



**Valley Renewables Group**  
development trust

*Carron Valley & District Community*

# Strategy 2023 to 2028

*VRG Vision: 'For everyone in our community to experience an improving quality of rural living. For this to be delivered through community-wide and individual projects, supported by community benefit income, and distributed through a fair and transparent process'*

[www.valleyrenewables.co.uk](http://www.valleyrenewables.co.uk)

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## Introduction

Valley Renewables Group (VRG) is the Development Trust for the Carron Valley and District Community. It is working hard to improve the quality of rural living for the community by fairly distributing the income it receives from the surrounding windfarms to benefit local people, through grants schemes and community projects and activities.

Over the last three years VRG has delivered the Newsletter, Open Days and Website, supported the Community Woodland Project, woodland events and activities, progressed the Meeting Room plans and given out a large number of individual and small community grants. A brief summary of how VRG has worked to its objectives and achieved the planned outcomes over the last three years is provided in the appendix. Further information can be found in the VRG Annual Reports.

To produce this updated Strategy, VRG has looked again at how the community would like to use the windfarm money to benefit local people. One to one interviews, focus groups and a community survey have been carried out and the feedback has been used to inform this 2023-28 Strategy. A summary of findings is provided in the appendix.

## VRG Mission

The Carron Valley and District neighbourhoods are collaborative and resilient, so able to act on future opportunities and challenges as they arise.

VRG has an agreed Vision and Mission, supported by a set of Aims, Objectives and Expected Outcomes that everyone is working towards. This Strategy clarifies these, giving VRG a clear route forward for its activities over the coming years. It is designed to be flexible, providing guidance to help decision making but also enabling VRG to adapt and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities as they arise. VRG needs to remain flexible and able to react to opportunities and challenges as they arise, both collectively across the whole area and in smaller neighbourhoods or pockets of need. Importantly, VRG also works to a clear set of values, which underpin all delivery:

### VRG Values

- **Fair and transparent** – making clear decisions that share funds widely across the community
- **Open to all** – valuing difference and supporting all neighbourhoods within the Carron Valley and District area
- **Flexible, open minded and looking to the future** – attracting new people and ideas to the Board, changing with the needs of the community
- **Resilient** – confident and competent to face future opportunities and challenges

## Summary of community needs from consultation feedback

The Carron Valley community has grown since the 2019 to 2022 Strategy was written. The population demographic has changed, with new families moving into the area. The population remains dispersed, with a wide range of interests and priorities making the community's needs quite different from place to place. The high quality environment and peace and quiet are highly valued, with isolation being recognised as a positive factor generally.

The survey highlighted the top five issues having a negative impact on quality of life as:

- Rising cost of living
- Fuel costs
- Lack of transport
- No central meeting point
- Inefficient heating systems

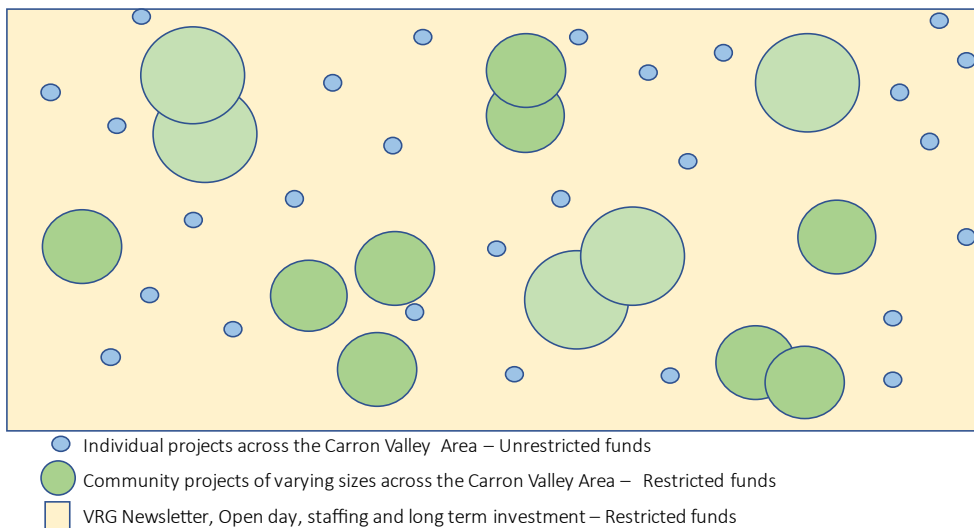
Poor roads, litter, fly tipping and antisocial behaviour were also noted as issues by many people in the survey responses.

