

Carron Valley & District



Carron Valley & District Newsletter

Issue 41, Feb'25

A Wee Blaw

STORM ÉOWYN WILL NOT be forgotten quickly. It's certainly a good while since our area has had a 'wee blaw' as strong as that. Regardless of whether or not we all received advanced warnings via the 'air-raid sirens' on our phones, it was still worrying to watch your caravan being shunted down the road bit by bit, to see your polytunnel or trampoline take to the skies, or your favourite tree finally succumb to just one storm too many. The main difference was that it all happened during the day this time, so we saw it all. It did, however, remind us once again how supportive our Community can be when times are tough. Many thanks to everyone who helped out neighbours. Good use will be made of this particular fatality but there is still much clearing up to be done around the Community.



Éowyn should remind us that, although it's only mid-February, there could be more storms to come. Also you'll recall, the Beast from the East was a March weather event so, are we ready and sorted for more dramas? We're not quite off the hook just yet.

Flower & Produce Show & BBQ

SAT 9TH AUGUST

That's the date of the main event in the Community's social calendar this year. Although last year's event, which was our first, was a big success, we learned a few things from that and hope to make it even better this year.

We're now in February so that would be a good time to make your growing plans for the spring. Having seen the standard last time and checked out the new list of classes for the next, you'll be able to identify the opportunities and hopefully match them to your gardening and creative talents. Just to prove we listen to what you say, to all the jam, marmalade and honey producers out there, you can use any type of jar you like so long as it's sterilised first. You'll find all the classes list on the website -

www.valleyrenewables.co.uk/projects/current-projects/community-open-day/

Hope to see you all there. Get Planting and Get Creative!

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I Dig Trees

HAVING AN INTEREST in all things conservation, we came across The Conservation Volunteers 'I Dig Trees' programme last year and applied for a limited number of trees to plant in the Community Woodland. We were successful in our bid and some months later received a delivery of 150 young tree saplings and 50 hawthorn hedge saplings. These were duly planted in the community woodlands over the winter months



by our woodland volunteer group. The hawthorns were planted near the event space to deter wild campers and other unauthorised access.

This year the opportunity again to apply for more trees occurred again and we were successful in a larger bid of 700 trees together with bamboo support poles and tubular protection against hungry deer, sheep or other animals. As we have planted out most of the areas already in the woodland, we decided to offer the trees to the community to promote growing your own woodlands within the valley. We did plant another 90 hawthorns surrounding the event space again but made the remainder available to the Community via the Carron Valley Connections Face Book page. Unfortunately, we could not give everyone all that they wished for, but 2 households received a limited number of hawthorns and 3 others received approximately 175 trees each along with the supports and planting instructions. We look forward to receiving some photos of the planting, and wish the households who received these every success in growing their woodlands. I am sure we will all enjoy the benefit of seeing these young woodlands thrive in the valley.

All being well, we will be given the opportunity to apply for more next year so please contact us early to let us know if you would like some and roughly how many. The trees tend to come in mixed packs of 50, all bare root and all native woodland species. The packs are generally labelled traditional woodland, pollinator, wildlife friendly, big 5, or hawthorn hedging. Typical trees included are Rowan, Hawthorn, Crab Apple, Goat Willow, Blackthorn, Beech, Birch, Alder, Hazel, Oak, Hornbeam, Elder, Wild Cherry, Dog Wood and Dog Rose.

We look forward to hearing from you and to seeing more trees growing in the valley.

B&JY

The Conservation Volunteers

THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS, via the I Dig Trees programme, are on target to provide 5 million free trees to communities across the UK by the end of this year. They do encourage feedback with photos of planting sessions and views of the young trees planted in community spaces. They are a charity and require donations and support from private and government institutions. Their idea is simple - by planting trees communities proactively help combat climate change, improve local air quality and create greener, healthier environments for people and wildlife. The trees provided are all native woodland species so beneficial to nature and biodiversity but not necessarily ideal for some gardens. In addition to the I dig Trees programme, The Conservation Volunteers have a range of courses and activities. To find out more about what's on in Scotland, contact: -

[The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland | Connecting People and Green Spaces](#)

Woodland Events

HERE'S WHAT IS COMING UP.

