

Kilmacolm Community Council

Chair's Annual Report, 2014-15

This, our 40th year as a Community Council, has been one of steady progress, and new episodes in continuing sagas, rather than dramatic new story lines. A number of earlier initiatives, by us and others, have come to fruition. Particularly satisfying was the ceremony in France during July when the Vice Chair signed the twinning agreement with MÉRIGNIES. Along with the signing ceremony here at the Agricultural Show in the spring of last year, this brought into effect the link between our two communities. Following the highly successful visit by some St Columba's pupils at Easter, in a couple of weeks time we shall see Kilmacolm hosting a large group of French school children for a long weekend. We all hope it goes well and that they return with fond memories of our village.

Another initiative that we helped to get off the ground was Colourful Kilmacolm. It has gone from strength to strength, and their flower displays have been a real boost to the village, not only in high summer but throughout the year.

It is not only our own initiatives that have come to fruition. Last Autumn we had our first visit from Parking Wardens in three years as Inverclyde's scheme for de-criminalised parking enforcement came into effect after a lengthy gestation. This set off quite a debate in the village. In February we arranged an open meeting to discuss the issues and after that we submitted our views to Inverclyde to feed into their review of the new arrangements. This should be completed fairly soon. It will be interesting to see what changes are proposed, but perhaps most important, whether our case for additional off-street parking has been accepted.

This was the third time since the present Community Council was elected in 2011 that we have felt an issue was sufficiently important to warrant a special open meeting. The others were, of course, the second St Columba's expansion plan, and the replacement scheme for the old Institute Building. All of the meetings have been well attended and have provided a good mechanism to channel strong feelings into productive channels. What is less clear is the impact they have had on decision making.

I touched then on one important planning application, the old Institute Building. We looked at this in the previous year but it was approved by Inverclyde during the year under review. We now see the start of the project itself. An even earlier planning case, but again highly important to the village, has also been approved during the year. That is the Balrossie application for a large Enabling Development of 40 houses in the Green Belt. As with the Institute case, we were sympathetic to the general idea but felt we had to object to the application as actually submitted. Again as with the Institute case, we were disappointed that our concerns appeared not to be reflected in the detailed decision.

During the year we considered the latest application for a wind farm on Corlic Hill and decided to submit an objection. I attended, and spoke at, the open meeting of the Planning Board which decided to refuse the application. Like the first application for the site, the developer has appealed, and, again like the previous case, there is to be a Reporter's Enquiry. So that story continues.

To end on a lighter note, Christmas saw the usual festivities around the switching on of the lights and we participated as usual with a shop window competition. It is always a pleasant evening and a useful opportunity for the Community Council to be seen as active participants in local life. More directly, it is also a chance for us to raise a little cash that we are free to spend as we judge best!

In the immediate future, after the summer break, we shall have elections for new members. I hope we shall see continued interest in the Community Council and that it will remain an important part of our community as it has been over the past 40 years. I am hugely grateful to my colleagues for their contribution. I am sure we and our successors will continue to serve our community for as long again.