

Milngavie in Blooming Lockdown

March - June 2020



Milngavie in Bloom is a Registered Scottish Charity No SC041480

The announcement and initial effects

The lockdown was announced by the Government on 23 March 2020 and we informed our volunteers on 27 March 2020 by email and by notice on our website, that, with immediate effect, our planned twice monthly work sessions of gardening and litter picking were suspended.

Any gardening activity would be restricted to maintenance of existing beds and containers and could be carried out as volunteers' permitted daily exercise. We stated that volunteers should not feel under any obligation to carry out any work.



We declared our tool shed to be out of bounds and asked volunteers to bring their own tools and bags.

We noted that several events in which we were due to participate had been cancelled or postponed including our annual Spring Clean, hosting the Beautiful Scotland judges' training day, our entry into the Britain in Bloom finals, our fund-raising plant stall during Milngavie

Week, a planned "Before and after" photo exhibition of our last 10 years and our summer Coffee Morning for volunteers.

We have also been unable to display the VisitScotland crystal vase, we were awarded at the Beautiful Scotland awards ceremony, due to the closure of shops in the precinct.

The effects on gardening activities

Our gardeners have been busy in spite of lockdown and have coped with the problems of garden centres not being open and social distancing. Our members have been resourceful, however, and work has continued, albeit on a reduced scale. Our volunteers look after more than 50 beds of various sizes and over 100 containers throughout the village.

We raised the Grow Social sunflowers seeds we received from Britain in Bloom and planted them in two of our gardens.



The planters in Main Street and Station Road have been planted with plants from various sources – Tesco, B&Q and Caulders Garden Centre (once it re-opened), but very importantly many plants grown by our own members in their gardens and greenhouses. Our volunteers have been carrying out work in the evenings when there are fewer people around. Thanks to our growers who have ensured that our floral displays can still provide colour during these extraordinary times.

Our Community Bed in the centre of the village was to be designed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Allander Rotary with a sign surrounded by colourful planting. In the light of the support for the doctors, nurses and other workers in the NHS and other key workers we decided to try to produce a floral rainbow display around the Rotary sign. The Community Bed and Circular Bed have been planted by ourselves - again with plants from various sources. Thanks to members for sunflowers – even those living in flats have contributed!



Work on all areas has been tackled by the members often working on their own and in their own time.

Weeding, maintenance and the addition of extra bedding etc. ,if appropriate, has been carried out at the Fraser Centre, Antonine Garden, Ellangowan Beds, Heather Bed, Hidden Bed, Post Office Bed and saucers, Station Bed, the Walker Bed at Southgate and Kirk Wynd.

The “Town Hall” girls have worked on their beds and also done some general weeding between the slabs and around the flagpole.

We facilitated one of our younger volunteers to tackle a neglected corner of a car park by donating old tools and reusing plants from our existing planting.

We were delighted that a young student at Edinburgh University joined us as she had no employment during the summer due to the cancellation of events. She is now a regular and

enjoying it very much and learning as she goes along. She has been given the task of looking after the bed at the Lillie Art Gallery.

Another volunteer planted herbs, tomato plants and nasturtiums, all donated by volunteers, in the Fish Pass raised beds and weeding of the area was tackled by an enthusiastic team. A couple from Milngavie Business Improvement District (BID) painted the nearby seats and railings. The dandelions



between the slabs, however, are growing again and it is proposed to use some weed killer.



We have restarted gardening sessions every second Thursday morning on the West Highland Way assisted by the local Ramblers volunteers and every Tuesday morning at the Italian Garden. Lots of work and planting has been carried out by everyone in their socially distanced bubble! We planted the wildflower seeds we received at the Beautiful Scotland awards ceremony held last September on the West Highland Way. Weeding has

started on the upper paved area of the Italian Garden and old barrels are being relocated there for planting.

At present, we have two sessions every Wednesday at 10am and 6.30pm but we wonder if we should restart our Saturday sessions.

Two of our volunteers were approached recently by a resident who lives in the Southgate housing area re an overgrown bed in the centre of the complex. She has already cleared the area (5 metres in diameter!) except for a few rather



poor azaleas. We have agreed to give advice and help to remove the azaleas. We feel our volunteers are fully committed but we shall leaflet the nearby houses to explain what is happening and ask for help. The resident insists she would be very happy to maintain the bed with help from a friend once it is planted. She is certainly enthusiastic and has a lovely selection of plants and tubs around her flat.



The group, who look after Carers Link Garden managed to continue independently. The water butt which the Community Service Volunteers put in place in February helped during the dry spring when we had no access to the building. Our third bench proved useful for socially distanced coffee breaks as lockdown eased. The group of volunteers who tend the garden grew or acquired most of the plants themselves. A Gardeners Question Time will

take place on 29th July as a Carers Link Zoom event. Sadly plans for working and growing with Young Carers could not take place this year. New tiered planters were purchased to screen the air conditioning units at the rear of the garden and will be planted up in 2021.

Once gardens centres reopened we liaised with Milngavie BID who agreed, once again, to fund the summer planting of their six beehive planters. We then arranged with Caulders garden centre to choose plants for us and deliver them, as the garden centre was more than 5 miles away.



