

Trustees Annual Report  
for  
Stirling Area Access Panel SCIO  
for the period  
to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024



Stirling Sheriff Court

Scottish Charity No: SC039837

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**Reference & Administrative Information**

**Charity Name:** Stirling Area Access Panel SCIO

**Scottish Charity No:** SC039837

**The Charities Principal Address:** c/o Council on Disability  
Norman MacEwan Centre  
Upper Craigs Cameronian Street  
Stirling  
FK8 2DX

**Website:** [www.stirlingareaaccesspanel.co.uk](http://www.stirlingareaaccesspanel.co.uk)

**Charities Trustees on date of approval including office held:**



**Names of other trustees during the period:**

Nil

**Independent Examiner:**



**Bankers:**

Virgin Money  
56 Murray Place  
Stirling  
FK8 2BX

## **Structure, Governance & Management**

### **Governing Document:**

The Charity is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). It is governed by its constitution which was adopted on 3rd April 2014. SAAP became a SCIO (SC039873) on the 5th August 2013.

### **Trustee Recruitment & Appointment:**

At each AGM, all of the charity trustees elected/appointed shall retire from office, but shall then be eligible for re-election.

Trustees can be elected at any time during the period.

A charity trustee retiring at an AGM will be deemed to have been re-elected unless:

- he/she advises the board prior to the conclusion of the AGM that he/she does not wish to be re-appointed as a charity trustee; or
- an election process was held at the AGM and he/she was not among those elected/re-elected through that process; or
- a resolution for the re-election of that charity trustee was put to the AGM and was not carried.

### **Objectives & Activities**

#### **The Charities Charitable Purpose:**

As set out in the 'Constitution' and 'The Charities and Trustee Investments(Scotland) Act 2005' the purpose(s) of Stirling Area Access Panel SCIO are the following:-

- The advancement of education
- The advancement of citizenship or community development
- The promotion of equality and diversity

Any other purpose that may reasonably be regarded as analogous to any of the preceding purposes.

#### **Summary of the main activities in relation to these objectives:**

The Panel's purposes are: To promote equality and diversity by raising awareness of access inequalities within the public, private and third sector. The advancement of education through the provision of technical and practical guidance on accessibility and related issues to organisations, services and the community. To advance citizenship through participation in decision making in relation to policies and legislation concerning access and equality.



## Achievement & Performance for 2023-24

We have had a mix of meetings this year, some online and others held in Forth Valley College. The World has become a very unstable place with war in Ukraine and the Middle East. As a consequence, cost for food, energy and transport is damaging living standards for most people. Similarly, councils and other organisations are having to cut spend, although there seems to be no shortage of funding for Active Travel, but not for Changing Places Toilets.

Our process of work is mostly carried out by email as health issues and age is catching-up for some members. Making change to the built environment is not easy, it can take a long time, but the hardest aspect is changing mindsets to consider the barriers constantly faced by people with disabilities.

We have achieved some small changes through the year, much of it in influencing organisations to think of being inclusive. The following are our key environmental issues:

- Seeing the correct signage returned to accessible toilets at Forth Valley College after a lengthy period and with the valuable intervention of an MSP.
- Receiving confirmation from the Scottish Prison Services that they will be conducting an Access Audit of the new women's prison at Cornton.
- The construction of the Roderic Dhu Watch Tower and path, is in modern times, an unfortunate example of discrimination towards disabled people. Again, without asking for help from an MSP, a video feed to the pier would not have happened. This was SAAP's suggestion of a minimum reasonable adjustment'.
- Advising the consultant's of the Gargunnock to Stirling Active Travel proposed path, that crossing the A811 twice, was entirely the wrong decision, particularly for school age children and young teenagers.
- His invitation to meet with the Council Leader Chris Kane (MP), was an opportunity to advise him of the primary issues which face disabled people, and of how we hoped he could help.
- Providing detailed advice to a Park Ranger about mobility devices which carry wheelchair users and path widths, signage and seating for all users of the park.
- Conveying to Audit Scotland that Active Travel projects which SAAP had consulted on, were disappointing with Sustrans and their consultants, by not following process, most with protracted periods of development.
- We advised in detail on the Rowardennan Masterplan where the toilet building in particular, was lacking application on disabilities. Our comments were passed to the consultants developing the project.
- Importantly, we advised Scottish Water of the risks posed with installing a top-up-tap located on a walking area outside Dunblane Train Station.

As can be seen in this Report, the diversity of our work is extensive and can sometimes involve multiple organisations who all fail to recognise Equality Legislation in the way that they should, and are thus technically breaking the law. At the risk of repeating ourselves, there is a pattern to the advice that our Panel give over the year. They are the same inclusive design problems that we see – accessible parking markings, incorrectly designed toilets, a lack of signage, and so on.

It has been a disappointing year with Changing Places Toilets (CPT's) as we have been waiting more than three years for the Scottish Government to release £10M to fund new CPT's in Scotland, which was promised in 2021. There are many groups just waiting to install these badly needed facilities which could do so much for people with complex needs. It is apparent with funding so tight, that the Scottish Government has no intention of releasing this money, leaving groups to find their own funds.



## **Achievement & Performance cont'd**

Funding is at a critical level, particularly for councils as they make swinging cuts to a range of duties, yet we continue to see large capital funding spent on Active Travel. Our Panel think that it is wrong to spend public money on very expensive streetscape for cyclists in the assumption that cycling will achieve benefits to health and reduce Co2 emissions. Unfortunately for many people, they cannot use bikes for a number of reasons, and our Scottish weather does not make easy travel, particularly in rural settings. We do think that there is a place for Active Travel, but public funding is meant to benefit the public, and not a minority in this case.

