



PERTH & KINROSS  
ASSOCIATION SCIO

# Annual impact Report 2024-2025

## UNLOCKING POSITIVE FUTURES

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD  
PERTH & KINROSS ASSOCIATION SCIO



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# THOUGHTS BY OUR CHAIR

**“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant.”  
- RL Stevenson**

And, in this, lies great challenge. Especially for organisations working with young people with significant additional support needs. For planting the seeds that will germinate into confidence, resilience, ambition, self-belief and hope is a complex and demanding task. And the germination of those seeds, and their growth, takes time and patience. If we have done our task well, the seeds we sow will work to support the lives of our young people both now, and long after we have disappeared into the shadows.



And so to our annual report for 2024/2025. How well have our staff and volunteers planted those seeds? We are fortunate to have an amazing team displaying dedication and skill as they work with our young people and help them to “be all they can be”.

**What a fantastic year which they have made possible.**



Altogether 417 young people were supported through face to face and online learning and support. All successfully attending over a sustained period of time. Of those who took part in face-to-face activities, these young people all need support for various reasons including - non attendance at school, visual impairments, ASD, ADHD, learning, mental health and physical disabilities. Some were young people in care. All faced huge barriers to being able to participate in things that other young folk take for granted. So it was that the comments of one participant caught my attention.

She said, “it is fun, I feel like everyone else, it is nice being in a group”.





Not feeling alone. Not feeling different and excluded. Feeling safe and happy. Included. Not judged. Cared for. This is how to help a young person realise their potential.

Our Distance Learning Hub, conceived during lockdown, but bringing activities to those who also face barriers, is now used by over 1200 young people.

All this has enabled over 246 awards to be completed this year. An amazing achievement.

But even more remarkable are the stories of growing confidence and happiness seen in the words and behaviour of the young people we work with. Their determination and progress is inspirational.

Reading this comprehensive report, it is easy to see and feel the impact that our work is having and to understand the seeds we are planting.

We wish to thank our funders, partners, parents, carers, staff, volunteers and young people for making this year so memorable. Working together, learning together, and supporting one another – our key to enriching lives.

**Thank you,  
Robin Illsley**





# WHO WE ARE



**"Participating in our Starfish Way programme in particular has undoubtedly helped some of the most challenged students believe they can push themselves and achieve things they had perhaps thought might not be possible. The way they grow in confidence is wonderful and what The Starfish Way is all about. It's a privilege to be part of the team." - Elaine Howie, Trustee**

The Association was founded over 30 years ago to help young people in Perthshire participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE) and provide support to DofE group volunteers. Eight years ago, we identified a significant lack of participants with additional support needs accessing the award, and in response, we developed and launched the Starfish Way programme (SFW). Starfish Way provides personalised support for some of Perthshire's most vulnerable young people facing challenges with mental health, poverty, and lack of opportunity, to achieve accredited awards, confidence and life skills through our unique learning framework.

Now in our 8th year, Starfish Way continues to expand as demand for our services to support vulnerable young people across Perth & Kinross reaches a new high. We have the use of several areas at Megginch Castle, the spiritual home and base of our Starfish Way activities, our new remote location at Bamff Eco-Tourism estate in East Perthshire and we are opening a new multi-use, residential, site at Cultybraggan in West Perthshire.



## OUR 2023 - 2028 STRATEGIC AIMS ARE:

- Improving Confidence and Self Worth
- Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of Young People
- Supporting Achievement and Closing the Attainment Gap
- Recruiting, Valuing and Retaining Staff and Volunteers
- Strengthening Partnerships, promoting our Services, ensuring organisational sustainability

**Our Vision - 'To support young people, particularly those with additional support needs, to feel happy, be safe, experience achievement, and believe in themselves.'**

## OVERVIEW OF THE STARFISH WAY PROGRAMME

The Starfish Way programme was established to support vulnerable young people facing economic hardship and additional support needs through personalised programmes that provide challenge and help develop confidence. The initiative focuses on adventurous outdoor activities, mental health support, employability and independent living skills while achieving accredited awards that help support positive outcomes including entry into college and the work force.

**Our Mission - 'To bring passion, joy and encouragement to the support of young people as they discover their abilities and become their best selves.'**

## IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Starfish Way has significantly improved the confidence and skills of participants, with all participants achieving sectional certificates and accredited awards. The highly customisable nature of the programme means that the personal journeys our young people undertake can be and are transformative.



