

**SCOTO COMMUNITY TOURISM NETWORK CIC
SC726720**

**CIC 34 REPORT/SOCIAL AUDIT REPORT
1st April 2024 – 30 September 2025**

SUMMARY:

A: SCOTO CIC Achievements over the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2025:

- SCOTO network increased to 484 members
- 2-day annual SCOTO Gathering event delivered in Montrose in February 2025 with 102 attendees from across Scotland and beyond
- 6 learning exchanges delivered in Angus in February 2025 visiting 15 local CLT enterprises and providing insights and inspiration for 66 individuals
- Community Tourism Day declared by SCOTO CIC on 25 April 2025 and celebrated across social media
- 12 online gatherings attended by 219 members on topics chosen by the network
- 36 network newsletters published and circulated
- 20 themed areas of support with toolkits, advice and signposting provided on www.scoto.co.uk
- 31 CLT case studies provided on www.scoto.co.uk
- 37 visitor facing blogs showcasing community tourism enterprises provided on www.belocal.scot
- 2240 social media followers on three channels – LinkedIn, FaceBook and Instagram
- 142 participants on SCOTO CIC's closed networks on Whats App and FaceBook
- SCOTO Consulting established and 12 contracts secured which provided direct support to 45 individual communities across Scotland and are supporting 3 regional initiatives
- SCOTO Consulting covered SCOTO CIC core operational costs
- SCOTO CIC registered a trademark for SCOTO Press Pause®
- SCOTO CIC presented or was a panellist at 16 regional, national and international conferences
- SCOTO CIC's end of reporting period member feedback survey confirmed
- A networkers' survey revealed
 - all 7 CIC activities remain relevant and valued
 - Online and face to face to face networking are the most valued activities, followed by the online learning resources and SCOTO's programmes of support.

B: SCOTO CIC Outcomes over the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2025:

- The SCOTO peer-to-peer network steadily grew in numbers and extended its reach across Scotland, especially in the Angus area where the annual gathering took place in 2025
 - SCOTO Networkers' knowledge and understanding of community led tourism practices across Scotland improved through training webinars on online sales, digital visibility, share and repair, and community run visitor information provision
 - SCOTO Networker's accessed new case studies and webinars featuring different models for community led visitor information provision motivating several communities to establish new visitor information services and improve existing services
 - SCOTO Networkers' peer to peer learning exchanges inspired practitioners to try new things, extend their offer, attract more volunteers and reach out to new visitors
 - SCOTO CIC enabled local business and community interests in Press Pause® communities to meet together and consider tourism in ways that have not happened before
 - Scottish communities who participated in SCOTO Press Pause® initiatives better understood and are adapting how tourism plays out in their local area to secure meaningful local benefits (eg Tartan Week in Lochcarron)
 - Three local authorities directly supported SCOTO Press Pause® regional initiatives which are influencing tourism policy and practice
 - Scottish communities opted to take responsibility for local visitor services previously provided by the public sector (toilets, visitor information) to maintain and improve the local visitor experience.
 - SCOTO CIC was recognised in England and Wales as the leading community tourism organisation in the UK
 - SCOTO CIC's consulting activity drew in sufficient core funding for SCOTO to be self-sustaining over this reporting period.
 - SCOTO CIC continued to be valued by its network.
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CIC 34 REPORT/SOCIAL AUDIT REPORT **For the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2025:**

Introduction:

Following a resolution at the SCOTO AGM in 2023, SCOTO successfully transitioned to become a CIC in January 2024. We are required to submit a formal CIC 34 report with our accounts to demonstrate what we have been doing in pursuit of our activities and the benefits this has provided our communities.

The CIC 34 report has 4 parts and covers the 18-month period of the accounts – 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2025. (Please note, with advice from our accountant, the Board agreed to shift the end of year from 31 March to 30 September meaning this current accounting period is 18 months and will revert to 12 months thereafter).

