

Carron Valley & District Newsletter

Issue 37 / Feb'24

Just a Wee Reminder

WITH APPROXIMATELY 70% of folk in our Community taking advantage of the grant schemes already, we would say to the other 30% - 'This is your chance to get your share of community benefit money'. You may not like windfarms, nor want anything to do with them, or perhaps you think you don't need anything, but surely you can think of something that fits the criteria?



To the folk interacting with the system already, just remember that, even if you have applied for something under one particular grant this year already, you can use one of the others to apply for something else so long as it falls within the criteria. You can find details of the various grants and their criteria on the VRG website: Grants - Valley Renewables Group. - Development Trust. If finding details about the grant schemes online is what's holding you back, how about asking a neighbour to help? Similarly, if you are aware of a non-online person, let us know and we can post stuff out.

Some might say 'why don't we just divide the amount of community benefit between the number of households and give all an annual cheque, or a reduction in electricity bills?'. However, the VRG Articles of Association don't allow that and it is also barred by a wind farm operator as it discourages careful use of energy. You can find a copy of our Articles at the bottom of the 'About Us' page on the website: About Us - Valley Renewables Group - <u>Development Trust</u> . All the criteria must be consistent with furthering the achievement of sustainable development.

With the Spring growing season coming along before too long (it is, isn't it?), are you remembering about the Get the Valley Growing Grant. You can save yourself a lot of money and effort trotting to the shops by growing your own veg and fruit, perhaps even enough to last over the winter as well.

Community Events Heads-up 1

OPEN DAY / RESIDENTS' PICNIC, whatever we called it - this year the main social event of the year will be a:

FLOWER & PRODUCE SHOW & BARBEQUE on 2411 AUGUST

This will be a first for us but, with so many of you "Getting the Valley Growing", finding entries should be no bother at all. So set aside the date and, for the green-fingered amongst you, here are some of the classes and age groups: -

Vegetables; Flowers; Produce (inc. baking and preserves); Home Made Tipples

Pre-schools; Primary children; Secondary children; Any age.

The full details will appear in March on our website events' page:-

<u>Updates & Events - Valley Renewables Group - Development Trust</u>

and will be notified as there on Carron Valley Connections Facebook page in due course.













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Winter BioBlitz

ON 9TH DECEMBER 2023, we had the inaugural Carron Valley Woodland Bioblitz. It was a particularly driech day (as December in Carron Valley tends to be) but nine intrepid naturalists (including three young children) braved the elements, while other volunteers planted trees in the woodland.



In case you missed the announcement in the last newsletter, we're starting a

regular Community Bioblitz to help get residents involved in recording and monitoring the Valley's natural environment using the iNaturalist smartphone app. You can find more details about the wider project and record sightings at any time here: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/carron-valley-biodiversity-project.

A Bioblitz is an event where people record the biodiversity (fauna and flora) in a particular area at the same time for a set amount of time. Not only is it a really fun way to look at nature, but also the data collected can be so useful for helping to keep track of the health of our local environment.

In our first Carron Valley Bioblitz, a total of 76 records were uploaded by 9 people in 30 minutes - 7 types of fungi (mushrooms and toadstools) and 69 types of plants. Well done, everyone! Pretty impressive considering how wet and wild the weather was. Afterwards we were able to retreat to the Woodland Cabin to warm up, catch up, and enjoy a delicious, warming mug of home-cooked soup.

Are you a keen naturalist? Would you like to get involved with our next Bioblitz? We'd love you to join in! We will have our Spring Bioblitz on 9th March at 11am (meet at the Community Woodland cabin). If you need any help with the iNaturalist app before then, check out the video tutorials:

<u>https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/video+tutorials</u> or contact Esther Brooker - <u>estherebrooker@gmail.com</u> EB

Chainsaw Course

THE FOLLOWING FOLK took part in chainsaw training in the autumn - David Petch (Jr), Brian Young, Barbara Wilson and Robert Leyton. After taking part in a five day training course, all returned later for a one day assessment. We are happy to congratulate all on their success. No doubt you will



be seeing them doing maintenance activities around the Community Woodland at some point in the future.