- Feb 15: Tree maintenance and Sitka bashing
- Mar 8: Wood fuel plus Sitka bashing
- Apr 5: Wood fuel plus Sitka bashing
- May 10: Wood fuel plus tubes removal, and BioBlitz.
- June 14: Maintenance & planting
- Aug 9: Flower & Produce Show and BBQ

There will be something for everyone to do regardless of ability. The more the merrier.

Community Bio Blitz

OUR LATE AUTUMN Community Woodland Bioblitz was a quiet one - just the four of us this time! There isn't much charismatic nature to see that time of year but we really enjoyed getting close to some of the smaller plant life and admiring the beauty that perhaps gets overlooked! We also had a lovely sighting of bullfinches, but failed to get a photo as they were moving too fast through the trees.

Come and join us for a future bioblitz! It's a really fun way to get to know what is living in the Community Woodland and it contributes data to help monitor the health of the ecosystem. Check out the VRG website for more details about the project and information on how to use iNaturalist, the app we use for recording data.

After the winter bioblitz on 15th Feb, the next one will be:

Spring BioBlitz - 11am, 10th May



Meet by the pond and bring appropriate footwear, clothing and your phone!

These events are great for youngsters and grown-ups alike.

Here is a photo of some of the beautiful lichen we saw on the last bioblitz back in December. EB

Wild Swimming

WILD SWIMMING (or just plain swimming as our forebears might have called it!) is very much of the moment, with TV programmes about it, and ads employing it as a means of suggesting their product is healthy for you or the environment!

I began to do this seriously about 4 years ago, with a group of like-minded, mad friends, and have swum every month of the year since then in all conditions. For the past 2+years it's been 'in skins' ie. no wetsuit! We try to meet weekly and go to Loch Venacher, although we have swum in the reservoirs of Carron Valley and Little Denny, and also Little Loch Chon (fabulous!).

The water temperature ranges from 4-15 degrees, depending on the season, and we're in for 5-30 minutes, again depending on the conditions. Windy and wet isn't wonderful, but to feel the sun on your face, surrounded by mountains and trees, is just magical! However, it's the camaraderie that's the best bit; squealing as we go in, or dithering whilst trying to change discretely in the car park, or drink hot chocolate from a thermos whilst chattering uncontrollably!

It's best, and safest to do this in company, and I'm sure that it's good for both body and soul.

HR

[Outdoor Access Code - Swimming Information about access to open water for swimming

Responsible behaviour by the public - The Access Code says: Access rights extend to swimming (subject to any local byelaws). Remember that swimming in open water can be dangerous, particularly for children, and that the water might be used for public water supply. Help to minimise problems for other users by: not swimming close to water intakes, abstraction points or spillways avoiding nets or other fishing tackle, not disturbing anglers and other water users, not polluting the water, and being aware that in prolonged dry spells fish might be distressed due to low water levels].

CVDCC Chair Message

IN THIS COMPLEX WORLD in which bin day will become two bin days, the Community Council not to be outdone has changed its meeting date from the first Wednesday of the month to the second Tuesday of the month. Currently meetings are still on Zoom. If you wish to raise a concern you can either attend the meeting via the contact link you can find on Facebook, or email to the secretary at cvdcc.sec@gmail.com.

Can the Community Council remind you that we still need your input to the Local Place Plan? Your ideas, priorities, concerns etc for the future will help us build a guide as to what we think is the way forward for the community.

PH

Community Hall - Progress Report

AFTER NINE YEARS, four feasibility studies, two community surveys, and two joint meetings of the VRG Board and Community Council, we have let the building contract and, at last, broken ground on the new Community Hall. When completed, this will sit alongside the Community Woodland and Community Wood-fuel Operation as our Community's assets.

The building comprises a hall capable of comfortably seating 40, a generous entrance lobby, two toilets, one accessible with baby changing, a catering kitchen and storage for furniture and the water treatment plant. Close by will be 14 car parking spaces and 2 accessible spaces. The building is due for completion and handover this July.

Candid Construction (Scotland) Ltd, as our contractor, had a difficult start in January with Storm Éowyn, closure of the B818, frost, snow and almost incessant heavy rain. Against the odds, they are making good progress, with the foundations now cast, and the base brickwork in progress to receive the timber frame. Insulation, cladding, plumbing, electrics and fit out will follow.

