

Carron Valley & District



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Carron Valley & District Newsletter

Issue 45, Jan'26

How Was It For You?

NOT MUCH SNOW or ice in the above recent sunset photo at Buckieburn Reservoir, but that's the way it was for a lot of folk in the Community. How was it for you? Most of the rest of Scotland was under threat of totally disappearing under volumes of the white stuff, plus getting about for many was a bit slithery to say the least. However, the fact that we got off lightly this time does not necessarily mean we'll be OK all winter. Another cold, white weather event is predicted, so still keep your freezer full, live-stock supplies sufficient, spade in the car and all that.

Creating and carrying out a Community programme for the year to come largely depends on you, the residents. Little will happen without ideas from you, plus a team of volunteers to help carry them out. Ideas to chair@valleyrenewables.co.uk please.

Now that the Community Hall is up and running, it does raise the issue of what's next. This has been a big all-consuming project for quite some time. Although this is a Community-wide facility, we are aware that, with the Hall being very much placed at one side of the Community, there will be some folk who find that a bit inconvenient and feel a bit left out. So please get in touch with one of the VRG Board or Community Councillors with your suggestions as to how the restricted Community-wide fund could be spent to provide facilities or projects located somewhere nearer you. Remember, it would be necessary for there to be a suitable location with reasonable access. Please keep thinking and let us know.

Community Council Advice

DURING WINTER MONTHS, we may find ourselves walking along unlit roads. In these conditions, a pedestrian dressed in dark clothing might not be visible to a driver until they are dangerously close. Reflective clothing changes this equation dramatically. Modern reflective materials can make a person visible from over 500 feet away, compared to just 50-100 feet for someone in dark clothing. This gives drivers crucial extra seconds to react, slow down, and safely navigate around pedestrians. Walking facing the oncoming traffic (on the right hand side in UK) also gives you time to react.

Some countries have recognized this danger through legislation and culture. In Norway, for example, wearing reflectors in the dark has become deeply ingrained in the culture. As well as reflective clothing, many carry reflective medallions either attached to bags or in pockets which hang from cords whilst walking. Finland has gone further, making reflectors legally mandatory for pedestrians walking on roads outside urban areas during dark conditions.

The Community Council along with VRG has supplied two reflecting armbands and two swing tags with this newsletter which we hope you will use to make yourself more visible at night. More reflective items can be collected at Woodland events. PH



Heads Up!

2026 FOOD & PRODUCE SHOW & BBQ - Aug 15th - Classes on P4

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Woodland Update

A GUID NEW YEAR TO one and all. January is our quiet month before activities start again with a maintenance day on Sat 14th February. There will be a range of activities, so something for everyone to lend a hand somewhere.

Many residents took part in the Community Woodfuel days last year and will have been enjoying the benefits of their dried logs during the recent cold snaps.

Following are the scheduled Woodfuel days for this year. The logs collected will have a chance to dry out for next winter and help add to the normal restocking of your log pile. We'll start in March, longer days and hopefully better weather..



Lots of residents are already on our contact list, however, if you are wanting to be involved, to get some logs and / or help out, then please contact dottietrees@gmail.com.

Woodland Plans for 2026 are to continue to remove tubes, replace lost trees in the recent restock areas, create some ditch crossings to allow easier access to the Christmas tree patch and plant some new 'Christmas trees' for future use. Most of this should be achievable by ourselves but contractors will be used for some of the heavier tasks.

Contractors will also be on site to take down and remove the wind throw from Storm Arwen (winter 2024) and adjacent blocks. The latter to stabilise the remaining stand of trees. Restocking will be conifer on the peat ground, with willow and alder wetter areas nearer the river plus native trees and Scots pine on the areas of mineral soils.

Apple Tree Pruning

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN about apple tree pruning come along on Sun 8th Feb. This is a hands-on session led by Lynsey Payne from 'Appletree Man', and on real trees! Lynsey was at the last Pomona day and helped many with identifying their apple trees and general advice. The session will take place in the Sauchieburn area.

Please get in touch with me as places are limited . Dorothy Breckenridge, dottietrees@gmail.com as soon as possible.

If you are interested in purchasing bare root fruit trees from Appletreeman, you can contact Lynsey directly who can bring them along on the 8th: 07919 274 028 or email@plantsandapples.com.

