

Carron Valley & District

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Carron Valley & District Newsletter

Issue 35 / Aug'23

First 15 Years

IT WAS BACK IN 2008, with the foresight of a handful of residents, that the Valley Renewables Group was formed, and registered as a charity. What a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then! From proposing an initial grant scheme, and nervously wondering if it could be afforded, to now distributing c£70+k per year to residents of the Community (a total of c£300k since the start), putting aside c£455k for a rainy day or major projects, plus acquiring 25ha of Community Woodland; that's not a bad start.

The VRG trustee directors, together with an extensive number of residents, deliver a wide range of projects aimed at providing benefit to the widest possible number of residents and the area in general. To get involved in shaping the next 15 years see p3.

New Community Council

EVERY FOUR YEARS the Community Council (CC) is required to resign and a new Council is elected. The new Council has six members, five of whom have returned. The Council welcomes Maureen Berry as the newest recruit.

The CC is charged with representing the views of the Community and presenting them to Stirling Council for action. The CC, with Valley Renewables, has carried out a number of surveys, the latest being related to windfarm development. Opinions and comments are most welcome and anyone can join CC meetings via the zoom link published on the Carron Valley Connections Facebook page or by contacting the secretary (see below).

The CC has very good links with Valley Renewables Trust and together make decisions about spending a proportion of the Community Benefit funds provided by the windfarm operators. There are restrictions and sometimes frustrations as, for example, we cannot fund services that are currently provided by Stirling Council.

Much as we try, it is sometimes difficult to bring about change, however we do try to serve the Community as best we can.

The inaugural meeting of the CC took place on Wed 12th July. It consists of: -

Chair: Peter Hayward	Others: David Petch (sn)
Treasurer: Morag Holdsworth	Margaret Porter
Secretary: Dorothy Breckenridge	Maureen Berry

Community Council meetings normally take place by Zoom on the first Wednesday in February - June inclusive and September - December inclusive. Anyone may attend meetings or suggest a particular topic to be discussed. Should this be the case, contact the Community Council Secretary for details: cvdcc.sec@gmail.com. PH

Important Diary Dates

RESIDENTS' SUMMER PICNIC: 26th Aug; 12noon-4pm; Woodland Event Space; see p3.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY DROP-IN SESSION: 16th Sept; 1pm-4pm; Woodland Event Space; see p5.

POMONA APPLE DAY: 14th Oct; 12noon-4pm; Woodland Event Space; see p6.

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Woodland Update

THE COMMUNITY WOODLAND has been in our ownership for some 5 years now, and the plan to change it gradually from a commercial to an amenity woodland is well underway. To mark the occasion and the progress being made, an application was put in on our behalf to Scotland's Finest Woods Awards. This is a very prestigious award scheme and we were therefore thrilled to be awarded 'Highly Commended' in the Community Woodlands Award - Large Group 2023 section. The awards were presented at the Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh by Mairi Gougeon, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and the Islands, with ours being received by Christine Puckering, ably supported by Crawford Logan (her husband, left) and Peter Mitchell (Fountains Forestry / our woodland manager, right). Brilliant!



Path Completion

THE FINAL PROCESS in the accessible footpath creation project took place on a really warm 17th June. A huge pile of whin dust had been delivered track-side for transferring to the middle section of the path for top-dressing. A good turnout of volunteers rolled up sleeves and got started. A mini-digger loaded the stuff into a trailer pulled by a quad bike, to deliver the material to the unsurfaced areas. Squads of folk waited to rake the stuff evenly across the path surface, more volunteers ferried cans full of water from the pond jetty for damping down the dust, then someone followed up with a whacker plate to press it all down. Quickly a good working routine was well into action, with folk rotating jobs, spelling each other and getting on with the job. The task was certainly a 'good workout' but progress was being made. BUT THEN - that was about the time one of the trailer tyres had a blow-out!

To keep the ball rolling, knowing the job had to be done, we started ferrying the material to the required part of the path by barrow! Now that was really hard work and we couldn't have kept doing that for long. However, a motorised barrow miraculously appeared and saved the day. Multiple loads of whin dust and barrow loads of watering cans later, despite getting constantly further away from the track-side pile and the pond of water, we completed the c350m of path resurfacing. A job very well done everyone. What a team!