# FACTS AND FIGURES



**1285**

Total users of the DLH



**417**

Young people took part in Starfish Way Activities



**8**

New partnerships



**246**

Awards achieved



**444**

Hours of volunteering given to the community (social value £5079.36)



**614**

Volunteering hours given to the Association



## 6 Schools represented

- Perth Grammar School
- Perth Academy
- Bertha Park High School
- St John's RC Academy (new)
- Forfar Academy
- Kinross High School



## 11 Accredited awards offered

- Duke of Edinburgh Bronze, Silver and Gold
- Certificate of Achievement (DofE)
- Paddle Start
- Saltire Award
- Heritage Hero
- NNAS
- JAS Gold
- RevivR CPR
- Wild Journey
- National Outdoor Learning Award
- John Muir Award



## 3 New locations

- Bertha
- Denmarkfield
- Bamff



# CASE STUDY

## BACKGROUND

Callum returned to the Starfish Way programme at silver level with his school after they saw the huge benefits the bronze programme brought to him. Callum has a diagnosis of Global Development Delay. This impacts his motor skills, both fine and gross, his speech (it is limited, and he struggles to express his thoughts), his cognitive, social and emotional skills. When Callum joined the bronze SFW programme he was quiet, withdrawn, shy, not engaging with his peers and had limited interactions with leaders. He tended to stay on the periphery of the group.

## OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Callum has gained so much self-esteem and confidence during his time on SFW. School staff see the benefits of him rejoining the programme, especially taking on leadership roles with the bronze young students. Callum now engages in all aspects of the programme, talks to his peers and works with people he wouldn't have before. His belief in his own abilities has increased, and he has a good relationship with staff. He has fully integrated with the group. Callum has been given the opportunity to attain (attainment has been limited within school) various wider achievements, including bronze and silver Duke of Edinburgh Award, Saltire Award, National Navigation Award Scheme and Heritage Hero. Callum is proud of his leadership role with the group and takes great pride in this role.





## WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT SFW?

Callum has limited attainment opportunities in school. The SFW programme has given Callum the chance to achieve and attain accredited awards. He recognises that his input is valued. In all aspects of his life, he has grown in confidence and self-belief. Callum works at his own pace and knows this is fine.



## BENEFITS OF SFW

Callum has continued to thrive and develop in year 2 of his journey on the SFW. He loves his leadership role and being a role model to the younger students in the group. He is comfortable with his style of learning and being a champion of his own achievements. The additional activities incorporated in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the SFW means that he has continued to push himself in new activities and out of his comfort zone.

**Callum, “I liked camping at Cultybraggan and being a leader for the bronze kids.”**



**School support staff, “We have loved watching Callum grow in confidence over the bronze and silver SFW programmes. He has really come out of himself and enjoys participating in all activities. In school he has become more independent and actively putting himself forward for tasks that previously he would not have done.”**

# OUR VALUES THAT GUIDE US

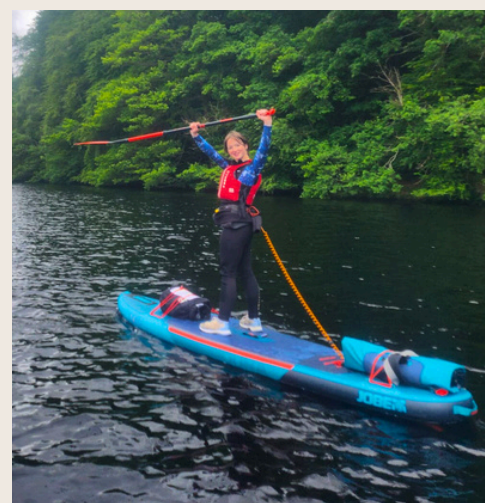
- To support young people by listening actively and learning from what they tell us
- To place kindness and the wellbeing of individuals at the centre of all our work
- To be inclusive and equal
- To value relationships
- To continuously improve
- To be sustainable

## MEETING AIM ONE

### Improving Confidence and Self Worth

Our core educational programmes for young people ensure we enrich people's lives by facilitating learning experiences in nature that allow them to achieve, build confidence and self-worth. The activities we deliver allow young people to learn and develop skills for life and encourage a life-long appreciation of the outdoors.

Our unique Starfish Way programme is designed to allow us to develop customised plans for young people with additional support needs, which increases their participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Throughout our bronze, silver and gold levels, we provide a wide range of activities that will inspire and engage young people and that offer them choice and challenge.