Parts One and Two set out SCOTO COMMUNITY TOURISM NETWORK CIC'S 'Social Audit Report' covering the relevant points for submission to Companies House. This report was presented and approved at the SCOTO COMMUNITY TOURISM NETWORK CIC'S AGM on 17 November 2025 for submission to Companies House.

PART ONE: **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT**

During the 18-month financial year 2024-2025, we have progressed the following under each of our seven approved CIC activities with the community benefit as noted.

Please note CLT is our abbreviation for Community Led Tourism.

1. Provide Virtual and In-Person Forums for CLT Learning, Networking and Connecting

In February 2025 SCOTO held its annual in person gathering in Montrose with 102 community participants at the conference on Day 2 and 66 participating in local learning exchanges on Day 1. The event was sponsored by Angus Council, and the Learning Exchanges were grant aided by the Scottish Community Alliance. The learning exchanges enabled 47 participants and 19 hosts to engage in one of six themed exchanges visiting a total of 15 different community led tourism enterprises in Angus. These enabled all participants to visit and hear firsthand what each host had achieved, and benefit from insights and lessons learned which they can apply to their own endeavours.

Throughout this reporting period SCOTO CIC has provided 12 online gatherings for members on current relevant themes and/or topics requested by the members. These have been a combination of awareness raising topics and showcasing best practice from across the network. 219 members booked to attend these events. The immediate benefit is enhanced knowledge and awareness of what others are doing, updates on current policy and consultation activity, inspiration for communities and the opportunity to interrogate presenters and discuss and explore opportunities.

25 April 2024	Highlights from the SCOTO Gathering
30 May 2024	Community Run Visitor Information Points – Case Study
27 June 2024	Community Run Visitor Information Points – Case Study
25 July 2024	Community Run Visitor Information Points – Case Study
29 August 2024	Community Run Visitor Information Points – Case Study
24 September 2024	World Tourism Day – Inspirations From Around the World
20 October 2024	Community Led Tourism Thistle Award Winners Showcase
28 November 2024	How to Boost Your Online Visibility
30 January 2025	Flourishing Destinations Showcase
27 March 2025	Highlights from the SCOTO Gathering Breakout Sessions
28 August 2025	LOCALfest and Circular Communities Scotland Share & Repair
25 September 2025	Community Run Dark Skies Festivals

SCOTO operates a WhatsApp Group, and a Facebook closed group for members for the exchange of ideas and questions on topics relevant to community led tourism. These were active with 142 were signed up to these groups during this reporting period

COMMUNITY BENEFIT – SCOTO Networkers have had access to one national in-person gathering with six learning exchanges and 12 online gathering events which provide valued networking opportunities, showcase best practice in CLT. These events plus the closed WhatsApp and FaceBook Groups provide highly valued insights and advice to support the development and strengthening of community led tourism in networkers own communities and enterprises.

2. Online learning and development resources for CLT

Throughout this reporting period SCOTO CIC has continued to add and share learning and development resources on www.scoto.co.uk. This has included adding more case studies notably in relation to community run visitor information centres linked to the VisitScotland announcement that all their remaining VICs would close by 2026, and several communities being interested in possible provision of local visitor information.

At the end of this reporting period there are now a total of 31 case studies on the website. The benefit for our networkers and communities is enhanced awareness of what has been done elsewhere to enhance and inform their own project activity. The case studies have helped inform learning exchanges.

<https://www.scoto.co.uk/resources/case-studies/>

During this reporting period SCOTO has increased the themed areas on the website to 20 <https://www.scoto.co.uk/resources/>. These provide toolkits and resources for CLT practitioners and provide signposting to resources and support provided by other organisations and agencies.

SCOTO published regular newsletters and Memos to highlight keep members informed, highlight new resources and up and coming events. SCOTO had a contact list of 484 people for this reporting period and published 23 newsletters/memos.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT – The SCOTO website has been further developed to provide additional resources to support community led tourism enterprises and operators and has had 14k visits in this reporting period.

