



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 1st AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 11 November 2013

It is almost exactly 6 months since our inaugural meeting was held here. When I started to prepare this report I looked back at my notes for that inaugural meeting and read through the list of tasks which I said the committee would tackle. I am pleased – and relieved – to be able to report that we have done all we said we would.

If you have read our September Newsletter and the items in the Gryffe Advertiser you will be aware of much that I am about to say, but of course it is important that it be recorded here, if not for posterity, then at least to satisfy our backers.

Our first priority was to obtain funding and our 3 applications – to Inverclyde Community Fund, Inverclyde Council Small Grants and Awards for All (Lottery) – were all successful, enabling us to get underway without delay. I would like to place on record our gratitude to these bodies, and in particular to CVS Inverclyde for their help, guidance and financial backing in the early stages, and to Councillor David Wilson for his encouragement and support.

These funds allowed us to pay for insurance cover and to purchase various supplies, including watering can, fertilizer, sacktruck, storage chest, protective sheeting, flexi-tubs and hi-vis vests with our logo prominent on the back, and later, compost, bulbs and plants.

At the same time we were receiving your membership applications and it is good to report that Diane has been kept busy in that regard. At the last count we had around 70 members, of whom about half wish to be actively involved in planting. We have been greatly encouraged by your support and by the encouraging comments of many residents, even before there was anything to show for our efforts. We gratefully accepted the offer of the use of a small flat-bed truck and a lock-up garage, both of which have proved most useful. The garage needed its lock upgraded and this work was done free of charge by Graeme Skelton of Powerdoors in Lochwinnoch. As a thank you he gets a mention on our website.

We are indebted to Jim Ferguson for his help in setting up our website which has now gone public. It is still in its early stages and will, we hope, be improved, but you will find information about us, contact details and of course photos of what we have been up to.

The web address is www.colourfulkilmacolm.org.uk

The Local Authority was not intending to replant the concrete planters in Birkmyre Park (on Knockbuckle Road) and so they were happy for us to adopt these. We considered using them in other positions in the village, but in the end the best course of action seemed to be to leave them where they were. Since this was a first effort, we decided that committee members should plant them up. This was done at the end of June, and then in September a dozen or so 'active gardener' members replanted them with plants to give winter interest and bulbs for the spring. I requested that Inverclyde Council renew the gravel around that area as it is at present rather muddy but I have been told that that is not possible for the usual health and safety reasons. They have, however, promised to monitor the condition of the area.

After discussion with Helen Calvert, chair of KNCC, about the siting of the piazza planters, they were ordered early in September, with an expected delivery time of 4 weeks. At the end of the month we therefore took advantage of a September 25% discount offer at McLaren's Nursery to buy plants both for Birkmyre Park and for the piazza. Unfortunately there was a delay in the manufacture of the planters – which are not a standard size – and plants had to be kept in their small pots longer than we would have wished. Eventually we took delivery of the planters on Friday 8th November and with the help of a good number of our 'active gardeners' we filled the containers and planted them up with daffodil bulbs for spring and ivies, violas and euonymus for some winter interest. I must make particular mention of the help given by Norrie Johnstone, who collected the compost from Bridge of Weir, the plants from our house and, at the last minute, breeze blocks from Greenock. He also supplied the water tank for filling the reservoirs – simply indispensable. Although the process of ordering and arranging delivery of the planters was rather fraught, I hope you agree that they were worth the wait.

We registered with 'It's Your Neighbourhood', a scheme run by the Royal Horticultural Society, which as the name suggests is aimed at encouraging local groups trying to enhance their surroundings. My wife, Sheena, and I attended the Annual Seminar in Stirling on 30th October at which short talks on various green issues were given and certificates awarded to groups involved over the past year. It was a good opportunity to meet representatives of similar groups to ours and hear about their work. We would have a long way to go if we were to match some of the projects we heard about.

And what of the future? Well of course, planting will have to be renewed twice each year, but we hope also to look at other areas of the village. We have a few ideas, but maybe it is best to keep them to ourselves for the time being until we have discussed our ideas with the relevant people. We also feel it would be wise to have a year's experience under our belt first. Nevertheless, if you know of a neglected corner that would benefit from some TLC do let us know.

Funding will also be an on-going process, and again we have possible sources to explore, and indeed offers to follow up.

Since the committee was formed we have met three times and I would like to thank all the members of the committee for their input. Special thanks to Diane for keeping track of membership and fulfilling all the roles that inevitably fall to a secretary and to Alistair for setting up our bank account – not such a straightforward task these days – and keeping track of the financial to-ing and fro-ing. And to Lucy who must dread every meeting, knowing it will lead to a tricky few hours' work trying to record everyone's comments in a coherent manner.

So, thank you for supporting us in this venture. We shall continue to do our best to make our village even more attractive than it already is.