

END OF PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Bee Line to Nature

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Eastfield
Community
Centre



1 Background to the initiative:

1.1 Bee Line to Nature

The *Bee Line to Nature* project ran from 2023 until its completion in April 2026. Funded by the National Lottery, it was driven by communities across four localities in South Lanarkshire. Its core aim was to strengthen people's connection with nature and help them recognise the benefits of that connection. A particular focus was placed on engaging individuals who had previously been disengaged from nature, offering programmes centred on protecting and enhancing the green and natural spaces that matter to them. Through this, the project sought to inspire long-term behaviour change and deeper environmental stewardship.

1.2 Partnership Structure

The project was delivered through a partnership of four voluntary sector anchor organisations—each a registered charity based within one of the four localities within South Lanarkshire. Each organisation led on a thematic strand of the project, taking responsibility for planning, delivery, monitoring, and strategic direction. These were:

- **Clydesdale Community Initiatives (SC035206)** – *Niall McShannon, Managing Director*, served as lead partner, overseeing overall coordination and leading on seed propagation and water harvesting.
- **Healthy and Active (SC032831)** – *Lesley Macintyre, Director*, led the educational elements of the project and engagement with key community partners.
- **Grow 73 (SC048411)** – *Eugenie Aroutcheff, Project Coordinator*, led the distribution of growing kits and expanded their work on pollinator planting and Bee Lines.
- **Larkhall Community Growers (SC042093)** – *Terry Patterson, Project Manager*, led community-based planting and growing activities.

This collaborative model was identified in the original application as a major strength and a critical factor in the project's anticipated success.

1.3 Climate Action Officers

Lottery funding enabled each partner organisation to appoint a Climate Action Officer. Their responsibilities included:

- Supporting and delivering project activity within their organisation.
- Sharing their thematic expertise across South Lanarkshire.
- Helping partners replicate successful approaches and drive wider change.

They also worked with communities across two key themes:

1. **People** – Understanding how individuals experience and engage with nature. This included reaching those who were disengaged or experiencing isolation, poverty, poor health, or disability, and creating opportunities to build knowledge, appreciation, and empowerment around nature and climate action.
2. **Habitats** – Protecting and enhancing nature by improving green spaces of all scales, transforming them into pollinator-friendly environments, and supporting communities to lead local environmental change.

1.4 Project Outputs and Outcomes

The project delivered a wide range of practical and educational activities, including:

- Pollinator planting—from doorstep baskets to meadows and community green spaces.
- Food growing initiatives contributing to the Bee Line and offering accessible ways to engage with nature.
- Engagement with schools, youth groups, health centres, and community organisations through growing challenges.
- Learning sessions on topics such as pesticide reduction, planting skills, and the importance of pollinators.
- Seed and vegetative propagation, including community-wide exchange and distribution.
- Four community celebration events—one in each locality.

The project also set challenging but deliverable outcomes. They anticipated that:

- **540** people experiencing inequalities would increase their knowledge of the climate crisis.
- **16** community groups would develop climate action plans for local nature assets.
- **45** community green assets would be improved for climate and biodiversity benefit.
- **1,200** people would participate in practical climate and biodiversity improvement activities.
- **120** community groups would increase their awareness and understanding of nature and climate action.

1.5 Overall Purpose

In essence, the Bee Line project aimed to:

- Engage previously unengaged individuals with nature, fostering knowledge, empathy, and behaviour change around climate action.
- Improve community health and wellbeing through stronger connections with nature.
- Bring nature back into communities by addressing “urban deserts” and prioritising habitat protection and enhancement.
- Diversify and expand planting to support carbon capture, reduce pollution, and strengthen pollinator habitats.

How successful it was in realising its outputs and objectives will be considered below.



2 What we did:

2.1 Research Methodology

Communities Connected were commissioned to carry out the end-of-project evaluation on behalf of the project partners. During the commissioning discussions, it was evident that a substantial body of qualitative data had already been gathered by partners throughout the lifetime of the project, as part of ongoing monitoring and continuous evaluation. An analysis of this existing evidence is provided in Section 3 below.

The evaluation undertaken by Communities Connected was based on qualitative research conducted in two phases.

2.2 Phase One: Partner Lead Interviews

The first phase focused on in-depth discussions with lead representatives from Clydesdale Community Initiative, Healthy and Active, Larkhall Community Growers, and Grow 73. Participants were informed at the outset that previously collected monitoring data would be acknowledged during the interview process, with the discussion primarily concentrating on strategic themes arising from the original project application.

These themes included:

- Partnership working and stakeholder engagement.
- Community Development and Community-Led Local Development.
- Climate change approaches and outcomes.
- Future development and sustainability (“where to now?”)

The full interview framework is provided in Section 6 Appendix I.

2.3 Phase Two: Stakeholder and Beneficiary Engagement

The second phase explored the impact of the Bee Line approach on stakeholders and beneficiaries. Participants in this phase were also informed of the extensive data already collected and were invited to reflect specifically on their experiences at the beginning, during, and end of their involvement in the Bee Line project.

This phase included:

- 2 participants from the Health Service.
- 2 participants from Education services.
- 5 representatives from Third Sector organisations.

Details of all participants are provided in Section 6 Appendix III.

Discussions focused on:

- The background to individuals’ involvement in Bee Line.
- What participants gained from their involvement.
- Key learning outcomes.
- Personal and organisational impact.

2.4 Additional Focus

All participants were also asked whether the Bee Line project could have provided different or improved support to organisations during its delivery period. Findings from these discussions are presented in the following section. Beneficiary findings are further supported through linked testimonies and case study material included at Section 5.



