



**November COVID-19 survey:
Funding and Fundraising
Places and Spaces Supplementary**



Contents

1. Places	3
2. Spaces	5
Gardens.....	5
Parks	6
Community Woodland	7
Land.....	7
Outdoor Centres	8
Sports Centres.....	8
Dance	8
Gymnastics.....	9
Swimming	9
Tennis.....	9
Rowing.....	9
Bowls	10
Education.....	10
Unspecified Sport	10

1. Places

Buildings, indoor spaces – village halls, community centres, churches and church halls, theatres, Town Halls, venues, museums and historic buildings are all part of the infrastructure of the charity sector. They provide the spaces where a vast range of activities can take place. They are used by other charities, community groups, sports groups, school groups, child care, care of the elderly, social care, government (polling stations), and serve an essential role in the life of the communities in which they are located.

Many buildings operated by charities were closed for mixed reasons that included: the decision to close some of these places was made elsewhere, by a local authority where they owned the building operated by a charity, by an umbrella body, or a landlord; lack of clear guidance from governments, councils and local authorities; the cessation of indoor meetings, events and performances under the restrictions; buildings unsuitable for compliance with restrictions, for example narrow entrances or hallways; no bookings because restrictions either prevented groups gathering or could not gather in sufficient numbers when socially distanced for income to cover their costs; insufficient income or reserves to cover cost of opening; lack of access to funding that would support opening; fear of responsibility and/or public opinion for potential spreading of the coronavirus, particularly in regard to vulnerable people; unwillingness of volunteers to work in an environment that exposed them to the risk of catching the virus from others.

Some were not closed but their usual user groups were not running sessions/group activities. A few were open but struggle to function due the current restrictions. A few were open but the purposes for which they were open had changed, for example they had become foodbanks, community shops, used their kitchens to prepare food to deliver to vulnerable people. A couple of the village halls that were closed were taking the opportunity to carry out renovations; and the volunteers at one of the museums were overhauling their archives.

What was consistent was their loss on income from user fees and fundraising. What was also consistent was the need to meet core/running costs to maintain the usability and the fabric of the building. Many had applied to their local authority for funding however the results appeared to be inconsistent. Whilst some said they had received funding to cover these costs from their local authority/council/ or a successful application for a Small Business Loan, others told us that they were advised they were ineligible or their applications were rejected. Some indicated there were issues around the rates that affected their eligibility, whilst others received grants that included the cost of rates.

Several charities said they had made great efforts and invested substantial amounts of their funds to adapt their buildings to ensure they were safe for use; screens, hand sanitiser and disinfectant were available for everyone; and extra cleaning was in place – then restrictions changed and it was all for nothing. Others made adaptations but their user groups could not have enough people in the space at one time to observe social distancing and cover the cost of the rent/hire. A couple of charities took all the necessary steps to ensure Health and Safety and Food Standards requirements were met but were then delayed from responding to the

immediate emergency because it took so long for local authority inspections to take place.

Community centres and village halls owned by local authorities were closed. User charities and local groups were frustrated that they were unable to access these buildings to provide their services and/or activities.

The frequent changes to restrictions and guidance was a huge challenge to both the operators of these buildings and their users. The lack of clarity had been a frustrating barrier to operation of any kind, and some charities spent substantial amounts on making their buildings complaint only to have the guidance change and their investment wasted.

Additionally, these buildings were used by diverse groups (many of which were charities) who frequently were unable to establish from the guidance what they were or were not allowed to do, and whether there were specific requirement that were applicable to them, or not. A small number of user groups were unable to access their usual building and were told that there was no government advice on the reopening of halls.

The charities that own and operate these buildings were impacted by other factors, some closed because their volunteers (and trustees in some cases) were in a vulnerable category due to age and/or a health condition. Whilst some were able to adapt to running their charity using digital platforms very successfully, there tended to be mixed experiences, others mentioning barriers including lack of/inadequate IT equipment, lack of IT skills, inadequate Broadband, and in some cases reluctance of individuals to engage.

Charities that had reserves or were successful with grant applications had done better than those whose finances were dependent on income from user fees and fundraising. By November 2020 some charities said they were struggling to meet the running and maintenance costs of their building, and a small number were doubtful that they would be able to keep going through the winter or restart when restrictions lifted.

Overall there appeared to have been quite a lot of variation in the impact on charities that own and/or operate village halls, community centres and other buildings. Some of this might be attributable to what appear to have been differences between local authorities/councils on guidance and restrictions; and the different priorities of various funding agencies and organisations.

Against that backdrop there were a lot of charities who found a way to support their local communities by providing foodbanks, kitchens for volunteers to make meals, and some were able to make creative use of outside spaces such as gardens and car parks as spaces for their users to provide some level of contact and support for their (often vulnerable) beneficiaries.