3. Programmes of support for CLT enterprises including grants

In this reporting period SCOTO CIC sourced a second Scottish Community Alliance grant to support our members through the provision of a professional travel writer interviewing and producing a further 17 visitor facing blogs about their community led tourism enterprise activities and sharing these to a wider audience on SCOTO CIC's digital channels. There is a total of 37 blogs now on the Be Local website - <https://www.belocal.scot/stories/>

SCOTO CIC also sourced a SCA grant for a community learning exchange programme linked to the annual gathering in February 2025 where 66 individuals engaged in community led tourism benefitted from enhanced knowledge and contacts.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT – The SCOTO blog programme has helped 17 communities narrate their story online and to better understand why storytelling is an important mechanism for engaging both local people and visitors, and as marketing material for attracting future visitors. The blogs have also helped garner more local support for the featured initiatives. Community learning exchanges have inspired community players through the sharing of best practice and lessons learned.

4. Provision of a promotional platform for community led tourism activity

SCOTO CIC operates www.belocal.scot as a visitor facing web presence with social channels on Facebook and Instagram. These profiles associate community led tourism enterprises as listings, through blogs and on an interactive map and appeals to conscious consumers.

The interactive map on this website is being developed to enable the enterprises to update their own listings – this is work in progress. Over 40 blogs (including those noted in item 3) are on this platform and are shared on the BeLocal social

media channels targeted at ethical traveller audiences through links and hashtags.

The platform was used to promote LOCALfest a 3-day event planned for October 2025. This partnership event was seeking to showcase community led tourism in action within one community that had undertaken Press Pause® (Dunkeld and Birnam) with bookable experiences and a series of curated conversations on key topics including buy local, local stewardship of heritage assets, circularity in tourism and revenue generation in community run museums and heritage centres. This was directly supported by the local development trust and community council, the local heritage trust and Historic Environment Scotland. The event was actively being planned by SCOTO and partners from November 2024 onwards. Unfortunately, due to a delay in and ultimately shortage of funding and other factors which were eroding the vision, the decision was taken to cancel the 2025 festival. There was notable partner interest in the curated conversations and local enterprises keen to provide experiences. Of note the landing page on the website had 1.9k views. There are plans in place for LOCALfest curated conversations to be progressed in 2026, starting with a local museums and heritage conversation in February.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT - The website has had 3.8k visits in this reporting period and the blogs have provided content for the individual enterprises to use in their own marketing and promotion. The early LOCALfest promotional activity served to raise awareness of the growing scale of Community Led Tourism in Scotland.

5. Gather data and intelligence

Tourism data gathering and measurement in Scotland currently focuses on visitor activity – footfall, bednights and spend. SCOTO CIC is engaged at a national level exploring new ways of measuring positive and negative impacts of tourism at a local level and seeking to correlate social and other data sets with tourism data. Conversations are also underway with Traveltech exploring the role of AI. SCOTO's Exec Director has recently been invited to join the Scottish Tourism Data Partnership. This continues to be work in progress.

SCOTO's Press Pause® initiative specifically seeks to support individual communities in gathering data that demonstrates the positive impacts tourism is having at a local level with a view to further enhancing these impacts – eg living wage jobs sustained, young people retained, cultural assets protected, local traditions celebrated. Over this reporting period SCOTO has undertaken Press pause® with 39 communities.

In this reporting period SCOTO CIC undertook three online surveys to gather data and intelligence for three specific purposes – the Lochcarron United initiative: Brora Press Pause ® feedback and the Montrose Annual Gathering participant feedback.

SCOTO also has a live survey which started during this reporting period linked to the development of the Moray Tourism Strategy. This will be key to understanding lived experience and informing the strategy development which will be submitted in December 2025.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT – SCOTO CIC continues to push for new approaches to measuring tourism impact and benefit at a community level and seeking to ensure tourism activity proactively supports Scotland’s communities and is not imposed on them. The data and insights SCOTO CIC gathers for individual projects and initiatives ensured lived experience and community sentiment are fed into strategy development and recommendations.

