

Thriving Stanley Impact Report



Foreword

Stanley means a great deal to me personally. It's the town where I grew up, where I went to school, and where both my grandfathers worked in the collieries. Now, I'm Chief Executive of Karbon Homes, the housing provider that owns and manages one in four homes in the town, and my passion for the town continues to burn bright.

I, as much as anyone else, want to see Stanley thrive. However, I know that the place has its challenges. People feel that the town has been left behind, and some have lost hope in something happening to change this.

Where that is understandable, as an important anchor institution in the area, at Karbon, we are on a mission to build strong and sustainable places for our communities, and we've committed ourselves to doing something about it, helping galvanise the town and leading the charge for change.





I'm proud of the work that we have done over the past few years, and in turn, the positive spotlight that's shone on the town to help bring about change. I'm hoping that you are starting to see the impact of our efforts.

Whether it is through additional investment in our homes, from new kitchens and bathrooms to added insulation to increase their energy efficiency, or by addressing empty properties on Stanley Front Street through our close partnership work with Stanley Town Council and Durham County Council, or as a result of our successful series of markets and art projects, we are proud of the growing sense of pride, belief and hope that is starting to pump back through the veins of the place. You can read more about our work in this report.

We know there are ongoing challenges, including ensuring that the board school site has a sustainable and viable long-term plan.

But we remain committed to Stanley, and I'm looking forward to the exciting plans for 2026 and beyond, with funding from the government's Pride in Place programme set to provide a real boost to the town over the next decade. Alongside the new council's Strategic Place Plan, there are many opportunities emerging.

The progress made so far would not be possible without the work and engagement of our excellent partners, including Stanley Town Council, Durham County Council, PACT House, The Forge, Just for Women, and the other members of our Stanley Stakeholder Reference Group. We cannot have a thriving Stanley without real joined-up thinking, and more collaboration will help to unlock the solutions that the town deserves. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can all do together over the next few years.

Paul Fiddaman,
Chief Executive, Karbon Homes

Introduction

In November 2024, we launched our Thriving Stanley Action Plan after many years of work in the community.

Ongoing consultation with local residents, key stakeholders and our colleagues has ensured this action plan is helping deliver what the community wants and needs. It consists of nine objectives set within Karbon's three strategic aims of Homes, Customers, and Place.



Homes

- Improve energy efficiency in our homes
- Explore ways to offer a range of housing types



Customers

- Deliver coordinated customer service and pilot new ways of working
- Help tackle customers' challenges through supporting the community and the voluntary sector



Place

- Act as an anchor investor in the Front Street and the board school site
- Develop partnerships to help create secure, sustainable employment opportunity
- Improve infrastructure and encourage enterprise and investment
- Develop new opportunities for young people in Stanley
- Identify opportunities for environmental improvements



Thriving Stanley Action Plan

Focus:

- Act as an anchor investor in the Ford Street and Board School sites.
- Continue to develop partnerships to support the creation of new opportunities to boost the creation of sustainable employment for people in Stanley.
- Advocate for Stanley to improve infrastructure and to encourage enterprise and investment.
- Develop new opportunities for young people in Stanley to the new academy.
- Locate opportunities for environmental improvements in Stanley.

This report updates on the progress that we have made on these actions and highlights projects that we are looking forward to delivering in the future.



Homes

Investing in the quality of our existing homes.

We are proud of the efforts of all our teams to maintain the quality of our existing homes, and in the latest Tenant Perception Measures, 85% of customers surveyed were happy that the home was being well maintained, and **100% of homes in Stanley meet the Decent Homes Standard.**

Over the past two years, Karbon has been working on upgrades to existing homes and has **invested over £12 million into the homes in Stanley.** This has included over 400 new kitchens, which have brought homes up to a more modern standard, and nearly 500

homes have had new roofs alongside the installation of solar PV, which has helped to reduce customers' bills and carbon emissions.