2. Spaces

Spaces were a little different from places in that they were mainly for a particular purpose or activity such as a tennis court or a garden though, for example, parks may be used by multiple organisations for different types of activity. Spaces were generally outdoors, though not exclusively, and might or might not have had a building associated with the activity for storing equipment, generating income or socialising. There were not so many responses from charities that operated in spaces as there were for operating places but they were linked by collective issues around the impact of COVID restrictions on delivering their purposes/activities or running their usual income generating activities and in some cases the need to secure grants.

A few of these charities have been able to adapt the income generating activities of their spaces, other spaces were specialised and therefore did not have the flexibility to do this. Some have been able to adapt spaces to comply with the COVID-19 restrictions, others have not.

One charity asked that OSCR and charity sector support organisations demand the government to create more open-air, safe, public spaces across Scotland, so that a variety of activities can be organised for a variety of people.

Gardens

- Community gardens were free to enter and making the space available to the general public has been greatly appreciated by local communities. Generally these spaces have been used by more people as a go to space for exercise and nature watching.
- All of the charities running community gardens said they had extended opening hours and thought this had helped members of charities with mental health issues, as well as the local community. Their volunteers reported improved mental wellbeing through being able to work at the gardens albeit socially distanced. One charity had adapted their services in response to the restrictions and offered free private use of the garden to anyone who was shielding and their family bubbles. This was greatly appreciated and has raised the charity's profile locally. These charities anticipated that continuing restrictions over the winter would have a negative impact on the wellbeing of some of their more vulnerable volunteers and users.
- The main impact of the pandemic on community gardens was loss of income because they could not hold fundraising events such as plant sales, coffee mornings and open days which are their main sources of income. Some had increased visitor numbers through extending opening hours which resulted in higher levels of donations, but this was not the case for all charities. Some charities were able to run events, albeit reduced, with controlled attendance and increased need for preparation: but there were others who were not allowed to open for events.

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- There were also examples of other adaptations, for example: one charity that said they transferred their sales online and hand delivered to garden gates, gave free vegetable starter kits to 800 households to increase interest in gardening for all ages, which they hope will transfer to increased sales next year when they hope to be able to open to the public again; another charity told us that their church has created a prayer space in its garden for the community; whilst another had linked up with community groups and other charities to provide fresh produce from their gardens for community larders.

Parks

- Several charities told us about parks, however they are a mix of what appear to be either operated by a council or a community based charity and charities that use a park for activities. The parks are in both urban and rural locations.
- One charity told us their activity relies on the availability of public spaces, such as the park and that generally more open-air public spaces are needed to allow various kinds of activities even in Level 3 restrictions. Another said all activities in the community park have been suspended since mid-March so they had lost their trading income from the hire of facilities.
- One charity said their main fundraiser for 2020 was cancelled and they also anticipate that it will not be possible for it to take place 2021. Another was worried that funding for parks and green spaces would be reduced in future but felt they are so important that they asked if there was any chance of additional funding for this critical support for mental health being given extra support via the Scottish Government?
- Parks and green spaces were much used during lockdown and took a bit of a battering with regard to anti-social behaviour such as increased litter. One charity worked with the local council to ensure a local park was kept as good as it could be for the enjoyment of all; and another said happily local people volunteered to help keep the park tidy which was very much appreciated! Another one told us the risk of Covid meant that cleaning costs had escalated, but they hope that if they all pull together their charity will still be in existence in 2022, and continuing to serve the people in their rural area

Community Woodland

- Charities that operate community woodland said they had been focused on keeping the facility open, giving people the opportunity to take exercise and improve mental health. One used their website and Facebook page to give information on social distancing and other recommendations to help people using the trails to observe guidelines and taken all necessary precautions to stay safe. Another had supported their members' mental health by offering woodland experiences such as forest bathing, and celebrations (guyfox night) in the local green areas; and liaised with the Scottish forestry where members were able to attend herbalist session in the woods to make cordials which were suitable to take home.
- The main impact of the pandemic on charities that operate community woodlands was a decrease in donations from visitors or income from activities and events, so they were having to find funds from elsewhere. However one charity said that at the very beginning there was a lack of sector specific advice so they had furloughed their only employee immediately but then found that forestry was deemed essential so they needn't have had any recourse to public funds.

Land

- One charity told us that Covid 19 and the restrictions led to a massive increase in the number of visitors visiting their estates for outside recreation. A significant minority of these visitors made irresponsible use of parking and camping; left litter, human waste and open fire damage; and instances of theft from their stores increased. All of this led to increased and different demands on their sole member of staff and on the 5 trustees. They said the increase in visitors probably did not lead to any increase in donations, they solicit in honesty boxes in their car parks and one of these was broken into and its contents stolen for the first time.
- Another charity said with effective communication and cooperation, they developed ways of continuing their land management work while following Government Guidelines. Pre Covid, they worked indoors and outdoors, they now only work outdoors at a safe distance. They are a food growing group and demand for produce such as seedlings, vegetables, salads and fruit had increased.