A comment made by one participant was along the lines of - "after years of using a chainsaw previously, I didn't realise what dangerous bad habits I had got into". With this Community having a very high proportion of chainsaw users, many of whom are of the self-taught variety, we are hoping to organise some one-day 'essentials of safe chain-sawing' courses and, if possible, a further certificated course like the one the four above went on. Watch this space.

Woodland Dates

All dependent on sufficient volunteering.

2024

9th Mar: 10am: Wood-fuel processing and woodland

management tasks.

11am: Spring BioBlitz

6th Apr: 10am: Wood-fuel and woodland tasks.

11th May: 10am: Wood-fuel and woodland tasks.

8th June: 10am: Tree maintenance and Sitka removal.

14th **Sept:** 10am: Wood-fuel and woodland tasks.

Quick Report

A GREAT VOLUNTEER DAY was had on 10th February with new chainsaw skills put to good use, removing tubes and stakes from some flourishing trees, removing Sitka spruces and some maintenance on the accessible path. It was amazing how much was achieved by the dozen or so volunteers. Special thanks to Crawford for delivering very welcome soup and rolls to round off the day.

9th March is the next event which will be another busy day with wood-fuel production and collection, plus simple woodland tasks for those volunteering for that. With the Spring Bioblitz also taking place, the woodland will be buzzing. Hope to see lots of you there.

Although we are currently buying in wood to create logs for those that ask for them, we hope to eventually be self sufficient in suitable wood through coppicing. That will take a few years and to get to that stage our trees need to be looked after and managed with your help.

Remember, if you are interested in signing up for woodfuel, then please let me know so I can add you to the list for the day – <a href="mailto:dotto:d



First Aid Courses

FOLLOWING ON FROM the chainsaw course, the Woodland Group is planning to organise a 1-day First Aid course specifically for chainsaw users. There will be a few places available. If you are interested in wanting to take part then please let



me know at dottietrees@gmail.com or 07724 405216. DB

Windows Solution

THE PROBLEM: Old single glazed, sash and case, twelve pane, wooden window frames. They are in good condition but draughty, attract condensation in cold weather, and are an obvious source of heat loss.

A SOLUTION: to improve the situation with Secondary Glazing. The Energy Saving Trust has a number of grant and loan schemes to enable households to make home energy improvements. Up to £8,000 is available as an interest free loan for secondary glazing. This is repayable over a period of time set by the borrower, up to a maximum of ten years. £8,000 may either fully cover the cost of installation of secondary glazing, or contribute to the overall cost in larger homes. Having done some research, I decided to take this route rather than double glazing, in order to retain the original windows of this Georgian period farmhouse. I personally feel that the retention of original features both internally and externally is important in period properties.



The secondary glazing has been in place now for two months. It is difficult at this point to quantify if it has made a significant impact on heating costs, as this winter the weather has oscillated frequently between spells of very cold weather and extremely mild conditions. However, the draughts and condensation have been eliminated, and the sound proofing is excellent. The recent high winds have passed unnoticed inside. Heat is certainly being retained within rooms for longer than previously.

The thermal / insulation capacity of secondary glazing is often greater than that of double glazing. This technical information was illustrated and provided by Shirley Paterson of 'NextGenergy', who has recently been undertaking EPC assessments in a number of homes within Carron Valley at the request of the VRG Board . This is part of the larger project to help determine the state (in energy efficiency terms) of the housing stock in Carron Valley, with a view to assisting with long term improvements where achievable.

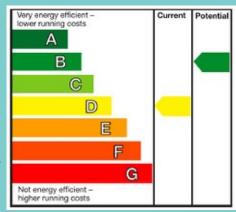
Tanya Ewing's company 'Glaze and Save' installed my secondary glazing system. Tanya attended the Energy Efficiency Event organised by the VRG last year. Her company have expertise in the improvements of glazing in older properties. She and her team worked with precision and professionalism throughout the process. The visual impact on the windows internally is negligible. They match the colour of their discreet internal frames with the exact colour of your current paintwork!

