

DUNDEE DOTS

A pilot exploring what happens when we share differently and connect the dots.

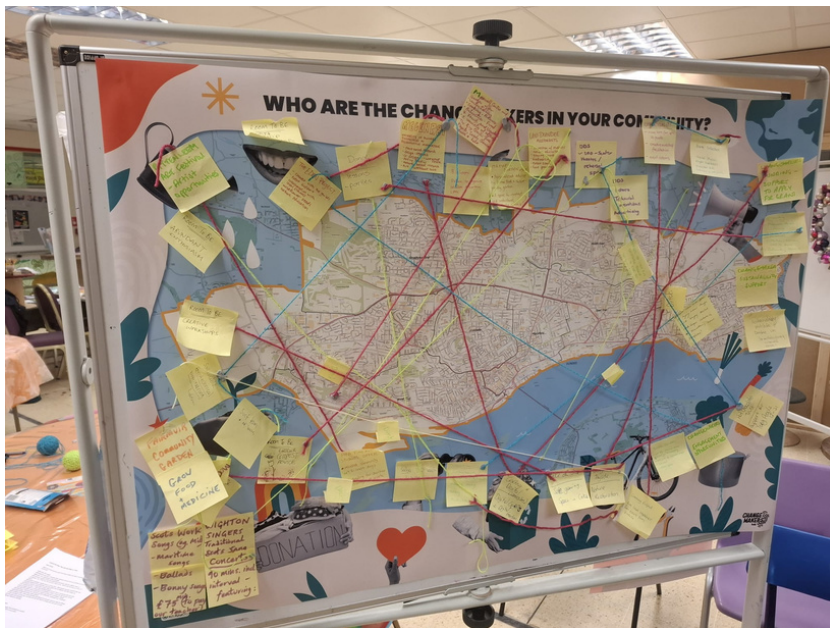


Table of Contents

OVERVIEW & HIGHLIGHTS.....	PAGE 1
HOW DID IT START.....	PAGE 3
HOW WE TESTED IT - INITIAL PHASE.....	PAGE 5
HOW WE TESTED IT - MIDDLE PHASE.....	PAGE 6
HOW WE TESTED IT - END PHASE.....	PAGE 8
TRANSACTIONS & LEARNING.....	PAGE 10
SUMMARY OF FINAL INTERVIEWS.....	PAGE 12
INSIGHTS & KEY LEARNINGS.....	PAGE 14
NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	PAGE 17
REFLECTIONS FROM FACILITATORS.....	PAGE 19

Overview & Highlights



What is Dundee Dots?

Dundee Dots is a five-month pilot testing an alternative, non-monetary exchange system between organisations. Using a simple mutual-credit model ("Dots"), participants shared skills, space, support, and surplus.

The purpose was to make collaboration easier, reveal underused resources, strengthen relationships, and explore more circular, regenerative ways of working across Dundee's community sector. Although the mechanism involved Dots, the deeper aim was to rethink value, connection, and how organisations can support one another beyond money.

What and how we tested

Organisations selected the Dundee Dot Exchange, the simplest of four proposed models. Each organisation listed offers and needs, exchanged support using Dots, and recorded activity in a shared ledger.

Testing included:

- exploration of potential models
- an introductory call and joining survey
- shared marketplace with Offers + Needs (Dots & Dashes)
- bi-weekly check-ins and weekly update emails
- a midway relationship-building session
- a public workshop exploring value and exchange
- an end-of-pilot in-person social

Across 16 weeks, over 40 exchanges took place.

Who took part and example transactions

Thirteen organisations participated in the pilot, majority from the third sector and some from the creative sector: Cake or Dice, Dundee Bairns, DVVA Communities Team, Maxwell Centre, Room To Be, ScrapAntics, Signpost International, Stein Design, TCA Dundee, Transform Community Development, Uppertunity, Wellbeing Works, and Alexander Community Development.

Examples of Exchanges

The pilot enabled a range of practical and creative exchanges, including:

Room hire and workshop space; board-game facilitation, creative sessions, cookery workshops, wellbeing activities; design critique, comms-plan discussions, social media help; harvest boxes, veg boxes, ready meals, surplus food; First Aid training; catering tasters and refreshments; chairs, décor, tools, art supplies, cleaning products, packaging; "man with a van," event setup support, volunteer help; and unique circular items like a wormery.

These exchanges showed how much value already exists, and how a shared system helps it circulate more openly.

Overview & Highlights



Key Learning

1. **Relationships matter most** – Trust, visibility, and human connection drove the strongest exchanges. In-person sessions were essential for reducing hesitancy and building confidence.
2. **Time is the biggest barrier** – Every organisation reported limited capacity. A small amount of coordination proved crucial for maintaining momentum.
3. **Simplicity is vital** – Organisations want a system that is easy, quick, and low-admin. Spreadsheets worked for testing, but a clearer, more visual tool is needed long term.
4. **Value is understood differently** – Assigning Dot values was challenging. Many preferred relational, conversation-based collaboration over transactional mechanisms.
5. **Skills and non-tangible support create the most impact** – Exchanges involving advice, creativity, staff time, or specialist input were often more useful than physical items.
6. **Internal communication gaps matter** – In larger organisations, frontline staff weren't always aware of Dots, leading to missed exchanges.
7. **Appetite for collaboration is strong** – Participants want more connection, shared learning, and opportunities to work together in playful, low-pressure ways.

