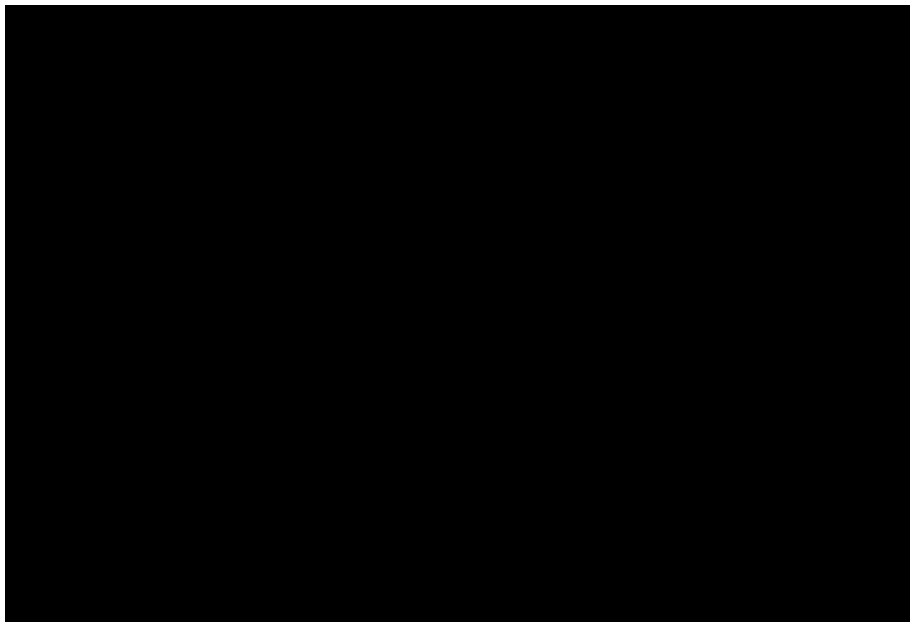




1st Step Development Ventures Trustees' Annual Report November 2023-October 2024



New 1st Step Unit at the Howgate Shopping Center Falkirk

1st Step Development Ventures Charity Contact Information



Scottish Charity Number - SCO 48748

Address Avonmill House, 12 Avonmill Road, Linlithgow, West Lothian EH49 7QX

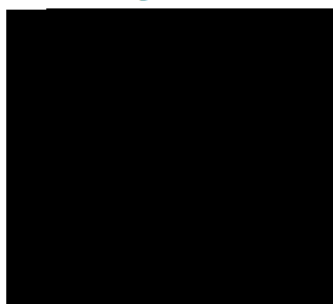
Telephone number 07869373900

Email Address firststepdevelopment@gmail.com

Facebook 1stStepcafeandbikes

Website <https://firststeprecovery.co.uk/>

Charity Trustees



Chair
Secretary
Treasurer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all our volunteers — especially those on their recovery journey — thank you. Your courage, commitment, and contribution shape everything we do. To our staff, trustees, partners, and funders: thank you for believing in our mission and helping us bring it to life.

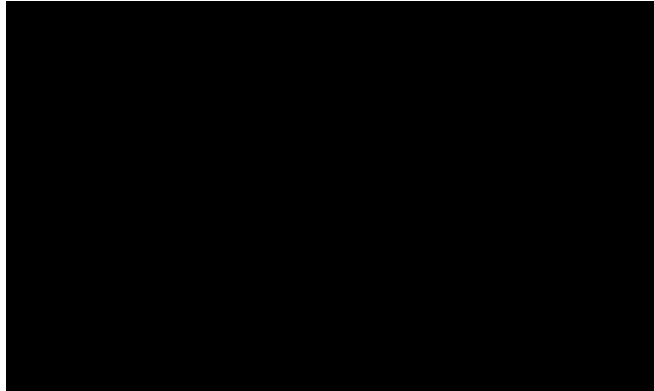
Together, we are proving that recovery, community, and purpose go hand in hand. And we look forward to continuing this journey with you.

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1. Our Achievements

“Recovery through positive action in our communities”



*(Awarded Innovative Organisation Of
The Year 2024 by Falkirk & District CVS)*

At the very heart of our work is a clear and powerful mission: to promote recovery from addiction through volunteering.

