



Give Me Sunshine

WE FROZE IN MAY and melted in June. So what will it be like in July? What we can say with some certainty is, that the weather will be very Scottish! And we're so grateful for that. The only downside on the horizon is that everyone else will want to come and live here! And who can blame them? It's a great place to be, warts and all.

So what's with this fixation with sunshine and rushing out to get burned to a crisp as soon as it appears? Be careful what you wish for. Hopefully you'll all have your Factor 30 (minimum) to hand, alongside the sun hat and the insect repellent, and of course the umbrella just in case.

All that frippery apart, the dramatic ups and downs of our weather are beyond just normal variation. It is down to global warming and, although some individuals don't agree, we are going to have to radically change lots of things about the way we live, in order to have a chance of surviving the mistakes of the past. The quest for Net Zero has been embraced by many, and our residents pitch well above their weight in that regard, but internationally it's not the same story. Often wealthy nations, industries and some individuals, continue to do what we all know is ill-advised, just because they can afford it. However, we would say, can they afford not to embrace the quest towards Net Zero like Carron Valley residents do?

Flower & Produce Show & BBQ

WE'RE ALL LOOKING forward to the Community's annual Flower & Produce Show, including Jennifer Willgerod's tasty barbeque, on August 15th. Hopefully your flowers and veg are popping up according to plan, and your cakes and preserves will be ready to tempt tastebuds. For all the youngsters out there, you've got a hard act to follow to match last year's scarecrow but we're hoping to see some very scary entries.

As a change, this time the registration procedure for the various classes will take place **in the Hall 10.30-11.30** with a one way system - 'IN' through the main entrance and 'OUT' by the fire exit. After doing that, you can collect your entry items from your car and head into the main marquee to set up in time for the judging to start at 12noon.

This year Home Energy Scotland will be present to answer any questions you may have and to help you fill in forms. Also Shirley Paterson and Ronan McGirr are hoping to come to continue advising on your particular situation.

The list of classes can be found on the VRG website at - [Flower and Produce Show Saturday 15 August 2026 - Valley Renewables Group - Development Trust](#). Apart from being the main social event of the calendar, and the chance to win a nice colourful rosette, there are valuable prizes that make it really worthwhile making an effort to take part.

The event will conclude around 4pm and, as usual, it would be much appreciated if some of you would volunteer in the setting out (from ~9am) and clearing up processes (4pm). Catch up with you all there.



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First Aid+F Course

A 1-DAY EMERGENCY FIRST AID AT WORK + F COURSE has been arranged for **24th October** at the Community Hall.

Many of us are involved with activities in the outdoors; be it working or just gardening, splitting logs, using saws or cutters to cut up wood or trim hedges. This course is just for YOU, to gain new skills or update previous knowledge of 1st Aid in the outdoor environment, including when using chainsaws.

It's a full day long with contents including: Understanding the role of a first aider, Accident procedures, Vital signs, Unconsciousness, Basic Life Support (BLS), CPR, AED awareness, Wounds and bleeding, Choking, Minor injuries, Personal hygiene in first aid, and First Aid kits. 'F' unit items covered are Haemostatic clotting agents, Chainsaw cuts, Crush injuries, Tourniquets, Remote help, Hypothermia and Lyme disease. The course involves some practical outdoor first aid.

Please note this course requires a certain amount of physical activity, and participants will need to demonstrate CPR techniques from the floor in a group environment. Assessments include practical scenarios on a continuous assessment basis and a multiple choice questionnaire. Please contact us before the course if participants have any special needs, or concerns regarding the assessment process.



If you are interested, please get in touch to reserve a place. There are 12 places in this initial course. If it proves popular, the woodland group would seek funding to run another.

Contact Dorothy Breckenridge – dottietrees@gmail.com to reserve a place or if you have any questions. DB

Wanted!

WE NEED YOU to help track down all the plants, birds, animals and beasts in our Community Woodland. Using your powers of observation, we'd like to know:

- ◆ WHAT you spotted,
- ◆ WHERE you spotted it,
- ◆ WHEN that was,
- ◆ Who you are.