6. Undertake contracts and services that support growth and development of community led tourism across Scotland

In this reporting period SCOTO CIC established SCOTO Consulting to progress contracts and advisory services and as income generation to support the core costs of operating SCOTO CIC.

SCOTO CIC devised a workshop-based programme in 2023 to support communities in considering how tourism is or isn’t working for them and what could be done better or differently. This has been successfully delivered in several communities across Scotland and SCOTO trademarked SCOTO Press Pause ® in 2025 as a process for developing community led destination development, management and promotion at a grass roots level specifically for the benefit of the host community.

Over this 18-month accounting period SCOTO Consulting has undertaken twelve contracts which support the growth and development of community led tourism and derive notable benefits within host/target communities:

- **North Highland Initiative Ph2 and 3** – having piloted Press Pause ® with the North Highland Initiative in 2023 SCOTO has since undertaken a further eight initiatives with NHI in Brora, Wick, Tongue, Durness, Ullapool, Plockton, Kyle of Lochalsh and Dornie. Additional funding was sourced from Highland Council via Wester Ross Biosphere. During this reporting period Lochcarron who were one of the pilots rolled out their Tartan Week Lochcarron celebrations – a key recommendation from their Press Pause workshop – and instigated a Lochcarron United initiative to focus on cohesion within their rural community.
- **Ayrshire Rural and Island Ambition Fund Phase 2** – Following the successful completion of Phase 1 activity in the previous accounting period, SCOTO was then commissioned to do a further phase of activity. This included delivering Press Pause ® in Muirkirk and Dalmellington (East Ayrshire), Whiting Bay and the Isle of Cumbrae (North Ayrshire) and a North Carrick strategic programme with nine communities covered by five community councils in South Ayrshire. SCOTO also undertook some

mentoring activity in the Stinchar Valley as a follow up to the Phase 1 valley wide activity and focused on supporting Ballantrae on their positioning and online marketing.

- **Cairngorms National Park Authority** – SCOTO was commissioned to develop the work completed in 2023/24 exploring the possible establishment of a cultural heritage network in the National Park. SCOTO provided facilitation services to support a local working group to design a networking event which then took place in October 2025.
- **Brora Community Led Tourism Support Programme** – SCOTO was appointed by the development trust to develop and support the implementation of their Press Pause ® activity plan and provide advice on the Otters Couch Social Enterprise and online retail project.
- **The Kintyre Way SCIO** – SCOTO was appointed to support the development of a walking festival in August 2025 which included supporting the training of 10 new walk leaders in the communities along the long distance trail.
- **ACT FIRNS** – SCOTO was appointed by the Argyll Coast and Countryside Trust to produce a community engagement plan for the Natural Capital South Knapdale Rainforest Restoration Project with the plan finalised in February 2025.
- **Circular Communities Scotland** appointed SCOTO to support the roll out of their Share & Repair Network Tourism Fund Project through mentoring the five community organisations participating across Scotland. This concluded in May 2025.
- **Fife Pilgrim Way & Kirkcaldy** – SCOTO has been appointed by Fife Council to undertake five workshops across the area with the workshop in Dunfermline taking place in this accounting period and the others to follow – work in progress.
- **Moray Tourism Strategy** – SCOTO Consulting tendered for and was successfully appointed to progress the next Moray Tourism Strategy for the period 2025-2035. This is following the demise of Visit Moray Speyside BID, and the work is being based on SCOTO's Press Pause ® approach. Work in Progress.
- **Press Pause ®**
Individual initiatives in Gorebridge, Strathard and Callander

SCOTO is also in discussions with Glasgow University JUST Tour researchers and is exploring joint working on Press Pause ® evaluation and next steps.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT – During this accounting period the 12 contracts have directly supported 45 individual communities and three regional initiatives.

Over 50 individual communities across the Scottish mainland have now benefited from SCOTO's Press Pause® programme since it was piloted with 39 of these within this reporting period. These have been either funded directly by the community or through partner programmes of support. The contracts and Press Pause® initiatives have contributed to community cohesion and have triggered several collaborative initiatives within and between different communities based on community led tourism principles. This work is ongoing.