We are proud to say that we have not only upheld this aim — we have lived it. Every project we run is designed to offer real opportunities for people in recovery to build confidence, reconnect with community, gain skills, and most importantly, to find renewed purpose and hope.

Our volunteering programmes have gone from strength to strength. People in recovery have found a supportive, structured environment where they are valued, trusted, and empowered. Many have gone on to further training, employment, or other positive life changes — evidence of the long-term impact that purposeful volunteering can have.

We’ve created roles that are more than just tasks — they are stepping-stones to a new life. And the sense of community and peer support that grows from this shared experience is one of the most powerful aspects of our model.

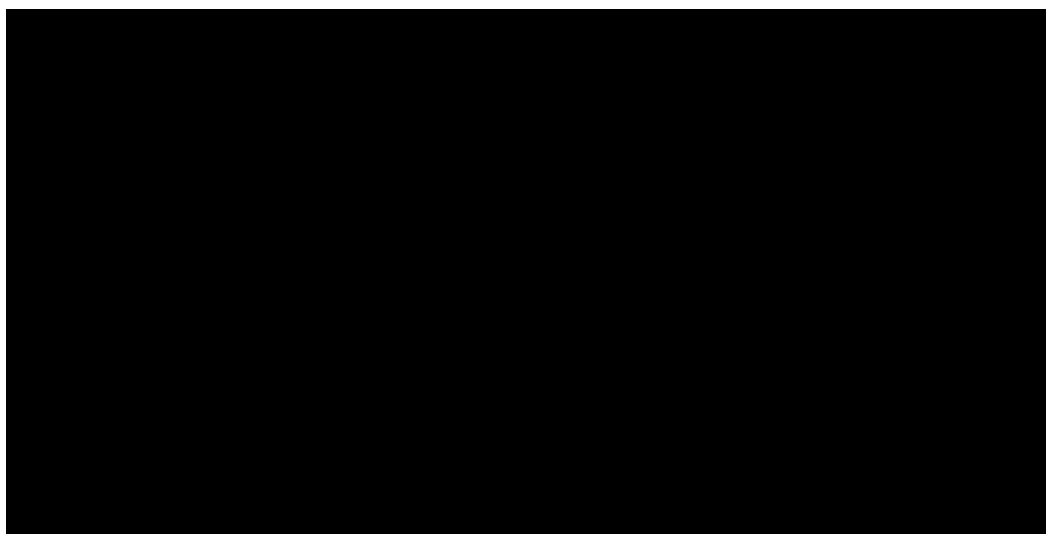
“When I began my recovery I moved to Scotland, not knowing anyone. 1st Step was a lifeline for me. I met friends, a place to socialise and had somewhere I felt I belonged. I began volunteering at the food hub, which gave me a further sense of belonging and purpose. I am now employed on a full time basis and am so thankful for what 1st Step gave me.”

We are now 9 years down this road, and our volunteers (including Trustees) and staff have a lot to be proud of, including the following highlights of 2023/24:

- We have worked with over 100 volunteers and contributed over 9315 volunteer hours to benefit the wider communities of West Lothian and Falkirk.

- We have saved over 60000 kilos of food that would have been wasted but was instead turned into meals for people across West Lothian and Falkirk.
- We won the CVS Award for Innovation recognising our unique approach to creating recovery-focused volunteering opportunities that make positive differences to our local communities and our environment.
- We moved to a new, larger unit at The Howgate to house 1st Step Bikes and the Falkirk Food Revolution. This space has allowed us to expand our reach, offer more volunteer placements, and raise awareness of both our environmental mission and our recovery focus within the wider community.
- A new hub – Linlithgow Food Revolution – opened at Cross House, Linlithgow.
- Between our 2 community food revolutions hubs we have supported over 500 people each month.
- We have worked on more than 1100 bikes and donated/fixed for free over 100 bikes to people who would not have been able to afford bikes or repairs.
- This year, we've seen many individuals take huge steps forward in their recovery journey through meaningful involvement in our work. Whether in the 1st Step bike workshop, community food hubs, café, gardens, or community events, our volunteers are the beating heart of everything we do — and their stories inspire us every day.