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Wreath Making Session



EARLY IN DECEMBER, the Community Hall was used for a festive morning of willow wreath making and mince pies. Using willow gathered from the Community woodland, residents crafted simple wreath bases (the tricky bit!) and decorated them with evergreen foliage and festive touches. It was lovely to see how creative everyone was with their wreaths and bark decorations, and hopefully they were enjoyed and admired over the holidays. Looking forward to more fun Community events like this in 2026! HR



Woodland Events

WOODLAND EVENTS THIS YEAR: -

- 14th Feb: Woodland maintenance
- 14th March: Woodfuel processing
- 13th June: Woodland maintenance
- 11th April: Woodfuel processing
- 9th May: Woodfuel processing
- 12th Sept: Woodfuel processing
- 10th Oct: Woodfuel processing
- 14th Nov: Woodfuel processing
- 12th Dec: Woodland Maintenance & cut your own Christmas tree

This is a hefty schedule needing lots of volunteers. It's all non-technical stuff. So come along and join in. Wear chunky footwear, warm clothes, robust gloves a hat and bring waterproofs.

Please remember that those helping to operate the log producing process must wear a safety helmet and high-viz vest.

WPALC

WEST PLEAN & AUCHENBOWIE LADIES CLUB - Here is its programme for the next few meetings.

2026

- Jan 15: Toots Musical afternoon
- 22: Matter of Opinion
- Feb 5: Herbal Story Telling
- 19: Lunch
- Mar 5: Women in Forestry
- 19: Give a Dog a Bone
- Apr 2: 2½ years Backpacking in Europe
- 16: Bridges
- 30: Stained Glass in and around Falkirk

Meetings are held in the Church Halls of Larbert Old Church, from 1pm-3pm; £2.50 a meeting for members, £3.00 for non-members. The first meeting is free.

We always end with a cup of tea and a biscuit, and lots of chat, so please come and join us, and bring a mug! HR



Smart Tips for Winter Savings

Fridge and freezer tune-up: Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly so they can run more efficiently. A frost-free freezer uses less energy, helps keep food fresher, and leaves more room for those festive treats.

Festive feasting: December's hearty meals can add extra heat and moisture to your home. Cook with lids on pots to save up to 30% energy. Try batch cooking, and always allow hot food to cool before putting it in the fridge.

Radiator know-how: Radiators work best when they're unblocked and clear of furniture. Bleed them twice a year to ensure even heating, and adding reflective panels helps keep warmth in—saving about £25 each year.*

Bright ideas: Swap to energy-saving lightbulbs - they use up to 90% less energy than traditional bulbs. Better for your bills, and you'll enjoy the glow of the festive lights even more.

(*Based on installation behind radiators on uninsulated external walls. Only recommended for uninsulated solid walled or uninsulated cavity walled properties).

Fancy winning energy-saving gadgets worth up to £750 for your home? Enter this quiz for your chance to win!

Answer four quick and fun questions on energy saving, and you could be picking your own prizes - think smart TVs, air fryers, solar kits, and more. Plus, you'll walk away with some handy tips to help lower your energy bills.

[Enter to win energy-saving appliances | Home Energy Scotland](#)



Energy Efficiency Group Update

LET'S START BY EXPRESSING our thanks and sincere best wishes to John Speake who retired at the AGM from the VRG Board and was lead for the EEG. John had been a great asset to the board and will be a hard act to follow. There will be many residents in the valley enjoying a more comfortable winter this year as a result of the energy and direction John brought to the group.

The EEG grant scheme started in Jan'23 replacing the householder grant. Of approx. 157 eligible households in the area (6 are unoccupied) 49 returned completed energy efficiency questionnaires, 2 of which confirmed they did not wish to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) carried out.

Since then, 63 homes have had EPC+ surveys completed free of charge by the VRG's contracted surveyor Shirley Paterson. 24 of these have had follow up visits by our Retrofit Advisory Team of Shirley and Ronan McGirr (architect). On these visits Shirley advises on Energy Efficiency possibilities and improvements, whilst Ronan gives advice on material measures to the fabric and structure of the building itself. Each visit starts by discussing the EPC and addressing the issues highlighted. The focus here is on what the resident would most like addressed and can afford. They then report back to the resident each improvement discussed, the estimated cost and expected annual saving once the work is completed. The resident can choose to undertake any, all or none of the work suggested. All this is free of charge and you choose your own tradesmen to carry out any work required.

