Social Enterprise in the Year of Young People
This paper is part of a series of Senscot Briefings which aim to showcase the approach that social enterprise is taking to address a range of complex social issues across Scotland. This Briefing will highlight how social enterprise supports and involves young people, including the challenges faced, the advantages and the measures taken at a national level to ensure continued development of young people in social enterprise.

**What is a social enterprise?**

A social enterprise (SE) is a trading business – selling goods and services – whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental goals. Senscot recognises SEs in Scotland based on the criteria set out in the Voluntary SE Code of Practice.

**Who are we?**

Senscot is a third sector intermediary established in 1999. Along with others, we have helped to develop a support infrastructure for SEs over the last 15 years. A key part of our work is to support Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) – geographic and thematic - across Scotland. See www.senscot.net to find out more.

**The context of this briefing**

More and more, the voices and opinions of young people are being taken seriously. So much so, that in 2017 the word ‘youthquake’ was named as the word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries.

With the advent of social media, young people now find themselves with a seat at the table when it comes to public policy.

The Momentum movement in the UK was driven largely by the political activism of millennials and led to a shock hung parliament. Meanwhile in America, Generation Z (born mid-1990s to mid-2000s) have coordinated an extraordinary response to the gun lobby in response to the proliferation of high school shootings.

The empowerment of young people is a global phenomenon that is still only in its embryonic stage. There’s a sense that young people will no longer wait patiently to inherit what is rightly theirs: they want their say on how to shape the world today.

Given that the collective bargaining power of young people now has a significant sway on cultural, social and political issues, it is important that the opinions of young people are properly reflected in all areas of civic society.
Policy background

Youthquake

“A significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people”

In November 2017, the Scottish Government undertook an important piece of research: Public Attitudes to Young People in Scotland.

This document examined the attitudes and perceptions of more than 1,000 adults towards 13 to 19-year-olds.

More people held positive attitudes towards young people, including being trustworthy and helping others. Most negative perceptions, however, focused on communication skills and young people taking responsibility for their own actions.

Young people’s participation in decision making in Scotland, published March 2018, highlights a very real generational divide between young people and adults in Scotland. 38% of young people said adults don’t listen to young people and 26% said that adults don’t act on their views because “it doesn’t fit with what they want to hear” and “they don’t think their views are important”.

The research goes on to suggest that young people are more positive about adults who are part of the community, rather than those in an authoritative role. Of adults who run out-of-school groups/activities, 70% of young people said they are good at listening to their views and 66% agreed that their views were taken into account.

This research offers evidence of why social enterprises are well placed to engage with young people, as they are not perceived to be in a position of authority and are well situated to seek out young people’s views.

Too often, teenagers feel that others view them negatively simply because of their age. This can really have an impact on their own wellbeing and self-esteem. The Year of Young People will show everyone across Scotland just how talented our young people are but also how challenging their daily lives can be.”

Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney

Youthquake

noun youth-quake  \  yüth- kwak  \

“A significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people”
The Scottish Government placed an emphasis on young people in the Social Enterprise Strategy 2016-26, stating a desire to instil the philosophy of social enterprise into children from an early age through mainstream education initiatives.

The Building a Sustainable Social Enterprise Sector in Scotland Action Plan 2017-20, prioritises a number of measures that directly impact young people in social enterprise, including:

- Providing social enterprise learning in schools
- Introducing entrepreneurial learning to educational settings
- Harnessing the potential of informal education
- Building careers in social enterprise
- Providing inspiration on campus
- Developing Scotland’s young workforce

Social Enterprise Academy’s (SEA) Social Enterprise in Education programme gives students hands-on experience developing and running a social enterprise, while also developing an understanding of social justice and community.

Staying with SEA, their Get on Board initiative is a leadership programme aimed specifically at getting young people onto the boards of social enterprises in Scotland. It supports young people to identify and develop leadership strengths to take forward their social enterprise.

A variety of evidence from work in schools, colleges and universities has shown the potential of social enterprise to ignite a passion for entrepreneurship and social change among young people.