We'd like to record the rich diversity of the area and can only do this with YOUR help. It's easily done using the iNaturalist app that can be accessed from the Apple App Store or alternatively Google Play Store. If you're less than 4'6" you might want help from a grown-up in your searches!



Bugs Are Good

AS SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH ONCE SAID - "If we and the rest of the back-boned animals were to disappear overnight, the rest of the world would get on pretty well. But if the invertebrates were to disappear, the world's ecosystems would collapse." Have a look at [Buglife | Help Buglife save the planet](#) to find out how you can help.



Woodland Events

WOODLAND EVENTS THIS YEAR: -

- 12th Sept: Wood fuel Processing
- 10th Oct: Wood fuel Processing
- 14th Nov: Wood fuel Processing
- 12th Dec: Woodland Maintenance & Cut Your Own Christmas Tree.

Woodland News

THE SPRING WOODFUEL DAYS have been busy with the many wonderful helpers who turned out enjoying dry and even sunny weather.

The incredible group of volunteers have helped process, heave about, load cars and trailers and deliver more than **1000 loads** of split logs and lengths since we started in 2020; an amazing achievement, never mind the warm homes and toastie toes which have benefited.

Over the summer months felling is taking place in and around the processing area. This is to remove the wind-blow and adjacent suspect block of trees. Some is being sold to cover the cost of the work and of replanting, with a fair bit being retained as the supply for Woodfuel for the next year or so. The paths and bike tracks are open but please follow any directions from workers.

In June some new '**as-dug green paths**' were constructed in the area around the pond. These are mainly to allow safer/easier access to the interior of the site, and only one is a through route between the pond and the accessible path further east, the remainder are shorter dead-ends. These are going to be left to green over and will not be surfaced in any way so will get messy at times. By mid July they'll be ready for intrepid explorers, especially if they kindly remove the odd tube or 6 and bring them back to leave at the back of the cabin on their return. 😊

Sat 3rd October at 12.00 is a date for the diary this autumn. The now famous **POMONA Apple Day and BBQ** is a bit earlier this year so that your fruit is still fresh. So remember to gather your apples, wrap up warm and come along for a juicy day out. There will be lots of activities for youngsters whilst the other youngsters turn the handle of the juicer.



Also at the Pomona Day will be a **chance to have fire extinguishers checked**. Stirling Fire Protection will be on hand to check any brought along by private householders. Checking for usability will be free. If yours needs a full service, the cost of that can be agreed between you. DB

North Third Path Maintenance

SCOTTISH WATER BEGAN a programme of upgrades on **Mon 8th June**, with works expected to last for **up to 12 weeks**. So that's up to around the end of August. The project includes: -

Replacement of four deteriorated timber walkways; Installation of a new timber staircase at the northern end of the reservoir; Removal of a section of trees to allow construction of a new path. These works are being undertaken to improve public health and safety and ensure continued safe access around the reservoir in the long term.

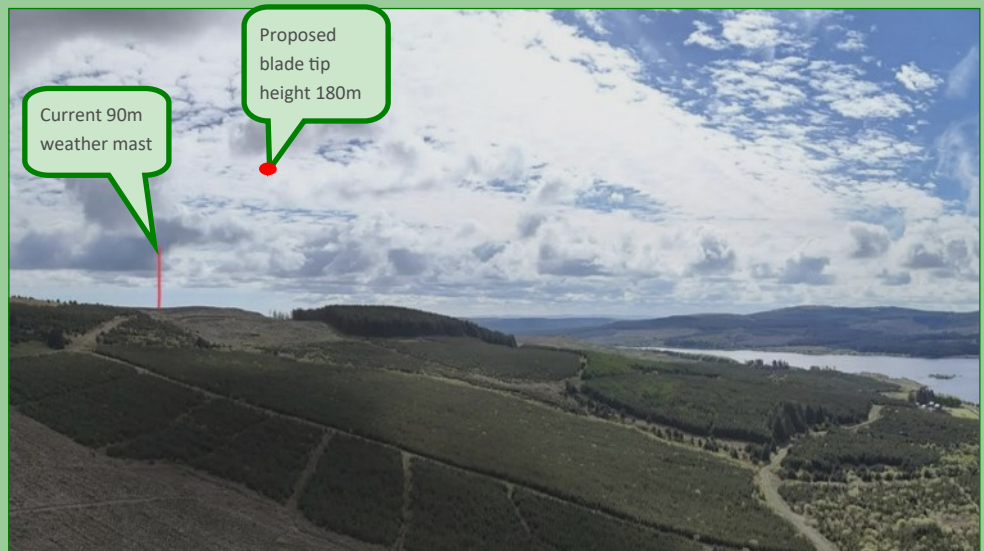
During the construction period, a section of footpath at the site's west shore will be **fully closed to the public**. It is recognised that this closure falls during a busy time of year and may cause some inconvenience. However, it is important that the works are carried out during favourable weather conditions to ensure the safety of staff and allow the project to be completed safely and efficiently.