We have initially contacted homes in the lower EPC rating bands as these properties would benefit the most from remedial improvements. However the scheme is open to all and grants are available to help with the cost, subject to funds remaining in the annual budget. The board opted this year to only consider EE grant applications from households who did not receive an EEG last year. (As we were so successful last year in distributing grants that the fund was exhausted very quickly). There are still funds available in the current year to end of June at the time of writing.

All owner occupied homes are eligible for Home Energy Scotland (HES) Grant and Loan funding for home energy improvements, subject to their terms, and these can be topped up by interest free loans. VRG grants can be used together with government funding. HES can be contacted by on 0808 808 2282 or via their web page [Home Energy Scotland](#).

In the 3 years we have operated this scheme the board has approved 94 EE grants at a total benefit to the community of over £120,000.00. Included in the home improvements were 31 for doors and windows, 18 for insulation, 11 for solar panels and or battery storage, 3 new Hydrogenie systems, 7 new boilers, 5 new air source heat pumps, 7 wood burning stoves plus others for wood stores, log splitters, thermal curtains etc.

If you would like an EPC survey or a visit from our Retrofit Advisory team, or know of a neighbour within the Community, there are funds available and we would like to hear from you.

See the VRG website for details - [Home - Valley Renewables Group - Development Trust](#)



BY

Flower & Produce Show Classes for Aug'26

VEGETABLES SECTION

OPEN CLASSES

1. 3 Broad Beans
2. 3 Runner Beans
3. 3 Pods of peas
4. 3 Carrots - tops trimmed to 75mm/3"
5. 3 Potatoes (same variety)
6. 3 Onions - tops trimmed & tied
7. 1 Lettuce (any type)
8. 3 Courgettes (150mm/6" approx)
9. 1 Broccoli (any variety)
10. 1 Cabbage (any variety)
11. 3 Cherry Tomatoes
12. 3 Non-cherry Tomatoes
13. 1 Cucumber
14. 3 beetroots (tops trimmed)
15. Dish/Plate of 10 Soft Fruit (Blackberry, Raspberry, Gooseberry or Strawberry)
16. 3 Sticks Rhubarb with foliage trimmed to 75mm/3" approx.
17. Any unusually shaped fruit or vegetable
18. Any exotic vegetable

FLOWER SECTION (own vase or bowl)

OPEN CLASSES

19. 3 Stems of Annual or Perennial flowers (all the same)
20. Vase of Mixed Garden Flowers (no more than 10 stems)
21. 1 vase of Sweet Peas (6 stems) foliage may be included for effect
22. 1 Specimen Rose bloom
23. A bunch of Lavender
24. 1 own bowl of Floating Flower Heads
25. Bunch of various Herbs in jam jar

PRESERVES / DRINKS SECTION (labelled with date made)

OPEN CLASSES

26. Jar of Soft Fruit Jam
27. Jar of Stone Fruit Jam
28. Jar of Marmalade
29. Jar of Fruit Jelly
30. Jar of Chutney (no cellophane)
31. Jar of Home-produced Honey
32. 1 Bottle of Homemade Fruit or Herb Cordial
33. 1 Bottle of Homemade Alcoholic Beverage

COOKERY SECTION (Entries to be on paper plates in plastic bags - no cling film please)

OPEN CLASSES

34. A Cake made using a Vegetable (beetroot, carrot, courgette, etc)
35. A Chocolate Cake
36. 3 Scones of any variety
37. 4 Squares of Tablet or Fudge
38. 4 Squares of any Traybake
39. 3 pieces of Shortbread
40. A Fruit pie

BREAD SECTION

OPEN CLASSES

41. 1 Loaf of bread (hand or machine made)
42. 1 Sourdough loaf

CREATIVE SECTION

OPEN CLASSES

43. A toy using any material
44. A cushion
45. A Woodworking item
46. A Hand knitted item
47. A scarecrow
48. Something made from recycled materials.

