

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2016 to March 2017





Our Vision

Linking people and the environment for a greener, healthier future

Our Aims

We work with others on environmental, food and active travel issues to:

- Encourage and support involvement, learning and practical action
- Educate and raise awareness
- Create and develop new ideas

Forth Environment Link (FEL) began as the Kippen Nature Club in 1989 with the aim of teaching children about biodiversity and nature. In response to community need and interest, the organisation grew in both mandate and geography, expanding to include adult education and demonstration projects.

In 2005 the organisation reconstituted as Forth Environment Link - a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, primarily serving three local authority areas - Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk. In 2008 Forth Valley Food Links merged with FEL, bringing an additional focus on sustainable local food production and consumption. In 2012 FEL took over the hosting of Cycle Stirling bringing a new cycling focus to our work. In 2013, Stirling Cycle Hub started operating from Stirling Train Station enhancing FEL's cycling provision.

As of 2017, FEL continues to work across three main themes: Active Travel, Circular Economy and Food & Growing, bringing together our all of its projects under these respective strands of work.

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A Message from our Board Chair, Kate Sankey

The last three years at Forth Environment Link have seen incredible growth for the organization. Having been part of FEL's fabric, in some capacity, for over twenty years, I can honestly say it is the most exciting and dynamic time for the charity.

Our active travel activity continues to go from strength to strength with more people making more journeys by bike or on foot than ever before. The bike share scheme we introduced to Stirling in 2014 has seen a substantial expansion with the number of stations doubling and an additional 60 bikes now in use. This has resulted in nearly 40,000 more local cycle journeys in and around Stirling, and continues to help employers improve options for their staff regarding sustainable travel. Our ambition for the coming years is to see the introduction of electric bike share to the city and to ensure that an affordable bike share program can be introduced to ensure that transport poverty is minimized in all our communities.

We have a far wider range of bikes available to rent and try as part of our outreach activity and have supported more people to get back on their bike after injury, as part of their rehabilitation or simply for social purposes.

Our ability to link and connect has been demonstrated through the integration of our local food activity with our active travel work. This last year has seen us operate a new on-line local food market, Stirling Food Assembly, from Stirling Cycle Hub. This is helping us connect people with the food produced in the region. It also allows us to address some crucial food waste issues as we support a zero waste ethos through the Food Assembly; producers only provide exactly what has been ordered, eliminating waste in the process.

The exciting part of this for me is that we are continually adding value to each of our areas of work by linking them to another - which means that we are able to support people and communities in a much wider and more comprehensive way. We now have almost 40 food businesses as part of our business network and this has resulted in a thriving local food sector across the region.

Food continues to be the glue that unites our activity. We have continued to put good food at the heart of our work and in so doing, we are working towards minimizing the amount going to waste. Our Zero Waste Scotland training program in North Ayrshire,

for school catering teams, has led to a national training resource and resulted in our sector leading the way in food waste challenge activity in Stirling schools.

Falkirk has emerged as a new area for us to develop activity in relation to community growing and we are working towards seeing more growing spaces in public places over the next twelve months.

Embedding positive food skills within our communities, at a school and wider level, is still what drives us in terms of changing our food attitudes and practices. We see clearly how good food can improve our health, environment and economic outcomes and we will continue to deliver practical work in this area over the next twelve months.

Food waste also forms a large part of our work to improve Scotland's circular economy. We have been working closely through our community outreach work to develop confidence in cooking, upcycling, fixing and mending products. Our aim continues to be to improve our environment through the provision of practical support and skills-based learning.

We will be taking this ambition to a new level in 2017 when we see the opening of a new reuse shop in Falkirk. This is one part of a hugely important development in FEL's future plans which will include an all new FEL Falkirk premises, combining an Active Travel Hub, Reuse Hub and integrated community space in the heart of Falkirk's town centre.

FEL is a dynamic organization and we continually strive towards innovation in our practice and delivery. Our team has grown over the last year to encompass new skills around wood and textiles, as well as community outreach, business development and walking. Our team here at FEL is our true strength and we have been lucky to have a stable board of trustees and delivery team, which has resulted in our strong and sustained ambition.

I look forward to another year; another stage in our development; more strength to our partners and friends; and more opportunities to improve our environment through practical action.

THE FORTH ENVIRONMENT LINK FAMILY



Board Members

- Kate Sankey (Chair)
- Rod Lawson (Treasurer)
- Peter Stott
- Paul Smith
- John Lamond
- Sheila Winstone
- Alasdair Tollemache
- Cath Preston (in-coming April 2016)

Sessional Support Staff

FEL employs a number of sessional team members who provide part time seasonal support during peak times and for specialist short-term projects.