3 Evaluation Findings

3.1 Qualitative Targets: Original Aims and End of Project Outcomes

Evidence gathered throughout the lifetime of the project — analysed by Communities Connected and reflected in this section — demonstrates that the Bee Line partners worked extensively with schools, community groups, mental health organisations, NHS services, nurseries, youth groups, foodbanks, sheltered housing projects, residents’ associations and community volunteers. Together, they delivered practical, community-rooted environmental action at scale.

The range of activity, while not exhaustive, included:

- Pollinator-friendly planting and biodiversity enhancement.
- Creation of community growing spaces and green assets.
- Distribution of “Grow-Your-Own” kits and seed packs.
- Food growing and sustainable gardening sessions.
- Climate awareness workshops and facilitated conversations.
- Community events and seasonal activities.
- Seed-sharing and knowledge-exchange initiatives
- Tree planting and perennial planting projects
- Recycling and reuse of gardening materials
- School-based growing and outdoor learning projects
- Community climate action planning

Activity was delivered across both urban and rural South Lanarkshire, with a deliberate focus on communities experiencing disadvantage, limited access to greenspace, isolation, poor mental or physical health, poverty, and low previous engagement in climate action.

As Table 1 illustrates, the project significantly exceeded the original targets set out in the application. Across the project period, thousands of local people were engaged in hands-on climate and biodiversity activity. Partners also developed long-term community assets and strengthened local environmental networks across the four South Lanarkshire localities. The scale of participation — combined with the achievement of end-of-project targets — demonstrates both the demand for accessible, community-led climate action and the effectiveness of the partnership model. This will be explored further in the next section.

Table 1 – Original Targets and End of Project Totals

Measure	Original Target	End of Project Total
Grow-your-own kits distributed	N/A	2,313
Individuals increasing climate knowledge and awareness	180 annually	4,624
Participants involved in practical climate and biodiversity activity	400 annually	3,317
Community events delivered	N/A	113
Estimated community event attendance	N/A	4,000+
Schools engaged	N/A	108
Community groups engaged	40 annually	254+
Volunteers involved	N/A	395+
Community climate action plans developed	16 overall	41
Community green assets developed	32 overall	45
Recycled gardening materials reused/recycled	N/A	15,293kg

3.2 Wider Outcomes Identified Through Testimonies and Stakeholder Interviews

Beyond the quantitative outputs, interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries — alongside personal testimonies and case studies (Section 5) — show that the project has:

- Increased awareness and understanding of climate change and biodiversity.
- Improved access to local greenspaces.
- Encouraged food growing and sustainable gardening.
- Supported positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Strengthened connection with nature and outdoor activity.
- Created therapeutic and mindful outdoor experiences.
- Reduced social isolation.
- Created volunteering and skills-development opportunities.
- Increased confidence and community ownership.
- Strengthened local community networks.
- Developed practical environmental skills.

The project also created or enhanced a wide range of community green assets, including:

- Raised beds and food-growing spaces.
- School gardens.
- Sensory gardens.
- Community orchards.
- Seed libraries.
- Willow plantations.
- Community seating and wellbeing areas.
- Wildflower and perennial planting zones.
- Composting systems.

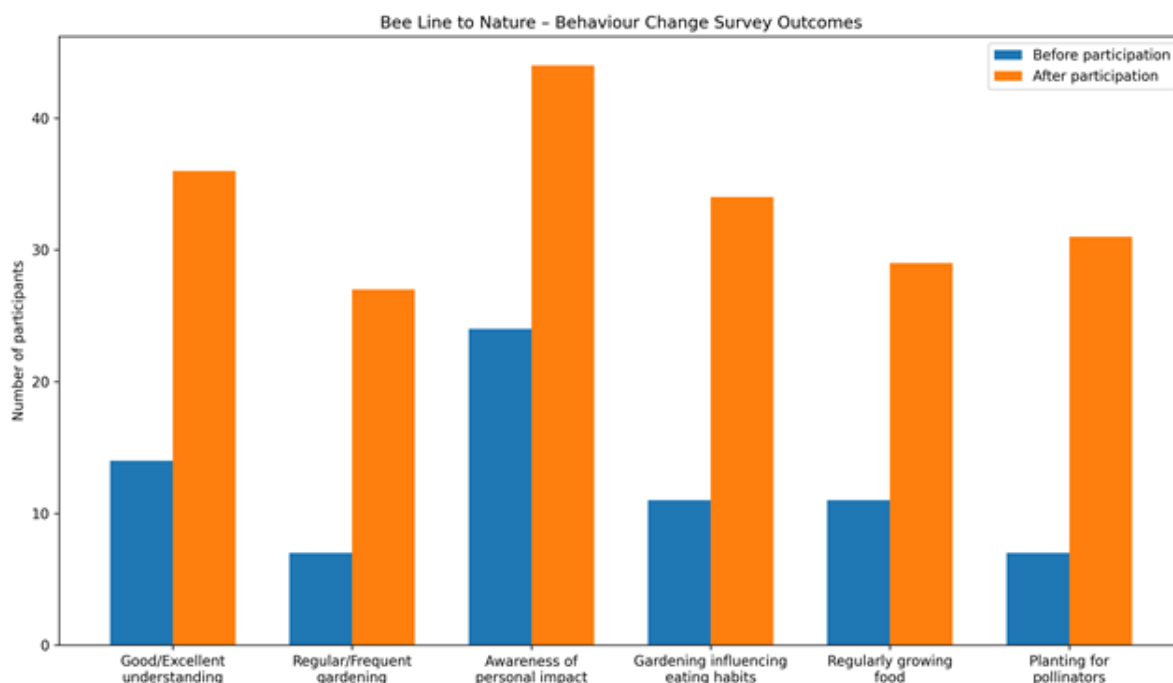
In addition, extensive pollinator corridors were established across South Lanarkshire and into Glasgow. These are mapped in the [Bee Line Impact Map](#).

