15 April 2021

Furnace Community Council
April 2020 – March 2021 A Brief History

Context

From early lockdown April 2020, Furnace CC members communicated and made decisions by email. From June 2020 to February 2021 we have been meeting monthly via Zoom, with members of the public invited and attending.

In May 2020 we made a successful application to Foundation Scotland for financial support during the COVID 19 pandemic, receiving £900 in addition to our annual £1,000 Windfarm Microgrant funding.

We used the emergency grant to buy masks and hand gel, which were distributed free to residents, and to offset additional costs related to daily food and newspaper deliveries. These were mainly undertaken by the local shop, which played a vital part throughout the first lockdown, with grateful thanks to Cindy and David MacInnes, who run the Furnace Stores.

Communication

Communication was vital, especially in those early days when everything was changing on a daily – and sometimes hourly – basis.

Furnace CC is fortunate that we already had a well established Facebook page – Everything Furnace https://www.facebook.com/Everything-Furnace-136146563229152 – with over 800 followers. We were able to monitor and very quickly post information. Aware that there are a significant number of residents without access to FB, we also used email and a telephone tree to ensure that information reached everyone asap.

At Christmas, aware that many people were alone at a time when we usually came together as a community, Furnace CC produced a special edition of the Furnace Press (PDF attached)– a community newsletter which we had been producing monthly for some years, but stopped with lockdown when Kilmory Printroom closed.

Furnace CC members worked very closely with Furnace SCIO to revamp and relaunch the Furnace Website – also now renamed Everything Furnace https://www.furnace-argyll.org/

Furnace Surgery

Furnace Surgery closed at the beginning of Lockdown and to date has not yet reopened. This is causing great concern among residents of Furnace and Minard.

Services had been running down for some time, from a 5 day week to a 2 day week to a one day week. This is a live issue. Along with other CC Convenors, we have met with representatives of Lochgilphead Medical Practice via Zoom, but have not been able to make progress on this issue. Another meeting is arranged for 27 April.

Breedon and Furnace Quarry

Furnace Quarry is an integral part of life in Furnace and Furnace CC members have previously met with Breed representatives on a regular basis to discuss items of mutual interest, but this fell by the wayside, having not met since May 2018.

We met again recently with Furnace CC, Breedon and ABC Ward Councillor, Councillors Philand and Taylor. This was a very positive meeting and really demonstrated the power of Partnership working. We discussed a range of issues and reached agreement on many items including a regular schedule of meetings.

Other issues

Concerned about traffic continuing to break the speed limit through the village, we purchased a "PC Speedy" card/plastic speed cop figure. This was having a noticeable effect in that traffic was slowing down, but sadly, PC Speedy was stolen, removed from his station by person or persons unknown.

Furnace CC has discussed and responded to a number of consultations including Ward boundaries, A83, COVID 19 community response and motorhomes.

The police have responded to a number of issues raised including motorbikes and vandalism.

Litter has increased to ridiculous proportions throughout the pandemic, with villagers having to clean up after so called "wild camping" which has left tents, fires, broken glass and other items (including full cans of cider).

We had to deal with a particularly contentious Planning Application during Lockdown and again our communication channels proved vital.

Furnace CC would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mid Argyll Ward Councillors Dougie Philand and Sandy Taylor for their ongoing attendance and support at meetings.

Lynda Syed

Convenor, Furnace Community Council