SCOTO's grass roots approach to destination development management and promotion is now informing regional tourism policy in Moray, North Carrick and Fife.

7 A focal point that strengthens the representation of community led tourism initiatives

On SCOTO's 3rd birthday in April 2025, SCOTO declared this as Community Tourism Day in Scotland and delivered a programme of activity on social media including live podcasts with key partners and blogs and inviting content from networkers. <https://www.scoto.co.uk/blog/#cltday>

In August and September 2025 SCOTO Director Catriona Waddington embarked on a 'SCOTO Adventures with a Bus Pass' journey over a month with a dual purpose. Catriona was seeking to adopt our SCOTO ethos of slowing down as a visitor using her over 60s free bus pass and also to meet first hand many of our SCOTO networkers and experience what they do in their communities. We set up a dedicated Facebook page to share her experiences which attracted 277 followers, and 37,000 views. She took 66 journeys and covered 11 local authorities and visited at least one community tourism enterprise at each stop on her journey. <https://www.facebook.com/SCOTOBUSPassAdventures/>

Royal Highland Show 2025 – SCOTO held a reception to profile our Press Pause® initiative and to launch LOCALfest 25 with Mairi Gougeon MSP and Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands at the Royal Highland Show. SCOTO also hosted a stand as part of the Community Showcase in the Scottish Government/Scottish Rural Action tent for 4 days which welcomed over 3,000 ticketholders.

SCOTO CIC now operates 3 social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. During this period SCOTO stopped using Twitter /X. Over this period SCOTO posted at least weekly on each channel and had a combined following of 2240 by the end of this reporting period. SCOTO now has over 1000 followers on Linked In

SCOTO both seeks speaker and workshop opportunities at external events and is also invited by key partners to feature on event programmes. Key events where SCOTO showcased and raised awareness of community led tourism are noted below in approximate date order over the 18-month reporting period.

- City DNA Conference in Bologna – SCOTO Exec Director presented on Community Led Tourism in Scotland
- Simpleview European Conference in Bristol – SCOTO Exec Director presented on Film Tourism and Communities
- Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions – SCOTO Chair had a speaker slot on CLT
- Aberdeenshire Banff and MacDuff Town Centre Forum – SCOTO Coordinator provided a CLT workshop
- National Churches Trust Sustainable Futures for Scottish Churches event at Paisley Abbey – SCOTO had a stand and CLT speaker slot
- Cruise Scotland Conference in Dunfermline – SCOTO Exec Director had a CLT speaker slot
- Scottish Tourism Alliance Signature Conference 2025 – SCOTO Chair was a panellist
- South of Scotland Destination Alliance Conference 2025 – SCOTO Director facilitated a CLT workshop
- Venture North annual tourism conference – SCOTO Exec Director hosted a workshop on our Press Pause (R) activity in the North Highlands
- UK Outdoor Recreation Network annual conference – SCOTO Exec Director delivered a CLT workshop
- Our Voice in Tourism event in York – SCOTO provided a keynote presentation on CLT in Scotland, hosted a workshop and had a stand.
- Scottish Historic Environment Forum – SCOTO's Exec Director was a Panellist
- Association of Scottish Self Caterers – Regional events in Highlands and Argyll – SCOTO Directors included in panel discussions
- DTAS annual conference in Glasgow – SCOTO hosted two CLT workshops
- Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum AGM – SCOTO's Exec Director presented on CLT and Press Pause ®

SCOTO addressed over 2000 people at these conferences and events and secured new networkers and leads for development activity.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT - The community benefit from SCOTO's ongoing external engagement activity over the reporting period includes a continued and growing presence of SCOTO CIC and community led tourism at tourism industry and community sector events across the country.

SCOTO continues to be active on social media with highly relevant topics, engages with wider interests and profiles what individual communities are doing. This ensures existing community led tourism enterprises in the SCOTO Network are recognised and valued for what they do in and for their communities and as part of Scotland's visitor economy. Through the SCOTO

CIC peer to peer network they inspire other communities to get involved in CLT for the benefit of their community.