**Lisa O'Brien, Development Worker,** "2024/25 has been another great year at the Association. We have delivered lots of new and exciting activities for our young people, which has been possible with additional qualifications and upskilling of the Development Worker team. The variety of activities has been well received with external staff noting that sometimes their young people may not have been able to access the opportunity otherwise.

We have also delivered exciting and progressive awards such as the Heritage Hero award, Junior Award Scheme and Wild Journey. This year, we have provided paddle performance awards, enabling students to access our beautiful landscape not just by foot but on the water also! School staff report remarkable increases in confidence and personal development in pupils that they would not have achieved in their traditional classroom environment. Participation in Starfish Way has benefitted students' mental health and wellbeing, resilience and confidence and they have taken this into their school, home and social lives."

## MEETING AIM TWO

**Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of Young People**

## CASE STUDY

### BACKGROUND

The Association received a private referral in April 2024 for Andrea who wished to access DofE but was unable to via the school she attends because of her additional support needs. Andrea attends the ISP at a local school and her parent was frustrated that she was not able to have the same opportunities as their mainstream counter parts.



Andrea is classed as learning disabled, this may be linked to her having a stroke as an infant. Andrea is classed as vulnerable and potentially can be a risk to themselves or others due to limited comprehension and level of understanding. Andrea is physically very able and an accomplished sports woman, particularly in running. Her limitations in understanding have reduced and narrowed many opportunities for her. Andrea struggles with poor speech, which has to an extent limited some social interactions for her. The referrer was keen for her to access the Starfish Way through the Association to, not only challenge Andrea but also give her opportunities to develop friendships as the reduction in social interactions has impacted her mental health.

## **OUTCOMES ACHIEVED**

Andrea has engaged very quickly and attends group regularly, connecting with all activities offered and excels particularly in physical activities. We have adapted some activities, such as navigation to support her level of understanding, making pictorial maps and repeating routes to consolidate learning. There has also been a lovely organic element of others in the group taking the lead in navigation and supporting Andrea, positively and empathetically. Andrea has grown significantly in her confidence and self-belief from attending DofE and learning skills she had not considered before. Andrea has also established good friendships and enjoys the social aspects of the group.

Andrea has now completed her full bronze award and is working towards silver. She will be attending our silver SUP expedition this summer.





### WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT SFW?

Andrea is fortunate to have a supportive and proactive family. However, she was lacking in challenges and social interaction, and this was becoming apparent to family. Because Andrea is vulnerable, there was a concern of her putting herself or others at risk. Andrea is, with support from her group, developing life and social skills that can give her more learning and social opportunities to develop her understanding around social interactions and reducing some risks.



### BENEFITS OF SFW

Andrea is now able to access the same opportunities as her mainstream counterparts. SFW enables her to achieve her goals by having appropriate support, a smaller group and a relaxed and adaptable programme to thrive in, removing some of the more traditional pressures of attaining DofE. The sessions are clearly outlined each term, with activities and outcomes, which is shared at home, so Andrea knows what to expect each week in group. Andrea is not rushed or pressured to complete tasks, the session will go at her pace. Andrea can now be part of a cohort, share ideas, problem solve and develop relationships with her peers.

**Parent of young person, “We appreciate the opportunities that have been offered to Andrea and are enjoying seeing her growing in confidence and her own abilities”**



**Andrea, “It is fun, and I feel like everyone else; it is nice being in a group”**

**Staff, “Andrea likes to talk about her DofE and share her learning with her school friends”**

A key objective, and one that is becoming increasingly more imperative, is to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our young people. We do this by providing high nurture, safe and therapeutic experiences and by engaging with families, carers and wider support networks.

This year we have worked with a wide range of young people and volunteers, including those with neurodiversity, mental health conditions or who are learning disabled or have a physical impairment. We have supported individual needs including ASD, ADHD and BPD, those with eating disorders and suicide ideation, English as an additional language, visual impairments, non-attenders at school and young people in care.



**Alex Deliyannis, Youth Services Manager**, “Poor mental health in young people is impacting many of our service users, resulting in them withdrawing from much of daily life and becoming very isolated and lonely. In some of our open groups, we are now experiencing some young people becoming absent for a period due to poor mental health and not managing. Several of these young people cited our services as being one of the activities that they re-engage with when they are feeling more like themselves.