Scottish Water continues to work closely with Forestry and Land Scotland in managing the site, including through a dedicated Reservoir Ranger who regularly patrols the area and supports visitors.

Updates will be provided as the works progress and with the aim being to complete them as quickly as possible.

Community Council Chat

I HOPE THAT AS many of you as possible visited the two consultation meetings outlining the new Wind Farm proposal at Cairnoch Hill. The four proposed turbines would be arranged along the top of Cairnoch Hill and be up to 180m tall, so making the blade tip heights almost as tall as Meikle Bin. As a rough guide the weather mast currently in place (highlighted in red in the photograph) is 90m tall, ie. half the proposed maximum blade tip height. To get more accurate details, please visit Eurowind's website by using Google and Cairnoch Hill Wind Farm.



Eurowind will be submitting a planning application to Stirling Council soon, so the Flower and Produce Show may be the last chance to pass on any comments you wish to make to the Community Council before the application is submitted. Look out for us at the CC table and mingling around.

May I also remind you that Community Council meetings take place in the Hall on the second Tuesday of the month (next one September after the summer break) and that we are still looking for volunteers to be co-opted on to the Council. PH

Carron Valley Sessions



Rain of Animals Concert on 26th June

MAY AND JUNE SAW the Carron Valley Sessions continuing with a concert by the amazing "Rain of Animals" on June 26th. The next concert will be on Friday 7th August at 7.30pm with "Big Sofa Sessions". They are a local duo who will be performing both original songs and classic covers. This event is free and no tickets are needed – just come along!

We also held open sessions in May, June and July. These are a chance for people to come together and share a song, tune, poem or talent of their own in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Keep an eye on

carronvalleysessions.co.uk

and the Carron Valley Connections Facebook group for full details of all future events. DS

From Doubt to Solar Convert

How We Transformed Our Energy Future

WHEN WE MOVED to Carron Valley area in 2021, solar energy was the last thing on our minds. Our converted barn, built in 2020, with thick walls, excellent insulation, and well-fitted windows, was already performing well on heat retention. The cost of going solar simply felt like a step too far.

That all changed following an initial visit from Shirley, which led to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) survey recommending solar installation as a clear next step. After doing our own research, we took the plunge, installing 12 solar panels and two 6kW batteries in April this year.



Our motivations are twofold: a genuine desire to support the environment, and a practical need to reduce our household energy bills. But there is a third, equally important factor unique to our rural location — power cuts.

The system is designed for full energy backup during the many power cuts we experience throughout the year, meaning there is minimal interruption to our family life during these times.

Following the initial visit and EPC survey, Shirley and Ronan returned for a follow-up review, providing what we can only describe as invaluable advice; not just about maximising the efficiency of our new system, but about making smaller, everyday changes that benefit both the environment and our finances.

In order to achieve this we took advantage of the VRG grant system, which helped make the project financially achievable, and we are truly grateful for the support. Our electricity bill last month saw a significant reduction, and honestly, we wish we had done this sooner.

Thanks to the VRG, Shirley and Ronan, we plan to go on making further changes to make our home even better.

If you are thinking about an energy survey or looking into becoming more energy efficient, I'd recommend starting with a chat with Shirley and Ronan. Contact admin@valleyrenewables.co.uk to arrange this. It has made all the difference for us.

M&AF

Tour De 4 Cycle Event



6TH SEPT IS THE DAY; starting from Glasgow; with a choice of routes.

