

Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire



Annual Report
2019 / 2020





Gordon Bennie
Chief Executive Officer

'ONE WEEK – 23rd March 2020.....'

Without doubt the impact of **one week** in this reporting year turned the world and our norms up-side-down and we were challenged to an extent unimaginable in my lifetime. The atmosphere and the vibrancy within the Third Sector Interface and across the Voluntary and Community sectors were infested by the new focus forced by COVID-19.

'Communication' across the board continued to be an item high on everybody's Agenda; and the perennial matter of limited resources and funds was the key issue for many Trustees seeking to make sure that they didn't take a terrible toll through our best and beautiful and leaving us bereft.

With reflection, nothing has changed, but in **one week** it did and with that change comes the challenge of how we can keep our Sector safe and healthy to 'bloom' again. Awareness of capacity, knowledge of the local 'microclimates' and keeping an eye out for the future can make all the difference. A little bit of TLC can leave our Groups to fight another day. A little effort now will pay dividends – and save money – while the Sector continues to sustain and support Community vibrance. Investment in favourable initiatives can indeed be a lifesaver and will fill gaps in many areas of modern society living.

It seems every year we say 'it's' been a funny old time when it comes to talking about the achievements of the Third Sector and the Interface. But this year it certainly has. The year however must not be defined by the rollercoaster of **one week!** We made inroads in the development of our Forum with numerous campaigns and conversations taking place. Communication and collaboration within the voluntary sector improved significantly. Many Groups and Organisations developed wider awareness of their capabilities and how their contribution fits within local arenas. And then there was the **one week** (and beyond) when actions were much louder than words and the Sector in unison acted for the benefit of all communities.

Yes, it was a transformational week and from the lessons learned the old norm is now firmly fixed in the past. Now's the time to think about how we clear the 'old' from the agenda and how we invest and protect for the future through the 'new'.

“ We have benefitted from VASLAN's ongoing support and excellent guidance for a number of years now. VASLAN staff have a wealth of knowledge and are a real asset to the Third Sector in South Lanarkshire. VASLAN has helped us develop some great and effective project work which has impacted positively on the lives of people living in our rural community. Our most recent project targeted Older People and with VASLAN's assistance we secured funding for a two year project to address Social Isolation and Loneliness, allowing 92 Older People to come together, make new friends, improve their social networks and make real changes to their lives. ”

**Forth Community
Resource Centre**

“We cannot show enough gratitude to the VASLan team. Without your help and guidance, we would not have got our project up and running. We would like to give huge thanks especially to Stuart and Peter for their continued support. They make us feel at ease knowing we can call on them to answer any queries we have (and there has been a few). Without the services of VASLan many third sector organisation's wouldn't be where they are at today.”

Waist Not Want Not Team

“VASLAN has been over the years our go to for anything that has to do with policies, constitutional rights, direction for process when a bit lost as to where to ask for support. It is also the place we think of when we meet local groups who want to set themselves up and don't know where to start. There is never a question too small or too big to answer which really makes us feel confident enough to go and ask in the first place.”

Grow 73



Nancy Barr
Chairperson

Welcome to our 2019-2020 Annual Report which reflects part of my first year as Chair of VASLan. It was indeed an exciting year, however, it does seem strange to be looking back to a pre-Corona virus period, when so much of our world is currently dominated by the pandemic.

We were pleased to have successfully delivered our Scottish Government work-plan and to have engaged with local partners and stakeholders, highlighting the impact, capability and potential of our third sector in South Lanarkshire.

Our internal operations were streamlined, introducing more efficient processes to enable us to provide an improved and more focussed level of organisational support.

Our engagement with partners continues to be fundamental in our efforts to ensure South Lanarkshire's Third Sector is represented at all levels.

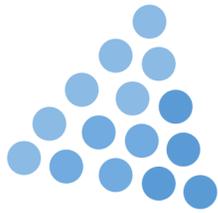
The staff team have made significant improvements to our Engage, Promote and Involve (EPI) system, to the extent that we can now undertake analysis of South Lanarkshire's voluntary sector services to SIMD level. This facilitates better decision making, providing more detailed information, and so is an extremely useful resource.

