

The word "spark" is written in a bold, blue, lowercase sans-serif font. Below the letters "a" and "r" is a large, blue, upward-curving arc. Surrounding the word are several smaller, colorful arcs in shades of cyan, magenta, yellow, red, green, and blue, scattered in various orientations.

spark

**Business Case
for the Asset Transfer of the
Beatlie School Campus former library**

Spark
December 2024

Executive Summary

Spark's Vision for Community Empowerment through Asset Ownership

Over the past 10 years, Spark has transformed the former library premises at Beatlie School Campus into a vibrant community hub carrying out a wide variety of activities. Through a collaborative approach, the charity has established itself as an integral part of the Craigshill community, delivering services that create significant social impact and improve lives by:

- Reducing social isolation
- Enhancing physical and mental well-being
- Strengthening community cohesion
- Upskilling individuals and building confidence
- Offering training, work placements and volunteering opportunities

These outcomes are invaluable not only to the community but also to public sector organisations like NHS Scotland and West Lothian Council. Spark's activities align closely with the West Lothian Council Corporate Plan (2023–2028), with over half the initiatives supporting multiple council priorities.

The Need for the Asset Transfer

West Lothian Council plans to demolish the Beatlie School Campus within the next two years to build housing. This development puts Spark's operations and its positive impact on the community at risk. Without securing ownership of the building, Spark faces potential displacement, which would:

- Significantly hinder its ability to deliver services
- Negatively affect community members who rely on Spark
- Increase pressure on health services and council resources

Community and Stakeholder Support

A community-wide consultation (August–October 2024), including surveys, events and stakeholder interviews, revealed overwhelming support for Spark to take ownership of the building:

- 95% of respondents believe ownership would enhance Craigshill, increase opportunities and empower residents.

- Spark is regarded as a unique and essential “anchor organisation,” pivotal to community well-being and collaborative service delivery.
- Suggestions for development included creating meeting spaces, improved outdoor areas and enhanced accessibility and parking.

Current Operations

Spark operates on the building's west side, with the West Lothian Youth Action Partnership (WLCYAP) on the east. Together, Spark and WLCYAP are collaborating with Almond Housing to deliver the Grow Together project, funded by the Scottish Government's Investing in Communities Programme.

Future Vision

Spark plans to continue sharing the space with WLCYAP, designating the west side for noisier activities like games and music and the east side for quieter ones such as digital training, counselling and career-focused sessions.

In partnership with Sky Spaces, Spark's objective is to create a collaborative third-sector hub where organisations can co-locate, share resources and deliver joint initiatives. This model also reduces financial risk while maximising community impact.

Although no immediate renovations are planned, owning the building would enable future enhancements, including improved accessibility, exterior upgrades and expanded services. Spark's enterprise arm, Spark Creations, also has growth potential, transitioning from volunteer-led activities to a sustainable commercial venture.

A Collaborative Opportunity

Spark's partners have identified opportunities for joint funding applications to support collaborative initiatives, further strengthening the value of Spark as a community hub and service provider.

By securing ownership of the former library building, Spark can safeguard its essential role in the community, expand its offerings and continue to transform lives in Craigshill.



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1. Introduction & Background to the Project



1.1 Background to the Project

Spark has been based in the former library premises of the Beatlie School Campus for over 10 years. These premises have enabled Spark to establish itself at the centre of the community, delivering valuable services with social impact and changing people's lives for the better by:

- reducing social isolation
- improving physical and mental well-being
- building community cohesion
- helping people get work ready, upskilling people, building confidence
- arranging training and work placements
- creating volunteering opportunities

which are of great value to public sector organisations such as the NHS and West Lothian Council as well as other third sector organisations.

In the next two years, West Lothian Council intends to demolish the Beatlie School Campus to build housing.

1.2 About the Community

Craigshill was the first residential area built in the New Town of Livingston development in 1966. People moved from Glasgow and Edinburgh. Many of these new residents had left behind family and friends to set up a new life in Craigshill. Consequently, they did not have the same support network as they did 'back home' which led to feelings of social isolation and loneliness in a new community that was establishing itself.

According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Craigshill has data zones that vary in their deprivation rankings. Some parts of Craigshill are among the most deprived 20% of areas in Scotland. This is particularly reflected in areas such as health, income and employment. The area demonstrates challenges in health indicators and educational outcomes, which align with broader trends in more deprived zones.





1.3 About Spark

Spark is a Scottish charitable incorporated organisation (SCIO) CS000509 and registered charity (SC007280). Spark was formed out of the Craigshill Good Neighbour Network (21/11/1983 – 22/11/2021) which was established to connect people, to meet, make new friends and share skills and experience.

The charity is composed of eight trustees, 245 members, 60 volunteers and eight members of staff. It works with 75 local, national and international partners. Spark exists to provide relief for socially isolated people in Craigshill and South Howden by providing practical help, social opportunities and volunteering opportunities, primarily but restricted to, the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage. Spark does not turn anyone away. Everyone is welcome.

Spark has been based in the former library building at Beatlie Campus for over 10 years. These premises have enabled Spark to establish itself at the centre of the community, growing and diversifying its services to reduce people's feelings of isolation and loneliness using a 'positive and imaginative approach to create a space where anyone can thrive.'

An analysis of Spark's readiness for a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) was completed in January 2024.

Spark's values

Spark values everyone for who they are and the potential they have. Whoever they are, whatever their situation, they will find a warm welcome and a place where people care about them. Spark uses a positive and imaginative approach to create a space where anyone can thrive.

Connected

We create spaces for people to connect and build relationships so that they feel supported, encouraged and valued – and can then help others feel the same in return.

Positive

We encourage fun and a sense of hope in everyone who walks through our door so that they know this is a place where they can thrive.

Inclusive

We believe everyone deserves the chance to feel better about themselves and make a change to their lives.

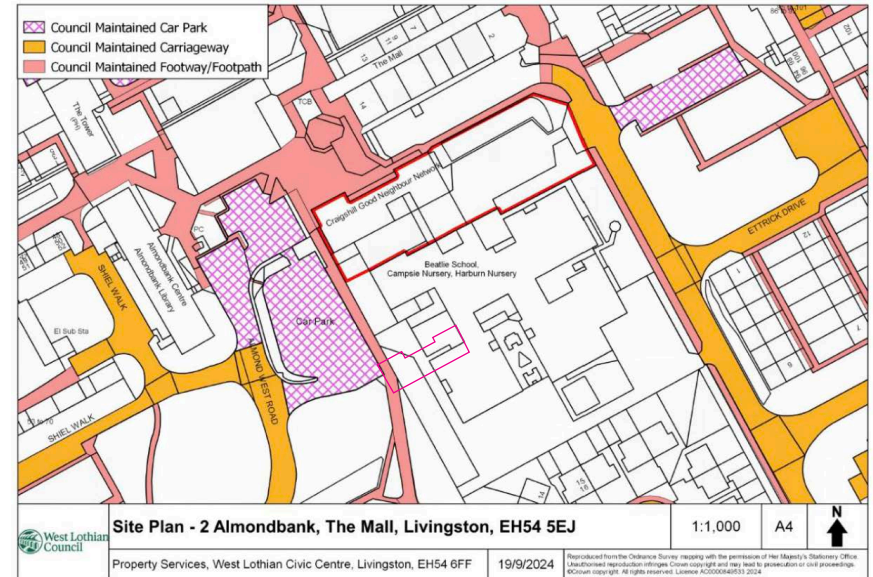
1.4 About the Asset

Spark's premises are located in the former library premises of Beatlie School Campus at 2 Almondbank, The Mall, Livingston, EH54 5EJ, in the centre of Craigshill, Livingston. It is easily reachable by walking, bus or driving with nearby parking.

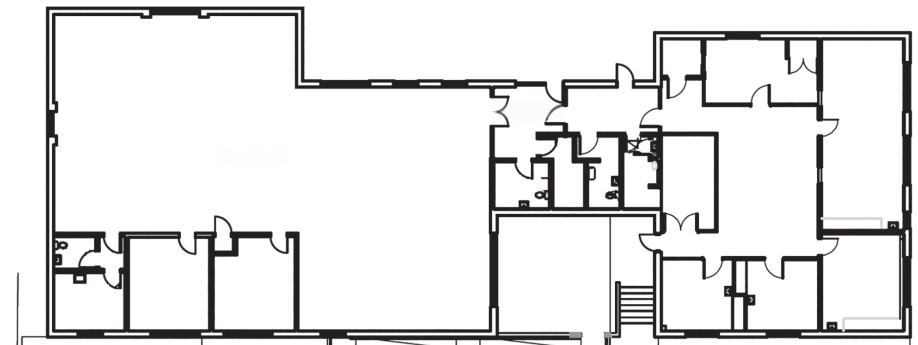
The property is a 1970s single storey building with brick elevations and a flat roof structure. It comprises a small entrance area situated in the centre of the building facing the Mall. Off the entrance to the left are two large rooms with smaller rooms off of them. To the right of the entrance is a large open space with three small rooms used for office/admin and a small kitchen. In the entrance area is a large accessible toilet. At the rear of the building is open space, accessed through the back of the left side of the building.



