

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

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# THIRD SECTOR MANIFESTO

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2026 & 2027



Scottish Government Elections 2026 &  
Local Government Elections 2027



### **Our Shared Vision:**

**A thriving West Dunbartonshire where quality of life is enriched through volunteering and social action.**

### **TSLF is facilitated by**

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## **The Third Sector Matters in West Dunbartonshire**

As we look towards multiple election years, it is important that the third sector is better recognised as an essential player in the West Dunbartonshire public service landscape, and supported to be a stronger, more sustainable partner.

Third sector organisations are central to the collective responses needed to address the complex social challenges facing our communities — reducing poverty, improving health and wellbeing, supporting young families and elder citizens, strengthening sustainable economic development and advancing positive climate action.

As a sector we are embedded in our communities of geography and interest. We are trusted sources of both services and information in a world of scepticism, misinformation and division. We strengthen and empower communities, providing early intervention and prevention activities that support a healthy society. We empower and mobilise the power of volunteering, in all its forms.

This manifesto gives voice to our sector organisations; their contributions to making West Dunbartonshire a positive, resilient and prosperous local authority area and their asks to help this essential work be sustained and built upon in the next coming years.

## **Our Focus**

A stronger collaboration between government, public sector bodies and the Third Sector focused on addressing the complex challenges facing our communities and working together for a stronger West Dunbartonshire.

## **Our Reach**

Our organisations - community associations, charities and social enterprises - deliver vital practical and emotional supports, build local capacity and engagement, advocate for vulnerable individuals, and gather evidence for policy development.

Rooted in communities, we are often the first trusted contact for those in need, filling gaps and relieving pressures in public and private sector provisions. We provide innovative and flexible approaches to service delivery tailored to a diverse range of needs. We are an essential voice for people in vulnerable situations, helping protect their rights and empower their engagement.



# ASK 1: Value Volunteering

From the volunteering effort required to complete Dalmuir Park in the early 1900's, through the creation of Mutual Service Associations in the 1930s, and latterly the introduction of the Scotland-wide Volunteer Centre network in the mid 1990's, West Dunbartonshire has a long-standing reputation as a giving authority.

Volunteering is, by its nature, an evolving and developing series of activities, proactively supporting services, organisations and communities and reactively, responding in emergency and crisis. Volunteering is a continuum of social activity, all of which embeds reciprocity. Formal volunteering supports service delivery, activism and advocacy, mutual aid and personal development. Informal volunteering builds strong social support networks, engages group membership, nurtures inclusive communities and enables everyone to contribute.



It involves the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of others, society or the environment and can take many forms. Volunteering is a free-will activity, but not a free activity. The value of volunteering in West Dunbartonshire is estimated at £25 million per year.

For volunteering to be at its most impactful, it must be valued, supported and promoted across all levels of government. **The Scottish Government Volunteering Action Plan is pivotal to this in policy terms and as a living document, endorsed by the sector, should be supported throughout its 10-year life span.** The complementary West Dunbartonshire Volunteering Strategy has since its inception in 2023, enjoyed community planning wide support. **The ongoing support of a local authority administration will be key to maintaining volunteering as a crucial component in all service delivery, community involvement and empowerment practice.**

## ASK 2: Fairer Funding a Reality

Securing the resources needed to maintain effective third sector service provision across West Dunbartonshire has become increasingly challenging.

Despite an increased recognition that the sector provides essential public services across communities, this has not been matched by fairer access to equivalent funding. Instead, we have experienced annual budget cuts, often severe and with little notice or consultation.

This, together with a move towards shorter-term funding options, a focus on project funding and disproportionate application and grant management requirements are reducing the sector's ability to focus on delivery and impacting negatively on our communities.



Proportionate, streamlined application and reporting processes, together with adequate lead-times and timely payments will help reduce the admin burden many organisations and charities experience.

As a sector, we support SCVO in its call for **Fairer Funding principles**. This includes funding that is unrestricted, able to cover core costs and support good governance.

