

# SURF AWARDS 2025

Awards



SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice : celebrating success

## The SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration 2025



The 2025 SURF Awards is delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government, and with additional support from Creative Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland's Towns Partnership, Scottish Procurement Alliance and South of Scotland Enterprise.

“Over 27 years, the SURF Awards have consistently attracted entrants of the highest quality, this year’s finalists are no exception. I have regularly been humbled by the range of talent and commitment, and in many cases the sheer doggedness, shown by individuals and groups in their endeavours to improve their communities. The Awards provide an opportunity to celebrate their success, a success that Scotland can justifiably be proud of.”



Brian MacDonald  
Chair, SURF

# SURF AWARDS 2025

2025 marks 27 years of the SURF Awards, showcasing, promoting and sharing the learning from best practice examples of ‘what works’ within Scotland’s places. Each year, the SURF Awards has celebrated some of the most impressive outcomes in tackling physical, social and economic decline in communities throughout the country.

This publication profiles the 15 projects shortlisted in the 2025 SURF Awards. Projects range in scale, activity and geography, from smaller scale community activity in Udney, to arts and wellbeing projects in Dumfries, and larger scale investments in Ardrossan. We hope all 15 will inspire those working in regeneration projects throughout Scotland, and provide opportunities for learning.

## Showcasing Best Practice

Each year, the SURF Awards shortlist and wider application process highlight what can be achieved when people come together in pursuit of a collective goal.

The Awards showcase examples of community groups and organisations delivering cohesive responses to meet community need and aspiration. Doing this by regenerating town centres or neighbourhoods, delivering solutions to housing shortage, breaking down barriers to employment and training opportunities, and supporting wellbeing and wider regeneration ambitions via creative activity.

This year’s 15 finalists sit at the heart of their respective communities. Providing an opportunity for others to learn from what is working and how this can be transferred elsewhere. The SURF Awards truly reflect and celebrate the best of community regeneration, and each initiative has changed the lives, for the better, of the people involved.

SURF thanks all of the applicants who took time to share their story and whose work supports communities throughout Scotland to strive for what often seems unachievable, providing positive outcomes for Scotland’s communities.

## Themes and Outcomes

The SURF Awards has five categories, which reflect regeneration activity at all scales, from community led initiatives to large-scale partnership investments. They are:

- **Housing and Regeneration**
- **Community Led Regeneration**
- **Creative Regeneration**
- **Removing Barriers to Employability**
- **Improving Scotland’s Places**

This year, our 20-member panel of expert judges independently considered category applications over an intensive two-month process of assessments and site visits. Working in category teams, the judges were tasked with narrowing down all nominees to a shortlist of 15, and ultimately selecting just one winner per category.

These winners were The Standard, Midsteeple Quarter (see p6), Scottish Men’s Sheds (p8), A Creative Approach to Revitalising Lochside (p10), What I Need In Life (WIN) (p12) and Ardrossan South Beach Community Space (p14). Our judging panel were highly impressed with the outcomes all initiatives achieved, and in the commitment, thoughtfulness and community-centred vision behind their respective planning and development journeys.

## Special Thanks

SURF is grateful to the Scottish Government, which has been our key SURF Awards partner since 2003. On pages 18-19, you can learn about what SURF and the Scottish Government are doing to support improved policy and practice in regeneration.

We appreciate the time and effort of our judges (you can see who they are on p5), and the additional support from our category partners: Creative Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scotland’s Towns Partnership, Scottish Procurement Alliance, and South of Scotland Enterprise.

SURF could not operate as Scotland’s Regeneration Forum without the active support, knowledge and experience of our 300+ member organisations: especially our 5 key delivery partners, who are listed on p20.

Finally, we are grateful to everyone involved in the SURF Awards since its inception, for helping us to better understand and promote ‘what works’ in what has largely been a turbulent and challenging period for Scottish community regeneration.

**If you would like to know more about the SURF Awards, including a series of free 2026 events featuring the winning projects and the outcomes of past processes, please visit: [www.surf.scot/surf-awards](http://www.surf.scot/surf-awards)**

# Results

## Contents & Category Results

### Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: to recognise and promote the achievements of all housing providers in ensuring that their investments are planned and delivered in a way which produces substantial, lasting benefits. This category is supported by Scottish Procurement Alliance.



Winner: **The Standard, Midsteeples Quarter** – page 6

Also shortlisted: The Y Centre and Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith – page 7

### Community Led Regeneration

Purpose: to reward best practice in a regeneration project which features representatives of a community of place or theme in a leading role. This category is supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise.



Winner: **Scottish Men's Sheds** – page 8

Also shortlisted: Number 30 The Square and The Medan Centre – page 9

### Creative Regeneration

Purpose: to reward best practice in placing artists, arts and creativity at the heart of place-based community regeneration efforts, increasing the potential of places. This category is supported by Creative Scotland.



Winner: **A Creative Approach to Revitalising Lochside** – page 10

Also shortlisted: Galoshans Festival and Alloway Railway Tunnel – page 11

### Removing Barriers to Employability

Purpose: to recognise a project that supports community regeneration by providing skills and employability support to help people fulfil their potential.



Winner: **What I Need In Life (WIN)** – page 12

Also shortlisted: Fife Gingerbread: Family Approach and MacMillan Skills Hub – page 13

### Improving Scotland's Places

Purpose: to identify, celebrate and share the positive impacts of participative planning and regeneration processes in Scottish places. This category is supported by Scotland's Towns Partnership.



Winner: **Ardrossan South Beach Community Space** – page 14

Also shortlisted: Two Towns Big Ideas – Banff & Macduff and Kenmore District Revitalisation – page 15



*"Badgers are one of nature's ecosystem engineers due to their ability to alter and shape the environment. Creating better surroundings for nature and other species to thrive. In the same way, we hope that planned regeneration activity brings positive outcomes for communities."*

# SURF AWARDS 2025

Recognising good practice across the country

Scottish Men's Sheds ★

Two Towns Big Ideas –  
Banff & Macduff

Number 30  
The Square

The Medan  
Centre

Kenmore District  
Revitalisation

The Y Centre

Fife Gingerbread:  
Family Approach

MacMillan Skills Hub

Galoshans Festival

Ardrossan South Beach  
Community Space

Buccleuch Street,  
Dalkeith

What I Need In Life (WIN)

Alloway Railway Tunnel

A Creative Approach to  
Revitalising Lochside

The Standard,  
Midsteeples Quarter

“As Highlands and Islands Enterprise celebrates 60 years of partnership with our communities, we honour the spirit of local leadership that has transformed places and lives across our region. Community led development is not just about regeneration – it’s about hope, ambition, and the power of people to shape their own futures. The SURF Awards shine a light on this energy and innovation, and we are proud to stand alongside those who make it happen every day.”