So, the window issues may be solved, but the bigger problem of thick, solid stone walls with no gap for insulation remains. This is the area of greatest heat loss in most homes and is a much bigger issue. I recommend looking online at the Energy Saving Trust website, to see what grant and loan help is available. It is extensive, enabling the energy efficiency, of older housing stock particularly, to be improved. Your EPC rating will also be improved after work is completed, thus enhancing the value of your property.

Energy Efficiency Project Report

WE BEGAN THIS PROJECT one year ago and I'm delighted to report that we are now making good progress. We have just completed a survey of 30 houses which will all be awarded an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) at no cost to the householder. Shirley Paterson from NextGenergy has had glowing references from several households who have all remarked on her thoroughness and professionalism.

We have been awarded a grant of £10,000 from Renantis to enable us to survey a further 50 houses. This next phase in our project will begin in March with the target for completion the end of June. This further survey allows us to check the energy efficiency of around half the Community's housing stock and will enable us to calculate a much more accurate figure for improving all the houses in Carron Valley.



If you have not yet had a survey, then please fill in the questionnaire sent with this newsletter and return it by March 4th. If you have not received a questionnaire, please inform Helen Bang on: - <u>admin@valleyrenewables.co.uk</u> and she will send one to you.

We have not yet fully analysed the results from our initial 30 surveys, but it is very clear that many properties would benefit from increased insulation, and grant support is available from both VRG and Home Energy Scotland (HES). HES is able to offer larger grants than VRG plus low or no interest loans. We will give more details of our findings in the next newsletter.

I would encourage you to take part in the survey, as it could be of great benefit to individual households and to the Community as a whole. Acting on the advice given will reduce your annual energy bills and lower our carbon footprint.

Community Council Chair's Message

THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL IS looking at the resilience of the Community and considering what we can do to improve it. As luck would have it, after our last meeting storm Isha hit, Old Sauchie lost power for two days and trees were blown over taking out the phone lines. With more severe storms forecast, planning for the worst and hoping for the best seems even more important. The Community Council with your help and suggestions will see what can be done to enable us to cope better.

On a personal level, here's a brief tale to illustrate the point.

POWER CUTS AND HINDSIGHT - A TALE TO TELL

We once had a fire in the house. I rushed outside found the hose; back in the house turned it on; nothing! It was disconnected! In the pitch dark I couldn't see the end to reconnect it. The torch was dead. You get the picture, the fire brigade arrived and all was well apart from the clean up. The hose now stays connected.

During our latest power cut, a tree had fallen over the power line. The torches were charged, the camping gas cylinder was full, candles aplenty were lit, as the log burner blazed. But we could have done more.



The network provider for this part of Scotland, SP Energy Networks (the company responsible for electricity up to your meter), have a website www.spenergynetworks.co.uk that is easy to follow. If you are over 60, have medical or other needs or have children under 5, you can register on their Priority Services Register. Once registered, your details are shared with your supplier (the one you pay) so you don't have to. If there is a power cut, you will be kept in touch and informed about any provisions that have been made to alleviate the problem and to assist you.

In the happy event that you are fit and young you will be able to remind us all that the number to ring is **105** if the power goes off. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, politicians seem most adept, but foresight is best for power cuts and fires!

Calling All Ladies

WEST PLEAN and AUCHENBOWIE LADIES CLUB

Originally the group was started in 1922, as part of the SWRI, by Mrs Munro of Auchenbowie House and Miss Bolton of West Plean House. It became an Independent Club a year later in 1923. We have just celebrated our Centenary Year! It was primarily for the wives and families of the two estates to meet and hence the unwieldy name!

Initially it began in the hall at West Plean, with no electricity or loos. We have now settled in Larbert Old Church hall (FK5 3AB) where we meet for a couple of hours on alternate Thursdays from January to June, and September to December at 1.00pm.

We are a friendly club with a membership currently of 30+ women of a certain age. There is a committee, and syllabus arranged for 2024, which includes speakers from the local area, as well as outings, and always a Christmas Party!

We always end a meeting with a cup of tea and a biscuit, with a chance to chat, so don't forget your mug.