In clearing the area for widening the access road and the car park, old tree stumps, roots and poor ground conditions were revealed. The decision was taken to move the car parking to the north side of the access road onto better ground. Car parking numbers and proximity to the Hall's entrance are unchanged.

Even more encouraging has been our call for volunteers to operate and manage the Community Hall. Ten community members working as a team have offered to manage the facility. They have formed a working group with a secretary, and are meeting monthly to set up the operating systems for the building using SCVO guidance - Village and Community Halls Handbook - as a starter. There will be details of the arrangements in future newsletters and on our website. Any residents with an interest in the operation of the Hall or who have skills to offer, would be very welcome to join the group.

RF



Insulating an Older House - Part 2

SO, LAST SUMMER, we decided to start the attic insulation.

Heat was escaping through the roof slates, and drafts were evident. Previous insulation was visibly wet/black and not doing its job. The bedrooms below have all had walls insulated, so we knew the attic had to be next. It used to take a whole morning to heat up the large open space, using an electric fan heater, as heat wouldn't stay up there in these winter months for very long...escaping through the gaps in the slate roof. Now the temperature difference in the attic has been excellent. So how?

We applied for a VRG Energy Efficiency grant of £2000 to help with the cost of the insulation (approx £1000 for Kingspan - 100mm rigid boards & insulation tape, and £1000 for the wooden dwangs and plasterboard to hold the rigid board in place). Silver insulation tape holds the rigid boards in place and covers any gaps (where my sawing skills were questionable!).

Then plasterboard was cut to size, to cover the insulation and properly seal the room. Then taped and plastered before I was allowed to paint and order a carpet!



The renovation has cost us £8000 from our own savings. We completed as much of the work ourselves but still had to get a plumber, an electrician and a plasterer, plus the £2000 from the VRG grant scheme paying for the insulation and plasterboard.

The energy savings are already evident as we do not need the heating on as long. The bedrooms are warm within the hour, and hold the temperature for longer. A bit of an upheaval but well worth it.

Unfortunately, it means we now need to do the other half of the house! Sorry Kenny & father-in-law, Billy... EJ

Energy Performance Certificates

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES (EPCs) tell you how energy efficient a home is. They are different from energy ratings which you find on home appliances. EPCs rate a home from A, very efficient, to G which is inefficient. In Scotland the current validity for an EPC is 10 years but there are proposals to bring this down to 5 years. Every house before selling or renting needs an EPC. An EPC is very useful in providing an overview of the improvements which need to be made, together with an estimate of their costs to improve the energy efficiency and therefore the EPC rating.

Older EPCs, even if they are still legally valid, can be quite outdated. Fuel prices affect EPCs and the methodology for producing an EPC has changed several times over the past decade. The EPC methodology is essentially a cost-based tool and every 6 months those fuel price indexes within the software get updated. This means that a legally valid EPC produced almost 10 years ago really could be reporting substantially different running costs compared with a more recent EPC and with greater potential savings nowadays. This means warmer homes and lower bills.

If you have an EPC from several years ago it is worthwhile considering getting it updated.

JS

End of 900 Years Parade

TO ROUND OFF THE celebratory year of 900th Anniversary events, Stirling 900 would like to invite pipers and bands to take part in the Stirling 900 Parade on Saturday 29th March. The aim is for 900 musicians, and if you would like to be part of the procession please, email - stirlingingvents@stirling.gov.uk - and someone will send out more information. Please look out for parade information and all other 900 events on the websites - scenestirling.com and yourstirling.com. There are also volunteering opportunities for the 900 Finale Weekend - available on the Stirling Volunteering Portal - stirlingingvents@stirling.gov.uk



Ecodesign 22 - What is it?

ECODESIGN 22 is a regulation that came into effect in January 2022 concerning all new domestic solid fuel fires, stoves, stoves with back boilers, and boilers. Solid fuel here meaning wood, smokeless fuels, and (currently) in Scotland certain fuels supplied by traditional fuel merchants which are not classed as 'smokeless'.

