

Blantyre Leisure Centre upgrades



As part of the South Lanarkshire wide upgrading of our gyms and studios, Blantyre Leisure Centre has now been completed with the facility back open to the public. This leaves Fairhill - Lifestyles as the last site within the project to be completed.

Beginning in August last year, phase one of the project began with the library and Bookbug room being incorporated into the centre and transformed from their prior use as the games hall store and a creche.

The reception at the front of the centre was modernised with new flooring, ceilings and a front desk along with a fully decorated surrounding area.

Finally, the first phase of the project was completed with the old free weights room being refloored, decorated and new lighting installed so that it could be used as a multi-purpose room.

The second phase of the project involved the fitness gym being completely upgraded with new flooring, walls and ceilings painted, and brand-new equipment installed.

The wet side was also closed so that the changing village lockers and cubicles could be replaced and new showers installed.

The air handling units for all dry side areas and the wet side changing areas were also upgraded or replaced.

Phase three was concluded in March, with the games hall reopening after being repainted and the floor being sanded and resealed.

The work was financed by South Lanarkshire Council's £2.74 million Transformation Fund. This significant investment saw key facilities upgraded to improve service delivery.



SLLC goes 'All In' for Glasgow 2026



Glasgow 2026 visited Calderside Academy in Blantyre, working alongside South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture and Scottish Disability Sport, to demonstrate a shared commitment to inclusive participation and community action.

The visit saw an inclusive athletics session, delivered to a group of third and fourth year pupils and led by SLLC's Active Schools team. The session demonstrated how young people of all abilities can take part in sport in a way that works for them.

This visit highlights that supporting organisations such as Scottish Disability Sport, South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture and inclusive education settings like Calderside Academy is central to the ambition to deliver a Games that is more inclusive than ever before, with accessibility, participation and community engagement at its core.

Patrick Murphy Communities and Education Manager at SLLC said: **"Many people see the Games as a moment in time during the summer, but our focus is on engaging with marginalised communities and local groups well beyond that window."**

"It's about helping people understand what the Games are, how they can get involved and how they can truly go 'All In' in a way that is meaningful to them."

Alongside schools across the country, Calderside Academy is 'All In' for Glasgow 2026, embedding the Commonwealth Games into its athletics term lesson programme.

Through a dedicated Games themed approach, pupils will learn about the Commonwealth Games, explore different sports and build excitement, ensuring they are fully ready to be part of the Games atmosphere when summer arrives.

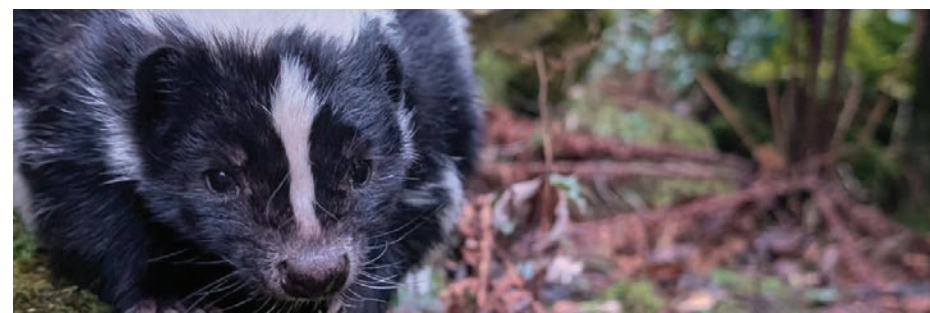
Caldergleng Animal Sponsorship

Work between staff at Caldergleng Zoo and the Commercial Team has led to an exciting new animal sponsorship opportunity for customers.

The packages that have been set up allow for customers to make a meaningful contribution to the animal's wellbeing, whilst also helping the zoo continue its work in conservation, education and wildlife care.

The 12-month sponsorship makes for a unique gift for animal lovers of all ages and is split into three different price tiers of Bronze, Silver and Gold.

For more information, visit the *Sponsor an Animal at Caldergleng Zoo* page on our website - or email our Education Officer: heather.ryce@southlanarkshireleisure.co.uk



Hamilton Park Partnership



SLLC have partnered with Hamilton Park to offer a corporate package for mid-week race days.

The package ties in with golf offerings, allowing customers to play at either Hamilton or East Kilbride before enjoying a race day.

SLLC will gain exclusive access to the Community Race Day on Thursday 16 July, where there will be significant indoor and outdoor space to run ACE activities and promote memberships. rakeside advertising, features in each programme for 2026 and exciting contributions to race days are also included, beginning with Low Parks Museum staff bringing the Silver Bell trophy to the Silver Bell Heritage Handicap on Friday 21 August.