Scotland’s Social Enterprise Strategy 2016-26

Pounds for Purpose, a new programme launched delivered by Firstport, provides on hand support and access to a £500 grant for young people to develop social enterprise ideas.

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) is a partner in AIM2Flourish, an international initiative that ‘connects students with business innovators using Appreciative Inquiry to celebrate business innovations aligned with the UN Global Goals’. Working with Senscot and Social Firms Scotland, GCU is connecting 50 Scottish social enterprises with students.

Since 2011, Community Jobs Scotland (managed by SCVO) has been creating work opportunities for young unemployed people within third sector organisations throughout Scotland. Providing around 8,000 jobs for young people since its inception, Community Jobs Scotland is targeted at more vulnerable young people particularly those more disadvantaged in the labour market.
Young people and social enterprise

In 2017, a ‘collaborative effort to track the changing scale, characteristics and contribution of Scotland’s social enterprise sector’ was undertaken. The second census of social enterprise in Scotland highlighted how grassroots social enterprises play an important role in supporting young people, often considered furthest from the labour market, into meaningful employment.

- 63% of social enterprises provide training or support intended to improve employability
- 49% employ previously unemployed young people
- 18% of social enterprises have a main aim to create employment, training, work experience and volunteering opportunities within their organisation

Delivering person-centred services social enterprises provide a safe and supportive environment for young people and play a significant role in moving them towards a positive destination.

This support provides considerable wider impact for young people, which includes:

- Accessing appropriate health care
- Connecting with their local community
- Taking part in cross-generational activity
- Developing soft skills
- Improving wellbeing and confidence

Creating a sense of ownership in the organisation and wider community means long term involvement and better understanding of community needs.

Working with and for young people, many social enterprises across Scotland are creating inclusive organisations that put their needs at the heart of any decision making. Working alongside local and national agendas, those that are delivering services and support for young people aim to remove barriers experienced by young people locally.

- 70% work with young people leaving care
- 78% work with young parents

It’s my second week here and it’s been interesting. I’m outside, I’m not stuck in the house all day, I’ve met plenty people. I can develop my skills here and hopefully get myself back into work. It helps me plan for the future and it helps me with my development.

Davey, volunteer, The Ecology Centre
Volunteering

Volunteering can be a great vehicle for both promoting social inclusion and engineering pathways to positive destinations, and in many cases is an ideal way for social enterprises to engage with young people initially.

Moving from voluntary to paid work can have a significant impact on a young person’s confidence and self-respect, creating the beginning of a career path. Social enterprises, working with young people, comment that their input is invaluable when determining potential young markets, particularly understanding young ‘buyers’.

ProjectScotland partners with hundreds of Scottish charities and social enterprises to create quality volunteering placements in Scotland.

Working in between the social enterprise and the volunteer, ProjectScotland spends time getting to know each volunteer’s skills, strengths and interests to match them up with a suitable placement. Placements are 20-30 hours a week lasting for three months, with travel expenses paid by ProjectScotland.

Paul Reddish, ProjectScotland CEO, said: “It’s vital, in our sector, we embrace youth volunteering. It’s one of the most important ways for charities and social enterprises to gain a true understanding of the wealth of skill and potential that exists within young people in Scotland.

“At ProjectScotland, our young people hone and develop their skills and experience, shaping them to become successful leaders, workers and entrepreneurs who will drive Scotland’s future.”

“I gained new skills. I also became more confident over the 13 weeks in taking on more responsibility and working without any guidance.”

Kieran, ProjectScotland Volunteer

“Take this opportunity because you can grow personally and professionally, meet a lot of new people and is good for your CV. The money is not a problem because ProjectScotland pay you the transport so is perfect.”

Sandra, ProjectScotland Volunteer

“Coming here has given me a lot of drive towards my future. They support you every step of the way, no matter what. If you wanted to leave here and look for a different job they would push you towards that. They want to get you somewhere where you want to be. They’ll always support you.”