Rachel Hunter  
Director of Enterprise and  
Community Support, Highlands  
and Islands Enterprise

## Independent judging panel – and the projects they assessed

The 2025 SURF Awards were independently judged by a panel of 20 representatives drawn from national regeneration-related bodies and community groups. Each panel member, listed below, gave their time freely to evaluate, shortlist, make visits to, and agree a winner from, project nominees in the respective categories. SURF is grateful for the extensive time and effort they contributed.

### Housing and Regeneration

Caryn McDade (Scottish Government)  
Heather O'Donnell (Scottish Procurement Alliance)  
Annabel Pidgeon (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations)  
Graham Ross (Austin-Smith:Lord)

### Community Led Regeneration

Murray Allan (Highlands and Islands Enterprise)  
Rob Davidson (South of Scotland Enterprise)  
Colette McGarva (Community Development Alliance Scotland)  
Richard Whitcomb (Bute Community Land Company)

### Creative Regeneration

Esme Leitch (Creative Scotland)  
Saskia Singer (Narture CIC)  
Kathryn Welch (Culture Counts)  
Manira Ahmad (Public Health Scotland)

### Removing Barriers to Employability

John Devine (ng homes)  
Heather Quammie (Scottish Government)  
Blyth Deans (Third Sector Employability Forum)  
Niki Spence (Clyde Gateway)

### Improving Scotland's Places

Mhairi Donaghy (Scotland's Towns Partnership)  
Neil Young (St Paul's Youth Forum)  
Mark Lawson (Scottish Government)  
Jilly Burns (Historic Environment Scotland)

Regeneration initiatives from across Scotland were nominated for the 2025 SURF Awards, highlighting the wide range of interventions that are addressing social and economic problems in communities throughout Scotland.

From Dumfries and Galloway to Aberdeenshire, these projects represent a wide spread of sectors and scales, with diverse public, private and third sector delivery models, and budgets that range from under £50k to millions.

Whilst only 15 shortlisted projects are featured in this publication, SURF appreciated the opportunity to learn about the important community regeneration work evident in every initiative that was put forward for consideration.



# Housing and Regeneration

# Winner

## SURF AWARDS 2025

### The Standard, Midsteeples Quarter

#### What is the aim of the project?

To deliver strategic town centre regeneration via community asset ownership.

#### Where is it taking place?

The Midsteeples Quarter is located within Dumfries High Street.

#### What has been achieved?

The Standard is the first phase of the Midsteeples Quarter Masterplan in Dumfries, a landmark community led initiative that aims to regenerate the town centre via community ownership. The upper floors of The Standard, which was completed in November 2024, are comprised of seven apartments for mid-market rent, including one dedicated as a work/living space for creative professionals. The lower floors contain a mix of enterprise, community, meeting, event, and office space.

The mixed-use development has kick-started the regeneration of the town centre, delivered in collaboration with a range of partners. The project is a complex hybrid of partial redevelopment and new-build,

The Standard is the first phase of the Midsteeples Quarter Masterplan



Four previously empty shops have already been brought back into 'meanwhile' use



responded to a need profile evidenced over a number of years. The apartments have been designed to maximise benefit from their aspect and elevated position, offering views across the Nith Estuary.

Significant engagement identified an overall lack of residents within the town centre; the project is a response, bringing footfall, renewed

vibrancy, and economic activity aligned to town centre living.

The enterprise space on the building's first floor is supporting and encouraging tech business start-ups and social enterprises from a co-working hub. Four previously empty shops have already been brought back into 'meanwhile' use, offering local independent traders and enterprises affordable retail spaces in a prime high street location.

The completion of Phase One brings a range of wider benefits to Dumfries and the wider community. The creation of a new Town Centre Living model in Dumfries is already catalysing other providers to plan housing delivery. Its successful completion has created a landmark innovative build, changing the tone of what is possible in Dumfries and raising the standard for new development.

#### Who is running it?

Led by Midsteeples Quarter (Dumfries High Street Limited), a Community Benefit Society with in excess of 500 members, with the housing developed in partnership with South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH).

#### Why did the judging panel like it?

The Standard heralds the next step in the renaissance of Dumfries town centre and is already the catalyst for other regeneration activity in and around the Midsteeples Quarter. The judges were extremely impressed by the integration of new dwellings within, and behind, the rejuvenated listed building on Dumfries' High Street. The carefully composed design skilfully reinforces the historic townscape, combining new buildings with restored heritage assets to deliver the initial phase of an ambitious mixed-use masterplan.

The judging panel acknowledged the extensive partnership working, enduring place leadership, and creative engagement of local residents, businesses and stakeholders required to establish and sustain a Community Benefit Society to deliver the project, which also supports local businesses, enables social enterprise and hosts community events.

The Standard building sets a very high standard for town centre regeneration.



Consisting of seven energy-efficient apartments

#### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.midsteeplesquarter.org/135-135-high-street>

**Contact:** Mike Staples, Chief Executive, SOSCH:  
[mike.staples@sosch.org](mailto:mike.staples@sosch.org)



# Shortlisted

## Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith

### What is the aim of the project?

To provide energy efficient affordable housing.

### Where is it taking place?

Located within the town centre of Dalkeith, Midlothian.

### What has been achieved?

Buccleuch Street is a mixed-use development containing six new affordable housing units that address the climate crisis and help tenants avoid fuel poverty by providing warm, comfortable homes built to Passivhaus standard. The project contributes to the circular economy through reuse, provides low-energy homes for the future, and supports social sustainability through the restoration of a historic building. The development, part of a wider town centre masterplan, has rejuvenated an area of Dalkeith that was run down and disconnected from the wider town.

An existing vacant property was brought back to life through retention, deep refurbishment, thermal improvements, and layout changes to meet current needs. It now contains new homes in the upper floors, with commercial units on the ground floor. Enhancing the street frontage has increased town centre density and footfall, and the pedestrian experience is improved by replacing a long boundary wall with an interesting new building. In addition, the six new-build elements are Passivhaus-certified, cutting energy use and bills by 90%.

The Buccleuch Street project also includes three previously renovated energy-efficient studios and a two-bedroom flat above shops in a historic building opposite the library. The retail units have been refurbished, and the original shop fronts have been retained.

Midlothian Council has built one of the first Passivhaus-certified affordable housing projects in Scotland, moved towards addressing the climate emergency, and created homes which benefit from nearly zero operational carbon use.

### Who is running it?

Designed by architectural practice Smith Scott Mullan for Midlothian Council.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges recognised that this project demonstrates how to successfully rejuvenate town centres by introducing high-quality, very energy-efficient housing to enliven our historic townscape. Retaining and repurposing the original building on the street frontage was welcomed by the judges, and achieving Passivhaus standard for the new-build flats had massively reduced running costs for tenants.