Membership is an astronomical £4.00 yearly, with a £2.50 charge per meeting for members and £3.00 for guests. The 1st taster meeting is free.

If you would like to come along, or wish more information please contact Hilary on 01786 816859 or 077922 76851. You are all most welcome!

The 2024 Syllabus includes

March 7th Talk about C-N-Do Scotland

March 21st RHET - taking the classroom to the countryside

April 4th Up cycling

April 18th CHAS

May 2nd Graham's the family dairy. Milk from farm to fridge

May 16th Playlist for life

Sept 5th Musical afternoon

Sept 19th Start up Stirling



The Order of Malta

THE ORDER OF MALTA DIAL-A-JOURNEY TRUST in Stirling provides a valuable service for individuals with mobility challenges. The flagship service aims to provide affordable and accessible door-to-door transport for people who have mobility difficulties and cannot use conventional public transport, or for other local groups looking for flexile transport options. Whether you have difficulty with mobility or belong to other local groups seeking flexible transport options, Dial-a-Journey aims to get you where you need to go with minimal hassle for you and your family. Here are some key details about Dial-a-Journey:



Address: Order of Malta Dial-a-Journey Trust, 17 Munro Road, Stirling FK7 7UU.

Service Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Contact Number: You can reach them at 01786 465 355

Dial-a-Journey also provides the Central Shopmobility service, which offers loan or hire of scooters and powered/manual wheelchairs within shopping centres, making it easier for individuals to move around while shopping. For more information, you can visit their website: <u>Dial A Journey - Door-to-door' transport (dial-a-journey.org)</u>. If you have specific booking inquiries or need assistance, feel free to give them a call!

This might be a solution for those of you who hoped to use the Demand Responsive Transport System which has since Covid fallen into abeyance. Worth a try perhaps.

Incidentally, the Order of Malta dates back to around the 11th century and is one of the oldest chivalric orders, set up to provide medical care, shelter, and protection to those traveling to the Holy Land on crusades. Nowadays, it combines a rich historical legacy with a modern day commitment to humanitarian service all over the world.

Condensation Control

OUR COMMUNITY HAS A HIGH proportion of traditional (pre 1919) buildings. So, unless you have done a lot of things to control it recently, condensation could well be an issue. Why is it extremely important to do something about it?

(a) It's really bad for your health. (b) It rots the fabric of the building. (c) It spoils the look of the place.

Here are some simple, low cost measures to help reduce condensation risks. (Advice from the Engine Shed blog):

- ♦ If drying clothes inside, do it in in a well-ventilated part of the building if possible.
- Run extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms during and after cooking and bathing.
- Open windows for short periods to let moist air out. Low-cost air quality monitors can tell you when to boost ventilation by opening a window.
- ♦ Make sure pathways for ventilation including subfloor vents and trickle vents are open.
- ♦ If condensation is forming on windows, wipe them down regularly to reduce the risk of timber decay.
- ♦ Consider using a Humidistat controlled extractor fan.

If you're making changes to a building, you'll also need to make sure any materials you're using don't impact ventilation or worsen condensation.

The Engine Shed is a great source of advice and information about buildings. They have a Facebook page - https://www.engineshed.scot.

www.facebook.com/HESEngineShed plus there is lots of stuff on their website - https://www.engineshed.scot.

Support for Rural Homes

THE COST OF ENERGY for rural homes can be a significant proportion of the household income, and we know that fuel poverty is prevalent in rural areas. Home Energy Scotland recognises this and has lots of advice on what can be done about it plus a range of grants and free loans available. Check out that part of the HES website - https://bit.ly/4bsdcXn - to find out what might apply to your situation.





Events Heads-up 2



BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS of the past 3 years, and with all your delicious apples needing to be juiced, there will be:

A POMONA APPLE DAY - 26TH OCT

Great fun, lots of fruit juice, tasty re-

freshments - everything applies.

Kicking Yourself?

THE LAST SURVEY WE sent out was the one about your property's energy efficiency measures, usage and costs. Each survey returned was anonymised at the outset and, from those, 30 households were



randomly selected to receive an in-depth energy performance investigation, and subsequent certificate and advice. Following that the hope is that one way or another you will be able to make some of the advised improvements.

