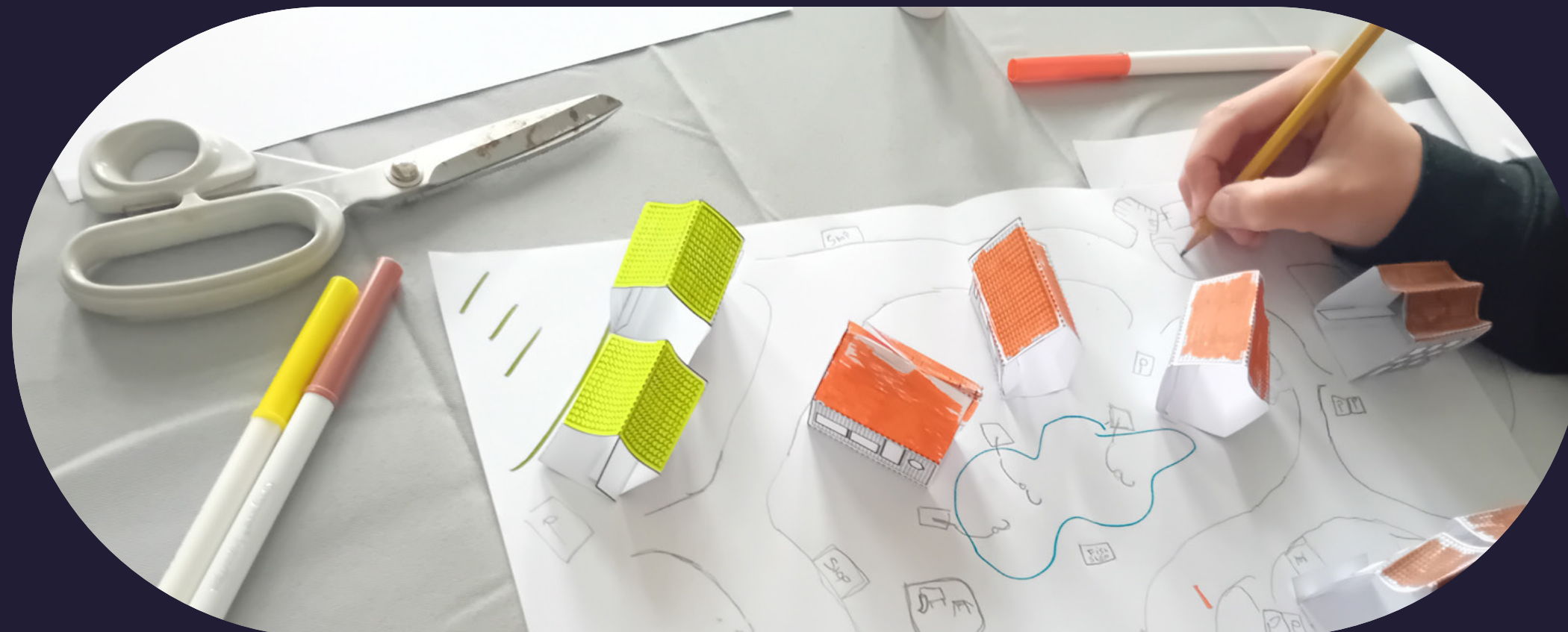
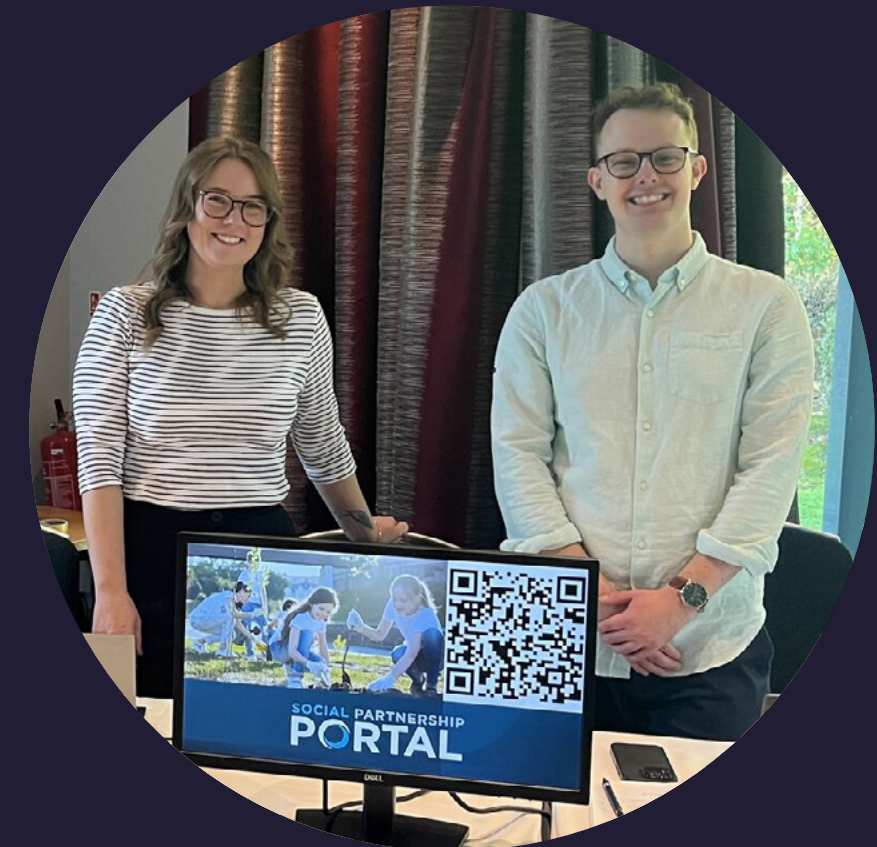