Community events included environmental open days, family activities, volunteer celebrations, seed swaps, biodiversity sessions, food-growing workshops and climate-awareness activities. As reflected in the case studies, partners delivered activity across a wide range of settings — schools, nurseries, sheltered housing, NHS-linked projects, community cafés, foodbanks, recovery groups, community gardens and local greenspaces. A core principle was to bring climate action into everyday community environments where people already felt comfortable and connected.



3.3 Behaviour Change Survey Summary

Table 2 – Bee Line Behavioural Change Graph



Recognising the importance of behaviour change for long-term climate action, the partnership conducted a behaviour-change survey with 48 participants. The results show clear positive shifts in environmental understanding, gardening participation, sustainable behaviours and awareness of personal environmental impact.

- **Environmental understanding:** Before the project, 15 respondents rated their understanding as “Poor” or “Very Poor”. After participation, none selected these categories. Those rating their understanding as “Good” or “Excellent” rose from 14 to 36.
- **Practical environmental behaviour:** Regular or frequent gardening increased from 7 respondents pre-project to 27 post-project. Participants also reported increased composting, recycling, upcycling, food growing and pollinator-friendly planting.
- **Awareness of personal environmental impact:** Before participation, 24 respondents described themselves as “Not aware at all” or only “Slightly aware” of their environmental impact. After the project, this fell to 4. Meanwhile, 44 respondents reported being “Moderately” or “Extremely” aware — a strong indicator of positive behavioural shift.

Throughout the funded period, partners prioritised meaningful community engagement, with a particular focus on individuals and groups who would not normally participate in climate-action activity. The project successfully reached:

- People experiencing poverty and deprivation.
- Individuals with poor mental health.
- People with long-term health conditions.
- Isolated older adults.
- People with disabilities or additional support needs.
- Individuals in addiction recovery.
- Women’s support organisations.
- Residents in sheltered housing.
- Young people and families.

- Young people not in Education, Employment or Training.
- People with limited access to greenspace (e.g., flat dwellers).
- Communities previously disengaged from environmental activity.

Practical, accessible activities — gardening, food growing, community planting — were intentionally used as a gateway into climate engagement, helping remove barriers associated with formal climate discussions. Existing networks and social-media channels were used to promote Bee Line activity, and as the project progressed, new organisations increasingly approached partners seeking involvement.

3.4 Overall Impact

Bee Line has generated significant environmental, social and wellbeing benefits across South Lanarkshire. The project increased understanding of climate change and biodiversity by connecting people directly with practical environmental action. Participants learned through hands-on involvement in gardening, food growing, pollinator planting and environmental improvement.

A key strength was the project's ability to engage people who may not previously have viewed climate action as relevant to their lives. By linking environmental activity with issues such as food insecurity, wellbeing, social isolation and access to greenspace, the project whilst deliberately not mentioning it made climate action more accessible, meaningful and locally grounded.

Many participants reported improved wellbeing, confidence and calmness through gardening and outdoor activity. Larkhall Community Growers also highlighted the therapeutic value of pollinator and beekeeping activity. Engagement with bees, pollinators and nature-based tasks supported mindfulness, stress reduction and social connection. They reported that participants involved in pollinator planting, gardening and beekeeping discussions described increased confidence, reduced stress and a deeper connection with nature.

3.5 Qualitative Interviews

Overview of Interviews

As outlined in paragraph 2.2, in-depth, in-person interviews were conducted with lead representatives from Clydesdale Community Initiative, Healthy and Active in East Kilbride, Larkhall Community Growers, and Grow 73 in Rutherglen and Cambuslang. Communities Connected advised participants that, following a review of project data, the interviews would focus on the strategic themes identified in the original project application:

- Partnership working and stakeholder engagement.
- Community Development and Community-Led Local Development.
- Climate-change approaches and outcomes.
- Lessons learned and future direction.

Participants were also asked why they became involved in Bee Line and how they viewed the future of the partnership. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were held in partner offices. The full interview schedule is provided at Section 6 Appendix II.



Airbles Road
Hospital



Why Bee Line?

All interviewees agreed that, based on their experience in environmental and community work, it was a natural progression to collaborate with other “like-minded” organisations and scale up their activity through joint funding. Existing relationships through VASLAN, the local Third Sector Interface Chief Officers’ Group meant partners were already familiar with one another’s work.

One participant summarised the motivation clearly:

“Climate action is in our DNA, and we could pool our knowledge and experience to benefit everyone.”

The partnership offered an opportunity to expand both strategic influence and operational delivery across South Lanarkshire.

Partnership Working and Stakeholder Engagement

Interviewees consistently emphasised that the strength of the partnership was central to Bee Line’s success. The role, contribution and collaboration of the partners dominated all four discussions.

Across the project, the Bee Line identity grew in recognition and credibility among stakeholders and beneficiaries. Partners agreed that the scale of the initiative mattered — it enabled them to engage confidently with statutory services, community groups and local residents.

The partnership environment was described as non-competitive, supportive and respectful. Two interviewees referred to it as:

- “a beautiful partnership”
- “a safe circle full of respect and passion”

There was a shared belief that, regardless of challenges, the group could collectively find solutions. Partners also highlighted the value of shared learning, joint problem-solving and mutual support, particularly when working with communities facing significant barriers.

Each organisation brought distinct strengths:

- Grow 73 – practical growing expertise and strong youth engagement.
- Healthy and Active – extensive locality-based partnership work and community engagement.
- Larkhall Community Growers – food growing and pollinator corridor development.
- CCI – partnership coordination, environmental education and wider community engagement.