The judging team noted that the project is an enabler for the wider regeneration of Dalkeith town centre, whilst helping address local housing need, tackle fuel poverty, support a mixed-use town centre, and repurpose historic buildings to maintain the identity of the place.



## The Y Centre

### What is the aim of the project?

To transform two vacant properties into vibrant spaces for young people.

### Where is it taking place?

Based within the Conservation Area of Central Perth.

### What has been achieved?

Standing on Atholl Street, the 130-year-old St Andrew's and St Stephen's building has been transformed into an advanced youth centre for young people across Tayside. YMCA Tayside purchased the C-listed church in December 2000 with huge ambitions to transform it into an innovative space for young people, containing a wide range of engaging facilities. Here, young people have access to opportunities to learn, where they can improve their confidence and skills, meet other young people, and receive support from dedicated youth workers.

The adjacent derelict tenement was repaired and converted to offer affordable accommodation to young people. The accommodation offerings are independent but linked to the Y Centre services and will be of particular benefit to care leavers. Providing an unrushed and supportive stepping stone to fully independent living.

Five new permanent FTE jobs have been created for the people of Perth, as well as supporting 11 existing jobs, 25 construction jobs, and creating 500 training placement opportunities. The development increases footfall in the city centre from the creation of a shop, rentable office and events space, and the community hub, with its well-attended regular youth activities.

The development of this project has delivered a significant placemaking impact and directly delivers on Perth and Kinross Council's priority objective to tackle poverty across the region.

### Who is running it?

The properties have been transformed by YMCA Tayside with support from Perth and Kinross Council.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges were inspired by the energy and ingenuity of the dedicated team responsible for delivering this life-affirming, transformational project and running an amazing programme of activities at the Y Centre. The judging team appreciated the immense effort and partnership working necessary to reimagine a vacant listed church to create a fantastic facility that warmly welcomes and nurtures young people.

A neighbouring tenement is currently being refurbished to provide accommodation for vulnerable young adults. Having met one of the initial tenants, it was apparent to the judges that upon completion this will deliver a multi-dimensional regeneration project already having a positive impact on the lives of many young people in Perth and beyond.



### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.smith-scott-mullan.co.uk/project/buccleuch-street/>

**Contact:** John Lancaster, Associate and Architect, Smith Scott Mullan: 0131 555 1414, [j.lancaster@smith-scott-mullan.co.uk](mailto:j.lancaster@smith-scott-mullan.co.uk)

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.ymcatayside.com/>

**Contact:** Jill McGrath, CEO, YMCA Tayside: 07545 424519, [jill@ymcatayside.com](mailto:jill@ymcatayside.com)

# Community Led Regeneration

# Winner

## SURF AWARDS 2025

### Scottish Men's Sheds

#### What is the aim of the project?

To transform disused and underutilised buildings into vibrant community hubs where men can come together.

#### Where is it taking place?

Men's Sheds are located in all 32 local authority areas.



Activity within Scottish Men's Sheds is member-led and guided by local need.

#### What has been achieved?

Across Scotland, men, particularly elderly, retired, unemployed or those experiencing poor health, are disproportionately affected by loneliness, isolation, and loss of purpose. Traditional community provision often does not feel accessible or relevant to them. This is where the introduction of Men's Sheds has proven to be a solution for social and health regeneration.

Sheds create safe spaces where men can connect, share skills and knowledge, and contribute to the community. Activity within Scottish Men's Sheds is member-led and guided by local need. Members collectively decide on projects, workshops, and community initiatives. This approach ensures that activities are relevant, meaningful and engaging and create a strong sense of ownership and motivation among members.

The Sheds offer a wide range of activities, from gardening, model railway projects, digital skills sessions, and intergenerational mentoring to woodworking, metalwork, and DIY projects. These activities provide opportunities for Shedders to learn new skills, share expertise, and work collaboratively, fostering friendships and peer support. The diversity of projects caters to different interests and abilities, encouraging participation from men who may not engage with traditional community services.

Regenerating disused buildings, green spaces, community infrastructure and, most importantly, giving men a sense of belonging



Fostering intergenerational working, with older men passing on traditional skills to younger people

and purpose. Fostering intergenerational working, with older men passing on traditional skills to younger people, whilst in turn learning from younger generations, strengthening community bonds across ages.

The Scottish Men's Sheds Association (SMSA) plays a vital role in the establishment and sustainability of Sheds, providing expertise, resources, and encouragement to enable communities to turn ideas into reality. Demand is consistently high; from just one Shed in 2013, the movement has grown to over 210 Sheds, with new Sheds in development each year. SMSA supports Shedders by maintaining an accessible support network.

This combined model of local action and national support has proven transformative. Together, Scottish Men's Sheds and the SMSA represent a powerful model of community led regeneration in Scotland.

#### Who is running it?

Scottish Men's Sheds are fundamentally community led and run by volunteers, with support from the SMSA, a member-led organisation with over 4,500 members.

#### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judging panel recognised the Scottish Men's Sheds Association as an inspirational driving force facilitating the growth of the Men's Shed movement in Scotland over the past decade. During the visit, judges met representatives from two local sheds and saw first-hand how these grassroots initiatives — established by local people — foster connections, skill-sharing, and community wellbeing. Rather than being a top-down model, each Shed reflects the needs and interests of its members and their local communities.



Men's Sheds has proven to be a solution for social and health regeneration

The panel was impressed by the diversity of activities offered, which help combat social isolation and strengthen local bonds. The movement exemplifies community led regeneration, with each Shed acting as a welcoming space where people come together to support one another, build friendships, and contribute positively to their local area.

#### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://scottishmsa.org.uk/>

**Contact:** Dr Jason Schroeder, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Men's Sheds Association: 07397 382533, [ceo@scottishmsa.org.uk](mailto:ceo@scottishmsa.org.uk)



# Shortlisted

## The Medan Centre

### What is the aim of the project?

To transform a disused hotel into a vibrant community hub.

### Where is it taking place?

Located in the rural village of Pitmedden in the parish of Udney, Aberdeenshire.

### What has been achieved?

In 2018, the need for a multi-generational community hub was identified through a consultation called 'Imagine Udney' and incorporated into a Community Action Plan. In response, Udney Community Trust purchased a disused hotel and restored it, creating The Medan Centre, a space shaped by and for the local community.

In 2025, the centre hosts Café48, Udney Community Shelf, a community garden, a sharing library, and a wellbeing hub, alongside a diverse programme of activities supporting physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Affordable spaces are available for local groups and practitioners to hire. Having a dedicated, accessible hub has supported a significant increase in community led activities and initiatives, created and delivered with the support of local volunteers.