It is a safe, inclusive and non-judgmental space for them to be in. They value our support and encouragement and find the activities we offer a great outlet. We have added more activities in the last year to SFW to offer a broader programme to meet the increasing number of needs of our services users, particularly wellbeing activities to support recovery from a bad spell of mental health. We are still working towards attainment of our wider achievement awards, but we also prioritise the wellbeing of our young people, how we can support their recovery journey in the activities we provide. Outdoor cooking, as well as being a great life skill seems to be an activity that really supports good mental health. It gives the focused activity of cooking but also the opportunity for conversations to evolve naturally around the campfire. We try and be as flexible and adaptive as possible, so we are giving the best support we can to our young people.”





# A HIGH-QUALITY DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

‘I have really enjoyed the yoga course for my silver physical section. It has helped me physically and mentally and I love the information in each activity. Having reassurance from my online mentor gave me confidence. I hope to do a gold section with you.’

Elenor – Yoga.

Our innovative online Distance Learning Hub (DLH) continues to expand, with a wide variety of modules for Physical, Skill, Volunteering and Expedition activities and four new modules added over the course of the year.

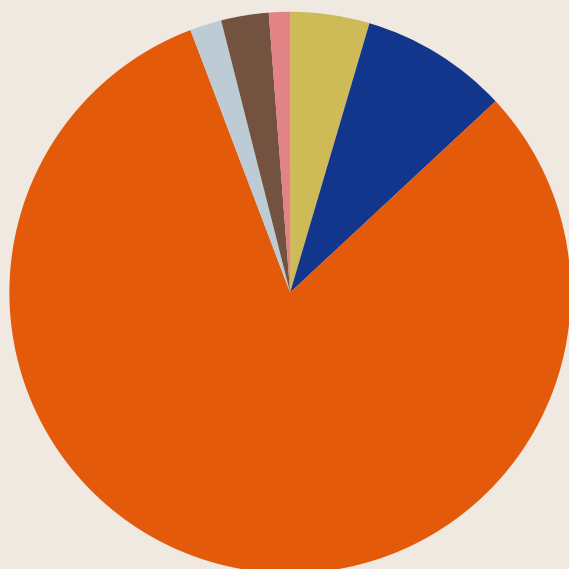
- **Advanced Chess:** This module builds on our most popular course, Learning & Playing Chess, allowing young people to further their chess skills and count them towards their silver DofE Award.
- **Audio Mixing:** Based on feedback from young participants and the increasing demand for skilled professionals in technical fields, we developed this module with input from an industry expert boasting over 20 years of experience.
- **Helping Save the World:** We created this module to address the ongoing critical issue of climate change and the climate anxiety affecting many young people today.
- **Different Cultures and Traditions:** As a response to racism, misunderstanding and intolerance in our modern world, this module aims at fostering understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of diverse cultures and traditions to encourage harmonious living.
- **Total users: 1285**
- **Total sign ups from April 2024 - March 2025: 313**

Over the course of this year, 313 new participants have joined the Distance Learning Hub from various parts of the UK, as well as from Australia, Japan, Dubai and China, bringing the total number of users to 1285.