### **Access Surveys**

There were no surveys completed in the last 12 months.

### **Consultations & Public Issues**

#### **Forthside Way Masterplan**

SAAP has had two positive meeting with the Council over the year and some clarification on detail which was not too obvious, for example in Active Travel routes and the reduction of the car park outside the Vue Cinema. This is a complex project which also includes new shops, new housing, leisure areas, restricted access routes and very challenging traffic flows into and out of Riverside. Travel for the whole area is by walking and cycling which will be challenging for people with disabilities, the elderly and young families. Further meetings are expected as details are firmed-up by the council.

#### **Forth Valley College Signage**

We can report that signage on all the accessible toilets has finally been changed back at our request, to the original, correct signage, after protracted discussions ending with an MSP visiting the college and meeting with the principal.

#### **Millhall Pedestrian Rail Bridge**

We have sent numerous emails to ScotRail without effect. Perhaps ScotRail are not responding due to the issues that we raised over the non – inclusive Stirling Station new developments. It was agreed to bank the accessibility issue with the bridge problem at the moment.

#### **Greenspace at Stirling Community Hospital**

SAAP were pleased to participate in detail over two years with this project, which is now completed. Although there were cost cutbacks, for example the trail in the wood between the hospital car park and Burghmuir Road has been removed, the current revised path will include a Green Gym, sensory area accessible growing area, Music Spot and extensive seating. When SAAP toured the opening in June '24, the end result was very pleasing and these outdoor features / activities will benefit many different groups of users.

#### **Stirling Rurality Network Meeting**

We have participated in a number of meetings and requested answers from the author of the Strategic Commissioning Plan relating to local Health Plans. It is difficult to know what change, or feedback value, achieved in an environment of continuous change, due to challenging conditions within the NHS.

#### **Tyndrum CPT**

Jeremy Balfour MSP raised the CPT question in the Scottish Parliament in late '23, asking when the funding would be released for this and for a CPT in Musselburgh. The First Minister replied that they were still considering criteria and that all Government funding was currently under strict scrutiny.

This is a farcical situation as the Westminster Government has already spent £30m on 600 CPT's in England in the same time.

Our Panel has also sent advice on the layout to the Tyndrum Information Group (TIG) as it has two entrances and three access routes. This information was passed to their Oban architects.

Meantime, TIG will be looking at funding options elsewhere.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

### **Cross Party Group on CPT's**

In September '23, Disability Equality Scotland gave a presentation on the work of Access Panels to the Group. The delay in funding new CPT's was also discussed, and members were encouraged to sign the current petition for the release of funding.

The CE of Pamis answered the recent criticism they had received for not supporting Tyndrum's CPT and its lack of Government funding, by explaining that it is in Pamis's constitution that they cannot support individual CPT's. Undersized CPT's which have been approved were also noted, even although Building Regulations state a minimum size.

At the January '24 meeting, SAAP asked for an architect to join the group as there is an unreality by members towards the cost of a typical CPT. Government funding has still not been released.

### **Cross Party Group on Disability**

The meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb. '24 was chaired by Jeremy Balfour MSP and there was discussion on future proofing of homes, Broadband in the wider environment, the completion and comment of the Access Panel Report, and our Chair raised the issue of the Roderick Dhu Tower. The summer meetings for CPT's and Disability didn't take place due to election activity.

### **Case Handling for Cornton Prison**

We have been advised by the Director of Estates for prisons that there will be a meeting with SAAP in the future to discuss only the visitor area access points which SAAP raised and as we advised, a consultant will be contacted to look at an Access Audit for the prison.

### **TT2 Cycle Route from Aberfoyle to Stirling**

The council finally completed a circa 300m long path on ground where the Blairdrummond Smiddy Farm Shop is located. The £80K spend will make it safer for cyclists coming from Kirk Lane by avoiding the busy and dangerous A84 junction.

### **Cambuskenneth Foot Bridge**

We wrote last year that the this bridge width of 1.7m is not suitable for pedestrians and cyclists, with the inappropriate signage used, the Chair wrote to the council asking for a meeting. This segment is part of the cycle route NCN 76 (Berwick to Kirkcaldy) and the bridge doesn't meet minimum advisory cycle standards of 2m width. An EqlA for this route has never been produced and at the meeting with the council, they say that there is a conflict of interest between the Land Reform Act (right to responsibly roam) and the Equality Act; which has precedent? Our thoughts are that the legal position and an EqlA should be in place before it was made part of NCN76, but until there is an opportunity to explore the legality of this bridge, we have to close this query. The correct solution would be a new, 4m wide bridge, but that will not happen.

### **Killearn to Balfron Active Travel, New Footpath**

There has been little change to a viable path route over two years due to land ownership issues, but funding status is progressing with Sustrans.

### **Old Killearn Hospital to Killearn New Path**

We mentioned last year that this Active Travel project from the old hospital site to the main street in Killearn is in progress. The potential route will be inclusive and not be any steeper than 1:20 with a width of 3m. We advised that a 4m wide path is better for a mixed-use two-way path per Cycling by Design and there should be seating in the new section every 50m per Inclusive Mobility. One concerning aspect of the two potential routes is that neither landowner is making it easy to discuss, one being non-contactable. There is a 'Places for Everyone' element with the existing streets in Killearn requiring future change, and funding is by Sustrans. There has been no published progress on a route yet.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

Further, Sustrans will not be managing funding after 2025 as Transport Scotland will be taking on this responsibility.