Before opening in 2020, Udney Community Trust could deliver only one regular activity, the weekly Health Walk, due to the constraints of a small office with no public space. The Medan Centre has enabled the growth of an extensive programme designed for broad appeal, which currently includes 18 regular activities, five annual initiatives, and around 30 ad hoc activities, including litter picks, talks, quizzes, and volunteer events.

Volunteer involvement has also grown exponentially. From six regular volunteers at Café48's opening, there are now 79 volunteers supporting operations and programme delivery, who have collectively contributed over 3,300 volunteer hours from January-June 2025.

### Who is running it?

Delivered and managed by Udney Community Trust, working in partnership with local organisations, and led by the community.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judging panel particularly liked Udney Development Trust's strong local leadership and its inclusive approach in creating a fully accessible facility that fosters community cohesion. Responding to the absence of a defined village centre, the Trust led a thorough community action planning process, engaging key partners including the local authority, schools, businesses, and residents. The community-owned wind turbine was also highlighted as a valuable asset, generating funds reinvested into local projects.

The judges could clearly see that the centre has now become a vibrant focal point for local activities, significantly boosting volunteer participation and delivering lasting benefits for the village and its environs.



## Number 30 The Square

### What is the aim of the project?

To provide a renewed reason to use the town centre after years of decline.

### Where is it taking place?

Based in Huntly, a mid-sized town in Aberdeenshire.

### What has been achieved?

In recent years, Huntly town centre has experienced rapid decline, resulting in the closure of numerous local retailers and other businesses and the withdrawal of public and commercial services. In 2023, the vacancy rate in Huntly town centre was 31%, the highest in Aberdeenshire and double the Scotland average.

Number 30 is a community led response to reverse town centre decline and deliver on the priorities set out in the Huntly 2030 Room to Thrive Plan, providing a new anchor facility in the heart of Huntly. The project is a direct result of a community vision and consultation process and the dynamic energy of the Development Trust and its partners to grab the opportunity to drive change.

Following a six-year journey to acquire and reimagine the space, Number 30 is based in a substantial category B and C-listed former department store in a prominent gateway to The Square, which was identified and named by local school children as part of a geography project.

The hub opened in September 2024 and is home to co-working, enterprise and learning spaces; a community-run café, cinema and gallery; a green travel hub and visitor information centre; performance and conference space; and, very soon, the new banking hub. The public response has been overwhelming.

### Who is running it?

Led by Huntly Development Trust and based on a community vision delivered by the Huntly Town Team.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges were impressed with the creative and enterprising nature demonstrated by the staff and volunteers to deliver a mixed-use space in the heart of Huntly's town centre in response to community ambitions.

It was clear to the panel the positive impact that was being made as a result of the community's vision to repurpose the vacant property into a multi-purpose, fully accessible community hub providing not only high-quality cinema, retail, and business facilities but also enabling community development, employment, and learning opportunities. There was a strong sense that the quality and scale of the project will act as a catalyst for further regeneration within the town centre.



### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://udnycommunitytrust.org.uk/>

**Contact:** Ruth Cluness, Manager, Udney Community Trust:  
01651 843776, [manager@udnycommunitytrust.org.uk](mailto:manager@udnycommunitytrust.org.uk)

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.number30.org/welcome/>

**Contact:** Carolyn Powell, Joint General Manager,  
Huntly Development Trust: 07551 107573, [carolyn.powell@huntly.net](mailto:carolyn.powell@huntly.net)

# Creative Regeneration

# Winner

## SURF AWARDS 2025

### A Creative Approach to Revitalising Lochside

#### What is the aim of the project?

To provide creative opportunities that allow people to fulfil their potential.

#### Where is it taking place?

Operating in Lochside, Dumfries, one of the top 3% most deprived areas in Scotland.

#### What has been achieved?

The project began eight years ago when members of the community took part in the Big Burns Supper community carnival. People enjoyed coming together with a common purpose and doing something creative. The community shared a deep frustration regarding the image of the area. Through a need for community action, the idea of LIFT D+G (Lochside Is Families Together) was born.



The Art Cabin provides a clearly identifiable base within the community

LIFT D+G now employs 10+ people, helps countless families, and empowers the community. Working holistically across food justice, health and wellbeing, employability, youth development, and placemaking. The team run groups, stage events, partner with local and national agencies, manage two community shops, and are delivering flagship creative placemaking projects, such as Nature And Nurture Area (NANA), Art Lab, and a DnD Creative Gaming Network. The work is now at the centre of a 25-year partner regeneration initiative.

Over the past year, in excess of 100 local people have participated consistently in creative projects, with hundreds more benefitting from occasional contact. Participants report feeling less isolated, have gained wider social networks, increased confidence and skills, and many are pursuing new career paths. NANA has educated people about growing and cooking, greatly improving diets and nutrition locally.

Wheatley Homes South donated a portacabin and lease to occupy, now known as the Art Cabin, and supported the fit-out of the space.

It was quickly clear what a huge benefit it was for LIFT, and its work, to have a clearly identifiable base within the community. Working with Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Art Cabin was adopted within the local planning strategy as a 'prototype HQ' for LIFT, and funding was sourced from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to expand the cabin with a storage container.



NANA has educated people about growing and cooking

The team are now working on plans for a permanent creative placemaking hub for Lochside, within the Lochside Regeneration Masterplan.

#### Who is running it?

Led by LIFT D+G with support from partners, including The Stove Network, Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Wheatley Homes South.

#### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judging panel felt that LIFT emerged as the winner due to its authentic, grassroots response to local need that centres creativity. Grown by local people, the project continues to evolve, addressing challenges and supporting health and wellbeing, creativity, skills development and community cohesion through community led initiatives. The level and depth of engagement was remarkable, providing diverse and person-centred opportunities for the whole community to get involved, contribute to and benefit from the project. Not only does the project benefit the lives of local people, but it is also transforming the space with a vibrant community hub and a thriving garden that provides nutritious food for residents. With no agenda beyond improving local lives, LIFT's work is genuinely life-changing, deeply rooted in place, and a model of creative regeneration in action.



The team are delivering flagship creative placemaking projects

#### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.liftdumfries.com/>

**Contact:** Angela Gilmour, Managing Director, LIFT D+G:  
07783137918, [angela@liftdumfries.com](mailto:angela@liftdumfries.com)



# Shortlisted

## Alloway Railway Tunnel

### What is the aim of the project?

To create an art installation within an old, dilapidated railway tunnel.

### Where is it taking place?

Located in Alloway, South Ayrshire, the birthplace of Robert Burns.

### What has been achieved?

The Alloway Railway Tunnel is an ambitious vision to deliver a community regeneration arts project, creating a stunning art installation within the railway tunnel at the Brig O' Doon. With a total length of 300m, it will be one of the largest murals in Scotland.

Working with muralist Chris Rutterford, 35 mural art workshops have been delivered, enabling the community to get involved in painting the mural. So far, 2500 people from age 3 to 93 have contributed.