PART TWO: **CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

SCOTO's primary stakeholders are

1. Individual networkers
2. Community run tourism enterprises
3. Supporters & Partners
4. The Tourism Industry and Communities Sector

NEWSLETTERS & MEMOS: We provide regular newsletters and memos to our individual networkers and enterprises, supporters and partners setting out important updates, upcoming events and new information. In each we ask for feedback on any issues they would like us to consider, and advice on future themes and topics for us to cover in newsletters, online gatherings and other activity. 36 newsletters were issued over this 18-month period

MEMBER FEEDBACK SURVEYS: Ahead of this year's AGM SCOTO undertook a member feedback survey asking four simple questions relating to which of SCOTO's activities are important to them; what SCOTO is doing well; what SCOTO could be doing better and any new areas of activity SCOTO should consider. Key feedback was that all seven areas of activity remain relevant with the virtual and in-person forum opportunities being the most valued. Suggested additional activity included more mentoring support, and help with funding plus building local partnerships. This feedback fed into the Board deliberations on future activity and will now be an annual survey linked to the AGM.

ONLINE GATHERING TOPICS: SCOTO CIC holds monthly online gatherings over Autumn and Winter for our networkers usually covering a specific theme that has been requested by our members or something new that will impact on at least some of our network.

SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES: SCOTO CIC use our social media channels (LinkedIn in particular) to provide updates on our own activity and seek views from tourism industry and community sector colleagues and contacts.

CLOSED MEMBER GROUP CHATS: SCOTO CIC has a WhatsApp group and Facebook group for networkers to share thoughts and ideas and seek advice from the Board and the wider network. It is also an effective mechanism for SCOTO CIC to highlight things of interest or as a reminder to take part in activity. With these being closed groups these are a safe space to ask any question – no question is a daft question. This is used weekly as a minimum and has prompted several online gathering topics and the inclusion of new resources on www.scoto.co.uk.

ANNUAL IN PERSON GATHERING EVENTS: We held our annual conference event in February to update and showcase our activity over the previous year, outline our plans for the coming year, introduce and showcase best practice from the area where we are hosting the event, provide breakout and networking opportunities and undertake local learning exchanges. The programme is deliberately constructed to ensure our network stakeholders can engage in different ways and inform our future work plan. We provide an event evaluation survey, and this year received 44 responses and 95% of respondents rating the event 8/10 and above in terms of good use of my time. The feedback informed our work programme with key topics from the conference developed in more detail as online gathering events – eg online retail, circularity in tourism.

SCOTLAND'S NETWORK OF NETWORKS: SCOTO is an active member of the Scottish Community Alliance charitable coalition and attends their monthly meetings to learn what other community networks are doing, share our updates and explore collaborations – a number of which have developed in this accounting period and include a shared presence at the Royal Highland Show 2025. In addition, during this accounting period one of our directors joined the board of the Scottish Community Alliance SCIO.
<https://www.scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/>

EXTERNAL CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT: Our board attend local, regional and national tourism industry and community sector events to learn about industry/sector updates that are relevant to our network, and seek to present on community led tourism, our vision and our practical actions on the ground at these events. We use this as a platform to promote community led tourism and the benefits it brings, for exploring collaborations and to get feedback to help inform and develop our own activity for the benefit of our members.

Key events where SCOTO showcased and raised awareness of community led tourism and had the opportunity to listen to and engage with external stakeholders are provided in our reporting against Activity 7 earlier in this report.

PART THREE: **DIRECTOR'S REMUNERATION**

No remuneration was received by the directors.

PART FOUR : **TRANSFER OF ASSETS OTHER THAN FOR FULL** **CONSIDERATION**

No transfer of assets other than for full consideration has been made.

Approved at SCOTO Community Tourism Network CIC AGM on 17th November 2025

**Proposed by: Melanie Allen
Seconded by: Howard Wilkinson**

Signed:

**Carron Tobin
SCOTO Director**