1.1 1st Step Bikes



The team tackle decorating our new Howgate unit.

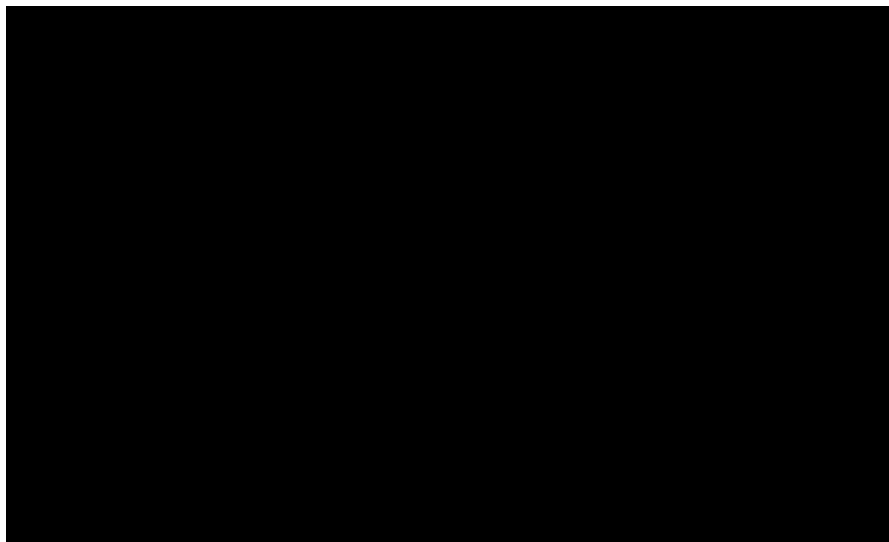
This year we moved to a new larger unit at the Howgate shopping centre in Falkirk and are now open 5 days a week and continue to host “pop up” sales in Linlithgow.

The shop is a significant opportunity, enabling us to expand our bike refurbishment training workshops to many more people and enables us to be accessible/open at the weekend.

Importantly, the Howgate shop enables us to directly service and sell bikes to the general public, creating new opportunities for our volunteers. We will be able to offer significantly more people training courses, opportunities to volunteer regularly and gain qualifications, transferrable skills and importantly the support to maintain their recovery.

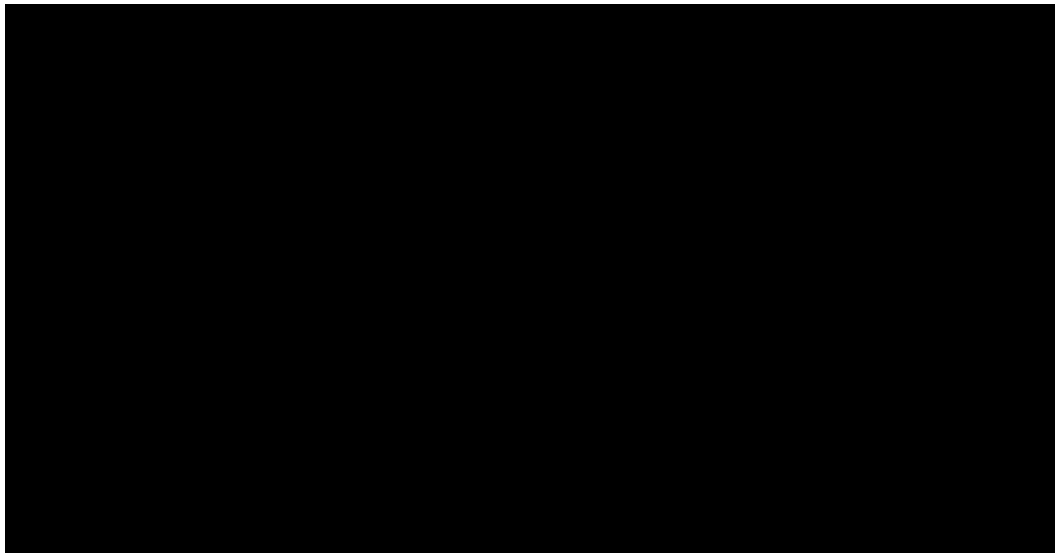
The Bikes team have continued to grow and build their skills, and gained new Velotech accredited qualifications. This means that 1st Step Bikes has enabled hundreds of people to be able to cycle for pleasure, exercise, and work or to be able to see family members. These activities generate better physical and mental wellbeing.