### **Roderick Dhu Watch Tower, Loch Katrine**

This is another 'carry-over' from last year. We had firstly received an email from the architects suggesting our advice could be taken as "libelous" and that we had upset the team behind the development. In our response we stressed the lack of an EqlA, the lack of an 'Outdoor Accessibility Guidance' Standard for the design, as these documents are used to be 'helpful' in any project design. We received a more positive response to this email. However, we wrote to Evelyn Tweed MSP, the CEO of LL&TNP, and Stirling Building Controls Management, saying that this project should be paused but we never received any response.

In summary, the path design to the Tower is discriminatory and we asked for a video feed to the car park. Three organisations were involved, the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (Planning), Stirling Council (Building Controls) and Visit Scotland (Funding). SAAP wrote to all of these organisations pointing out the issues, no responses were forthcoming. We asked if the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Disability would support the cause and they did. The Chair, Jeremy Balfour MSP, wrote to all three organisations raising SAAP's concerns and received a reply from all of them. SAAP was delighted to learn that the CEO of Stirling Council now confirmed that there would be a video feed from the Tower to the Pier which The Sir Walter Scott is berthed. This was the 'reasonable adjustment' which we advocated, and which the original scheme should have contained as a minimum.

### **Lifts at Forthside Railway Bridge (Squinty Bridge)**

It is very problematic when the lift/s are not working for wheelchair users and the elderly, as there is such a long detour for an alternative way to the other side of the bridge. A member convinced council staff that signs should be deployed at both ends of the bridge to help when not working, by also having signage at the bus and railway stations, to let potential bridge users know if any lift was out of order, but a few months have passed, with lift breakdowns, and no signs have appeared yet.

### **Car Parking Payment Query**

A member raised the issue that Stirling Car Parks did not have the facility for paying by cash. A trustee checked various car park around the city centre, including Maxwell Place, the Corn Exchange, Dumbarton Road, and Port St, and found that the meter units took both cash and phone payments. The Travelodge car park on Goosecroft Road is a private car park.

### **Disability Equality Scotland (DES) Celebration and AGM – The Barracks**

Two trustees attended, and found it worthwhile as they met fellow Access Panel members, and were able to network with DES directors and staff. They also raised several important concerns with the Minister for Equalities, who attended the day briefly.

### **Jeremy Balfour MSP Survey for Panels and Final Report**

The chair circulated JB's Report and briefly commented about SAAP's further input to the Report which focussed on Public Transport and Healthcare shortcomings. We added Active Travel issues, Sustrans lack of accountability, Net Zero and a reduced choice for travel, fewer bus services, flawed EqlA's, lack of transparency with Building Controls, and that Planning authorities should recognise the Equality Act. We don't know if any points were taken up.

### **Former Cornton Prison Visitor Centre**

We had a phone discussion with the CEO of Plus who was interested in taking over this building and adding a CPT to it, ensuring accessible toilets and also that parking was good. We discussed access issues and costs which could be high in this case. It was left with an open invitation for Plus to come back to SAAP for advice which they may need for a permanent future development of their own.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

### **Taxicard Payments**

A member had raised the issue that people in Clacks could no longer obtain a discounted Taxicard locally, but would have to obtain it in future from the Bus Station in Stirling. This is a cost cutting measure which SAAP has little chance of influencing.

### **Gargunnock to Stirling Cycle Route Consultation 13th Sept. '23**

SAAP was invited to a Teams discussion with two consultants from Sweco AB and two residents from Gargunnock. Surprisingly, the route crossed and ran parallel to the North side of the A811, and was only 2.5m from the road. The route also went through Cambusbarron and on to Stirling City. We made 5 points of concern; the residents too were unimpressed with this illogical proposal; there was no agreement with landowners either. The meeting finished with the consultants saying that they had recorded the comments and would take them into account during the route development. There have been no further meetings.

### **Industrial Premises in Cowie**

SAAP was contacted by Buildings Control in September relating to a small employee facility with showers and changing facilities. We made 6 points of concern, the only entrance was not suitable for wheelchairs, there were no female toilets, no canteen and the changing rooms had no seats or benches. The accessible toilet with shower did not meet British Standards. Overall, it was an example of extreme cost cutting. Our comments were acknowledged.

### **Guide Dogs – Training Offer**

Guide Dogs had written to Access Panels offering training courses for those with sight loss – The Chair forwarded information on to appropriate individuals.

### **Kazuba Kiosk Dry Toilet System**

We were approached in September by an architect representing 'Greenroutes' in the walled garden of Gargunnock House. They wished to install a French designed, outdoor dry toilet system kiosk which the manufacturer claimed to be 'accessible'. SAAP rejected this design as it was unregulated and didn't meet 10 access points, for example there were no handrails to support a wheelchair user. The architect later responded by saying that they had no choice but to go ahead with this design as there was no other. We did point out that the toilet could be made accessible, but this was also ignored due to time constraints.

### **Accessible Rural Polling Stations**

In September, Stirling Council asked SAAP to comment on 7 mostly rural Polling Stations. We replied by saying that it was not something that we could undertake, but we made comments for Balfron, the McIntock Hall, which has some serious access issues and Edmonstone Hall in Strathblane which was good. The council officer stated that any negative points would be investigated.

### **Alyn Smith's MP Stirling City Survey –**

It was agreed that all members should respond individually to our MP's survey, and we encourage everyone to do so.

### **Sustrans Community Engagement – Places for Everyone**

2 members attended this online event in November and raised questions relating to sensory and neurodivergent issues.