We asked specific volunteers to help on the day so that we had more control over social distancing. The team completed the work in 2 hours despite the rain.

We worked on the other planters in the precinct during the evening to minimise contact with passers-by. Again we asked Caulders to choose and deliver plants to avoid us having to visit the garden centre.

Our work at the railway station has been suspended by ScotRail until further notice, however, the group who work there are keen to resume work as soon as it is permissible. Our volunteer who maintains the bed outside the station has continued to work there in her own time.

The 30 railing troughs, located throughout the town, are looked after by one of our volunteers who has managed to fill the troughs with plants raised in her greenhouse.



Prior to lockdown we had ordered and taken delivery of five Amberol barrels to replace some aging wooden barrels. We donated three of the barrels to St Andrew's Church, where we hold many of our social gatherings and used to store our tools, compost and plants. The barrels have been gratefully received and put to use.



We also donated two of the replaced barrels to the Allander Road It's Your Neighbourhood group. We will help them plant up and clear the area where the barrels will be located.

The effects on litter picking activities

Many of our volunteers who are not shielding have continued to litter pick in their own time.

One volunteer has been clearing litter along Clober Road and an area along the Allander Water. He has collected bags full of plastic bottles and cans discarded by picnickers. He also cleared a lot of broken glass and bits of china from among a large area of pebbles that had been deposited across one area of the meadow when the river had flooded.

Another has been keeping Tannoch Drive clean. The main offenders are from people who park there to walk at the waterworks. They have been discarding food wrappers out of their car windows. She has also litter picked at the waterworks and the field below the dam.

Dog walkers are still continuing to leave poo bags.



Another volunteer litter picked at the station path and car park and tried to sort out the recycling area, but was completely overwhelmed. She took photographs which have been sent to two of the local Councillors. Evidently a council worker attends daily to take away all the excess stuff to landfill. We suppose it is better that people are dumping there rather on the grass verges in the countryside. One Councillor expressed the view that people are using online

shopping so much now that there is far more cardboard and that extra provision for re-cycling should be considered by the council after lockdown.

We have been very fortunate in East Dunbartonshire that the refuse collectors have been continuing to uplift from our usual points, including all the heavy loads taken from the river by another of our volunteers. His efforts were mentioned in the Beautiful Scotland newsletter as a “Lockdown inspirational story”. On one occasion he saw a young boy wading in the river picking up lots of plastic bottles. Evidently the boy was deaf but the adult with him said he was taught about litter picking at school.

Another couple have cleared the whole of Auchenhowie Road on two occasions this



month, collecting 7 bags in total. The road was much cleaner than usual because there has been less traffic.

One volunteer filled 3 bags in Lennox Park, mainly around the skate park area and the benches where drinking groups have gathered.

On one occasion the volunteer in charge was rewarded when a new recruit turned up. Together they picked up all the rubbish which had been tipped out of the bins behind Greggs, then our new volunteer cleared the post office carpark while the volunteer in charge cleared up round the flag pole in the park which was in a disgusting mess. It is soul destroying when the same areas are having to be done over and over again.



Several of our volunteers took part in the Citizen Science Upstream Battle survey on the Allander Water, as part of Keep Scotland Beautiful's marine litter campaign. The final report was excellent and Keep Scotland Beautiful will continue to work with the appropriate authorities to try and alter littering behaviour.

We know that many other volunteers have been doing their bit also, and we thank them for that. The place would be in a terrible state otherwise. Green bags are not being delivered to the Fraser Centre, so volunteers have had to use any kind of bags that they have and put them in their own bins or leave them for the Council at the usual pick up points.

Several passers-by have offered to help when lockdown is over. Let's hope they mean it.

We have e-mailed a copy of the Beautiful Scotland guidelines to all our Clean Sweep volunteers.

The effects on the management of the group

The committee continued to hold monthly meetings using Skype and Zoom. All credit to our minute secretary in managing to capture all that was going on during these meetings. Email was used extensively to keep in contact, notify and report activities.

Fortunately we were able to use internet banking to pay invoices and reimburse volunteers for their expenses and receive donations from our local residents.

We continue to promote our website, and encourage our volunteers to visit the website, in our newsletters and in letters to the local paper.



We have managed to publish a new leaflet, with eye-catching artwork, courtesy of our local printer.

Our annual general meeting is still a couple of months away but we may need to consider if, when and where we can hold it. We may also need to consider an amendment to the constitution to permit either a delay to the AGM or an alternate method of holding it.

Reflections on lockdown

The gardens of many of our volunteers will have benefitted from the additional time and care they have received during the fine spell of weather we enjoyed during the early weeks of lockdown.

We thank our volunteers who provided and grew many of plants used in this year's displays, which demonstrates what can be done without great expense.

We acknowledge that the last few months have not been easy for everyone, however, as a group we have tried to confront and overcome the difficult and challenging circumstances. Our volunteers have continued to focus on the core objectives of the organisation, keeping the village looking colourful and clean, while at the same time providing exercise and allowing some social contact. We hope the limited activities have made the lockdown bearable by providing both physical and mental stimulus for our volunteers. It would have been all too easy to let our displays deteriorate and could perhaps have resulted in the loss of some members. Let's hope we can encourage some new volunteers to join us as society emerges from the lockdown.

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