

# Valley renewables group



The Development Trust for Carron Valley Community

Valley Renewables Group Newsletter

Issue 13 March 2016

## Broadband Update

Broadband improvements continue to be a priority for many residents, as they are for the Board. Many of you will be appreciating the fact that you get to read this newsletter in paper format!

Our last communication indicated that it would not be unreasonable to expect to see some evidence of action by around Easter. Sad to say we hit a big stumbling block in the form of British Telecom! A list of the Community postcodes was submitted to them back in early December, with an expectation of a reply within 2 weeks. Now in March, they have just revealed which of the postcodes they can supply Broadband to (via their Superfast Broadband Project) and which they can't. Only now that we have got that, can the rest of the process can begin; contract drawn up... out to tender to interested parties....decide who gets it.....do the work.....flick the switch!

On 15th March, at a meeting with Community Broadband Scotland, it was decided that within 4 weeks we would have sufficient information to then enable us to start the process described above. We can't wait! It's so frustrating!

## In the Meantime.....

.....until a more permanent solution can be found, many households in our area who can't access broadband via fixed phone lines are having success via the 3G (and sometimes even 4G) mobile networks. For example, the area around Buckieburn can now access download speeds of up to 10 Mb/s by using a 3G router and "MIMO" antenna. Of course different areas will have different signal strengths on different networks. The various network operators' coverage maps are the best guide to the 3G signal (if any) available where you live. Additionally, the website [www.sitefinder.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.sitefinder.ofcom.org.uk) gives a detailed map of all mobile transmitters in the UK. 3G transmitters will be marked as "Type of Transmission = UTMS" and there are several such transmitters around the edge of our area. If you would like more information on how mobile broadband works and whether it might be available in your location please contact David Sparkes on 01324 228 698.

## Social Media Presence

Yes, it's true, we're on Facebook here -

<https://www.facebook.com/valleyrenewablesgroup>

It would be just great if you would 'like' us, keep the conversation going, and generally do typical Facebooky type things.



## In This Issue

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- ◆ Wee snippets
- ◆ Annual Open Day
- ◆ Coomb ceiling insulation

Find us on

**facebook**

## A Community Base

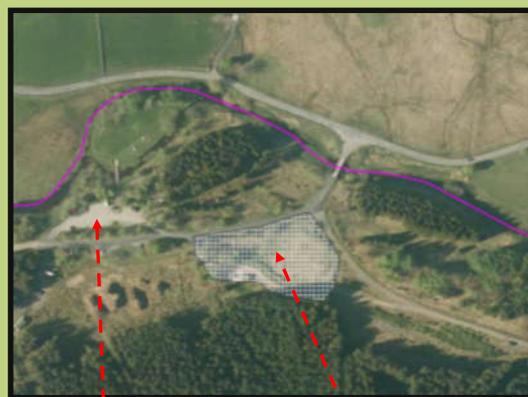
Stirling University is considering the future options for their Howietoun site which had been made available to the community, both the Community Council and Valley Renewables Group, over many years as a free venue for events and meetings. The VRG would like to thank the University for its hospitality and, before you fear we are now homeless, thank Jimmy Coyne at the Carron Valley Fishery, for providing a temporary alternative venue for the routine VRG Board Meetings.

The VRG has been looking at options open to us for developing a community base, to provide amenities for local residents, and to try and use the additional footfall of visitors to our area to ensure any facility is well used, and also to guarantee its long term future.

The VRG sub group has been in contact with the Forestry Commission, who own sections of land in our area, and that has a stated goal of ensuring its local communities benefit from this ownership. An area in the vicinity of the Carron Valley Dam, known locally as the deer larder site, has been identified as a potential location for an alternative base. We are in the preliminary stages of exploring what funding is available, what possible options are open to us, and what sort of facility would be appropriate in terms of size, use, viability and sustainability. Successive community surveys indicate that there is a desire for some such facility. This is some of the thinking behind the possible project in this location.

There are something like 70,000 cars per year visiting the forest car park, delivering perhaps 150,000 people, masses of bikes, loads of dogs, a few horses, and assorted others. We feel, that by offering a selection of services for some of these visitors, plus a range of events, courses and exhibitions, sufficient funds can be raised year on year to sustain a versatile, multi-functional building to be proud of, that would both create some jobs, and meet the needs of the community into the future.