CHILDREN'S SECTION (Please state age on entry. Entrants may have some adult help)

10 YEARS AND UNDER CLASSES

49. Draw or make a Creepy Crawly
50. An Iced biscuit (judged on decoration)
51. Painted Stone
52. Something you have grown yourself

11 TO 17 YEARS CLASSES

53. Arrangement of Flowers in container of your choice
54. A Picture in any medium
55. 4 Iced Cup Cakes
56. Photography up to A4 size
57. A Painted Stone



Plant of the Month - Bog Moss

SO WHAT IS THE MOST important plant in Scotland? Which has had most impact on ecology, land use, economy, climate, ...? Is it Scot's pine? Or wheat perhaps? No. In my opinion it is amazing but humble moss! Several of the 30 Scottish species of Bog Moss, or Sphagnum, are 'Keystone Species' that have determined the landscape and land use potential of almost half of Scotland.

How? Well, Sphagnum mosses have a unique cell structure with many large, empty, balloon-like cells holding water like a sponge. Dry Sphagnum absorbs and holds up to 20 times its weight of water. What's more, the cell walls absorb minerals and release acids. The resulting acidic, nutrient-poor and water-logged soils restrict the habitat to a very few tolerant plants (like Sundew which gets nutrients by catching and digesting insects). Antimicrobial compounds produced by the Sphagnum, and an absence of oxygen, prevent decay of dead vegetation which then accumulates as peat. So, deep peat covers 20-25% of the land area of Scotland, and shallow organic soils, where Sphagnum may also have played a role, cover another 25%. Resulting moorland and wet-heath soils seriously limit the potential for agriculture and forestry.

Whole books could be written about Sphagnums. Their beautiful colours range from pale green to bronze, reds and purples. They prevent flooding by holding water on moorlands and releasing it into the rivers slowly. During WW1 a million wound dressings were sent to the front every month made from absorbent and antiseptic Sphagnum collected mainly by school children. Bog mosses add distinctive aromas and flavours to many Scotch whiskies. Scottish peat has stored as much carbon as all the trees in the UK put together, so is critical in net-zero climate policies, but has been burned as a fuel throughout history releasing carbon back into the atmosphere. Unfortunately, most peatlands have been badly degraded by peat digging and drainage, fire and forestry and are now seriously threatened habitats.

So next time you buy compost for your garden, make sure it is peat **and** Sphagnum free.

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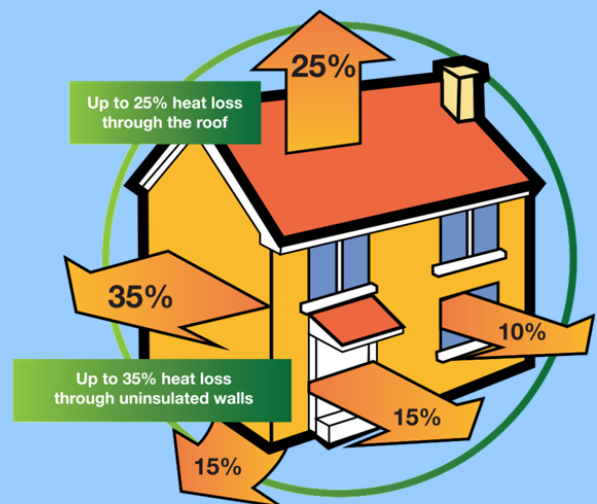


Don't Miss Out on Free Advice - Act Now!

YOU WILL ALREADY HAVE READ where we're at with the Energy Efficiency Project. Grants to provide support for your retrofitting plans are currently available. You will be aware that any extra insulating, draught excluding, glazing improvements and so on you can do, although they have a cost, they will have a payback to you in terms of reduced heating and power costs year on year. In fact, not only will it be necessary to do that work before major grant awarding bodies will support you, but also the government will require EPC ratings to be 'C' or above before too much longer.

It is recognised that for some the whole retrofitting thing is such a daunting prospect, that you'd rather ignore it than tackle it head on. We are therefore providing a **free** hand-holding service to help you. Our EPC expert (Shirley) and a specialist architect (Ronan) will spend a couple of hours with you discussing options, priorities, comparative costs, funding sources, etc. You still don't have to do anything but at least you will know what to do and the order in which it should be done. Then hopefully one day

Of the 63 homes for whom we provided a free EPC+, 24 have had one of our free follow-up advice sessions and, of those, a good number have started carrying out improvements - extra insulating, draught excluding and better glazing, etc. If any of the other 39 householders are interested in these free hand-holding advice sessions, you need to act fast as the funding for this will not be available too much longer. So make it a New Year Resolution to ACT NOW. You've nothing to lose and a lot to gain. What will it cost you at this stage? Perhaps a couple of cups of tea or coffee.