Staff recruitment further strengthened delivery, enabling Climate Challenge Officers to share skills and support activity across localities.

Partnership working extended well beyond the four lead organisations, with strong links developed with:

- Schools and nurseries.
- NHS services.
- Community councils.
- Mental health organisations.
- Youth groups.
- Foodbanks.
- Third sector networks.
- Community growing groups.
- Local authority services.
- SCCAN and wider climate networks.

This is reflected in the case studies and testimonies within this report which illustrate the scale and breadth of these relationships.

Community Development and Community-Led Local Development

Interviewees recognised that engaging people already interested in nature or climate action is relatively straightforward. The real challenge — and the project's strength — lay in reaching those who felt disconnected from climate issues or faced barriers such as disability, poor mental health, poverty or lack of confidence.

Partners drew on their existing networks of community groups, voluntary organisations and local stakeholders, achieving strong participation across all four localities.

Community involvement and co-production were central to Bee Line. Local people helped shape activities, identify priorities, design growing spaces and propose environmental improvements. The partnership also made deliberate efforts to engage those not previously involved in climate action, including school pupils and families.

Interviewees stressed the importance of removing stigma around growing and making activities feel accessible. One participant described the need to move away from: *“the Monty Don experience”* — meaning that gardening should feel informal, inclusive and achievable for everyone.

To support meaningful participation, partners used a wide range of approaches, including:

- Community consultations and informal conversations.
- Gardening groups and workshops.
- Community cafés and drop-ins.
- School workshops and pupil-led projects.
- Town surveys and feedback exercises.
- Community planning meetings.
- Partnership discussions with local organisations.
- One-to-one engagement.
- Volunteer-led activities and peer support.

Rather than imposing activities, the project encouraged local ownership. Communities decided what to grow, how spaces should look and how activities should run. This fostered a sense of pride, sustainability and long-term commitment.

Many participants first engaged through wellbeing, social connection or gardening before progressing into climate conversations — a deliberate and effective approach.

Climate-Change Approaches and Outcomes

Interviewees were clear that climate terminology was rarely used in community settings. All felt that accessible language and practical action were far more effective than technical climate messaging.

As one interviewee put it: *“Some get it — some don’t. You need to know where people are at before you go down the climate-challenge path.”*

Partners agreed that climate engagement worked best when linked to meaningful, hands-on activity. Many participants became interested in climate issues only after first engaging through gardening, wellbeing or community events.

A key lesson identified was the importance of relationship-building and creating welcoming, informal environments. Participants were more likely to stay involved when they felt supported and valued.

Interviewees highlighted several consistent findings:

- Practical activity is more effective than abstract climate messaging.
- Gardening and food growing are strong gateways into climate awareness.
- Long-term relationships are essential, especially with vulnerable groups.
- Community ownership increases sustainability.
- Outdoor activity improves wellbeing and confidence.
- Flexible approaches are needed to meet diverse needs.
- Intergenerational activity strengthens engagement.
- Small local actions can lead to wider behaviour change.

Bee Line contributed to climate action through both environmental improvements and long-term behaviour change. Evidence collected shows increases in:

- Pollinator-friendly planting.
- Tree planting and canopy cover.
- Perennial planting schemes.
- Local food growing (reducing food miles).
- Composting and reuse.
- Recycling and upcycling.
- Understanding of biodiversity and soil health.
- Awareness of sustainable growing practices.
- Water harvesting and sustainable gardening techniques.



Loaves and Fishes EK
Community Garden



4 Key Take Aways

4.1 Summary of Findings

Over the course of the project, Bee Line became a recognised and trusted initiative across South Lanarkshire. Communities, organisations and partner agencies increasingly sought opportunities to collaborate, participate and connect with the project.

The Bee Line identity created a shared sense of purpose across localities and helped build momentum. The project developed a strong reputation for delivering practical, inclusive and community-led environmental activity, particularly in communities previously disengaged from climate action.

The project also strengthened connections between the four localities, helping communities feel part of a wider movement focused on biodiversity, food growing, wellbeing and climate resilience.

Evidence indicates that Bee Line has created a strong and lasting legacy. The values, learning and approaches developed will continue to influence future partnership working and project design. Many relationships established through Bee Line — with schools, NHS services and community organisations — are continuing beyond the funded period.

The project demonstrated that climate action can be successfully embedded within wider wellbeing and community-development activity. It also highlighted the importance of adapting to local circumstances and recognising that a “one-size-fits-all” approach does not work.

However, partners were realistic about the challenges facing the third sector. Future activity will depend heavily on securing ongoing funding. While some elements can continue through volunteer networks, maintaining the scale achieved through the Climate Action Fund is not feasible without further investment.

4.2 Future Direction

All four partners acknowledged the challenges of sustaining community-sector work in the current funding climate. While opportunities exist — such as the Climate Action Fund and Cleaner Awareness Fund — competition is high and resources limited.

Despite this, partners remain optimistic that aspects of Bee Line can continue, particularly where strong relationships and community ownership have been established. Tools such as the Bee Line map and community-led growing spaces are likely to remain active.

If future funding is secured, partners intend to continue work in the following areas:

- Supporting community growing activity.
- Developing green assets and pollinator spaces.
- Working with schools and supporting school gardens.
- Strengthening local food-growing initiatives.
- Delivering wellbeing-focused environmental activity.
- Building on partnerships developed through Bee Line.
- Encouraging climate awareness through practical, community-led action.

Bee Line demonstrated that meaningful climate engagement requires sustained investment, staff capacity and long-term community support. While activity may reduce in scale without new funding, partners are committed to maintaining momentum wherever possible.