All models sold and installed from that date are now required to be independently tested and certified, and must reach certain standards of efficiency and, rather like a motor car MOT exhaust emissions test, not exceed certain emission requirements.

These emission limits include those for Particulate Matter (PM), Organic Gaseous Compounds (OGC), Nitrogen Oxides (Nox) and Carbon Monoxide (CO). The first three of these have never before been regulated for solid fuel. The CO limit has been slashed from 12,500mg/cubic metre to below 2,000.

I only learned all this recently, when my wood stove with back boiler went kaput. I could not find a suitable replacement in the UK, for less than £1300, excluding delivery. Happily, my original stove supplier has redesigned, tweaked and modified their stoves, making them compliant. I did have to get the new one shipped from Bulgaria and pay import duty and VAT, but it was less than £540.

Ecodesign compliant stoves are more efficient and clean-burning, therefore use less fuel and help with cleaner air. For more information search Ecodesign and/or HETAS.

My new stove is much more controllable and, if I had replaced it sooner, I would have been warmer, and my log pile would not be so low!

N.B. Burning Carbon, in any form, releases Carbon Monoxide, this soon combines with oxygen to form Carbon Dioxide. So, if you're stove is older than 2022 it might be wise to have it checked out the next time it gets cleaned. RL



West Plean & Auchenbowie Ladies Club

HERE ARE THE NEXT few fortnightly meeting dates and topics: -

- April 3rd Chocolate for change
- April 17th Scotland below the surface
- May 1st Eyes
- May 15th Helping Hands Fund donation
- May 29th Afternoon tea

After that the group takes a summer break through to September.

HR



Rogue Traders

STIRLING COUNCIL IS URGING residents and businesses to be wary of rogue traders looking to take advantage of the damage to property caused by Storm Éowyn. The extremely high winds from the storm caused widespread impacts to buildings. They urge people to follow the advice from the Council's Trading Standards Team and if you feel uncomfortable or suspicious about a cold caller in your local area,



Free Priority Services Register



SP ENERGY NETWORK invites those who qualify to register for assistance in times of emergency. "In the event of a power cut, our teams work around the clock to restore your electricity as quickly as possible. We appreciate for some customers this may be particularly distressing and that's why we offer extra support to customers who feel they need our help". You can sign up to the Priority Services Register if you:

- ◆ Are over the age of 60
- ◆ Have a special communication need
- ◆ Depend on electricity for home or medical care
- ◆ Have a child under 5 years of age
- ◆ Have chronic illness
- ◆ Or just feel you need a little extra help

3 ways to sign up -

Phone: **0330 1010 167** (Mon-Fri 8.30am - 4.30pm). Website: spenergynetworks.co.uk/psr. Text: **PSR** to **61999**.

To check if it is a power cut your experiencing and not a household fault [Call 105](https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/psr).

Local Place Plan

WORK ON THE LOCAL PLACE PLAN is continuing. We are currently focusing on the locality, and are compiling information from key members of our Community. Our focus is on the geography, history and industries across the Carron Valley area. We will use this to help us and others understand our Community's location with all its demands and constraints, the significance and impact of our history and our future opportunities and challenges.

To date we have gathered a good range of information on agriculture, forestry, fishing and the freshwater research unit. It and would be great if you could help with information on wind farming and local history. All information would be greatly appreciated. It is really important to get as many people involved in this process as possible.

Thank you in advance for your contributions. Please contact me (Maureen, Vice Chair of the Community Council) on -

buckieburn@gmail.com

Rain

IT RAINED, and rained, and rained!
The average fall was well maintained.
And when the tracks were simple bogs,
It started raining cats and dogs.

After a drought of half an hour,
We had the most refreshing shower.
And then most curious thing of all,
A gentle rain began to fall!

Next day but one was fairly dry,
Save for a deluge from the sky,
Which wetted the party to the skin,
And then at last the rain set in!



Anon.

Home Energy Scotland Grants & Loans

THE VRG TRUSTEES fully appreciate the disappointment some of you may have experienced in not being able to access funding from our grants' schemes this year. In the case of Home Improvement grants (our Energy Efficiency ones), Home Energy Scotland is still currently providing grants and 0% interest loans. Here is a summary.

How much funding can you get?

