

Third Sector Support Advisor for Cowal and Bute:

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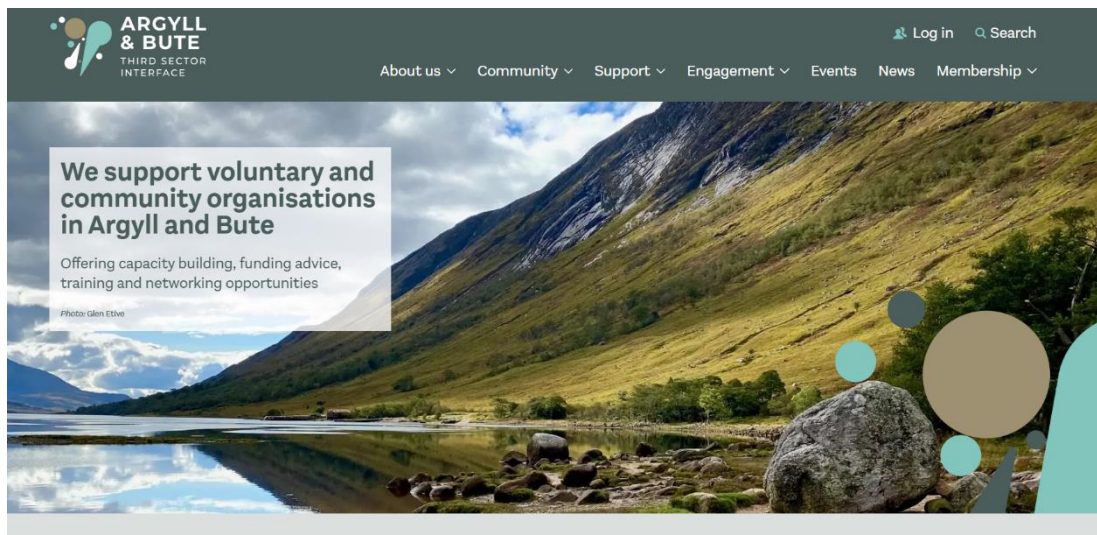
Facebook page for Cowal and Bute TSI news [can be found by clicking here.](#)

This update covers the period from 17th February to 22nd April 2024.

TSI activity for quarter four 2023-2024 has involved:

- completing the final version of the TSI funded **Community Wealth Building** report
- reviewing our budgets
- **supporting member organisations and the wider community** through the council and IJB budget processes
- planning for our next **business plan and new strategy**

Our new website ([click here](#)) also continues to grow as a space for collaboration and news and **we would love to have your views on content and stories.**



Scottish Government, Parliament, TSI landscape & policy activity

Legislation was presented in the Scottish Parliament on 23rd February 2024 to activate some provisions of the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023, effective from 1 April 2024.

The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is preparing to implement these changes to enhance benefits for charities and the public.

No immediate action is required from charities or their trustees, but **we should anticipate updates to OSCR's guidance on their website.**

Key enhancements include:

1. **Increased Inquiry Powers:** From April 2024, OSCR will gain enhanced powers to direct charities to take specific actions, appoint interim trustees and extend inquiries to former charities and trustees. This aims to protect charity assets and improve regulatory responses.
2. **Streamlining Information Requirements:** Changes will clarify and expedite the process by which charities must provide information, improving inquiry progress.
3. **Enforcement on Non-compliance:** Charities failing to submit accounts within 9 months or engage with OSCR will face removal from the Scottish Charity Register starting 1 April 2024. This enforces the duty of financial transparency essential for public and donor confidence.
4. **Registration Criteria:** New criteria effective from the same date will require charities to demonstrate a significant connection to Scotland, such as having a principal office or conducting activities in Scotland.
5. **Operational Flexibility:** The new act reduces bureaucratic hurdles, such as the need for a 42-day notice for certain changes, and permits flexibility in cases like charity mergers.



Future measures include creating a **searchable record of disqualified trustees** by October 2024, and further provisions by summer 2025, such as **publishing trustee names and records of charity mergers**. These steps are part of a broader effort to ensure charities are well-regulated and transparent in Scotland.

More details here:- <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/charity-law/changes-to-charity-law-after-the-charities-regulation-and-administration-scotland-act-2023/>

The net impact of the changes is likely to be a more interventionist approach to promoting good charity governance and practice.

