

## Green Light For Community Centre

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Since the last edition of Saintfield News there has been good progress with the community centre project. As reported on the SDA website in January, (see <http://discoversaintfield.com/2016/01/saintfield-community-centre-update-january-2016/>), the public consultation events in December, kindly hosted by Saintfield High School, were very successful. Fifty five people, representing thirty five local groups (which between them represented over 4,000 members), gave valuable suggestions on priorities for the new centre. Stephen McClelland incorporated these, together with the previous public consultation results, into a business case for the community centre on the Belfast Road site. The business case considered six options for the site and

concluded that only one option should be taken forward to the next stage. This option makes use of all three buildings on the site. The biggest (building A, which is 60m by 30m) would have an artificial 4G surface laid, which



would be used for training by all Saintfield sports clubs and for junior games of football and GAA.

The middle building (building B) would be refurbished to contain a four-court multi-use hall, meeting rooms, exercise rooms, changing rooms and catering facilities. The third

building (building C) would contain a few more flexible rooms for community use and an extensive and modern fitness suite. The intention is that this facility would be managed by a private sector company who already have experience of doing so in partnership with other Councils and community groups. From initial research we know that the Saintfield site would be an attractive base for private sector fitness providers, at prices to the public similar to those charged by other Council leisure centres. This business case was

completed on 25th January and given to Newry Mourne and Down Council. The Executive Summary and the actions listed below were presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee of NMD Council on 11th February and were accepted unanimously.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

## Life Savers

A defibrillator was recently installed at Vivoxtra on the Ballynahinch Road. It is located on the wall next to the supermarket door and is accessible at all times. This model comes complete with recorded

instructions as to how it should be used.

Other defibrillators in Saintfield are situated at Marshalls, Church House, White Horse Inn, Hazel's Newsagents and Saints Cafe.



# Chair's Viewpoint



**Martyn Todd**  
Chair of Saintfield  
Development  
Association

*"We have had  
several more  
meetings with  
senior officials  
in NMD"*

The last three months have been like the curate's egg for the Saintfield Development Association, good in some parts and bad in others. The bad part was the death of our former Chair and champion of Saintfield, Gerry Lowe. You will see his obituary elsewhere in this edition, but I just want to pay a short personal tribute to him and it is in the context of the good part of our news, the progress on the community centre, also reported elsewhere in this edition.

About nine years ago, Gerry led a small group of Saintfield people, then members of the Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee, the forerunner of the SDA, who gave a presentation to Down District Council, requesting a feasibility study for a community centre in Saintfield. Gerry, always good with words, gave a very eloquent speech, in which he made the case for Saintfield to have neutral facilities for all the community groups and sports clubs in and around Saintfield, somewhere for everyone. It is a shame that Gerry did not live to see the opening of a community centre in Saintfield, although I know he would have been very pleased to see the progress now being made.

When I was nominated as Chair in May 2015, I said that one of my top priorities was to build a strong partnership with the new Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, something that the SDA had enjoyed with

Down District Council and currently enjoys with all the Rowallane councillors. I am pleased to say that we are making good progress. We have had several more meetings with senior officials in NMD, most recently on 9th February, when we agreed actions and target dates for the new community centre in the coming six months.



*Members of SDA with Ellen Brennan (centre)*

We are fortunate to have Ellen Brennan selected as the main point of contact in NMD for all community groups in the Rowallane DEA (District Electoral Area). Ellen has already shown her commitment to Saintfield by attending SDA meetings and volunteering at the Christmas Fair. She is setting up a Forum for Rowallane DEA which will meet about six times a year. On this Forum will be the five Rowallane councillors and eight members of the public, selected by open recruitment. The SDA is very keen to have at least one person on this Forum to represent as many community groups as possible.

Finally, we have had another visit to Saintfield from the Chair of NMD. The former Chair, Councillor Naomi Baillie visited

Saintfield last summer. She has since left on maternity leave and has been replaced by Councillor Mickey Ruane. He, with Councillor Willie Clarke, visited Saintfield on 9th February and were shown around by Barbara Graham, Paul McGeown and myself. They met David Murtagh at the hockey pitch, who

explained that the council-owned shale pitch was no longer fit for purpose. They then saw around the AYC youth club and met there Sean Murray and Norma Mack, who explained that a larger space for teenagers, with more to do, was badly needed.

After that they visited Saintfield United Football Club where Jim

Spratt, SUFC President, showed them their current facilities and explained the club's ambitions for developing the site to cater for more young people. Finally, they saw the site for the new community centre, meeting Brian Gamble and hearing about the community's ambitions for the existing buildings on the site.