We have continued to offer outreach bike training courses, building cycle-tech skills in the wider community across West Lothian targeting people affected by addiction/poor mental health. This has included Bridgend Village, Polbeth, and Dollar Park in Falkirk.



Recent successful volunteer achieving Velotech Bronze level qualifications.

1.2 1st Step Community Café & Garden



Burns celebration at the 1st Step Café

Our café and community garden continue to focus on being a haven of safe and supportive space for people affected by addiction. Both have grown in popularity, and have seen an increase in attendance from the wider community. Some people come because they want to support our work, but others come because they feel lonely and/or are struggling financially. They find friendships and companionship as well as free, tasty food!

Volunteering is central to the café, and the amazing café team have worked wonders with a modest budget, supplemented by excess donated food from local businesses and our own produce from the garden, to produce some lovely food. The café has also hosted very popular family events including Christmas and Halloween Christmas parties that have also drawn in the wider community.

Volunteering in the café is also a real “feel-good” role, with many benefits for those helping out.

“I love the sense of switching off for those few hours and self care.”

“The café has given me another sense of purpose and helped me with my own struggles of having family with addictions. It has given me a deeper understanding of the struggles of people living with addiction.”

“Volunteering with 1st Step is one of the best things that has happened to me!”

1.3 Falkirk and Linlithgow Food Revolution Hubs

“This place (Falkirk Food Revolution) keeps many of us alive,” quote from regular food hub user.



This year we have significantly grown our food-pantry operations. The team have grown in capacity and skills, with a number of volunteers and staff achieving health and hygiene qualifications, and skills and qualifications in mental health which means they can have even more benefit to the people who use our services – it’s about more than a basket of food.

This financial year, as per our strategic plan the food hub at Bridgend was transferred to the local Bridgend community. This will enable local people to take forward the hub to continue to meet local needs.

A new hub – Linlithgow Food Revolution – opened at Cross House, Linlithgow. This joins our successful Falkirk Food Revolution – at the Howgate, Falkirk. Both are operating on excess food donated from local businesses and donation-based incomes. This model enables both centres to maximise sourcing of the best quality food available and to purchase other much needed products such as hygiene products that are not donated as well as to distribute free emergency food parcels.

The community pantries work in close partnership with food retailers, helping them direct food that would otherwise have become waste, to people who can use it in the community. The opening of a new Marks and Spencer store in Linlithgow enabled the Linlithgow Food Revolution to be launched.

The logistics of an increasingly large number of volunteers who now collect food every night of the week, and redistribute it to our food hubs is a significant undertaking. Our brilliant team of volunteers have risen to the challenge appreciating the huge benefits to them and the wider community.

The pantries are increasingly popular, and support hundreds of people and families with food and groceries. Financial donations from the public are used to buy basics that we give away as “emergency” parcels of food and essential items to people who need them. As well as creating valuable volunteer opportunities we are preventing huge amounts of food waste, thereby reducing our community carbon footprint and also feeding hundreds of local people.

2. Objectives

Inspiring Recovery Together

“Working towards communities that make addiction recovery real. That means challenging stigma, supporting people to see their own strengths, and creating opportunities for them to rebuild social connections and find purpose and fulfilment in their local communities.”

The opposite of addiction is not sobriety but being able to build positive and diverse human connections. This is often referred to as the ability to build “recovery capital”. The building blocks of which are peer support, supportive friends, family and community and access to purposeful activities.

This is easier said than done when very often people have become estranged from families due to chaotic and challenging behaviours and are trying to break free from negative influences in their social lives. People trying to recover are often very isolated and can be vulnerable to relapse. They can struggle to be accepted for volunteer opportunities because they often need a great deal of support and patience as recovery is fragile and set backs are common.