## Locations of Users

### Distance Learning Hub

#### Apr 2024 – Mar 2025

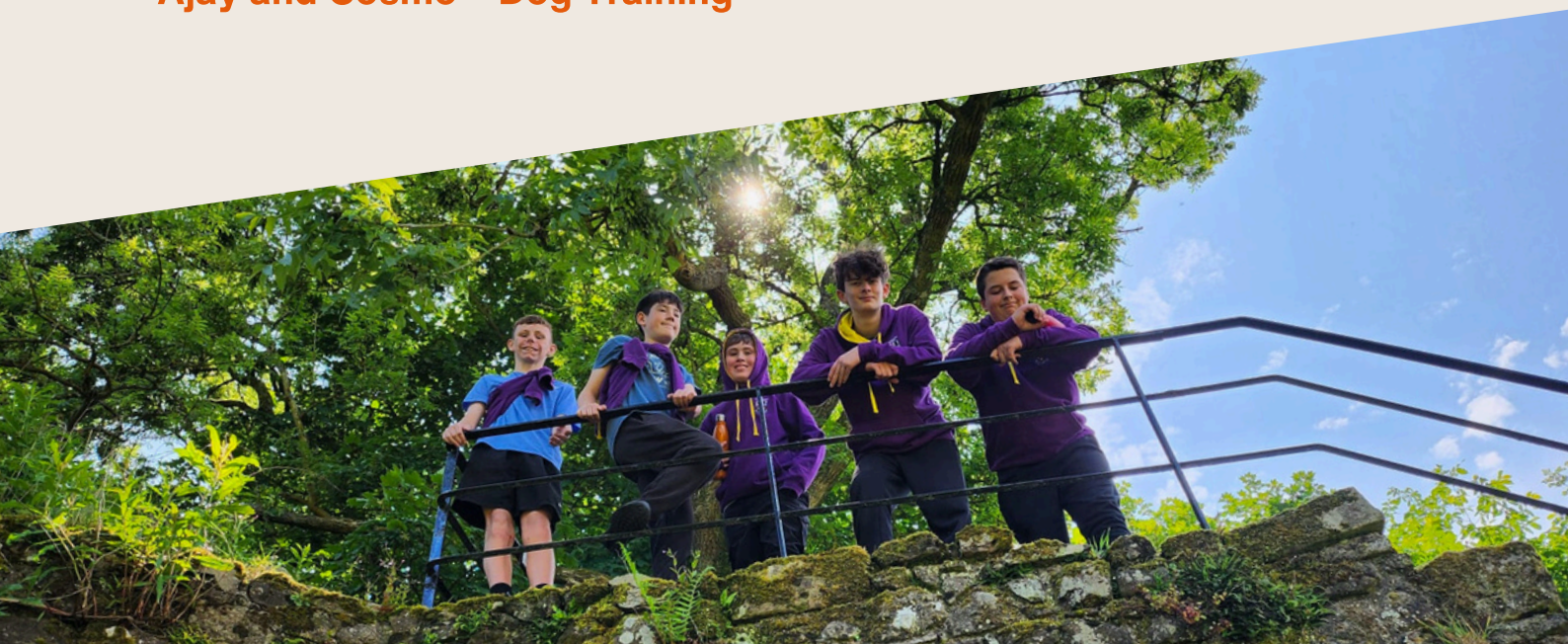


In total, 63 users have requested an assessor and the most popular courses this year were Learning and Playing Chess, Cooking for Fun, Mindfulness, Meditation and Yoga, Photography and Volunteering for Charity.

We're thrilled to announce that each module on the Hub now features audio and a preview video. This enhancement broadens accessibility for young people, teachers, and caregivers and makes our online learning platform more inclusive. Following a comprehensive DLH audit, we're currently evaluating the website in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to further improve accessibility and ease of navigation for individuals with disabilities and have plans to expand it further over the coming years.

"I have learnt a lot of new, different skills and enjoyed the whole course on Dog Training thoroughly. This course has been helpful as I can now use these new abilities on our Maltese Dog - Cosmo. My favourite command was the "Scent Game" as I found it very fun to look at Cosmo attempting to find the hidden treats. However, all the commands, joined together were enjoyable."

**Ajay and Cosmo – Dog Training**





## MEETING AIM THREE

### Supporting Achievement and Closing the Attainment Gap

The Starfish Way programme is a bespoke and innovative educational plan that offers young people with a range of needs and barriers to participation access to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, John Muir Award, Saltire Award, NOLA, PaddleStart and more. Not only does our programme provide young people who may be struggling in other areas of their lives with the opportunity to attain new skills and awards in outdoor environments and close to nature but the learning experiences they gain through the programme have led to positive outcomes after secondary school, with many of our young people going onto further education and work experience.

One of our young people recently completed The Ascent Saltire Award for contributing over 50 hours of her time to volunteering with a range of organisations – Perth Gun Dog Rescue, Milnathort Vet practise, a local farm and Perth Autism Support. She hopes to make a career of caring for animals and has been caring for the dogs at the rescue centre - grooming and training them. She also helps run the centre in the office as well as care for all other animals there. She has been mucking out on the farm, lambing and castrating and docking lambs, feeding the horses, hens and goats and she has organised fundraisers for the centre.



# OUR LOCATIONS

We are extremely fortunate to have access to some incredible locations – each of which provide a different level of experience and opportunity:

LOCATION	USE
<b>MEGGINCH CASTLE ESTATE</b>	Provides privacy, security and a calm and therapeutic environment experience including heritage, wildlife, gardening, woodwork, archery, outdoor cookery, bushcraft, meditation, navigation, photography, fitness trail and socialising in the beloved Coorie Hoose.
<b>BAMFF CONSERVATION AND REWILDING ECOTOURISM</b>	Our newest location on Bamff Estate near Alyth provides us with our most Easterly location and is a more remote and wilder spot.  It's an ideal location for conservation work and learning about nature, developing bushcraft and navigating skills and for accessing Alyth Hill.
<b>ABERDALGIE CHURCH</b>	Provides a useful base, particularly in the winter months where young people have learnt green wood working skills and Christmas wreath making.
<b>CULTYBRAGGAN</b>	Cultybraggan provide progressive experiences for those with more confidence and able to venture further from home.  This year we will be developing our residential and respite capabilities.
<b>DENMARKFIELD REWILDING</b>	A calm and innovative project that is focused on improving biodiversity on what was farmland. Young people can contribute to the conservation activities and learn about nature and wildlife.  It is a perfect location for running adapted expeditions.
<b>QUARRYMILL, BERTHA LOCH, KINNOULL HILL, COMRIE, COMRIE LINN, LOCH FASKALLY</b>	Activities including expedition practice, bushcraft skills and volunteering.  We use additional locations for walks, paddleboarding and volunteering to explore new environments.