General overview of the Beatlie campus with the property for the asset transfer request highlighted. (Condition Surveys, West Lothian Council, August 2023)



Site Plan



West side

East side

The site on which the property is situated extends to approximately 0.627 acres (0.25 hectares). The building has a Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 527.93 square metres / 5,683 square feet.

NOISY SIDE

QUIET SIDE

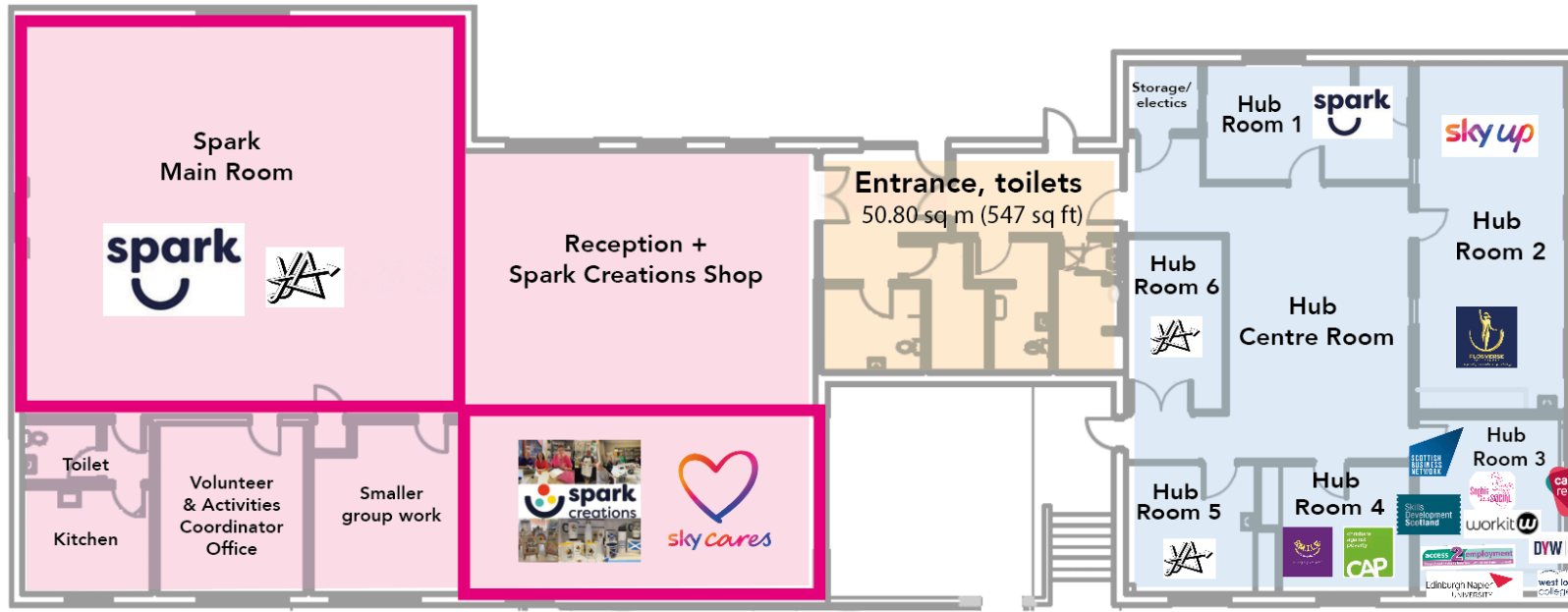


Figure 1.1: Proposed use of the former library premises as a collaborative third sector hub. The Noisy Side will host singing, music, dancing, exercise, arts and crafts, games and WLCYAP music sessions as well as Spark Creations. The Quiet Side will host the Spark office, WLCYAP community fridge, Sky Hub and Flosverse digital, employability support, counselling and advice, meeting and study rooms.

1.5 The Objectives

Spark's objectives are to take full ownership of the entire former library premises of Beatlie School Campus. Spark currently operates on the west side of the building, while another third-sector organisation, the West Lothian Youth Action Partnership (WLCYAP), occupies the east side.

Spark plans to continue sharing the space with WLCYAP, with **noisier activities like games and music in the west side** and **quieter ones such as counselling and career-focused sessions in the east side**, see Figure 1.1 above.

Spark's objective is to create a collaborative third-sector hub where organisations can share resources and deliver joint initiatives while reducing the risk of losing revenue if a tenant leaves.

Pending a successful asset transfer, Sky Spaces has offered to cover the cost of decorating and installing Wi-Fi infrastructure in the building to support Spark's aims.

Although no immediate renovations are planned, owning the building would enable future enhancements, including

improved accessibility, exterior upgrades and expanded services. Spark's enterprise arm, Spark Creations, also has growth potential, transitioning from volunteer-led activities to a sustainable commercial venture.

1.6 The Reason for the Request

For Spark to remain viable and to secure its future and not be potentially displaced from its current premises, the board aims to own the building. When a group is displaced, it greatly reduces its efficacy and ability to get its work done and deliver valuable outcomes. Spark does not want to be in this position. Hence the reasons for the asset transfer request are to:

- ensure stability by removing the risk of displacement
- gain control of the building Spark operates in
- maintain vital community services
- enable future building alterations

1.7 The Need for the Project

The community consultation confirmed that Spark has established itself as a core anchor organisation within the Craigshill community. Spark has approximately 30 partners using Spark's services and 45 partners collaborating with Spark to deliver activities which address a wide range of priorities such as reducing social isolation, providing opportunities and support for people to have the confidence and skills to enter employment or take up training/education. All of Spark's activities fully align with West Lothian Council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2023 – 28. The consultation also identified demand for more activities particularly activities at night and on the weekends.



2. Methodology

As the purpose of this business case is to secure the approval of a Community Asset Transfer of the former Beatlie Campus library by Spark, consultation with the community and buy-in from the community is vital for both impact and financial viability. Spark commissioned Ailsa Campbell + Associates to conduct research to ensure that its members, local residents, partner organisations and other stakeholders had an opportunity to express their views and to understand the level and nature of support for Spark's request.

2.1 What We Did

A robust campaign of consultation activities took place from 3 August – 3 October 2024. The consultation comprised:

- a community survey
- a 'Have you Say' event on 20 August
- semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of 14 stakeholders (delivery partners, user partners, staff, local council and elected officials)
- desk top research of local plans (Transform Craigshill plan, WLC Corporate Plan 2023-28)
- case studies of two charities with similar aims and objectives to Spark

2.2 Community Survey

The aim of the community survey was to understand from as many people in the community as possible, if people valued the work Spark was doing, how Spark could do better and if people supported Spark owning the building.

The first part of the survey was designed to understand how well the respondent knew Spark, how often they came to Spark, how they came to Spark. The second part of the survey provided some ideas of what other services Spark could offer and asked for recommendations of other ideas.

The next section asked if they supported Spark owning the building and were asked if they thought owning the building would give people in Craigshill more to do, make it a better place to live and give people in Craigshill a say in the services offered to them.

Then people were asked what were the best things about Spark and what could be improved.

Finally people were asked for some information to understand the age and sex of people coming to Spark and where they were coming from.

2.3 Have Your Say Event

The purpose of the 'Have Your Say' event was to give a variety of stakeholders the opportunity to sit together and share their view as well as hear other people's thoughts which might not be the same theirs. The participants were asked to collectively answer the question 'How can Spark best serve the community for the next 5-10 years?'

Prior to the event, Spark staff and volunteers were trained by Ailsa Campbell to facilitate. Using people connected with the organisation instead of an external consultant helps to strengthen ties between people and to build on Spark's valuable social capital.

Each table of approximately 10 people was led by a Spark staff member or volunteer through a series of steps to gather ideas from the group and then prioritise them guided by the principles of 'equal voice and vote, learn from each other and all ideas are welcome.' The process involved open discussion with rich picturing to draw out ideas.



2.4 Semi-structured interviews

A diverse group of 14 stakeholders were interviewed to assess Spark's role, collaborations, impact on public health, well-being and economic regeneration. The interviews explored community challenges, opportunities and the implications of Spark's absence, as well as views on its location and potential benefits of the asset transfer. Stakeholders also discussed reporting practices and comparisons with other charities.

2.5 Case studies

Visits to two similar organisations have highlighted successful examples of social enterprises and community groups achieving substantial benefits through 'hub' models. The two case studies provide valuable insights and practical guidance for Spark.



3. Findings & Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The research findings underscore the indispensable role Spark plays in the Craigshill community. Across various consultation methods, a consistent message emerged: there is no comparable facility in the area that provides the same level of support, especially for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, socially isolated individuals and school children.

Many participants shared that they rely heavily on Spark's services, crediting it as the catalyst for forming friendships, engaging in meaningful activities and enriching their lives. For these individuals, Spark is not just a service provider but a lifeline. The consultation revealed that without Spark:

- Social isolation, loneliness and frailty would rise sharply, placing additional strain on already stretched social and health services.
- The educational and experiential opportunities provided to school children would be lost, reducing the scope of their curriculum and personal development.

When asked 'What would the effect be if Spark no longer existed or could not deliver its services?' interviewees expressed deep concern, highlighting the far-reaching consequences for both individuals and the wider community. Their insights form a compelling case for Spark's critical importance and the need to secure its future through asset transfer. Comments from Spark's partners included:

'To lose Spark would destroy the community.'

'It would leave a massive void.'

'It would be devastating.'