The team are creating 30 documentary heritage films. Using QR codes on the mural, visitors can watch the films in the tunnel, as well as through the website gallery. Using local people to tell their story, play music, recite poems or sing songs, it brings the illustrations to life.

The project has created educational opportunities, including a 7-week school programme with Girvan Primary to help tell the story of Ailsa Craig, a feature in the mural. The pupils created a short film and teaching pack to share the learning.

Local people are proud of the history of Ayrshire and want to ensure residents and visitors from all over the world have the best experience when exploring the village. The project is more than merely restoring the past; they have given the tunnel, and community, a future.

### Who is running it?

Overseen by the Alloway Railway Tunnel (ART) SCIO, with support from partners such as South Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire College, and the National Trust for Scotland.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges agreed that Alloway Tunnel was a strong finalist due to its inspiring, life-enhancing transformation and genuine cross-sector collaboration. This community led project exemplified collaborative working, engaging local partners and providing meaningful skills development opportunities for students from the local college and schools. Artist-led participation fostered connections with local heritage, as well as creative skill development. The sense of community pride and ownership over the tunnel was clear to the judges, as were the benefits to those involved in the creative process. Sustainability has been thoughtfully embedded, with income generation ensuring long-term resilience and supporting ambitions for further improvements.

## Galoshans Festival

### What is the aim of the project?

To use traditional folk theatre to champion creative arts practice.

### Where is it taking place?

The festival and events programme take place throughout Inverclyde.

### What has been achieved?

The Galoshans Festival is a celebration of creativity, culture and performance rooted in a traditional piece of folk theatre originating in Inverclyde and performed throughout medieval Scotland, particularly around Hallowe'en. The festival has grown to become a highlight of the year for culture and community, using this unique tradition as a launchpad to explore, promote, and champion creative arts locally.

The 2024 festival celebrated Galoshans' 10th anniversary and was the largest festival to date. Through RIG Arts' artist residencies, bursaries, artist commissions, and partner-supported opportunities, the festival delivered an extensive creative programme that engaged 1,215 participants, attracted 3,969 audience members, created opportunities for 254 artists, and involved 23 volunteers in its delivery.

Galoshans presents a vibrant programme of high-quality arts intervention, bringing art installations, film, theatre, live music, and much more to the heart of the community. The festival connects communities with creative practitioners to inspire and unlock potential, create a sense of place, celebrate local identity, and renew pride.

The Galoshans programme is designed to break down barriers and make quality art accessible to families and those who may not otherwise have the opportunity. Putting Inverclyde on the map as a place of cultural significance and presenting cutting-edge creative practice in an accessible local context.

### Who is running it?

Led by RIG Arts and utilising a consortium of partners, including Inverclyde Council Library Services, The Watt Institution, Inverclyde Music Services, The Beacon, Magic Torch, The Wyllieum, and CVS Inverclyde.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges felt that Galoshans was a strong finalist, deeply rooted in tradition – this project impressed judges with its creativity, ambition, and support for artists. Developed through a consortium of local partners, Galoshans' immersive programme has become a key event in the local calendar, engaging marginalised communities and collaborating with a range of artists and community groups. The project showcased impressive scale with strong visitor and community engagement, reflecting a deep commitment to inclusion and creative development. Advocates and participants shared powerful personal outcomes and journeys, showing the impact of this high-quality community led cultural provision on the lives of residents.



### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.allowaytunnel.org.uk>

**Contact:** Shelagh McLachlan, Trustee, Alloway Railway Tunnel (ART) SCIO: 07841 868129, [shelagh@allowaytunnel.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:shelagh@allowaytunnel.onmicrosoft.com)

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://galoshansfestival.co.uk/>

**Contact:** Karlyn Barr, Funding Officer, RIG Arts: 01475 910337, [karlyn@rigarts.org](mailto:karlyn@rigarts.org)

# Removing Barriers to Employability

# Winner

## SURF AWARDS 2025

### What I Need In Life (WIN)

#### What is the aim of the project?

To address high levels of non-engagement post pandemic.

#### Where is it taking place?

Operating in Blantyre and Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire.

#### What has been achieved?

What I Need in Life (WIN) is a holistic service co-designed with clients that adopts a whole-person approach, incorporating physical, emotional, mental, and social aspects, whilst removing barriers to progression and enabling meaningful participation.



A self-funded pilot project, WIN was created with the single aim of re-engaging, post-pandemic, with those disadvantaged at a community level, and providing clients with a purpose and meaning. Offering an alternative pathway and access to a broad spectrum of support delivered by an established network of partners.

The clients supported by WIN face deep-rooted, complex barriers that often include poor mental health, disability, social isolation, trauma, homelessness, criminal convictions, and little or no work experience. They have disengaged from mainstream and statutory services as they are in crisis, and traditional employability approaches and support services do not reflect their reality at a time when they need help the most.

WIN offers clients a second chance, providing a safe, supported environment for them to build confidence, create stability and structure, and flourish at a pace they are comfortable with. It is not about quick fixes; it is about offering the right support at the right time, whilst focusing on equipping clients with the tools and skills to succeed in life, achieve their goals and aspirations, help alleviate poverty, and progress towards employment, further education, and/or training.

WIN is delivered by two Community Wellbeing Advisors (CWA) who offer personalised non-clinical support to help clients overcome barriers, reduce isolation, build trust, and empower them to take positive steps to achieve long-term change.

For WIN clients, a first step can be leaving home for the first time in years, attending life skills sessions, accessing specialist support, such as addiction services through a trusted network of partners, or pursuing a volunteering opportunity. By breaking down barriers piece by piece, WIN restores belief that change is possible and that every person has something to contribute.

#### Who is running it?

The programme is delivered by Routes to Work South, working with partners to provide wrap around support.

#### Why did the judging panel like it?

The WIN project is clearly filling a gap in two communities with the highest levels of deprivation in South Lanarkshire. During the visit, the judging team was given access to the WIN delivery team, including the very successful CWAs. The judges were impressed by the input from partners, who play an active role in the delivery of WIN. The judging team also had the pleasure of meeting five of the WIN participants, who each told their story of the support they had received and the impact it had on their lives.

The judges were very impressed with how the CWAs were able to work with participants, helping them to overcome deep-rooted complex barriers that were preventing them from moving on and improving their lives, with participants telling judges that the WIN project had been life changing for them.



#### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** [https://youtu.be/a\\_cd74Y9fhY](https://youtu.be/a_cd74Y9fhY)

**Contact:** Nicola McNaughtan, Deputy Chief Executive, Routes to Work South: 0141 6460500, [nmcnaughtan@rtws.org](mailto:nmcnaughtan@rtws.org)

# Shortlisted



## Fife Gingerbread: Family Approach

### What is the aim of the project?

To provide holistic, whole family support to vulnerable communities.

