

# Valley renewables group



The Development Trust for Carron Valley Community

Valley Renewables Group Newsletter

Issue 11: January 2015

To: All Householders

Folks

At the AGM of the Valley Renewables Group (VRG) on 13<sup>th</sup> November, the 2015-18 Development Strategy was launched. As residents of the Carron Valley and District Community Council (CVDCC) area we'd like you to have one so that you know, not only what we've been up to in the past, but what we'd like to achieve over the next three or four years.

If you're not quite sure what the role of the VRG is, let me explain. There is a quick summary in the enclosed booklet detailing our origins. Our main purpose is to manage wind farm community benefit funds for the benefit of all the residents in the CVDCC area, regardless of membership. The VRG is a company limited by guarantee and a charitable trust, and is a membership organisation. It relies on fee - paying members to monitor and control its governance. If you aren't a member already or your household doesn't have one (and over half do), you might like to consider life membership for the princely sum of £3.00! This can be paid by cheque and sent to the secretary whose address is on the front of the booklet. It is really important to us in negotiations and discussions with others on your behalf, that we are able to say that our membership is a certain percentage of the population. That gives us a lot more clout.

So, how's that different to the Community Council, you might ask? Community Councils are statutory bodies, with members elected from the residents. They are set up to monitor and lobby the local authority on issue like roads, policing, planning, etc., and to be your link to them and other bodies. It has a director on the VRG. The CVDCC works very hard on your behalf and is involved, through Foundation Scotland, in the distribution of Earlsburn 1 community benefit funds. CVDCC has agreed that the VRG will otherwise negotiate with windfarm operators, and distribute funds thus generated.

The growing and trusting relationship between the VRG and the CVDCC together provides the community with a strong supporting foundation for the future. Let either of the organisations know if there is anything we can do for you or for a neighbour.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Porter".

Margaret Porter Chair, Valley Renewables Group

## Our Way Ahead

Accompanying this Newsletter is a booklet - 'Valley Renewables Group - Development Strategy 2015-2018'. This is the result of a detailed review of what has been achieved since our foundation, and what our goals and priorities should be for the next 3 years. It is based on our existing experience, local knowledge, discussions with the Community, and survey results. The work of the Community Council has also played a significant part. Margaret Porter, our Chairperson, introduces the document .

## In This Issue

- Our Way Ahead
- Moving forward
- AGM
- Admin Assistance
- Open Day
- Blowing in the Wind
- Broadband Update
- Demographics
- Small Grants Scheme
- Local People Leading
- Walking into History

## Moving Forward

We are anxious to involve members of the community in carrying forward our strategy. One of our first priorities in the coming year is to create opportunities for young people and children:

**Are you too young to have used one of these? If not, we want to hear from you!**



One of VRG's top priorities for the coming year is to support and create opportunities for our Children and Young People. So, if you are at School or College, and live in the Carron Valley Community Council area, we want to hear from you!

We want to hear more about the challenges young people face living in a rural area like this, and see what we can do to help. For instance, we are looking at expanding our existing Small Grants Scheme so that young people could apply for a grant to help pay for educational courses, music camps, student textbooks and possibly even driving lessons.

If you have any ideas on how we can best support you, or would be willing to work with us to help us develop our work in this area, please contact David Sparkes on 07980 301 503 or at [ValleyRenewables@Sparkesnet.co.uk](mailto:ValleyRenewables@Sparkesnet.co.uk)

In addition the Board will explore the feasibility of creating a hub which could host community events and social gatherings; help to identify ways of encouraging local businesses; and supporting the work of the History and Heritage Society.

### Getting Connected

## Broadband Update

The Community Council and ourselves had agreed, in association with Community Broadband Scotland, to award a tender to a contractor from the short list we had drawn up. This was for a technical study of the area to look at feasibilities, and to be paid for by Community Broadband Scotland. However, the goalposts, or should we say antennae, have shifted at CBS, who now have a preferred bidder system who is different from ours.

Discussions are afoot to ensure this new contractor will follow our local specification, otherwise we may need to commission our own study. Part of the delay in progressing things was the difficulty in carrying out due diligence on prospective contractors. Hopefully there will be some progress to report shortly.



## Admin Assistant

To help with growing secretarial and administrative duties and the small grant scheme, we have enlisted part-time help when needed from Helen Bang. Early impressions are of someone who is quick on the uptake, efficient and discrete. Just what we were looking for!

## Demographics

Stirling Council has issued an analysis of 2011 Census data affecting Community Council areas. Ours shows a population of:-

322 (154 males / 168 females) in 130 households of which 80% are owner occupied. Nearly 55% are 45 or over 60% of households have 2 cars 25% are professionals 4% are retired

This is just a snapshot. The full analysis is available from the Performance Team at the Council [www.stirling.gov.uk](http://www.stirling.gov.uk).

It makes interesting reading and will help to inform our decisions.

## Small Grants Scheme

Did we miss your application due to Christmas post or oversight?

Accompanying this newsletter is an application form for the Small Grants Scheme. Please read the Guidance Notes if you have not already done so.