'It would be life-changing for people. So many people rely on Spark's services.'

3.2 Themes

Theme 1:

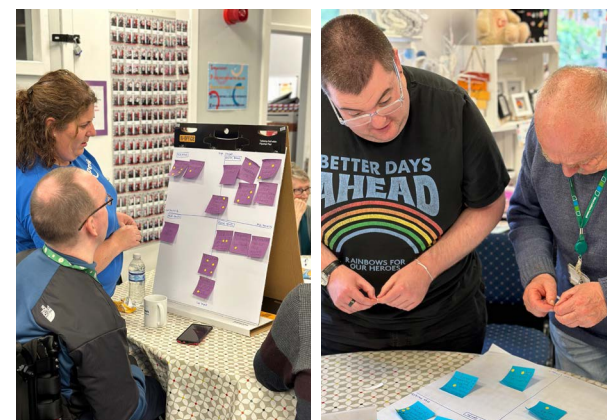
Integration into Society and Pathways to Employment

Through inclusive activities such as crafting, singing and games, Spark provides support in a way that is engaging and non-stigmatising. These activities build confidence and empower individuals, helping them transition into volunteering roles, which often lead to training and employment opportunities. Spark also mentors school leavers, equipping them with the skills and confidence to achieve positive destinations, offers modern apprenticeship opportunities and fosters knowledge-sharing that extends beyond the organisation itself.

Theme 2:

Spark's Strategic Location

The former library premises, centrally located in Craigshill, is perfectly positioned to support Spark's operations and its vital role within the community. Securing ownership of this space would allow Spark to expand its activities, deepen its community impact and diversify revenue streams. Ownership would also provide long-term stability, enabling Spark to focus on delivering enhanced services and achieving transformative outcomes for Craigshill residents.



Members, volunteers, delivery partners, Spark Board and local councillors writing down and prioritising ideas at the 'Have Your Say' event on 20 August 2024

Theme 3:

Partnerships, Collaboration & Social Capital

Spark is a highly valued partner. There is no other organisation like Spark in the area. As an 'anchor organisation' it is fundamental to what is going on in the community. It helps other third sector, public sector and private organisations deliver their objectives in public health, social well-being and employability and reducing inequalities and as a place where they can use Spark's services.

Spark is at the cross-section of its community, it is the 'go-to place' for people to connect and as a result has built up very strong social capital. The organisation is described as a very loyal and trustworthy partner, a primary partner due to its diversity, reliability, trust and duty of care, they have 'soul'.

Figure 3.1 shows all of Spark's user and delivery partners.

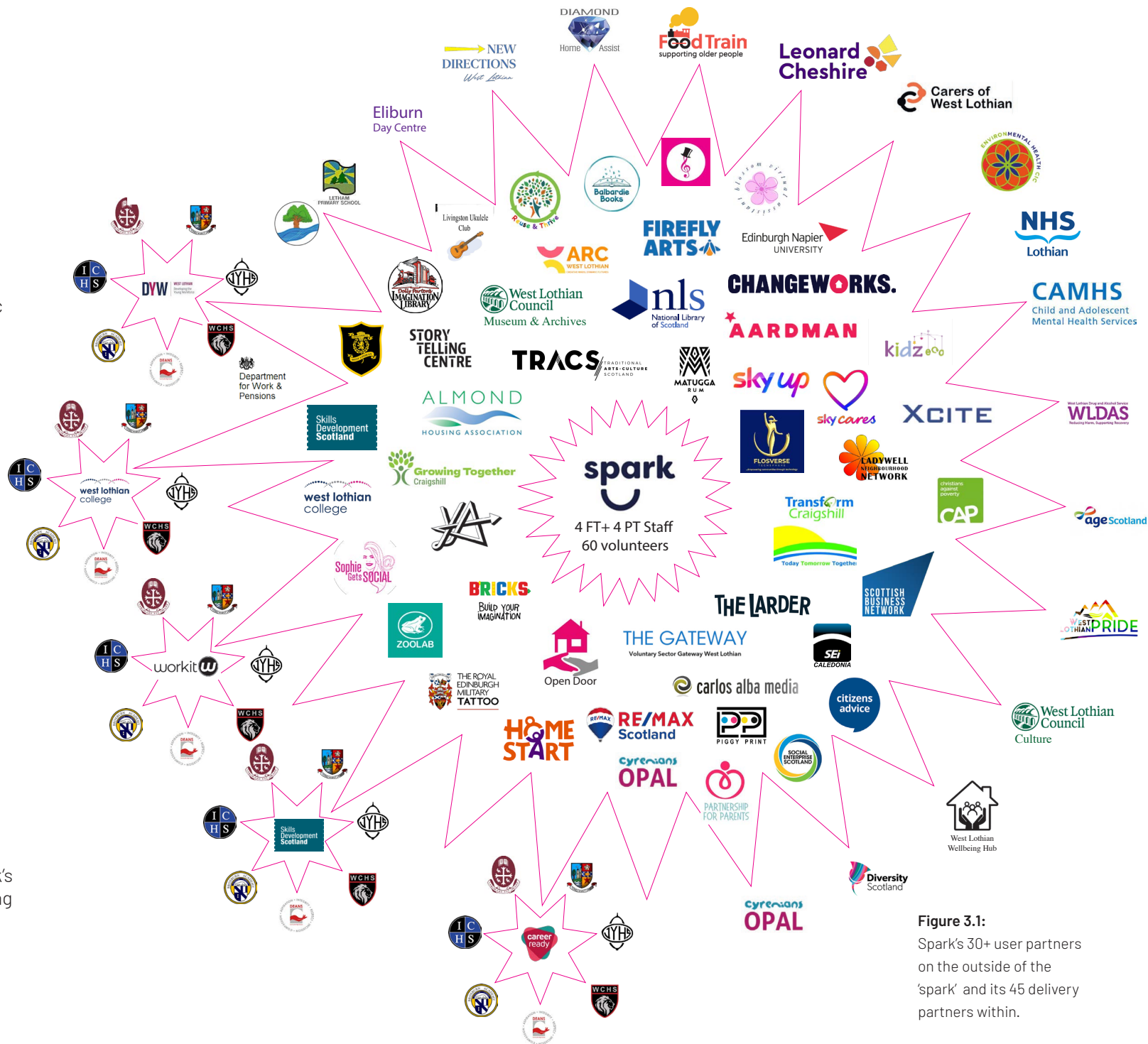


Figure 3.1: Spark's 30+ user partners on the outside of the 'spark' and its 45 delivery partners within.

3.3 Community and Stakeholder Support

Letters of support (Appendix 5) from Spark's partners, included with this application, highlight the widespread recognition of Spark's importance and the strong community backing for this asset transfer request.

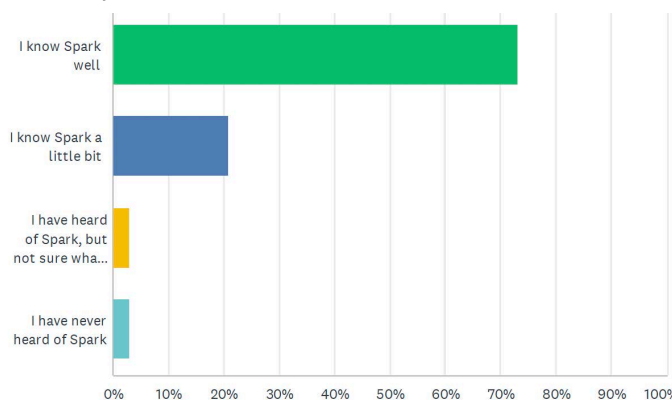


3.4 Community Survey Results

In total, 167 completed survey responses were received. Split 50/50 with 84 completed online and 83 completed on paper. As a starting point, it is worthy to note that the community truly values and loves Spark. They feel it is an important part of the community. They love coming to Spark where they immediately feel safe and welcome.

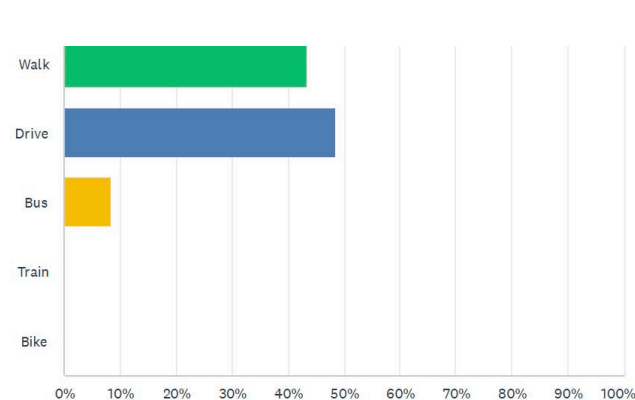
How well people knew Spark

The majority (73%) of people completing the survey knew Spark well with most (48%) visiting more than once a week, the second highest group were people who came a few times a year (26%).



