



Colourful Kilmacolm

Chairman's Report to the 14th AGM

Cargill Centre, Kilmacolm

Monday 18 May 2026

It is often said that the older you get, the more quickly time seems to pass, and certainly as I sat down to do this report I found it hard to believe that it was a full year since I had written the last one. Then there is the temptation to pull out a previous year's report and use that at the AGM. Would anyone notice? I suspect I wouldn't get away with it and to be honest, although I often think there will not be a lot to report, it is always surprising when I trawl through the minutes of our 5 meetings, how many ideas we have come up with, discussed, adopted or discarded according to the collective wisdom of committee members, and believe me, there is a lot of wisdom and common sense represented there. I am happy to acknowledge, and am very grateful for the contribution of them all to our discussions.

And so I will bring you up to date with what has happened since our AGM a year ago. It is inevitably a mixed bag of successes and frustrations but fortunately no outright failures or disasters.

You may remember that we had to have, shall we say "discussions" with Inverclyde Council before they finally agreed to add the pavement at Carriages to their regular weedkiller programme. While the pavement has not been totally weed free at all times, the council has kept to the agreement, saving us the cost of purchasing machetes.

Like all local residents, we are frustrated by the unfinished state of the retail unit under the new flats. We would like to install barrier baskets on the railings at the top of Smithy Brae once the area is finished and cleared of clutter, so we are applying to Inverclyde Council for funding to purchase appropriate planters, and if necessary will store them until the area is clear.

The story at Market Place is a much happier one, if somewhat convoluted. Bear with me! Scottish Gas Network completed the installation of their gas governor, underground as agreed after negotiation, and tidied up the site to our satisfaction. Our planter now sits further forward than before, to allow access to the governor, but in fact this allows the plants in it to be seen to better advantage. To compensate for some plant disturbance, particularly at the front left section of the garden, they contributed £150 towards new plants. This area is especially dry, being under a large conifer, which, understandably perhaps, the council is unwilling to remove. To give plants a chance of getting established, a professional gardener suggested raising the level of the soil before planting and then watering regularly until plants had a chance to get their roots down deep, and we thought this was definitely worth a try. However as there was no raised edging along that section, any extra soil would have ended up on the pavement. So we needed new, higher edging.

While we were thinking of which local company we might approach with a sob story, by happy coincidence I received an email via the council about a scheme with the rather grand title Glasgow City Region Community Benefits Hub. This is a scheme whereby local volunteer groups can apply for work to be carried out free of charge by businesses which have won contracts from local authorities, and in return the businesses have to agree to put something back into the community. We applied, our bid was accepted, and in an amazingly short time - just a day or two - a new higher edging was concreted in and a load of topsoil added. To be honest we would have preferred an even higher edging, but that was what was on offer. Also, I was not there when the topsoil was added. If I had been, I would have asked for more, so we ordered a builder's bag of topsoil from Caledonian Horticulture (can recommend) and that was spread over the first lot. We used some of the SGN plant money to purchase plants at McLarens Nursery and these, along with some from my own garden, have been planted. We have been watering the whole area very regularly to give the plants every chance to establish themselves. Let's hope that the appearance of this corner will soon be much improved.

Another success was the siting of two half barrel planters at the Covid Memorial which you'll find at the foot of Birkmyre Park. Parklea Branching Out, from whom we buy our summer plants, very kindly donated 2 concrete slabs to put them on, as well as enough extra plants to fill them.

Last autumn we offered spent daffodil bulbs to members for naturalising at £2 for a bag of 30 and by all accounts they did very well this spring, so we have a plan to use this year's bulbs elsewhere in the village.

Last year I said our planting schemes would be much the same as before, apart from a slight change at Birkmyre Park. That was a trial move from begonias to impatiens. Although a little slower to flower, they performed well in the end and we're giving them another chance this summer, at the park and also at the time capsule.

I also said last year that planting more bulbs at the layby beyond the Knapps seemed a waste, however once the bus and kiosk were gone we decided to plant more crocuses there, but only on the area between the fence and the road. Accordingly a few intrepid members planted 1000 crocuses on a very windy, cold autumn day, as cars whizzed past us rather scarily. But this spring we, and anyone passing, were rewarded with a glorious show. Another 1000 will be ordered this autumn as we only had enough for half the length. You may have noticed!

The banner which Mike sourced for us has been displayed when we've been out working. We have had a few people expressing an interest, but getting to the next stage, actually joining, seems often to be a step too far. We will not give up!

Our most recent idea is to site two planters near the Birkmyre Park café. The relevant authority at Inverclyde Council have no objection, the planters have been ordered and are due for delivery before the end of this month. So watch this space (literally!).

Thank you very much for turning out to this meeting. We really appreciate your support here and throughout the year. Do wait behind at the end for a drink and a chat.