[www.valleyrenewables.co.uk](http://www.valleyrenewables.co.uk)

**To avoid disappointment, you are advised not to proceed with a project or purchase until you receive confirmation of an award.**

## Local People Leading

The Scottish Community Alliance publishes a monthly newsletter called 'Local People Leading', containing news of what other communities around Scotland are doing. It is a rich source of inspiration and initiative.

There is much we can learn and imitate, while recognising that few communities are as spread out and as lacking in community facilities as we are. It's well worth dipping into.

[www.scottishcommunityalliance.co.uk](http://www.scottishcommunityalliance.co.uk)

## Walking into History

As you may know, there is a Borestone Heritage Trail partly within our boundaries. The establishment of this trail was made possible with help of a grant from the original Earlsburn fund. The trail is one of several trails in the Stirling area.

[www.stirlingheritagetrails.co.uk](http://www.stirlingheritagetrails.co.uk)

VRG, as part of its future strategy discussions, are anxious to promote further development of a trail in Carron Valley and District and also to enhance and extend the network of paths in our area. There also needs to be a programme of signage and interpretation of heritage and historical sites in the area. We need enthusiasts to take this forward, working in co-operation with our own Carron Valley Heritage and Historical Society [www.carronvalleyheritage.org](http://www.carronvalleyheritage.org)

## More blowing in the wind

Not only is a trumpet being blown, but we have got wind of a renewed interest in establishing a windfarm at Muirpark by a Bremen based, but UK operating, company 'EnergieKantorUK'.



You will recall this was originally the site of an application by SSE which was refused and not appealed. This new proposal, of which a scoping report is with the Council, will have a different configuration from the SSE one. The VRG have set up a sub-group to meet with the developer. Further details later.

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The 'Craigton and Spittalhill' application is due to be determined by Stirling Council shortly. This is in the context that Scottish Office Reporters have challenged the Council's current policy on turbines as being contrary to national planning policy. If the application is refused an appeal is likely to be considered. The line being taken by the Reporters may mean other developers who have been refused may consider re-applying.

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There is an ongoing saga of discussions between our Community Council and some neighbouring ones (who were involved by developers in the run-up to the Earlsburn 2 planning application). This is regarding the apportioning of the funds likely to come from Earlsburn North farm (also known as Kingsburn or Earlsburn 2.). Our CC has argued, that although we have a greater claim on the money (about £112,000 total annually) because of its impact in construction, maintenance, landscape, and relative need terms, it was willing to propose equal shares in the interest of fairness and to avoid bitterness and wrangling.

Regrettably some neighbouring Community Councils have a different view. Gargunock, Kippen and Cambusbarron together argue for the lion's share to a large extent for not receiving community benefit from the first windfarm (Cambusbarron does have 10% share of this). Fintry is of like mind to us and Denny is arguing for a significant share. The mechanism for payment of the money when the new farm is commissioned has also to be considered. Meetings are chaired by Foundation Scotland who currently administer the original fund.

## Open Day

Without blowing our trumpet too loud, the annual Open Day has been acknowledged as a success in building community spirit, and as a source of useful advice and information, particularly on renewables and sustainability.

Our next Open Day will be on **Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August**, from 12 noon - 4.00 p.m. as usual. Unfortunately due to the changes at what was Carronbridge Hotel, the Board will probably be seeking an alternative venue. Many thanks go to the Hotel proprietors for facilitating our previous Open Days. So, if you have a nice flat space and there's plenty of parking nearby, let us know if you'd like to make it available. Watch this space. We are also considering changing the emphasis towards growing for food, keeping poultry, bees, etc, and promoting more local produce, while still providing some advice on energy efficiency.

Any other suggestions would be much appreciated.

## The AGM

The AGM was held in November at the Howietoun Fishery Museum courtesy of the University. Thanks to all who attended. Two new members joined the Board - Mary Gallagher, who was previously a member and Isaac Tabner. Welcome to both.

The meeting also said farewell to Frank Kelly who has been our first treasurer and who has guided us expertly and wisely through the intricacies of company and charity regulations. We owe a large debt of gratitude to Frank. The Board has approved Robert Ferguson as our new Treasurer.

Our Chair remains Margaret Porter and Secretary Barbara Wilson.

### MARY GALLAGHER

I have lived in the Carron Valley for the last eleven years and enjoyed walking and riding in the area for a lot longer than that. I'm interested in sustainable living as a way to cut bills as much as to save the planet and I'm very keen that our community benefits from the money that the wind farms generate. While I love living in a rural area, particularly one as beautiful as the Carron Valley, the challenges we face with regards to access, transport and social links are greater here than in town particularly with regards to young people and the elderly and I have personal experience of both situations.



I'm very glad to have the opportunity to be a part of the VRG and support the community in any way I can.



### ISAAC TABNER

I moved to the Carron Valley in August 2013 and volunteered as a director in autumn 2014. Engagement with VRG is an ideal opportunity to get to know the community better, help to protect the good things that we have, and help ensure that the wind farm funds are used for the benefit of current and future communities that are affected by them. My priorities are:

- > Making 21st century communications available to all inhabitants
- > Enhancing the amenity value of the natural landscape.
- > Making the small grants as accessible as possible to those in need.



Photos courtesy of Dugald McAlpine — winter reflections

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information:

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