At 1st Step we know for certain that recovery is real and can be sustainable if you invest the time and support to build real connections between diverse people and enable people in recovery to be able to contribute to their communities as active citizens. This in essence is “point” of our organisation and the huge need we as a charity have been set up to fulfil through our key objectives, which are:

- Provide services for individuals affected by and in recovery from substance misuse in West Lothian and Falkirk communities in order to relieve the suffering and disadvantage caused by addictions and improve lives of everyone affected by addiction
- Provide safe environments for individuals in recovery from substance misuse, their friends, family and local communities.

- Advance education by providing skills development, training and volunteering opportunities for people in recovery from substance misuse to improve their life chances and opportunities for future employment

We achieve our objectives through creating opportunities for people to interact, socialise and learn together. We support a peer lead weekly recovery meeting, also a community cafe, which is open to everyone. The Cafe runs as a social enterprise offering and outside catering service. We have also created a cafe garden and offer courses in growing and healthy eating to complement the Cafe.

Over the last 8 years we have gone on to develop 1st Step Bikes, based at the Linlithgow recycling centre and Howgate shopping centre. From our workshops we offer bike refurbishment training courses and retail experience for people in recovery where they can start to learn new skills, develop routines, make wider social connections (really important to preventing relapse) and start volunteer and rebuild their lives.

Creating purpose, tackling boredom, stigma and giving people hope, are all key ingredients needed to help people recover sustainably. These are the ingredients we work to achieve.

3. Building the Evidence

During the year we have continued to work closely with stakeholders and our community to further understand the what is needed. Key conclusions are:

- **Lack of good quality supported volunteer/personal development opportunities** (especially at the weekends)

People don't always want to talk about their situation. Many want to focus on meaningful tasks where they can "lose " themselves. **Creating work and genuine purpose** was often highlighted together with the need for structure and routine (which they have lost).

- **Working on bikes is good for recovery/mental health** because you can work by yourself if you are feeling fragile and as your confidence grows, at your own pace you become part of the wider team. Valuable life skills are-learnt.

"Consistent – I appreciated that it was 4/ 5 days a week and a regular thing"

"I have learnt how to ask for help because I feel part of a community"

"My daughters can see I have turned a corner - learned to trust their father"

- **Need to tackle stigma** People trying to recover are often very isolated as they try to cut themselves off from former friends/negative influences. Often they have very chaotic lives and poor relationships with family and friends. Research shows that stigma is a significant barrier to recovery and that the building blocks of real recovery are diverse new community support networks and making a positive contribution to the wider community. Not easy when you lack confidence and there are few supported practical volunteer opportunities.

Our volunteers have the opportunity to interact with peers and diverse customers, servicing, buying or donating bikes.

“When I started I was still suffering from panic and anxiety attacks. I felt ostracised from the wider community. I really appreciate the new community that is 1st Step but also that what I am doing with 1st Step shows the wider community that I am no longer that bad guy they thought I was. Working on bikes for people I already knew and who already had a negative impression of me has helped me reinvent myself”.

- Need for positive **peer role** models that give people hope and the support they need and seeing peers reclaim their lives and achieve qualifications/employment.

██████ *is so inspiring. It shows me recovery can be real”*

“Being a single parent, the guys are positive male role models for my wee boy”

4. **Structure, governance and management**

The governing document of 1st Step is a constitution, which sets out among other things the purposes, structure and powers of the organisation, and which provides for appropriate governance and management. A copy can be made available on request.

5. **Trustee recruitment and appointment**

The constitution sets out the process and powers available for appointing and recruiting to vacant Board positions under the clauses dealing with The Board and Appointment/Retrial. The constitution also allows for a minimum of 4 Trustees and a maximum of 8. There is a provision, which allows the Board to operate with office holders only so it can go down to 3 Trustees in exceptional circumstances.

When we have made appointments in the past there have been 3 key criteria

1. An interest in the organisation and its objectives.
2. A willingness to support the organisation and its objectives with a practical commitment.