This is a charity event devised by Sir Chris Hoy with 4 rides choose from - a static challenge through to a 56 miles ride. Find the information, how to contribute and to register at: [Tour De 4 Landing Page](#) | [Event Updates and Donations](#)

If you are not riding yourself, you can just donate (see above) or give the riders lots of road-side encouragement as they pass through along the B818 on the day. These are not races but rides and for many will definitely be a challenge.

Another Grant Amendment

GOOD NEWS! Following a recent review of grants, it has been decided to increase the Student Bursary Grant to £1000. All other grants stay the same in the meantime.



Energy Efficiency Update Continued



WE ARE SURE THAT you will all be familiar with the recent Energy Efficiency survey sent to all residents by email or post with return stamp envelope provided. Disappointingly, only 24 returns were received from the 157 households contacted. We hope that more will still be received as these are a great source of feedback and information to us, and enable us to make plans for the next steps of the programme on what really matters to you.

Several more home visits by our retrofit team of Shirley and Ronan are now in the planning stage as a result of the feedback you have provided to us. Thank you to all who made the effort to reply. Two households have asked for a visit but replied anonymously so, if this was you, please let Helen know your contact details and we can forward these to Shirley and Ronan to make it happen.

All owner-occupied homes are eligible for substantial grants and interest free loans from Home Energy Scotland (HES). It was apparent from the replies, that there are some doubts about the viability of their grants due to the cost and upheaval of carrying out structural works such as wall and underfloor insulation. However, this is where great savings on energy costs can be made. It is not correct that you can only obtain grants and proceed with other energy saving or renewable projects once these works have been completed. The only essential work which must be completed is loft and cavity wall insulation before heat pumps or similar can be awarded where it has been specifically requested on an EPC survey. The resident can choose to carry out any, all or none of the recommendations of the survey and can choose which order they want.

With this in mind, we have invited HES to attend our Flower and Produce event in the community hall and grounds on Saturday the 15th August, where they will be available to answer any questions you may have, and offer guidance with grant applications, etc. Whilst many of you are aware of HES, very few of the respondents have actually applied and been awarded grants. As we ourselves have successfully received a grant from HES, I can assure you that the process was very simple and their staff were extremely helpful, with their contribution to our works very gratefully received. It helped us change our complete heating system and has led to substantial savings for us. As the cost of energy is due to rise in July by a further 20%, this should be of great interest to all our residents.

The date is confirmed with HES but we will post a reminder on the Carron Valley Connections Facebook page and by email to all the residents who have given us their permission to be contacted on all VRG matters. If you have not yet given your permission and would like to do so, please contact Helen, our administrator, on admin@valleyrenewables.co.uk or join the VRG community group for £3-00 life membership. We look forward to seeing you at the next event in our Community Hall. BY

HES Advice



DID YOU KNOW THAT -

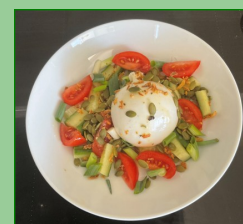
"We waste 80% of the energy we spend our money on"? Here are some small changes that can really add up.

- ◆ Check your bill – make sure you're paying the correct amount and on the best available tariff.
- ◆ Turn your thermostat down by 1°C – you may not notice the difference, but your bills will.
- ◆ Only heat the rooms you use – turn down radiators in empty spaces.
- ◆ Wash clothes at eco mode or 30°C - using less hot water reduces the energy needed for each load.
- ◆ Dry clothes naturally where possible - use an outdoor line or indoors on a drying rack in a well-ventilated room instead of using a tumble dryer.

Quick Burrata Salad

Ingredients:

- ◆ 1 burrata cheese
- ◆ 2 salad tomatoes
- ◆ 4 spring onions (cut on the diagonal into small pieces)
- ◆ Portion of cucumber
- ◆ Handful of pumpkin seeds
- ◆ French dressing
- ◆ Crispy onions to scatter (usually available in a tub...long-life or make your own).