5.1 Braehead Planter Project

In May 2023, one of my first jobs was to help plant up a brand new 5 tier planter for the volunteers of Braehead Residents Association. On that first visit I did it all myself while educating/discussing what I was planting and why. One of the volunteers took a real interest and since then, usually twice a year a small group of three or four volunteers plant it up themselves with less input being needed from me as their knowledge and confidence grows.

This particular group are really great at recycling and reusing. When it comes to removing and refreshing the soil and the plants they keep it all on site. Following on from the 5 tier planter they have taken on a strip of land nearby which they put the older planter compost and plants into. They have learned about the useful addition of coffee grounds too and regularly add this to their compost and beds.

We've discussed wild flower seeds and they have sown yellow rattle seeds amongst other wild seeds in their wilder areas, understanding that this weakens the grass.

Around this area they have also planted tree seedlings supplied by LCG to help re-instate a fenced off area with mixed woodland trees, including oak, beech, hawthorn and rowan.

They have said that they enjoy learning more about plants, particularly plant names and are keen to encourage more pollinators. They have future plans include incorporating bug and bee hotels into the area they look after. If they could they would incorporate a beehive so I've recommended they get in touch with Amanda Gott of backyard bees, who keeps a beehive in our community garden.

All the volunteers have commented that this experience has helped them to feel more competent with what they do in their own gardens and they appreciate coming together as neighbours to brighten up their shared space.

5.2 CCI Gardeners Den

Gardeners Den was developed as part of Bee Line to Nature at Clydesdale Community Initiatives (CCI) and has become one of the projects successful stories at CCI offering a sustainable community asset that is well used and will continue after the completion of the project.

What began as a small onsite gardening project with an area for recycling gardening equipment, developed over the three years into a thriving community resource where participants, volunteers and members of the public could learn practical gardening skills, share knowledge and connect with others both in person and online who had a passion for growing.

Each week a small group of regular participants came together to take part in activities including seed sowing, potting on, growing vegetables, maintaining raised beds, creating seasonal planters, propagating plants and learning about pollinator friendly gardening. As well as our regular participants the Den was also open during these sessions to the general public, providing a welcoming and informal environment where people could develop confidence with their gardening, learn new skills and knowledge and benefit from time spent outdoors.

A key feature of Gardeners Den was its strong focus on recycling and reuse. Participants were encouraged to reuse pots, trays, gardening equipment and materials wherever possible and also use the donations brought by the general public. This supported the wider Bee Line to Nature aim of promoting sustainable behaviours and reducing waste. Throughout the project, participants also

learned about composting, food growing, biodiversity and the role of pollinators within the local environment.

One of the most successful developments was the creation of the Gardeners Den Swap Shop. Initially established as a small area where people could exchange surplus gardening items, it grew into a well-used community resource. Visitors to CCI regularly drop in to donate and collect gardening books, tools, trowels, pots, seeds and other equipment. The swap shop has helped remove barriers to gardening by making resources freely available to local people while encouraging a culture of sharing and reuse and it is a very well used facility.

The project also developed an online community through the Gardeners Den Facebook group, which now has over 1,000 members. The group is used to share gardening advice, growing tips, seasonal information, photographs, opportunities to get involved and details of items available through the swap shop. It has created an active online network where people can support one another, exchange knowledge and celebrate successes.

The success of Gardeners Den demonstrates how climate action can be delivered through practical, community-based activity. Participants engaged with issues such as recycling, food growing, biodiversity and sustainable gardening in a way that felt accessible, enjoyable and relevant to their everyday lives.

Perhaps most importantly, Gardeners Den has created a lasting legacy. The project has become an established part of CCI's activity and continues to provide opportunities for learning, volunteering and community connection. The relationships, skills and resources developed through Bee Line to Nature will continue to benefit local people long after the funding period has ended.

Key Aspects of the Project:

1. 3 years of delivery.
2. 1,000+ Facebook group members.
3. Weekly gardening sessions.
4. Community Swap Shop established.
5. Hundreds of items reused and redistributed with a combined weight of 4660kg over 3 years.
6. Ongoing legacy project continuing beyond Bee Line to Nature.

5.3 CCI Transforming Train Stations Through the Bee Line to Nature Project

Overview

The Bee Line to Nature project has annually transformed eight train stations across Lanarkshire into vibrant, welcoming and environmentally beneficial spaces. Through the installation of planted barrels and planters, previously overlooked station environments have been reimagined as thriving green hubs that support both people and wildlife.

The Challenge

Many of our local train stations can sometimes feel a little uninspiring with little greenery or connection to nature. This lack of planting limits opportunities for biodiversity and can reduce the overall sense of place for passengers and the surrounding community. This gave us a perfect opportunity to connect in with our Bee Line project and enhance these spaces not only with planting but with pollinator friendly plants that would help create our Bee Line corridor.

The Transformation

By introducing colourful, pollinator-friendly planting schemes, the Bee Line project has:

- Turned grey, underused spaces into attractive green areas.

- Created seasonal interest with changing planting throughout the year (we visit twice a year, Spring and Autumn and update all planters).

This gives an improved first impression of stations for passengers and visitors.

Environmental Impact

The planting across all eight stations forms part of a wider pollinator pathway, helping to:

- Support bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects.
- Provide additional food sources for birds and wildlife.
- Contribute to local biodiversity in urban and semi-urban areas.
- These connected green spaces act as small but important stepping stones for wildlife across the landscape.

Community Impact

A key element of the project is its community-led approach. Not only do we take our participant volunteers along to support with the planting but we also involve local schools, volunteers and community groups.