- Sarah Fraser
- Richard Chatfield
- Theo Laffargue
- Caroline Morrison
- Ahmed Elkesh

Staff from April 2016 to Present

- Clara Walker - Executive Director
- Vicky Vincent - Finance & Administration Manager
- Katarina Cech - Administration Officer *in-coming July 2017*
- Kelly Rice - Project Coordinator, Forth Upcycling Network *until June 2017*, and Project Coordinator, Revive Falkirk *as of April 2017*
- Richard Chatfield - Project Support Officer, Forth Upcycling Network *until June 2017*, and Wood Reuse Officer, Revive Falkirk *as of April 2017*
- David Gentles - Textiles Reuse Officer, Revive Falkirk *in-coming as of May 2017*
- Diane Alderdice - Project Coordinator, Forth Valley Orchards Initiative *retired as of October 2017*
- Margaret Miller - Schools Officer, Forth Valley Orchards Initiative
- Emily Harvey - Project Coordinator, Grow Forth and Food & Growing Development Manager *as of April 2017*
- Nikki Kenn - Business Project Officer, Grow Forth *out-going May 2017*
- Donna Rodgers - Community Project Officer, Grow Forth and Project Coordinator, Grow Forth *as of April 2017*
- Stuart Guzinski - Food Hub Officer, Grow Forth *in-coming of April 2017*
- Vicki Ferguson - Community Project Officer, Grow Forth *in-coming of May 2017*
- Sarah Fraser - Project Support Officer, Food & Growing *in-coming as of September 2017*
- Graham McQueen - Project Coordinator, Stirling Cycle Hub and FEL Active Travel Development Manager *as of November 2016*
- Ray Burr - Project Officer, Stirling Cycle Hub; Project Coordinator, Stirling Cycle Hub *as of November 2016*; and Project Coordinator, Falkirk Active Travel Hub *as of November 2017*
- Susanne Mueller - Project Officer, Stirling Cycle Hub and Project Coordinator, Stirling Cycle Hub *as of November 2017*
- Emma Thomas - Project Officer, Stirling Cycle Hub
- Caroline Morrison - Walking Officer, Stirling Cycle Hub *in-coming of June 2017*
- Jane Beaton - Project Coordinator, Callander Active Travel Hub *in-coming April 2017 until October 2017*
- Chris James - Community Outreach Officer, Stirling Cycle Hub *in-coming May 2017*

Volunteers

We would like to acknowledge our wonderful team of volunteers who support all aspects of FEL's work. Our volunteers make a significant contribution to FEL's projects and enable us to reach more broadly and deeply into many communities across the Forth Valley area.



Stirling Cycle Hub

Stirling Cycle Hub, funded by Transport Scotland, is a pilot project in its 4th year based at the Stirling Train Station. Its main aim is to increase awareness and participation in active and low carbon travel.

We do this by:

- Providing advice, guidance and route planning services in the Hub.
- Planning and running a variety of events designed to encourage people to make more of their everyday journeys by cycling or walking.
- Highlighting the fantastic cycling and walking routes in and around Stirling and promoting the health benefits of both.
- Creating opportunities for people to cycle and walk and to make both an easier choice for their everyday journeys.

This year Stirling Cycle Hub has also successfully worked with ten employers in Stirling through our Employer Engagement programme, funded by Smarter Choices Smarter Places in partnership with Stirling Council. The programme aims to help make cycling a viable, everyday option for employees and students locally. This year's participants were Stirling Council, Prudential, Forth Valley College, Stirling University, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Conservation Volunteers, Thinkwhere and Zero Waste Scotland.



Over 5,656 VISITORS
April 2016 - March 2017

OVER 75 EVENTS
April 2016 - March 2017

Over 700
Route Planning enquiries

1,829
Facebook followers

1,647
Twitter followers

Star Events and activities of the Year:

- **Thursday & Sunday Morning Meanders** - In partnership with Active Stirling, our popular weekly leisure rides continue to grow in popularity. We completed a total of 32 Meander rides with an average of 20 riders each week.
- **The Women's 100k Challenge** ride saw 44 women cycling either the 50km or full 100km routes round the Stirlingshire countryside.
- **Hub Club Rides** - We completed 7 Hub Club Rides with an average of 13 riders, with 24 individuals completing the Pedal for Scotland 'Classic Challenge' 46 mile ride from Glasgow to Edinburgh.
- **Stirling Festival of Cycling**, funded by Smarter Choices Smarter places in partnership with Stirling Council and the annual Pedal for Parkinson's Stirling Cycle Ride event. The festival, in Kings Park, attracted 800 visitors in the region and provided a host of cycling activities for all ages to enjoy.