Rory, Callander Youth Project
Representation of young people in social enterprises across Scotland is highlighted in the Social Enterprise Census 2017. Representing 28% of Scotland’s population, young people account for 3% of social enterprise managers and 1% of board positions.

A lack of diversity at a charity board level was emphasized in a recent report by the Charity Commission, which found that “92% of trustees are white, older and above average income and education”. The report also found that the average age of trustees is 55-64 years, while 51% of trustees are retired.*

Traditionally, social enterprise boards are comprised by people who are relatively time rich: people who have retired from full time work or those who no longer have the responsibility of raising a young family.

“Despite younger people making up a far higher percentage of the communities that trustees serve, there is more work to be done to encourage boards to open up places for young people.

If your organisation is interested in bringing in young talent at a strategic level, a good place to start is the Young Trustees Report by Charities Aid Foundation.

Published in 2015, the report outlines benefits for both charities and young people of having a more inclusive and diverse board, plus recommendations about how to enact this.

Geography is known to impact on health, employment and access to services. The life chances of young people in Scotland: report to the First Minister, published 2017, highlights that young people in rural areas face higher costs of living and worse access to services.

In Argyll and Bute, InspirAlba have created an action plan on behalf of the Argyll SEN. Within this document are measures to tackle migration of young people away from rural areas, perceived lack of opportunities, and lack of connection and communication.

Social enterprise is identified as a key player in developing opportunities in apprenticeships, employment, job progression and community involvement.

“Argyll and Bute has challenging demographics, where one of our biggest exports is our young people and depopulation is a real issue. We are working on a number of work streams to engage young people in recognising local opportunities, highlighting how they can use their creativity, energy and ideas to contribute to the sustainability of our rural area. This also highlights how social enterprise can offer opportunities for fulfilling careers, where you can do something that you are passionate about, develop skills and be part of a wider movement.

David Bryan, Social Enterprise Academy

Ailsa Clark, InspirAlba

*As OSCR does not compile this sort of data, Charity Commission is the best source for comparison.
In 2009 Scotland hosted the Year of Homecoming, this year-long celebration proved to be a great success, boosting Scotland’s tourism – with 4.6 million attendances at Homecoming events across Scotland in 2014.

Following this success, the Scottish Government, in partnership with Visit Scotland, Event Scotland and national partners, developed a series of themed ‘Focus Years’.

Planning for the Year of Young People began three years ago with a group of 35 young people, Communic18, influencing how the Year should be run.

Consulting with hundreds of their peers, they made recommendations on what the top priorities and goals should be and with an additional 500 Ambassadors they have been promoting local activities and creating opportunities in their communities to challenge negative stereotypes of young people.

Activity for the Year is based around six key themes Culture, Education, Enterprise and regeneration, Equality and discrimination, Health and wellbeing, and Participation.

Year of Young People

Year of Young People 2018 aims to inspire Scotland through its young people, celebrating their achievements, valuing their contribution to communities and creating new opportunities for them to shine locally, nationally and globally.

Objectives

1) Provide a platform for young people to have their views heard and acted upon.

2) Showcase the amazing talents of young people through events and media. Develop better understanding, co-operation and respect between generations.

3) Recognise the impact of teachers, youth workers and other supporting adults on young people’s lives.

4) Provide opportunities for young people to express themselves through culture, sport and other activities.
Partners have created an array of resources for organisations to use to get involved in the Year of Young People.

Branding toolkits provide advice and key messaging; funding opportunities exist through Event Scotland, the National Lottery and other partners; and a partner programme enables those that haven’t sought funding to get involved.

Other funders, charities and organisations have been encouraged to engage with the focus year by thinking up initiatives or grants which will both promote the development of young people and showcase their talents. This, in turn, ensures that there has been a raft of opportunities cropping up over the year that can directly benefit social enterprises.

The drive for genuine collaboration across a range of sectors and interests creates an opportunity for social enterprise to tell their story, to help visitors and partners better understand the work they do and their needs.

Whether it is through increased funding opportunities or by increasing their engagement with local young people, there are definite benefits to be reaped from the Year of Young People.