We have also created a new Damp and Mould Project Board that has implemented a new, more proactive approach to tackling damp and mould, and we are ensuring that we meet the obligations of Awaab's Law to investigate emergency hazards and damp and mould issues within strict timeframes, with **99.3% of emergency responsive repairs completed** within our target timescales in 24/25.



Over
£12 million
invested in homes between
2024 and 2026



We have brought forward proposals for a scheme of

34

homes in Craghead.



Building new homes

To help bring more affordable housing to the area, we have brought forward proposals for a scheme of **34 homes in Craghead**. All will be built to the highest sustainability standard, saving the new residents money on their energy bills, and the scheme will also bring new investment into the community, in the form of developer contributions and additional council tax receipts.

At the time of writing, we are still finalising the plans and taking into consideration the feedback we have received from the general public, the town council and statutory consultees.

We will continue to look at other sites, including the board school site on Stanley Front Street, and explore how we can deliver new homes to meet the demand for affordable housing in the county.



CGI images of what the homes in Craghead could look like

Customers

In November 2024, we launched our Thriving Stanley Action Plan after many years of work in the community.

We are committed to providing the best possible service to our customers, and over the past year, we have rolled out **a new Customer Services Delivery Model**. This saw us restructure our housing and frontline service teams to ensure we have retained a local focus and presence in all our communities. The new model was piloted with Stanley as our first 'housing area'. With a team locally based and focused on service provision in the town and its surrounding areas, the new structure has created a consistent customer journey and has helped us tailor our services and support to the needs of the community.

Community Investment

We have a dedicated Community Investment Team with allocated Community Connectors for each of our housing areas. They work in the community, with community groups and charities, to fund projects that help support Karbon customers and strengthen the wider community. Stacey Dobson is our Community Connector for Stanley and has built strong relationships with stakeholders in the community, as well as our customers.

Since beginning the Place programme, we have granted over **£80,000 to projects across Stanley**. This includes funding for the Burnside Family Centre to support the set-up of a wellbeing café in South Stanley, one of Karbon's most deprived estates. The café

has been a real success and is having a big impact on the community, with new members attending each week.

We also supported Stanley Town Council's Activity Week in August match-funding lunches for the 3800 people who attended over the course of the five days.

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PACT House received

£600

from the Community Investment Fund in December 2025



Pact House Presents for Parents (P4P)

PACT House received £600 from the Community Investment Fund in December 2025 to deliver Presents for Parents. Parents are quite often the last people to receive a Christmas gift, after they have made sure children and other family members are provided for. This project saw 100 parents receive a small Christmas gift, which their children chose for them and had wrapped at the PACT House stall at the Christmas Light Switch on event.

“Delivering this out in the community, being able to explain the project and allow people to take part, proved a heart-warming experience. This also opened up other conversations around community support, telling people about PACT House and the work it does in the community.”

Darren McMahon, PACT House

Silver Friends

We are really proud of our Silver Talk and Silver Friends services which many residents in Stanley access. Silver Talk is for customers aged 50 and over and they will get a call from our friendly, fully trained volunteers for an up to 30-minute chat at the same time each week. Silver Friends is our in-person social befriending programme, designed to help older and vulnerable people overcome loneliness and isolation. Our volunteers made **over 1300 calls in 2025**, speaking to over 120 regular customers, and we have **held 55 events**, including regular coffee mornings in Annfield Plain and Towneley Court.



Place

Improving Stanley Front Street

Since beginning our work in Stanley, we have run several consultations with the community, local businesses and partners to ensure our action plan going forward continues to reflect the wants and needs of the community.

One of the biggest themes from the consultation was the ask for us to invest in Front Street, helping to bring footfall back to the high street and make empty buildings less of an eyesore.

In response, we established a working group, bringing together our Place colleagues, Stanley Town Council, Durham County Council and the local network to form the **Stanley Front Street Partnership**. The scope was to identify empty units and engage with landlords to bring them back into use, raise awareness of financial support available to landlords and business owners, and bring investment and innovation to Front Street's public spaces.