Woodland Dates

Dependent on sufficient volunteering.

2023

12th Aug: Wood Fuel Day / Surplus Produce Swap

26th Aug: Residents' Summer Picnic (see p3)

9th Sept: Wood Fuel Day / Surplus Produce Swap

16th Sept: Energy Efficiency /Retrofitting Q&A Session (p5)

7th Oct: Wood Fuel Day / Tree Tidying

14th Oct: Pomona Apple Day (p6)

4th Nov: Wood Fuel Day / Tree Planting

Further information found on Carron Valley Connections Facebook page.

Event Space Damage

ON FRIDAY 21ST JULY some folk camped on the event space in the woodland. Sadly they lit a fire directly on to the grass in the middle of the area that we have put a lot of effort into improving. This was reported to us next day but of course by then they had gone, but not before leaving some litter plus some little 'presents' in the undergrowth around the perimeter.

No one quite understands the mentality of folk who can't use the countryside and at the same time 'Leave No Trace' of their having been there.

A quick response by several residents had the damage re-turfed and re-seeded so hopefully before too long the eyesore will recover. The area has also been surrounded with no fire / no camping signs. We'll see if that works.



Residents' Summer Picnic - 26th Aug

WHEN / WHERE: Noon until 4pm at the Community Woodland Event Space off the B818 just east of the reservoir. Cross Spittal Bridge into the FLS woodland then follow the signs plus see the diagram below.

PARKING: Please consider car sharing with neighbours or other residents. The first FLS parking area on the right is reserved for folk attending the Picnic. Our parking marshals will help you. If you have a disabled blue badge though turn left to the event space entrance to drop the person off, then park the vehicle beyond the next barrier.

FOOD: Lots of picnic type foods and drinks are free and provided by Drum Farm. They're brilliant. Soooo tasty!

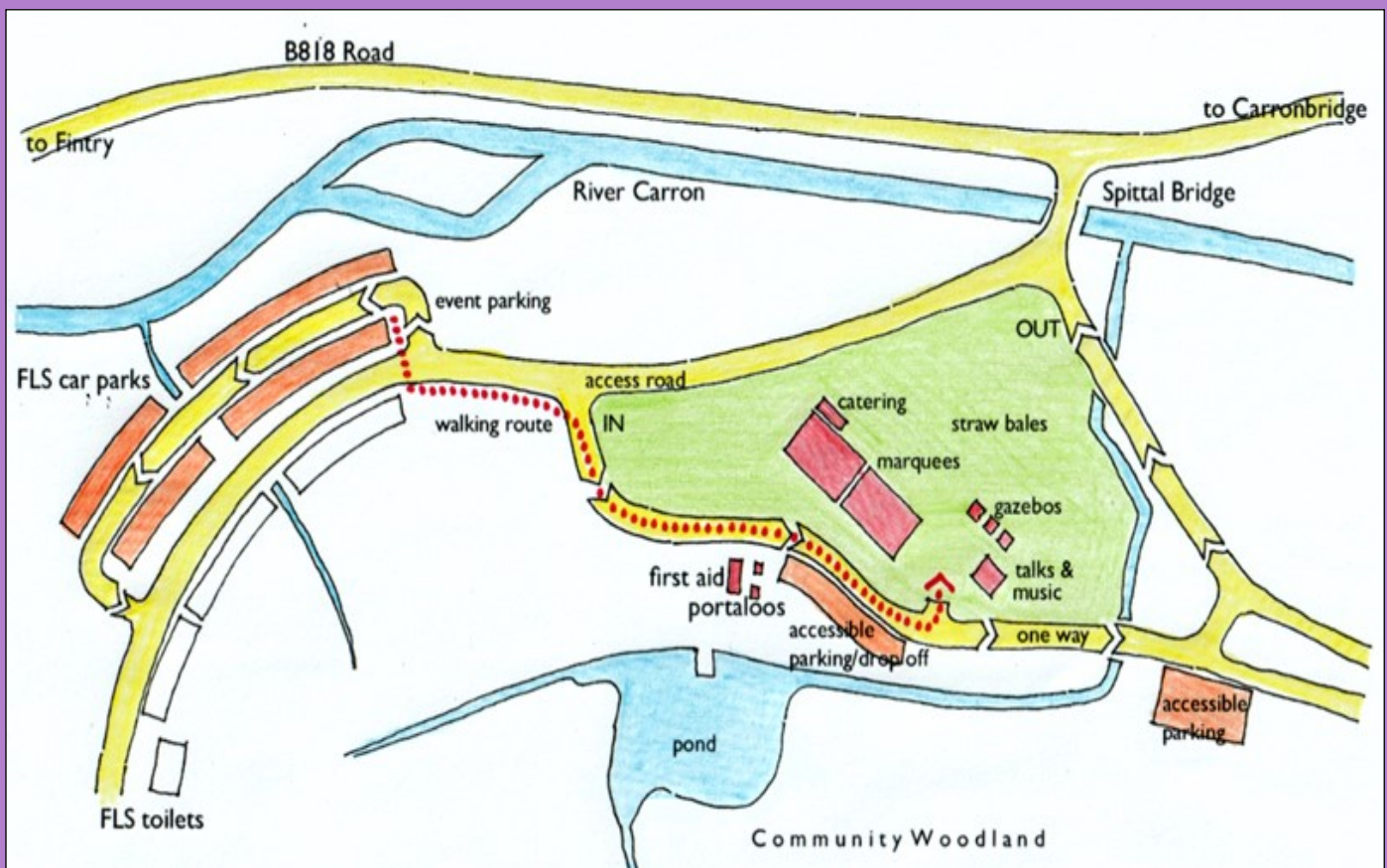
BUYING STUFF: Food that's not provided by Drum Farm is not free. This includes home and garden produce, and ice cream (£1/per cone, no extra charge for sprinkles). There will be other items on sale so come prepared with cash.