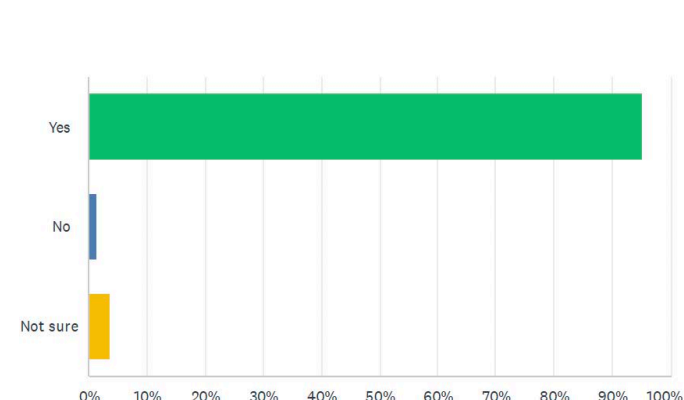
How people are travelling to Spark

Most people walk or drive (or are driven) to Spark, a small percentage take the bus which corresponds with the location people are travelling from.



Support for Spark owning the former library building

95% of respondents believe Spark owning and developing the building will give people in Craigshill more to do; make Craigshill a better place and give people in Craigshill a say in the services offered to them.



Where people are travelling from

Most people are coming to Spark from the EH54 postcode. Few are coming from neighbouring postcodes and further afield.

EH54	134
EH53	7
EH52	6
EH48	5
EH47	6
EH11	1
KY12	1
KY11	1
Not filled in	5

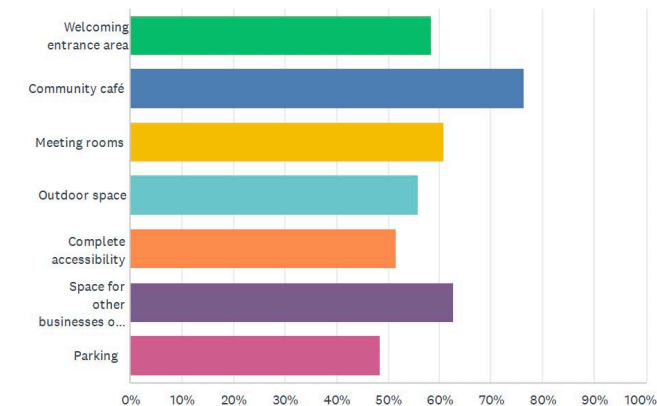
What else could happen at Spark?

Top suggestions were a *community café*, however other comments suggested that there were already a number of café-like places in the immediate area.

The second most popular suggestions were *meeting rooms* and *space for other businesses to operate*.

The third most popular suggestions were to make more of the external elements of the property, to *enhance the entrance* and create some *outdoor space*.

As some of Spark's members have significant mobility issues, *complete accessibility* and *parking* were also raised.



Why are people coming?

There were overwhelming comments expressing how much people love coming to Spark because of the community spirit, the people who run it and volunteer there, how they are made to feel, some attributing their very survival to Spark.

Comments included:

The people who frequent the place, also the staff.

People! Staff and attendees.

Something for everyone.

Spark is an amazing place to be meeting different people every day every week. Just brilliant if people are feeling lonely just come in say hello everyone is more than welcome.

A nice place, stuff on all the time.

Excellent community hub for all ages and provides much needed support.

The sense of community, absolutely lovely building to be in. Could get more support from the council.

Open to the whole community and very accessible.

It brings people together and everyone is so helpful and friendly there is lots to do and lots of fun and laughs for some people this is a lifeline for them.

The staff are FANTASTIC, everything is brilliant, the volunteers are great, warm and welcoming as soon as you walk in. Craigsfarm is not very friendly, only goes occasionally, you're anonymous. Spark has everything, cares for you.

Spark is an amazing place to come to. We are just one big happy family. If it wasn't for Spark I would be dead - it has saved my life.

The really good atmosphere when you walk in. Really really friendly, better atmosphere than Craigsfarm.

Its a great charity. Its well used and I don't know what the community would do without it.

As a support worker of people with additional needs we come to spark frequently. They all enjoy themselves and are made to feel welcome. The groups we attend are well run.

Welcoming and friendly place. Family sees the benefit for me.

Spark was used extensively by my late sister, it provided her with a place to meet friends and participate in activities that enriched her life.

Always made very welcome, great support, builds relationships and friendships. An absolute asset and not just to Craigshill residents.

They are so lovely and they have a really good understanding of people's needs.

It gives the people a chance to meet others and maintain friendships.

It has literally saved my life.

Very friendly, welcoming, volunteering opportunities are great.

Staff are helpful in so many different ways, they support me to also help others. Spark can help others to help others in our community.

The feeling of belonging, being safe and treated with respect and kindness

Spark is a great place as I'm a care worker and most of my clients go to Spark and it makes a huge difference to their lives.

Saved my life, suffered from mental health just after Christmas, got in touch through the board who put me in touch with Kirsty.

You are not alone when using Spark. The help and support from the Staff and volunteers is second to none.

Hard to say what could be improved, every facility for the community is there to interact with people. Love the Friday mornings (Men's Club), never miss it



General feelings about Spark

People were asked what were the best things about Spark and what could be improved.

The best things were:

It's great place to meet people and is friendly to everyone.

Handy parking as its right next door.

Good use of the old library.

It's a happy place.

Well laid out.

Very clean building.

Friendly people.

Spark are an integral part of the community of Craigshill.

It's great that it's right next to the mall.

Been going to this building nearly every week since we moved here nearly 50 years ago when it was a library, then the C.G.N.N. and now Spark, and always found it very welcoming.

This is a great place for the community.

Spark is an amazing place for the local community .

There is enough space to have various activities on at the same time.

This building is in the heart of Craigshill.

Fantastic location right in the heart of Craigshill.

It's a welcoming safe space for all.

It would be a crime for this building to lie empty.

*Perfectly positioned for easy access and parking.
Big enough to hold a number of people while still feeling safe.*

Ideal with plenty of space , friendly and helpful staff.

Haven't been here for Spark as yet but from what I saw on Facebook, it looks good.

It should be used as a community hub.

Craigshill not the nicest part, but Spark helping to change that

Building is secure, with cameras, feels safe

It needs more space to facilitate the ever increasing number of people attending

Open plan! with side rooms - ideal for big events and small meetings

It's a wonderful space where incredible things happen.

Perfectly positioned for easy access and parking. Big enough to hold a number of people while still feeling safe.

Suggestions for improvement:

The walls could be painted with warmer colours.

More disabled parking needed.

Turn the heat down.

Good if it's bigger with more space.

Open plan! with side rooms - ideal for big events and small meetings.

More space would be better.

Could do with usable outdoor space.

The mural on the side wall is nice, would be good to see more on other outside walls.

I am working on training my dog to offer emotional support and would be happy if Spark allowed therapy dogs.

It needs to be modernised and cleaned to enhance the area.

A much more usable outdoor space would be good maybe a cafe a proper shop for what they sell open weekends for kids things/family .

It should be used as a community hub.

Maybe start up a 1:1 service and get back to those who offer it for free.



3.5 Case Studies

Although at different stages in their journeys, the charities *Crieff Connexions* and *Letham4All* share similar aims and objectives with Spark. Ailsa Campbell visited the sites and conducted interviews with the Development Officers of both organisations to gain insight into their operations and strategies.

Crieff Connexions, Crieff
crieffconnexions.org.uk



Background

Crieff Connexions (CCX) provides a range of support services and signposting for the most vulnerable individuals in Crieff's local community. In October 2022, the organisation relocated to a former large retail unit in the centre of Crieff. This space, which occupies a substantial footprint, includes eight separate retail units that are being transformed into a vibrant community hub. The hub offers a variety of services and activities, including a food larder, a charity shop, counselling rooms, an IT suite, a second-hand uniform shop, a reuse shop, and a social café.

CCX currently operates under a lease agreement with an option to purchase the premises. To support this transition, the charity is moving from a single-tier to a two-tier governance structure and working with organisations such as the Scottish Land Fund and Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS) to begin the acquisition process.

Making it Work

Crieff Connexions has evolved significantly, growing from an organisation operating with just a table at its entrance to a sustainable enterprise employing two part-time staff. While the charity could maintain its current activities, its ambition is to go further by developing the building and expanding its impact.

The objective is to achieve long-term sustainability within the Penny Lane premises. CCX generates income through various activities, including:

- Renting space to other community groups
- Operating a community food larder
- Running a second-hand uniform shop and a reuse shop
- Managing a community café

These activities collectively generate the £4,000 per month required to cover rent, utilities, and staff salaries. For example, local groups like Crieff at Christmas pay minimal fees to store the town's Christmas lights but contribute in kind, providing valuable volunteer services such as electrical work and signage installation, which save CCX money.

A temporary banking hub previously located in the premises was a significant income source, contributing

£600 per month until it moved to a permanent High Street location. CCX is now exploring options to repurpose this vacant space, with plans to create a 'maker space' for artisans. This facility would allow individuals to rent space by the hour or day to pursue activities such as jewellery-making or painting.

Funding and Collaboration

CCX receives no direct financial support for the building's operational costs but secures project-specific funding, such as grants for initiatives like 'Warm Spaces'. Numerous service providers, including mental health, addiction recovery, housing advice, and financial support organisations, utilise the counselling rooms free of charge. These services are funded by external grants, such as £15,000 per year for three years from the Gannochy Trust, which supports CCX in connecting individuals to essential services.

Previously, CCX received a one-year grant of £10,500 from The National Lottery to aid in developing the hub and expanding its support services. Such funding enables the organisation to meet its mission of linking vulnerable community members with the resources and assistance they need.