## MEETING AIM FOUR

### Recruiting, Valuing and Retaining Staff and Volunteers

While our focus is on holistic programming that delivers mental health and wellbeing support, employability skills, independent living skills and physical activity, we also recognise the importance that the Association can play in improving the health and wellbeing and employability of everyone that engages with us or who supports us, and that includes our staff and volunteers.

We have a wonderful group of volunteers who manage our garden area at Megginch Castle, with a group of seven dedicated gardeners who meet weekly year-round. We have six activities and expedition assistants, all of whom have received upskilling and training through the Association and in total have contributed around 314 volunteering hours. Our diverse board brings extensive knowledge and experience in youth work with vulnerable young people and outdoor education, alongside expertise in business, PR, and HR, supporting all aspects of the Association. Group volunteers assist Development Workers, enriching our programmes with their skills and ideas while forming trusted relationships with our young people.



Not only do our volunteers provide an invaluable service to the Association, but the benefits of spending regular time outdoors with a purpose are of incalculable benefit to the physical and mental wellbeing of our volunteers.

With funding through the PKC ERI fund in support of employing those with barriers to employment, we have been delighted to be able to employ a Modern Apprentice Administrator on a 12-month contract and who is providing support services across the whole organisation.

As an organisation, we are working to improve our organisational resilience by implementing a programme of measures and improvements to ensure we can recruit and retain quality staff. We also invest in our staff by providing role-specific training and CPD opportunities to allow them to flourish in their roles.

## MEETING AIM FIVE

### **Strengthening Partnerships, promoting our Services, ensuring organisational sustainability**

Working with partners and broadening our reach within the community allows us to reach the most vulnerable in society and ensures organisational resilience as we maintain a level of flexibility to provide solutions where opportunities arise and where we are most needed.

We have continued to strengthen and maintain our existing partnerships and introduce several new ones. We have been delighted to be able to work in partnership with Mindspace, running nature sessions for children and young people to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

**One young participant stated, “I have been feeling low and not myself for ages. I love camping and coming out each week has reminded me how much I love it, being by the fire and drinking hot chocolate, I feel happy.”**

We recently introduced summer cycling sessions in partnership with them too.

**Kerry at Mindspace, “The activities provided for the partnership group were spot on for these young people, with low school attendance, poor self-esteem and anxiety. They have loved their time outdoors, being allowed to play and explore and creating camps and enjoying the conversation generated around the fire. This type of work is so supportive for their mental wellbeing.” Attendance at school has improved significantly.”**

Nordic Walking Perth has introduced our some of our bronze and silver groups to a fun new experience for their physical section attainment, which has been taking place on the Inch in Perth city centre and has been taken up enthusiastically by our groups.





Thanks to Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust for providing their free resources to allow us to incorporate their wonderful 'Wild Journey' into our Starfish Way programme – allowing young people to gain bronze, silver and gold certificates for completing activities under the following activity streams – Adventure, Create, Investigate, Write and Perform, Health and Wellbeing and Environmental Action. All of which complement the skills, volunteering and activities we provide.

Our newest partnership is blossoming with Denmarkfield Rewilding, an incredible site situated near Luncarty, which provides opportunities for our young people to volunteer their time and learn about nature and wildlife in a beautiful nature setting. We have an adapted expedition taking place there this summer.

We are especially delighted to have a new presence on the East side of Perth, thanks to the generous support of Bamff Ecotourism, who have provided an area of their estate for running the Starfish Way programme. The location is wilder and more remote than our Megginch Castle Walled Garden and provides a nice progression to the challenge and experience we can offer to young people. We ran a pilot course there with a group of bronze and silver participants, where they contributed to the estate's conservation and rewilding efforts, explored the wild environment, created bug and bee hotels and developed their navigation and bushcraft skills.

