



Objectives and activities

The charity's objectives are:

1. The advancement of citizenship including the rights and responsibilities of the citizen, through the development of opportunities for people to be more active in their communities, involving people in community activity including volunteering.
2. The promotion of equality and diversity including the elimination of discrimination.
3. The relief of those in need by reason of age, ill health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage, contributing to the prevention or relief of poverty through information and advocacy.
4. The provision of recreational facilities, or the organisation of the recreational activities with the purpose of improving the life conditions for the persons for who the facilities or activities are primarily intended.

Achievements and Performance

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a SCIO as recognised by OSCR. Trustees are chosen from the membership of the organisation and have a variety of skills which can be utilised by the charity in furtherance of its objectives. Board members can be appointed at the AGM. At each AGM, a chair, secretary and treasurer are appointed as per OSCR regulations.

Following the successful establishment of the new leadership team and the formal Memorandum of Understanding with ARFC (September 2019), we looked to further strengthen governance by reaching an understanding with local community youth football teams who operate under the Albion Rovers brand. This significant piece of work was completed in March 2020 and an amended Memorandum of Understanding, to include the Youth Teams, was agreed at a joint meeting with ARFC in March 2020. However, due to restrictions in physical activity as a result of COVID 19, there has been limited opportunity to implement this.

Our financial procedures have also been enhanced by access to online banking (see Appendix 2)

We have always been mindful of our limited resources and make great use of volunteers. However, one major positive impact of the pandemic was the award of significant grant funding from the SPFL Trust. Unlike many other organisations, COVID 19 has proved to be a blessing as we have access to new funding streams that are allowing us to upgrade facilities that will serve our community well in the future. While most of this funding was restricted and spend in accordance with an agreed condition of grant, we were also able to access unrestricted funds which we have ringfenced to create a part time paid Community Development position. The Trustees recognise that the way to grow as an organisation is to have designated people to be able to offer wider opportunities to our community. We are excited to have advertised and appointed to such a post in July 2021. Between July and end of this reporting period (31/08/21), we have been able to add to our football activities for children and build new partnerships with SFA and local groups.

Activities 01 September 2020 to 31 August 2021 (for inclusion in our annual report)

The period from September 2020 to August 2021, included various periods of lockdown and restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, our mainstay groups of Buddies, Memories and Thursday Club and school holiday camps met sporadically, if at all, in accordance with government advice.

The bulk of our activity in this reporting period can be detailed under the following headings:

- **SPFL Trust Covid-19 Community Grant (£10,000)**
- **SPFL Trust Covid-19 Direct Response Grant (£2500)**
- **Community Activity**
- **Funding and Fundraising**

SPFL Trust Covid-19 Community Grant (£10,000)

The condition of grant for this award included:

1. providing 'free' football for under 16s in season 2020/21
2. promoting local and national charities
3. enhancing community groups experiences by setting up a Hall of Fame
4. establishing a training pitch behind the goals for use by our youth teams, disability football and kids' clubs and to new community groups/events
5. refurbishing a portacabin to create a multi-purpose area for use by our current groups such as Buddies, Thursday Club while also expanding to provide community events and drop-in sessions and
6. depending on costs of above to use any extra to subsidise the cost of school holiday camps and expand to provide activities over and above football.

All of these grant conditions have been met and we can evidence this as follows:

We purchased 40 junior season tickets to ensure free football for under 16s for season in 2020/21. During the lockdown periods, this funding provided free 'passports' to games online. This portion of the grant benefitted 18 families. We sponsored the ARFC Season Books, the 50/50 Draw tickets and Fixture Lists and included information about local support networks including Coatbridge Foodbank, Citizens Advice and Women's Aid. The reach of these charities in supporting vulnerable people is substantial and although difficult to quantify we note that the Coatbridge area has the highest levels of postcode areas in the most deprived 15% of data zones across Scotland (39.3%) – more than any of the other localities in North Lanarkshire (average 23.4%).

We were able to establish a Hall of Fame and purchased, professionally mounted and framed photographs of ARFC Hall of Fame inductees together with new tables and chairs and enhanced lighting. The costs of these were a worthwhile spend as the lounge area is a much better environment for our Memories Group and Thursday Club. There are over

22 members of these groups and this new space will allow us to attract more participants – especially to the memories group. We are also exploring a joint project with a local charity for young people with additional support needs and the lounge would now be the perfect setting.