Nextbike Stirling

Stirling Cycle Hub in partnership with Transport Scotland brought Nextbike to Stirling in October 2014. In 2016, through further funding from Sustrans Scotland in partnership with Transport Scotland, the Nextbike scheme was expanded from 11 stations to 23 stations across Stirling with a total of 160 hire bikes at its disposal. The scheme continues to go from strength to strength and has since become a part of the fabric of Stirling enabling residents and visitors alike to travel around the city in a smart, sustainable way using a scheme comparable to those in major cities like London, Paris and Berlin. There were 15,239 sustainable, environmentally friendly journeys made by Nextbike Stirling this year and the scheme is one of the the fastest growing in the UK.

Over 15,239 BIKE HIRES
April 2016 and March 2017

228% INCREASE IN HIRES
April 2016 - March 2017
compared to last year
(6,655 Bike Hires)

Cycle Stirling

Partnership working on cycling and active travel has continued this year through FEL's support to Cycle Stirling. This cross-sectoral working group aims to support collaboration and consistency in delivery of cycling and cycling-related activities and events throughout the region.

The group worked together to support and promote a range of events and activities throughout the year; provided advice and guidance on funding opportunities, infrastructure developments, training activity and promotional campaigns; produced responses to key local and national active travel consultations; and help facilitate a consistent active travel approach for Stirling and its surrounds.





Forth Valley Orchards Initiative

Forth Valley Orchards Initiative focuses on inspiring, involving and engaging communities on the revival, development and care of orchards. FVOI receives a range of funding and support from Inner Forth Landscape Initiative, Central Scotland Green Network Trust, Helping Britain Blossom, Falkirk Environment Trust, Falkirk Community Trust and People's Postcode Lottery.

The 'Fruitful Communities' Project followed on as a new phase of CSGNT's successful 'Fruitful Landscapes' Project and aimed to support communities increasing their capacity to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to enable them create, maintain and use the orchard resource of the Inner Forth.

Working with community groups, individuals and landowners associated with orchards we engaged in a varied program of learning events and activities to build skills and give them the knowledge and confidence in managing their orchards in the longer term. Engaging schools in fruit growing, biodiversity and environmental education continues to be a cornerstone in FVOI delivery, working to FEL's Orchard Resource Pack. We also continued to support and work with our 8 Master Orchardist Volunteers to provide training and support within orchard communities.



19 WORKSHOPS
and
6 networking events

411
School Orchard Days

746
Pupils Engaged

15 NEW
Habitats Created

8
Master Orchard Volunteers
who continued their work
supporting local Orchards

Star Events and activities of the Year:

- **Roman in the Orchard**, as part of the Friends of Kinneils 'Big Roman Week'
- **Summer & Winter Pruning Workshops** at Kennetpans and Valley Field Orchards
- **Orchard Essentials at the Helix Nuttery**
- **IFLI schools' orchard programme**



119 TONNES
of CO2e saved

Engaged and Supported
80 PEOPLE
to take the food waste challenge

ENGAGED WITH
1667
school children during the
School Food Waste Challenge

110
EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS
and Community Events

6 BESPOKE TRAINING
& networking sessions for SME's

1809 KILOMETRES
cycled relating to food journeys

83% INCREASE
in local fruit and veg usage

71% reported a positive
change in food related behaviour

74% felt more confident
about cooking after a session

76% of people
stated their skills had improved

Grow Forth

Grow Forth, funded by Climate Challenge Fund, focuses on connecting communities and businesses to create a more vibrant food culture.

Our project for 2016 -17 'Stirling Food Hub' worked closely with local communities, including other local food projects, schools, communities and local business to take more control of their local food system, helping them to get more involved with food at every level from growing and harvesting to sourcing, cooking and eating.

In addition, we commissioned research into our local food system, the subsequent report is called Good Food Stirling, this is available on our website.



Star Campaigns, Events & Activities of the year:

- **The Stirling Food Assembly Launch** - 29th September 2016 see page 10 for more details
- **CBeebies 'Down on the Farm'** - Community Project Officer Donna Rodgers featured on an episode inspiring youngsters across the Country to make their own jams and chutneys
- **Schools' Food Waste Challenge** - we encouraged and supported 8 schools
- **Community 'Feast Together' Meals** with communities in Mercat Cross, Breachhead and Thornhill



Stirling Food Assembly

Stirling Food Assembly, funded by Climate Challenge Fund as part of the Stirling Food Hub project, brings producers into the heart of the community on a weekly basis to increase awareness of, and access to local and seasonal food.