### Where is it taking place?

Based in three specific ward areas with the highest poverty rates in Fife.

### What has been achieved?

The Family Approach project works with the six Child Poverty Priority groups, based in Methil, Buckhaven and Wemyss; Kirkcaldy East and Central; and Benarty, Lochgelly and Cardenden. The support is flexible, relationship-based, and tailored to each unique family's needs. It encompasses 1:1 parenting guidance, emotional wellbeing, housing support, education assistance, money advice, advocacy, and confidence building, alongside traditional employability skills. Group sessions and family learning activities are also included to foster connection and resilience between parents and children.



As part of the Engage, Support, Progress model, The Family Approach work holistically with families to break down barriers that keep them trapped in poverty and guide them toward a resilient, sustainable future. As families grow in confidence and stability, they are supported along the employability pathway to gain access to training, education, traineeships, and guaranteed interviews. Strength-based and co-produced with families, the project empowers families to lead their own progress using tools like Outcome Star, which tracks progress across wellbeing, aspirations, family stability, and work-related activity.

Over two years, the team have worked with 161 parents. Of those parents, 30 jobs were secured and 28 progressed to accredited education or volunteering. Many others are now ready to seek opportunities after removing significant barriers. This approach doesn't just help parents into work; it ensures they stay there, creating lasting change and breaking the cycle of poverty for future generations.

### Who is running it?

Delivered by Fife Gingerbread in partnership with Citizens Advice and Rights Fife.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges were very impressed with the stories from many participants that had been supported through the project and with the dedication and enthusiasm of the Family Approach Key Workers. It was evident that it's not a one-size-fits-all approach, with the support tailored to each unique family's needs.

The judging team very much liked the importance the project placed on the participants "voice", which was validated by two parents who sit on the parent forum. Excellent collaboration with other organisations was demonstrated by input from the dedicated Citizens Advice Bureau staff member, who has been seconded to the project.

## MacMillan Skills Hub

### What is the aim of the project?

To provide an employability service tailored to local need.

### Where is it taking place?

Delivered within some of the most deprived areas in North Edinburgh, Muirhouse and Pennywell.

### What has been achieved?

The MacMillan Skills Hub is an employability service embedded within a regeneration development. It is part of a whole-area, place-based approach to make services community led, interlinked, accessible, and effective. Based within the MacMillan Community Hub, a new co-located facility that allows for cross-partner collaboration and a friendly and welcoming environment.



Each person who engages with the Hub is treated as a unique individual with their own action plan, created in partnership with their employability support worker, who stays with them throughout the whole journey. The core service is flexible and recognises that clients often have additional barriers, including caring responsibilities, digital poverty, refugee status, and disabilities. The team works to create an action plan that is embedded with support, including digital upskilling and providing any necessary equipment and software. Nursery support is available within the building for parents needing time to speak in private. A client barrier removal fund is matched to each individual for them to access to meet the costs of things such as travel, interview clothes, or protective clothing if undertaking training.

The service ensures that local people benefit from the new employer opportunities that have been created by the investment in the wider area. To date, 190 residents have moved out of poverty and into quality jobs.

### Who is running it?

The service is delivered by Capital City Partnership (CCP), working with local partners, and linking into the CCP coordinated Edinburgh Local Employability Partnership.

### Why did the judging panel like it?

The judges visited the recently opened MacMillan Skills Hub and immediately experienced a really vibrant atmosphere, with a significant number of local residents using the facilities on the day. As part of a wider regeneration project, the Hub shares the building with other local services, which the judges felt was a great example of effectively linking regeneration opportunities in the area with the needs of local people to improve skills and, for many, progress into employment.

The judges applauded considerable success in linking with two large-scale recruitment services, creating dedicated teams to maximise opportunities for participants, providing intensive support both pre and post-employment, and ensuring job sustainability.

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.fifegingerbread.org.uk/family-approach>

**Contact:** Angela Campbell, Team Leader – Family Approach, Fife Gingerbread: 01592 725210, [angela@Fifegingerbread.org.uk](mailto:angela@Fifegingerbread.org.uk)

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://macmillanskillshub.org/>

**Contact:** Rona Hunter, CEO, Capital City Partnership: 07566 230608, [Rona.hunter@capitalcitypartnership.org](mailto:Rona.hunter@capitalcitypartnership.org)

# Improving Scotland's Places

# Winner

## SURF AWARDS 2025

### Ardrossan South Beach Community Space

Located in North Ayrshire, the Ardrossan South Beach Community Space (ASBCS) is based in the South Beach Promenade area of the town. Ardrossan Community Development Trust has a 25-year lease on the space, and it has traditionally been a destination for both Ardrossan residents and visitors alike.

The ASBCS delivers significant and positive impact for the community of Ardrossan, which continues to suffer negative effects from the decline of its shipbuilding, fishing, chemical, and tourism industries, which left a community legacy of economic decline; lack of local employment, training, and skills opportunities, particularly for young people; and a rundown town centre, with empty premises and derelict land.

The Hub on the Prom, a vibrant centre for community, leisure, and seaside fun



The development of The Hub on the Prom, a vibrant centre for community, leisure, and seaside fun, has allowed for the establishment of a Community KIOSK, which is providing a range of community activities and services. This includes free access to Wi-Fi, available across the site, enabling visitors to leave comments and reviews. The KIOSK also provides disability wheeler hire, golf equipment hire for use on the 18-hole crazy golf course, and deckchair hire, all of which are free and enhance the visitor experience.

Cyclists can make use of the free to use bike shed, complete with plug sockets for charging electric bikes. With both accessible toilets

Cyclists can make use of the free to use bike shed



and fully equipped changing places, the ASBCS ensures that everyone can enjoy all that Ardrossan South Beach has to offer.

The Hub is also home to the Beach House Community Café, which facilitates community interaction, reduces social isolation, and supports social enterprise. Four colourful beach huts have also been delivered for rental by local businesses, alongside a mobile sauna, contributing to the delivery of community wealth.

The South Beach Play Park offers a welcoming space for families, featuring a wheelchair swing,



Four colourful beach huts have also been delivered for rental by local businesses

accessible play equipment, and a delightful children's maze. All of these services and facilities are part of the Hub's promise to make services fun, inclusive, and accessible for everyone.

A key deliverable of the project was to provide employment, training and volunteering opportunities for the residents of Ardrossan, particularly the most vulnerable members of the community. This includes the creation of six FTE equivalent employment opportunities, 175 local volunteering opportunities, and 100 training opportunities across several sectors, including hospitality, events, and community engagement.

The judges were hugely impressed with the transformation of the neglected and underused seafront area into a vibrant and well-maintained community-owned space that welcomes both locals and visitors.