The grant has allowed us to create a Community Pitch. A previous unusable space is in the process of being transformed. The pitch should be fully playable by late September 2021 and when fully operational, the facility will benefit our associated youth teams, walking group, Buddies, holiday camps with currently 135 individuals participating. In addition, the pitch will be used by any new groups we set up as we now have a community officer to promote and run various clubs such as Girls Only football, Walking Football centre etc. The popularity of the pitch will grow and benefit even more in the community.

The creation of a designated Community Hub will prove invaluable. We have used the grant to transform a portacabin into a viable community hub. We worked in partnership with Cliftonhill 100 (a group established to celebrate and promote the centenary of the stadium) and shared the costs of building a bespoke ramp to ensure full accessibility for all. The refurbishment has allowed us to also create a community office and this will lead to even greater benefit for the community. The Hub will support groups of up to 20 for drop-in sessions, training events, school visits etc. At present this is difficult to quantify but it will represent a real increase in participation as we do not currently have such a facility.

We used the remaining balance of £50 to subsidise aspects of a school holiday football camp in July 2021.

There are many great stories to share about the impact of this £10000 grant. However, we would like to concentrate on the fact that the grant was ‘stretched’ due to the many hours of free labour provided by volunteers and by some generous donations of materials by local companies allowing us to make the £10k grant go much further and make an even bigger difference. The volunteers, some of them retired tradespeople, also gained a great deal by using their skills on behalf of the community they live in and love and in seeing projects gradually take shape and come to fruition due to their efforts.

SPFL Trust Covid-19 Direct Response Grant (£2500)

We used this funding to set up a physical walking group: The Rovers in the Community 12@12 Club. The project involved socially isolated individuals meeting at the stadium one day each week for an initial 12 weeks. After a welcoming and COVID safe signing in process and warm up activity, the participants walked 12 minutes out and 12 minutes back. This ensured their daily mile and accessibility for all as the chosen route was flat terrain.

On return from the walk, lunch was provided – either as a grab and go bag or a socially distanced seated lunch – during Tier 3 this was changed to the open-air main stand at the stadium and proved so successful we remained there even as restrictions eased. This added a football dimension to the experience and the associated club have gained a few volunteers through this. The grant was to cover the cost of running 12 weeks with an anticipated 12+ participants. Costs included accommodation and staff costs, purchase of hi-vis vests, hand sanitisers, thermometers, 3 facemasks, water and lunch. This new 12@12 Club provided a much-needed re-integration opportunity for social interaction in a non-threatening environment as we eased out of COVID 19 lockdown. Due to good housekeeping, donations from supporters and a

willingness of the participants, we were able to actually hold 19 sessions with the funding.

We had hoped to launch in September 2020, but were delayed awaiting the completion of our newly refurbished, deep cleaned community lounge (COVID crisis grant funded). The first 12@12 walking group kicked off on Wednesday 28th October and finished on Wednesday 23 June 2021 – with a few forced breaks in between due to Covid-19 lockdown rules and Christmas holidays. We have more than met the agreed conditions of grant.

Since receipt of the grant, we spent money on securing accommodation, appropriate qualified staff and purchased equipment and devised appropriate monitoring processes to ensure COVID compliance and data to share with SPFL Trust in line with the conditions of grant and had 19 successful events. A significant part of the spend was on providing lunches. On return from the walk, lunch was provided – either as a grab and go bag or a socially distanced seated lunch. All but 2 participants stayed for lunch thus evidencing the positive impact of the project on their meeting needs in direct response to Covid.

We promoted the project through our own and ARFC social media channels and made contact with local charity groups and elected members to ensure wide coverage and reach out to those who would benefit. Over the course of the programme, we had 32 unique participants with an amazing 15 attending over 15 of the 19 events – with two with full attendance! The number of participants was far greater than the anticipated 12. This shows two key things: one, as a community charity we do not exclude anyone who wishes to take part and meets the criteria and two, the need for this type of activity to combat social isolation and promote health and wellbeing in our area is clear.

The breakdown of participants was as follows:

	MALE	FEMALE	25-40	40-55	55-69	70+
GENDER	13	19				
AGES			3	3	15	11
ASN			2			
DISABILITY						3

We carried out an evaluation of the project at week 12 and 100% respondents wanted the project to continue and committed to attending a further 7 sessions.

The main reasons given for initially attending were health (92%) and getting out of the house (91%). At the end of the project another significant response to our evaluation was given as making new friends. It was uplifting to see new friendships form and continue.

One of several stories to tell is that after only a few meetings the group had gelled to such an extent that they suggested a fundraiser for those less fortunate than themselves and through voluntary donations raised enough funds to fill two hampers. These were subsequently raffled via JustGiving and raised a magnificent sum to donate to 12@12 chosen charity: Mary's Meals.