Method:

Chop the tomatoes and cucumber into small pieces laying them in a bowl to create a bed. Place the cheese on the top. Scatter the spring onions round the cheese. Pour dressing over the vegetables. Add the pumpkin seeds. Finally scatter the crispy onions...as these are usually salty, no need to add seasoning. Score top of cheese with a knife and drizzle some more dressing into the cheese. Lovely served with some artisan bread of choice. Serves 1 as a main or 2 as a starter, if you half the cheese portion. Enjoy.

KS

(Not So Very) Smart Meters!

IT WOULD BE LOGICAL to think that, if Government was contracting installers to fit Smart Meters throughout the country, part of the deal would be to check that these actually worked before walking away, and certainly before being paid for the work. However, it seems that logic has not played a part in the grand scheme of things particularly in Carron Valley and surrounds, and many other rural areas in the country. A plea has come to Valley Renewables (VRG) and the Community Council (CC) to find out what, if anything, can be done about it.



Many standard Smart Meters (SM) work through using UHF but, as we all know, there are many dead spots for that in Carron Valley. The next option is to use a second generation SM along with a 4G Hub. This utilises whatever 4G mobile signal is available in the area. In Carron Valley the B818 from the west end of the reservoir to the bridge over the River Carron in the east can access EE. This is not a sales pitch for EE, nor does it necessarily mean that all the houses nearby can also access EE, but the 4G Hub solution could be worth a try. There should be no need to change your mobile provider to EE. It works for the Community Hall.

Another solution may be one recently developed that uses broadband connectivity - <https://chameleontechnology.co.uk/2026/06/16/chameleon-technology-supports-new-vwan-initiative-to-boost-smart-meter-connectivity/>.

If you want a smart meter, your energy provider is required to provide this and to check it is working within 30 days. They should also give you a contact number to call if there are issues with it. If, having had an SM installed you find it doesn't work, don't take 'no' for an answer or let the installer away with dilly-dallying. Hold their feet to the fire until you get a working SM. There is good information on the Citizens Advice Bureau website - [Getting a smart meter installed - Citizens Advice](#).

The VRG and CC continue to look into the whole SM issue including arranging a face-to-face meeting with our Member of Parliament, Chris Kane, at the Community Hall hopefully in the next few weeks. Those of you who wish to attend and explain your personal SM experiences are welcome. Chris is anxious to gain a clear understanding of the extent of the problem and to look into finding solutions.

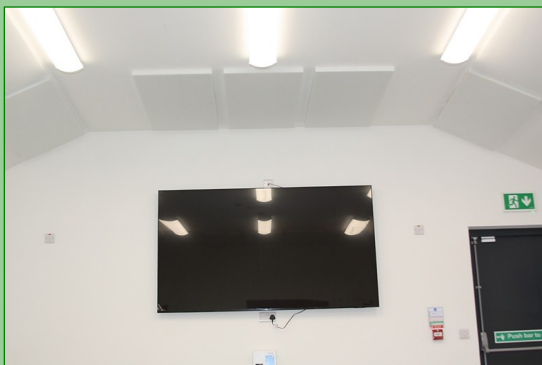
Lets hope this can be resolved soon. Please contact chair@valleyrenewables.co.uk if you have any personal experiences.

Hall Update

IT'S ALMOST A YEAR since we finished building the Community Hall; a year of settling in and finding our feet. Here is a brief update.

Early bookings have gone well with a wide range of events, meetings, group 'away days', performances, music sessions, parties and family occasions, making full use of the facilities. To book, go to - Community Hall website: carronvalleyhall.org.uk.

We have now installed an AV system to help with presentations and larger meetings. This uses a very large (85 inch) 'smart' TV linked to our WiFi system. A TV licence allows us to show films and documentaries and to watch sport. Film nights are now a possibility.



Early on, in the main hall with its hard surface finishes, we found sound was reverberating. Our volunteers fitted acoustic panels to the ceiling to good effect. The solar panels and battery storage, together with excellent building insulation, are making the running of the Hall very cost effective.

We have secured full rates relief for the Hall, as it is registered as a community facility by North Lanarkshire Council. Scottish Water has adopted our incoming raw water supply and will maintain this for a metered charge.

The successful operation of the Hall depends largely on the volunteers in its Management Team with Robert Layton as the Volunteer Hall Manager. A big thank you is due to all who support and help.