It is a credit to all those people that the Chair, Mickey Ruane, and Councillor Willie Clarke, on 11th February, at the Council Committee responsible for allocating funding to capital projects, reported that they had met very passionate people in Saintfield and commended them all for their efforts on behalf of the community.

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## Green Light For Community Centre (continued from the front page)

The efforts of the SDA and the Saintfield Community were acknowledged by the councillors. NMD has committed capital funding in the financial year 2016/17 for Saintfield and expects to see work commence on site in April 2017.

The proposed timeline for the project is as follows:-

1. By 29th February 2016 a person at Assistant Director level appointed to be responsible for the Saintfield community centre project.
2. By 30th April 2016, in cooperation with the Saintfield community, expressions of interest are sought from the private sector to be partners with SDA and NMD in implementing the Saintfield project.
3. By 31st May 2016 a private sector partner to have been selected for the Saintfield project.
4. By 31st July 2016, with input from the selected private sector partner, financial



projections and a Green Book Economic Appraisal to be completed for the preferred business model.

5. Commencing in June 2016, the legal arrangements to be put in place for the preferred business model.

6. Planning approval will be sought for the preferred business model, the target date to be dependent on the scope of change from the existing planning application.

7. Between 1st March and 30th September, NMD will support the SDA

in seeking all possible external sources of funding for the preferred business model.

8. Adequate funding will be committed in the 2016/17 financial year to cover the costs relating to the Saintfield community centre such as planning applications, revised drawings, quantity surveying, economic appraisal, etc.

The SDA is delighted to see tangible actions now in place and committed to by NMD and looks forward to reporting further good progress in the next edition of Saintfield News.

## Green Committee Report

The Green committee of the SDA have been active over the winter months and have plans to implement the following projects into the spring and summer seasons.

It is intended to develop and cultivate the waste ground adjacent to the Maxol service station on the Crossgar Road and maintain a suitable variety of flowers and shrubs.

Plans are in hand to plant wild flowers at the points of the Comber Road / Belfast Road and Lisburn Road / Old Belfast Road junctions. This will beautify the approaches to the village.

Extensive landscaping is needed at Fair Green and planning permission is required before this can be undertaken.

The recently planted lime trees at Fair Green, which were vandalised, are being replaced.

The annual street clean and litter pick is scheduled this year for April at a date to be announced.



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## Obituary — Gerry Lowe OBE



A minute's silence was observed at the recent meeting of the Saintfield Development Association as a mark of respect to Gerry Lowe, who passed away on 20th December last year aged 69, after battling a severe blood infection for many weeks.

Gerry was a prime mover in the formation of the Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee in 2004, the forerunner to the SDA. He was chairman from its inception in 2004 until he stepped down from the chairmanship in 2013.

He was a staunch supporter of Saintfield and few will realise the tremendous amount of work he put into improving the facilities and infrastructure of the town. His genial manner and ability to relate to everyone endeared him to both residents of the village and

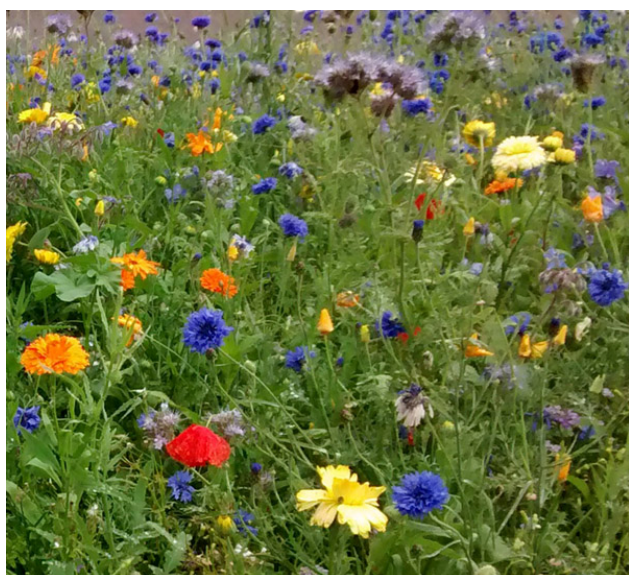
officials in the Council. He also possessed a very persuasive manner and was able to get things done where others might struggle.

In his commercial life he was a qualified accountant and founded Lowe Refrigeration with younger brother Michael in 1977, a company of which he was the visionary and driving force. His elder brother Kevin joined the company a few years later.

Lowe Refrigeration was a recipient of the Queens Award for Export on three occasions and in 1994 Gerry was European Businessman of the Year.

Saintfield has lost a great friend with his passing but the many improvements he initiated in the village will stand as his epitaph.