Since establishing this partnership, Durham County Council have supported six businesses through the Targeted Businesses Improvement Scheme and supported access to its Vulnerable Buildings budget, totalling **more than £60,000 of grant funding in the centre of Stanley**. As a result of this grant funding, **more than £300,000 of private investment is being channelled into the centre of Stanley**. Durham County Council has also agreed to pilot using High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) powers, which we feel will help to improve Front Street further.

Signage and shutter art

As part of this work, we supported PACT House with **new external signage for its Enter Retro shop** on Front Street to improve the facade. Working with Stanley-based participatory arts organisation, The Forge, we also commissioned four artists to **create shutter artwork for five shop fronts on Front Street**. The artists chosen, Lee Ferry, Lewis Hobson, Jordan Stead and Eduard Sacrest, worked with local school children and community groups to ensure the artwork was influenced and inspired by local people. The results have helped to enliven Front Street.

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Stanley Board School

In 2023, we made the bold decision to purchase the Stanley Board School site, as the community had told us that this building was a blight on Front Street. Since then, we have consulted with the community on what they would like the site to become, to ensure its redevelopment helps strengthen the community and improve the high street. We're grateful to everyone who took the time to meet with us and help us shape the future of the site.

Having stood empty for over a decade, the building was in a very poor condition with substantial structural defects, and the investment required to retain it was financially unviable for us to undertake. Due to its

condition, we applied for permission from Durham County Council to demolish the building and work was completed in February 2026. We thank everyone for their patience whilst this necessary work has taken place.

The cleared site is surrounded by hoarding to ensure public safety and to boost its vibrancy, we have displayed photos taken by pupils from both Annfield Plain Junior School and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, as part of a community project, we'd previously funded titled 'a child's eye view of home'.



Place

Stanley Markets

In early 2025, Karbon Homes began working with Bacchanalia to design and develop a series of street food markets to be held on Stanley Front Street to help celebrate Stanley as a great place to live, work and play.

It has been great to see so many people enjoying Front Street, and the footfall on the street has increased. **Over the six markets held so far, over 10,800 visitors have been attracted to Front Street**, and we have been joined by many local traders and

organisations, helping to generate income for small local businesses.

We were also able to co-fund a **Christmas market** with Stanley Town Council, Durham County Council and the North East Combined Authority. Paired with the town's Christmas lights switch on, the event was a big success.

Building on the success of the 2025 markets, we have been **awarded over £34,000 in funding from the North East Combined**





Over
10,800

visitors have been attracted
to Front Street

Authority to continue them through 2026.

Working with our partners Bacchanalia and participatory arts organisation The Forge, this funding will help us grow, strengthen and diversify the markets and increase their capacity and cultural offer.



Other Place projects

Celebrating Stanley

Since beginning our place-shaping work in Stanley, we have heard time and time again how important the town's heritage is to many residents. To recognise this, we commissioned Building Self-Belief to run a **heritage celebration project** in Stanley. Through 'Celebrating Stanley', Building Self-Belief worked with students from North Durham Academy and South Stanley Junior School to learn about Stanley's history, whilst creating anthologies and a visual timeline for the town. Building Self-Belief also worked with the community and Karbon's in-person befriending service for older residents, Silver Friends, to create a **podcast series** that has explored personal histories and experiences in Stanley.

Lumiere

We sponsored a project at the Durham Lumiere Festival's Learning and Participation programme. The project was commissioned by Point North and involved **lantern-making workshops**, held in various locations across County Durham. We hosted workshops in Stanley and Consett, and lanterns were featured in an exhibition entitled 'Glimmer' designed to bring together voices from all ages and backgrounds, offering an insight into the lives of the Durham community.





Use this QR code to listen to the **Song for Stanley**



Song for Stanley

We have worked with New Writing North to bring together our Silver Friends volunteers and school children from St Joseph's Primary School to participate in an **intergenerational songwriting project**, with the Song for Stanley performed at the Christmas market event. The lyrics and themes of the song were then translated into visual artwork by artist Narbi Price, which represents the culture and history of Stanley.