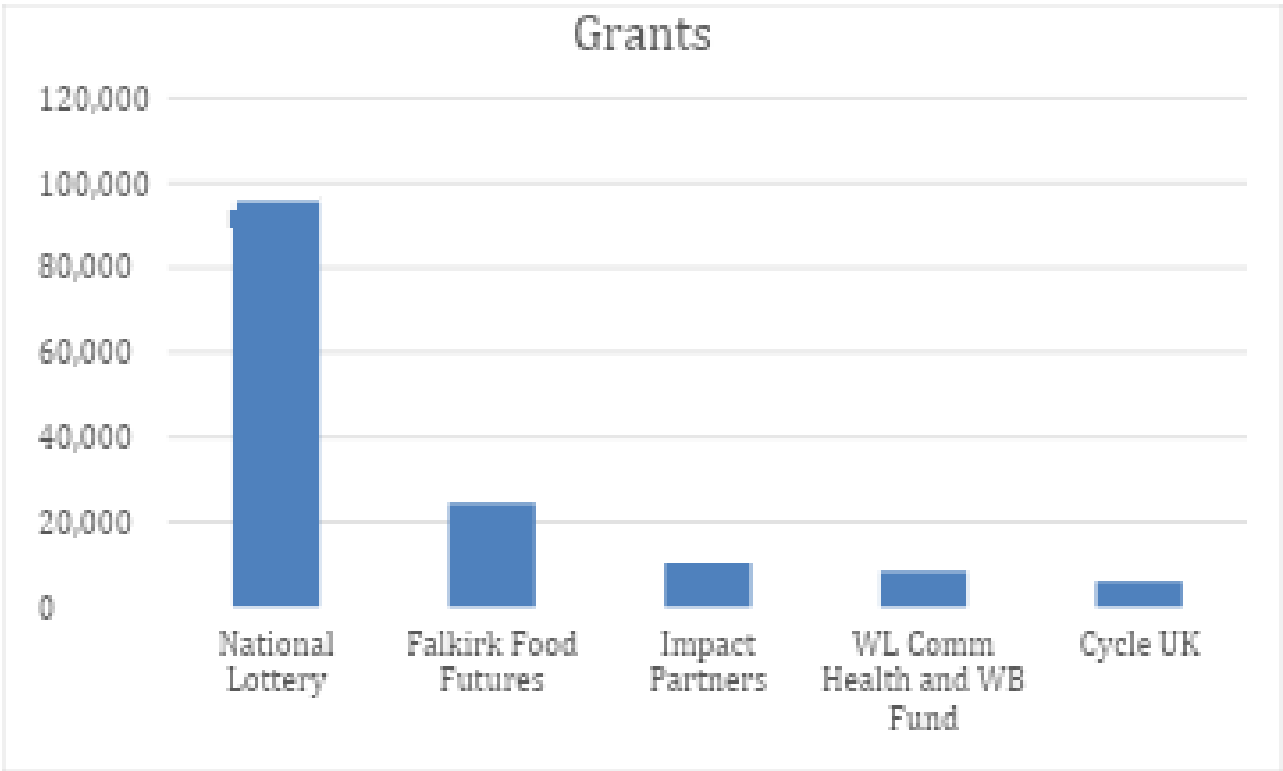
3. Knowledge or experience, which will inform the effective operation of the Board in support of the organisation and its objectives.

Board positions so far have not been advertised but have been filled either by people coming forward to volunteer or by approach to individuals who are assessed as having knowledge or experience, which will support and develop the operational resilience of the Board. When a potential candidate comes forward - through either route - their suitability for will be reviewed and signed off by the Board prior to any appointment being made.

6. Financial Review

Charity funding, in general, continues to be difficult to achieve, however the flexibility that 1st Step has developed in opportunities to meet its core commitments has allowed the charity to draw on funding from a variety of sources.

As the chart below shows, 1st Step Development Venture’s funding is mainly in the form of restricted grants from 3rd party funders.



In addition to these direct funders our thanks also go to our various supporters in the community and local businesses for their non-financial support and contributions over the year.

The generated income stream provided by bike sales, servicing and scrappage has increased to £16,201.

This financial year, as per our strategic plan the food hub at Bridgend was transferred to the local Bridgend community. This will enable local people to take forward the hub to continue to meet local needs.

Salaries continue to be our main expenditure at £126,877. We are able to maintain the employment of 11 members of staff through the support of funding partners while offsetting other expenditure against the income streams above.