**Priority needs for the Carron Valley and District community in the future:**

- Rising cost of living
- Fuel poverty and the need to improve energy efficiency
- Housing improvements to increase energy efficiency (insulation, improved heating systems)
- Localised social community projects and activities throughout the whole area.

Consultation discussions noted that the Carron Valley and District area covers a collection of small communities and neighbourhoods, as opposed to one single community. As there is no one point that is recognised as central, collaborative and resilient Carron Valley neighbourhoods need to work together to spread the windfarm funding as widely and fairly as possible, creating opportunities for all. Projects are likely to be spread in this type of pattern:

**Schematic diagram of VRG support across the Carron Valley and District area**



### Community feedback highlighted that:

- Individual grants are very popular, being highlighted as the most important thing that VRG delivers within the survey. These grants need to reach as many people as possible, particularly those most in need.
- Newsletter, Open Day, Website are highly valued
- Small community grants could be used by neighbourhoods to fund small, localised projects and activities to bring people together locally. There could be a potential to co-ordinate these through paid worker support if appropriate.
- More localised projects in all neighbourhoods within the area would be valuable and add to community cohesion.
- The current larger community projects are generally supported, with monitoring of numbers and feedback regarding benefits being useful reporting mechanisms in the future.
- Paid staff time to deliver specific activities and operations to reduce VRG Board time commitment was recognised as useful, with development of energy efficiency initiatives being highlighted in particular.
- Long term Investment of *some* restricted funds is supported by the majority of people and seen as sensible if there is not an immediate use for some of the restricted funding. This is not viewed as important as spending funding on current and emerging projects however. In discussions it was highlighted that now there is a secure long term investment fund, it would be useful for future investment to be more accessible so it can be used for emerging projects in the medium term.

## VRG Core Functions

VRG currently delivers a number of **core functions** for the community:

- **Communication** across the community
- Planning and administration of all the existing **Grant Schemes**
- **Financial** management of restricted and unrestricted funds
- **Employment** of the Administrator and other staff / sub-contractors
- **Organisational Governance** and strategic thinking

The Development Trust Association Scotland and Foundation Scotland are both aware of VRG's activities and recognise the organisation as being forward thinking and making excellent efforts to engage with the wider community.

Succession planning and consideration of how much work can realistically be delivered through voluntary time is an important factor for VRG. Given the significant workload, the Board will continue to use sub-groups to effectively manage work strands as required. VRG will also investigate using core funds to pay people to carry out specific tasks that help the Board to deliver this strategy through advice, project delivery, management and leadership as required.

VRG also works hard to attract new people to the Board to give greater resilience in the future, expanding the representation of age, geography, skills and life experience. It is vital that the Board has

a forward thinking and open minded attitude in order to retain any new interest, being flexible and reacting to new ideas, whilst continuing to have a positive impact on the quality of rural life across the whole area. It is also important that the role and workload of Board members is clearly laid out and limited to a realistic commitment to help with recruitment and retention of Board Members.

## Carron Valley Summary SWOT Analysis



This SWOT analysis has been compiled from collated feedback from the VRG Board against the four headings.

### VRG building upon Strengths and Opportunities includes:

- Good governance and effective distribution of grant funding for the benefit of the community.
- Clear financial policy regarding grants and investments
- Increased grants opportunities
- Effective liaison with Community Council and partners
- Potential increase in staff resource to deliver.