The project has helped to:

- Encouraged local ownership and pride in station environments.
- Provided hands-on learning opportunities about planting and biodiversity.
- Strengthened relationships between communities and their local stations.

Participants not only contribute to the upkeep of the spaces but also gain knowledge and confidence that extends beyond the project.

Conclusion

The Bee Line to Nature project shows how relatively small interventions such as thoughtful planting in public spaces, community involvement and partnership working, can have a significant impact.

By transforming train stations into greener, more biodiverse spaces, the project not only supports wildlife but also enhances everyday journeys, making stations places that people feel proud of and connected to.

5.4 Community Garden Calderwood Baptist Church

Through the Bee Line to Nature project, Healthy and Active in East Kilbride worked in partnership with volunteers from Calderwood Baptist Church to establish a new community garden that supports biodiversity, community connection, and local growing.

The church had an underused outdoor space and a small group of committed gardening volunteers who were keen to develop it into a welcoming area for both people and wildlife. Bee Line to Nature worked alongside the volunteers from the early planning stages, helping them think through how the garden could be developed in a way that was realistic, inclusive, and sustainable over the long term.

Separate funding was secured to support the purchase of raised beds, removing a key barrier for the volunteers and allowing the garden to get off to a strong start. Bee Line to Nature supported the volunteers to decide on the size and placement of the beds, taking account of sunlight, access, and ease of maintenance.

Alongside the practical development of the space, the project focused on increasing volunteers' knowledge and confidence around biodiversity. Two of the church's gardening volunteers worked closely with the Bee Line to Nature team to learn more about pollinators, soil health, and the benefits

of growing a mix of food and wildlife-friendly plants. Volunteers were encouraged to include pollinator-friendly flowers with the plan of introducing food growing at a future stage, helping to create a garden that supports bees, insects, and other wildlife as well as the local community.

The volunteers valued the hands-on support and shared learning approach, which helped them feel more confident in making decisions about planting and ongoing care of the garden. The garden is now a shared community asset, shaped by the volunteers who maintain it and informed by a stronger understanding of how small green spaces can contribute to local biodiversity.

This partnership demonstrates how Bee Line to Nature supports volunteer-led action by combining practical resources, funding support, and knowledge-sharing. By working at the pace of the volunteers and building on their existing commitment, the project has helped establish a community garden that will continue to grow and benefit both people and nature.

5.5 Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service, Larkhall

In May 2023 the local fire station asked for help from LCG to help them with a raised bed they had which was totally overgrown. CCI helped with their petrol fuelled equipment to cut back a thicket of bushes. Once we shaped and trimmed what was left, we added fresh compost to one half and woodchip and logs to the other half. As the logs have decayed and broken down, we've seen ants all over them making holes and lots of interesting fungi.

Over the course of the three years, we have added 4 Rowan trees and underplanted them. Shrubs and seasonal bulbs are continually added, and the self-seeding calendula is doing well. We've involved the children from the nursery next door; they have on several occasions come in to plant up tubs with bulbs and seasonal flowers to brighten up the expanse of mono blocking that surrounds the station. Two new planters were installed, and they now have 4 fruit trees in these along with a bed of soft fruit herbs and shrubs. The area has been transformed with further ideas in the pipeline such as adding in more raised beds and adding a 5th fruit tree to make it an orchard. The firemen themselves have also come up with the idea of re-purposing their old helmets as hanging baskets. One of the firemen joked that he knew nothing about gardening but 'now I'm getting the mickey taken out of me as I'm out watering these plants every day'. Whenever locals pass by, they remark on how nice it is to see the flowers and the bees all over them. We are encouraging the firemen and passersby to help themselves to the apples and herbs and strawberries that they are growing, and this has gone down very well. The firemen always to chat and to ask any burning gardening questions they have and they seem to have taken genuine pride in the plants and pollinators around them.

5.6 Grow 73

1. Background

- **How did you first hear about Grow73 and the Bee Line to Nature project?**
I heard about it through a friend who knew of the project. We spoke about it and I sought out more information from the website and decided to volunteer.
- **What was going on in your life around that time?**
I had just been made redundant during the covid lockdown in 2020 so I had increased time available.
- **Had you done anything like this before?**
No. My life was busy with work and being an active trade union lay officer.
- **Was there anything that made you hesitate before starting?**

Lack of confidence in my own knowledge and abilities. My health had deteriorated during lockdown which had contributed to this.

2. Involvement in the project

- **What sort of things have you been involved in through the project?**

Growing food from scratch, seed saving, composting, hosting community events

- **Which activities do you enjoy most?**

Growing food, becoming more aware of environmental and climate issues, learning new skills.

- **Was anything harder or more unfamiliar than you expected at the start?**

I was surprised at how much I didn't know and pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed learning about these issues.

- **How often would you say you take part?**

Twice a week.

3. Skills, learning & awareness

- **Have you learned anything new since getting involved?**

Yes. I have learnt so much about sustainable food growing, climate issues and the importance of pollinators, green spaces etc.

- **Is there anything you feel more confident doing now?**

Growing my own food and not relying on supermarket mass-produced food covered in chemical preservatives with plastic packaging.

- **Has it changed how you notice plants, insects, or green spaces?**

Very much so.

- **Do you ever catch yourself explaining things to other people now?**

Absolutely! If I don't know the answer, I ask members of the team and this leads me to learn more. I am so glad I became involved in this hugely worthwhile project.

4. Personal impact

- **Has being involved had any impact on how you feel day-to-day?**

Yes. I have grown in confidence and feel better due to eating better food with much more variety than previously.

- **Do you feel any different about yourself compared to before you joined?**

Yes. I am more interested in environmental issues.

- **Has it affected your confidence or willingness to try new things?**

Yes. I would never have believed I could get so much satisfaction from the project.