WHO'S COMING: Lots of folk, some you've seen before and some not. Rather than miss anyone out, just come and see for yourself. There will be demonstrations, come and try its, exhibits, music, brain-picking chances, talks..... et, etc.

WEATHER: Well of course this is Scotland so who knows exactly at this point. There is no such thing as poor weather; just poor equipment! It is a fairly sheltered site and the marquees are very robust. However, regardless, come prepared for anything with several layers, chunky footwear, waterproofs perhaps. You know the drill.

TALKS / MUSIC PROGRAMME:

	2.00 Music from Alison & Gus
12.30 Defibrillator demonstration	2.30 Children's story time with Crawford Logan
1.00 Young Musicians	3.00 Music from Willie Crawford
1.30 Waste Recycling	3.30 More music to end the day.



VRG Board & AGM

THE BOARD OF THE VRG consists up to 9 Trustee Directors, currently made up of - Rob Ferguson, Jenny Holdsworth, Ian MacFarlane, David Petch, Margaret Porter, Christine Puckering, Carol Simpson, and John Speake. Yes, you've counted right, that's only 8. So there is 1 vacancy at the moment and shortly to be another. The next opportunity to confirm new board members will be at the up coming AGM on Nov. 7th. However, if you think you have a skill or a specialism to offer, we'd love to hear from you before that. We are particularly looking for people capable of any of the following: - making decisions, getting along with people, listening, handling finances, project management, being open-minded, or learning from others about any of these. If even only slightly interested, contact: - chair@valleyrenewables.co.uk. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Ticked Off



AS YOU KNOW DEER ticks should be removed as soon as possible. Our garden now seems to be a feeding ground for the local deer population and as a result gardening often involves the removal of ticks.

For removing ticks a 'Tick Twister' or 'Tick Tweezers' are useful. The plastic Twisters comes in two sizes but even the small one is difficult to use on very small ticks. Ordinary tweezers seem to squash the tick and tend to grip the body leaving the head. Recently we found the curved Tick Tweezers in a well know chemists in the Thistle Centre. The advantage of the curved ones is the ability to grip the head with the points and lift the whole thing away. We find the watchmaker's loupe (magnifier) is an essential tool for identification and guidance as it frees up both hands and makes the whole thing more fun, especially if the operation involves a friend! The loupe is also great for help in extracting splinters. PH

Cycling Loops

WITH A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL cycling event having just passed through our patch (6th Aug), and with quite a few e-bikers and others in the Community, perhaps your mind has turned to a personal cycling event. We have our very own challenge loop(s) here in the Community that lend themselves to time-trialling, although how long they take doesn't really matter except perhaps personally.

