

## ***Duneaton Community Council Chairman's Annual Report 2020-21***

### ***Chairman Malcolm Muir***

#### **General**

Duneaton Community Council provides impartial and non-political support for six village communities, each with its own character and priorities and each with its own hinterland of farms and other more remote properties and businesses. Communications remains a key issue, especially in terms of public transport, although broadband speeds in some of the villages have improved recently. The significance of broadband speed has become especially apparent over the past year with all Community Council meetings having to be held online over Zoom. All six villages continue to be actively represented on the Community Council and all the villages have now their own working groups and project programmes, supported by our community Development Officer, Liz Steele.

We are an open and accountable group and would urge anybody with a question or issue, or even just interested, to attend our meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 in Robertson Hall; you will be made very welcome. With the increasing amount of money coming into the area via the windfarm operators, it is vital that everybody should have a say in how these significant resources can best be used to enhance this beautiful area, its rich heritage and the quality of life of its residents

#### **Micro Grants**

We continue to manage monies from both the Clyde Wind Farm Fund and other funding sources. The Micro grant application scheme continues to be popular for funding local community-based projects and we hope that community engagement will continue to access this excellent method of funding. It is great to see such a wide range of project ideas now coming from all six villages.

#### **The Clyde Windfarm Extension Fund**

The Clyde Extension Fund represents a significant, new source of funding and needs to be administered transparently and invested in projects and activities that will bring long-term benefits to the area. Duneaton CC is working in partnership with Biggar, Symington, Thankerton Community Councils to combine four allocations into one annual fund of £200,000 per annum. This offers a much greater degree of flexibility and enables larger, strategic projects to be funded in any one year, if desired. The fund is administered directly by Scottish and Southern Energy, through a panel on which each of the four participating Community Councils will have two delegates.

#### **Community Development**

Support from the Clyde Extension Fund has allowed Duneaton Community Council (DCC) to engage Liz Steele as Community Development Worker (CDW) since June 2019, to work within the 6 Duneaton communities of Abington, Coulter, Crawfordjohn, Lamington, Robertson and Wiston.

For much of the past two years, work on delivering the SCC Community Engagement Plan has had to be curtailed, with much of Liz's efforts refocussed on supporting our communities through the pandemic and associated lockdown periods. Because of this, further money has been secured to extend the post and allow Liz to help our villages to re-invigorate the initiatives begun in 2019.

During the past 2 years Liz has supported numerous community led projects, improved communication between the villages, assisted in the establishment of 2 new community groups, formed associations with local and national support groups and organisations and supported the 6 villages throughout the Pandemic. All have resulted in an increase in local capacity and sense of local community.

***Examples of initiatives helped through the work of the CDW are:***

assistance with ideas and funding for numerous community events and group projects  
assistance with the initial stages of the refurbishment of Roberton Hall  
iPads and laptops for 8 vulnerable people  
Crawfordjohn picnic area redevelopment  
Coulter Playpark refurbishment  
Wiston & Coulter defibrillator projects  
Abington PTA technology project  
Crawfordjohn Hall solar panel project  
Boxes of Kindness and afternoon tea boxes  
Initial stages of Coulter Broadband  
Crawfordjohn and Coulter community groups  
Covid: volunteer delivery service, food parcels, help line links, information newsletter  
VASLan and REF Covid recovery funding  
Series of 3 community event delivered by an organisation outside Duneaton  
Publicity for funding opportunities.

The role of the CDW to work with individuals on behalf of their groups, or with unique projects, has given an opportunity to highlight the work of DCC, as well as helping to build confidence for people to create and deliver community initiatives.

**Planning and other consultations**

At the time of writing, we have another five proposed windfarm developments in the DCC area and one due to start construction. The workload generated by windfarm consultations and negotiating community benefits is considerable and CC members have needed to develop a detailed understanding of the processes involved. Increasingly, developers are putting forward windfarms of over 50 MW generating capacity, meaning that applications go directly to Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit. The loss of direct local planning control over these major and long-term impacts is a growing concern. DCC has always been very willing to engage with windfarm developers and operators to ensure the best outcomes and benefits for our community. It is clear, however, that public attitudes in Duneaton are starting to change as ever more development proposals are submitted. A recent DCC community consultation on one proposed new 50 mw windfarm showed 78% of respondents against the development, with 75% citing cumulative impact as the main factor. Almost all of the 100 responses were from Duneaton and nearly all from separate households. Given that there are about 470 households in the area, this was an encouraging uptake of some 22%.

**DCC members**

2020 saw the resignation of John McLatchie from the Community Council. John was the previous DCC Chair and we thank him for all his work over a good number of years. We are pleased to welcome Alison Mitchell who has now been confirmed as a full member.

## **Communications**

Our FB page <https://www.facebook.com/DuneatonCommunityCouncil/> has increased to 294 likes, and thanks to regular posts from CC Members and our Community Development Officer we reach hundreds of people each week. For example, the latest 28-day data shows that 1,735 people saw our posts and 1,042 people engaged with them via likes or comments. This is very high considering our DCC population of around 470 households. While our website <https://duneatoncc.weebly.com/> is less popular, it provides access to DCC information for non-Facebook users and allows the DCC to share more complex information and files. In the period 7 Nov-6 Dec there were 124 page views by 43 separate individuals.

## **Conclusion**

Duneaton Community Council remains active and in good health and both succession and communication is being improved by the active network of village committees. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all DCC Members and Associate Members who have worked so hard over the past two years and, of course Liz, our Community Development Officer who worked tirelessly through the very challenging period of the lockdowns in 2020. Thanks to Liz, our team of volunteer drivers and the fantastic support from local shops and services, we were able to provide deliveries of groceries, hot meals, medicines and other essentials to those who were sheltering.