SMEs and VCSEs: Driving local economic growth

Aug - Oct 2025



SMEs and VCSEs: Driving local economic growth

By collaborating on quarterly themes, we can maximise our social impact in the communities where we work. Collaboration means that SCAPE Partners can either work together, or work on a shared goal.

Supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) in the construction industry offers benefits for the economy, the community, and the industry itself. This support is often a key component of public procurement strategies, designed to increase social value and foster resilient, innovative supply chains.

This report showcases some of the ways our framework delivery partners and SCAPE, across England and Wales supported SMEs and VCSEs in just four months.



£8,335
Goods or funds donated



Meet the buyer event

SMEs and VCSEs are vital to the UK economy, making up 99.9% of all businesses and accounting for 60% of private sector employment. Supporting them directly stimulates economic growth at the local and national levels.

In October, more than 1,000 suppliers including SMEs and VCSEs, attended a one-day event at the Nottingham Belfry, hosted by Local Supply Chain (LSC) and supported by SCAPE and our framework delivery partners.

The day kicked off with a morning session dedicated to networking, bringing together buyers, partners, clients, and LSC. The goal was to foster collaboration, celebrate shared successes, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities to strengthen and grow our industry together.

Social Enterprise UK (SEUK), the national membership and campaigning body for social enterprises in the UK, spoke on industry-leading topics such as sustainability, local spend and engagement.

The afternoon session comprised a ‘Meet The Buyer’, with suppliers including subcontractors, consultants, material suppliers and social enterprises in attendance.

Attended by:



Social enterprises in the supply chain

By incorporating VCSEs into the supply chain, companies can increase diversity, encourage innovation, and build more resilient and flexible business networks.

As part of the Nottingham Waterside Bridge project, a milestone was reached at the end of November when Balfour Beatty became the first business to procure goods and services from all three of Grace Enterprises' social enterprises in a powerful demonstration of social value driven procurement.

Each of these enterprises exists to provide meaningful employment for individuals facing barriers to work, offering Living Wage jobs and a supportive environment. Together, they've helped over 100 people into employment and now, their impact is growing.



Radiant Cleaners provide cleaning services at the Nottingham Waterside Bridge site offices and compound.