- ◆ Red Loop - 25km -> / 470m[^]
- ◆ Red Loop + Extension (Blue Swan's Water addition excluding North Third Road) - 34km -> / 635m[^]
- ◆ Blue Route + North Third Road - 12km-> / 215m[^]

Other combinations are possible including figure of 8s, two of one loop and one of the other, etc..... Everyone in the Community has easy access to the route from home but you could also park up at Carron Valley FLS car park and start from there. If timing your cycle is not important to you, these routes make excellent family or individual jaunts, plus give a very good impression of the extent of our Community - it's bigger than you think. Take a drink and some snacks, and just take your time. There are lots of interesting picnic spots and some great views. If you want to let us know your best times or throw down the gauntlet to others, put it up on the Carron Valley Connections Facebook page. Get peddling!



Energy Efficiency Drop-In Session - 16th Sept

SEPT 16TH, 1PM-4PM, at the Community Woodland events' space, Carron Valley. Hot drinks and cakes provided.

YOU NEED TO BE THERE if you're wrestling with what house improvements to make, in what order and at what cost. Our Energy Efficiency Drop-in Session will provide you with the opportunity to ask questions of our panel of experts.

Confirmed specialists attending are:

- ◆ **Stephen McAlaney** from Home Energy Scotland, who can provide all the information you need to qualify for grant support.



- ◆ **Jim Bissett** of Hydro Genie can answer questions on improving boiler efficiency. He has devised a system to remove all the air bubbles from the circulating water making the boiler and radiators more efficient.

- ◆ **Peter King**, who is a member of the VRG Energy Efficiency subgroup, is a Solarity Architect who has looked at a variety of insulation products and can advise on their cost effectiveness.



- ◆ **Derek Anderson** from DM Hall surveyors, will be able to answer questions on the usefulness of Energy Performance Certificates and what might be expected during a survey.

- ◆ **Louise Waters** is a qualified mechanical engineer specialising in heating systems, works for Natural Power at their Stirling office and also has experience of working with windfarms.



- ◆ **Tanya Ewing** from Glaze & Save is passionate about helping businesses and homeowners save money on their energy bills with a unique magnetic secondary glazing system, **InvisiTherm**®.

- ◆ We are also expecting to have a representative from **'1314 Renewables'** who can answer questions on heat pumps and SMART homes.



WHERE WE'RE AT WITH THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROJECT AND WHAT NEXT:

We have now analysed the energy efficiency questionnaires, with many thanks to all those who returned one. A total of 51 responses have been received covering all house types but mostly from houses built prior to 1914. 34 responses were in this category with 19 listed as either farm-houses or cottages, built prior to 1850, and 15 built between 1850 and 1914. These will almost certainly be the least energy efficient of all our housing stock unless they have had extensive insulation fitted. This was borne out by noting how much energy was spent annually and these house types spent the most.

The dominant fuel source was oil, followed by LPG. The annual energy spend covered a wide spread, ranging from under £2000 to over £5000. What the results have demonstrated quite clearly is that we remain heavily dependent on fossil fuels, which is unsurprising in a rural community with no mains gas. This however gives us a great opportunity to lower our energy bills and reduce our carbon footprint. Only 4 houses have heat pumps and 4 use biomass.

The next stage will be to carry out a detailed survey on a selection of about 30 houses (with the owners' approval) to provide an estimate of the total cost of increasing energy efficiency as much as possible. We have requested quotations from 3 surveying companies to carry out this work. It will also include any necessary repairs before any energy efficiency measures can be implemented. This work is planned to start on November 1st 2023 as we are applying for grant support to pay for these surveys and we will not know if our application is successful until mid-October. We will then estimate the total cost of improving all our houses.