Next Steps

1. **Light Coordination & Clear Hosting** – Continue Dundee Dots with a small amount of dedicated coordination (around 4–6 hours per week) to update the marketplace, prompt matches, and support engagement. The pilot showed that momentum depends on someone holding space.
2. **Refine the Marketplace** – Create a simple visual online hub to replace spreadsheets. Test clearer categories (skills, space, surplus, time) and offer guidance on when Dots apply versus Pounds. This will make exchanges easier and help organisations see fair return on investment.
3. **Expand Participation** – Broaden the network to include more community groups, social enterprises, creatives, and ethical businesses. This increases opportunities for exchange and reduces imbalance. Provide simple onboarding so operational staff (not just leaders) know how to take part.
4. **Build a Monthly Social Rhythm** – Host a one-hour monthly social, rotating between organisations. Keep it light, playful, and relational. The pilot showed that trust and connection, not the currency, drive exchanges, so regular touchpoints are essential.

Potential Impact

Dundee Dots has the potential to support long-term sustainability across multiple levels. Environmentally, it encourages reuse, sharing, and circulation of existing resources, reducing waste and unnecessary consumption. Economically, it helps organisations stretch limited budgets, access support without additional financial pressure, and build resilience through shared capacity rather than competition. Socially and at a community level, it strengthens relationships, trust, and local networks, key foundations for wellbeing, collaboration, and collective problem-solving. By making hidden skills, time, and surplus visible, Dundee Dots offers a practical way to support a more connected, circular, and people-centred local economy. It asks:

Can Dundee build a culture where value flows more freely, where resources are shared more openly, and where people and organisations thrive through collaboration rather than competition?

How Did it Start?



Initial Spark

Dundee Dots originated from the Changemakers Hub, where partners were noticing similar challenges across the city: tight budgets, burnout, unused spaces and skills, and organisations working in isolation despite wanting to collaborate. We kept returning to the same question:

What if Dundee had more ways to support each other that didn't rely solely on money?

This sparked an exploration into alternative currencies and mutual credit systems, simple tools that communities worldwide use to exchange skills, space, and resources without financial strain.

Why explore alternative currencies?

We wanted to test whether a local exchange system could:

- make collaboration easier and more natural
- reduce pressure on limited budgets
- reveal underused skills and resources
- reduce waste through circular sharing
- strengthen relationships and collective resilience
- shift thinking away from scarcity toward abundance

The aim was not to build a perfect system, but to experiment with a new way of working.

What are alternative currencies and mutual credit systems?

Alternative currencies allow groups to exchange value using an internal unit instead of money.

In a mutual credit system, everyone starts with a zero balance, gives what they can, and receives what they need. Balances rise and fall, and temporary “debt” is part of how the system flows.

This approach:

- widens access to support
- unlocks hidden value
- reduces waste
- builds trust and reciprocity

It suits Dundee's third-sector and community landscape, where collaboration already exists but is often blocked by time, money, or lack of visibility.

Many organisations already had the ingredients for collaboration (skills, space, creativity, people) but no simple way to connect these pieces. Dundee Dots emerged as a way to join these dots, making everyday support more visible and easier to exchange.

How Did it Start?



Why does Dundee Dots matter for Dundee?

Dundee Dots emerged in a context where many organisations are doing vital work but operating with limited time, capacity, and financial flexibility. For these groups, even small exchanges can make a meaningful difference to their daily operations. Yet these opportunities often remain unseen or inaccessible simply because there is no mechanism to connect them.

Dundee Dots helps bridge that gap. It:

- reduces barriers to collaboration by giving organisations a simple way to approach each other
- makes skills, space, surplus and creativity visible across the network
- creates access without financial pressure, allowing organisations to give and receive support even when budgets are tight
- encourages creative problem-solving, using what already exists in Dundee
- builds long-term relationships by normalising exchange, generosity, and mutual support
- supports a circular local economy where waste becomes value, and underused resources find new life

Where does this sit within wider regenerative thinking?

Dundee Dots is more than an exchange tool, it is part of a broader regenerative movement taking shape across Dundee. This movement prioritises interdependence, creating a space where like-minded organisations can strengthen their work through reciprocal contribution within a local network. By valuing less tangible outcomes such as solidarity, wellbeing, and sustainability, it challenges the assumption that money is the only meaningful way to measure or exchange value.

Drawing inspiration from thinkers like Charles Eisenstein and Keith Skene, the project explores how small shifts in behaviour and mindset can strengthen three key pillars:

- Economic resilience: facilitating the circulation of local assets, reducing reliance on external funding, and making better use of what already exists.
- Social connection: building trust, confidence, and networks that sustain organisations beyond the pilot.
- Environmental responsibility: reducing waste, sharing surplus, and embracing circular practices.

Dundee Dots is intentionally simple. The “Dots” themselves are only a vehicle. A playful, manageable way to test whether a different kind of economy is possible at a local scale.

This pilot doesn’t answer every question, but it shows what becomes possible when organisations are given permission, structure, and support to work differently.

How We Tested Dundee Dots: Initial Phase



Researching and shaping the models

We explored a range of alternative exchange systems for B2B – timebanks, mutual credit, circular surplus models, contribution-based systems, and trust-based currencies. From this, we created four simple options for Dundee organisations:

1. Dundee Dot Exchange – mutual credit for skills and services.
2. Circular Surplus Match – exchanging surplus physical resources.
3. Commons Contribution Model – earning credits through shared community benefit.
4. Anchor Credits – a trust-based system where value is negotiated.