Involving young people in their activities can increase the pool of valued, motivated young people available to them – people who will be better equipped either for volunteering roles or paid positions due to their engagement with the focus year.

How has the Year of Young People impacted social enterprise?

The #YoYP2018 Fundraising Case Study

Realising the fundraising potential of #YoYP2018, ProjectScotland launched their ‘Be a Super Hero’ campaign at the start of the year.

Based on the typical £1500 cost of putting one young person through their volunteering programme, they asked supporters to raise enough to fund additional placements, and by doing so become a #PSHERO.

Individuals, teams and organisations were all encouraged to sign up to the challenge. There were three fundraising targets to hit for pledgers: Hero (£1500), Superhero (£4,500) and Legend (£7,500). A raft of rewards and incentives were offered for each target, including invites to events and dinners hosted by ProjectScotland.

The campaign was great success, raising over £25,000 by June 2018 – enough to fully fund an additional 16 places on the programme.

Development Director Graham Robertson said, “As a youth volunteering agency, ProjectScotland was very keen to engage and embrace Year of Young People in Scotland for 2018. We decided to launch our own #PSHERO fundraising campaign as a hook to give both businesses and individuals further incentive to engage with Year of Young People.

"It has provided a great way to promote our work to a wider audience, as well as helping us raise valuable funds to support our cause."
Engaging young people in social enterprise

Below is a list of programmes and initiatives currently active in Scotland which are designed to help give young people a chance to contribute to their community. This can be through engaging with social enterprise, volunteering opportunities, business support or collaborative opportunities.

**Pounds for Purpose**

Pounds for Purpose offers grants of £500 as well as guidance and support to young people aged 16-26 to try out ideas that have a positive impact on people and the environment. [Find out more](#)

**Social Enterprise in Education**

The programme was created as a partnership between the Social Enterprise Academy and the Scottish Government to support the development of enterprise by giving students hands-on experience of running a business. [Find out more](#)

**ProjectScotland**

ProjectScotland works with hundreds of charities and social enterprises across Scotland each year, finding valuable volunteer placements for around 300 young people each year. A mentor for each volunteer ensures that young people benefit as much as possible from their placement. [Find out more](#)

**Young Scot Co-Design Service**

The co-design service involves young people creating, designing and delivering solutions in collaboration with organisations. The service goes beyond consultation - it engages young people as equals, with shared power and resources. [Find out more](#)

**Young Enterprise Scotland**

Young Enterprise Scotland supports around 15,000 young people from all backgrounds to develop their business knowledge, entrepreneurial skills & ultimately become more employable. [Find out more](#)

**Social Enterprise World Forum**

The Social Enterprise World Forum 2018 is partnering with PwC to provide 100 bursary places for young people who are working in or engaged with social enterprises. This bursary discounts the cost of entry to the forum for young people to £50+VAT, offering activities across each of the five days. [Find out more](#)

**Scottish Youth Parliament**

The Scottish Youth Parliament is a politically-independent organisation that aims to represent the young people of Scotland. Elections are held every two years, in which young people from all across Scotland stand as candidates to become Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs). [Find out more](#)
Social enterprise activity around the Year of Young People

Below is a selection of SEN member events which are being hosted throughout the year to celebrate the contribution and talent of Scotland’s young people.

You can also view the official catalogue of YoYP events here: www.visitscotland.com/ebrochures/en/year-of-young-people/

Event Scotland’s Open Event Fund offers support for YoYP events: www.eventscland.org/funding/year-of-young-people-2018/