5. Wider impact & future

- **Has this changed how you feel about your local area or green spaces?**

I am more aware of green spaces than I ever was before and I feel more protective of areas and want to help protect and develop for future generations.

- **Do you do anything differently at home because of what you've learned?**

I eat more sustainably and make less waste than before.

- **Do you see yourself staying involved with nature or volunteering longer-term?**

I am definitely keen to stay involved with nature and volunteering.

- **Would you recommend this to someone else? Why?**

Yes. It is very beneficial to your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

6. Quote-friendly questions

- **If you had to explain Grow73 and the Bee Line to Nature to a friend in one or two sentences, what would you say?**

The project is very important to our local community, and it is vital to understand the importance of being sustainable.

- **How would you describe what this project has meant to you personally?**

It has changed my life as I eat in a completely different way. I eat a better variety of whole food and am much more aware of the importance of using locally produced produce.

- **What's one thing that really sticks with you from being involved?**

I have loved being involved and have learnt so much from the project leaders and other volunteers.

5.7 Hunter House Community Café

As part of the Bee Line to Nature project, Healthy and Active worked in partnership with volunteers to develop a community garden at Hunter House in East Kilbride, transforming an underused outdoor area into a shared space that benefits both people and nature.

Initial Development and Impact

The original project focused on supporting volunteers to begin developing the outdoor space in a way that was achievable, inclusive, and sustainable. Through a combination of practical support, funding for installation of raised beds, and shared learning, volunteers were able to establish a foundation for the garden, including the introduction of planting areas designed to support biodiversity and encourage community use.

A key outcome of this early phase was the increased confidence and knowledge of the volunteer group who worked closely alongside Bee Line to Nature staff. Volunteers developed a stronger understanding of pollinator-friendly planting, soil health, and the importance of creating spaces that benefit both wildlife and the local community. This approach ensured that the garden was not only physically developed but also supported by a knowledgeable and motivated group capable of maintaining and shaping the space over time.

Developing the Next Phase

The next phase identified opportunities to build on this foundation and further enhance the site as a multi-functional, sustainable community asset. The space has been carefully reviewed and mapped, with several distinct areas identified for development. From this, detailed plans have been produced by the Bee Line team which have been shared with Hunter House.

Enhancing Sustainability and Resource Use

One key proposal is the introduction of composting facilities within a designated rear area. This will enable the group to recycle garden and café waste on site, creating nutrient-rich compost to support planting while reducing waste. Composting will also contribute to biodiversity, supporting insects and microorganisms that play a vital role in healthy ecosystems.

Expanding Food Growing and Community Benefit

There is strong potential to develop a "Soup Garden", using raised beds to grow vegetables, herbs, and fruit. This would:

- Provide fresh produce for local use, including potential links to foodbank support.

- Offer educational opportunities for local schools.
- Create additional volunteering and skills development opportunities.

The development of food growing reflects the project's wider aim of linking climate action with social benefit, ensuring that the garden contributes directly to tackling inequality as well as supporting biodiversity.

Plans also include enhancing the existing outdoor seating area through:

- Planting fruit trees such as apple, plum and pear.
- Introducing native wildflowers and perennials to support pollinators.
- Softening boundaries with climbers such as honeysuckle and ivy.

These improvements will create a more attractive and welcoming space for visitors who will benefit from access to nature while significantly increasing biodiversity.

Low-Maintenance, High-Impact Planting

Across wider grassed areas, the introduction of native bulbs and wild planting is being considered. This approach is both cost-effective and sustainable, as plants naturalise over time and require minimal maintenance, while delivering long-term biodiversity benefits.

In addition, adapting maintenance approaches (such as reduced mowing and creating natural pathways) will support wildlife while maintaining accessibility for users of the space.

Building a Community-Led Asset

This next phase of development reflects the core principles of Bee Line to Nature:

- **Community-led action** – with volunteers continuing to shape the space.
- **Sustainability** – through composting, planting and long-term design.
- **Biodiversity enhancement** – creating habitats for pollinators and wildlife.
- **Social impact** – linking growing to food, learning and wellbeing.

The planned developments will transform Hunter House from a developing garden into a fully integrated community asset, combining environmental, social and educational resource. The continued development of Hunter House demonstrates the lasting impact of the Bee Line to Nature project. What began as an underused outdoor space has evolved into a growing, dynamic environment with the potential to:

- Support community wellbeing.
- Provide learning and volunteering opportunities.
- Contribute to local food resilience.
- Enhance biodiversity at a local level.

The Bee Line to Nature team have worked in partnership to create a sustainable model that will continue to develop as a community asset.

5.8 Loaves and Fishes Garden Project, East Kilbride

As part of the Bee Line to Nature project, Healthy and Active in East Kilbride has been working in partnership with Loaves and Fishes foodbank, its Volunteer Manager, and a group of volunteers to transform the outdoor space around their new community hub into a welcoming, biodiverse gardening area.

Loaves and Fishes recently took ownership of the building through a community asset transfer from the council. Volunteers are keen that the outdoor space becomes part of the community and want to transform the space into three areas in planned stages. From the outset, volunteers were involved in discussions about how the space could be used, who would look after it, and how it could support both people and nature over time. Future plans include wider consultation and engagement within the area and opportunities to become part of this community project.

Following an initial planning meeting, volunteers helped shape a shared vision for the garden, identifying three distinct but connected areas: raised beds for growing food, crocus bulbs and wildflowers to brighten the space, and a habitat area to support wildlife. This approach allowed the group to balance food growing with biodiversity, while making realistic changes that could be maintained by volunteers in the long term.