Introducing the idea to organisations

We invited organisations to a 90-minute online session to explore the concept and discuss the four models. A follow-up survey confirmed who wanted to join and gathered expectations. Findings:

What mattered most: Across the survey responses, the four highest-ranking priorities were:

1. Supporting trust and collaboration
2. Discovering new ways to solve problems
3. Practical exchanges being easy
4. Building networks

What success would look like: Across organisations, success meant:

- Stronger relationships – forming new connections and strengthening existing ones
- Meaningful, practical exchanges – actually using the system to access skills, space, surplus
- Learning whether this model works for Dundee – understanding what enables collaboration
- Increased capacity – easing pressure by uncovering hidden resources and new ways to share

Selecting the model

Organisations chose Option 1: Dundee Dot Exchange. They also requested one addition: a space for listing Needs (“asks”), tracked as Dashes (–), to improve visibility and mutual support.

Setting up the system

We:

- created a shared ledger. Organisations were able to change and adapt their Dots and Dashes
- confirmed expectations and payment (valuing time and participation)
- held bi-weekly check-ins
- sent weekly emails with reminders, examples, and connection prompts
- 13 organisations then exchanged over 16 weeks

All of this aimed to keep momentum, reduce hesitancy, and support real exchanges.

How We Tested Dundee Dots: Middle Phase



By Week 4, one thing was clear: the Dundee Dots pilot is wanted and needed. Organisations see value in rethinking how they share skills and resources, but the early phase also highlighted that meaningful collaboration takes time, and time is one of the scarcest resources in the third sector.

Time as a Critical Resource

Staff are stretched, making it difficult to experiment or engage consistently. The role of coordinators has been essential in keeping momentum, prompting exchanges, and “joining the dots.” This reinforced a key learning: if we want new ways of working, we must value and resource the time it takes to build and maintain relationships.

Different Organisational Realities

Smaller organisations were able to engage quickly, while larger ones needed more time due to internal layers and processes. This slowed momentum but highlighted that embedding new systems requires patience and trust, not just interest.

Reciprocity Already Emerging

Despite early barriers, several helpful exchanges took place. Organisations shared space, creative support, surplus materials, and training. The Dashes (Needs) list helped surface practical requests, making it easier to connect asks with offers. These early interactions showed that goodwill and collaboration already exist, the system simply helps bring them forward.

Hesitancy and the Need for Playfulness

Many organisations were still cautious about listing their full range of offers. This came from habit, competition, or lack of time to reflect. To get the most from the pilot, participants noted the need for more play, experimenting, and confidence to “put things on the table.”

Sector-Wide Busyness

“Busyness” appeared across every conversation. This limited participation but also highlighted the potential of shared systems: collaboration could reduce pressure, distribute workload, and make the sector more resilient. Several even asked whether sharing staff time or skills could be possible in the future.

Looking Ahead

The early phase sparked new relationships and fresh thinking about value. While the pilot won’t answer everything in 16 weeks, it has already opened the door to:

- stronger local connections
- better visibility of skills and resources
- more relational, less transactional collaboration
- a shift from scarcity toward shared thriving

How We Tested Dundee Dots: Middle Phase



Ongoing support and check-ins

The two facilitators met organisations regularly to troubleshoot barriers, suggest connections, and help refine offers and needs.

Midway Meeting – 21 October

We held a fun, relational session designed to build trust and help the group reflect on progress.

Aims:

- strengthen relationships
- explore barriers
- generate solutions
- imagine future possibilities

Activities included:

- icebreaker and reflective questions
- speed-date style conversations
- exploring what quality relationships look like
- discussing barriers such as hesitancy, clarity, and confidence
- sharing ideas like using WhatsApp, refining offers, and normalising asks

Insights from the mid-pilot survey

Benefits experienced so far:

- new relationships and awareness of organisations
- increased visibility of skills/surplus
- creative thinking and new perspectives
- personal development and learning

Barriers identified:

- hesitation to initiate exchanges
- unclear offers or varying Dot values
- challenges engaging wider teams
- time constraints
- dislike or difficulty with spreadsheets

Suggestions to improve:

- clearer descriptions and contact info
- more facilitator-led prompts
- more diverse partners (incl. private sector)
- more visual or user-friendly tools
- wider incentives in future (e.g., perks, discounts)

How We Tested Dundee Dots: End Phase



Public Workshop (Week 14)

We held a workshop open to the public: “Connect the Dots: Play with New Ways to Trade”. In this workshop, we explored alternative currencies, value, and exchange.

Activity 1 – What does the economy mean to you?

Participants shared immediate associations with “the economy.” Responses fell into three groups:

- Traditional concepts: money, banks, trade, investment
- Critiques: inequality, dependency, capitalist structures
- Future visions: regenerative models, green economy, donut economics

This highlighted a shared tension between familiar systems and a desire for something different.

Activity 2 – What would it be like if EVERYONE had what they needed to live a good life, and how would that be different from how things are now?

We explored the above questions, and participants imagined a society where everyone could live a good life. Feedback revealed a consensus:

- The ideal system requires universal security
- A shift toward empathy, collaborative, caring society
- And systemic changes that promote Less money driven decision making.

Activity 3 – Trading with Dots

Participants offered a personal skill or interest and made mock exchanges using “Dots”. Reflections echoed challenges seen in the pilot:

- Difficulty defining value without money
- Negotiation feeling unfamiliar or awkward
- The need for trust and clear boundaries during exchange

The activity showed that mindset, not mechanism, is often the biggest barrier.