Every house surveyed will be provided with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). This is a necessary requirement before individual households can apply for grant aid from Home Energy Scotland (HES). Whilst our overall aim is to use funding from windfarms, Government and other power companies, this will take time to finalise. We therefore encourage you to apply for grant aid from HES whether it be for more insulation or the installation of a heat pump.

We very much look forward to seeing on 16th Sept.

JS

Investments Fund

THE VALUE OF THE Investment Fund as of 25/07/23 is :

£455,494 : up 0.72% over 12 months.

The original investment was £435,000

RF

Summer at the Fort

26 / 27 Aug: FORCES IN THE FIELD

23 / 24 Sept: VIKING EVENT

26 / 27 / 28 Oct: HALLOWEEN (ADULTS)

28 / 29 Oct: HALLOWEEN (KIDS)

Pomona Apple Day - 14th Oct - 12-4pm

THIS WILL BE HELD at the Community Woodland event space, 12-4 pm on Sat. 14th Oct. There will be a delicious barbecue provided by Drum Farm, and an opportunity to crush apples and pears for juice. Make sure all fruits brought have been washed. You can drink your juice there and then, share with others, bottle it to take home to drink, or to do with as you wish! We hope to have an apple expert to identify your apples if you need help, and to answer any apple-related questions.

There will also be a 'Bring and Share' table if you have produce to share, and some fun activities for children as well as using them as slaves to crush the apples! Come along, share with the Community, have fun, and celebrate one of our most treasured native fruits! Watch Facebook and website for updates.

CP



Thoroughly **wash** the fruit especially if it's been picked off the ground.



Bring a knife for cutting up your fruit before it goes into the scatter. Then keep an eye on it. [Knives have been known to disappear].

Bring **clean** sterilised bottles sufficient for the juicy product of your fruit.



If by any chance you have too much juice for consuming immediately, you could pasteurise it by following these instructions so that it is safe to keep for longer: **"Heat the juice to about 70°C (158°F), stirring frequently. Keep it at 70°C for at least 1 minute. This will make sure that all E. coli O157:H7 bacteria, and other germs such as mould, are destroyed."**

You could always make cider from your apple juice. There are numerous recipes online.

Sweet Surplus Use

RHUBARB GINGER BREAD

Preheat oven to 160°C (425°F)

- ◆ 4oz butter
- ◆ 4oz soft brown sugar
- ◆ 2 eggs lightly beaten
- ◆ 8oz black treacle
- ◆ 2oz crystallised ginger
- ◆ 8oz plain flour
- ◆ Level teaspoon ground ginger
- ◆ Level teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- ◆ 4 table spoons milk
- ◆ 1lb rhubarb cut into chunks

Grease a 1.5litres (2.5pints) tin

Cream butter and sugar. Beat in the eggs. Mix in the treacle, still beating, then the chopped and ground ginger.

Finally fold in the flour with a metal spoon. Dissolve the bicarbonate in the milk and stir this into the dough.

Put half the mixture in the tin. Cover with rhubarb pieces, then cover with the remaining dough.

Bake for 45mins, then turn down the oven to 150°C for another 30mins, but watch as it can burn.

CP



Savoury Surplus Use

THANKS TO VRG growing grants, it is so much easier to grow and eat your own. Tonight's dinner is from the polytunnel and raised bed. Pasta with kale pesto, roasted vegies, and goat's cheese (from the Farmers market).



KALE PESTO

- ◆ 100g kale (wash leaves, strip the stalks to keep for soup)
- ◆ 60g parmesan
- ◆ 60g your favourite nuts (pine nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds - try toasting them beforehand)
- ◆ Olive oil
- ◆ Juice from a lemon
- ◆ Salt & pepper

Use a mortar & pestle or processor and grind/pulse the kale, parmesan, nuts, adding some olive oil to a thick pesto consistency. Season with lemon juice pepper and salt to your taste. There you have it.

I don't use garlic when making the pesto but I do add it when it comes to eating, usually roast some garlic and mix it in. I find it doesn't have such a harsh taste. But each to their own.