Following on from this, the Commercial Team recently launched the new Corporate Sponsorship webpage, offering sponsorship and partnership opportunities for national and local businesses to partner with SLLC.

Should any member of staff have any suggestions as to businesses that may be interested, please contact Business Engagement Officer: lynsey.anderson@southlanarkshireleisure.co.uk

Employability in SLLC

SLLC services are trusted and accessible spaces within communities. People engage with SLLC for various reasons; learning, social connection and wellbeing all create opportunities to build confidence and develop skills.

The organisation is well placed to act as an early engagement point, helping people within local communities take their first steps that can lead into volunteering, training or employment.

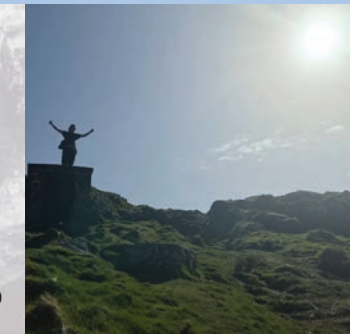
To that end, the impact of employability within SLLC over the past few months has been significant across various projects and initiatives.

94 funded three-month memberships have been provided to individuals, directly supporting their physical health and mental wellbeing as part of their employability journey.

Through partnership with Supported Employment, local people have engaged in 20 new 'Create and Connect' art sessions, using drama, digital development and create activity to build confidence, communications skills and peer networks.

Furthermore, over the Easter period, 40 employability participants and their family members have accessed the Outdoor Resource Base (ORB) outdoor programme, promoting wellbeing, social connection and positive engagement in accessible, community-based environments.

Moving forward, work is in place to secure five fully funded, six month paid placements for Supported Employment candidates. This will create meaningful, paid pathways into work. Structured work experience placements for participants through SLLC's Aspire and GradU8 programmes are continuing. This embeds practical, service-based learning within live working environments for young people in their transition year at secondary school.



Regimental History Day



Staff from Low Parks Museum in Hamilton attended the Regimental History Day at Edinburgh Castle, representing SLLC through the Collection of the Cameronians.

Assistant Museum Officers, Aileen Anderson and Laura Cassidy, met with curatorial staff from museums representing other antecedent regiments. They also engaged with visitors keen to learn more, offering opportunities to handle and explore objects from the collection.

The day included a special lunch in the mess hall, followed by a memorable chance to meet the mascot of The Royal Regiment of Scotland, a Shetland pony named Cruachan IV, who succeeded Cruachan III in 2012.

Marking the 20th anniversary of the regiment's official formation, the event brought together the historic regiments that now make up The Royal Regiment of Scotland. It highlighted the importance of preserving each regiment's unique heritage, Aileen and Laura were delighted to take part in such a meaningful and celebratory occasion.



Calderglen Harvest Mice Project - Five Years On



Five years on from the beginning of the Harvest Mice project at Calderglen Zoo, SLLC Insight caught up with Heather Ryce, Education Officer, to find out how it is going and what the plans are moving forward.

It all started on Instagram, Heather had been following an organisation called Ealing Wildlife Group, just outside of London, who were posting about Harvest Mice and the then lack of the species across the UK.

"I messaged them saying that I worked at a zoo" says Heather.

"I told them I would love to partner up and rehabilitate the mice back into a suitable habitat."

"They came back to me and said it was perfect timing as they were looking to see if other zoos had more mice".

Harvest Mice are the smallest rodent in the country and are one of only species we have with a long, prehensile tail, like spider monkeys.

"They're quite special and unique" says Heather.

"I think when people hear about them, they imagine mice that come into the home, which obviously they don't want, but Harvest Mice are different".

Very quickly, the conversation moved from online into a real-life project with Heather planning for the first transportation of the mice.

"I took the first load down, which was about 150 mice, and it just went from there."

"I drove down to Ealing, and we released them into the habitat that's been reclaimed."

"The mice used to be there before but because of the way farming is done now with machines rather than horse and plough, and with hedges being cut back it had basically decimated their habitat".



The project has grown since then, with the mice being released into different areas across Ealing.

Fast forward to the current day and the mice now have a huge area which has been left to grow, that allows the mice to roam around in the thicket of grass and flowers.

The project isn't without its challenges, particularly around moving the mice from Calderglen as Heather explains.

"Because the mice are being released into the wild it is important that the healthiest ones are chosen so that they have the best chance of breeding and surviving."

"I take them down in big plastic storage boxes with plenty of bedding and food, then on the way when I stop at a service station to check on them, I will make sure that they get some fresh air and water."

"The mice are usually a bit stressed for the first half hour or so, because they won't have known anything outside of where they have come from, but then afterwards they'll just bed down in the straw and be fine."

"They're hardier than you think".