Background

Letham4All began as a small group of mums seeking a space to engage with their families and has since grown into a thriving community organisation. Starting with the old Perth & Kinross Council Live Active building, they successfully undertook a community asset transfer and worked with partners such as the National Lottery, the Scottish Government and Perth & Kinross Council to develop a major extension. While the journey hasn't been without challenges—including the need to become more open and collaborative—they now offer vital services such as mental health support, addiction recovery, financial counselling as well as a community fridge. Their initiatives include 'Oot the Hoose' 60+ Social Project, Youth Work Project, arts, crafts, fitness and social activities, as well as the Letham4All Community Bus, available for other local non-profits. Through determination and partnership, Letham4All continues to create opportunities that enhance the well-being of their community



Making it Work

Since its formation, Letham4All has focused on building community capacity and supporting health and well-being through resident-led initiatives and strong partnership working. Key achievements include:

- Reducing social isolation through volunteering with older people and young families.
- Offering training in Basic First Aid and Food Hygiene.
- Establishing affordable family activities through the Family Fun Club.
- Supporting 18 local projects, with 1,452 residents participating in funding decisions.
- Providing weekly youth groups to build skills and confidence.
- Transforming a vacant recreation centre into a thriving Community Hub via a community asset transfer.
- Creating a soft play area, community kitchen, and supporting groups like the Majorettes, Kids Association, and Breastfeeding Support Group.
- Developing the Letham Friendship Network, hosting weekly coffee mornings and 'knit and natter' sessions.

Funding and Collaboration

The Community Hub, developed by and for the community, operates as a social enterprise. It combines grant funding with income generation from events, meetings, a community gym, dance and yoga classes, recovery cafés, arts workshops and religious services. By aligning passion, partnerships and financial sustainability, Letham4All delivers meaningful, long-term benefits to the local area.

4. Services & Outcomes

4.1 Benefit to the Community

Spark is a community led organisation and owning former library of the Beatlie School Campus will enable the charity to achieve its purposes, which are 'to benefit the community by taking steps to minimise social isolation and loneliness in the regeneration area of Craigshill and South Howden, in the East Livingston and East Calder Electoral Ward and its surrounding communities.' With the proviso that these purposes are consistent with furthering the achievement of sustainable development. Specific benefits Spark aims to deliver are:

1. The advancement of community development (including the advancement of urban regeneration within the Community);
2. To ensure members feel valued and have the chance to spark their potential, to develop existing and new skills;
3. To bring people together by offering social, learning and volunteering opportunities;
4. To ensure everyone is welcome whatever their social and ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation or any personal circumstance and characteristics;
5. To help people connect and build relationships with each other and create friendships;
6. To nurture confidence and self-esteem;
7. To spark a different way of people seeing themselves to help them grow and thrive.

In the next five years, Spark's main priorities after securing its location through a community asset transfer, are to expand its opening times and range of activities on offer to address the findings in the community consultation.

Stretching resources with strong social capital

During this period of ongoing budget and financial pressures, Spark is able to stretch resources further due to the strong social capital the charity has built up through its network of 45+ organisations and dedicated team of volunteers. Through its extensive partnerships ranging from hyper local third sector organisations such

as Almond Housing Association and West Lothian Youth Action Partnership, to national private sector companies like Sky and international charities such as Dolly Parton's 'Imagination Library' in America, Spark is a vibrant place delivering a wide range of activities which support local and national priorities.

4.2 Key activities, services and outcomes

Table 4.1 on the right shows Spark's current activities with user and delivery partners, together with outcomes and associated financial Social Value, showing how they align with West Lothian Council's priorities from its Corporate Plan 2023-28.

Spark works with the local high schools, West Lothian College, Developing the Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland, WLC's access2employment, workitw, Career Ready, entrepreneur Sophie Robertson and animation company Aardman **to help young people get work ready, raising their educational attainment, investing in their skills and ensuring positive destinations**, thus helping to **tackle poverty and inequality**. They do this through career mentoring, work shadowing and placements, arranging modern apprenticeships and guaranteed interview opportunities. Through various activities the young people who come to Spark gain the five Core Skills: Numeracy, IT, Communication, Problem Solving and Working With Others.

Another area which Spark focuses on is **reducing social isolation, bringing the community together and providing a safe space for the vulnerable**. Ways in which they bring people together are the very popular Men's Group, intergenerational activities such as reading with the elderly and the primary school children, arts and crafts, games, singing as well as helping people understand the increasingly complicated digital world and its devices.

Spark helps to **create strong and sustainable communities** by regularly organising seasonal events as well as one-off events such as the Storytelling Festival, Science Festival,

Film Festival and Spark in the Park. The organisation achieves this by working with cultural organisations such as the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Firefly Arts, Sky and Flosverse. The nearby NHS health centre sign posts patients to Spark because they know the activities are tailored to different people's needs and abilities. Another significant project is the 'Growing Together' project organised by Almond Housing Association with the West Lothian Youth Action Partnership.

Spark **protects the environment** through a range of activities that **protect the health, well-being and safety of local people**. It also **recycles its waste** and buys goods from sustainable and anti-slavery sources. As a result, their partner Sky chooses to use Spark Creations over other providers for their branded gifts.

Effects of an unsuccessful asset transfer request

















Fundamental to Spark continuing to deliver its valuable activities is securing ownership of the premises it is currently in. To have to leave, find another location and settle in there, would seriously disrupt and most probably halt its work. This would have a huge detrimental effect on the significant number of people and 75+ partner organisations who rely on Spark.

4.3 Social Value

In addition to the outcomes of Spark's activities, is the Social Value which can be quantified financially using various databases. Please refer to section **6.2 Calculating Spark's Social Value** on page 27.

Table 4.1:

Sparks activities aligning with West Lothian Council's priorities set out in the WLC Corporate Plan 2023-28 with corresponding Financial/Social Value. Note, most of Spark's activities align with more than one of West Lothian Council's priorities.

WLC Priorities from Corporate Plan 2023-28	Spark Activities	Outcomes (Consequences of Activities)	 Financial/ Social Value
 <p>RAISING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</p> <p>11</p>	<p>Spark Activities: Career ready mentoring, Work shadowing, Work placements, Modern apprenticeships, Guaranteed interview opportunities, Core Skill: Numeracy, Core Skill: IT, Core Skill: Communication, Core Skill: Problem Solving, Core Skill: Working with Others.</p> <p>Benefiting partners: </p> <p>Delivery partners: </p>	<p>Outcomes: Positive destinations, Building confidence, resilience, positive attitudes, Breaking multi-generational unemployment, Creating jobs, 5 Core Skills, Parent satisfaction, increase range of choices available to young people, Providing route out of poverty to progress towards work through training and volunteering.</p>	<p>£9,283 for each young person who has a significant increase in the confidence that can be measured and evidenced through the monitoring of relevant survey questions (Appendix 3a)</p>
 <p>STRENGTHENING CARE AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, ADULTS AND OLDER PEOPLE</p> <p>12</p>	<p>Spark Activities: Inter-generational activities, Inter-generational singing, NHS signposting patients, Activities tailored to abilities, Signpost to other organisations, Support for carers, Refurbishing digital devices, Coffee mornings for parents, Days out for all abilities, Intro to digital for over 55s, Using digital skills, Lending digital devices.</p> <p>Benefiting partners: </p> <p>Delivery partners: </p>	<p>Outcomes: Saving home visits = 5 doctor appointments, Supporting carers, Digital equality, Social inclusion, Support adults with physical disabilities, Support adults with learning disabilities.</p>	<p>£3,537 for each person who participates in exercise that does not noticeably change your breathing or make you sweat at least once a week for at least two months (Appendix 3a)</p>
 <p>INVESTING IN SKILLS AND JOBS</p> <p>13</p>	<p>Spark Activities: Career ready mentoring, Work shadowing, Work placements, Modern apprenticeships, Guaranteed interview opportunities, Core Skill: Numeracy, Core Skill: IT, Core Skill: Communication, Core Skill: Problem Solving, Core Skill: Working with Others.</p> <p>Benefiting partners: </p> <p>Delivery partners: </p>	<p>Outcomes: Positive destinations, Building confidence, resilience, positive attitudes, increase range of choices available to young people, Breaking multi-generational unemployment, Creating jobs, Providing route out of poverty to progress towards work through training and volunteering.</p>	<p>£4,179 for person who participates in exercise that raises your heart rate and results in breaking into a sweat at least once a week for a period of at least two months (Appendix 3a)</p>
 <p>HELPING TO CREATE STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES</p> <p>14</p>	<p>Spark Activities: Inter-generational paired reading, Inter-generational singing, History of Cinema, Mapping River Almond Craigshill, Storytelling festival, 60th anniversary of Craigshill events, People's Parish, Spark in the Park, Blether Bench.</p> <p>Benefiting partners: </p> <p>Delivery partners: </p>	<p>Outcomes: Supporting carers, Heritage learning, Building community.</p>	<p>£3,249 for each individual who volunteers on a regular basis at least once a month for two months or more (Appendix 3a)</p>
 <p>TACKLING HOMELESSNESS, POVERTY AND INEQUALITY</p> <p>15</p>	<p>Spark Activities: Career ready mentoring, Work shadowing, Work placements, Modern apprenticeships, Guaranteed interview opportunities, Lending digital devices, Refurbishing digital devices, Intro to digital for over 55s, Using digital skills, Core Skill: Numeracy, Core Skill: IT, Core Skill: Communication, Core Skill: Problem Solving, Core Skill: Working with Others.</p> <p>Benefiting partners: </p> <p>Delivery partners: </p>	<p>Outcomes: Providing route out of poverty to progress towards work through training and volunteering.</p>	<p>Services & Outcomes 17</p>