I've suggested kale, but really any vibrant, coloured, leafy veg would work – herbs, carrot tops, etc.

DB

A Garden Nursery

One for those young at heart. I've found that keeping wild patches in the garden is not just making life easier, but the wildlife seem to love it as well. This year's star is a hare nursery.

According to the Mammal Society:-

"Young leverets are born fully furred with their eyes open and are left by the mother in forms a few metres from their birthplace. Once a day for the first four weeks of their lives, the leverets gather at sunset to be fed by the female."

Soooooo on a damp mid-July evening a first sighting of a tiny, wee leveret, so small it could sit on half your hand.



Each evening, we kept our eyes open for more sightings, wonderful fun for the next few weeks, having a wander round the windows to discover the spot where it was waiting for mum to come and feed it. First it hid amongst the grasses along the edge of the gravel path, then round to a hidey hole by the hose and watering can waiting patiently for mum or having a face wash.



Then there were two. But these were part of a different family. Amazingly two hares had chosen to give birth and have their nursery here, one leveret at the front and two at the back. The two mothers would approach at different times and wait cautiously, but usually it was too dark to get any good photos but, once the we'ans were a bit older, teatime came earlier, and mum obliged:



By now, the we'ans have discovered each other and are exploring their surroundings.... More to follow next time.....

DB

Our Elected Representatives



Evelyn Tweed MSP evelyn.tweed.msp@parliament.scot 01786 235 225

Alyn Smith MP alyn.smith.mp@parliament.uk 0207 219 3000

Cllr Neil Benny bennyn@stirling.gov.uk 01786 233 124

Cllr Scott Farmer farmers@stirling.gov.uk 01786 233 131

Cllr Jen Preston prestonj@stirling.gov.uk 01786 233 126

Bumble Bees

(Note from a neighbour-YJ)

MY TWO CHILDREN, Jessica and Hamish, recently came across a Bumblebee nest in the ground of their garden! They never knew that was a thing!

They watched the bees come and go from a inconspicuous hole in the soil, and then started asking questions...that's when we called over the Bee Expert, Dorothy (we now call her DoroBee!). She suggested this website -

www.bumblebeeconservation.org

which gave us all the information about bumblebees to answer our questions, and pictures and an app to identify these wee Bumblebees. Next Steps: We're going to give Bumblebees a home by adding these to our garden... Here's how to make a nest. Full details of all the steps on:

https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Making_a_bumblebee_nest-1.pdf



For those of you who are really interested in spotting wild creatures that frequent your garden or that you spot when you're out and about adventuring, why not record your sightings on the iNaturalist website. You could be part of the largest group of naturalists in the world. Just go on to the website (or download the free app) and get started. <https://uk.inaturalist.org/>

Air Source Heat

THERE WAS A REALLY informative programme on the other night about air source heating.

As we're all trying to educate ourselves on all things to with Energy Efficiency and Green Energy, here's the link if you missed it.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0fzltvd>

The success of heat pumps does depend on good insulation, draft exclusion and double glazing. To find out about all of these, remember the Energy Efficiency Drop-In Session on 16th Sept. It's a great chance to speak to some experts and have your questions answered.



Grants Paid

For '22/23 financial year to 30/06/23.

Household	£10,921	
Energy Efficiency	£27,279	
Student Bursaries	£2,500	
Young Person's	£3,047	
Fire Alarms	£1,983	
Warm Up	£ 9,618	
Get Growing	£12,608	
E Bikes	£500	
New Venture	£0	
Residents' Groups	£0	
Community Groups	£1,896	
TOTAL	£70,352	RF

Contact Us

VRG Secretary:

secy@valleyrenewables.co.uk

VRG admin and information:

admin@valleyrenewables.co.uk

Visit us on the web at:

www.valleyrenewables.co.uk

or Carron Valley Connections private Facebook group

Community Council Secretary:

cvdcc.sec@gmail.com

Editor:

weehowlands@gmail.com

Grants

JUST A WEE HEADS-UP reminder that grant applications will be being received again from September. Check out the VRG website to see what's there and how to apply.

www.valleyrenewables.co.uk

While the main focus is on energy efficiency improvements, other grants are available.