A full list of SEN member projects and events can be found on our website: www.senscot.net/social-enterprise-events-and-activities-for-year-of-young-people-2018/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulate Cultural Trust</td>
<td>‘Turn the Page’, a Scotland-wide e-zine for care-experienced young creatives.</td>
<td>July ’18 - July ’20</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hello@articulatehub.com">hello@articulatehub.com</a> <a href="http://www.articulatehub.com">www.articulatehub.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clackmannanshire TSI</td>
<td>Warren Elsmore and Big Build Exhibition</td>
<td>17 July - 7 August</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anthea.coulter@ctsi.org.uk">anthea.coulter@ctsi.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findhorn Bay Festival</td>
<td>A spectacular programme of arts and culture events showcasing artists of local, national and international renown</td>
<td>26 September - 1 October</td>
<td>findhornbayfestival.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVSE CIC</td>
<td>The Sruighlea Festival packs in a foodie festival, Stirling highland games, walking tours, a traders village plus live music in the evening.</td>
<td>18 August</td>
<td><a href="mailto:office@fvse.org.uk">office@fvse.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.sruighlea.scot">www.sruighlea.scot</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Arts</td>
<td>Cashback to the Future programme will engage over 200 young people in Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Renfrewshire in workshops led by established artists.</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rhall@impactarts.co.uk">rhall@impactarts.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.impactarts.co.uk">www.impactarts.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knockengoroch World Ceilidh</td>
<td>An unparalleled music and arts festival hosted in a beautiful mountain riverside meadow.</td>
<td>24 - 27 May 2019</td>
<td><a href="http://www.knockengoroch.org.uk">www.knockengoroch.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Mining Museum</td>
<td>Creating their first ever youth panel, young people will be the voice of the museum, planning and organising their very own exciting exhibition and event for young and young at heart audiences.</td>
<td>1 May - 1 August</td>
<td><a href="http://www.eventscland.org/events/1300/">www.eventscland.org/events/1300/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Traditional Music &amp; Song Association of Scotland (TMSA)</td>
<td>Grow Your Own Music Session. Young musicians will have the opportunity to grow a programme of traditional music sessions in their local area.</td>
<td>Various, August - December</td>
<td><a href="mailto:grantmcf@me.com">grantmcf@me.com</a> <a href="http://www.gyoms.org.uk">www.gyoms.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study

Callander Youth Project

Callander Youth Project Trust aims to improve the quality of life of young people, aged 11-25, in Callander and the surrounding area by maximising their potential through access to the best possible recreation and educational facilities, support and resources.

Factfile

Established: 1997
Legal structure: Co. Ltd by Guarantee
Turnover: £377,822
No. of staff: 12
No. of young people worked with in 2017: Over 100

Activities

CYP uses hospitality as a vehicle to get young people in the Callander area ready for mainstream employment, using the framework of the Scottish Government’s Employability Pipeline.

“Young people can present themselves to us at any point in their lives, at any stage of the pipeline,” managing director Chris Martin explains.

“If the young person finds themselves at stage one, we can offer them an activity agreement. Stage two, we can offer volunteering opportunities for young people. At stage three, we work with SCVO on Community Jobs Scotland.

“We offer apprenticeships at stage four and stage five at hospitality level two or level three, depending on their aspirations. We can also offer business admin, customer service etc.”

Steps to Work is CYP’s employability programme, an 80-hour, SQA accredited programme. It is divided into a 40-hour course in personal development – working on emotional intelligence, working with other people, self-reflection – and a 40-hour work experience module.

“We’ve had some cracking placements, we try to be as person-centred as possible and young people have gone on to great destinations. One person did a work experience module at Perth Race Yard and now he’s at Newmarket, training to be a jockey!”

“We feel empowerment is so key to what we do. Giving young people ownership gives them both responsibility and the opportunity to step up. We have three supervisors just now, who take on the role of running the hostel, the café and the events package,” Chris elaborates.

“They’re tough shifts, you start at seven in the morning – they’re on call seven days a week and they run the show.”

Chris also works to ensure that the young people at CYP project a positive image of young people in the community, both through intergenerational work and through project which benefit the community as a whole.

“A lot of professional people come here to retire, and young people can sometimes be seen as a nuisance.

“There was a dilapidated local bus shelter that the council were going to remove but there was resistance from the local community – Greener Callander got together with us to coordinate skills and together we’ve launched a mural on the bus shelter, painted by the young people.

“There’s a lot of positive things that the young people are doing in the community that can change perceptions.”

Chris also helps put young people at the heart of CYP’s strategic decision-making process: “We have our board at CYP, but we also have a youth forum which feeds into the board.