The Food Assembly allows local products to be pre-ordered online, giving producers a guarantee of sales and cutting their food waste at source, whilst also giving local shoppers access to local produce they would otherwise have little access to. Our dedicated team supports a growing network of local producers and shoppers through the weekly meet-the-producer collections at the Stirling Cycle Hub, providing seasonal food tastings and cooking workshops to bolster the relationship between growing, cooking and eating local food.



Events and workshops of the year:

- **Stirling Food Assembly Launch** - 29th September 2016
- **Quarterly Seasonal Food Tastings**; including a Summer Picnic and Harvest Festival
- **Pop-up Food Hub Workshops** with producers; including a Sourdough Bread workshop with Riverside Bakery
- **A Christmas Dinner Leftovers cookery demo**
- **Bring & Share for Gluts day** where producers and individuals with excesses harvest produce could share to avoid food waste



37 PRODUCERS
1,229 MEMBERS
475 REGULAR SHOPPERS
3,000 BASKETS
 of local produce sold
£33,140 LOCAL FOOD SALES
 (Year 1)



Forth Upcycling Network

Forth Upcycling Network, a project funded by Zero Waste Scotland's Volunteer and Community Advocate Programme, focuses on helping to encourage, support and educate on waste reduction in communities across Forth Valley.

The programme, which began in June 2015, is currently in its final year of the VCAP funding. Our Project is split into two main strands:

1. **Volunteer and Advocate Development:** Providing and facilitating training workshops to local groups, community volunteers and advocates, and project volunteers.
2. **Community Engagement:** Increasing the knowledge and skills of local community members and residents within the Forth Valley area, with the aim of changing behaviours; increasing recycling; reducing and preventing food waste; and extending product life-cycles via reuse and repair.

300 EVENTS
 attended
7,400 PEOPLE
 engaged face to face
51,671 PEOPLE
 engaged online via social media, blogs and website articles
73 COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS
22 COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

Volunteer Training, Events and Community Workshops include:

- **Wood Upcycling**, making bug hotels, planters, raised beds, benches and compost bins
- **Upcycled Arts and Crafts**, making plastic bottle snowmen, upcycled logo art and Eco Bag designing
- **Love Food Hate Waste Cascade Training**
- **Info stalls** at galas, fun days and eco days
- **Nailed It Training Course**, involving basic - advanced woodworking and upcycling training
- **Foodbank Recipe Cards**, providing recipes and food waste prevention tips
- **Forth Valley College Talks**, educating students on reuse and food waste





Zero Waste Scotland North Ayrshire Tender

Zero Waste Scotland commissioned FEL to design a Food Waste Monitoring Toolkit for pupils, teachers, and a Food Waste Monitoring Toolkit for caterers for schools in North Ayrshire. Utilising our knowledge from our Grow Forth projects Food Waste Challenge with schools in 2016, we refined

our Toolkit and then test piloted it with the primary schools in North Ayrshire. The pilot merited good results and the Food Waste Monitoring toolkits are now widely available throughout Scotland, details can be found on Zero Waste Scotland Website.

The pilots 6 primary schools included Elderbank, St. Bridgets, St. Anthonies, Lawthorn, Skelmorlie and Abbey, a total of 1,785 children participated.

Communities along the Carron Association

Communities along the Carron Association (CatCA) contracted FEL to conduct a feasibility study within three areas of Falkirk - Carronshore, Langlees and Denny and Dunipace. The feasibility study investigated the potential of developing a series of community growing projects within these areas.

FEL engaged with community groups, partners and schools within the three areas through community conversations and surveying.

A feasibility report was produced for CatCA and their partners, to help further the development of potential community growing projects. Form

the surveys conducted we found that over 90% of people would support community growing initiatives within their communities.



In 2017, FEL has continued to grow, expand and develop across its three main themes; Food & Growing; Circular Economy and Active Travel. Here is a snapshot of the progress FEL has made this year.

Forth Environment Link Falkirk

In December 2016, FEL, in partnership with Falkirk Council, took up the opportunity to have a presence within Falkirk Town Centre in a soon-to-be refurbished building on Falkirk High Street. The building, which completed its refurbishment in October 2017, will house two of FEL's newest projects; Revive Falkirk - a waste prevention and reuse initiative and Falkirk Active Travel Hub.

FEL Active Travel



Active Travel continues to be an important aspect for FEL's on-going delivery and with continued funding from Transport Scotland, Stirling Cycle Hub has added a new walking focus to its services, bringing a true sense of Active Travel to Stirling City Centre and its communities.