Half the Story, a Nottingham-based bakery, supplied delicious biscuits for the project team.



Jubilee Events supported the project press day at Nottingham Waterside Bridge, with marquees and event logistics.

Behind every service is a story of resilience and opportunity. One Radiant Cleaners employee said: **“Before joining Radiant, I struggled to find stable work. Now I feel valued, supported, and part of something bigger.”**

A baker at Half the Story added **“It’s more than baking, it’s about rebuilding confidence and being part of a team that believes in second chances.”**

This collaboration is a shining example of how businesses can use their purchasing power to create real, lasting impact. By choosing social enterprises, we’re not just buying services, we’re investing in people, communities, and futures.

“It’s about rebuilding confidence and being part of a team that believes in second chances.”

Balfour Beatty



Enabling carbon reporting and reduction across the supply chain

By helping SMEs manage carbon reporting, large businesses ensure their suppliers can provide the necessary data and meet their environmental requirements. This creates a competitive advantage for SMEs who can demonstrate their low-carbon credentials.

Willmott Dixon has partnered with the Supply Chain Sustainability School (SCSS) and other contractors to launch a free Carbon Calculator, helping the supply chain measure and report their carbon emissions. The tool allows suppliers to calculate Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, apportioning them across Tier 1 contractors.

By offering a simple, standardised method, it reduces duplication and supports smaller businesses with limited resources. Suppliers can input data directly or complete a short report covering fuel, travel, energy, materials, waste, and water. This enables suppliers to manage emissions and improve reporting accuracy.

Another challenge is carbon literacy. Many SMEs lack the internal expertise of resource to navigate complex sustainability reporting requirements. To help this, Willmott Dixon are providing guidance and workshops to help build confidence and capability across the supply chain, including hosting Carbon Reduction Trade Workshops and have introduced a dedicated email address to provide support with carbon reporting.



Expert advice live: Supporting SME and VCSE success

Hosted by the CE Midlands Social Value Theme Group, this collaborative initiative was designed to support and upskill local SMEs and VCSEs, leaving a lasting positive impact by providing free access to valuable industry knowledge and guidance.

This interactive, half-day information session brought together industry experts and around 50 local SME and VCSE representatives. The session focused on key areas that directly influence business growth and sustainability, including marketing, bid writing, sustainability, social value and the procurement act.

Attendees heard from specialists and had the opportunity to ask questions and network with peers from across the region.

VCSEs were introduced to the Social Partnership Portal, an online platform to bring social suppliers and contractors together and maximise social value within construction projects.

Supported by SCAPE and many framework delivery partners, this initiative aimed to foster collaboration, build knowledge, and empower local businesses to thrive within the construction and built environment sector.

Attended by:

AECOM

LSC
Local Supply Chain

STEPNELL
COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION PARTNER

WILLMOTT DIXON
SINCE 1852



Supporting The Horticultural Industry Scheme (THIS) through mentoring

Over the past three months Tim Leggett, Framework Manager at R G Carter, and Chris Cooper, Senior SHE Advisor, have been mentoring Tim Melvin from The Horticultural Industry Scheme (THIS). The mentoring aimed to provide a greater understanding of health and safety and expand its reach across Norfolk.

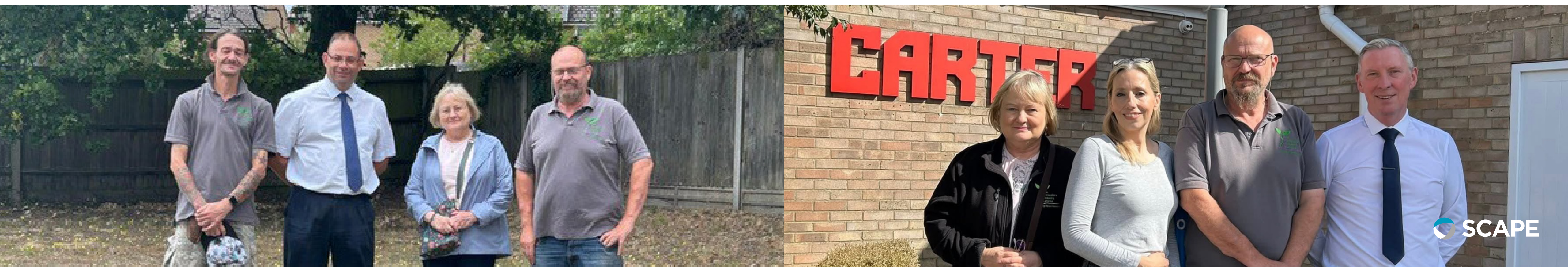
THIS is an award-winning community interest company dedicated to helping people at risk, including those who are homeless, ex-homeless, ex-offenders, care leavers and individuals recovering from addiction, find work and take steps toward reintegration into society.