The outcome of the evaluation has confirmed the overwhelming need to continue with this type of activity. So much so, that we have sought funding from other

sources to embed the 12@12 Walking Group – now to be renamed Wednesday Rovers – from August 2021. It is envisaged that the initial group members will return with other new people attracted too.

The impact on our community is clear with more opportunities for people to participate in light exercise, have a healthy lunch and meet and retain friends. All of this impact positively on both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The uptake has been more than expected showing the need for events and activities to combat isolation and also to give opportunities for respite for those who are carers for family members. After only a few meetings the group had gelled to such an extent that they suggested a fundraiser for those less fortunate than themselves and through voluntary donations raised enough funds to fill two hampers which were subsequently raffled with proceeds going to charities.

Some participants were under 40 and had additional support needs. They were among the best attenders and were supported not only by the staff, but by the other walkers in the group. Special lunch was quietly provided for one walker who was attempting to lose weight for health reasons. The parents, key worker and health professionals of this walker were delighted by this show of support, inclusion and encouragement.

The main beneficiaries of the crisis grant provided to run this programme were older women who were carers, or widows and had health issues including restless leg syndrome and hip replacement surgery recovery.

Community Activity

Cliftonhill 100, a group established to celebrate and promote the centenary of the stadium, had worked with local schools in the period pre pandemic. However, to complete their project and meet their conditions of grant from Heritage Lottery Fund, an art competition was arranged with schools and our chair was on the judging panel. The winners and other entries were professionally mounted etc. and have been hung in the new community hub. We have agreed that post pandemic, the programme run by this as hoc group will revert to the Trust and children will be thrilled to see their work displayed.

We successfully applied to be involved in the SPFL Trust **4-4-2 Reading** project. An ARFC player, Mark Doran made a video about his favourite book and this was shared on twitter and Facebook. We had 7 local schools sign up to participate in this project to enhance and support reading, however, the pandemic restrictions limited activity. We hope to resurrect the worthwhile work in school session 2021/22.

We were able to run a children's **football holiday camp** in July 2021. This was the first such event since October 2019 and proved to be very successful. Over 80 boys and girls aged between P1 and S1 joined in the Albion Rovers Community Trust Summer Football Camps in July. The camp was run by professional coaches who worked on football skills but the emphasis was also on fun. The camps were designed to develop both football and social skills.



We participated in the SPFL Trust funded **Festive Friends** programme which previously culminated in a Christmas Party. However, due to COVID restrictions, this year we filled and distributed 30 hampers. In identifying participants, we used both our own knowledge of our community and liaised with local churches and charitable organisations. We made a



conscious decision that the hampers were to be filled with special 'luxury' items such as Christmas cake, chocolate, quality tinned meat/fish etc and not a food parcel. We also added a Christmas card and gift voucher.

This initiative proved to be a real success with hampers and gifts being delivered to 22 individuals and a further 8 through organisations. The recipients had been recommended by local churches, local elected representatives, the fans forum and our own Trust contacts. The hampers had been very well received and there was positive feedback about the initiative. We contributed to the SPFL Trust communications strategy. All agreed that the

initiative had been a success and to an extent this format had a more targeted reach than the festive lunch approach.

Funding and Fundraising

The widening of the Board of Trustees brought additional skills to our organisation. We used these to good effect and successfully applied for funding from national organisations including Robertson Trust and Arnold Clark group.

These funds will be used to continue the Walking Group beyond the SPFL Trust funding and support the Buddies and Memories Group. We also organised and ran a successful festive fundraising raffle – although due to too few football games and limited footfall, we ran this online through Just Giving. We sold 1114 tickets and raised £600 for our funds and donated the remainder to the Football Club to help offset impact of the pandemic. Our volunteers are to be recognised for donating the hamper items, for donating other prizes and for promoting the online sales. We raised more in this fashion than previous years and have decided to keep the Christmas Raffle online in 2021.

SPFL Trust had been the recipients of major donations from individual philanthropists and used this to provide the grants detailed at the start of this report. In addition, they used funds to embark on an ambitious programme to ascertain the social impact of football and contribution made by organisations like ourselves. We agreed to participate in this work with Consultants KKP. As a consequence of this, we received an initial payment of £4000 with two £3000 payments to follow when we provide the necessary qualitative and quantitative data required. These are the funds we will ring fence to support the growth of our organisation by employing a community development staff.

Isabelle Boyd
26 February 2022