Activity 4 – Joining the Dots (Mapping Exchange)

Participants mapped local organisations on a Dundee map and used wool to show potential exchange pathways. The resulting map visually demonstrated a complex web of community resources and opportunities for reciprocal trade. Observations noted the need for time and trust to build connections, whilst acknowledging this creates a challenge with keeping all people engaged.

Overall Insight

Participants moved from critiquing the current system to actively imagining and mapping alternative, community-based ways of exchanging value. The session reinforced that while new models require confidence and relationship-building, there is strong appetite in Dundee for more collaborative, regenerative ways of working.

How We Tested Dundee Dots: End Phase



In-Person Social Gathering (Week 14)

We held an in-person networking session during the 14th week as a relaxed breakfast designed to help participants feel more connected and energised. Breakfast nibbles were provided by one of the pilot organisations, setting a collaborative tone from the start.

Opening Activity: Checking In

Participants selected a playful object and used it to describe how they were feeling that morning. This light exercise helped break the ice and encouraged open, human-centred conversation.

Activity 1: “Two Dots and a Wish”

Everyone then shared:

- Two personal skills or things they could offer, and
- One thing they needed.

Though personal, the activity linked back to the pilot’s themes of giving and receiving. Two key insights emerged:

- Most participants said they needed more time, reflecting a shared pressure across organisations.
- People learned small personal details about one another, deepening connection and reminding us that we’re all navigating similar challenges.

Group Discussion: Ideas for Next Steps

We closed with a reflective discussion on how the project could evolve. Key comments included:

- Bring in a wider range of organisations to create more varied exchange opportunities.
- Provide clearer guidance on what should be exchanged using Dots versus paid in Pounds, to protect organisational income.
- Explore how offers could be adapted or expanded, and whether a larger marketplace or database would help.
- Be mindful of capacity and energy; exchanges should support, not strain, organisations.
- Consider how to show value and return on investment beyond money.
- Find the right balance between clear information and avoiding admin overload.
- Offer regular reminders of available offers.
- Keep the process simple and playful, not another task.
- Form a steering group and create more opportunities to build relationships.

Participant Feedback

People described the session as a refreshing, more social style of networking and expressed interest in having more sessions like this.

How We Tested Dundee Dots: Transactions & Learning



Additional Learning

One coordinator attended a DVVA Volunteer Coordinator meeting to explore how “people power” (time, skills, and volunteering) might fit into Dundee Dots.

The insight: every organisation needs volunteers and time. Volunteers help, but they can also be time heavy. Volunteers have expressed interest in swapping across organisations to share learning

Facilitator Reflections

Both facilitators kept notes throughout, capturing insights into behaviour, patterns, momentum, and relational dynamics.

Example Transactions

The pilot supported over 40 exchanges, showing how everyday skills, space, surplus, and support can unlock value across Dundee’s community sector. Examples include:

- Space & Facilities

Room hire for meetings and workshops; access to community and outdoor spaces.

- Facilitation & Activities

Board-game sessions, creative workshops, wellbeing and mindfulness sessions, volunteer drop-ins, and a “Getting Ready to Volunteer” workshop.

- Professional Support & Advice

Design critique and branding advice, comms-plan discussions, troubleshooting sessions, peer problem-solving, and help with social media content.

- Food, Growing & Circular Economy Exchanges

Harvest boxes, veg boxes, ready meals, surplus food redistribution, cookery workshop support

- Equipment & Resource Sharing

Decor items, art packs, fabrics, tools, packaging, cleaning products, swivel chairs, stacking chairs, and other repurposed or surplus materials.

- Transport & Practical Support

“Man with a van” support, help preparing for events, and assistance with market or community-day setup.

- Training & Skill Development

First Aid training and individual skill-sharing sessions across the network.

- Specialist or Unique Circular Items

A wormery, bedding, and other reused items contributing to circular practice.

Alongside social and economic benefits, the pilot demonstrated clear environmental value. Various items were reused rather than purchased new or sent to waste. By sharing what already existed within the network, Dundee Dots helped reduce unnecessary consumption, extend the life of materials, and support more circular use of resources across organisations.