Working in partnership

Stakeholder Reference Group

Our Stakeholder Reference Group meets quarterly, and we now have **more than 140 representatives from over 50 organisations**.

The group continues to grow as our work to champion and celebrate Stanley reaches further.

At the launch of the Thriving Stanley Action Plan at the Reference Group meeting in November 2024, **more than 20 partners agreed to sign up to be Strategic Partners** and to work with us to create a Thriving Stanley.

Over the past year, we have worked with these partners on a number of projects and explored various opportunities. We are also working to expand our network of partners in Stanley, and we continue to arrange regular Stanley Stakeholder Reference Groups to bring everyone together.

During our meetings this year, we have shared regular updates on the work we're doing, but we have also provided an opportunity for our partners to update us on the exciting work that they are doing. We have also used some of the meetings to run workshops on important topics, including a workshop on the Board School and how to promote the town.

If you would like to join our Stakeholder Reference Group, or if you would like to add anything to the agenda of these meetings, please contact: stanley@karbonhomes.co.uk.

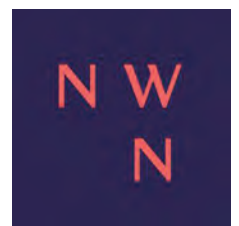


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We would like to thank all of the partners that have worked with us over the past year and are excited to continue our work in 2026.



Coming next

We are proud of the impact that we have had in Stanley and are looking forward to continuing our work in the town, alongside our partners.

Here are some of the things that you can expect to see more of from us:

- We will continue to offer a wide range of services from **The Skills Hub**
- We will continue with **more markets** in 2026
- We will be working closely with the council on **the future of the board school site** to find a long-term solution for its use and explore meanwhile use options for the medium term.
- We will continue to work with Stanley Town Council and Durham County Council **to improve Front Street** and look forward to seeing how High Street Rental Auctions and new legislation might support in reviving the high street.
- We are excited about the work that has recently started with **The Girls Network**, a charity that partners with schools and colleges to provide girls and young women with mentoring, workshops, and development opportunities that help them build confidence, develop new skills, and think more positively about their future, and will continue with this at North Durham Academy
- We will explore opportunities for additional grants to support **more creative projects** and see how we can engage more directly with a larger range of customers.
- We will continue to progress with plans to **build more affordable homes** for local people including the planning application for 34 new homes in Craghead
- We will invest millions more to **upgrade more homes** in Stanley, focusing investment in reducing energy bills, addressing fuel poverty, and improving the comfort of residents.
- We have awarded **£10,000** of social value investment from our contract with RE:GEN to Stanley Events to create a community hub at the Beamish Football Centre in South Stanley that will benefit the whole community.



If you are interested in any of the work we are doing in Stanley, or if you would like to work with us, please get in touch with stanley@karbonhomes.co.uk.



Your feedback

This report was created for you, our customers, to keep you updated on how we're doing as an organisation and how we're delivering our services to you.

We would love to hear your constructive feedback on the report, from the content to the way it has been designed, so we can understand if it works for you and how we might improve it in the future.

You can get in touch with our Communications and Marketing Team in the following ways:

Email: communications@karbonhomes.co.uk

Telephone: 0808 164 0111

Facebook and LinkedIn: @karbonhomes

To chat to us about anything else, contact our Customer Relationship Team.

The full service is available 8am - 6pm on weekdays.

0808 164 0111

info@karbonhomes.co.uk

www.karbonhomes.co.uk

or visit our social media pages



Don't forget, you can also use your MyKarbon account to pay your rent, check your balance, update your contact details or to book a repair at a time that suits you.

Visit **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/mykarbon** to log in or register.

This report has been approved for publication.

We've created this plain text version to support those using accessibility tools such as translation, audio, changes to the size of text, ruler and screen mask.

We also aim to make our information and services more accessible by using plain English in our communication and offering sign language and language interpreters where required.

If you would like this document in an alternative format or have any questions relating to the report, please contact inclusion@karbonhomes.co.uk.

Karbon Homes is a charitable registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration No.7529