4.4 Policy Framework

In addition to supporting WLC priorities, Spark's activities also align with numerous national policies. The following policies and strategies are of particular relevance to Spark's work:



<p>Scottish Government National Performance Framework, 2023 https://nationalperformance.gov.scot</p>	<p>Communities: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe</p> <p>Culture: We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely</p> <p>Economy: We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy</p> <p>Environment: We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment</p> <p>Fair Work and Business: We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone</p> <p>NPF's Values "of kindness, treating everyone with dignity and compassion, respect for the rule of law and acting in an open and transparent way" and its Purpose including "opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased well being and sustainable inclusive economic growth". (National Outcomes review, Scottish Government 2023).</p>
<p>Well-being Economy https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-monitor-december-2023-update/pages/3/</p>	<p>The four capitals approach: natural, human, social and produced/financial "capital," or resources. If we are sustaining, investing in and nurturing these four types of resources, we can be confident that we are increasing our capacity to deliver well-being for current and future generations... By focusing on future as well as current well-being, this set of measures also provides a rounded picture of the resilience of the economy.</p>
<p>Place Principle, 2019 https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/</p>	<p>Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities... all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.</p> <p>A collaborative, place-based approach with a shared purpose to support a clear way forward for all services, assets and investments which will maximise the impact of their combined resources.</p>



A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections, 2018

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-strategy-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-social-connections/pages/3/>

Acknowledges the role third sector, social enterprise and business play in reducing social isolation and loneliness of the young, old and those living with disabilities.

Contains four priorities:

- Empower communities and build shared ownership
- Promote positive attitudes and tackle stigma
- Create opportunities for people to connect
- Support an infrastructure that fosters connections



Achieving a sustainable future: regeneration strategy, 2011

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/achieving-sustainable-future-regeneration-strategy/>

Community-led regeneration is at the heart of our regeneration strategy. It is about people:

- identifying issues and opportunities in their local area
- deciding what to do about them
- making positive changes in their communities

We support community-led regeneration that:

- increases the number and strength of locally-controlled, enterprising community organisations
- supports local organisations to take ownership of assets such as buildings or land
- helps people to co-ordinate action and respond to challenges in areas where there are high levels of disadvantage
- helps people identify and act on the priorities in their areas



Young people: training and employment <https://www.gov.scot/policies/young-people-training-employment/>

Young people are key to our future economic success so it is crucial we do as much as we can to prepare them for the world of work and open up job opportunities for all.



5. Governance & Management

Spark has a strong track record of delivering a wide range of projects for community benefit in a sustainable manner. During the community consultation interviews with Spark's partners, the organisation was repeatedly praised as "reliable", "trustworthy", "well organised" and a "really a top-flight anchor organisation". An analysis of Spark's readiness for a Community Asset Transfer was completed in January 2024.

5.1 Governance

The charity's board consists of eight trustees who are all local residents. The board has diverse expertise in local government, housing, finance, mental health and education. Some trustees bring prior or concurrent board experience, while others are new to the role. The Office Bearers, in particular, have strong backgrounds in Local Authority, the Third Sector, and Finance. As a board, they are dedicated to continually developing and strengthening key roles.

The role of the Spark trustees are to:

- Set and maintain the vision, mission and values of the organisation.
- Develop direction, strategy and planning.
- Ensure the organisation has the structure and resources for its work.
- Establish policies and procedures to govern organisational activity, including guidance for the board, volunteers and staff.
- Establish systems for reporting and monitoring.
- Manage risk and ensure compliance and accountability with the governing document, external regulators and the law.
- Make certain that the financial affairs of the organisation are conducted properly and are accurately reported.

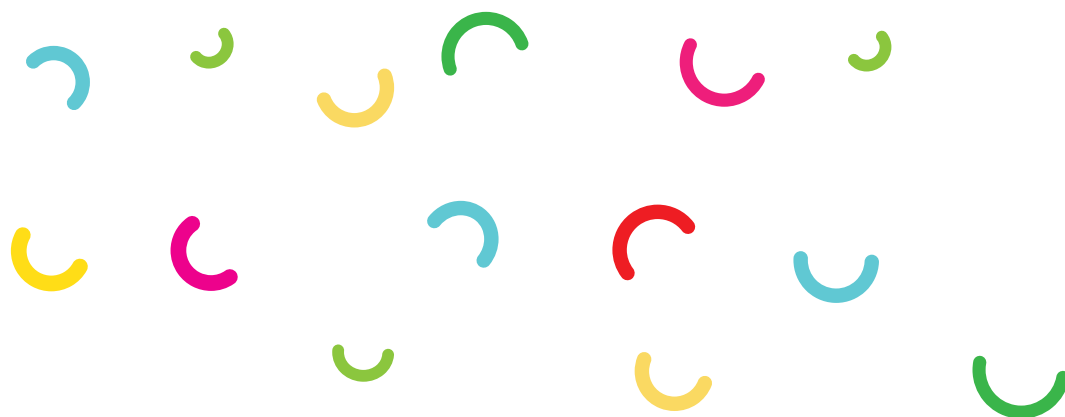
5.2 Legal Structure

Spark is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)(SC007280). Spark's constitution (Appendix 2) has been approved by the Scottish Land Fund and DTA Scotland's Community Ownership Support Service (COSS) with the Scottish Governments' requirements for a community body to be compliant with pursuing a Community Asset Transfer. The relevant points are as follows:

The SCIO's purposes are to benefit the community by taking steps to minimise social isolation and loneliness in the regeneration area of Craigshill and South Howden, in the East Livingston and East Calder Electoral Ward and its surrounding communities which is in the UK Parliamentary Constituency of Livingston. The Scottish Parliament constituency is Almond Valley. The benefits ("the Community") with the following objects:

- 1.1 The advancement of community development (including the advancement of urban regeneration within the Community);
- 1.2 To ensure members feel valued and have the chance to spark their potential, to develop existing and new skills,
- 1.3 To bring people together by offering social, learning and volunteering opportunities,
- 1.4 To ensure everyone is welcome whatever their social and ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation or any personal circumstance and characteristics,
- 1.5 To help people connect and build relationships with each other and create friendships,
- 1.6 To nurture confidence and self-esteem,
- 1.7 To spark a different way of people seeing themselves to help them grow and thrive.

But only to the extent that the above purposes are consistent with furthering the achievement of sustainable development.



5.3 Spark Trustee Biographies

Frank Anderson – Chair

Frank Anderson, a former councillor and sub-postmaster, brings deep insight into the concerns and aspirations of local residents, with a particular focus on amplifying the voices of under-represented groups. Skilled in navigating complex policies and advocating for local needs, Frank works closely with the CEO and trustees to foster relationships with stakeholders, including residents, businesses, government agencies, and community organisations. As Spark's Chair, Frank is adaptable and resilient, skilfully managing the evolving demands of his leadership role.

David Edgar – Vice Chair

David Edgar, a retired senior housing manager with experience in local authorities and housing associations, has a blend of leadership, strategic planning, and operational expertise. His understanding of national policy versus local needs informs his work at Spark, where he applies his skills in managing complex budgets and securing funding through partnerships. David's strong project management abilities and approachable demeanour have positioned him as the leader of Spark's befriending program, where he fosters connections and promotes community well-being.

Fay Edgar – Secretary

A retired Community Partnership Manager, Fay Edgar is passionate about aligning organisational goals with community needs. As Secretary, she leads efforts to monitor Spark's social impact and cultivates relationships that enhance outreach and elevate the charity's brand reputation. Fay's extensive volunteer work with other organisations has strengthened Spark's presence across diverse sectors, making her a vital bridge between the organisation and the community.

Colin Williamson – Trustee

Colin Williamson, a community activist, storyteller and Disability Access Officer for Livingston FC, has been a passionate advocate for social justice and environmental sustainability for over 30 years. Diagnosed with autism at age 47, Colin pursued a degree in Scottish Ethnology and a postgraduate certificate in Community Education. He works with multiple non-profits focusing on environmental impact, disability rights and social justice. As Spark's Storyteller in Residence, Colin uses his skills to bring community stories to life, creating meaningful connections and fostering inclusivity.

Heather Ashford – Trustee

Heather Ashford, a long-time Girl Guider and mental well-being champion, has inspired countless young girls to reach their potential. Drawing from her lived experiences with physical and mental health challenges, Heather is a passionate advocate for accessibility and inclusion. Her dedication to supporting others and her love for the outdoors make her an integral part of Spark's efforts to promote well-being within the community.

Margaret Springett – Trustee

Margaret Springett, a long-standing member of the Craigshill community, is a pillar of faith and service within her church. Known for her compassion and unwavering commitment, Margaret is deeply involved in local events and initiatives that uplift and connect people. Whether offering support, a listening ear, or simply sharing a cup of tea, Margaret embodies Spark's spirit of kindness and dedication to fostering community bonds.

