

GRANTULLY AND STRATHTAY CONSERVATION TRUST

NEW YEAR NEWSLETTER

On behalf of the Trust Committee, a Happy New Year!

The Trust writes to members around this time of year to review the year and to look ahead. This year, in a break from tradition, we have decided to send this letter to households throughout the Conservation Area and further afield. There are two reasons for this. Since our last membership exercise there have been a number of new and very welcome arrivals who we hope will be interested in what we do and may wish to join the Trust. Secondly, we feel there is a need to try to correct misunderstandings which appear to exist within the community concerning the reasons behind the establishment of the Trust and our future aims and ambitions.

The Trust (originally the Strathtay Community Company (SCC)) was formed in 2008 when parcels of land within Strathtay village were put up for sale and bought by developers. Fearing over and, possibly, inappropriate development, the SCC was formed and the majority of residents became members. The Trust, the directors of which are volunteers, differs from the Community Council in that its responsibility is to a specific area and the majority of members live within the conservation area and therefore have a direct interest in its well being. Although our remit has since expanded, the original intention was to empower the community to give greater control over issues affecting the villages and to provide more choice in how our needs are met. It is not, and never was, intended simply as a block to development though it remains a useful and necessary community organisation which can lobby as necessary and represent the interests of residents in such matters. In 2009, the Trust was formed following the creation of the Grandtully and Strathtay Conservation Area and membership extended to include residents within the Grandtully boundary of the Conservation Area. Details of the Trust's current activities and Articles of Association, together with a list of committee members, are available on our website (www.grandtullyandstrathtayvillage.co.uk). The site also provides some history of the settlements of Strathtay and Grandtully, together with photographs both current and from days gone by. Monitoring and commenting on planning applications remains a core issue. However, in the relatively short period the Trust has been in existence, we have pursued a much wider remit and succeeded in:

- a) assisting Perth and Kinross Council with the granting of long overdue Conservation Area status;
- b) ensuring a quality resurfacing of Grandtully Bridge after several botched attempts;
- c) arranging for bollards to be erected around the War Memorial to protect it from vehicular damage and obtaining a grant and raised additional funds to clean and restore the Memorial;
- d) lobbying the Council to improve signage to keep large and heavy vehicles away from Grandtully Bridge;
- e) organising a series of social evenings the most recent of which, a summer barbeque, was well attended and raised over £300 for our chosen charity - the Aberfeldy Cottage Hospital;
- f) successfully pressing the authorities to start to tackle the speeding problem in Grandtully by erecting a flashing sign;
- g) obtaining, with the support of the majority of residents, a Right to Buy option on the fields at the western end of Strathtay village to be exercised if ever they come up for sale;
- h) Persuading the Council to adopt the Red Telephone box in Strathtay and thereby preventing its removal under the BT scheme;

i) obtaining a grant to allow restoration of the telephone box and, thanks to Simon Grey at the village store who kindly provided the paint, repainting the box inside and out prior to it becoming an information point;

j) assisting the Council with developer appeals to ensure that new developments within the Area were sustainable. Contributing substantively and effectively to the consultation exercise on the new Development Plan for Perth and Kinross;

k) liaising with PKC over improvements to the Conservation Area proposed in the Conservation Area Appraisal and by residents.

I hope it is clear from the above that the Trust, far from being a body solely concerned with planning applications has had, and continues to have, a very positive affect on the area and is working in numerous ways for the long-term benefit of the community and our quality of life.

The Right to Buy option referred to above will expire in May this year. The recent Trust AGM unanimously voted to apply to renew the application and preparations to do this are now in hand. Demonstrating that strong community support continues to exist is a major requirement for successfully re-registering our interest and committee members will therefore shortly begin consulting residents. When they do so they will be able to answer any questions you may have and explain how we might use the land should it ever come up for sale.

The Strathtay village shop not only provides us with an essential service but also a social hub for the community. Alison and Simon work hard to ensure that the shop is well stocked, with a greater range of goods than its size might lead you to think. They will also order any special items you need and even deliver free of charge! But, these are difficult days for the smaller retailers as they compete against the strong competition from large supermarkets. If shops like ours are to survive they need our strong support. A New Year resolution to buy more of what we need locally would give the shop a real boost. As the saying goes, use it or lose it!

The Trust website is available to anyone, free of charge, who wishes to advertise a local event. The Trust 2013 social programme will begin next month with a talk, with refreshments, by a locally resident expert who will speak to us on the Ash die back disease and other threats facing our native woodlands. Details of this event, which will be of interest to many, will soon follow.

Although we have managed some limited success in Grandtully against the menace of speeding, we have still not persuaded the authorities that measures also need to be taken in Strathtay. This is a problem which many members and visitors have raised and we will continue to badger until something is done.

I hope that the above gives you a flavour of what we are trying to do and brings you up to date with recent activities. Please remember that in order to continue to operate effectively we need your continued support through both membership and communication. Knowing your views is essential. So, if anyone has a particular point to raise do not keep it to yourself. Let us hear it! Our main method of communication is by email. If you would like to become a member of the Trust, for which there is no charge as we rely on donations and fundraising, and be added to our mailing list, please let us know at info@grandtullyandstrathtay.co.uk. We would very much like to hear from you.

For the Trust

Jeff Thomas, Chairman