The new, energy-efficient community hub and café provides an impressive focal point that is helping to change perceptions of Ardrossan as an attractive place. Led by the community with support from the local authority and housing association, the improved seafront has already delivered physical, economic and social benefits that are a kick-starter for regeneration across the rest of the town.

The judges also welcomed the further exciting work underway, including links with community led initiatives in nearby Saltcoats and Stevenson, ensuring that the South Beach Hub can act as a demonstrator and catalyst for regeneration across the wider area.

#### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://www.ardrossantrust.org>

**Contact:** Scott Mould, Chair, Ardrossan Community Development Trust: [chair@ardrossantrust.org](mailto:chair@ardrossantrust.org)



# Shortlisted

## Two Towns Big Ideas – Banff & Macduff

Launched in December 2023, this project, highlighted in the Banff and Macduff Development Partnership Action Plans (2016-2021), aimed to tackle town centre challenges in two Aberdeenshire towns through participatory budgeting.



After researching other successful examples, this method was chosen as it empowers residents to influence local spending and decision-making, fostering stronger community engagement. With no business associations and few active town groups in the two towns, this approach hoped to spark positive change by giving local people the power to influence spending decisions, strengthen community ties, and inspire fresh ideas to revitalise the town centres.

The Two Towns Big Ideas Fund supported six diverse projects that enhanced local economic opportunities and strengthened engagement with private businesses and social enterprises. These included a Highland one-day festival, a youth-led Youth Hub pilot, a Banff and Macduff showcase event, skateboarding coaching sessions, a museum exhibition, and the creation of an inclusive outdoor events space.

Collectively, these projects delivered measurable economic benefits, including the creation of five jobs, six businesses receiving financial support, and 40 others being supported either as suppliers or through non-financial means. Two new enterprises were launched, and seven new products, services, or processes were enabled. The fund facilitated 63 community events, 15 consultations, and 15 marketing campaigns, engaging 3,890 participants, including 344 young people.

The Youth Hub, co-designed by Banff Academy pupils and A Place in Childhood, laid the foundation for a youth-led initiative addressing anti-social behaviour and town centre decline. The fund's inclusive approach empowered young people not only as participants but also as project creators and leaders. Their involvement helped shape initiatives that are socially impactful and economically resilient.

All projects continue to deliver post-funding and initial delivery period.

The judges were impressed with the programme's variety, particularly the broad range of partners involved in the transformation, from teenagers to business leaders to the local authority.

The large number of people participating, alongside the transformation of both public spaces and local identity, demonstrated the programme's success. The judges noted the clear passion generated, which empowered so many groups of local people as experts in community regeneration. The judges were also inspired by the diverse solutions implemented to transform the area.

A key highlight was the immense value for money achieved from a small initial investment, which is to be celebrated as an exemplary model for the entire country.

## Kenmore District Revitalisation

The historic Perthshire village of Kenmore sits at the eastern edge of Loch Tay. The rural setting and local attractions bring hundreds of visitors and holidaymakers to the area, and, like many rural communities in Scotland, Kenmore is largely dependent on tourist income, but finding and keeping staff in the hospitality sector is difficult, particularly because of housing and transport issues.



Private developers bought and restored the local Taymouth Castle, saving it and its grounds from ruin. This development brought hundreds of permanent, quality jobs to the area. The developers have also bought up many of the nearby holiday homes, returning them to permanent residences for staff and families.

With the changing makeup of the community, new ways were needed to bring people together. Working collaboratively with all sections of the local community, Kenmore and District Community Council are improving the area, its amenities, and its attractiveness for residents and visitors.

Throughout the year social events are organised by The Reading Room Management Committee, including quiz nights, a book club, free first aid and defibrillator sessions, and talks on local history. This year saw the second season of Warm Welcome community lunches, where people can go along and enjoy a free beverage, a bowl of hot soup, and snacks. Local schoolchildren, accompanied by teachers, often attend to do painting or play chess with older visitors. These events are of immense value for an isolated rural community, combating loneliness, helping to mitigate the cost of living crisis, and promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

Following a recent feasibility study, a management group is being set up to purchase Kenmore Church to turn it into a flexible and economically viable community space.

The judges were impressed by the dedication and commitment from this entirely volunteer-run group.

Kick-started by the redevelopment of Taymouth Castle Estate, the Community Council has already achieved significant positive change in Kenmore and continues to drive more activity for the village. In particular, the passion of the local primary school kids to get involved in improving their place was inspiring, and their clear ideas on what needs to happen next were impressive.

The enthusiasm and pride of the whole community will yield positive benefits long into the future and, in particular, for the development of the forthcoming Community Action Plan.

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <https://youtu.be/JsR-5jOf-U>

**Contact:** David McCubbin, Project Officer Town Centres, Aberdeenshire Council: 01467 468643, [david.mccubbin2@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:david.mccubbin2@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

### Where can I find out more?

**Website:** <http://www.kenmore-and-district-cc.org.uk>

**Contact:** Colin Morton, Communications Officer, Kenmore and District Community Council: 07561 105250, [colinmcmorton@gmail.com](mailto:colinmcmorton@gmail.com)

# SURF Awards...

Every year, some of the best regeneration projects in the country get a well-earned boost by receiving a SURF Award. But what happens next? We asked each of the 2024 category winners for an update. Here are their stories.

## Creative Regeneration Narture CIC

It's been a year of yes for Narture CIC! We've been on inspiring food and arts research trips, and after three pitches over the last year, we finally won the Scottish Edge Social Competition, which will allow us to expand our bakery/café in Ayr and generate more income to support future arts projects.

We've also just completed our first RISE Festival, celebrating five years of making, baking, and community led creativity. The festival activated six spaces across Ayr with exhibitions, workshops, live music, and wellbeing sessions, bringing together local artists, creatives, and the wider community. You can see more highlights and book into upcoming events at: <https://shorturl.at/0WgNx> and <https://www.instagram.com/narture.cic/>



However, the future presents some challenges. Ongoing cuts to further education and across other sectors have raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of the programme. In response, we are actively exploring more efficient and collaborative ways to streamline delivery with our partners, ensuring we can continue to provide this vital support.



## Housing and Regeneration Kirkhope Steading

Winning a SURF Award last year was a huge boost for us as a community organisation, and we took time to celebrate with past and present board members afterwards. We also said goodbye to a few board members who left on a high, having seen such a big development through to completion!



## Removing Barriers to Employability DFN Project SEARCH Ninewells

Since December, DFN Project SEARCH has continued its impactful work supporting individuals in their transition to meaningful employment. The academic year concluded at the end of May, with seven students successfully graduating. We're proud to share that six of these graduates have secured employment — all within the NHS. We remain committed to supporting the seventh graduate in finding the right opportunity.

The new academic year began positively in August, welcoming eight new interns who are settling into their placements well. Staff and interns alike are made to feel like valued members of the NHS workforce, which greatly enhances the experience and outcomes of the programme.