### **Aberfoyle CPT Floor Correction System**

We were advised by the council in October that as the floor had not been laid properly, the contractor was correcting it and the toilet would be out of commission for a week. We advised that there should be a sign pointing out the location of the closest CPT (Blair Drummond), which was acknowledged.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

### **Edinburgh Airport CPT Signage**

A member of a local focus group sent photos of the signage of the CPT in Edinburgh Airport which they thought were effective. We wrote back that the intercom system was difficult for foreign users and there were 7 signs in the immediate door area, none for sight loss, some with the wrong information and all of this just creating clutter and confusion. Overall, a poor example. We didn't get any further acknowledgement from the focus group.

### **'The Bank Dunblane'**

In September, SAAP was contacted by a project manager for the above vacant bank. There is a plan to turn this building into a café/bar/deli & music & cinema venue. On the proposal there is an external ramp into the venue, but we found that it didn't comply with Standards. Also, the accessible toilet didn't meet the overall size required and there was no baby changing facility. There was an internal ramp with similar issues to the external one. Overall, for a project which aims to be accessible and inclusive, it fell very short of what it hoped to achieve. The overall internal and external design of the building and garden was later changed, but there were still a couple of access issues. Planning later gave it approval with conditions.

### **Buchlyvie Path**

A manager from Stirling Council was seeking to help the local community by providing an offroad path from the village hall to the local surgery and contacted SAAP in October. The incline of the bank was steep and it couldn't be described as a path, but a 1:20 ramp with extensive and lengthy Z sections was the only option. Overall, we advised that it would be a difficult and pricy project which would require a civil engineering or landscape architect to assess.

### **Local Development Plan Consultation: Transport**

SAAP submitted additional points about the limitation of rural bus services, the inequalities of Active Travel for disabled people and the limitations of DRT. Overall, there is nothing new in these points, other than good transport links must be made available to new housing being constructed with Place Making also a prerequisite.

### **Moray Park Peninsular Toilet, Doune**

The architect responsible for this proposed community building contacted SAAP as Building Controls were not happy with the baby changing bench which had been added. Over two years ago we had advised the architect specifically on this point. As a peninsular toilet is larger than a corner accessible toilet with baby changing, we were happy to support this arrangement to the architect and Building Controls.

### **Stirling Sheriff Court Without Accessible Parking**

With this item there is considerable history going back a number of years for the Panel, regarding lack of accessible parking. Recently we were asked by Alexander Stewart MSP if there were any issues in Stirlingshire which he could help with, so we included the Sheriff Court. Briefly, although SAAP had been promised an accessible bay in May '22, it was never actioned. The Scottish Court and Tribunal Service, (SCTS) who look after Court properties, is now of the view that an accessible bay is not required and the parking in front of the court is on private ground. SAAP have provided the full history with the legislative reasons, e.g., the Equality Act, for an accessible parking bay, to [REDACTED] and he has taken up the issue with the SCTS. We await their response.

### **Meeting with Council Leader Councillor Chris Kane**

In April '24 and using TEAMS, SAAP discussed the issues currently of concern to the Panel which discriminate and create absolute barriers for disabled people. The Roderick Dhu Watch Tower is an example which [REDACTED] supported strongly as council leader; there are many other cases within Planning which doesn't benefit the disabled user or environment for all. We advised that the council has their responsibility of the Public Sector Equality Duty which covers all aspects of their work.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

██████████ is keen to build stronger working ties with SAAP.

### **Pavilion Cave, Kings Park**

SAAP were contacted by the owner about operating for special events. We advised that they contact Building Controls as the matter was not about access in this instance.

### **Draft Guidance on inclusive design for town centres and busy streets"**

The Chair advised everybody to read this document which has been produced by Transport Scotland and it informs on statutory duties like completing an EqIA on projects, as well as responsibilities within the Equality Act, etc.

### **BSL Event 28<sup>th</sup> February at Stirling Council**

We hope that some members attended this event on 28th Feb. at Viewforth.

### **Outdoor Access at Muiravonside Country Park**

We received a question from a Park Ranger about accessible vehicles (potentially bikes) to take wheelchair users around the park. We suggested talking to two local organisations to get their opinion and knowledge on taking wheelchair users on bike rides. We also gave advice on path widths, crossfall, seating and wayfinding for Dementia users.

### **Bridge of Allan Accessible Parking**

We received an email from a concerned lady relating to the removal of residential spaces. Looking into this issue, it is entirely normal for the Roads Dept to remove residential spaces which are no longer required by current resident/s.

### **Bellfield Centre Accessible Toilet Near Meeting Room**

We highlighted to management that the baby changing table stopped wheelchair users from being able to manoeuvre within the toilet. Also highlighted was the entrance door which opened inwards and Standards don't recommend this. However, although the baby changing table was immediately removed, the door remains in this orientation as it has release fasteners on the hinge side which makes it possible to remove the door from the outside – but that would not happen quickly!

### **Local Development Plan Input**

The Chair stated that SAAP had submitted an email to the council in October '23 covering: Transport - Public Transport's unreliability; requesting more accessible taxis from 20% to 30%; proper consultation and better outdoor guidance with Active Travel projects, including 5% parking for larger accessible/cargo bikes.

Housing – Student residences should have 5% of wheelchair accessible rooms. Adapted homes should comply with BS9266 Design of accessible and adaptable general needs housing.

Standards – Use of BS9266 vs the older version from the late 90's of "Housing for varying needs" which is grossly out-dated, and limiting 'Designing Streets' as it isn't inclusive.

Commercial Premises – Closing the loophole of designed features like, undersize toilets which can be carried over to the new project.