If, for whatever reason, you didn't fill in that survey, you haven't missed out.....yet. With this mailing there is another copy of that survey. Please, please, please fill it in this time and get it back to us. You will read elsewhere that Renantis, one of our windfarm developers, has awarded us an additional £10,000 towards our Energy Efficiency Project. This will be used to fund and additional 50 household energy efficiency surveys. Your property could be one of that 50. Taking part in that could open the door to bigger funding. It will also help us work out just how much funding we have to find to help reduce the overall cost to householders when they start making improvements. What's to lose?

If we can help you reduce your household running costs.
That's like money in your pocket year... on year... on year

As You've Gathered

AS YOU'VE GATHERED as far as the grant system is concerned, we are majoring on assisting households with Energy Efficiency projects. Here's what some beneficiaries said:

"The heating is set lower and clothes in wardrobes no longer feel cold."

".... helping us all have more eco-friendly, warmer homes." BJ

".... draughts and condensation have been eliminated, and the sound proofing is excellent." WE

Community Hall

PROGRESS IS BEING MADE! Meetings have been held recently with an architect and quantity surveyor to help firm up the likely design and cost. A meeting will shortly be held between the VRG and the Community Council to reach a joint decision on whether to go ahead or not. You'll hear the result of that in the next newsletter.

Nettle & Feta Bourek

In former times, families would eat early nettle leaves as they emerged in the Spring, regarding them as a tonic after the limited fresh diet over the winter.



Foraged nettles are still good to eat and MAY be good for inflammation, hay fever, blood pressure and blood sugar!

Pick young leaves wearing gloves, and always well away from anywhere dogs may have been!

Ingredients:

- * 1 pack Filo pastry from the chilled area in supermarkets
- * 600gm young nettle leaves, washed and chopped.
- * 400gm feta cheese
- * 1 beaten egg
- * A little natural yoghurt or melted butter
- * A handful of sesame seeds and some nutmeg

Method:

Wash the nettle leaves and cook gently until they soften. Drain well and chop. Crumble the feta into the nettles and add the beaten egg, reserving a little egg to glaze the top of the pie. A little nutmeg improves the flavour.

Put 4 individual sheets of filo pasty in a deep 12"x 8" baking tin, brushing each sheet with melted butter in turn. Let the sheets overlap the edge of the tin if need be.

Add the nettle/feta mixture in a layer, then use the remaining filo sheets on top. Tuck the edges of the sheets in before you finish off with the last sheet.

Glaze the top with a little beaten egg (or milk, if you forgot to save some) and scatter a few sesame seeds on top.

Bake in a moderate over for about 30 mins.

It works really well with a cucumber or herb sauce too...

Cucumber/herb sauce:

- * Half a chopped cucumber
- * 3 tbs mayonnaise
- * 3 tbs natural yoghurt or lightly whipped cream
- * Finely chopped herbs (dill, parsley, chives, thyme) Mix everything together and serve. If you don't have a handy cucumber, just use the herbs.

PS. For the bourek, if you can't wait for new nettles to pop up, substitute with spinach.

Email Permission

AS YOU WILL ALL realise no doubt, sending things by post these days is getting incredibly expensive. We would encourage those of you who have the means to receive things electronically and to communicate by email, to do so. No worries though if that's not possible, just make your wishes clear.

Got a Pre-Schooler?

Free Trees for Bobies

Claim a free tree to mark your baby's birth!

Trees are great for the environment: Trees provide homes and food for wildlife Trees capture carbon and clean our air Trees make the future better for our families





Treelink would love to hear from you

- you have a pre-school child in your family, would like to celebrate an adoption or commemorate a lost
- · have room for at least a small tree to grow in your garden
- · and live in the Stirling Council area

For more details, and to register your interest in a free tree, visit treelinkstirling.org.







Planning



AT THE MOST RECENT Community Council meeting, we became aware that there were a number of planning applications affecting properties in Carron Valley and District. There could well be one near you. Should you wish to view or comment on applications you may do so on the Stirling Council website: View and comment on planning applications | Stirling Council. You may have to check neighbouring areas as well to get the whole picture.