Stirling Council's Big Conversation 2026/27

LIKE MOST LOCAL AUTHORITIES nowadays, Stirling Council finds trying to get its annual budget to balance somewhat challenging. Thanks to suggestions from 4,300 residents in the previous 'Big Conversation', the current year's budget shortfall of £12.3 million is being bridged through an 8.8% increase in council tax and a range of suggested savings totalling £7.7 million, which mainly consist of making efficiencies across services.

Unfortunately, an estimated shortfall of £12.25 million is anticipated in the up-coming financial year. To meet these ongoing challenges, it is important to have a meaningful conversation with Council residents, communities and staff, on how to redesign council services to do things better and more efficiently.

In the realisation that Stirling Council doesn't have a monopoly on good ideas, it is therefore asking residents to take part in another The Big Conversation. Please give them your thoughts at: - [Project: Big Conversation 2026/27 | Stirling Council](#)

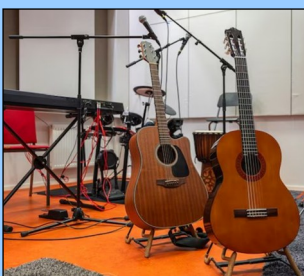
Heating Oil Prices

A FEW YEARS BACK one of the VRG trustee / directors spent some time every few months trying to negotiate group purchasing rates for domestic heating oil from different suppliers. This worked for a while and good rates were achieved and notified.



However, it was a lot of work for a volunteer, and there were difficulties about co-ordinating supplies, so the scheme eventually stopped. Although we are not about to restart it, the person who ran the scheme says that it is really worth phoning around just before you need a refill and you can achieve <£100 off a tank full. Advice is be flexible about de-

Low Key Sessions



CALLING ALL MUSICIANS, storytellers, artists and lovers of music. The Community hall is now open, so a few of us are hoping to form an informal group to organise some concerts and sessions over the coming months. We have already spoken with several amazing performers who

are keen to come. The next step is to form a wee group to make it happen.

If you're interested in joining in, keep an eye on the Carron Valley Connections Facebook group for updates, or call David on 07980 301 503 to register your interest. If and when we get this project going, we'll publicise the events through Carron Valley Connections and on Community noticeboards, so be sure to keep a good look out there! DS

Peace at Long Last

DESPITE SIGHTINGS FROM Meikle Bin to Duncarron, local farmer Tom Robb could not be found after going for a walk on 12th August 2012. Extensive searches by many for days and weeks could find no trace of him. However, human remains identified to be him were eventually found in the forest on 8th September last year. Though sad, this will finally close a chapter for the family.

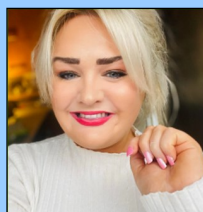
From a long established Community family, Mr Robb was a fine, gentle man with a twinkle in his eye.



Two New Faces

THE VALLEY RENEWABLES Annual General Meeting was held back in November. For the first time it was held in our own Community Hall instead of having to head to somewhere outside the Community to have it. The usual reporting of the previous year took place plus confirming appointment of two new trustee directors. These are:

Josie Deans and David Rolwegan



We look forward to the inspiration and ideas they will bring.

Hall Booking

SHOULD YOU WISH TO book the Community Hall for something or know someone who would, there are two methods:-

1. Go on to the Community Hall website - <https://carronvalleyhall.org.uk/> - and click on 'Booking'. Check the date and time you are interested in on the Calendar. Then click on 'New Booking' on that date / time. Fill in your details and send off the form. You will find all the details, conditions and charges on the How to Book pages - [How to Book – Carron Valley Community Hall](#).
2. If you don't have internet access you, can call Helen our administrator on 07765 295 282 and she will take down your details and requirements, and talk you through everything you need to know.

So no excuses - get booking.