### VRG mitigation of Weaknesses and Threats includes:

- Strategic focus on energy efficiency
- Effective investment

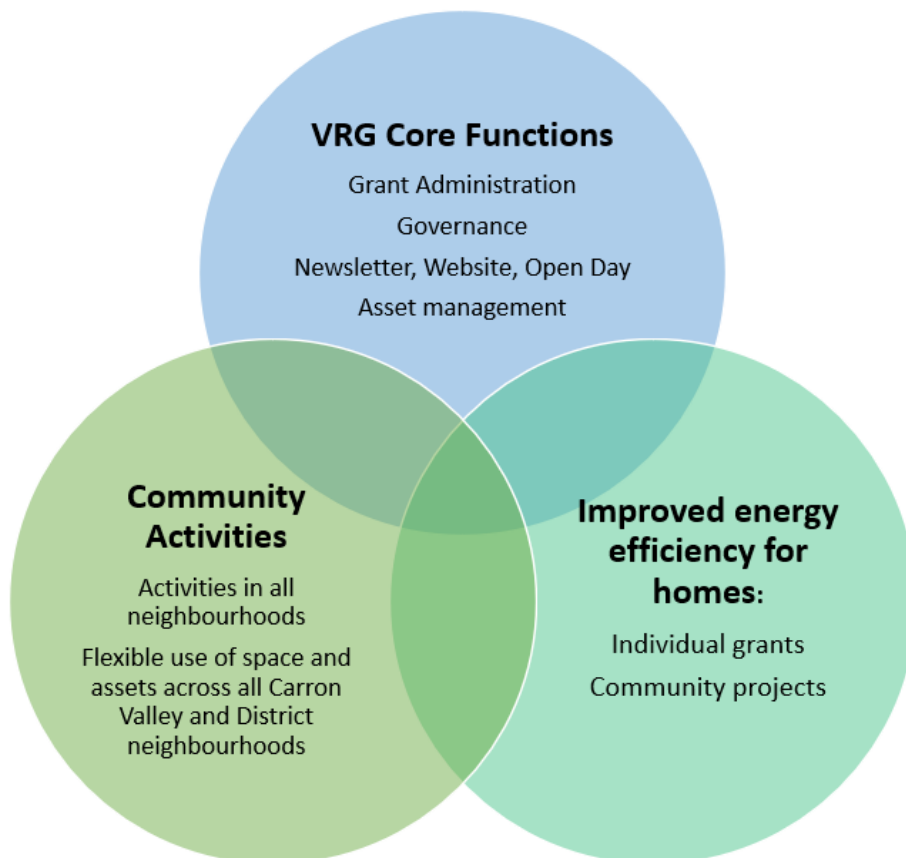
- Ongoing community engagement
- Project development to address identified issues
- Ongoing liaison and discussion to address concerns
- Recruitment to the VRG Board, succession planning.

## VRG Strategic Focus

In addition to the core functions that VRG will continue to deliver, the strategic focus for VRG's activities going forward is two-fold:

**Working towards improved energy efficiency for all homes** in the area, using individual and community grants, loans, staff resource and specialist advice as required.

**Increasing small scale and localised activities** across all neighbourhoods in the Carron Valley and District area, acknowledging that there is no central point geographically so valuing activity across all neighbourhoods.



## VRG Aims and Objectives

Aim 1	Objectives
<p>Distribute VRG unrestricted and restricted funds fairly and transparently across the Carron Valley and District community, benefitting as many people as possible and reaching those most in need.</p>	<p>1a) Allocate <b>individual and community grants</b> using a clear and transparent process, updating the focus of grants to attract new applicants as appropriate</p> <p>AND</p> <p>1b) Support people to work towards <b>energy efficient homes</b> through individual and community grants, together with bespoke projects, schemes and advice as appropriate</p>
Aim 2	Objectives
<p>Connect the community, encouraging collaboration and cohesion between neighbourhoods to give overall community resilience</p>	<p>2a) <b>Communicate across the wider community</b> through the Newsletter, website, social media and Open Day</p> <p>2b) <b>Support wide ranging and diverse neighbourhood activities</b> across the whole area through community grants</p>
Aim 3	Objectives
<p>Support community asset development with grant support through an informed and transparent decision making process</p>	<p>3a) <b>Support viable and sustainable larger community projects</b> that address identified neighbourhood challenges and interests, including environment and heritage</p> <p>3b) <b>Maintain and manage community assets</b> including communication networks, resources, staff, land and buildings, using subgroups as appropriate.</p>
Aim 4	Objectives
<p>Manage VRG effectively, responding to emerging challenges and opportunities as they arise with a flexible and open minded approach</p>	<p>4a) <b>Deliver good governance</b> and financial management, using transparent and well publicised decision making processes</p> <p>4b) Use financial resources effectively to <b>contract additional services and support</b> as required to address challenges and opportunities across the community. This may include employing operational staff as required.</p> <p>4c) Liaise closely with the Community Council, surrounding communities and Foundation Scotland regarding <b>future wind farm funds being made available</b>, to secure funding for Carron Valley and District whilst considering the needs of other communities.</p> <p>4d) <b>Attract and retain new people</b> onto the VRG Board, expanding the representation of age, geography, skills and life experience</p>