“The national park has emulated that, and we’ve got three young people on the national park board to provide a youth advisory service to the senior board, which is great.

“I think we need to think about as adults how we facilitate our boards, and whether we’re an environment conducive to supporting a young person. Where do we meet, what time do we meet, who’s on the board? We’ll encourage [board members] to ask themselves these questions before they take a young person on board.”
Benefits of Working With Young People

“We found that utilising Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) has been beneficial to us,” Chris said, speaking of the Scottish Government initiative run by SCVO.

CJS creates work opportunities within the third sector in Scotland for unemployed young people. The programme has a specific focus on vulnerable people who find themselves with significant barriers to work.

“It offers young people opportunities to work, to get their first job – young people who wouldn’t necessarily be employable in the mainstream.”

Chris takes issue with the perception that taking in young people through the CJS programme is ‘free labour’, stressing that if these young people are properly looked after, they can blossom into highly motivated and productive members of staff.

“In terms of ownership, we find millennials will really take advantage of the opportunities that are afforded to them. They’ll raise their game if you give them free reign and they’re not micromanaged.

“If you offer them opportunities to empower themselves, I really think young people in your workforce will take them.”

The Callander Youth Project was great for me. I joined when I was 17 and I didn’t really have any prospects. They trained me up in a lot of different areas - I got my bar licence and my driving licence through them. I became a supervisor there early on and through that I ended up getting a job here at the local butchers. It was a real confidence boost.

Robert, former Callander Youth Project employee
Case Study

The Ecology Centre

The Ecology Centre is an inclusive, community-led charity and social enterprise. It aims to inspire positive change through directly connecting people and the natural environment for the benefit of both.

Factfile

Established: 1998
Legal structure: Co. Ltd by Guarantee & Charity
Turnover: £285,572
No. of staff: 2FT & 9 PT
3 apprentices
No. of young people worked with in 2017: 9,500

The Ecology Centre, situated by Kinghorn Loch in Fife, provides an inclusive setting for people to learn about the natural environment around them and achieve personal development through outdoor activities.

The centre educates people about the benefits of protecting and interacting with the environment and focuses on young people through its work with nearby schools – all aimed at getting children out of the classroom and experiencing nature.

They also offer a range of outdoor volunteering and training opportunities which can help equip young people with the skills and experience that will help them to move on to paid employment.

Activities

There are three pillars on which all of The Ecology Centre’s work is built: education, volunteering and training.

Educational outreach work sees team members out and about visiting schools across Fife, encouraging children outdoors to connect with their local green spaces.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the organisation, and they join the Centre from all walks of life - everyone is welcome. General Manager David Stockwell explains:

“We have a general volunteer day every Wednesday, where anyone’s free to come along. We have people from all kinds of backgrounds and abilities, we have supported volunteers who may be living with a mental issue or a physical issue, working alongside people who are retired and just want to spend some time outdoors.”

Volunteers help grow fruit, vegetables and herbs in the garden, which are then used to make lunches for volunteers, while others can get involved with the Tool Shed. In the Tool Shed, volunteers refurbish a range of carpentry, workshop and gardening tools, as well as manual Singer sewing machines. These can then be re-used and are often donated to other local community groups or charitable organisations to help with their projects. Some of the tools are also sent to Malawi through a project run by Global Concerns Trust.

The Ecology Centre partners with the Our Bright Future apprenticeship programme - a vital initiative for the local community, as employment prospects are not always in abundance for young people in the Fife area.

“As part of our Fife Rural Skills Partnership membership, we work alongside several other organisations offering experience and apprenticeship opportunities to young people aged 18-24.

“They can gain a modern apprenticeship in rural skills by supporting us as key members of staff, conserving the land around us and building up their range of skills – technical and social. It’s fantastic seeing their confidence levels increase as a result of being here and being part of a great team.

“They also have the opportunity to go to other sites to develop other skills that we can’t necessarily offer here, such as horticulture or consolidation of chainsaw skills.”

