

Chairperson's Report

AGM. 21st February 2023

Welcome to the fourth AGM of Stoneyburn and Bents Future Vision Group SCIO. Our accounting period runs from August to August, and as such, this report will cover the period between August 2021, until August 2022.

Allow me to thank the Board of Trustees of SBFVG SCIO, for all their hard work, determination, effort, teamwork and commitment throughout the year; to our new Project Development Officer, for all her hard work and dedication, who took up her role this year. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Village Primary Schools' staff and pupils; both Primary Schools' PTAs; the Community Centre Staff and Management Committee; West Lothian Council; our local Councillors; WLC NET's Services; the numerous Village organisations, groups and local businesses; WLC Regeneration Officers; The Woodland Trust; Paths for All; the West Lothian Foodbank; West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust; Voluntary Sector Gateway; Development Trust Association Scotland; West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network; the Stoneyburn and Bents Community Council; and of course, the residents of our village.

This period, from August 2021 to August 2022, saw many events take place within the Village, and saw the Group undertake new challenges to help deliver for our village in light of the pandemic:

- We combined our Befriending service with our Blether Service, continuing to see more villagers sign up for the service.
- We had our Hallowe'en decorate a window competition.
- We continued our Village improvements and clear-ups.
- Our annual Santa Parade went ahead in December 2021, and came back with a bang with a kids disco to kick off the weekend
- We brought the joy of Panto to the village.
- We continued to build our Social Media presence to highlight the work of the group within the community.

- This year saw the return of our Amigos club, and we also ran our Summer of Fun taking trips to many different places during the summer holidays.
- This year saw the return of the Annual Fulshie Fun Run.
- We had to postpone our outdoor film event.
- We continued to offer many at home projects for our residents, including our new Young at Heart project for our older residents.
- We planted our planters at both the Fulshie and Bents with village gateways also being tended.
- We saw paths through the Fulshie Bing, with progress in other areas too.
- Our new Project Development Officer took up the role in February 2022

We continue to work with the support of the Community Council, to help push the village's need for footpaths out of the village. The group has worked tirelessly to try and make this a reality, which will be a great asset for the village. Sandy has been a real driving force behind this issue. The group has met with Councillors, representatives from Sustrans, WLC Officers, Paths for All, and the various landowners throughout the village. This has been something that the Group has been determined to achieve for a long time and is progressing well despite challenges along the way, gaining support from local media who interviewed Sandy about his hard work.

The group has continued to work in partnership with the Woodland Trust, who maintain the walks, paths and the forest around the Fulshie. New paths have been laid, and are also being maintained, with trees being cut back to allow easier access to the paths. The Woodland Trust has further work planned to upgrade and widen the paths throughout the woods further in the coming years.

Our telephone Befriending service merged with our Blether Service, to provide a check-in service, or a chat to help combat loneliness of our elderly residents. Due to this merger, we increased the level of service to our villagers. This allowed us to determine who required additional help and support. We were able to help lots of individuals with many different aspects of their lives as we had built up a relationship with them in the past through this service. We continue to run this service remotely, and our volunteers can conduct this service from the safety of their own homes. We continue to provide our volunteers with additional training and equipment in order to ensure their safety whilst conducting calls, and the ability to handle certain situations that may arise on these calls, and give them the confidence to know what services the individuals on the calls may require – thanks to the dedication of Mary, and the low cost nature of this service, we will continue the delivery of this service.

In December 2021, our Annual Santa Parade returned. With the lockdown restrictions eased, we were able to have a parade where we could invite our village to join us. Children were able to visit Santa in the afternoon, before he went out and toured our village, and everyone was able to enjoy our outdoor stalls and games in the community centre car park – we were even joined by some special guests during the day, including Olaf, and our very own snowman who was keeping the kids entertained with ‘beat the goalie’. Santa took to the streets in a horse drawn carriage, supported by his elves. It was another great success and the Villagers of all ages thoroughly enjoyed the whole day. We also brought the fun of the Panto to our village, where villagers were able to enjoy Jack and the Beanstalk at the community centre.

In February, Laura took up her new role as the Group’s Project Development Officer. During this time, our Project Development Officer, hit the ground running and has built on the foundations laid by the Group, going after additional funding to help meet the 5-year development plan that the group had set up, in order to best meet the needs of our Village. Although not all applications were successful, Laura has endeavoured to ensure that all applications and projects were given the same attention, time and effort. Laura has been actively involved in the many projects that we have currently running, and has been leading many new projects in the village, as well as liaising with other groups, building capacity and relationships with other groups and organisations.

This year also saw the introduction of our new club for our older residents, our ‘Young at Heart’ club, which saw us host several events throughout the year, which aimed to get our older residents out and meeting up with each other again after Covid lockdowns meant many of our villagers did not engage with each other over that time period. These events were a great success, and as such many more were planned by our Project Development Officer throughout the year, with funding that she secured.

The summer saw the return of our Amigos Club, which was greatly received, and well attended. We had many games and fun throughout the summer, including with Studio 44, who managed to tire out the kids (and our volunteers) with its fitness programme, as well as Planet Soccer, teaching us some football skills. This summer also saw our introduction of our Summer of Fun, where we received funding from West Lothian Council, which allowed us to take our villagers on trips throughout the summer, as well as bringing in some activities for people to attend. We saw jousting at Linlithgow, Tigers at Blair Drummond – we learned about science and the world around us at the Glasgow Science Centre. We also managed to pot our own plants in our plant pots we painted, when we had a visit from Potter Around at the Community Centre.

I would like to thank Raymond for his dedication in keeping the village looking its best, to Jean for continuing to support our new planters, and planted areas throughout the village, to

the Walking Group who litter pick the Fulshie on their walks. And also for all our volunteers who keep our village looking great.

It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to one of our longest serving board members, a great stalwart of the community, an advocate of the village of Stoneyburn and Bents, and a great friend. Ian Currie passed away in July 2022, and he will be sadly missed by all of us

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This has been a challenging year for the group – I look forward to the next year and I would like to thank you all for your time and commitment in making Stoneyburn and Bents Future Vision Group SCIO, an effective Group leading and supporting new developments, and being at the very heart of our Community.