Local strategic partnerships - budgets

It was previously reported that the council was considering its budget on 22nd February 2024 and that there were proposed cuts to third sector grants. The TSI supported grantees by highlighting the negative impact to decision makers via an email campaign and in particular the impact on low-income families with working age parents and carers as well as the loss of match funding flowing into Argyll and Bute. This campaign was successful, and the savings proposal was withdrawn by councillors.

The HSCP was in a similarly challenging position with a need to find £11.4million of cuts and specifically proposed cuts to day care services for vulnerable adults on Bute and in Oban. The TSI made representations directly at the Integration Joint Board (IJB) by working with family groups and user groups. The cuts have been stalled and a review has been requested which the TSI will be supporting to ensure there is proactive engagement with the affected communities.

Community Wealth Building (CWB) report

Following the board's approval of funding for a CWB report the TSI has been leading on the commissioning of a CWB strategy and action plan for Argyll and Bute's Community Planning Partnership.

The January 2024 meeting approved the **20 high level recommendations** and the April 2024 CPP received the final report.

All recommendations are centred around the five pillars:

- Plural ownership of the economy.
- Making financial power work for local places.
- Fair employment and just labour markets.
- Progressive procurement of goods and services.
- Socially productive use of land and property.

The final report has been received at April's CPP Management Committee meeting and the report will be sent to the Area Planning Group's for feedback on how to implement the proposals and recommendations which are likely to be taken forward by a new steering group.

Community Planning Partnership (CPP) organisational changes

In a surprise move in an unscheduled report (and in between council administrations with no elected members present) last week's CPP Management Committee introduced and approved a new model for Community Planning with four tiers of meetings and engagement instead of the current three. **The new model involves the use of a statutory partners only oversight group with no TSI nor Third Sector Organisation (TSO) representation** (unlike at present on the current Management Committee), a once a year only Community Planning meeting (with wide representation as now - but it has not met in a while), the four Area Community Planning Group meetings (as now) and the use of working groups to lead specific pieces of work.

The latter is a good innovation - with the Climate Change Working Group providing a good test of change - but it is the manner of change and the lack of consultation that is surprising. The model also misses the opportunity of increasing the power and scope of Area Community Planning Group meetings.

As an example, using the current model the TSI (supported by our Social Enterprise Network) was able to promote Community Wealth Building and proposed the research described above to the CPP at one of the four meetings annually. **In the new model there is no method for a TSO to propose innovation or to directly collaborate on the community planning agenda at the oversight group.**

The TSI role across Scotland is to operate at the interface between public and third sectors and this appears to be a surprise step in the opposite direction. Some public bodies present welcomed the move as they had to represent their organisation at up to six council area CPPs and this change makes their attendance more manageable. However, this should not be at the expense of local voice and TSO representation. This point was made and **Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface objected to the proposal.**



The paper appeared somewhat rushed, with the change taking place immediately and with no comparator information provided on arrangements with other CPPs - a question that was asked by the Scottish Government observer.

The TSI will be in consultation with TSO groups on next steps and if our members wish to lobby for change then we will take this view to CPP lead partners and the new administration. At the very least, consultation should have taken place and elected members should have been present. More on the CPP report from the 10th April 2024 meeting can be found by clicking [here](#).

Internal TSI matters

Sector funding 2024-2025

The impact of the national budget first received in December 2023 is continuing to make its way through the funding and commissioning systems of the Scottish Government. We know that the NHS and Councils are under real financial pressure and many major capital projects have been delayed in favour of preserving jobs and frontline services.



However, where protections have not been specified in law or funding bodies have been given discretion over the use of funding pots then we have seen grants and commissioning budgets, hitherto used to fund third sector services, come under increased pressure.

TSI funding and reporting

TSI funding has been agreed for one year only despite ministerial support for a longer-term settlement over two years. TSI CEOs are committed to campaigning for a fairer funding settlement and regularly meet with ministers to collectively demonstrate the impact of TSIs. Whilst we received a 4 per cent uplift in 2023-2024, that was the first uplift in twelve years.

It is worth noting that Scottish Government have reiterated their support of Evaluation Support Scotland's approach of a TSI evaluation framework driven by local need / outcomes and not baseline KPIs. In line with other funders, they have continued the trend of removing bureaucratic encumbrances and have confirmed that the six month reporting requirement has been scrapped in favour of an annual business plan (due end April each year) and an annual review (due end June each year) with a focus on case studies and qualitative outcomes.