Role of Young People

“Engaging with young people is a crucial part of everything that we try to do at The Ecology Centre”, David explains, “giving them opportunities to gain practical skills and experience of working with the land.”

David stresses the importance of building connections with the local community – bringing in young people from the surrounding areas who want to develop their future away from mainstream education.

“One of our newest apprentices, Liam, is from Burntisland, just down the road from us. It’s crucial for us to try and build a sense of connection between him, the land and the community around here and provide him with new skills that will help aid him with his future ambitions.

“Often, we’re working with young people who don’t necessarily thrive in the classroom environment, or who don’t want to work in an office staring at a screen for hours at a time.”

One of the reasons for the success of the Our Bright Future programme is its person-centred focus, allowing young people to identify their own positive destination once they feel equipped to do so.
Benefits of Working With Young People

As an organisation devoted to protecting the environment, giving young people the knowledge and passion to carry on The Ecology Centre’s mission is a no brainer.

“For us, getting kids passionate about saving animals, saving plants, engaging with nature and looking after their green spaces from the earliest possible age will only reap dividends for us as a society, the planet and them as individuals in the long term.

“In a business sense for us as an organisation, those young people will be coming up and will be working in a place like this when they’re of age to do so. We want to give young people and apprentices opportunities to become permanent employees at The Ecology Centre or any of our partner organisations whenever possible.

“I can see someone like Liam running a place like this in a few years’ time, after getting some more experience. If we can help him start to apply himself, there’s nothing holding that kind of potential back.”

I was struggling to find a job after going into young offenders two years ago. Not many places are going to give someone with a criminal record an opportunity. It’s actually an amazing place, The Ecology Centre. An apprenticeship like this is going to give a lot of people like me the opportunity to work. All I want to do now is get my own business and enterprise, then help other people who have been in the same situation as me. That’s my main goal in life, definitely.

Liam, apprentice, The Ecology Centre
The Tower Digital Arts Centre believes that digital is the future and should be at the very heart of every community. The Tower uses technology to bring world class local and international arts performances into the community.

**Factfile**

**Established:** 2015  
**Based:** Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute  
**Legal structure:** Co. Ltd by Guarantee & Charity  
**Turnover:** £378,000  
**No. of staff:** 2 paid staff  
**No. of volunteers:** 16  
**No. of young people worked with in 2017:** 34

The idea behind the Tower Digital Arts Centre was to bring digital technology and the arts together under one roof to service the local community.

Originally staging live theatre and musical shows, The Tower has evolved to bring first release local cinema back to the town centre and now comprises two screens, a music academy and the only accredited Apple training facility in the west of Scotland.

It has even spouted a sister charity, The Submarine Trust, which houses a real, full-size Royal Navy submarine encased in a 360-degree cinema screen which uses 24 4K cinema projectors.

The cinema screens are used to stream live performances from around the world, including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Opera House and the Bolshoi Ballet Academy, as well as the latest releases.

Musical performances and theatre shows run by local community groups are also staged at the Tower, as are daytime ‘Silver Screenings’ for older members of the community.

The development of young people is central to much of the work at The Tower, with a number of training programmes and academies hosted on site, most of which are fully subscribed.

A community academy for folk music currently has around thirty children involved, while the newly-formed digital photography society had over sixty members from its very first meeting.

Industry standard digital coding classes are also available to young people in the area – making the Tower the only Apple-accredited training centre in the west of Scotland.

Run entirely by volunteers, the coding club hosts around 15 children every Saturday, offering those with an interest and aptitude outside of school access to the latest software and coding techniques.

Video editing, TV production and graphic design courses are also available from the Tower’s Apple lab and training centre.

A second charity, The Submarine Trust, has recently been added to the premises, developing local heritage around the nearby naval base at Faslane.

The centre has managed to acquire an ex-service Royal Navy submarine and has built a 360-degree 4K cinema around it, with 24 projectors creating an immersive museum learning experience for visitors.

Animations of the inner workings of the submarine have been developed on-site by the coding club, and will be textured, modelled and then projected onto the outside of a submarine to illustrate the life of a submariner.

