



Ayrshire supports Ambition!

Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition is supporting community led initiatives across the Ayrshire

'Community Led Local Development' or 'CLLD' gives local communities the power to tackle their own, local challenges. By building knowledge and skills, supporting new ideas and projects and encouraging cooperation, CLLD helps to create viable and resilient communities.

Within the EU, LEADER is the main funding mechanism for CLLD, which is delivered through Local Action Groups (LAG). Scotland built a strong and successful network of 21 LAGs covering all rural and island Scotland.

However, with the closure of the LEADER in Scotland, brought about by the UK leaving the EU, different delivery methods of CLLD delivery across rural and island Scotland are being explored by Scottish Government, whilst maintaining and building on the LAG network (the current CLLD funding forms one of the schemes within the Scottish Government's Rural Development Programme).

Nowhere is this better exemplified than in Ayrshire, where the Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (ARIA) fund was established. It is led by the ARIA LAG, a group of representatives from the local area and administered by South Ayrshire Council.

In 2022-23 the group ran two funds: the Main Fund which delivered funding allocations to applicants in November, and the Small Capital Fund in response to extra capital monies received from Scottish Government, with funding allocated February.

The funding was well received by organisations who applied for funding, but there was concern regarding the tight timescales for delivery, especially on the capital funding.

However, despite this, projects were successful in delivering. This included Pinwherry and Pinmore Community Development Trust (PPCDT) who were successful in applying for ARIA Small Capital Fund in 2022/23, to create a community space within the Old Pinwheery School. The funding enabled PPCDT to develop a fully furnished and equipped, warm and welcoming cosy space within the village, enabling them to help address issues affecting their community.

Amy-Dee Watson, PPCDT Project Officer said of the project: “We are helping to tackle issues affecting our community, including social isolation, financial hardship, mental health and wellbeing issues”.

2023-24 sees ARIA delivering three funds:

- ARIA Main Fund
- Communities into Action – aimed at getting actions from Community Action Plans (CAP) implemented, or CAPs reviewed/developed from scratch with an emphasis on capacity building.
- Community Asset Maintenance – smaller fund for conditions surveys on community assets leading to a scheduled/costed condition register, plus a £2k sinking fund grant for repairs/maintenance.

Jim Watson, Chair of the ARIA LAG said: “Now in its second year, the ARIA fund is becoming established as an important funder for rural and island communities throughout Ayrshire. Building on last year’s success we aim to work with more groups and businesses this year to deliver positive benefits to our communities who face increasing challenges”.

Angela Lamont, Ayrshire CLLD Fund Co-ordinator said: “The development time with groups is critical. We’ve had a two month expression of interest phase this year in which we’ve worked with groups to develop projects and

applications, and this has been hugely beneficial. Next year we'll look to separate those phases to give greater focus to each one".

Projects supported by ARIA covers a diverse range of activities, from measures to address net zero to developing sustainable visitor attractions. Check out case studies of [Woodside Arran CIC](#) and [Little Peru Ltd](#) who utilised the ARIA Small Capital Grant and the ARIA Main Fund Grant respectively to support development of their businesses.

Find out more about ARIA at [Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition \(ARIA\) Fund - South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](#).