We continue to work with Aberdalgie Green Shoots at their wonderful location, which has been an ideal setting over the colder months. Aberdalgie supported us with some activity towards a Heritage Hero award for a bronze group which included some grave surveying, and they funded our green wood working skill sessions over the winter.

At Isla Court sheltered housing, we form part of an intergenerational project where young people help the residents to care for and maintain their green spaces and spend time talking with them. Last winter, several of our participants hand-made Christmas cards for all the residents.

## PROMOTING OUR SERVICES

Our social media presence has increased with regular posts on Instagram, Facebook and X accounts. With guidance from our Senior Development Worker (Digital Marketing) and our Social Media Assistant, a content planner has been implemented to share more of our valuable work and reach wider audiences to benefit from our programmes. Last year also saw us featured in the Community Engagement Podcast, which highlights the important work of charities across Scotland.

# ACTIVITIES OFFERED

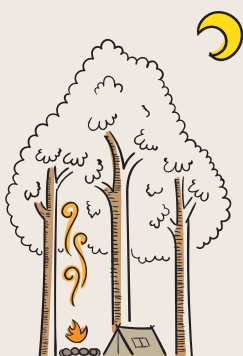
## Newly introduced activities

- Conservation and rewilding on Bamff estate
- Nordic walking
- Swedish candle making



## Activities offered:

- Cycling
- Stand up paddleboard
- Climbing
- Archery
- Walking
- Badminton
- Navigation
- NNAS
- Bushcraft
- Hill skills
- Litter picking
- Gardening
- Expedition skills
- Arts and crafts
- Conservation & Rewilding
- Life skills / independent living
- First aid
- Canoeing
- Orienteering
- Outdoor cooking
- Nordic walking
- Green walking
- Café visits (social skills)
- Wellbeing activities – sound maps, meeting trees, Swedish candles, worry/affirmations jars
- Board games
- Journalling
- Heritage hero – grave identification, Blackwatch Museum, Abernethy Tower, Balvaird Castle, Cultybraggan Museum, William Wallace monument, Bannockburn
- Lego





**“The Starfish Way programme has been incredibly beneficial for our son over the past few years. It gave him structure, purpose, and achievable goals that boosted his confidence and independence. The physical and volunteering sections helped him build routine and social skills in a supported environment. It’s been a huge part of his personal growth and a real source of pride for him and us. Alex was an amazing leader, and if it had not been for her leadership skills and personality, I don't feel my son would have engaged.”**

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT STATISTICS

SOFT SKILL	Nearly all (80%)	Most (60-79%)	Some (20-59%)	Few (less than 20%)
CONFIDENCE	X			
COMMUNICATIONS	X			
SELF ESTEEM		X		
ATTENDANCE	X			
LEADERSHIP		X		
RESPONSIBILITY		X		
EMPATHY	X			
RESILIENCE	X			

# EXPEDITIONS

Our busiest and most eagerly anticipated time of the year. We completed six expeditions across Perthshire and have a further six planned this summer.

Our Forfar bronze group completed their expedition in 2024 – based in Comrie for two nights, with the aim of exploring the heritage of Comrie and they were so lucky with the weather! Our Perth Autism bronze group also explored the wilds of Comrie in 2024 with the aim of tracking their wellbeing. This was a huge achievement for this group, pushing themselves out of their comfort zones and embracing the emotional challenges. We also took a PKAVS silver group out to Comrie.

We successfully undertook an adapted 1:1 gold expedition with the aim of building confidence for 1 young person. Finally, our gold canoe expedition at Loch Faskally and Comrie with the aim of environmental surveying and building social confidence for the group was a memorable experience for staff, volunteers and the young people themselves, who are back this year to complete a silver paddleboarding expedition.

**Personal assistant to a young person, “The SFW programme has helped him so much. He is speaking and contributing. His café visits with the group have given him the confidence to do this himself. He has been applying for volunteering positions and has a new lease of life. He still experiences bad days, but his life skills toolkit is constantly evolving and expanding to help him tackle the hard times.”**





# CASE STUDY

## ACCESSING STARFISH WAY TO SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### BACKGROUND

Hamish is 26 and has a diagnosis of Autism, motor tics and OCD. He struggles with anxiety and depression which has resulted in self-harm and a lengthy stay in hospital. Because Hamish lives rurally, this has exacerbated the feeling of social isolation and limited social interaction with peers, particularly since leaving school, making him feel very lonely and craving a real need to connect with others, being a very outgoing and social person. This social isolation has impacted his mental wellbeing significantly.