When the mice get down to Ealing, they will be sexed and counted. However, they won't be released on the night of travel given the long day they have had.

The mice then get a couple of days to relax before volunteers will release them into the wild in batches.

The volunteers have been a crucial part of the entire project and Ealing Wildlife Group has grown in the numbers since it began. They are also responsible for collecting data each year to ensure the newly released populations of Harvest Mice are surviving.

The team are now an important part of their local community and are made up of many animal lovers and enthusiasts.

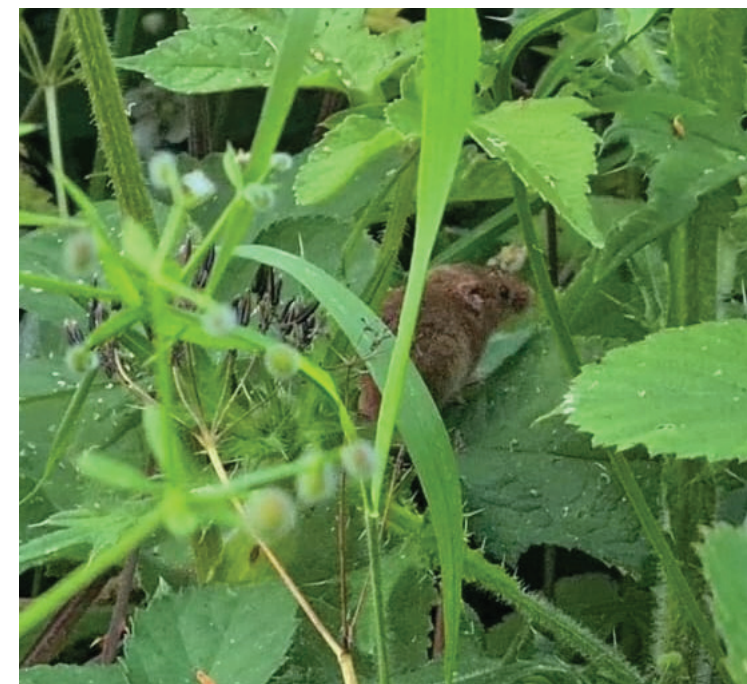
So, what's next for the project?

"There's no signs of slowing down" says Heather.

"All the data shows they are thriving further down south in England, which is why we do it."

"As long as we're taking them down and have signs that they are surviving and breeding by themselves, we're just topping up numbers and filling all the reserves that we can."

"They're good symbols of a healthy habitat and it has been really nice to be part of the solution to bringing them back."



Secondary Dance Competition



The 2026 Active Schools Secondary Dance Competition took place on Tuesday, 10 March, at The Town House, Hamilton.

A total of 340 pupils from 16 different South Lanarkshire secondary schools took part, with 28 performances in front of a sold-out audience of over 350, made up of family, friends, and VIP guests, including local councillors and senior management from the Leadership Skills Foundation.

At the event, pupils performed in their age groups (S1-3 or S4-6) and entered their routines into one of the following categories based on their chosen style: Street, Contemporary, or other.

This year also saw a new addition to the show: the 'Solo Showdown' dance-off competition. One representative from each school took to the stage and showcased their best solo moves.

The competition was coordinated by the Active Schools team and Town House staff, with support from 15 dance leaders from a variety of secondary schools.

On the night, the dance leaders group performed both the opening and closing routines, which had been rehearsed during the 'Days of Dance' sessions.

These sessions were coordinated by Twin City, the viral twin dancers who were part of the Future Pathways project, and Ellie Whyte, a former Dance Leader and Stonelaw High School pupil who has since gone on to become a professional dancer and choreographer.

"What struck me most was the power and purpose behind the dances," said Alex Potter, Quality Assurance Manager at the Leadership Skills Foundation.

"These young leaders were tackling serious themes such as teenage suicide, mental health, the 8-minute theory, bullying, communication, compassion, resilience, friendship, and even the Holocaust."

"The music, movement, and choreography were all about telling a story and making the audience think and interpret."

"The energy, creativity, and sheer joy in the room were something special."

Michelle Turnbull, SLLC Active Schools Manager, added: **"It's fantastic to see so many schools engaged in our dance programme. The Secondary Dance Competition is always a highlight of the year and provides both volunteer deliverers and participants with the perfect platform, at an excellent venue, to showcase their hard work, talent, and creativity."**

"This year, we have 151 Dance Leaders working towards Level 4, 5, or 6 qualifications."

"Not only do they support the secondary competition, but they also deliver extracurricular clubs to 101 primary schools throughout the year."

"These numbers highlight the popularity of dance, and we look forward to continuing to provide opportunities for young people across South Lanarkshire."

