

St Fillans Community Council AGM Chair's Report October 2020

St Fillans Community Council has had two meetings since I took over in November 2019 and sent out one report during Covid-19 restrictions.

The Community Council has retained the same four members after last November's election. Myself as Chairperson, Ulrika Hollas Vice-chair, Rico Hollas Treasurer and Collette McCloud Secretary.

Since taking up the reins of Community Chair it has been somewhat challenging, especially with an unforeseen Covid-19 pandemic. However, as a village I think we have by in large risen to the challenge.

My sincere thanks to the CC members, volunteer groups and village volunteers who have worked so hard to maintain, improve and keep our village, not only for ourselves but for visitors to enjoy. I also thank those that volunteered throughout the lockdown period in order to keep our most vulnerable residents safe. To me St Fillans is a very special place.

The following report hopefully will give some insight to what has been, in spite of Covid-19, a busy year.

Christmas Tree Lights

After hearing of some scary moments during the removal of the lights from the 'Millennium tree,' and wanting to adhere to the villagers wishes of having Christmas lights on the said tree, some careful thinking was applied. So appeared laser lights shining from the ground up, thus removing the need for climbing in the tree or churning up the ground with a Cherry picker type vehicle. These hopefully will be added to this coming Christmas.

Hogmanay

This event was sold out again. Great time had by all that could attend, numbers as usual being limited. Thanks to Gordon & Pamela McDowell, Richard Graham and Audrey Gavigan for their efforts. £636 raised this year for the Community Trust.

Buses

Next to befall us over the Christmas period was the withdrawal of the Stagecoach bus service to St Fillans. This was due to lack of use, but in the face of the Scottish Governments National Transport Policy. We initially set up a small group to see if there was anyway the village could set up a volunteer bus group. This group was overtaken by events and has not been revisited, the initial lead for this group having stepped down for personal reasons. Perth and Kinross Council are providing a bus service to the village and school buses are again running.

Covid-19

In March it became apparent that restrictions were going to be introduced because of the Covid-19 virus causing a worldwide pandemic. The CC along with other members of the community got together for a socially distanced meeting to brainstorm ideas on how best to protect the most vulnerable and the community as a whole.

To that end we now have The Reach Out Whatsapp Group for mobile devices, thanks to Bruce Montgomery for setting this up and Fi Weston for assisting with admin. A request was made to Liam Cayless of The Village Store for help. He set up as a food hub with a delivery service courtesy of Craig Gavigan. A regular chemist run was also set up for those requiring prescriptions. The CC put in request for funding, most being turned down; however, we did in the end receive aid from the National Park for our volunteer fuel costs, and we were also able to purchase hand sanitisers and gel for use in the Church and Sandison Hall.

Camping and jet skiers 'PWC'

What a huge issue this became. Dirty campers during and after lockdown was all consuming, to the extent questions were raised by the shadow environment secretary for Scotland Liz Smith MSP in Scottish Parliament. This after a meeting organised by our own Ruth Graham and attended by Liz Smith MSP, Cllr Roz McCall, reporter Lyn Duke, Myself and CEO for Keep Scotland Beautiful Barry Fisher. All incredulous of how people can behave.

I also had numerous meetings with our community police officers regarding the enforcement of the by-laws.

Thanks to all those that took time to call the police, it is the only way that authorities will know that everything is not okay. We also now have an app for those calls that have been made and for those that have tried to call 101 but can't get through. The information can be collated and sent anonymously to the police central hub.

With the issue of PWC. I and others within the community including Martin Willkie and Richard Graham are in online consultation with The National Parks, Police Scotland, Riparian owners around Loch Earn, hopefully there will be things in place for next year.

Policing

Outside of camping and PWC. There has been the theft of our cardboard speed officer as highlighted in an amusing article on Tayside Police FB page. An alleged assault in The Village Store car park by mobile caravanners on each other, was witnessed and reported by villagers. During lockdown (April) party goers in a house were reported and told to leave. Speeding in the village continues to be a bug bear. I have agreement from our Ward police officer and MSP's that the best way forward is average speed cameras for the A85. We need to persuade them to be installed now. The Police have done speed checks in St Fillans and spoken with drivers, the regularity of this seems to have curtailed somewhat recently although some police presence in the village has been noted.

Bridges

The memorial bridge. Initially we reported that SSE did not want to maintain the bridge. However, after further correspondence, they conceded it was theirs and have taken

ownership, I am pleased to report they have completed the required repairs and maintenance.

Dundurn Bridge, has now been hit twice over the past two years. After being told it would be repaired after lockdown, P&K head engineering has informed me there is no date set for repairs.

Golf Club

I am so pleased to report St Fillans Golf Club received the supreme accolade of Best 9-hole Golf Course in Scotland, Congratulations to Gordon Hibbert, John Myles and all others involved. Also, a great achievement in being prepared and opening the course after lockdown.

Paths Group

The next section for the LERP is all but ready to go with all funding and planning permissions in place, only agreement from SSE on a small part is required. We also applied for walking and cycling friendly status for the road from Comrie to Dalchonzie. This was agreed and implemented within weeks rather than the usual months.

Villagers Magazine

Again, this year some great articles from Bruce Montgomery in the Villagers. Please keep them coming.

Gardening Group

It was with deep sadness that this year we lost Eric Kennelly who, in 2008, resurrected the group previously known as St Fillans in Bloom, to form the current St Fillans Garden Group. Hopefully he has a more reliable lawnmower where he has gone.

In recognition of Eric and his wishes a riverside walk has been laid, with seating along the way and a special one where Eric had wanted a view up the river. 'Eric's Way.'

Covid made organising events difficult, however during lockdown as part of daily exercise and prior to dirty campers turning up, litter picking took place with a total of 45 bin liners being collected from the loch and riverside.

An electronic system for collating hours has been introduced and is proving to be successful. A garden group project to improve the Field of Hope area was met with approval by the villagers and the makeover is underway, this being led by Lorna Kennelly, assisted by Cherry Neale and Audrey Gavigan. Many thanks to David Methven for donating stones and the labour to place them.

Festive committee

Unfortunately, a very quiet year due to Covid-19 restrictions. It looks as though it is going to stay quiet for the foreseeable future. I am assured that the committee is planning and plotting for next year as they feel we need to make up for lost time.

Sandison Hall Groups

The hall has been shut to all group activities. However, our Yoga Guru Pamela McDowall has been of great benefit health wise to the village, continuing all our Yoga sessions online throughout the pandemic lockdown free of charge.

I do hope in 2021 the groups that use the hall can be rekindled.

I would also like to mention Sally Watson who after 15 years has stepped down as the Sandison Hall Committee Chairperson. A marvellous effort, thank you.

Welcome to New Villagers

Another of our residents that has been kept busy recently is Paula Linton, she has been meeting and giving out welcome packs to our new residents. I extend a warm welcome to you all and hope you all get as much pleasure from living in St Fillans as I do.

On a personal note, I would like to thank you all for making the Village what it is and for supporting the community throughout these exceptional times, (sorry for the cliché.) A big thank you to my fellow councillors for their support and hard work and for the support of the Community Trust and their Chairperson's sage advice.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Community Council, I wish you all the best, the end of restrictions and a better 2021.