



## The Story of Strathearn Building Bridges

### Preamble

More than fourteen years ago, (in the small Highland Perthshire town of Crieff), a small group of parents of young people with varying disabilities got together to share their concerns about the life their children might lead after they left school. They worried about where their teenagers could go, what they could do, and how they would make new friends without suitable opportunities and experiences being available. The group decided to take matters into its own hands and set up a community club with organised activities in a safe space. Like many of these ideas, it began as a friendly, informal gathering but in 2013 **Strathearn Building Bridges** became a registered charity (SC048085) and in 2018 later formalised as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Today it is going from strength to strength, helping to overcome the chronic loneliness of social isolation for young people with disabilities whilst providing a host of opportunities, experiences, and development of skills.

BB supports young adults who have learning, physical and emotional disabilities to overcome chronic loneliness of social isolation after leaving school. As well as reducing isolation these young people with disabilities are given a range of opportunities, experiences, and development of skills which will improve their lives in the future. The charity aims to Whilst the charity is focused on the young people the range of activities they are involved in allows respite for their families and carers.

Building Bridges is able to support the young adults by:

Increased inclusion, enablement, independence, mental health and wellbeing

Increased access to employment, volunteering, learning, culture, sport and leisure opportunities

Increased equality of opportunity and active citizenship

## Vision

Socialising Disability in our Community

## Aims

Strathearn Building Bridges aims to fulfil its name – to build bridges to a better quality of life for people aged 16+ with learning, physical and emotional disabilities and also for their carers. We do this by providing opportunities and experiences through a range of social, leisure and educational activities, enhancing integration, reducing isolation and increasing awareness within our community whilst also providing respite for families and carers.

## Values

- **We are open and inclusive:** we welcome members of all abilities living in Strathearn who are aged 16 or more.
- **We enjoy making friends and having fun together:** our range of activities help build social skills, foster friendships and have fun in a safe and welcoming space.
- **We appreciate our volunteers:** we are truly grateful for the help of our wonderful group of faithful volunteers
- **We welcome supportive partnerships:** via links to a number of organisations active in our community we can provide even more opportunities for our members
- **We feel part of a community that cares:** becoming a more visible group within the community enhances integration and inclusion and makes it easier for local people to understand who we are and how to show their support.

## Activities

### Tuesday Club

Tuesday Club social group – weekly, average 20 attendees – promotes social and interpersonal skills and with the support of volunteers allows members with learning disabilities to access a range of enjoyable activities of their choice including arts and crafts, games, quizzes, films, music and trips further afield.

### Wednesday Social

An afternoon group – weekly, average 6 attendees – meeting to socialise and enjoy games, music and films.

### Knock Down

Knock Down social & citizenship group – fortnightly, average 15 attendees – similar to Tuesday Club, but with more emphasis on partnerships and involvement with other local groups and organisations, such as Crieff Highland Gathering, Perthshire Amateur Operatic Society, Remake Scotland and the Co-op.

### Thursday Zoom

An informal friendship group – meeting fortnightly via Zoom with average 6 attendees. A one-hour online get-together to chat about what each person has been doing recently and to share news. Hosted by two adult volunteers.

## Boccia

Boccia group in partnership with P&K Disability Sport – weekly, average 15 attendees (including some younger, non-SBB members)

## Saturday Lunch Club

A popular kitchen workshop - monthly for 3 hours with 6 places. Members are taught food skills to prepare and make a themed lunch led by an Activity Leader and supported by volunteers. The group then sits down to enjoy lunch together and chat.

## Events

In addition to regular weekly or fortnightly activities throughout the year, SBB offers its members the opportunity to participate in several annual events including:

### Annual Barbecue

The annual barbecue is a popular event that has been held at various local venues over the years. It always includes games and activities, as well as barbecue food. Volunteers and Partners are also invited to attend, which provides a helpful opportunity for SBB to express its gratitude for their support.

### Halloween Party

The Halloween Party is open to members and their families and is usually accompanied by Halloween games and a disco.

### Christmas Party

With great support from Crieff Bowling Club, the Christmas Party is attended by members, staff and volunteers alike. Live music is performed by local musicians and it is always a wonderful, fun atmosphere for all.

### Crieff Highland Gathering

SBB members are proud to be appointed 'Games Makers' each year at the Crieff Highland Gathering and enjoy being an integral part of this large internationally recognised community event. Our members work in collaboration with the CHG board of directors and volunteers to ensure the safe and smooth running of the day's events.

## Volunteers

SBB has a roster of 24 local volunteers who unfailingly offer their time to support our range of activities. The loyalty and commitment of our volunteers is outstanding and their contribution to the lives of our members is quite remarkable.

## Partnerships

Reaching out to other local organisations to build mutually beneficial partnerships is vitally important to our ambition to diffuse SBB throughout our community. Our partners include Perth & Kinross Disability Sport, Strathearn Arts, Crieff Highland Gathering, Remake Scotland and Live Active Leisure.

# Outcomes

The stated outcomes of SBB is to enhance the lives of its members with activities that offer:

- Increased inclusion, enablement, independence, mental health and wellbeing
- Increased access to employment, volunteering, learning, culture, sport and leisure opportunities
- Increased equality of opportunity and active citizenship

By delivering more than 5,000 hours of purposeful activities every year, our members can each benefit safely from over 4 hours per week of vital socialisation and friendship.



# Operations & Finance

SBB is led by a board of volunteer trustees and currently employs two part-time staff who are Activity Leaders. Recruitment is currently under way to engage a replacement Volunteer and Activities Co-ordinator, also in a part-time employed position.

## Expenditure 2024

Salary Costs	Volunteer & Activities Coordinator	£9,900
	Activity Leaders x 2	£10,000
Expenses	Venue Hire & Materials	£6,000
	Professional Fees	£1,500
	Misc Expense	£2,500
<b>Total operating budget</b>		<b>£29,900</b>

# Future Developments

Subject to our success in raising additional funding, currently there are two identified opportunities for investment in the growth of Strathearn Building Bridges:

- **Sports Activity Leader**  
During our recent recruitment activity for the post of Volunteer & Activities Coordinator, a candidate presented who had extensive experience of working as a Sports Activity Leader up to Special Olympics standards. This led Trustees to recognise the value of appointing someone to this role on a permanent part-time basis at a likely cost of £15k per annum.
- **Work Experience Programme**  
Similarly, an opportunity emerged to operate a local community café and this was seriously considered by Trustees as a valuable means of providing work experience opportunities for

members, as well as raising more awareness of Strathearn Building Bridges by having a physical presence in the community. It was decided that the opportunity was a little premature at the time but gave rise to considering taking on such an opportunity in the future, perhaps in partnership with others. Additional operating budget of £30-50k per annum would be required for the venture.