Valley Vitality – Health & Wellbeing Group

STARTING 15TH APRIL

Do you ever feel tense, depressed, fed up or just a bit lonely? They are very common feelings but there are things you can do to help yourself to feel better during the day and even sleep better at night. A new wellbeing group for all in Carron Valley and District Community will be running in the Community Hall from April. Join us for simple mindfulness sessions, wellbeing activities and a friendly chat over a cuppa and a soup lunch. The group will run for six weeks, starting on Wed April 15th until May 20th, from 12-2pm.

Christine and Josie will be there to make it happen! No need to book, but it helps if we know how much soup to brew up. It will always be vegetarian but let us know if you have any dietary allergies. Taxis can be provided if you find transport difficult so don't hesitate to get in touch with jo_cdeans@hotmail.com. Tel. 07555 052 700 to ask any questions and to make arrangements.

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Maintaining Your Home



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND publishes a whole host of fascinating books and leaflets which can be downloaded, including one on fixing and maintaining your property - [Short Guide: Maintaining Your Home | Historic Environment Scotland](#). So if you have a traditional property particularly, this makes excellent bedtime reading.

The Amazing Wee Honey Bee

Winnie the Pooh loved honey and I'm sure many of us do too. But did you know that the tiny, wee honey bee also makes an amazing super-sticky stuff called 'propolis' that it uses to fill up holes and gaps in their homes? Energy efficiency is not new!

These wee honey bees collect resin from trees. Anyone who has handled a recently felled log or sat on its stump will know what that is - very sticky stuff. They chew the resin a bit and mix in some wax produced by the bees themselves (that's another story) to produce the propolis. They have been doing this for millions of years. It's just like an extra strong superglue that we humans use.

Recently, we humans decided to investigate how to stop sticky things clogging up machinery, etc. Well, maybe looking at how nature has worked over the millennia is a good starting point. Some scientists are now investigating how this wee creature, producing all this very sticky stuff, manages not to get stuck itself.

It's not yet solved within our understanding as yet. But just think, the wee honey bee just lives naturally creating and using this super sticky stuff, and unknowingly is at the forefront of technology. We humans are just catching up on how that is. There's so much to learn from the world around us.

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Your Elected Representatives



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

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

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

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

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

Nature's Creations

FROST FLOWERS, according to Wikipedia, also known as ice flowers or crytallofolia, are intricate ice formations that emerge from the stems of specific plants during cold weather. These formations resemble delicate ribbons or petals and are typically seen in the autumn or early winter when temperatures drop below freezing.

Some have been seen around the Community recently, and also Hair Ice (Feb'25 edition). Have you seen any near you?



CVDCC Mtgs

ANY PERMANENT RESIDENTS are very welcome 19.30-20.30. Meetings are monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from February to June and September to December. February and December meetings are by Zoom, the others in the Hall. To comment or attend contact: - cvdcc.sec@gmail.com.

Don't keep quiet about a Stirling Council issue if we can put pressure on them as well.

Crunchy Chocolate Mousse

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT all that over indulgence was a distant memory, here's a suggestion that will keep your sweet tooth craving!

Ingredients for 6 servings:

- > 5 Crunchie Bars crushed, plus 2 extra ones crushed for the topping
- > 250g mascarpone
- > 500ml double cream
- > 300g milk chocolate melted

Method:

Melt the chocolate gently and set aside to cool. Pour the cream and mascarpone into a bowl and whip lightly until combined. Pour in the melted chocolate and the Crunchie pieces and fold together. Pop into little serving bowls and top with more crushed Crunchie pieces. Leave to set in a fridge for 2-3 hours or more (if you can). KS



Grants Paid

JULY 1/7/25 TO 12/1/26

Student Bursaries (10)	£5,000
Children & Young People(16)	£2,992
Energy Efficiency (18)	£29,805
Warm Up / Costs Down (13)	£2,506
Get the Valley Growing (8)	£3,343
E-Bikes (5)	£2,500
Total spent	£46,146
Annual Budget to 30/6/26	£62,500
Still Available	£16,354

Donation Thanks (F&P show)



Contact Us

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Visit us on the web at:
www.valleyrenewables.co.uk
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Date for Your Diary

Flower & Produce Show & BBQ - Sat 15th Aug.