Equality Act – To be enforced by Planning and supporting the recommendation of EqIA's to Applicants. The council do not respond to submissions.

### **Council Grant Funding**

In the first quarter of '24, we were told that our annual funding will be stopped due to a severe shortage of Council funds. We are one of five charities affected. However, the notice period provides that there will be a payment of £750 awarded to us for the first quarter of this financial year.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

### **Treasurer Position**

As of March '24, a trustee has kindly offered to take on the role of Treasurer which members present approved. Further, it was agreed to move some funding to our Savings Account to benefit from higher interest.

### **Constitution Update**

The changes to the Constitution with the addition of two clauses relating to the GDPR and the refreshing of our Privacy Policy, was unanimously passed by members in July '24. The revised Constitution will now be submitted to OSCR by the Chair.

### **Blue Space**

SAAP members were asked to comment on a survey by Scottish Water on what makes waterfronts (Blue Space) attractive to disabled visitors. SAAP submitted details for the basic needs of: accessible toilets, accessible parking, cafes and a flat and level frontage. We haven't seen any results.

### **Audit Scotland**

SAAP were contacted by Audit Scotland to convey our experience with Active Travel Projects, Sustrans, consultants and the council. We commented that there had been difficult consultation with all of them, particularly with Sustrans since 2014. Much money seems to be wasted over lengthy periods with consultants, and the council didn't consult correctly with their Walk, Cycle, Live projects as EqIA's were not completed.

### **Consultation for Alcohol Licensing Policy**

This was an excellent document issued by the council and aimed at the responsible behaviour of licensees. SAAP provided some comments about disability and medication.

### **Public Query – Front Door Access**

A Raploch lady asked SAAP for information about making her front door more accessible. We responded by advising to contact Social Services and asked for details of the specific issues. There was no response forthcoming.

### **Forthbank Stadium Accessibility Audit Request**

We had completed access reports there on two previous occasions. The second time we noted that none of our previous recommendations had been actioned. As it is likely that our second report would not have been acted on either, we advised the organisation to contact the National Register of Access Consultants as their Report could not be so easily ignored.

### **McGill's buses and mobility scooters**

We were informed by a scooter user that McGill's buses do not take mobility scooters on their buses due to their size and the fire risk of carrying lithium batteries. Mobility scooters are the most common mobility device for disabled users. There are three classes of scooters, Class 1 is the lightest and Class 3 is the largest.

We had written to Evelyn Tweed MSP and she had written to the CEO of McGills who responded that they complied with the Equality Act and there was no Standard for scooters.

SAAP discussed the disappointing letter from McGill's CEO, and wrote to [REDACTED] Minister for Equalities on this. Two of our trustees had met [REDACTED] and her staff at the recent DES Conference, and had raised the issue with her, questioning what the Scottish Government intend to do for the many people with disabilities who are users of a mobility scooter, who are now refused bus travel. It was agreed that we would let DES make an entry about discrimination against mobility scooter users on the Access Panel Network News, as we know this is a national issue affecting other areas of Scotland, as well as Stirlingshire.



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

We asked the Scottish Government Ministerial Office (SG) to act on the issue, and they replied by referring SAAP to a voluntary standard that some bus companies in England use, called "CPT Code for the use and acceptance of Mobility Scooters on low floor Buses". This Code is only for Class 2 Scooters, which seem to be the most popular disability device for mobility users.

The SG advised SAAP to contact the English authority for Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR), as we thought the Code to be too complex. Within the Code, Scooter users require a "permit for travel" which involves assessment of on-bus training, covering the use of the bus ramp and manoeuvring into the designated space. The Scooter user will not be carried if they pose a danger to passengers, and the Scooter must be kept in "good working order", unmodified, etc. This is not an easily workable Code for disabled users and it puts significant responsibility on the driver too. Overall, we don't see McGills accepting this Code.

We also wrote to the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) but didn't receive a response to what is obviously a complex problem.

We assume that Transport Scotland are aware of this problem and as promoters of inclusion in public transport, it should be them who develop a more pragmatic Code which addresses the needs of scooter users who must use public transport, with bus companies in Scotland.

### **Intersectional Stigma of Place-based Ageing (ISPA)**

A presentation on this 5 year project was given by [REDACTED] from Stirling University: she explained that Stirling Uni, in partnership with three other universities, and two housing organisations are looking for disabled people who are over 45, to say what they like and dislike about where they live: what affects life in and around the home.

Stigma is part of the research too, and how to tackle it. Stigma is when someone is treated unfairly because of what other people believe about them. Stigma can affect older disabled people getting around their homes and neighbourhoods. There will be neighbourhood mapping, and volunteer researchers will keep a reflective diary which will record the likes and dislikes about where one lives (the neighbourhood – own garden, community park, how one travels, etc.); what makes life easier or more difficult.

All travel costs and other expenses will be covered, and information technology devices can be provided, which the recipient may keep.

For more information, please contact [REDACTED]

### **Parking at the Engine Shed**

A trustee pointed out that at the three accessible on-road parking bays on Forthside Way for the Engine Shed, the lines are worn away as it is constantly being used by car users either travelling by train or as a pick-up point for passengers. Although highlighted at the beginning of 2024, the lines still haven't been freshened. It will be followed-up.

### **Stirling Vennels and Lane**

During May '24, we had a Teams meeting with a consultant from Ironside-Farrar and a member from Stirling Council. One of the Trustees is familiar with these locations and has advised on the use of signage, photos, lighting, etc. However, some of the areas are in private ownership; access (and budget) is very limited due to steps, gradients, location of bins, debris, and the narrow nature of these historical routes, although some of the vennels are used by schoolchildren. There is also an issue with anti-social behaviour, which the conservation renewal scheme acknowledges. There have been no further meetings.