# What happened next...

This year has been one of consolidation as we draw breath and move onto other projects. The young families in our five houses are just living their lives, with another new baby on the way. The business units are ticking over, with five of the seven spaces let all year and another used for hot-desking. One business took on another employee, and one tenant decided to share her studio with a craft jewellery business. The remaining workshop hosted an art exhibition, and we are now marketing it as shared studio space.

## Community Led Regeneration Bute Community Forest

Over the 12 months since Bute Community Forest won the Award for Community Led Regeneration project of the year, the project has gone from strength to strength. The Community Forest delivered on its ambition to provide outdoor learning in the forest for each of the 400 children, aged 3-11, on the Isle of Bute, as well as delivering a widespread event programme for different interest groups. These have included repeat events, such as our fungi forays, night time biofluorescence walks, and Easter trails, and new events utilising local and national expertise.



We have built on our volunteer pool, who regularly undertake small-scale infrastructure improvements, as well as constructing much needed resources such as fire-beaters and stands.

Over the last year we have added two part-time staff, one to oversee our new visitor centre and car/cycle park development as a whole new welcome area, the other to take forward our nature restoration work, alongside celebrating the natural and built heritage, where plans are afoot to do the first archaeological digs of a former settlement in the heart of the forest.

## Improving Scotland's Places Molendinar's Flourishing

Winning the SURF Award was such a boost for our team and community. As an area that has not received major regeneration funding, this award validated our efforts, boosted our profile with funders and increased awareness of St Paul's Youth Forum (SPYF) with key decision makers, resulting in visits from three Scottish Government Cabinet Ministers, including First Minister John Swinney.

Since the award our Bike Shop (SPYF On Bikes Ltd) has tripled its turnover, generating profits which are reinvested into our communities. We continue to work on physical changes within our community, with phase one of Flourishing Molendinar (our transport infrastructure project) receiving funding for implementation in 2026. Our health hub, comprising a community farm and football pitch, continues to progress. Another notable achievement was the launch of Beyond Bars Cargo Bikes, a collaboration with HMP Barlinnie which gives new life to discarded bikes and helps people marginalised by society.



“The 2025 SURF Award finalists again demonstrate the committed work of regeneration initiatives to showcase what can be achieved when people work collaboratively to make a lasting change within their respective communities. The passion shown and uncompromising devotion to task are not only admirable but astonishing.”



Emma Scott,  
Awards and Communications  
Manager,  
SURF



As Scotland's Regeneration Forum, SURF's overall objective is to address poverty and inequality in Scotland's disadvantaged communities.

SURF is the primary arena for debate on community regeneration in Scotland. It acts as a channel for information, consultation and policy proposals, based on the knowledge and experience of its extensive membership and wider connections.

SURF network activity includes debates, conferences, place-based initiatives, policy exchanges, research programmes, an annual awards for best practice, responding to policy consultations, and distributing information and publications.

This all provides a truly independent network to explore current practice, experience and knowledge, with which to positively influence the development of more successful regeneration policy and practice.

SURF is a registered charity founded in 1992. It is directed by a Board of 9 Trustees drawn from its extensive membership.

We have a database of over 3000 regeneration contacts and a membership of over 300 organisations from across Scotland.

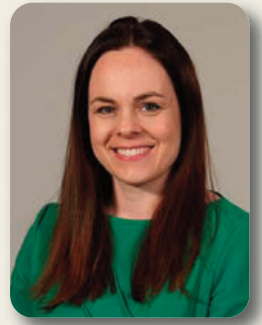
SURF members range in size from small community groups to large private companies and also include local authorities, academic institutions, housing associations, charities and professional bodies.

Further information on SURF's activities, and how to get more involved, is available on our website:  
[www.surf.scot](http://www.surf.scot)



“The SURF Awards shine a spotlight on the remarkable achievements of communities leading the way in place-based regeneration. The shortlisted projects show how local action can drive meaningful change — socially, economically, and physically — while also embracing sustainability and innovation at their core.

Regeneration is not just about improving places; it’s about supporting the conditions for resilient communities to thrive in the face of evolving challenges and address local priorities on their own terms. It is right that we celebrate and learn from this year’s shortlisted projects. They exemplify what’s possible when creativity, collaboration, and a commitment to improve our places, come together.”



Kate Forbes,  
Scottish Government  
Deputy First Minister  
and Cabinet Secretary for  
Economy and Gaelic

# Place-Based Regeneration

**As we enter the final months of this current parliamentary term, it provides a timely opportunity to celebrate the hard work and commitment of our local communities in driving forward national priorities and to reflect on the successes, opportunities and challenges of recent years.**

Against a backdrop of ongoing economic challenges, we have seen the resilience, creativity and togetherness of our communities. They have continued to develop new and innovative ways to address their local place priorities on their own terms and to deliver projects that will have positive impacts for years to come. The SURF Awards are important in not only recognising and celebrating those behind the projects but also in ensuring that this best practice is shared far and wide, to inspire and encourage others.

Regeneration remains a key priority for this Government, directly contributing to its four key priorities by actively enabling sustainable development, acting as a catalyst for economic growth, facilitating the transition to net zero and tackling poverty by improving places for people. This year, we are providing over £62m of crucial investment to communities across Scotland, with a focus on creating

opportunities in places that need it most, supporting sustainable places, and promoting wellbeing.

We are also continuing our ongoing work to empower communities to make positive changes in their local area. Importantly, this includes supporting the development of community anchor organisations who have a leading role in understanding and unlocking the potential within their communities now and into the future. A key aspect of this is making sure these organisations are in a position to take advantage of future investment opportunities to deliver successful and sustainable change. As such, ensuring people and communities have a stronger voice in the decisions that impact their places remains at the heart of our approach to place-based regeneration.

It should, therefore, go without saying that the work and mission of SURF, and the many individuals and communities across Scotland driving forward regeneration projects, remain vital in achieving our shared ambition to improve our places.





## SURF Awards Learning Workshops

With support from SURF Awards partners, SURF will be arranging workshop events in 2026 to explore transferable lessons from the success of the five winning SURF Awards projects.

To receive information on these free and informal learning exchange events, please sign up to our mailing list via the SURF website at the following link or contact [emma@surf.scot](mailto:emma@surf.scot)

[www.surf.scot](http://www.surf.scot)

## Members and Sponsors

SURF is very grateful for all the support it gets from over 300+ member organisations, and in particular from its five key delivery partners. Their backing provides the political, administrative and financial independence that helps SURF play a unique role in linking policy and practice across all of the sectors concerned with regenerating Scotland's communities.



This publication was compiled and edited by Emma Scott.

A PDF version is available from: [www.surf.scot/surf-awards](http://www.surf.scot/surf-awards)