Marketplace Ledger

Organisation	Contact details	Offer 1 & Dots	Offer 2 & Dots	Offer 3 & Dots	Need 1	Need 2	Need 3
Organisation 1		First Aid training					
Organisation 2		Cafe Space Hire Main cafe space hire, fully accessible seating, a maximum of 40 people with wifi, screen, projector, audio, induction loop. ●●●● 4 Dots for 3 hours	Team Building sessions Board gaming session - We can offer co-operative team building games, with a facilitator. ●●● 3 Dots for 2 hour session		Creatives to run workshops within the cafe space.	We are looking for large and small mirrors, frames for decoration of the cafe. Also artificial flowers and vines	
Organisation 3		Black Tote Boxes with Mixed Items Boxes with various items, contents vary weekly. Items cannot be resold, must be used within your communities or given out for free. This weeks offers: Tote of assorted ringbinders/lever arch files; Disposable bed pads; Tote of A4 cardboard (packs are a little dirty but card is fine inside); 2 televisions (32" wall mounted); Tote of coat hangers; Double airbed; Tote of personal hygiene kits ● 1 Dot per box/item			Ambient food items. These include essential food ingredients.	Children's clothes	Rehis training (Ideally 3 spaces)
Organisation 4		Volunteer Policy Review Reviewing volunteer policy, agreements, organisational development, and providing templates for volunteer documents. (1.5 hrs) ●●● 3 Dots per session	Information Session Information session on trustee roles, responsibilities, and all things volunteering, including celebrating volunteers and recruitment. (1 Hour) ●● 2 Dots per session/ (2 hours) ●●●● 4 Dots per session	1:1 Engagement Meeting Tailored meeting to discuss the support your organisation needs and tailor it accordingly. (1 hour) ●● 2 Dots per meeting			
Organisation 5		Workshops Workshops on a wide range of creative, gardening, cooking, and wellbeing topics. (2 hours) ●●●● 4 Dots per workshop	Outdoor Meeting Space Access to a beautiful safe outdoor meeting space in the Maxwell Centre garden, with light refreshments and facilities. (2 hours) ●●● 3 Dots per session	Harvest Boxes Fortnightly harvest box or "Pick Your Own Harvest" session (1 available each week). ●● 2 Dots per box/session	Support with ideas to scale up income revenue within our business model.		
Organisation 6		Green Team Gardening and composting advice. ● 1-3 Dots depending on support	Creative Team Creative worksheets/resources for workshops or events (●● 2 Dots), editorial advice for creative writing (●-●●●● 1-3 Dots depending on length).	Inclusiv-T Volunteer Task Force (availability dependent), LGBTQIA+ allyship workshop, or Gender Talks Listening Session. ●●● 3 Dots	Gardening Tools / plants, wood for construction, planters / big pots	Creative materials for workshops	Opportunities for strengthening allyship: working on a collaborative project together / building a partnership
Organisation 7		Large Room Hire Room hire for community/team use. ●●● 3 Dots (negotiable)	Blue Barrels Blue storage barrels. ● 1 Dot per barrel	Art Resource Pack Box of art resources. ●● 2 Dots per box	Team building sessions	Large tool hire, specifically floor cleaner machine)	Musical instruments, as well as food items for emergency bags
Organisation 8		Room Hire Rooms of various sizes available for meetings or one-to-one sessions. ● 1 Dot for 2 hours	Ready Meals A selection of nutritious vegetarian meals made using local surplus food. ● 2 Dots per 20 meals	Cooking Skills Workshop A healthy eating and nutrition cooking workshop delivered by a qualified nutritionist for up to six people. REHIS training also available. Dot value negotiable. ●●● 3 Dots per workshop	Support and guidance to better utilise our garden & allotment space in Whitfield.	Review of our social media channels and support developing a strategy.	First aid in the workplace training.
Organisation 9		Design Advice/Critique A discussion with me on email or call to give feedback on something you/your organisation is designing in-house (e.g. presentation, poster, leaflet, campaign). I'll share pointers to help make it clearer or more professional. (1 hour, advice only, no design work included). ●●● 3 Dots	Design Chat A short call/meeting to explore an idea or design challenge you may have (e.g. planning how a marketing campaign might look, writing a creative brief, thinking through a project or just general brainstorming). Afterwards, I'll follow up with key points and advice from our chat by email. (1.5 hours, chat and email follow up only, no design work included). ●●●● 4 Dots	Design Request Support to create a simple graphic (e.g. flyer, social media post, slide graphic). Please ensure you're prepared with a clear brief and final copy/details for any request you'd like to make. ●●●●● 5 Dots Note: this offer covers small design tasks only and not larger projects like design of; annual reports, brand identities, or full marketing campaigns etc. Happy to discuss larger projects separately.	Private meeting space for a potential client design meeting/workshop in Dundee (preferably somewhere central) during November – dates and numbers tbc. It would be good to have discussions with Dot members who could potentially have space/rooms to support this. Would need to have good Wi-Fi connection.		
Organisation 10		Policy Development Support with policy development focused on drug and alcohol use. ●●● 3 Dots per session	Drug and Alcohol Awareness Training Awareness training sessions around drug and alcohol use, tailored for organisations. ●●● 3 Dots per session		Room hire for one to one sessions, as well as group/meeting space. Ideally Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays.		
Organisation 11		Surplus Food Crates Nutritious produce from FareShare Tayside & Fife. Availability changes daily. ●-●●● 1-3 Dots depending on crate size	Furniture Pre-used domestic and office furniture, cleaned and functionality-checked. ●-●●●●● 1-5 Dots depending on amount	Volunteering Opportunities Opportunities at FareShare for individuals/groups: driving/deliveries, off-loading/sorting, or making up CFM orders. Dot value to be arranged	We are looking for a wider range of volunteering opportunities for individuals who use our housing support services.		
Organisation 12		Lunch & Learn: Creativity at Work We'll join your team for a relaxed lunch (provided by us) session exploring creativity, inclusion, or regenerative leadership. We can set the topic together. Up to 10 people. ●●●●● 5 Dots	Inclusive Practice Lab A two-hour session to explore how your organisation can be more inclusive and creative. Includes reflection tools and practical actions. ●●●●● 5 Dots	Serendipities Catering Taster Enjoy a sample lunch or snack platter from our Serendipities kitchen. Up to 10 people. ●●●●● 5 Dots	Garden volunteers	Van hire occasional	Training
Organisation 13		Mindfulness Taster Session 45-60 minute mindfulness session with a trained facilitator. ●●● 3 Dots	Room Hire Training/board room for up to 12 people with Wi-Fi, TV, flipchart, and tea/coffee facilities. City centre location. (3 hours) ●●●● 4 Dots	Volunteer Support General volunteer help for one-off tasks such as maintenance, tidying, sorting, or simple gardening. (3 hours, by arrangement, weekdays only) ●●●● 4 Dots			

Summary of Final Interviews



The final interviews explored organisational experiences, challenges, and reflections from across the Dundee Dots pilot. Participants consistently described being motivated by a desire to collaborate more effectively, strengthen community networks, and rethink what value means beyond financial exchange. Many viewed the pilot as a chance to “try something different,” experiment with new concepts, and find “a way of making us richer without having to do a funding application.”

