

Buckhaven

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING - WHAT WE'VE LEARNED



SNAPSHOT

2023 has been an exciting year in Buckhaven with lots happening and many new ideas developing in the area. Corra's new Co-ordinator Neill started in April by building and rebuilding connections, supporting existing activities and working with local people and partners to develop new ones. This has included:

- Community Cinema – working in partnership with a group of local volunteers and Fife Council CLD to deliver four highly successful screenings.
- Cosy Café and Larder– supporting the Baptist Church and its volunteers through changes in the delivery model and staffing in partnership with Fife Council CLD, FareShare and others.
- Step Up Group at Levenmouth Academy – supporting a group of young people to deliver a Mental Health Day and develop a sustainable pupil-led wellbeing group.
- Heritage Regeneration Project – taking the first steps in working with a variety of partners to ensure that this process is community-led and as productive for Buckhaven as possible.

Through these and the many other community activities in Buckhaven from organisations including Cook and Share, CLEAR, The Community Council, The Community Trade Hub and more, there is real potential to work together towards shared aims around community, reducing poverty and regeneration in Buckhaven.

Community Cinema



Corra has been working with a group of community members and the Fife Council Community Learning and Development (CLD) team to set up a community cinema in Buckhaven Community Centre. The screenings offer local families the opportunity to go to the cinema together for free or at a very low cost.



So far, using equipment loaned by On Fife and funding from the Levenmouth Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Group (WRAP), the group have hosted three screenings with 360 people attending. These were:

- October 2023: Hocus Pocus 2 with 190 people attending
- November 2023: Luca with 84 people attending
- December 2023: Elf with 86 people attending

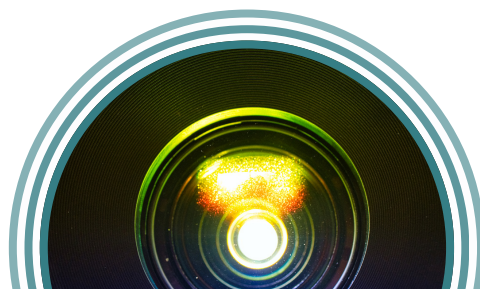
The screenings have been well received, people have liked the film choices and the quality of the screenings. Working in partnership with Fife Council CLD staff has enabled the group to access local networks and quickly build a large audience for their screenings.



A key focus will be supporting the cinema to be fully community-led. The group have taken greater control of the project as it develops with two local mums leading on the delivery of the tuck shop. Another is working with her partner to assess the best potential set-up for the cinema when the group buy their own equipment. The group are leading on promoting the cinema within the local area and building an audience and ongoing engagement with the local community.



“I love volunteering at the community cinema, it’s so good to be part of a service that allows families to spend time together without having to worry about spending money, it’s really rewarding and I love seeing the excitement on kids faces too”



Cosy Cafe

The Cosy Café and Larder have provided bags of food and a cafe space to local people in Buckhaven since 2016. It is a vital service which provides food and a warm welcome, advice, support, and a sense of community for local people facing challenges with finances, mental health, poverty, addiction, and other issues.



This has been a challenging year for the Café with a large turnover of volunteers and significant changes in the project model. However,

work has taken place alongside the

volunteers to keep the service going, bring in over £15,000 funding and make

changes to ensure the project is more sustainable. The volunteers delivered a weekly Café and Larder for 30-35 people each week. This offered a bag of food, a free

hot lunch, advice and support and a sense of community. This is a lifeline for many

people in Buckhaven. It helps reduce the impact of poverty for those who attend and the wider community with over 1500 food bags distributed this year with a value of around £40,000.

“...coming to the Cosy Cafe hopefully brightens up their day”

“It’s challenging, rewarding, and fulfilling but it’s great to share with them and know that they appreciate what we are trying to do for them”



2024 will be an important year for the Cosy Café group as they work to develop the project to be stronger and more sustainable. The importance of the work they do in the community is increasingly recognised. They are supported by partners including Corra, Fife Council and others.



“I’m helping people that are struggling, and I believe that they are being able to move on to another week, knowing they can feed their family...that gives me a great feeling, helping in this small way and that is why I do what I do”

Step Up Group

Using funding from the Comic Relief #ShiftThePower Community-Led Grant Making Fund, Corra worked with a group of Levenmouth Academy pupils to host the Step Up – Mental Health Day and establish the Step Up – Pupil-led wellbeing group in the school.



Over the school year the group worked with Rachel Morrison to create and refine their initial ideas before settling on hosting a mental health day within the school which addressed several key areas they identified. The group worked with Corra and school staff to organise sessions for pupils to take part in on the day including Yoga, Art Journalling, A Rage Room, Music Scoring, and Meta-fit.