**Activities**

**Hauling a submarine through the wall of a church hall might seem like a fairly extreme way to get young people’s attention, but founder Brian Keating explains that this is part of the ever-evolving challenge to keep young minds engaged.**

“The Tower was set up with young people in mind, this idea of engaging with the arts but making sure that technology was at the forefront of that engagement – it’s part of our remit,” Brian explains. “We have to think about what interests and excites people.”

Promoting and developing from within ensures that young people at The Tower always have a pathway.

A good example is the coding club – after initially getting support from Apple to build the Apple Lab and becoming a certified training centre, a former student of the coding club now runs the classes for 15-20 young people every Saturday. He’s still only 20 years old himself.

Volunteering is also key to The Tower’s operations, with the majority of staff made up of young people from Helensburgh and the surrounding area.

“We have a lot of people who get involved as volunteers because they struggle a bit with their confidence, they have some issue going on and maybe they’ve never worked before and they feel that this may be a way to help them get experience.”
“If they’ve been volunteering for a year or more, we have some paid ushering jobs which volunteers always get. All the ushers are all ex-volunteers and they then work side by side with the new volunteers, who they mentor.”

**Revenue Streams**

Founder Brian’s entrepreneurial verve is evidenced both by the breadth of activity that goes on at The Tower and by the ingenuity of the Submarine Centre.

The two cinema screens bring in a steady, reliable income which makes up a large part of The Tower’s current enterprise revenue.

Daytime screenings for community groups has proved a success, so much so that certain film screenings are now part of a social prescription scheme at the local GP, with The Tower receiving funding for it as part of a service level agreement.

There are three spaces available for function and event hire: a concert hall, a studio and a fully-equipped computer training room. Rooms can be hired for private screenings or other functions, with a comprehensive package of digital services available on request.

Brian uses the surpluses of The Tower’s more robust income streams to ensure that training for young people can be offered for free, while The Tower’s other activities can be subsidised.

He also puts a great emphasis on cost management by using the latest technology cloud-based software for volunteer scheduling, payroll, booking systems, accounting and staff management etc.

Finally, the Submarine Centre provides an exciting array of fundraising opportunities. Rather than sit the sub on the floor of the museum, it is suspended 10ft from the floor to allow for unique events, parties and dining experiences underneath it. There are also plans in place to use the centre as a broadcast centre for live musical events.

**Benefits of Working With Young People**

Asked about the benefits of working with young people, Brian was unequivocal: “It’s essential! It’s essential that young people are engaged with the process of building an organisation – if it’s going to be sustainable it has to.”

The obvious benefits of engaging with young people for The Tower is getting an influx of talented young people from the community.

“We’ve got a 20-year-old who runs the coding course here, and he wasn’t a coder – he came through a volunteer through front of house. Now he’s got classes of 10 through the week, 30 at the weekend, and it’s been great.”

Brian is also keen to stress that the value of having young people in the workforce is often underrated.

“I think young people are much more capable than we give them credit for...I remember bringing the head of media courses at one of the biggest colleges in Glasgow to show him the coding school, and he was amazed by how fast this 14-year-old kid was editing. This is an ex BBC producer, editor and he was amazed.

“Young people are looking for ways to contribute and help make a difference. The Tower has changed the way people use and perceive the town centre in Helensburgh. With over 40,000 visitors a year it’s become an important hub for culture, technology and learning. Young people are at the heart of The Tower’s development and the campus is regarded by most as one of the coolest place in Helensburgh.

“We’ve got a 20-year-old who runs the coding course here, and he wasn’t a coder – he came through by volunteering at the front of house. We asked for a volunteer to run the course and he jumped at the opportunity. Now he’s got classes of 10 through the week, 30 at the weekend, and it’s been great.”

“Young people are the lifeblood of any organisation and finding different ways to get them engaged is important.

“I think the role of young people is absolutely critical to what we do.”

Young people are the lifeblood of any organisation and finding different ways to get them engaged is important.

The role of young people is absolutely critical to what we do.

Brian Keating, founder, The Tower