Alan McRae – Trustee

Alan McRae, a seasoned Senior Project Tech Planner at Sky, has over 20 years of experience in strategising and implementing technology solutions that align with organisational goals. With expertise in software development, IT infrastructure, and emerging technologies, Alan excels in driving innovation and efficiency in projects. After attending a Spark event, Alan began volunteering and now advises the team on digital projects and internal cybersecurity, helping Spark navigate the digital landscape and enhance operational capacity.

Jane Menzies – Trustee

Jane Menzies, a Tenant Lead and Quality Assurance Team Member for Wheatley Homes East, brings customer-focused and detail-oriented expertise to Spark. With experience in managing tenant relationships and auditing processes, Jane ensures high standards of service delivery addressing concerns and ensuring a seamless experience with positive community engagement. Initially referred to Spark by her GP, Jane has become a dedicated volunteer and trustee, using her experience to promote Spark's work and connect with the community.

5.4 Capacity to Deliver: Staffing & Volunteers

In addition to the trustees, the charity employs a CEO who reports to the board. The CEO oversees a team of experienced, highly organised staff comprising: an Operations Manager who manages a Volunteer & Activity Coordinator, a Social Enterprise Manager and four Community Support Assistants, see Figure 5.1 on page 22. This team runs Spark's diverse range of activities and revenue generating social enterprise 'Spark Creations'.

The CEO previously co-founded a charity focused on learning, well-being and collaboration and prior to that was the Manager of the Falkirk Business Improvement District. In this role, she led a small team to deliver programmes individually and in partnership, ensuring Falkirk town centre was safe, clean and friendly.

The Operations Manager previously worked in social care, with young people in residential settings and with homeless young people.

The Volunteer & Activity Coordinator has a proven track record of creating fun and diverse activities and coordinating events which deliver valuable outcomes, keeping up relationships with external people in the schools, OPAL and Carers of West Lothian.

To facilitate the addition of the other side of the building under Spark's ownership and extend operating hours to include evenings and weekends, additional staff will be required. It is anticipated that two new part-time employees, each working 16 hours per week, will be needed to support these changes.

These roles will be filled through West Lothian Council's Access2Work scheme, which offers part-funding for new employees for a six-month period. This initiative will help manage initial staffing costs while enabling Spark to expand its operations effectively and contribute to local employment initiatives.

All of Spark's employees are paid the Real Living Wage.

Role	Hours	Funded by
CEO	28	TNL, Robertson Trust & Impact Funders
Operations Manager	35	TNL, Robertson Trust & Impact Funders
Volunteer and activity coordinator	35	TNL, Robertson Trust & Impact Funders
Social Enterprise manager	28	TNL, Robertson Trust & Impact Funders
Total	126	
Social Media Support	20	Unfunded, paid by Spark
Community Support Assistant	25	Unfunded, paid by Spark
Community Support Assistant	20	Unfunded, paid by Spark
Community Support Assistant	16	Unfunded, paid by Spark
Total	79	
*Volunteers (46 reg)	228	Free
Total	228	
Operations Support	16	Access2Work
Operations Support	16	Access2Work
Total	32	

*Volunteer hours across daily activities and Spark Creations, excludes volunteers at one-off events. For example, 50 volunteers helped make 'Spark in the Park' on 20 August 2024 a great success.



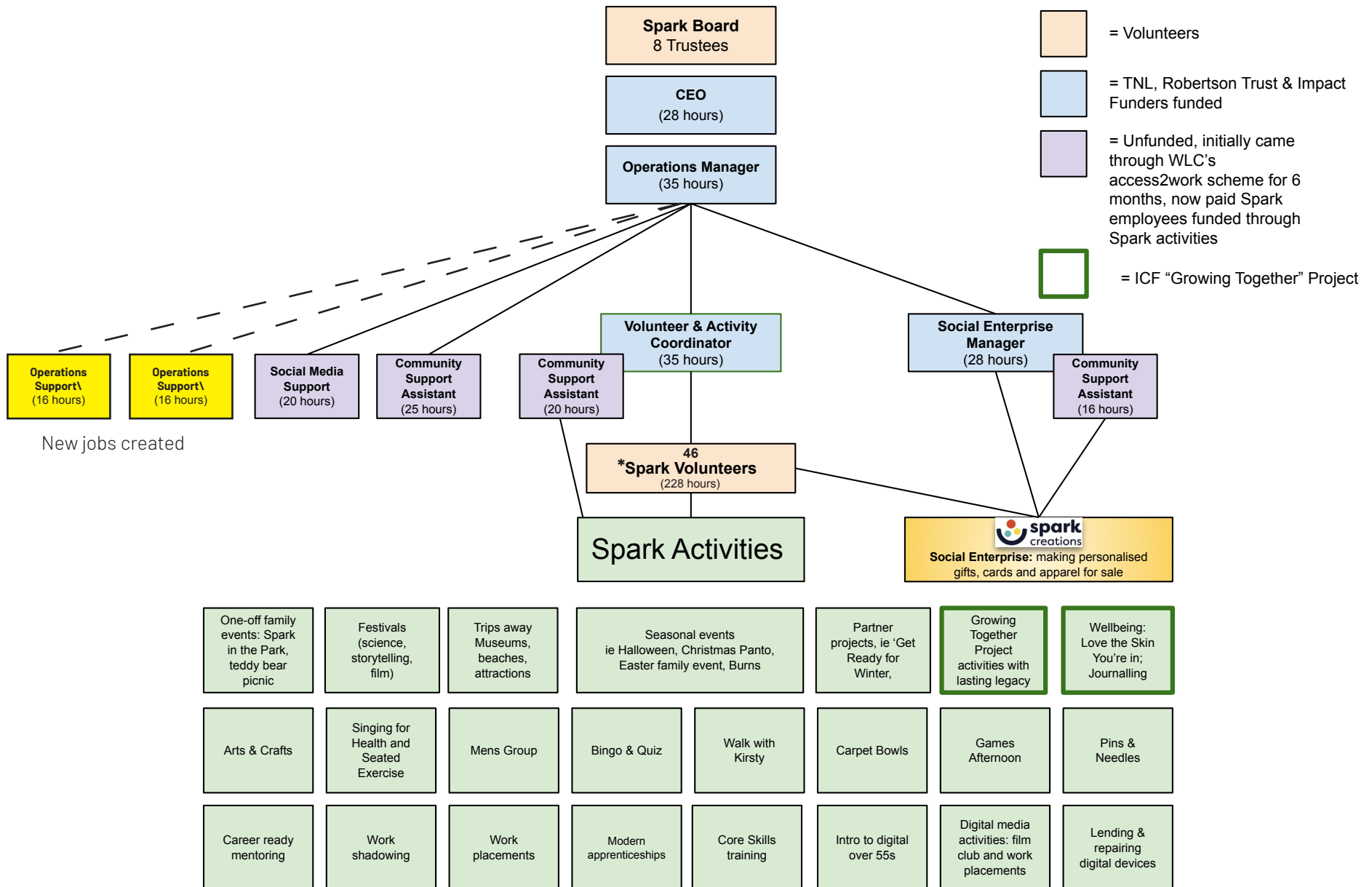


Figure 5.1: Spark's organisational structure

5.5 Financial Management

The Board sets an annual budget which is overseen by the CEO and who reports monthly on actuals versus projections, highlighting discrepancies and contributing factors such as levels of rentals, unexpected costs etc. Spark uses Xero. This system enables the team to assess how its plan is proceeding and plan accordingly. The budget and cash flow will be assessed each two months. The report will also provide an analysis of any shortfalls, along with a mitigation plan which may include more aggressive marketing. The objective is to secure a mix of revenue and grant funding.

5.6 Policies and Procedures

A full set of organisational policies and procedures are in place which are regularly reviewed to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose. Policies in place include:

Cash handling and financial systems
Property Maintenance and supply chain
Remuneration and Benefits
Absence Management
Maternity, Adoption, Paternity and Parental Rights
Volunteers
Training & Development and Performance Appraisal
Health & Safety
Lone Working
Data Protection
IT & Information Security
Confidentiality
Whistle blowing
Equal Opportunities
Expenses, Travel and Subsistence
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure
Capability process
Redundancy
Environmental

5.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The aim of this business plan is to ensure that Spark's hub in the former library premises of the Beatlie School Campus continues to be a thriving space delivering valuable social impact to the community and its partners. There is also an aspiration to generate income to cover costs and to reinvest in its projects.

The Board and CEO are committed to monitoring the progress of the charity's work, to promoting both success and learning, not just to satisfy funders, but because delivering valuable activities and providing a space to foster ongoing collaboration ensures the continuation of meaningful impact and maintaining a strong reputation.

The primary audiences are funders, partner organisations, members, and local residents, each requiring tailored communication.

Baseline

The baseline for reporting will be the outcomes and targets set out in this business plan and in the assumptions backing up the cash flow projections. It also reflects the community need in the Craigshill area. The baseline is also contained in the identification of need in the research findings set out in section 3.

Process

The CEO will provide a comprehensive report at each board meeting detailing progress against each defined outcome over the preceding month. The report will assess whether targets have been met and include clear, actionable plans to address any areas where performance has fallen short.