Despite Dundee’s active third sector, several interviewees noted that the assumption that “everyone is already connected” is misleading. The pilot offered a structure to reconnect groups, meet new partners, and uncover opportunities that day-to-day pressures often obscure.

Experience of the Pilot & Key Barriers

Participants praised the pilot as “well organised and coordinated,” but interviews revealed several common challenges, most prominently time and capacity. Organisations often struggled to free up staff to take part, and the busiest periods (e.g., summer programmes) did not fall within the pilot timeline, limiting opportunities for exchange.

Practical barriers also emerged. For some activities, such as transporting heavy materials or collecting wood, the effort outweighed the benefit. There were also operational issues: senior leaders who attended meetings understood the system, but frontline staff (those handling tills, booking systems, deliveries, or invoicing) were often unaware of Dundee Dots. This disconnect meant some exchanges were missed or complicated.

One organisation felt like a “net loser,” having given significantly more than they received. This raised concerns about fairness and balance, particularly for organisations whose offers were tangible goods with high real-world value, such as food or furniture.

Confusion Around the Currency

A key theme was uncertainty about the role of Dots themselves. For some, the dots were “just another currency,” making exchanges feel transactional rather than relational. Several participants questioned whether the system risked adding “a layer of complexity” to interactions they would normally approach informally or cooperatively.

Assigning Dot values to like-for-like physical goods or services proved difficult. Offers were sometimes too vague (such as simply listing “furniture” or “food”) making it hard for others to understand what was available. Some organisations preferred relationship-based collaboration over a tracked credit system, noting that generosity and reciprocity often happen naturally without formal accounting.

This reflects a deeper structural challenge: the currency mechanism was not the primary driver of engagement; relationships were.

Summary of Final Interviews



Outcomes and Unexpected Positives

Despite challenges with the currency itself, the pilot succeeded in creating new relationships, conversations, and collaborations. Many described Dundee Dots as “a vehicle to meet people,” noting that they connected with organisations they had never interacted with before.

Several interviewees said the pilot encouraged them to revalue their own skills, for example, recognising that poster design, event support, or strategic thinking were meaningful, tradeable assets. External validation from peers reinforced this: “That’s worth a lot more than you think it’s worth.”

Some organisations benefited directly from exchanges, such as securing transport or receiving practical support during busy periods. Participants emphasised that the relational tone of the pilot (especially the interactive in-person activities) helped build trust and made exchanges “friendlier and not just transactional.”

The interviews also highlighted a broader learning: the third sector is “time scarce”, and emotional labour, staff energy, and internal capacity must be recognised as real resources. When these are undervalued, motivation and participation decline.

Key quotes

- “A way of making us richer without having to do a funding application.”
- “I think it works better on non-tangible things like time or experience or work rather than stuff.”
- “I personally found it quite a difficult system... maybe I’m more of a giver than a taker.”
- “Shifting the perception of what value means can only be a good thing.”
- “It added a layer of complexity to what people are wanting to do.”
- “The whole third sector is time scarce, a resource we don’t look at.”
- “We were told, ‘That’s worth a lot more than you think it’s worth.’”
- “The benefits are only just coming in. It would be great if it carried on.”
- “Sometimes the offers helped make the initial connection, and then you find your own way to run with it.”

Insights & Key learnings



Across surveys, workshops, check-ins and final interviews, clear themes emerged about what helped, what got in the way, and what mattered most to organisations participating in the pilot.

1. Time, Capacity and “People Power”

Time was the most consistently cited barrier. Organisations are already stretched delivering services, so participation, reflection, and experimentation were difficult. Offers sometimes “took chunks of time,” and the ledger felt like “another time sponge.”

The coordinators’ role was essential for keeping momentum, prompting exchanges, and helping people navigate hesitancy. A broader insight emerged: relationship-building requires dedicated time and resourcing, not just interest or goodwill.

Exploring the volunteer coordination with DVVA reinforced this: everyone needs volunteers and time, but managing volunteer swaps itself takes capacity. Time and energy must be treated as real resources within any exchange system.

2. Trust, Relationships and Human Connection

From the very start, organisations’ top priorities were trust, collaboration, ease of exchange, and building networks. These remained the strongest outcomes across the pilot.

Midway and final reflections highlighted:

- increased awareness of organisations across Dundee
- strengthened partnerships and new relationships
- fresh perspectives and personal development

Participants repeatedly described Dundee Dots as “a vehicle to meet people.” Interactive sessions (midway meeting, public workshop, breakfast social) played a key role in building confidence and reducing hesitancy. Trust and human connection are foundations of any viable exchange system.

3. Simplicity, Tools and System Design

Organisations wanted a system that was simple, fast, and low-admin. Experiences with the spreadsheet ledger were mixed: some found it accessible, others found it word-heavy or unclear.

Common challenges included:

- unclear offer descriptions
- differing Dot values
- missing contact details or availability
- uncertainty about how to initiate exchanges

Participants suggested clearer formatting, phone contacts, reminders of offers, and more visual, intuitive tools. Ease of use directly influences engagement.

Insights & Key learnings



4. Understanding Value, Currency and Exchange

One of the most important, and challenging, insights concerned how people understand value.

