**Brahead, Broomridge & District Community Development Trust**

Our Trust has raised over £300,000 for community projects and delivered a number of resources and social outcomes in our work so far, such as:

R**esources**

An 11,000 square metre ‘outdoor community centre’ on land leased from Stirling Council, including:

80 micro-allotments for hire by individuals and families

A communal ‘tool shed’ with everything required for gardening

An apiary with community beehives producing local honey for sale

An ‘events space’ in a large polytunnel

A 30kw community owned solar panel array generating income through the Feed inTariff

A workshop for maintenance type activities

A clubhouse for smaller gatherings, social events and education events.

A community orchard with free range chickens (and eggs for sale)

A community picnic area

**Outcomes**

Community events, including an annual flower show, plant sale and pumpkin festival

Community educational events, including bike repair, food waste reduction, food growing, garden maintenance, garden and household maintenance

Regular connections and visits with local schools, nurseries, Brownies, Cubs, etc

A focus on environmental sustainability through rainwater harvesting for plant growing, solar panels for energy generation, organic growing techniques, UV water filtration system for handwashing.

Through involvement in our community centre and trust activities, a survey of users has shown:

Decreasing levels of food waste

Decreasing levels of household budget spent on food

Increasing levels of exercise

Increasing levels of pride in the community

Increasing levels of feeling connection to community

Increasing levels of socialising within community

Increasing levels of volunteering within community

Over 2000 occasional visitors to the outdoor community centre each year since 2015 (except for 2020 & 2021 Covid!)

100-150 regular users from within the community per year using the outdoor community centre

100-120 volunteers within the outdoor community centre each year

As a trust, our vision is to create a vibrant, connected community which flourishes as a key part of 21 st century Stirling with health, happy residents. We do this first by listening to, and amplifying, the local community voice to create, influence and facilitate new opportunities that enhance our quality of life. To that end, we have pursued projects and objectives which recognise that our physical and mental wellbeing is inseparable from the condition and health of the built and natural environment in which we live. Our key project, Braehead Community Garden has been incredibly successful and developed numerous activity strands since opening in 2015. What started out as a project primarily aimed at addressing access to local food has become much larger, with the space being used in many different ways (as our key achievements demonstrate). We have always had a long term aim to build capacity in our events and education programme to offer local residents the opportunity to develop more skills and further increase their sense of connection with the community and the knock-on effect of a more resilient, health community, to reach more people within the community and offer more events and more opportunities within the outdoor community space. In 2021 we built a large polytunnel to develop a social enterprise, propagating plants for sale at the start of the season and then growing fruit and vegetables for sale at harvest time. We would also investigate employment opportunities for growers within this project and we believe we have the space, the volunteers and the experience after five years of community growing to make this a success. However, the size of our outdoor community centre (11,000 square metres) and the associated ongoing maintenance, along with the growing demand for access to the facility from within the community and other local groups, is stretching the volunteering capacity of our Trustees. In order to continue to grow and realise our potential, we need to move to a volunteer led, employee supported model.

The Development Officer role is to support the Trust and lead on both our outreach activities within the community, assist with the development of a events and education programme within the outdoor community centre and develop our social enterprise model for a plant nursery and fruit/vegetable ‘grow and sale’ social enterprise. We are also conscious that we need to ‘branch out’ from our primary project and provide more support for other local groups to support their ambitions for bettering our community.

The Trust Is seeking a part-time Development Officer for twelve months from April 2023, in order to further develop Braehead Community Garden as a community-run asset that improves the lives of local residents and to build on the work of the previous development officer.

Continuing to post of Development Officer will enable us to:

• Provide a point of co-ordination for all the Garden’s activities, ensuring good communication, a varied programme of events, and a welcoming and streamlined experience for garden members and volunteers;

• Free up volunteers’ time for further developing the Garden, rather than administrative tasks;

• Facilitate the involvement of all garden members and other stakeholders as we update the Garden’s development plan for the medium term;

• Reach out further into the local community, both directly and through the further development of local partnerships;

• Improve local accessibility of quality fresh produce, both for those who want to grow their own and for those who want to buy healthy food at an affordable price;

• Develop the Garden’s potential as a space for local people to come together in an ‘outdoor community centre’ model;

• Maximise the Garden’s potential to derive revenue from its various enterprises.

The post is vital for the coordination and development of Braehead Community Garden. It provides garden members and the wider community with a point of contact, and co-ordinates a wide range of volunteer activity. Prior to the Development Officer post, this coordination was carried out by trustees and other volunteers from among the garden members. However, reliance on volunteers’ time does limit the Garden’s potential as a community asset. It is notable that garden members have reported that since the Development Officer post began in June 2022 they have a better understanding of what is happening in the Garden.

The Development Officer role at Braehead Community Garden is central to achieving the Community Development Trust’s vision to ‘create a vibrant, connected community’.

The Garden reinstated a programme of events in 2022, after a break due to Covid. The events were a huge success and feedback from the community is very positive. However, in 2023 we aim to build on those successes with a more structured programme of events, based on learning from last year and feedback from members. This programme will not be possible without members' input and a Development Officer to coordinate it. The garden aims to host a variety of events throughout the year, with a broad range of appeal, including open events to connect the wider community. For example, we are very much looking forward to running the horticultural show again this year, which has not happened since 2019 and has proven to be a great way of bringing the whole community together. It is notable that the Garden has brought together people from diverse communities in the local area, including a wide range of cultural backgrounds, as well as adults with additional support needs and their carers. In 2022, for the first time, the Garden held a (short) waiting list for a raised bed – an indicator of the Garden’s wide appeal as a special place in our local area.

A focus on food-growing skills means that more members of our community are better able to access healthy, fresh produce at minimal cost – which is ever more relevant, with the cost of food rising. Garden members recently indicated that they would like a more structured programme of events that will enable them to feel confident in their growing skills. The ongoing support of a Development Officer is crucial to co-ordinate a lively programme of events such as workshops, seed swaps, skill-shares and volunteer days to help ensure that all those who wish to grow food are well-supported to do so. The programme encourages garden members to share their own expertise with peers, such as workshops on soil health, crop planning, orchard maintenance, and composting.

The Development Officer role will enable us to involve more members of our community in the Garden, through events, outreach, and local partnership working. Open events co-ordinated by the role to date - such as the Pumpkin Festival at Halloween - have brought many local residents to visit the Garden, some for the first time. This is due to the post’s focus on communications and having a point of contact for working in partnership with other local organisations such as the local Primary School Parents’ Forum. With ongoing support from a Development Officer to co-ordinate events, we will be able to build on this success, deepen existing local partnerships and explore new ones.

The Garden currently offers a variety of volunteering opportunities: caring for the hens, growing and selling produce, making and mending garden infrastructure in the workshop, grass cutting, bee-keeping, and general garden maintenance. Peer mentoring and some external training contribute to increasing members' skills. Local secondary school pupils working towards their Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards have provided long term regular volunteering commitments. Employer-sponsored volunteering, particularly from employees of the Stirling Thistles shopping centre among others, have provided invaluable support for several intensive days of garden maintenance.