### **DES Conference, 28th June '24**

A member attended online and it was very worthwhile to learn of the experiences of diverse Access Panels throughout Scotland. Many Panels mentioned reduction in, or withdrawal of, funding from local authorities. There were various presentations, e.g., the Braille petition, disability hate crime.

### **Rowardennan Masterplan**

This is a project led by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) to improve Rowardennan



## **Consultations and Public Issues cont'd**

for visitors, while making travel to there, predominately by sustainable means. Car parking will be reduced and travel by water, bus, and cycling will be encouraged. SAAP participated in the online consultation and submitted many points covering: signage, path widths, issues with the visitors centre and particularly the accessible toilet which had a door which opened inwards and a boot washing facility right next to this toilet entrance. We also made the point that an EqIA was an essential requirement as for example, wheelchair users are unlikely to use water transport due to piers not being adapted. Our input was acknowledged by the LLTNP architect, and it was stated that our advice would be given to the consultants who are developing the project.

### **Planning Issues**

#### **22/00800/FUL – Demolition of workshop and construction of new shop, with relocated filling station with new access and parking including electric charging in Balfron**

This August '23 Application is a resubmission of an approved Application where significant external changes to the immediate area have been made. The accessible parking bays were incorrectly marked and we took the opportunity to comment about an undersized toilet, addition of a hearing loop at the counter and manifestations at the entrance door. We were also concerned about how confusing the traffic routing to this new layout was with a new exit and a pedestrian crossing. We objected to this Application but it was approved in April 2024.

#### **PAN-2023-006Erection of 30 holiday chalets by Gartmore**

A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted by a developer to the Council in August '23. It is not a Planning Application but a notice to the Council advising on how the developer intends to engage with the community about their proposal.

We objected to this proposal as there were no accessible chalets and recommended that 3 have elements of accessibility, a dog spending area, etc. The architect contacted SAAP and stated that our comments would be passed to the developer. No further development is known.

#### **23/00463/FUL – Construction of new two storey 20 No. bed luxury care home at Randolphhill, Dunblane**

SAAP objected to this extension in September. Within the "Supplementary Guidance" many design references are quoted but a significant one is missing, namely "Care Homes for Adults - The Design Guide" by the Care Inspectorate which takes into account factors like Coronavirus control, fire and food safety and aims to provide high quality care through design.

There were a further 16 points of concern which we noted, including no fire refuges or a service lift. There was no acknowledgement, and the application was later withdrawn.

**24/00442/FUL** was later submitted, which we also objected to, based on a different building construction method, but the internal layout was unchanged, although the immediate forecourt area was different. We objected again as all the previous issues still existed, particularly with accessible toilets and bathrooms which had doors which opened inwards, the 'quiet space' was not so, there was only one lift when there should also be a service lift, no drop-off outside, etc. It is awaiting a decision.

#### **23/00540/FUL – New Pavement Café, Crossed Peel**

In October '23, SAAP objected to this Application on a number of points:

This pavement café on Spittal Street is badly located being on a steep slope and it also causes unnecessary footway clutter to create a hostile environment for a number of people, particularly those with sensory issues who will normally have to follow the footway centre and may be confused by this café development. The pavement café is on a slope which is illogical where drinks are involved and potential spilling.

There were five other points in SAAP's objection and the Application was later withdrawn.



## **Planning Issues cont'd**

### **23/00594/FUL – Installation of modular units providing changing facilities for the Bannockburn and Eastern villages**

In November '23 we commented negatively on these buildings as access for a wheelchair user was extremely difficult for both the lounge and sports changing areas; it certainly wasn't inclusive. The location of accessible toilets was also poor. Altogether we made 13 separate points and most importantly, advised the developers to speak to user groups to find out their requirements. Planning approved this Application in early December '23.

### **23/00683/FUL – Erection of replacement gatehouse and ramp at Superglass Insulation Ltd, Stirling**

In December '23 SAAP submitted a neutral view of this Application on a number of points, from a lack of handrails on the ramp and top area, incomplete accessible toilet, to a signed hearing loop at the guard's window. This Application was approved in late January '24.

### **23/00756/FUL – Installation of Top-up-Tap at Dunblane Railway Station**

This was a sensible proposal which SAAP agreed with in principle, in early Jan. '24, but no consideration had been given to users of the tap. A cyclist who wished to use this Tap had nowhere close to safely park their bike, so potentially vulnerable pedestrians may not see bikes lying flush to the adjacent paved walking line. We advised close bike parking and clear wayfinding for this otherwise beneficial facility. The Application was approved in Feb.24. We can only hope that Scottish Water act on our recommendations.

### **23/00747/FUL - Siting of sales cabin at Oakwood, Killearn for Cala Homes**

In February '24 we objected to this Application as there was no accessible parking, or ramp into the cabin, and the toilet facilities didn't include an accessible toilet. Planning gave a temporary approval in March '24 to this Application with a condition to add a single accessible parking bay. A small success.

### **23/00751/FUL Change of use of former bank to community centre, Doune**

We submitted an extensive "neutral" comment in March '24 with 16 points added to our previous 20, to the developer. In July '24, Planning are still reviewing the Application.

### **24/00145/FUL Installation of plaques for a Heritage Trail, Doune**

We submitted a neutral comment for this Application in March '24, primarily as the proposed use of lettering on the plaques consisted of capital lettering and did not comply with Inclusive Communications or Easy Read principles.