To get this off the ground, we will be carrying out a feasibility study and looking into sources of funding. Additionally, we would really appreciate your views on things like facilities, design, uses, etc.



Forest Car Park

Deer larder site

## .....Hello...Is there anybody out there?

Valley Renewables Group, as your Development Trust, is always keen to hear any comments from local residents on the work we do on your behalf. Please do not hesitate to get in touch, or have a chat with any of our Directors.

We are also always keen to hear from anyone who wishes to assist our group, whether on an ad hoc basis at a one off event such as our Open Day. Or maybe you have creative skills in writing and could help us produce these newsletters during the year; perhaps you are an existing VRG member who wishes to contribute by standing to become a Director, bringing your skills to help your community.

If you think you don't have any 'skills' to offer, the most valued attribute to possess is a great big dose of common sense!

## Wee Snippets

### Open Day

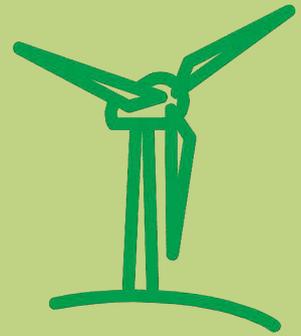
This year's social event of the year will take place on Saturday, 27th Aug, 12.00 to 16.00, at Craigend Farm. The arrangements are still being made but we can all start with a collective hope for blue skies, sunshine and gentle warm breezes for the day.....failing that just for the 4 or so hours of the event itself..... and if we can't have "sunny" can we all just please wish for "dry"?

Many thanks go to Evelyn and Willie Crawford for offering to host the event again.

## Windfarms.....Any Way the Wind Blows.....

Windfarm developers continue to see our area as the best venue for new developments. Craigton / Spittalhill was given permission for its 7x2mw development . Also Craiganet received permission for erecting a single turbine. The VRG is in discussion with both developers to ensure the Community does receive maximum financial benefit from these additions to our landscapes.

The Kingsburn wind farm (also known to some as “Earlsburn North”) is nearing completion. The six communities earmarked for community benefit, including ourselves the Carron Valley & District Community, engaged in a lengthy process of meeting and mediation to see if amicable agreement could be reached on how to share the funds. The short answer that does not do justice to the protracted discussion is “No”. An arbitration procedure was then suggested to resolve the deadlock but this could of course be costly. As time has ticked by with no agreement being reached, the developer, Falck, has announced it will split the funds equally (one-sixth shares each) at least for the first three years..... allowing the six communities to try and reach common agreement at some point in the next 36 months. Oddly enough, recognising that agreement between all six communities was unlikely, our Community had suggested at the outset that a compromise that might resolve the situation swiftly, would be to split the pot 6 ways! That didn't meet with any support from the other 5 communities, so we are now in this rather complicated impasse. Ah well!



## Insulating Behind Sloping Ceilings

Many houses in the area have sloping “coombed” ceilings upstairs. Unfortunately, the roof space often is not insulated, making the rooms very cold in winter. The dilemma is how to add insulation without removing the plasterboard and wrecking the bedrooms to do it! Here's how one of our directors, David Sparkes, achieved the impossible.....

.... When friends of ours renovated their house they went the whole hog, tearing down the plasterboard , fitting Kingspan insulation into the gaps between the roof joists, covering with a vapour barrier, and finishing off with insulated plasterboard. That was far too much upheaval in our case though; we needed a solution that didn't involve removing the ceilings.

Kingspan didn't work for us because there was no room to manoeuvre the stiff sheets into position. We even tried cutting through one side of the foil backing to give a bendy semi-perforated sheet, but this didn't work due to nails etc sticking out half way down. In the end, we chose “Supaloft” insulation, which is made from recycled plastic bottles. The great thing about it is that it is non-itchy – important because we ended up getting up close and personal with rather a lot of it! However, one big problem is that you can't drag or push it into place without it catching and tearing. We solved this by sewing a protective 'sleeping bag' from slippery nylon fabric. The insulation was then fed into the sleeping bag, and held in place using strong bulldog clips. We dropped a rope down the gap, and used this to pull the whole thing into position. Once in place, one person held the insulation securely at the top, whilst another removed the bulldog clips and pulled the sleeping bag downwards and out of the way, leaving the insulation in position. For the sections we couldn't access from the bottom, we covered the insulation with fabric to make a 'duvet', then pushed the whole thing into place from the top using drain rods. Don't forget that whatever method you go for, a 50mm ventilation gap is required between the insulation and sarking to comply with Building Regulations.