The pilot was designed around Dundee Dots as a mutual-credit unit. However, final interviews showed mixed feelings:

- Some felt Dots were “just another currency” and “still a transactional arrangement”.
- Organisations already comfortable with sharing and mutual aid sometimes experienced the system as “adding a layer of complexity to what people are wanting to do”.
- Assigning Dot values to physical goods (like furniture or crates of food) felt difficult, especially when those items had a clear cash value in the “real world”.

Participants also reported:

- confusion about what counted as a fair amount of Dots
- discomfort saying no or negotiating boundaries
- a preference for informal, relational collaboration in some cases

At the same time, the pilot prompted revaluation of internal skills: design time, workshop facilitation, strategic thinking and “a man in a van” were all recognised as meaningful assets. One organisation reflected they had been “short selling ourselves” and appreciated when peers said, “That’s worth a lot more than you think it’s worth.”

Overall, the learning is that value is multi-layered. Currency can help track flow, but relationships, mutual recognition and self-worth are just as important.

5. Visibility of Offers, Needs and Hidden Resources

A core aim of the pilot was to reveal underused skills, space and surplus. Across the phases, there was evidence this worked:

- The initial marketplace helped people “take a look at the various offers” and see more clearly what others could provide.
- The Dashes (Needs) section surfaced real-time challenges, from event support to specialist skills.
- Midway surveys highlighted increased awareness of “the range of support available across Dundee”.

However, there was also hesitancy to list the full range of offers. Reasons included:

- not being sure what was “appropriate” to offer
- worry about over-committing already busy staff
- simply not having time to reflect on everything they could bring

Workshop and mapping activities (like “Joining the Dots”) showed visually that Dundee already has a dense web of potential exchanges. The challenge is making that visible in ways that feel safe, manageable and not overwhelming.

Insights & Key learnings

6. Different Organisational Realities and Internal Layers

The pilot highlighted differences between organisational types and structures:

- Smaller organisations often engaged more quickly and flexibly.
- Larger organisations had more internal layers (finance systems, approvals, booking processes), which slowed down embedding the model.

A recurring issue was top-down vs frontline engagement:

- Senior leaders often understood Dundee Dots and attended meetings.
- Operational staff (who handle tills, bookings, logistics) sometimes didn't know about the system, leading to confusion or missed exchanges.

This produced experiences like feeling like a “net loser” when tangible goods went out but little came back in, and uncertainty about when to use Dots versus Pounds.

The learning is that embedding new ways of working requires reaching the people who actually deliver day-to-day operations, not just those in leadership roles.

7. Appetite for Collaboration, Play and Culture Change

Despite the barriers, there is a strong appetite for doing things differently.

Across surveys, workshops and interviews, participants:

- expressed enthusiasm for “projects that shift the perception of what value means and what currency is”
- welcomed playful, social formats for networking and reflection
- wanted more opportunities to meet, visit each other's spaces, and build relationships over time
- felt “the benefits are only just coming” and were curious about what might happen if the work continued

A recurring thread is that culture change is as important as system change. The pilot showed that when people are given time, support and permission to experiment, they are willing to question old assumptions and explore more regenerative, relational ways of working together.



Next Steps & Recommendations



The pilot strongly suggests that Dundee Dots is worth continuing and refining. We recommend a further 12-month testing phase with light coordination, a clearer marketplace structure, an expanded network of participants, and simple monthly social sessions to keep relationships strong. This next stage is about shaping a model that truly works for Dundee, and that could potentially be shared to other locations.

Four Core Recommendations

1. Light Coordination & Clear Hosting

The pilot demonstrated that collaboration doesn't happen automatically, it needs gentle structure. When coordinators prompted, introduced people, or clarified offers, engagement rose.

A dedicated Dundee Dots coordinator could:

- act as a “matchmaker,” linking compatible needs and offers
- support operational teams to understand how to take part
- hold consistent communication (e.g., weekly roundup or fortnightly check-ins)
- ensure no single organisation feels like they are “carrying” the work
- capture a clearer picture of value created across the network

Even 3–6 hours per week would significantly improve consistency and reduce friction. This aligns with participants' repeated feedback: “It needs to be held by someone.”

2. Refine and Strengthen the Marketplace Model

The next phase should focus on shaping a clearer, more user-friendly exchange system. Participants responded well to the idea of trading, but felt the mechanism needed simplifying.

Key developments to explore:

- shifting from spreadsheets to a clean digital tool or visual dashboard
- adding optional filters (skills, space, surplus, equipment, advice, etc.)
- offering clearer guidance on when to use Dots vs. Pounds
- co-developing values for commonly used exchanges (e.g., room hire, transport)
- allowing flexible, negotiable values for more relational exchanges
- building in a way to record intangible impact such as strengthened partnerships or saved time

Refinement is not about creating a perfect system, it's about finding a model that feels natural, practical, and easy to maintain across diverse organisations.

Next Steps & Recommendations



3. Expand and Diversify Participation

More participants mean more pathways for exchange. Several pilot organisations noted that imbalance in offers or needs sometimes limited opportunities.

Expanding the network would:

- create a wider pool of skills, tools, and spaces
- ensure organisations don't feel like "net givers" or "net receivers"
- help distribute value more evenly
- strengthen Dundee's collective resilience

This also aligns with interview insights: participants want the system to feel bigger, more varied, and more alive.

The project would also work with operational staff, to ensure flow of understanding use of the system.

4. Establish a Monthly Social Rhythm

Trust, not currency, is the real engine of Dundee Dots. Every meaningful exchange began with a conversation, a human connection, or a moment of shared understanding.