Measure	Loan funding per improvement	Grant funding per improvement
Air/ground/water to water source heat pumps	£7,500	£7,500
Hybrid heat pumps ¹	£7,500	£7,500
District heating scheme connection	£7,500	Not available
Solar thermal	£5,000	Not available
Hybrid solar PV / water heating	£5,000	Not available
Wood fuelled (biomass) boilers (and eligible stoves) ²	£7,500	£7,500
Wind turbine	£2,500	Not available
Hydro turbine ³	£2,500	Not available

Primary improvement	Loan funding per improvement	Grant funding per improvement
Solid wall insulation (external and internal)	£2,500	£7,500
Flat roof or room-in-roof insulation	£1,000	£3,000
Loft, cavity and underfloor insulation	£500	£1,500
Insulated doors	£4,500	Not available
High heat retention storage heaters	£5,500	£2,500
Warm air units	£5,000	Not available
Double glazing**, triple glazing**, secondary glazing**	£8,000	Not available
Secondary improvement***	Loan funding per improvement	Grant funding per improvement
Cylinder thermostat, draught proofing, wastewater heat recovery system, hot water tank jacket	£125	£375
Heating controls	£150	£450

Rural households

If you live in a rural area, you can apply for extra grant funding. You could get:

- > up to £1,500 extra for energy efficiency improvements
- > up to £1,500 extra for clean heating systems

More details at: - www.mygov.scot/energy-saving-funding/home-energy-scotland-grant-and-loan or 0808 808 2282.

Investment Fund

CURRENT VALUE of the Investment Fund is £484,079 after the transfer out of £35,000 towards the costs of the Community Hall. The fund has increased in value by 10.85% in the last 12 months. The original investment was £435,000.

Just to Confirm

JUST TO CONFIRM, the amount of wood-fuel we aim to supply to those who request on the wood fuel days, is equivalent to 1 cubic meter builder's bag per household. Going forward and to ensure that the bags are well filled, logs will be cut smaller so as to fill all the space more completely.



(G)rants

The VRG has become aware, this year more than most, that several folk think we're not doing a good job when it comes to grants distribution. Please remember that it is not the administrator's fault so, if you have a comment to make, send it to the chair person entitled 'Grants' and it will get forwarded to the appropriate person for consideration.



So, just to remind you, not all the money we receive can be spent on household and individual grants as it is 'Restricted' by the wind farm operator from which it comes. Such funding can only be used for community wide projects and costs. At the moment, for example, after years of saving, some of that is being allocated to the new community hall costs, a project many of the residents suggested in previous surveys. Of course, that may not seem a very attractive proposition for some as it will be 'way over there'. However, not building it would not make more money available for the small grants schemes.

A sizable chunk of the restricted fund goes to the woodland and its regular free log producing project – 242 loads have been delivered / collected in the past year, with volunteer effort from 135 folk. There will be some who say that they don't use logs, don't need an air-fryer, don't need a bursary, don't have children, etc, etc. So how can we help YOU? If there is nothing in the grant schemes for you, suggest something. Remember the unrestricted money that can be given as individual or household grants is about £60K at the moment. You will see on p8 the amounts and numbers of grants awarded this financial year, with at least 120 households having benefitted to date. For some reason many grants were fully taken up early on this time. Perhaps it was more folk knowing about them, or the increased cost of living, more children in the area, or a whole host of other reasons. It's difficult to know. The Trustees are very aware of your disappointment if you were expecting to tap into a particular grant only to find it was already fully spent.

Of one thing you can be certain, the Trustees, all of whom are volunteers, spend a lot of time trying to get the right, fair and equitable balance to fund distribution. Perhaps we don't always succeed. However, WE COULD USE YOUR HELP. The next financial year begins on 1st July and, right now, the annual discussions are taking place to decide how money should be allocated. So, assuming that in the next financial year there is ~£65K to spend on individual and household grants, HOW SHOULD IT BE SPENT? Please send your constructive advice and suggestions to the chair person - chair@valleyrenewables.co.uk - and we will see if any of them can be implemented next time round. Please don't just sit on your hands and grumble about it.