## Lottery Grant For Green Saintfield Committee



The Green Saintfield committee of the SDA are delighted to announce that they have been offered a £1000 grant from the National Lottery "Grow Wild" scheme to help fund the planting of wild flowers at the junction of Comber Road and Belfast Road.

It is planned to implement the scheme this spring.

Although some work will be done by a contractor,

a great deal of the work will need to be carried out by the community and it is hoped to recruit volunteers, both individuals and groups, who would be interested in assisting in a practical way.

The site is very visible to passing traffic and the intention is to create an attractive approach to Saintfield.

If you would like to become involved, please e-mail [info@discoversaintfield.com](mailto:info@discoversaintfield.com)

  
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## Editor's Letter



**Brian Gamble**  
Editor of  
Saintfield News

The annual Christmas Fair is the most time consuming and costly event on the SDA calendar. Planning begins early in the year and the Events committee are always on the lookout for innovations to keep the fair fresh and appealing to young and old alike.

We rely heavily on funding from the NMD council as well as from donations given by local traders and businesses. The committee also hold a number of events during the year to raise funds to cover the costs of the childrens' entertainments at the fair.

Budgets are being cut across the board and the SDA do not know how these cuts will impact on the funding we receive from Council. Any cuts will obviously have an effect on what can be procured for the fair.

With the fair being held on the evening of the first Friday in December each year, there is always the risk of inclement weather and last year's fair was hit by strong winds and showers, causing the gazebo stallholders to be moved into the AYC hall to prevent them from being blown away.

However, the residents of Saintfield and some out-of-townners braved the breezy weather to support the fair and an estimated crowd of 2000 enjoyed the evening in the true Christmas spirit.

The committee need to know whether they are giving the community what they want in terms of celebrating the festive season in Saintfield. The possibility of cuts in funding, together with the fact that the Christmas fair has adhered

to a similar format in recent years, has prompted the question of whether now is the time for a rethink on what we provide for the Christmas celebration.

The committee would greatly appreciate your input as to any changes or innovation you would like to see either at, or in place of, the Christmas fair. If you are happy with the way things are and would like to maintain the tradition, let us know that as well. We would appreciate your input, so please let us have your thoughts, comments or suggestions by e-mail at:

[editor@discoversaintfield.co.uk](mailto:editor@discoversaintfield.co.uk)

or you can leave comments on our website:

[www.discoversaintfield.com](http://www.discoversaintfield.com)

or on our Facebook page.

## Saintfield Crime Report

The latest crime statistics available from the PSNI at the time of writing are for the month of December 2015 and record a total of 15 reported offences in Saintfield. Anti social behaviour accounted for over half the number of offences at eight, with most of these recorded at Fair Green.

There were four instances of criminal damage, two reported thefts and one incident of violence/sexual offence.

The level of reported crime is still very low for our village although we must not become complacent. In the writer's opinion, the incidents of anti social behaviour are in the main caused by unruly youths, so the sooner Saintfield has a functioning community centre to keep our youngsters occupied, the better for all of us.

There were reports of opportunist thefts from domestic garages in the Moyra Park area, so remember to keep yours locked at all times.



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The Saintfield Heritage Society series of talks continues to be well attended, with only the March and April talks remaining. On Thursday 10th March, Ernie Wilson will talk about the building of the Mourne Wall and on Thursday 14th April, Dr Mike King will talk about the 1100 year-old Downpatrick High Cross. (See <http://discoversaintfield.com/saintfield-heritage-programme-2015-2016/> for more details)

The speaker at the annual dinner on Thursday 12th May at La Mon Hotel will be popular BBC Radio Ulster Presenter, and Saintfield resident, John Toal.

The annual outing this year is to Drumalis House on Thursday 9th June, where Eamon Phoenix will guide the tour. Visitors are always welcome. You can book places through [info@discoversaintfield.com](mailto:info@discoversaintfield.com).

The Saintfield Library is organising a talk on Tuesday 22nd. March, at which members of the Heritage Society will give a talk on "Interesting Snippets from Saintfield's History". More information is available from the Library. Come along and learn about the very interesting heritage we have in Saintfield.



All these events are open to non-members as guests, so if you are interested in going, contact any member of the Society.

## Saintfield Cycle Ride

The next event on the SDA calendar is the popular Saintfield Cycle Ride, which is scheduled for Sunday 15th May.

The route is 32 miles around the beautiful County Down countryside and is suitable for all standards of cyclists. The entry fee is just £10 and registration will be from 8.30am for a 9.30am start at the Downpatrick Street car park, behind Danske Bank. The ride will end at The Rowallane Inn in Saintfield, where refreshments will be available.

Full details will appear on our website [www.discoversaintfield.com](http://www.discoversaintfield.com) and on our Facebook page.



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