Grants Review Quote

HERE IS A QUOTE FROM last year's independent grants' review:

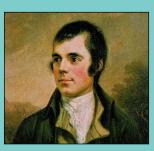
"The long-term legacy for Carron Valley and District area that is provided by the VRG individual grants is worth noting. The Community has clearly stated that individual community grants are the preferred way in which VRG surplus income is distributed to the local population. These are helping to achieve a broadly improved and safer housing stock, reduced living costs and self-development opportunities for individuals within the Community. This all contributes indirectly towards community resilience and cohesion by making Carron Valley a positive place to live."

You may not know, but people are looking for opportunities to come and live, and to work, here. It can't just be the lovely soft rain we get!

Bad Roads Not New

YOU MAY THINK that the awful state our roads are currently in is a sign of the times. But maybe it's not. Robert Burns wrote his Epigram on Rough Roads back in 1786!

Well said that man!



"I'm now arrived - thanks to the gods! Thro' pathways rough and muddy, A certain sign that makin' roads Is no this people's study: Altho' I'm not wi' Scripture cram'd, I'm sure the Bible says That heedless sinners shall be damn'd, Unless they mend their ways!"

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

Beginner's Guide to Bird ID

WHEN OUT FOR A WALK in the great outdoors, have you ever found yourself wishing you could identify which feathered friend was making that beautiful sound?

Maybe you want to get better at recognising that the wee brown bird you're looking at; the one that is different from all the other wee brown birds out there!

Getting to grips with bird ID can seem daunting, but it's more accessible than you may think. Beginning your journey in the months of winter and spring is a great time to start training your eyes and ears before our summer visitors arrive.

Come join Scottish Water's Ranger, in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland, at Carron Valley on either Saturday 2nd or Saturday 23rd March, between 10am – 12pm, for

a stroll and introduction to bird ID. For more details and to confirm attendance, please contact - jacqueline.kane@forestryandland.gov.scot.

Beginner's Guide to Bird ID

Carron Valley, Main Car Park

Saturday 2nd March or Saturday 23rd March 10am - 12pm

Come join Scottish Water's Ranger, in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland, at Carron Valley for a stroll



For details and to confirm attendance please contact jacqueline.kane@forestryandland.gov.scot





JK

Grants Paid

From 01/07/23 - 06/02/24 (7 months)

6 Student bursaries £3,000

7 Young Person's £1,378

1 Household (scheme closed) £480

20 Energy Efficiency £17,089

20 Warm Up/Cost down £2,970

12 Get the Valley Growing £3,696

Total: 66 grants £28,613

Investments

As at 06/02/24 - £474,161

Up 2.26% over 12 months

Annual income ~£12,053

Flower & Produce Show Entry

LET'S GET PRACTISING - BAKING SCONES

This is our family recipe for fluffy, eat straight-out-of-the-oven, large scones! Mixture is sticky so we use our floured hands to quickly roll into a ball! The size varies according to hand size and who eats it!

Ingredients:

200g self-raising flour

5g baking powder

50g margarine

50g castor sugar

105ml milk

Method:

- 1. Sift flour, add baking powder, sugar and marge rub together with clean hands into breadcrumb consistency.
- 2. Make a hole in the middle, add the milk, then with a knife stir into a soft sticky dough.*
- 3. Roll out or use hands to make scone shapes and place not too close together on a floured baking tray they get bigger.
- 4. Bake for 12mins in a pre-heated oven at 210°C (Gas 6) until slightly brown on top.

Makes 4 large, 6 medium or 10 small.

* You can add cherries, blueberries or sultanas if you like.

Love Jessica (age 9) & Hamish (age 6)

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

CVDCC Mtgs

THE NEXT MEETINGS of the Community Council take place on Wednesdays - 6th March, 3rd April, 1st May. These meetings take place by Zoom, so you can just sit in the comfort of your own home and listen or actually ask questions. Contact the secretary at: cvdc.sec@gmail.com for the link to attend or to comment.