Funders Fayre 2024

The TSI Funders Fayre held in Oban on 20th March 2024 was a great success with **8 funders in attendance and over 70 participants**. Feedback has been positive and **we will look to repeat the event** with different (but hopefully equally nationally significant) funders in six months' time in another part of Argyll and Bute. The message that we need to work together to support each other during a period of sustained financial pressure was well received.



Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund – Year four announcement

Two TSI staff attended a Communities Mental and Wellbeing Fund national conference in Perth in March. The event celebrated the achievements of the annual £15m programme as a source of important funding aimed at grass roots organisations creating lasting change in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing - with a focus on prevention and user led involvement.

The minister announced that there will be a year four of funding at the same levels as for 2023-2024. National planning for the next round begins shortly.



TSI Board member recruitment

Owing to a number of changes (a death, a retirement and a new job) the TSI finds itself down to the minimum level of four trustees and we are **urgently seeking to recruit** from interested people in our locality.

We meet five times a year and you will be helping to support third and social enterprise sector organisations to thrive, prosper and support our local communities.

For an informal conversation please contact takkisulaiman@argylltsi.org.uk and visit <https://www.argylltsi.org/about-us/our-board-2/> to view the role description which is at the foot of the page.

TSI at the Rockfield Centre

With the success of the TSI Hub in Inveraray the TSI is beginning to test new models of co-location.

The TSI has taken **flexible office space at the Rockfield Centre** in Oban which have started being used by two new TSI member groups – an autism support group and a heritage group. We will embark on a more detailed research and consultation exercise with local social enterprises and entrepreneurs to

ascertain the appetite for hot desk working space. This follows a positive informal consultation on Information Oban which found that there may well be a market for such facilities. If that is the case, we will open negotiations with statutory partners and the Rockfield Centre to invest in these facilities.

Argyll and Bute Climate Action Network (ABCAN)



The work of the TSI-supported Argyll and Bute Climate Action Network ([ABCAN](#)) is now fully under way led under the auspices of the Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT). The TSI is playing its role and has just completed the disbursement of three rounds of seed and micro grant funding. We are now moving onto the next phase and will provide governance support for the establishment of ABCAN's steering group. Scottish Government funding has been approved for the next year of activity, however seed capital funding for this coming year will be less than the £40k available for the year gone - though we may collectively fundraise to increase this total.

Sustainable Food Partnership (SFP) online event – 26th February 2024

In late February Argyll and Bute TSI co-hosted an [online discussion](#) of setting up [a Sustainable Food Partnership](#) in Argyll and Bute. There is an existing network of 85+ SFPs across the UK which are working collaboratively to support and encourage a transition to a healthy, sustainable and more equitable food system.

The event was a great success with over 40 – mainly new groups to the TSI – in attendance. Next steps are currently being considered but it is possible that we will host the network as part of our capacity building approach and duties.

By forming an inclusive cross-sector food partnership, public agencies, community organisations, businesses and academics can collaborate to create lasting change by agreeing on priorities and action for the local area.

The SFP network shows that a local food partnership can help drive a fundamental shift in its local food system and become a hub for a rapidly growing **good food movement of active and engaged citizens**. It can also

help tackle climate change, empower communities, build resilience and help prevent food poverty.

Consulting on a new strategy and a local sustainable funding campaign

The TSI is increasingly coming across groups with financial difficulties and we provide support and advice where we can. The TSI will be consulting widely on a new five-year strategy and we will be asking member third and social enterprise organisations as well as the wider community about your priorities for the focus of our activity.

We will use this opportunity to check in with local third sector and social enterprises to see how you are faring in these challenging financial times. Our goal is to create a campaign that amplifies the sector's concerns about the lack of secure three-year funding agreements that allows us to plan ahead and offer security to our workforce. **Watch this space!**

Research proposal – mapping Argyll and Bute's early intervention services

The TSI's *All Our Children Network* has long identified that third sector services for children are patchy in Argyll and Bute with children and families going unsupported and needs becoming more serious as a result.

As was previously reported, a proposal to address this (written by the TSI's CEO and the Social Value Lab, submitted and accepted by Argyll and Bute's Chief Social Worker) which involves mapping and then investing in preventative support services for children run by the third and social enterprise sector - is now up and running.



Hosting posts and funds for other organisations and programmes

As reported at the last board the TSI is (as of 8th April 2024) hosting a Wellbeing Development Manager post funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and is subject to a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The synergy with the TSI's work is significant as it involves capacity building third sector groups active in preventative healthcare as well as developing information and support tools such as our [community directory](#).

This collaborative approach is deeply innovative and we will explore other areas of work that might benefit from this approach.

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