7. Reserves Policy

Financial sustainability is a challenge to nearly all-charitable organisations; this is often due to the current tendency for funders to support new or one-off projects, rather than support core or on-going costs.

Our unrestricted reserve as of 31st October 2023 is £79,913. This is equivalent to 5-6 months running costs, which puts us in a more secure financial position and would allow us to cover any funding gaps, in line with our reserves policy.

We will continue to research and identify potential funders that support our values and priorities to promote recovery in our communities. We also aim to increase income generation from through the Café and new initiatives, which will allow us to maintain and build up our level of reserves to give us greater financial security.

8. Looking forward to next year

1st Step is fortunate that the Lottery funding will continue through the 2024/25 financial years and allow the provision of paid employment to be a mainstay of the recovery progression. However, the challenge of continuing salary funding in the future is not one to be underestimated in the current climate.

We look forward to a continued growth in the donation-based income streams to provide financial continuity of the services provided to our client base.

Overall, the strategy with more direct community-based activities and partnerships has brought 1st Step into contact with new networks and funding opportunities that will be progressed in the coming year.

We are committed to deepening our support for people in recovery. In the coming year, we plan to:

- Expand the range and flexibility of volunteer roles
- Strengthen our support for peer mentoring and progression
- Create clearer pathways into training and employment
- Continue innovating in how we connect recovery with economic and environmental sustainability

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:



Print name 

Designation Treasurer

Date 16th June 2025

1st Step Development Ventures SCIO

Scottish Charity SC048748

Receipts & Payments Accounts

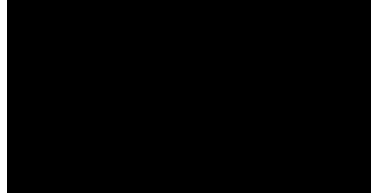
for the year ended 31st October 2024

Reference and Administrative Information

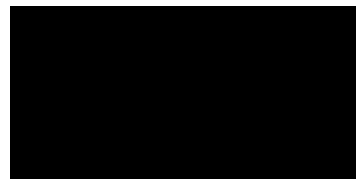
Charity Name: 1st Step Development Ventures SCIO

Charity Registration Number: SC048748

Contact Address:



Independent Examiner:



Bankers:

Santander
Bridle Road
Bootle
L30 4GB

1st Step Development Ventures SCIO

SC048748

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of 1st Step Development Ventures SCIO

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year to 31st October 2024 which are set out on pages 4 to 7.

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) Act 2005 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 view given by 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.



Name: [Redacted]

Address: [Redacted]

Date: 16th June 2025

1st Step Development Ventures SCIO

SC048748

Receipts & Payments Account for the year ended 31st October 2024

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total funds 2024	Total funds 2023
	£	£	£	£
Receipts				
Bike sales and servicing	4,288	-	4,288	6,939
Bike donations	8,887	-	8,887	-
Café and food donations	22,986	-	22,986	18,363
Sundry income	381	-	381	3
General donations	520	-	520	5,062
Grants	8,227	140,354	148,581	144,597
Total receipts	45,289	140,354	185,643	174,964
Payments				
Bike Project consumables	157	268	425	1,000
Food purchases - café and food hubs	1,643	2,402	4,045	3,390
Staff salaries and pension costs	22,004	104,467	126,471	133,966
Sessional workers	-	-	-	1,048
Travel and expenses	2,853	3,335	6,188	2,710
Staff training	-	-	-	669
Other direct project costs	413	5,906	6,319	1,098
Volunteer training and expenses	472	1,615	2,087	695
Membership subscriptions	707	421	1,128	975
Computer equipment and costs	82	82	164	17
Equipment purchases and replacements	2,456	2,491	4,947	5,466
Rent - café	-	-	-	559
Howgate costs/utilities	-	150	150	6,645
Insurances	814	-	814	800
Phone and internet costs	386	763	1,149	1,000
Office, printing & admin costs	109	182	291	286
Advertising and promotion	-	68	68	339
Website hosting	13	21	34	81
Bookkeeping fees	370	435	805	812
Sundry expenses	85	600	685	2,318
Total payments	32,564	123,206	155,770	163,874
Surplus for the year	12,725	17,148	29,873	11,091