The Application was approved and a copy of our 10 comments was "passed on to the applicant for consideration" by Planning in late April '24.

### **23/00399/FUL Change of use of a former porta into a Farm Shop**

This shop and café only had a single accessible toilet for staff and customers to share. There was no bike parking and access to the building for a wheelchair user would be difficult. In April '24 we submitted a neutral input with 10 extensive points.

Planning approved this Application in late May'24, with Conditions to add cycle parking, which SAAP had highlighted.

**24/00353/FUL Installation of 5no. Electric Vehicle charging stations serving 10no. parking bays etc, at Tim Hortons 21 Springkerse Retail Park Stirling FK7 7TL-** This project was approved, but existing accessible bays were not properly marked, and there is no marked safe path to/from accessible chargers to the restaurant. Building Controls to query. This was a highlighted issue to Building Controls in late July.



## Planning Issues cont'd

**24/00401/ADV Lectern and stone plinth signs at Land East Of Cocksburn Reservoir, Sheriffmuir Road.** - This is a very popular walk and we objected as there was no use on the lectern of Braille, it also had sharp corners and some information was printed on non-contrasting colours.

**24/00410/FUL Change of use from Shop (Class 1A) to Food and Drink (Class 3), 13 Port Street Stirling.** - We objected as the accessible toilet door opens inward, there was no baby changing, we suggested unisex toilets with one enlarged cubicle.

**Pre-Planning Listed Building Solar Array (Gargunnoch)** – An architect, advised by the council to contact SAAP, had sought our views on a listed private residence whose owners wished to fit solar panels at ground level in their large garden. We wrote to the architect saying that we normally don't comment on private developments, but if the public did have access, he would need to look at paths, wayfinding and seating. He replied by saying that there is "no public access" to where the solar array is.

### Previous Planning Applications of Note

**20/00426/PPP Craigforth Campus Redevelopment**– We had previously submitted a neutral submission to this development. A new Planning Hearing has been requested for the 30<sup>th</sup> of July to discuss in principle, a much smaller development of shops, housing, care home, restaurants, etc. No known decision has been made.

**22/00829/FUL Equi-Power Kildean, Riding for the disabled.** – This project has been around for a couple of years and recently SAAP were notified by the developers that SEPA advised Stirling Council that the project cannot go ahead due to the flood risk on access and egress to the site. A more suitable site will need to be found. We had previously submitted a neutral submission as the layout was questionable, and a Changing Places Toilet was not identified on poorly presented drawings.

**23/00194/FUL Alterations and reuse from a school to an Aparthotel** – This application for the school, built in 1855, was rejected by the council for a number of reasons, for example on preserving the features of the school and not complying with the Local Development Plan, etc.

**24/00264** was a new submission aimed at temporary accommodation for students. SAAP objected as there was no accessible accommodation. A decision has still to be taken on this proposal.

**23/00399/FUL Change of use of a former porta into a Farm Shop** – Although this Gartmore project was approved, we wonder how a single (Accessible) toilet for the whole building would work. The manager for Planning and Building Controls advised that Building Controls would ensure that the correct number of toilets would be supplied when the project will be reviewed.

**Note:** SAAP were kindly invited in July to the next meeting of the council's Architects Forum, which we had previously attended some years ago, this is an excellent opportunity for the Panel.

The council also offered accommodation for SAAP meetings on their premises, which will allow us not to incur charges for hiring accommodation.

### Publicity and Marketing

There are some minor updates to the SAAP website, [www.stirlingareaaccesspanel.org](http://www.stirlingareaaccesspanel.org)

**In the Stirling Observer on 15-9-23** - SAAP was mentioned in an article about car and taxi access for "Student flats plan for the city".



## **Publicity and Marketing cont'd**

The article didn't mention that we also asked for accessible apartments for students with disabilities as there were none.

**Stirling Observer 3/4/2024 "Panel calls for new members"** – An article submitted by a Trustee promoting the Panel and the need for more members, was published in the Wednesday and Friday issues.

It was also carried in 'Voice of the People' for two weeks. Stirling Carers was also contacted.

## **Training and Development**

### **SAAP Course**

A development course for our members was delivered by an NRAC consultant on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024, featuring the Human Rights Act ~ Equality Act, Publications; 'Inclusive Mobility', 'Design for the Mind', 'Guidance on Inclusive Design for Town Centres and Busy Streets and Outdoor Accessibility Guidance'. There were five SAAP members, one Clacks member, and a member of Artlink, in attendance and members stated that it had been a very informative and worthwhile event.

### **Acknowledgments**

We thank Stirling Council for their final financial backing and for their many years of support.

Our thanks to Disability Equality Scotland for funding our course and their backing throughout the year.

Our indebted thanks to our Independent Examiner for her respected and prompt advice, and examination of our Report and Financial Data, in accordance with OSCR, Charity Regulator.

We also thank our treasurer for her outstanding effort by managing our expenses and arranging the completion of our Annual Accounts, by a very considerate Chartered Accountant.

The trustees would like to comment that we are indebted for the essential engagement and support of SAAP members in the Panel's ventures, over the last 12 months whilst managing their own health and disability challenges.

It would be good to report one day that access and inclusion issues have generally been improving and that they are now a minority occurrence, but currently that is far from happening. Attempting to resolve these issues for Panels is a continuous passion.