### WHAT DID WE DO?

Hamish was invited to attend wellbeing sessions to meet his social needs, connect with others and enjoy time outside being creative and connecting with nature.

Hamish has been able to access and take part in the inclusive activities, such as nature scavenger hunts, outdoor cooking and nature arts and crafts, which has boosted their confidence and given them a purpose in their week. The social element has really supported his mental wellbeing, being able to spend time outdoors, talking and enjoying other people's company. The human desire to connect with others works very well when building fires and cooking on the campfire. It is a relaxed atmosphere that invites conversation and creates a safe space for the attendees. Hamish has responded positively to the groups and can articulate that the sessions have benefited his mental wellbeing.



## **OUTCOMES ACHIEVED**

Hamish attended each session and engaged well with the activities, learning throughout. He has grown significantly in confidence and self-belief, learning skills he had not considered before, such as lighting fires. Hamish has expressed that the social isolation has made him feel very nervous and self-conscious about trying new experiences and activities. These sessions have given him more confidence.

Hamish has benefited hugely from the social element of the sessions, having the opportunity to speak with others and enjoy their company. Hamish has learned how to communicate better with others, understanding the basics of taking turns and not speaking over others. Hamish has a lot of empathy and is always keen to support others in the group when they are not feeling their best. He is always ready to check in with others and sit with them, so they are not alone.

The sessions have really reduced the feeling of social isolation for Hamish.

## **WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT SFW?**

Hamish would have continued to feel very socially isolated and potentially self-harm again. The feeling of being alone with no one to talk to was weighing him down and making him feel mentally fragile and low.

He wouldn't have had the opportunity to try new activities and learn new skills.

Hamish wouldn't have benefited physically and mentally by spending time outdoors.

**Hamish: "I love being with my friends, they help me, and I help them."**

**Parent of Hamish: "Hamish has grown in confidence and is so happy to be meeting others, they are more upbeat and positive."**

**PA: "Hamish is becoming more confident over daily tasks now and he is enjoying having others to socialise with."**



# CULTYBRAGGAN

Last year, we negotiated a 10-year lease for Hut 47. We aim to use the site as a basecamp for expeditions, a centre for ASN residentials and as a facility to help young people begin to take the first steps towards independent living. We will also use it for family residentials and respite breaks.

We know there is a chronic lack of accessible residential accommodation offering doorstep access to stunning lochs and rivers that provide opportunities for water sports, and the Perthshire hills and moorland for wild camping and expeditions. It's not only access to the outdoors that's lacking but the additional pre and post residential support that young people may require and which we can provide as part of our service. Having already received much interest from Perth & Kinross Council's Youth Services, Social Work and Edge of Care teams and youth groups locally and nationally including the DofE Award, this will allow us to generate an ongoing income for the upkeep of the hut and facilities. The refurbishment of the hut is still ongoing; in the meantime, we are developing the outdoor space and running courses and expeditions from the campsite, which provides a unique and memorable experience for our young people.





# LOOKING AHEAD

- Reach out to greater numbers of young people as our capacity permits, with a long-term goal of increasing our staff capacity to support more young people.
- Expand the number of volunteers and mentors, without whose support we couldn't offer the level of service we do.
- Expand and explore new opportunities at Cultybraggan for our young people, community groups and working in partnership with the Comrie Development Trust.
- Expanding our reach towards younger participants, including exploring the development of a programme with Perth High to support their enhanced transition programme.
- Reinvigorate our refugee outreach programme through finding new opportunities.
- Continue to strengthen our new and existing partnerships and look for mutually beneficial opportunities that allow our young people to have an incredible level of choice and opportunity

## NEXT STEPS

As a charity, we understand the importance of generating our own income which is why we are taking a number of steps over the coming year:

- Introducing a fundraising sub-committee
- Identifying and rolling out income generating activities
- Completing the refurbishment at Cultybraggan and developing our residential potential
- Expanding the Distance Learning Hub, with new modules and a bigger reach





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT



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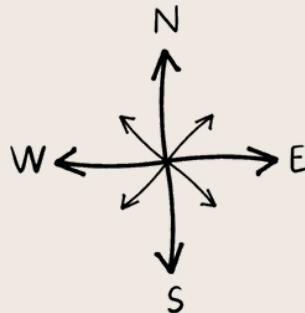




PERTH & KINROSS  
ASSOCIATION SCIO

# UNLOCKING POSITIVE FUTURES

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD  
PERTH & KINROSS ASSOCIATION SCIO



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