R G Carter's relationship with THIS began in 2022 at their Thetford office, where they manage the SCAPE regional construction framework. At that time, THIS started maintaining the gardens at the offices and residential properties and have since worked at multiple locations. Over time R G Carter has supported THIS in enhancing their health and safety awareness and standards, both for their staff and as a business.

Through mentoring, R G Carter has provided THIS with a comprehensive understanding of health and safety in the workplace, including legislation, known hazards while working in horticulture (such as using tools that cause vibration and noise), working safely near highways, and how to complete Risk Assessments and Method Statements, with templates provided for practical use.

The mentoring also included a strategic meeting with the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner to explore how they could collaborate and provide opportunities in rehabilitating ex-offenders. Additionally, Chris taught Tim to complete COSHH Assessments for regularly used chemicals and ensuring the correct use of PPE when handling them.

The two organisations now maintain regular contact, providing ongoing advice and support, and have agreed to organise further meetings and training in the new year to continue building impact.



Partnering with VCSES

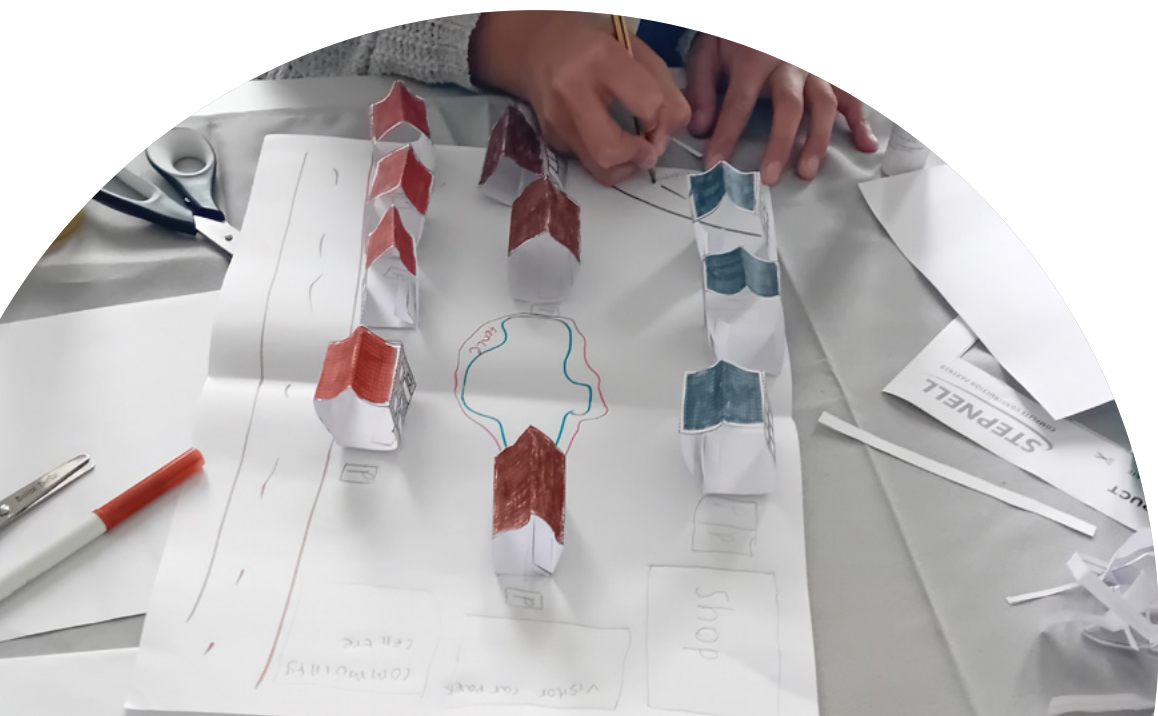
Inspiring future builders through business