Our Panel seem to be the only local voice in Stirlingshire who are interested in improving Planning Applications and the built environment at the moment. There are many larger organisations which represent disabilities, or are doing funded academic research, and they have the staff or more volunteers to make a difference to outcomes from Planning Applications, which could make a future improvement to society. It is about taking a holistic approach to their chosen focus, for example, ensuring the complete design of (modular) homes offers a lifetime of flexible service.

Finally, it is important to us to attract more people who can continue to challenge the future issues of bad inclusive design.

### **Future Plans**

When possible, we will have face-to-face meetings in the coming year. Some meetings where distance is a factor, it is obviously easier to participate online.

For our own members, we will be able to:

1. When suitable, provide SAAP meetings in person.
2. Look for new members at every opportunity.
4. Continue our discussion with council on the Forthside Development, and consultant led Active Travel routes.
5. Provide further training development opportunities for all members.
6. Advocate for more CPT's in Stirlingshire.
7. Be cautious by keeping member safe from activities where Covid is a risk.



## **Financial Review**

### **Statement of Reserves Policy:**

Our funding for last year came from a Stirling Council grant for £3750 and a grant £600 from Disability Equality Scotland for which we would like to thank them. This included our usual £3000 from Stirling Council plus an additional £750. We were notified that no further funding would be received from Stirling Council in 2024-2025 due to financial cuts in the Council budget. The £750 was a severance payment.

There have been no large items purchased this year.

Meetings have continued to be hybrid this year. We have had virtual meetings this year and also face to face meetings which included a training event for members.

This has resulted in reduced travelling expenses this year of £52 (2023 £141) and reduced meeting costs this year £380 (2023 £458)

The 120- day notice account has generated an increase in interest due to the rising interest rate. Interest for this year was £305 (2023 £74)

Due to interest rates increasing and our main funder Stirling Council withdrawing all future funding £11,000 was transferred to the 120-day notice savings account from our non interest paying current account to generate some income.

### **Reserves Policy**

SAAP has £16,658 (2023 £13420) in reserves. This increase directly reflects the continuation of restriction in activities. Presently SAAP does not have premises or overheads.

The restricted funds remain the same £3547 (2023 £3547). This fund is only to be used should there be any gaps in funding.

### **Details of any deficit:**

There was no financial deficit this year.

### **Details of Donated Facilities & Services:**

The Charity benefits from the time given by all the Trustees to the running of the Charity and would like to thank them.

### **Statement of Trustees Responsibilities:**

The members of the Charity must prepare financial statements which give sufficient detail to enable an appreciation of the transactions of the Charity during the financial year. The members of the Charity are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which, on request, must reflect the financial position of the Charity at that time. This must be done to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and must take reasonable steps for the prevention and/or detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Chairperson

Dated:

6-11-2024

## Receipts & Payments Account Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024

Receipts & Payments Account	Notes	Un Restricted	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
<b>Receipts</b>					
Donations		0	0	0	0
Receipts from Fund Raising Activities		0	0	0	0
Other Charitable Activities		0	0	0	0
Grants	1	4,350	0	4,350	3,000
Bank Interest		305	0	305	74
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>4,655</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,655</b>	<b>3,074</b>
<b>Payments</b>					
Expenses from Fund Raising Activities		0	0	0	0
Expenses from Charitable Activities	2	1,242	0	1,242	996
Independent Examination		175	0	175	150
Governance Costs					
<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>1,417</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,417</b>	<b>1,146</b>
Net Receipts/(Payments)		3,238	0	3,238	1,928
Transfer between Funds		0	0		
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for Year</b>		<b>3,238</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,238</b>	<b>1,928</b>

### Statement of Balances As at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024

	Un Restricted	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
Balances at Start of Year	13,420	3,547	16,967	15,039
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year	3,238	0	3,238	1,928
<b>Balances at End of Year</b>	<b>16,658</b>	<b>3,547</b>	<b>20,205</b>	<b>16,967</b>

### Other Assets

See Note 3

£677      £847

### Liabilities

No Outstanding Liabilities

Financial Statements approved by the Charity and signed on its behalf by:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer

Dated: 6/11/2024

<b>Notes to the Accounts</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
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**1. Grants Received**

Stirling Council	3,750	3,000
Disability Equality Scotland	600	0
	<b>£4,350</b>	<b>£3,000</b>

**2. Expenses from Charitable Activities**

Meeting Expenses	380	458
Trustee Expenses	52	141
Admin Costs		
Phone Costs	128	124
Postage	0	9
Books & Stationery	0	178
Courses	596	0
Website Costs	86	86
	<b>£1,242</b>	<b>£996</b>

**3. Assets of Stirling Area Access Panel SCIO as at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Laptop – Leveno (adjusted 2024)	375	469
Wireless Inkjet Printer – Brother (adjusted 2024)	302	378
	<b>£677</b>	<b>£847</b>

**4. Trustees Remuneration and Related Part Transactions**

The Trustees did not receive any remuneration during the financial year

**5. Nature & Purpose of Funds**

The statements of accounts for the year show the financial figures for the Charity. All funds are for the sole use of the Charity and its running costs.

Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
Current Bank Acc	5,237	0	5,237	15,039
120 Day Notice Savings Acc	11,416	3,547	14,963	1,928
Cash in hand	5	0	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£16,658</b>	<b>£3,547</b>	<b>£20,205</b>	<b>£16,967</b>



**Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts**

Report to the trustees of Stirling Area Access Panel SCIO

Registered charity number SC039837

On the accounts of the charity for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024

Set out on Pages 19 to 20

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) 2005 Act and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent examiner's statement**

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

**Independent examiner's statement**

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed

Date: 7 November 24

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body:  
ACIE & Dip Business & Finance.