The Board will review the report, discuss proposed actions, and agree on necessary measures to ensure alignment with organisational goals. These agreed actions will then be delegated to the staff team for implementation, ensuring accountability and a structured approach to resolving issues and driving progress.

Evidence will be sought by:

- Recording numbers of organisations using the hub
- Recording the number of people benefiting from the hub
- The nature of those people and organisations
- The finances will be monitored based on a simple financial model as per section 5.5.

How We Will Use This Information

The information gathered through our monitoring and evaluation systems will be used for three distinct purposes:

1. To help us to continually improve our service, ensuring we are delivering outcomes with social impact.
2. To communicate how we are doing with stakeholders, partner organisations, members and local residents.
4. To ensure revenue continues to grow to reduce need for grants, so financial viability is protected



5.8 Partners

Spark is fortunate to have very strong partnerships with a number of third, public and private sector organisations. These links are vital for the delivery of its valuable community benefit as well as its financial sustainability.

Spark's key partners are set out in the table below:

Partner	What they will do
Almond Housing Association	Growing Together project, co-deliver community regeneration project, fund special projects
Craigshill Health Centre	Refer patients to Spark, co-deliver 'befriending service'
Diversity Scotland	Very close partnership, provide diversity and inclusion training for staff and members, Spark is gold charter certified organisation
DYW	Pre-employability services (e.g.: foundation apprentices, work placement application through Spark, career focused activity)
Growing Together	Currently co-produced project with Almond Housing and WLCYAP which aims to become a stand-a-lone organisation
Career Ready	Pre-employability services (e.g.: foundation apprentices, work placement application through Spark, career focused activity)
Sky (Hub, Cares, Spaces)	Investing in Spark with capital expenditure, training delivery, volunteers, hosting activities, networking
West Lothian College	Pre-employability services (e.g.: foundation apprentices, work placement application through Spark, career focused activity)
West Lothian Council	Regeneration, social work, access2work,
WLDAS	Refer patients and deliver drug and alcohol awareness and Naloxone training to Spark team
Other local and national charities, see Figure 3.1 on page 10	Continue to collaborate with Spark, use the hub for their service delivery. Contribute to the cost of running the space by jointly applying for future funding.



5.9 Risk Management

Risk	Impact	Probability	Existing Controls	Action Required	Lead Responsibility
Demand lower than expected	High	Low	Building on existing partnerships who already use Spark and want to support the organisation	Communication with partners, keeping the up to date on progress	Management Team
Loss of key personnel, volunteers and board members	High	Medium	Motivation for volunteers Succession plan	Write an accession plan Good terms and conditions for future staff Good volunteer policy	CEO, Operations Manager and Volunteer Coordinator
Capital and fit out costs higher than expected	Medium	Medium	Proven track record of support from Sky	Communicate with Sky regularly	CEO
Insufficient reserves to manage cash flow	High	Low	Revenue from diverse sources: Spark Creations, funding finders		CEO & Operations Manager

It is vital to watch risks to the organisation and its projects.

Would happen to an asset if the applicant's organisation ceases to exist

If Spark were to cease operations, the impact on the Craigshill community would be profound and far-reaching. The 266 members who rely on its services would be left without a vital resource. Furthermore, the 30 organisations currently benefiting from Spark's support—including the local primary school, NHS GP surgery, and various charities—would lose a key partner, as would the 45 delivery partners who collaborate with Spark to provide essential services.

Given Spark's integral role in the community and its strong partnerships, it is highly likely that these organisations would come together to prevent its closure. Spark is deeply committed to ensuring its resources and assets remain within the community. Should the need arise, Spark would actively collaborate with other third-sector organisations to safeguard these assets and ensure they continue to serve community needs.



6. Funding & Finance

6.1 Introduction

Spark has been operating in the former Beatlie School Campus delivering its wide range of activities for different user groups for over 10 years. Currently, the charity is only seeking to take ownership of the building and not refurbish at this point in time. It plans to expand the work it does with its partners by sharing its main space and renting out the different rooms on the other side and increasing its operating hours.

Working with Sky Spaces, the vision is to create a third sector collaborative space, not with just one organisation, but a space where other third sector organisations could either have a permanent workspace or deliver projects in collaboration. Having a number of organisations decreases the risk of losing income. The message will be “Come and work with us at Spark, where we can work collaboratively together for the benefit of Craigshill.”



6.2 Calculating Spark's Social Value



Councils have an obligation to get 'best value' for an asset to maximise its income. Community organisations can pay for some or all of the building through the social value of the community

benefits they provide through the services they deliver. Social value is defined as “a measurement of the benefits that your services and programmes bring to people and communities”. The UK Social Value Bank contains a suite of 88 outcomes. Each outcome has a defined financial metric, which incorporates a well-being value, a health top up value and, where applicable, an Exchequer value (savings to the state)”. (hact.org.uk)

Findings from the community consultation confirmed that through its activities, Spark delivers valuable services with social impact, changing people's lives for the better by:

- reducing social isolation
- improving physical and mental well-being
- building community cohesion
- helping people get work ready, upskilling people building confidence
- arranging training and work placements
- creating volunteering opportunities

which are of great value to public sector organisations such as the NHS and West Lothian Council as well as other third sector organisations focusing on caring for the elderly and user groups with different special requirements. See Table 4.1 on page 17.

Supported by the Business Growth Adviser of Business Gateway in the Economic Development Department within West Lothian Council, Spark was able to calculate the Social Value of its services using the reputable Housing Association Charitable Trust tool.

The data, Appendix 3b, is supported by a written report, Appendix 3a, explaining the process and where the data originated.

6.4 VAT and Corporation Tax

Cash flow projections indicate Spark will remain below the VAT threshold and will not need to register. A trading subsidiary, if required in the future, will follow a standard model, using Gift Aid to transfer surpluses to the parent charity, ensuring no corporation tax liability.

6.3 Funding the Transfer of the Building

West Lothian Council and SPARK jointly instructed the District Valuer to undertake a Single Independent Valuation (SIV) – Market Value of the property at: 2 Almondbank, The Mall, Livingston, EH54 5EJ.

The valuation took place on 18 October 2024.

The building was valued at £120,000. The report also noted that to decouple the services would cost £30,000.

A valuation of the Community Benefit from Spark's activities was carried out, it was calculated to be £540,740. The calculations with explanations are attached as Appendices 3a and 3b.

Building Value	£120,000
Decoupling Services	-£30,000
Community Benefit from Spark's Activities	-£540,740
Price to Spark	£0

Outline calculations of how Spark proposes to fund the price of the land

6.5 Funding strategy for future use and maintenance

Sky Spaces have confirmed, pending a successful asset transfer, that it is pleased to support Spark's objectives by covering the costs of decorating, Wi-Fi and communication infrastructure.

Current grants are due to end March 2025 and Spark is in discussions with multiple funders to source the next round of funding. Spark also works with a fundraising consultancy to identify and apply for funding that aligns with Spark's objectives. This has been very successful and has a proven track record of success, see Figure 6.1.

The interviews with Spark's partners identified the opportunity for joint funding applications to support their collaborative work.

In addition, Spark Creations, which was initially started as an activity to give volunteers a positive experience, has the potential to become more commercial on a larger scale but it could not rely on volunteers.

Although Spark has the means to generate income, it will always be a funded entity in some capacity. The goal is to become sustainable, covering the overheads of the building and staff and seek funding for projects in collaboration with community partners.

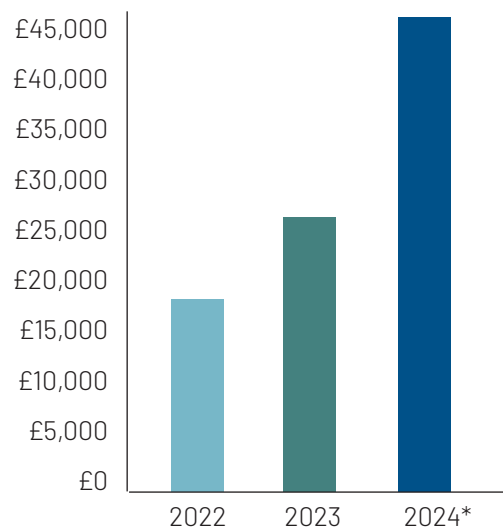


Figure 6.1: Funds raised using professional fundraisers
*This is from September to November and includes £30,000 (£10,000/year for three years) for a volunteer co-ordinator, Bank of Scotland 'Enable Grant' third year still ongoing.

6.6 Spark's Hub Financial Summary

The table below shows the projected income and expenditure for the next five years. A full budget and cash flow projection is attached with the business case, see Appendix 4.

Financial Summary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Income from trading	£199,365	£277,752	£300,409	£328,595	£362,153
Fundraising & Grants	£152,439	£129,231	£129,671	£130,124	£130,590
Trading %	57%	68%	70%	72%	73%
Total income	£351,804	£406,983	£430,080	£458,719	£492,743
Total expenditure	£249,071	£283,609	£326,110	£344,622	£391,027
Profit or loss	£102,733	£123,373	£103,970	£114,097	£101,716
Operating Cash Flow					
Without grants	(49,706)	(5,858)	(25,700)	(16,026)	(28,875)
With grants	102,733	123,373	103,970	114,097	101,716