“This day was amazing 😊”

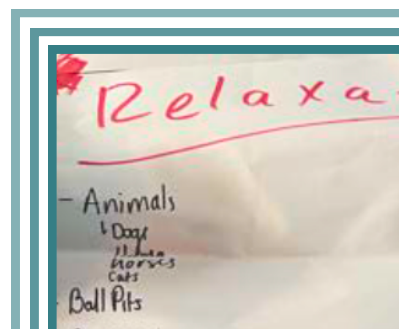
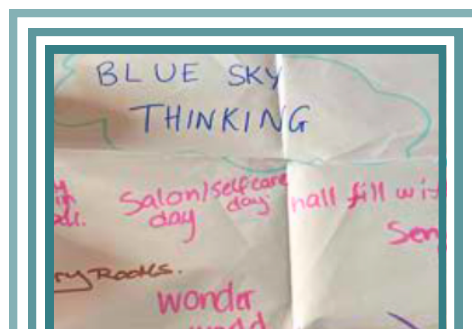
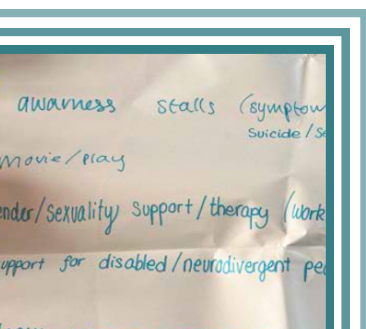
More than 50 pupils attended on the day, many of whom struggle to attend school regularly. The group received great feedback on the sessions and the day with 93% saying they would attend again.



“I loved art journalling and would love to do it again for longer periods of time”



Following on from this Neill has worked with the group to establish the wellbeing group as an ongoing pupil-led initiative. They will host two events in 2024 – workshops to deal with exam stress on the 11th of March and another Step Up event in June which will be designed and delivered in partnership with the Green Action Trust as part of the River Leven Project.



Heritage Regeneration Project



Corra has a vital role in identifying people's priorities and ensuring that local people's voices are heard and central in the development of projects. This has included support to The Heritage Regeneration project, The River Leven Project and their associated plans and activities, alongside plans being developed and delivered by Fife Council.

It is clear from our work in 2023 that perhaps what Buckhaven needs most urgently is community-led peer support like the Cosy Café for those experiencing poverty. Alongside this is a continued need for local groups to work together to support the community to take a lead on issues affecting the area.

What have we learned?

It is a difficult and slow process to re-establish trust and connection with a community when there has been a substantial gap between workers. Community moves slowly but connection is quickly lost as projects develop and volunteers' lives change, or they move on to new projects.

However, it is clear there is still a real need for Corra's presence in Buckhaven to help establish and develop community-led initiatives and spaces. Projects such as the Baptist Church's Cosy Cafe and Larder are a vital lifeline in the town. They help those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and other issues. They also provide space for local people to empower themselves by creating a community-led response to the issues facing many in the area.

The impacts of poverty continue to affect members of the community in Buckhaven, and Levenmouth. However, there is a clear will and strength amongst local people and organisations to address this. Projects such as CLEAR and the Community Trades Hub offer local people opportunities to be part of the community and to build a sense of cohesion and connection. There is an opportunity to work together towards positive change alongside other organisations such as the Community Council, Cook and Share, and Buckhaven Parent Council.

What have we learned? contd.



Corra support is informed by the ambition and priorities of local people helping to create opportunity for new ideas and connections to be made. This will be important in the coming years as initiatives such as the Heritage Regeneration Project and the River Leven Project aim to create greater connection and cohesion between local groups.

It was also clear that we can achieve greater impact when working with local partners such as Fife Council CLD, Levenmouth Academy and the Baptist Church. While this is sometimes challenging, Corra has an important role to play in ensuring community voices are heard and listened to.

What happens next?

2024 will be an important year in Buckhaven with several large infrastructure projects including the new railway, the River Leven Project and the Heritage Regeneration Project reaching important phases of their work. Ensuring that the local community voices are central to these discussions and decision making will be a priority for Corra's work this year.



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Alongside this, Corra will continue to work with Cosy Cafe to build its strength and capacity with support from key partners. This will include recruiting a worker to support the volunteers on an ongoing basis.

We will support the Community Cinema group to source funding for equipment, develop a year-round screening programme and move to a fully community-led mode. Whilst also looking at broadening the programme to include screenings of local archive footage and other community interests.

We will work with Levenmouth Academy to deliver the Step Up group's exam stress event and mental health day in the River Park. We will support the pupils and teachers to create a sustainable pupil-led wellbeing group and associated programme of events.

Moving Forward

Since 2015, the Getting Alongside Communities programme has been helping to create the conditions for communities to deliver powerful, long-lasting change.

In the early years of the programme, there was a strong focus on listening, capacity building, widening community participation, and supporting ideas into action. This long-term, relational approach has established deep knowledge, trust and connections with local people and partners – and resulted in increased community leadership, voice, ambition and action.

The final delivery phase of the programme is focussed on supporting communities to establish clear priorities, plans and partnerships that can drive and sustain community-led change – beyond an ‘on the ground’ presence from Corra which will end by March 2026.

Each community is currently working to agree their priorities and the format of a community owned plan by March 2024, and to identify the partners required to achieve it. There will be an event in September 2024 to ‘launch’ each plan followed by an agreed timeline to transition to community leadership in each place.

To help each community share learning and connect with community members across the Getting Alongside Communities programme, a community network has been established. Plans are also in place to develop a Community Leadership Collective to accelerate learning, leadership and positive change within and across communities.

The end of Corra’s work on the ground will mark the start of a new relationship between Corra and communities. This legacy phase will be co-created by communities and Corra and include a focus on: celebration and connection; community leadership and infrastructure; financial resources; knowledge & skills; learning & evaluation. Necessary conditions for success include:

- Community owned plan being delivered by local people and partners.
- Local community leadership – with connections to local and national networks.
- Community infrastructure (spaces and organisational structures).
- Long-term resourcing in place (funding, learning, relationships).



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