1st Step Development Ventures SCIO
SC048748
Statement of Balances as at 31st October 2024

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Bike Fund	Restricted Funds	Total funds 2024	Total funds 2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Opening cash at bank and in hand	65,188	20,365	56,664	142,217	131,126
Surplus for the year	12,725	-	17,148	29,873	11,091
Transfers between funds	2,000	- -	2,000	-	-
Closing cash at bank and in hand	79,913	20,365	71,812	172,090	142,217

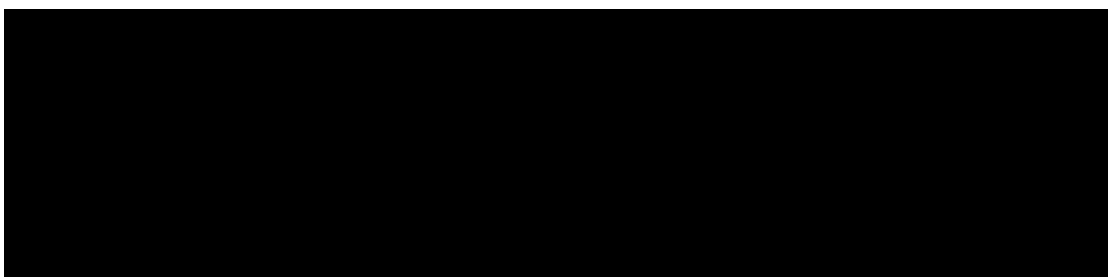
Reconciliation: bank and cash balances

Bank	79,656	20,365	71,812	171,833	141,960
Bike petty cash	140	-	-	140	140
Café cash	117	-	-	117	117
	79,913	20,365	71,812	172,090	142,217

Other liabilities:

Pension payments due	324	372
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Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf



Name: [REDACTED]
Treasurer

Date: 16th June 2025

1st Step Development Ventures SCIO

SC048748

Notes to the Accounts

1. Basis of accounting

These accounts have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis in accordance with the Charities & Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

2. Nature and purpose of funds

Unrestricted funds are those that may be used at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the objects of the charity.

Restricted funds may only be used for specific purposes. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for specific purposes as shown in note 4.

Designated funds are funds set aside by the Trustees for a specific purpose. The Designated 1st Bikes Fund has arisen from surpluses earned from bike sales which the Trustees have ring-fenced for further development of 1st Step Bikes.

3. Trustee Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

No remuneration was paid to the trustees or any connected persons during the year. No expenses were reimbursed to any of the trustees during the year.

No trustee or any person related to a trustee had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the year.

4. Movements in Funds

Funds Note

	Balance at 31.10.2023	Receipts	Payments	Transfers	Balance at 31.10.2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Funds					
Big Lottery Community Fund - for 1st Step Bikes	31,931	95,632	72,509	-	55,054
Cycling Friendly	2,305	-	2,277	-	28
Access to Bikes - Cycling UK	2,000	-	-	2,000	-
BLES	884	-	-	-	884
Community Exchange (evaluation)	-	446	366	-	80
Falkirk Food Futures (Forth Environment Link)	1,329	24,394	25,723	-	-
Impact Funding Partners	6,233	10,352	10,234	-	6,351
Walking for Health Fund	83	1,108	963	-	228
West Lothian Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund	4,604	8,422	3,839	-	9,187
West Lothian Third Sector Support Fund	7,295	-	7,295	-	-
					-
Restricted Funds total	56,664	140,354	123,206	- 2,000	71,812
Designated Fund: 1st Step Bikes	20,365	-	-	-	20,365
Unrestricted Funds	65,188	45,289	32,564	2,000	79,913
Total Funds	142,217	185,643	155,770	-	172,090

Transfer between Funds - £2,000 received in the year to 31.10.23 from Cycling UK for Access to Bikes was wrongly treated as a restricted fund. It should have been unrestricted so the balance has been transferred to Unrestricted Funds

Designated Fund: 1st Step Bikes - The balance represents unrestricted surpluses generated by 1st Step Bikes, ring-fenced for project continuity.