2020 sees VASLan celebrate its 10th year as the Third Sector Interface (TSI) in South Lanarkshire. Over the course of these years VASLan has continued to adapt and develop, markedly improving levels of communication, information gathering and sharing.

The way in which we deliver support has changed over these years, as have our staff team and Board, developing to navigate the emerging challenges.

As we entered March 2020 the Covid-19 crisis meant that we had to accelerate our improvement plans, quickly bringing forward the planned changes to our working practices.

The future holds new opportunities but many unknowns, and we give an assurance that we will continue to promote the work of the sector, engage with people at all levels, and involve as many individuals and organisations as possible in our efforts to support the growth and stability of South Lanarkshire's Third Sector.



Engage

Support, Events and Consultations

Throughout this year we have introduced significant improvements to the Engage, Promote and Involve (EPI) knowledge base and we continue to work on further enhancements to improve our ability to accurately capture the state of the sector.

We further streamlined our ways of working to introduce more efficient processes which has enabled our staff to provide an improved and more focussed level of organisational support. This has allowed us to increase our levels of activity and engagement with the sector.



Through targeted communication the number of people we reached increased by **73%**



Volunteer registrations increased by **47%**



89 events facilitated an increase of **27%**

Third Sector Forum

We continued to host our quarterly Third Sector Forums in all four localities. These Forum events have been restructured to include sector and partner presentations, briefings and consultations along with knowledge sharing activities while still providing opportunity for organisations to network.

The themes for this year's forums were:

- Third Sector Engagement in Community Development
- Sustainability
- Enterprising Communities
- The Power of Information



The Forums receive an excellent response with **239** people in attendance over the year.

“ I would personally like to appreciate all the hard work and diligent effort that you have put into helping with the registration of my charity, *The Economic Forum For Women Empowerment Scotland*. It was your persistent and hard work that has made it fruitful and successful. We now have our registration number and are so grateful. ”

The Economic Forum For Women





LOCATOR

Our Locator tool usability has been significantly improved following consultation and feedback from clients and partners. The upgrade gives increased functionality and streamlines the end user experience.

Volunteer Friendly

The Volunteer Friendly Award, supports, recognises and rewards organisations for good volunteer management practice. We supported **3** organisations to renew their award and VASLan are supporting a further **4** organisations in achieving this award.



“ When funders and other stakeholders know that we are a ‘Volunteer Friendly’ organisation this gives them a clear, recognisable message that our volunteers are important to us and that we work hard to support them in their roles and appreciate their commitment. ”



COVEY Befriending

Celebrations

In partnership with Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL) and Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership, VASLan promoted volunteering outdoors during Volunteers’ Week. The “Growing volunteering across Lanarkshire” campaign saw VASLan staff travel across South Lanarkshire visiting organisations that offered green health volunteering and handing out seed bombs to encourage people to get outside and enjoy their beautiful surroundings.

Our Annual Third Sector Awards once again, received an overwhelming response. The large number of nominations from all four localities highlighted the incredible impact that volunteers and organisations make to their local communities. The event saw our youngest ever winner Lewis Watt, receive an **Outstanding Contribution to Volunteering Award** for his exceptional volunteering as a Committee member with Blantyre Community Council. A total of **14 Awards** were presented at the event. The 200 people in attendance enjoyed watching nomination videos of shortlisted candidates and the participation of a wide ranging section of the Sector truly made this event a success.





Involvement

We successfully delivered our Scottish Government work-plan and have been actively involved in national work with Scottish Government and other TSI's, in support of South Lanarkshire's young people we have been instrumental in administering and driving improvements with the National review of the Saltire awards.

Consultations and Campaigns

This year we have partaken in a significant number of Mental Health consultations as part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy steering group. This includes supporting a pan-Lanarkshire Suicide Prevention event exploring actions that can be taken by partners, particularly those in the front line.