We could probably spend much more money than there is available. Who couldn't? We have a 'shopping list' of items we would like to acquire for the Community but realise it is important that we don't spend outwith our means. We are now, therefore, targeting outside funding sources beyond the current windfarm operators, in the hope that we can pick-off items from the wish list or add to the number of grant schemes. We have had an element of success with this in the past under Nadara's 'Call for Projects' scheme (E-Bikes, early stage of the Energy Efficiency scheme), and CSET's assistance with the cost of the all abilities path round the pond. The net needs to be cast further though. Any ideas?

Care in the Community (Local Place Plan)

The Community Council is looking to gather information from or about those receiving Care in the Community, with a view to populating the Community's Local Place Plan about your experiences, aspirations and suggestions. A copy of the template you can use to channel your thoughts can be found here - [Local Place Plan template PPL 111124](#). Alternatively, just contact Maureen Berry, the CC Vice Chair and Local Place Plan Co-ordinator - buckieburn@gmail.com.

Our Elected Representatives



Evelyn Tweed MSP evelyn.tweed.msp@parliament.scot 01786 235 255

Chris Kane MP chris.kane.mp@parliament.uk 01786 652 345

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

Fungus of the Month

HAIR ICE

HAIR ICE IS A stunningly beautiful phenomenon well worth searching for in winter. It can only be found in deciduous/broadleaved woodlands on a cold, frosty day when the soil surface is frozen and air temperature is just below zero. Look for spots of the most brilliant white shining out from the woodland floor like the brightest of stars against a dark sky. Then look closely. You'll see a mass of exceedingly fine strands of ice, like waves of purest white hair growing from dead wood. Breathe on it and it just melts away.



So what has this to do with a fungus? Well, hair ice only develops on wood infected with the wood-rotting fungus *Exidiopsis effusus* (sorry, no English name). Ice usually forms as a crusty mass or as coarse frost crystals. But in this case, as ice forms, moisture is drawn from pores in the wood and freezes instantly. This pushes the hair of ice outwards as more ice forms on its base. Chemicals uniquely produced from rotting wood by this species of fungus then stabilise the ice in thousands of parallel strands, only 0.02 mm in diameter, and prevent it from re-crystallising into more typical frost patterns.

So next time there is a sharp frost in the morning, get out there and hunt for *Exidiopsis effusus* before the sun melts all its hair away. Look closely. You will not be disappointed. CL

Recipe of the Month

SEA BREAM WITH A COCONUT AND RED CHILLI SAUCE

Serves 1 (multiply up as necessary)

- 1 Fillet of Sea Bream (or Sea Bass)
- 30g Butter
- ¼ Onion
- 1 Bay Leaf
- 100ml water
- 2tbs Coconut Milk
- ¼ Red Chilli
- 3-4 Chives strands



Chop the onion; finely chop the red chilli; chop the chives; skin the fish.

Melt the butter in a pan; cook the onions with the bay leaf until golden. Add the water, coconut milk and chilli, and poach the fish for 8 minutes. Remove fish from the pan. Reduce the sauce.

To serve: Sprinkle the fish with the chives and pour the sauce over the top. PS

It's Working!

PARTLY THANKS TO EFFORTS from yourselves, the local authority is gradually tackling the pot holes and road drainage in the area. Of course there is a lot more to do but let's keep up the pressure: If you see a pothole which you think may be a danger to road users, call 01786 404040.

CVDCC

THE NEXT MEETING of the Community Council is Tuesday, March 11th, 7.30-9.00pm. All welcome. To comment or attend (by Zoom) contact: cvdcc.sec@gmail.com. It will be on the 2nd Tuesdays of the month hereafter.

It's open to all permanent residents.

Grants Paid

BETWEEN: 01/7 & 5/2/25

Student Bursaries (8)	4,000
Young Person's (20)	5,356
Energy Efficiency (22)	41,145
Get the Valley Growing (9)	2,433
E Bikes (3)	1,499
Warm Up / Costs Down (19)	3,465
Community Groups (5)	2,231
TOTAL	£60,129

Contact Us

VRG Secretary:
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VRG admin and information:
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07765 295 282

Visit us on the web at:
www.valleyrenewables.co.uk
or Carron Valley Connections private Facebook group

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Remember - Flower & Produce Show & BBQ - 9th August