RF

Heads Up

Pomona Apple Day on 3rd Oct at the Event Space & Hall

Flower of the Month

THE FAMILIAR RED CAMPION (*Silene dioica*) makes its nectar hard to reach. Its flowers are brightly coloured to attract insects, but nectar is stored at the bottom of the dark-red tube you can see behind the pink petals. This tube has a narrow opening in the centre of the flower. To reach the nectar an insect must have a very long tongue and the strength to push it past the stamens or stigma at the mouth of the tube. This restricts access to very few insects. A rich reward of nectar then makes it worth their while searching for other Red Champion flowers and successfully transferring pollen directly from the stamens of one flower to the stigma of another with very little wastage.



Make your nectar too easy to get, and many different sorts of insects will visit, picking up pollen in the process, but then move on to an entirely different plant species, wasting the pollen. Make your nectar accessible to only a few species of insect and give them a rich reward, and pollination becomes very efficient. There is no point in short-tongued insects visiting Campions - they need to specialise in flowers with much more accessible pollen. At least, that is the theory.

Unfortunately for the Champion, not all short-tongued bees have read the textbooks! Look carefully at the flowers in the photo at the top. Each has a bite mark in the base of the flower. A short-tongued bee (usually a Buff-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*) has discovered that it can bite into the tube and steal the nectar from behind without going in the proper way from the front of the flower and transferring pollen in the process. What makes matters worse is that other short-tongued bees, like the Early Bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*) seen in the bottom photo poking its tongue into the base of the flower, have learnt that they also can steal nectar through holes made by others without helping pollination.



Fortunately for us, and for the Red Champion, there are still sufficient 'honest' insects who do the right thing by accessing the nectar through the front door and effecting pollination, so most plants produce enough seed to enable us to enjoy these beautiful pink flowers throughout the summer. But what proportion of Red Champion flowers near you have been robbed through 'breaking and entering'? Watch the visiting bees for a while – which ones visit the front of the flower, and which just go straight round to the back door?

CL

Halloween Party

COME AND JOIN us at a Halloween Party in the Community Hall!

- ◆ Be prepared to be scared!
- ◆ Fancy dress is a must.
- ◆ Prizes for the best outfit.
- ◆ Dookin' for apples
- ◆ Games
- ◆ Pin the broom on the witch and much more.

Saturday 31st October at noon

All Welcome



AR

Your Elected Representatives



Alyn Smith MSP Alyn.Smith.msp@parliament.scot ; Chris Kane MP chris.kane.mp@parliament.uk ;

Cllr Jen Preston prestonj@stirling.gov.uk ; Cllr Neil Benny bennyn@stirling.gov.uk ;

Cllr Scott Farmer farmers@stirling.gov.uk .

Fitness Friday



Stronger Together ♡

• MOVE. FEEL GOOD. HAVE FUN. •

ELEVATE
— FITNESS —

All fitness levels welcome!

FRIDAY

♡ *Elevate Fit* ♡

OUTDOOR CLASS

📍 Carron Valley Community Hall | 🏋️ Elevate Fit (Outdoor) | 🕒 1:00–2:00pm (60 mins)

..... ♡ — ALL FITNESS LEVELS WELCOME — ♡

Show up for yourself. We'll do the rest. ♡

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 apply pressure to help sort it.

Grants Paid

JULY 1/7/25 TO 30/06/26

Student Bursaries	£5,000
Young Person's	£4,140
Energy Efficiency	£34,927
Warm Up / Costs Down	£3,636
Get The Valley Growing	£6,171
E-Bikes	£3,000
Community Groups	£6,068
96 Total	£62,924

Contact Us

VRG Secretary:
secy@valleyrenewables.co.uk

VRG admin and information:
admin@valleyrenewables.co.uk
07765 295 282

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

WPALC

WEST PLEAN & AUCHENBOWIE LADIES CLUB

Here is its programme for the next few meetings.

2026

Sept 10th: Musical Afternoon

Sept 24th: Police information session

Oct 8th: Prison Chaplaincy

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. Bring a mug!

HR



Final Warning! Flower & Produce Show & BBQ - 15th Aug @ our Event Space