraging local residents to adopt greener transport habits.
- Preparing for final installation, which is expected to be completed **very soon**, likely **ahead of the next phase of the community-hall renovation works**.
- Ensuring that the e-bike will become a shared community resource, supporting volunteers, local families, and project leaders in moving around the village sustainably.

This project represents another step in strengthening local resilience, promoting sustainable living, and improving access to environmentally friendly transport for all.

3.8 Events & Community Life

We delivered a wide variety of local events including:

- Climate Action Festival (multi-week programme)
- Summer and autumn family activities
- Community Christmas Function (with vendors, treats, music, and outreach groups)
- Public engagement on flooding, heritage, and sustainability
- Workshops on preserves, gardening, and crafting
- Partnerships with local musicians for cultural enrichment
- Working with Healthy Vallies, Forth Community Group, GearUp and Community RePaint

These activities strengthen social cohesion and ensure every age group has a place in our community space.

4. Governance and Compliance

This year we have:

- Complied with OSCR regulations as a registered SCIO.
- Maintained accurate financial accounts and documentation.
- Prepared and issued AGM notices as required by constitution.
- Implemented fire safety checks, PAT testing, EICR compliance, and risk assessments across all temporary accommodation and hall-related areas.
- Advanced safeguarding and wellbeing practices for children and families.
- Ensured transparent reporting to funders and partners.

This strong foundation ensures our long-term sustainability.

5. Financial Overview (Summarised)

Income sources included:

- Grant funding (SSE Renewables, Clyde Wind Farm, Climate Hub, REF Fund, Dolly Parton Foundation)
- Donations (financial and in-kind)
- Community fundraising - £3,300 raised
- Project-specific contributions

Expenditure supported:

- Hall repair & pre-renovation work - contractors & subcontractors
- Delivery of Climate Ready Places programme
- Equipment, storage solutions, creative workshop materials
- Insurance, compliance, and safety
- Operational needs and admin
- Development of sensory-room research project
- Bills

Our financial management is prudent, transparent, and aligned with charitable purposes.

We are an all-volunteer based organisation with over 9,000 hours of volunteer work delivered.

6. Looking Ahead – Priorities for 2026

- Full ex-hall building work and major structural hall rehabilitation.
- Launch of the AI-enabled sensory room prototype.
- Launch of the Eatery, Soft Play and 2 new function rooms
- Expansion of climate-education programming.
- Creation of the Village Garden and local food sustainability hub.
- Increased membership and volunteer recruitment.
- Development of the Reading Club and toddler-friendly learning spaces.
- Strengthening collaboration with local schools and community groups.
- Larger festivals and annual creative events.
- Continued expansion of the Imagination Library.

2026 promises to be a year of major transformation.

7. Appreciation and Acknowledgements

Soul of the Junction SCIO would not be what it is without the extraordinary support of:

- Our volunteers and community members
- VASLan
- Our Councillor Ralph Barker
- Local businesses and donors
- Partner organisations
- Funders and supporters
- International collaborators from the AI for Good community
- The families who trust us

- Every child who inspires us daily

Your belief fuels our work.

Together, we are building something truly meaningful
for Carstairs Junction.

This inaugural Annual Report captures a year of ambition, action, and authentic community care. With continued partnership, creativity, and determination, Soul of the Junction SCIO will remain a beacon of hope, resilience, and innovation for years to come.

We look forward to the future – and to continuing this journey with all of you.