Outdoor Centres

- One charity said they were saddened about the lack of help and protection being offered to outdoor residential centres; one centre has already had to be sold off; another is under threat; and they felt that council centres were vulnerable. Another said there was no way of replacing lost income by obtaining funding for a youth organisation which had part of its income through hire of its Outdoor Centre for residential activities.
- An education charity told us the outdoor industry has been badly affected by the COVID restrictions and needs more support. The restrictions, in particular lockdowns and travel restrictions had stopping their education course providers delivering training courses. It wasn't clear to them whether they could continue to run courses as candidates had to travel to get to them.

Sports Centres

- A charity that runs a sports centre in a small town had been closed since March. They said older users don't want to come back to use the gym; but younger members do, though they were not good at cleaning down equipment; and there was a lack of volunteers to man the pavilion.
- Restrictions also impacted another charity who said they were unable to use their gym for a number of weeks and once they were allowed to open they were restricted by how many members could use the gym at any one time due to the distancing rule.

Dance

- A charity that runs a community dance studio found it impossible to continue to offer our services due to the COVID restrictions. They understand the reasons for the restrictions but the loss of income has been very difficult financially. At the beginning of the pandemic they tried to reduce their ongoing costs by cancelling a lot of services but of course energy bills continue to come in. It has helped enormously that their local council offered a small business grant which they were able to access to keep them afloat, but not knowing when they may be able to start again was frustrating.

Gymnastics

- 🗨️ A charity running a gymnastics club said their source of funding stopped completely. They had applied for Government grants but were turned down with no explanation. They had used up all of their reserves just keeping the club going and preparing for reopening. Another gymnastics and trampoline club were able to open some of their sessions with a reduction in the number of children attending: but it had caused them much stress in that they were struggling to cover costs. A number of trained volunteers had stopped as they had to get new jobs which meant they were not available to volunteer any longer.

Swimming

- 🗨️ One disability charity asked if OSCR and charity sector to support organisations could provide help and support to ask an ALEO to do repairs and open their pool, as their club had not been able to function for disabled swimmers.

Tennis

- 🗨️ There were responses from several charities operating community tennis courts. They had experienced different impacts of the pandemic. One was concerned that they were unable to run their usual fundraising events and recruit new members; another had to deal with an individual who took advantage of their free facility by relocating private coaching to the courts from his usual location; and another had applied some months previously for a community asset transfer to enable the club to carry out urgent repairs and upgrades to the tennis courts but due to Covid it had not yet been processed by the council who could not say when it would be processed, which had prevented them from being able to apply for funding.
- 🗨️ The charities had kept the courts open to all when restrictions had allowed to provide a resource to their local community. They had seen an increase in the use of their open air tennis courts (and in one case MUGA [Multi Use Games Area]) including by people from outside their immediate community. They felt they had managed to comply with the guidance and keep their community active and safe.

Rowing

- 🗨️ A volunteer run rowing club with a boat house in a public park found they were not eligible for any funding assistance. They were key to small groups and single folks of all ages meeting up and getting exercise, yet they were not categorised to benefit from any core funding support to offset their losses of around £2500 per annum in event / charity shop income.

Bowls

- This charity had hoped to involve schools throughout the summer with outdoor bowls and with indoor bowls in the winter, but was unable to do either due to the pandemic and a lack of volunteers. They were unlicensed so do not attract new members as other clubs do and would appreciate help in how to promote our sport at grass roots level.

Education

- Our charity helps educate children about farming and the countryside. Children visit farms and learn about other outdoor careers such as forestry, gamekeeping and fishing. Farmers and other volunteers go into school to talk to the children. At present our work with schools is completely on hold. We are developing ways we can use technology to work with children remotely but it's not the same experience. Head office pay permanent staff. Our part of the organisation uses only volunteers (who work with the permanent staff) and since we have no premises we also have no overheads so our finances can be maintained until our work with schools is able to resume.

Unspecified Sport

- One sports based charity had to stop because of lockdown, COVID restrictions and facilities not operating. Another that school hall hire was not available, even after restrictions were lifted, which had caused their sport to be inaccessible: and this in turn made it impossible to reregister members for the new season and collect direct debits to provide income.
- A sport development charity who also administer the sport in our area said they had been unable to organise competitive sport this summer and were concerned that the lack of development, particularly at junior level, would have a short and long term effect on participant numbers. They have had no fundraising activity and this would hinder their development plans. It almost feels like we will be starting afresh as we have lost so much momentum.

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