We have increased our engagement with partners and the sector as a whole:

172 Campaigns
reached over
37,000 recipients



265 strategic engagements with
partners

Partnerships and Strategic Involvement

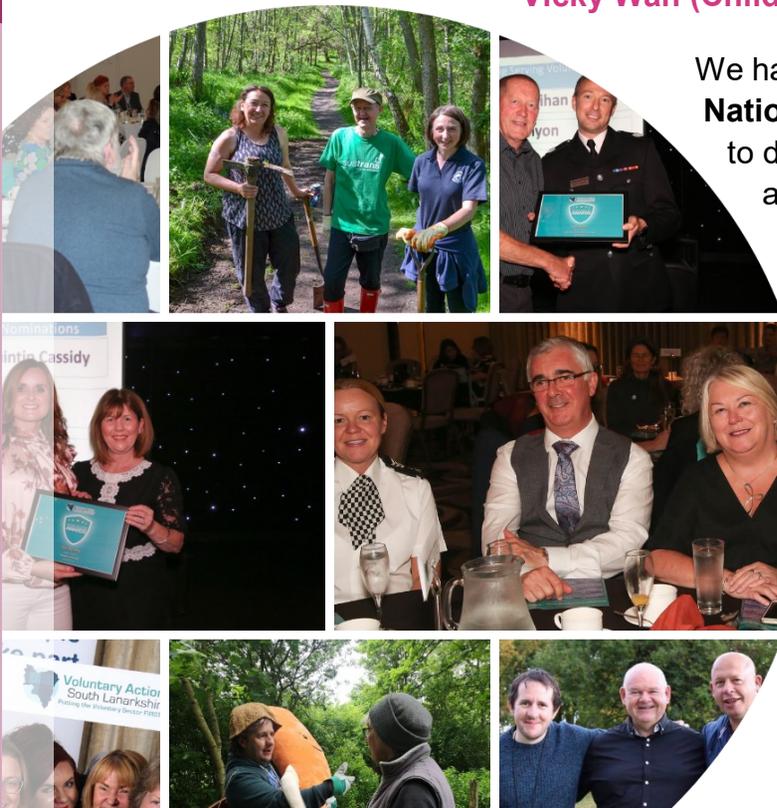
We have been actively involved with the quarterly TSI Social Enterprise Practitioners Forum which is attended by staff from Scotland's TSIs and presents a platform for staff to discuss social enterprise support, share experiences. Through these forum events and the intelligence gathered, our TSI social enterprise practitioners are better able to inform social enterprises of upcoming opportunities and issues relating to the sector.

“As a member of Children in Scotland, VASLan also amplifies the voices of the third sector in South Lanarkshire and uses the local sector's experiences to inform and influence national children's policies.”

Vicky Wan (Children in Scotland)

We have continued our engagement with the **National TSI Children's Services Network** to discuss Children's Issues. This provides a link to other discussion platforms such as VOICES Forum hosted by Children in Scotland.

In 2019 VASLan continued to support the **Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership** and participated in the NHS Green Health event at Chatelherault. The event brought together health & social care professionals to raise awareness of the wide range of green health volunteering opportunities and the benefits they can bring.



Moving Forward



2020 has been a challenging year, like many of our partners VASLan have had to swiftly adapt to new working arrangements to allow us to comply with the necessary restrictions surrounding the Coronavirus crisis.

Throughout we have continued to provide the conduit to the Third Sector at a strategic level on key areas such as Health and Social Care, the Lanarkshire Mental Health Strategy, the National Third Sector GIRFEC Project, South Lanarkshire's Adult and Child Protection Committees, and to our Lanarkshire Resilience Partners.

We have continued to provide support and engagement with local organisations through virtual platforms and improved methods of communication.

We had plans in place to allow us to move forward this year, however, the implications of the pandemic have resulted in the acceleration of our improvement journey, bringing forward some of the change decisions we had planned to progress over the year.

This improvement journey will see us **reshaping** our staff team, **relocating** our offices and **refocusing** our methods of support to South Lanarkshire's Third Sector.

We have started on these improvements, and want to assure you, that embedded within our plans for the future is our overarching aim to **Engage with, Promote and Involve** South Lanarkshire's Third Sector

As for the wider voluntary sector and community groups across South Lanarkshire, it would be remiss of us not to highlight the unprecedented levels of direct action by members of the community and voluntary groups throughout the pandemic.

Our sector has worked collectively to provide support and engagement over an extended period to engage their communities and protect and support vulnerable groups.

The scale of this work has been phenomenal and there's a tangible desire to build on the excellent work developed and delivered by engaged and active communities across South Lanarkshire.





Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire

Putting the Voluntary Sector FIRST

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