We recommend:

- a one-hour monthly social, rotating host locations
- informal check-ins or object-based icebreakers (as participants loved these)
- short sharing moments ("What's one offer you can share this month?")
- relaxed networking with no agenda beyond connection
- optional drop-in problem-solving circles

These gatherings should be:

- light-touch (minimal planning required)
- playful (to reduce pressure and hesitancy)
- consistent (to maintain trust and familiarity)

Participants made it clear: relationships were the biggest benefit, and the most important foundation for future success.

RefleCtions from FaCilitators



As we come to the end of the Dundee Dots pilot, I've found myself sitting with a mix of gratitude, humility, and curiosity.

I was moved by how open people were. In a sector where everyone is busy, stretched, and carrying a lot, so many organisations still showed up. Showed up with honesty, generosity, and thoughtful input, with something unfamiliar. That shouldn't be taken lightly. It reminded me that, even when capacity is tight, there is a deep desire to connect, to learn, to do things differently.

One of the strongest things this pilot surfaced for me is how easy it is to forget the human part of our work. We often talk about organisations having strengths (and they do) but those strengths live in people. In their experience, creativity, care, problem-solving, and willingness to help. And more than that, they live in the relationships between people, both within organisations and across them. When those relationships are strong, things flow.

The pilot also made me reflect on time. Not just as a practical constraint, but as something deeply connected to care and possibility. We all need more of it. Or maybe we need to protect it better. Time to think, to talk, to build trust, to experiment. I keep wondering: how do we create conditions where working together doesn't feel like an extra burden, but actually lightens the load?

Another learning surprised me a little, even though it shouldn't have... small is powerful. We often assume that bigger means stronger, more impactful, more efficient. But what I saw was the opposite. When things are small, people can respond quickly. Decisions don't get stuck in layers. Conversations happen directly. In larger systems, ideas can lose momentum simply because they have too many doors to pass through. Small, relational spaces allow energy to move.

If I had to name my biggest takeaway, it's this: the thing we need most to make our work function well (relationships and connection), is the very thing we rarely give enough time to. When relationships and understanding already exist, everything moves more smoothly. We can step into flow rather than stop-start cycles. We don't waste energy re-explaining, second-guessing, or navigating uncertainty. We know who to go to, who to ask, and how to work together. Support becomes quicker, more natural, and more human.

Without relationships, every project feels heavier. We search for solutions instead of reaching out. We rebuild trust from scratch each time. We lose time without realising it. The paradox is that relationships save time, but only if we invest time in them first. Time to talk, to listen, to learn how each other works. Time that often feels "unproductive" on paper, yet makes everything else more efficient, resilient, and meaningful. That's something this pilot made impossible to ignore.

On a personal level, I've made new connections and learned a lot from how others work, think, and navigate things. That, in itself, feels like a success. Dundee Dots started as an experiment with exchange, but what it really revealed was something much more fundamental: we already have so much. The question is how we notice it, share it, and make space for it to grow.

And maybe that's the work ahead. Not building something bigger, but building something closer.

Danielle, a facilitator of Dundee Dots Project

RefleCtions from FaCilitators



I was thrilled to be given the opportunity to coordinate this pilot of a local currency in Dundee. Having spent time researching and exploring alternative currencies over a number of years, while working with and alongside communities, I have often felt conflicted — caught between awe and frustration — at what people are capable of doing with the scraps from the dinner table. The awe in witnessing the relentless pursuit of people striving to make the world better for others as much as for themselves. The frustration of no one at the dinner table seeming to appreciate that the kitchen is running empty.

During the 16 weeks of the pilot, our role was to facilitate the mechanics of the system. Our approach was to connect with people on a human-to-human level, and hopefully to model that way of relating for the interactions between participants.

When I worked in the third sector, I experienced frustration with scarcity: the time it can take for ideas to move into action due to resourcing constraints, finding time to balance network and partnership work with usual activities, fund writing, and a niggling sense we are competing for resources.

Our approach to co-ordinating was to try to loosen the transactional nature of both professional exchanges — “this is what I do, what do you do?” —. An anxiety-inducing moment for me as I introduce myself and work through as many phrases as I have rehearsed. I find that this language helps construct an image in the mind of the listener; but left unexamined, that construct can feel more like a wall of words rather than an opening. Especially in a group.

My focus was on building relationships and learning about the person behind the role. I hope I managed to achieve this in each meeting, and through that began to see connections and spaces where collaboration might emerge. This was not always possible due to the limited timeframe of the pilot or the constraints on people’s schedules. However, what it showed me is there are still spaces where we can work more closely together — not only to enhance our own work, but to widen the range of perspective of what is possible by knowing the assets available to us.

When reflecting on the beginning of the pilot, I was concerned that participants with sought-after expertise might be inundated with requests, but this was not the case. While many people expressed uncertainty about how the mechanics of this exchange differed from legal currency, a key distinction — particularly in this time-bound experiment — was that there was no incentive to build up surplus dots.

Overall, participants were willing to be part of an experiment: sharing what they had but did not need with those who would benefit, while knowing there was a network of resources they could draw upon in return. Even participants who struggled with capacity and were not able to engage fully in exchanges still found time to communicate and attempt to make exchanges happen.

It was the care, openness, and commitment over the 16 weeks that impressed me most.

Darryl, a facilitator of Dundee Dots Project

**"If you want to
Change the system,
Change the
relationships." —
Margaret Wheatley**