One idea that generated particular enthusiasm was the creation of a small ‘Soup Garden’. Volunteers recognised the value of growing ingredients that linked directly to the foodbank’s vision of reducing food insecurity by improving access to healthy, nutritious food. While they understood that food production would be modest in the first year, volunteers felt strongly that being able to see food growing would help people reconnect with where ingredients come from and build pride in the space. The garden was also designed with accessibility in mind, including space for wheelchair users to engage.

Volunteers also played a key role in problem-solving. Concerns about vandalism, water access, and tool storage were openly discussed, with the group agreeing practical, low-cost solutions that prioritised openness and community ownership over heavy security measures. Planting wildlife-friendly, “jaggy” hedging was seen as a way to gently protect the space while increasing biodiversity.

The project remains in its infancy; however, the volunteers are excited about starting to create the space next year. Volunteers have gained confidence in planning green spaces, understanding biodiversity, and thinking about how nature-based activity can support wellbeing and community connection. Just as importantly, the project continues to build stronger relationships between the foodbank, its volunteers, and the wider community using the hub.

This work has laid the foundations for a volunteer-led gardening group that will continue to care for the space, support pollinators and wildlife, and create a welcoming environment around a vital community asset. The project demonstrates how involving volunteers early, valuing their ideas, and linking food growing with nature and learning can turn an underused outdoor area into a shared source of pride and purpose.



Spittal Primary School
Rutherglen



6 Appendices

Appendix I - List of Partner Organisations who participated in the evaluation.

- Niall Mc Shannon (Managing Director) **Clydesdale Community Initiatives**
- Lesley Macintyre (Director) **Healthy and Active**
- Eugenie Aroutcheff (Project Coordinator) **Grow 73**
- Terry Patterson (Project Manager) **Larkhall Community Growers**

List of Stakeholder/Beneficiary Agencies and Community Groups that participated in the evaluation.

Education

- Larkhall Academy
- Spittal Primary School

Health

- Airbles Road Hospital
- Stonehouse Hospital

Third Sector Organisations

- Calderside Baptist Church - Community Foodbank
- Loaves and Fishes East Kilbride
- Eastfield Community Resource Centre Cambuslang
- Friend of Newton Railway Station
- The Jack Trust Stonehouse

Appendix II - Project Questions based on Evaluation Brief and Discussions with CCI Lead

On the basis of the Annual Reports and the information submitted by Bee Line Partners, there is a “when” of information and data that has been collected. This information will be crunched and an analysis presented within the report.

Time with Bee Line Partners in interview will acknowledge this but will focus on the undernoted strategic issues.

1. About you and your organisation.

- Name/Title and Contact Details.
- Why get involved.

2. Partnership Working and Stakeholder Engagement

- How well do you think you have done individually and collectively?
- What were the key challenges? Successes? Pitfalls?
- What did you learn? And what were the key takeaways?
- What would you have done differently?

3. Community Development/Community Led Local Development

- How well do you think you have done individually and collectively?
- What were the key challenges? Successes? Pitfalls?
- What did you learn? And what were the key takeaways?
- “Heineken Groups” – how did you go about it and how successful were you?
- Sustainability?
- What would you have done differently?

4. Tackling Climate Change – Hard nut to crack

- How did you approach it?
- How did you measure success? (try to get behind the behavioural change stuff).
- Is it working?

5. The “If Only” Question

- Have you identified anything during this period (excluding funding!!) that if it had been available at the time could have contributed to the success of the project?

6. Where to now!

- Looking at the bigger picture what concerns do you have for your organisation and the Bee Line Initiative moving forward (teasing out issues in relation to uncertainty and the future funding landscape).
- Are you glad you got involved from a personal and organisational point of view?
- Have I missed anything?

7. Thank you/the end!

Appendix III - Questions for participants and beneficiaries of the Bee Line Project

1. Background.

- How did you first hear about the Bee Line to Nature project?
- Were you keen to get involved?
- Had you done anything like this before?
- Was there anything that made you hesitate before starting?

2. Getting Involved.

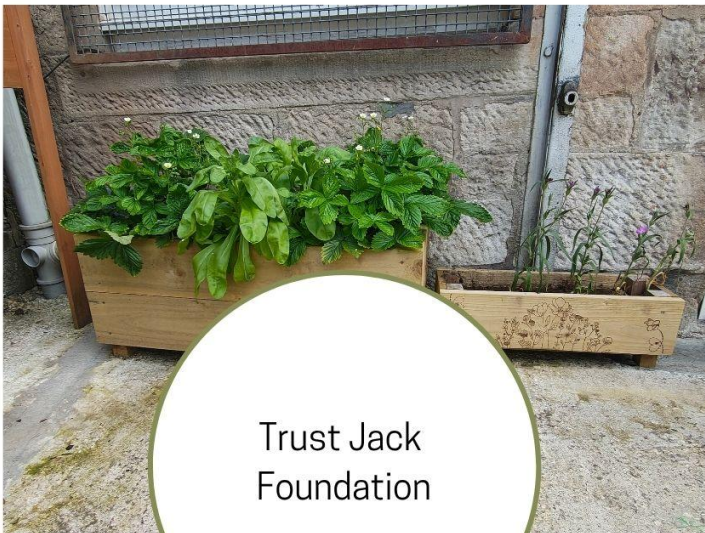
- What did you do?
- What did you enjoy most?
- How often did you get involved?

3. What did you learn?

- Have you done anything differently since getting involved?
- What have you learned? Big Picture / Wee Picture
- Climate Action as a concept!

4. Personal impact

- Are you glad you got involved?
- From then till now do you feel any different about yourself?
- Has this changed how you feel about what you did?
- Would you do it again given what you have learned?
- Would you encourage others to get involved and why?



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