

Duneaton Community Council Chairman's Annual Report 2021-22

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. After two challenging years, dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, we are pleased to have finally resumed face to face meetings.

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 the Clyde Wind Farm Fund, the Clyde Extension Fund and Ventient Energy's fund from their Glenkerrie operation. 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

Duneaton CC participates in the administration of this fund in partnership with Biggar, Thankerton & Quothquan and Symington Community Councils. The past year has seen awards made to a total value of £432,600 against a total project value of £713,025. In the Duneaton area, the fund has contributed £20,782.39 to install solar panels and batteries in Crawfordjohn Hall, provided revenue support funding of £4,943 to Abington Bowling Club and £3,000 of additional microgrant funding.

Community Development

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

With the additional funding, ongoing microgrant and other windfarm funding enquiries and networking with relevant 3rd sector organisations, as Community Development Worker for Duneaton it has been a busy year with many positive outcomes.

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.

- Assistance with Clyde and Glenkerie microgrant applications:

Clyde - 13 Glenkerie - 9 Total 22

- Assistance with at least 4 Clyde main fund project enquiries
- Healthy number of views and interactions related to Facebook posts
- Secured 3 additional Scottish Government Funds for the CDW to work with and for the community with new initiatives
 - 2 Inspiring Scotland grants totalling £2k revenue and £6k capital to spend within 6 months in our communities. Some villages were awarded a full 1k for their initiatives to include community days with a visiting fish and chip van and planting initiatives with barrel tubs and plants around the villages and a new bench for Abington. Where villages couldn't spend the full allocation I allocated funds to shopping bus trips for the over 70s; a series of craft/soup lunches and afternoon tea boxes.
 - Current additional funding under the title of Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund includes £2,500 revenue and £2,225 capital to spend on a series of community cafes, with combating post-Covid isolation as the main aspect of addressing mental health.
- Hugely positive outcomes from all initiatives funded by the additional grants, with the two most outstanding being the focus on addressing isolation felt by many post Covid. All events have given people the opportunity to socialise and for villages to get back on their feet by organising village events.
- 2ndly, the invitation for Healthy Valleys to work with me on the craft soup lunch and café sessions. From anyone's memory this is the 1st time an organisation has worked to deliver such projects in Duneaton, where the initiative has an open invitation for anyone to attend.
- The role of CDW has helped to put Duneaton on the map through ongoing opportunities to network, mainly with 3rd sector organisations, mostly based in South Lanarkshire. All except a few, generally these organisations do not see a cause or think to work in our area. The Old School House is the perfect location for organisations to book a space to offer their services on a regular basis. The CDW has engaged with a number of organisations to suggest this

prior to the opening of the Centre, with at least Connect2 Renewables taking up the opportunity. In addition, the use of external funding to work with other organisations for projects in Duneaton.

Planning and other consultations

At the time of writing, we have six operational windfarms in the DCC area, with a one (Priestgill) due to start construction and a further five in the application stage. 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 remains a 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. Guided by the results of a community survey, undertaken over the summer of 2021, DCC has submitted an objection to the proposed new Grayside windfarm in the hills behind Coulter and Lamington. DCC also submitted an objection to the Little Gala development near Wiston. In both cases, the key issues were cumulative impact and intrusion into "upland glen" landscapes.

DCC members

2022 saw the resignation of Robin Craig from the Community Council and we thank him for all his work over many years. We are pleased to welcome Nichola Hill, from Abington, who has now been confirmed as a member.

Communications

Our FB page <https://www.facebook.com/DuneatonCommunityCouncil/> has increased to 327 likes, and our posts were read 9,646 times over the past year. 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 196 page views by 87 separate individuals, which is double the same period last year. Two newsletters have been produced and distributed over 2022 and we are very grateful to the local volunteers who deliver these around the villages and surrounding farms.

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 year and, of course Liz Steele, our Community Development Officer.