While the current Scottish Government multi-year Fairer Funding pilots are a step forward, there is much to do to deliver the **sustainable multi-year funding** the sector needs as standard **across all government departments, agencies and public bodies**.

Without this, and the **inclusion of full cost recovery around staffing costs**, the ongoing disparities between the public and third sectors will only grow – weakening the sector and weakening communities.



## ASK 3: Value the Third Sector

Everyday all across West Dunbartonshire, government departments and public sector agencies rely on the services provided by the third sector.

We make a profound difference to building stronger communities and enabling people to have a much better quality of life.

While progress has been made to cut through organisational barriers in areas such as health, care, housing, and community justice, genuine and sustained partnership working, where the sector is valued as an equal partner in decision making and governance, remains elusive.

Third sector organisations bring to the table a deep understanding of the people and communities they serve. We bring unique insights and diverse thinking, essential to help tackle the complex social challenges we all face.



It is important that the third sector be seen as an equal partner around all tables, with the **power imbalance** created by funding relationships acknowledged and addressed.

This requires a strong commitment on all parties to better understand each other's duties, challenges and foster a stronger **culture of collaboration**.

To achieve this, it is vital that the voice of the sector is **engaged at the earliest stages of policy making, strategic planning and service design**, bringing with us local knowledge and a direct understanding of community need, rather than seen as consultees later in the process



# ASK 4: Empowering the Empowerment Act

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was designed to shift power to communities by giving them greater influence over public services and assets.

While the Act provides the legal foundation to empower communities, enabling them to have a stronger voice in local decision-making, own or control land and buildings and shape local services to better meet local needs, there remains much to do.

The Community Wealth Building agenda offers a fresh impetus with the opportunity for the sector to be better recognised and engaged as a key partner in local economic development. Through our community anchor organisations, we can enable our local communities to access and benefit from the wealth our local economy generates.



Collectively the third sector is a **significant local economic force for good**. We are a **meaningful local employer**. Our levels of **local and inter-sector spend are high**, positively impacting community benefit.

Work to **streamline the local community asset transfer and participation processes** is required and we are ready to play an active part in these discussions.

Fully embracing the opportunities available will require a greater focus on ethical commissioning, **moving from harmful competitive procurement to a more collaborative, outcomes-based model**, ensuring local sector expertise is not diluted. Through this we can collectively deliver better, more sustainable services



## Signatory Organisations

Action Old Kilpatrick	African Connect	African Women's Support Network
Age Concern Vale of Leven	Alexandria Relaxation and Therapy Group	Bellsmyre Digital Community
Ben View Resource Centre	Bipolar Scotland	Brain Injury Experience Network
Carers of West Dunbartonshire	CATRA	Clydebank Men's Shed
Clydebank Special Needs Forum	Clyde Shopmobility	Crafting Together CIC
Dalmuir Credit Union	Dalmuir Golf Course SCIO	Dalmuir Multi-Storey Flats TRA
Dalmuir Park Housing Association	Dalmuir Barclay Church & Community Pantry	Double L Centre
Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol	Dumbarton District Women's Aid	Dumbarton FC Community Trust
Duntocher Village Hall	Faifley Upcycling	Fifty Plus Walking Group
Flourishing Faifley	Growing Beardmore	Haldane Youth Services
Healthy Hearts Lifestyle Club	Isaro Community Initiative	Kinship Care West Dunbartonshire
Knowetop SCIO	Lomond and Clyde Care and Repair	Lomond Community Garden/Pantry
Mentor Scotland	Moments of Freedom	Renton Community Development Trust
Shipyard Trust	Skylark IX Recovery Trust	Stepping Stones
Strathclyde Autistic Society	Thera Trust	Turner Syndrome Support Society
Vale of Leven Trust	Victim Support Scotland (West Dunbartonshire)	West Dunbartonshire Boccia Club
West Dunbartonshire Community Transport	West Dunbartonshire CVS	West Dunbartonshire Epilepsy Group
West Dunbartonshire MEA	Whitecrook Community Action Group SCIO	Y Sort It