The main results from the competition are as follows:

- **S1-3 Overall Grand Champions** - St John Ogilvie High School
- **S1-3 Outstanding Performer** - Orla Russell, St Andrew's and St Bride's High School
- **S4-6 Overall Grand Champions** - Stonelaw High School
- **S4-6 Outstanding Performer** - Cerys Newton, Trinity High School
- **Outstanding Male Performer** - Rhian McNeil, St John Ogilvie High School
- **YPSP Choice Award** - Rutherglen High School
- **Dance Leader of the Year** - Katie Reid, Strathaven Academy, and Erica Barclay, Calterside Academy.



Peter Hickey Retirement

After over 40 years of distinguished service in local authorities, Peter Hickey retired in March of this year. SLLC Insight caught up with Peter to talk through his career and time with the organisation, and some plans for the future.

What first brought you to South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture, and did you ever think you would be here this long?

My local authority career began in 1982 with East Kilbride District Council as a Sports Centre Attendant at Duncanrig Sports Centre. After gaining a Diploma in Management Studies in 1988 I was seconded to the Directors department as a Management Assistant.

In 1996 at the time of local government reorganisation, I joined South Lanarkshire Council as Development Services Manager a role I retained at the formation of the South Lanarkshire Leisure Trust.

In 2011 I left my role in development and took up a position as an Area Manager in operations where I remained until retirement. It was an easy decision to stay on this career path as sport was, and still is my passion.

Latterly, providing management support to colleagues in cultural services was a pleasure and a new challenge. I never ever thought of leaving SLLC.



What have been your proudest moments or achievements during your time here?

My proudest moments are too many to mention across such a long time but I am proud to have achieved 44 years' service.

I'm fortunate to have worked with so many great colleagues and help some in their career development which comes with a certain amount of pride seeing them succeed.

Is there a particular project, event, or person that stands out as especially meaningful to you?



The one project that stands out from the many was when the World visited Lanarkshire for the 45th International Children's Games in the summer of 2011.

I was seconded for a year to work for both North and South Lanarkshire Councils to organise the Games working alongside former SLLC General Manager, Hugh Waters.

The Games were an outstanding success and showcased not only our facilities but the professionalism and dedication of our staff without whom the success would not have been possible.

Over 1200 young athletes from 77 cities in 34 countries along with their coaches, supporters and city delegates experienced what was roundly described as one of the best Games ever.



How have you seen the organisation and your role evolve over the years?

There's no doubt that there's been massive change since I first entered leisure services.

It's a sign of the times that all public sector services are facing greater financial pressure and the expectation to maintain standards remains high.

I believe the service has evolved to having to be more businesslike and professional and this is evident in how staff have embraced the concept and remain as SLLC's greatest asset.

What are you most looking forward to in retirement, and do you have any exciting plans?

I'm really looking forward to spending more time with family and tackling the DIY jobs that have been too long ignored!

Travel features strongly in my plans and I'm looking forward to visiting new destinations with my wife.

I'll also be working on my fitness, with Activage card in hand, as I know there's a six-pack lurking beneath and a jaw line to rediscover!



Partnership Working delivers New Bicycle Reuse Hub for Hillhouse Community

Organisations from across South Lanarkshire have come together to set up a bicycle reuse hub for residents in Hillhouse, Hamilton.

Hillhouse residents' and tenants' association have the launched the hub alongside Lanarkshire Climate Action Hub, one of the 24 environmental hubs nationwide which are funded by the Scottish Government to support community and environmental work.

Further funding and support have come from Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's people and place programme, Lanarkshire social enterprise Gear Up, Cycling UK and South Lanarkshire's community payback unpaid work team.

The hub will include a workshop carrying out free repairs, where donated bikes will be reconditioned so that they can be given out free of charge to community members. This will allow for an increase in the access to safe and suitable bikes for local residents.

South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture will lead in the support of cycle training and outings, including Saturday morning sessions, where attendees will pedal from the hub to the nearby Jock Stein Sports Centre for sports and activities.

The hub was officially launched at a recent event and demonstrates the strength in local partnership working to help deliver activities and services.



The stage is set! Get your tickets now...

... and experience something truly unforgettable at one of our vibrant cultural venues.



Come along to our **Sip and Glaze Night** at East Kilbride Arts Centre (11 June) where you can catch up and giggle with friends as you glaze, paint and design your own pre-cast pottery item under the guidance of our Expert Tutor. 18+

K-Pop takes over The Town House, Hamilton (14 June) with a high-energy live tribute packed with global hits.

Grado and Stephen Purdon bring **Shellsuits and Spandex 2** to East Kilbride Village Theatre (25 June) - stories, laughs and chaos guaranteed.

For further information on what's on offer visit our website:
www.slleisureandculture.co.uk