I have to say, the difference is amazing. We've burned far less fuel this winter *and* the house has been warmer! Don't forget that if you need to beef up the insulation in your home, this type of project is eligible for a VRG grant of up to £500 – please see [www.valleyrenewables.co.uk](http://www.valleyrenewables.co.uk) for further details and an application form.



## Can We 'Grant' Your Request?

The VRG board took the decision at their routine meeting in early December 2015, that the group's financial position was such that our Small Grant scheme upper limit could be increased from £250 up to £500 per application. The scheme continues to prove popular with our residents, and we hope that the increase will encourage the completion of both large and small projects. To remind you eligible projects include those that improve the energy efficiency of your home or alterations to switch it to use renewable energy. The VRG also provides grants for other eligible projects – please read our guidelines to see how we could provide funding.

Alongside the Small Grant scheme we have also had a separate Young Person's Grant scheme with a target audience of those up to the age of twenty-five. The flyer that may already have fallen out of this newsletter explains the scheme. This can provide up to £250 per application for eligible projects. To date, alongside driving lessons to get round the lack of buses or any other rural transport, we have funded the younger members of our community in their endeavours to develop current interests in horsemanship and photography skills, in the hope of developing a career. to mention but two examples.

There may be some of you who wonder why your request has been turned down, so just to clarify the situation, the Board is tied to the six objects in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. These apply within the Carron Valley & District Community Council Area and in summary are:-

- a. To advance environmental protection, promote the adoption of resource efficiency measures, minimise proliferation of mines / wells / other extraction facilities that degrade the natural environment, reduce greenhouse gases.
- b. To advance citizenship, community development, civic responsibility, promote the voluntary sector, effectiveness or efficiency of charities.
- c. To advance education in the fields of renewable energy, energy conservation, and similar areas.
- d. To encourage, stimulate and support volunteering mainly within the area.
- e. To provide and organise recreational activities within the area, available to the public at large, with the object of improving their conditions of life.
- f. To promote, establish, operate and support similar schemes and projects which further charitable purposes within the area.

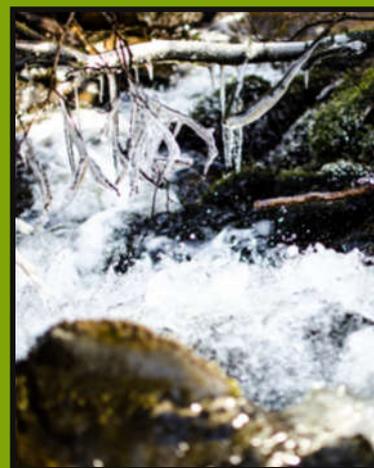
So, if you can fairly and reasonably align your request with one or more of the above, your application should stand a good chance.

To remind you, eligible projects include those that improve the energy efficiency of your home or alterations to switch it to use renewable energy. Greenhouses, poly-tunnels and poultry housing to support local self sufficiency are also eligible. VRG provides grants for a wide range of home improvement projects. Please read our guidelines to see how we could provide funding support. If in doubt just ask!

In addition, if you think that there is a project, that fits within one or more of the above objects, and would best be achieved by several of you grouping together and pooling your small grants, we would like to hear about it. It is often the case that more can be achieved collectively than individually. Just run it past us before you put an application in.

## Year to Date

In the past 12 months there has been **£12,550.61** given in **54** small grants. This averages **~£231** per grant. We expect this to be greater, now that the main scheme limit has been raised to £500 per eligible project.



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Excellent photo of a stream possibly near you, by our local aspiring photographer. Check out some of Rory's other recent work on Twitter—#AuroraBorealis—then scroll down to find Rory's ones; brilliant!

## Contact Us

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