Through a partnership with Inspire in Arts, Stepnell Construction engaged home-educated students in a creative challenge to ‘Build a Business’.

Inspire in Arts is a charity with a mission to provide a safe and social creative environment that supports the transition of young people into adulthood.

Participants explored various roles within the construction industry and collaborated to form mock companies. They then planned their own 10-home residential estates considering layout, costing, and the roles needed to deliver the project.

This programme not only introduced construction as a career pathway, but also helped students build enterprise, planning, and financial awareness in a real-world context.



Lincoln City Foundation Poacher's Patch community garden

In September, Lindum donated sub-base to Lincoln City Foundation (LCF) in support of “Poacher’s Patch”, a new community garden project.

LCF delivers a broad range of programmes focused on health, wellbeing, education, and social inclusion. Its work benefits children, adults, and families throughout the Sincil Bank area — one of the 10% most deprived communities in the country — where residents have very limited access to green space.

The donation helped lay the foundation for transforming an overgrown, disused strip of land behind the stadium’s 3G pitch into an inviting and functional green space.

Poacher’s Patch will allow LCF to enhance its community programmes by providing opportunities for children to learn about the environment and growing food, creating a tranquil wellbeing area for staff and its mental health programme participants, and offering a much-needed local asset for residents.



Partnering with VCSES

Rotary Club of Bedford Park St John's School Sensory Garden

In response to a request from the Rotary Club of Bedford Park, who were coordinating the creation of a new sensory garden at St John's School, Ashe donated surplus construction materials from their nearby Bedford Academy project.

Recognising the opportunity to support a valuable community initiative while reducing waste, Ashe's site team arranged for the materials to be collected and delivered directly. They are now being used to help build a sensory garden, an

inclusive, calming space designed to support the sensory and emotional needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

The garden will provide a safe and stimulating environment where students can explore textures, colours, and sounds, supporting their development and wellbeing.

This initiative highlights the power of local partnerships, with Ashe, the Rotary Club, and St John's School working together to deliver a lasting legacy for the community.



Sports Kits for students at Bedford Academy

Ashe proudly donated £2,000 to Bedford Academy to support the enhancement of their sports provision.

This funding was specifically allocated to purchase much needed football and basketball kits for students, helping to remove financial barriers and ensure that all pupils can participate in team sports with pride and confidence.

Wearing professional, branded kits will instil a sense of pride and unity among students,

strengthening their connection to both the school and the wider community.

This initiative reflects Ashe's broader mission to invest in the communities where they work, ensuring that their contributions extend beyond the construction site and into the lives of young people.

They're delighted to support Bedford Academy in promoting physical activity, teamwork, and inclusion through sport.



“The day was filled with great energy, meaningful conversations, and new opportunities, a true celebration of collaboration across the supply chain.”




Sophie Nicholson,
Sales and Account Manager,
Local Supply Chain

“Jubilee Events is one of three social enterprises that exist to create supportive employment for people who face barriers to work—and now Balfour Beatty is the first customer to work with all three businesses! This kind of partnership is transformational.”



Connie Pringle,
Operations Manager,
Jubilee Events

“We are incredibly grateful to Lindum for their generous donation and continued support. Poacher’s Patch will not only create a valuable green space for residents but will also help us deliver more opportunities for learning, wellbeing, and connection, further strengthening our links with those who need them most.”



Alex Bavin,
Director of Operations,
Lincoln City Foundation