Building on the strength of the Stirling Cycle Hub, FEL was awarded Low Carbon Travel and Transport funding from the European Regional Development Fund to run the Falkirk Active Travel Hub in partnership with Falkirk Council's Healthier, Greener Falkirk Initiative. The Hub aims to bring low carbon and active travel advice to the local residents in Falkirk.

Along with Stirling Cycle Hub, FEL also piloted a Callander Active Travel Hub for 6 months to help better understand the opportunities and challenges of connecting our rural communities.



FEL Circular Economy

In 2017, FEL's Forth Upcycling Network, funded by Zero Waste Scotland's Volunteer and Community Advocate Programme, came to an end. The lasting legacy and experience gained from delivering VCAP over the last five years led to a successful application Climate Challenge Fund for Revive Falkirk.

Based at FEL's Falkirk High Street property, the project aims to enable local residents of Falkirk to reuse, upcycle and make a contribution to the local circular economy. In November 2017 Revive Falkirk opened its very own shop selling locally upcycled goods.



FEL Food & Growing

Throughout 2017, FEL's Stirling Food Hub has been delivering more outreach to communities in the form of supporting capacity building across the grow to eat agenda, actively reducing food waste and developing a suite of food hub activities which run from Stirling Cycle Hub. This year, energy has been added to the mix and FEL will be supporting householders to make simple changes at home which will help reduce the amount of energy they use.

Stirling Food Assembly is going from strength to strength with satellite distribution points emerging and pop up markets helping to stimulate demand for local food.

In 2017 we held Stirling Food Summit at which we disseminated our Good Food Stirling report, this provided a robust starting point for our new Food and Drink coordinator at Stirling Council to begin consulting on our Local Food and Drink Strategy.

FEL is also helping Falkirk Council and partners develop their Food Growing Strategy.

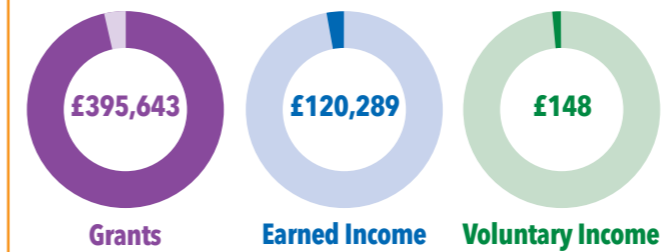


Forth Environment Link would like to thank and acknowledge the support we receive from a wide range of funders. In addition to grant funding FEL also raises money through consulting work. This financial year's accounts have been fully audited in accordance with UK Charity regulations and have been prepared using the new Charities FRS 102 SORP.

The breakdown of funding, for this year and last, is as follows:

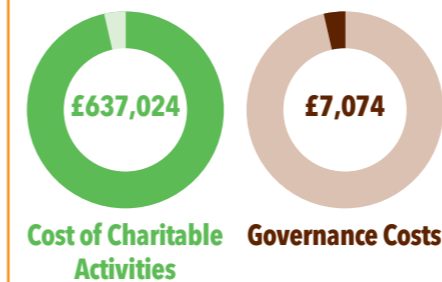
2017

INCOMING RESOURCES



Total **£516,080**

RESOURCES EXPENDED



Total **£644,098**

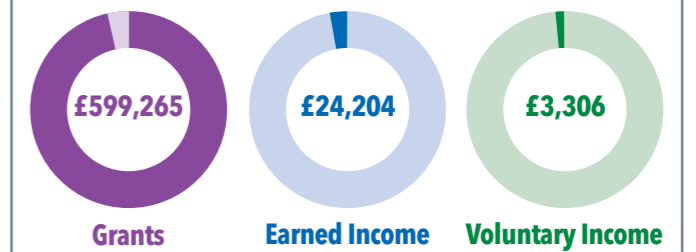
NET INCOMING RESOURCES* **-£128,018**

Total Funds Brought Forward **£286,326**

Total Funds Carried Forward **£158,308**

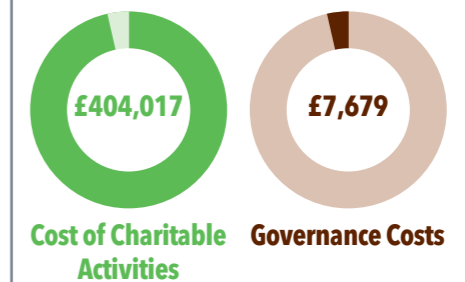
2016

INCOMING RESOURCES



Total **£626,775**

RESOURCES EXPENDED



Total **£411,696**

NET INCOMING RESOURCES* **£215,079**

*£208,835 restricted

Total Funds Brought Forward **£71,247**

Total Funds Carried Forward **£77,491**

FORTH ENVIRONMENT LINK IS SUPPORTED BY:



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