

## Construction Starts On Community Centre

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

#### PAGE

Chair's Viewpoint	2
Animation Workshop A Success	2
Saintfield Christmas Lights	3
SDA Green Committee Update	3
Construction Starts On Community Centre (concluded)	4
80th Anniversary Of Saintfield WI	5
Building Ban In Saintfield	5
Pedal The Peninsula	6
Food & Wine Taster Hits The Spot	6

As many of you will have noticed, there is a hive of activity at the site of the new community centre on the Belfast Road, opposite Saintfield High School. Yes, after many years of negotiation, sweat and tears, the project is finally under way.

To give you an idea of the process gone through to reach where we are today, here is some background to the saga.

The project was initiated on Monday 25th June 2007, when the late Gerry Lowe, then Chair of the Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee, (since renamed the Saintfield Development Association), led a presentation to Down District Council to request a feasibility study for a community centre for Saintfield. Present that evening in the council chamber were some people who have been supportive of the project for all of the 11 year intervening period. Councillor William Dick proposed that DDC should commission such a study and

this was seconded by Councillor Billy Walker. The proposal was agreed with no objections. Also present that evening, representing the community with the late

District Council, the project progressed steadily, if slowly at times. A suitable site was difficult to find and three possibilities were rejected before Michael Lipsett, who succeeded Martyn Todd on his

retirement, organised the purchase of the Belfast Road site on behalf of Down District Council.

The site is ideally situated, being near the centre of the village and opposite Saintfield High School.

The existing three well-built and well-maintained warehouses, lend

themselves to many possible uses.

Following extensive public consultation (over 950 local people completed questionnaires) the facilities for the centre were agreed and Down District councillors unanimously approved funding of £3.4 million to refurbish the premises. However, the merger of Down District Council with Newry and Mourne Council resulted in a moratorium on all previously agreed capital projects.



Pictured is the presentation of the letter of offer of the £500,000 funding boost for the community centre from Cllr Roisin Mulgrew (Chairperson of the Mourne, Gullion and Lecale Rural Development Partnership) to Cllr Mark Murnin (Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)

Gerry Lowe, were Lindsay Ross of Saintfield United Football Club, Lawrence Murphy representing Saintfield Hockey Club and the then Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee and Susan Welsh representing Saintfield Community Estates Partnership. Martyn Todd, current Chair of the Saintfield Development Association, was then the Director of Recreation and Community Services in the Council and was also present. During the remaining tenure of Down

Continued on Page 4

## Chair's Viewpoint



**Martyn Todd**  
Chair of Saintfield  
Development  
Association

*"learn more  
about the  
activities of over  
50 community  
groups in  
and around  
Saintfield"*

This is a really exciting time for our town! Saintfield Sports Club has a new, state of the art artificial grass surface for the men's and ladies' hockey clubs and the Striders. Saintfield United Football Club's new grass pitch is under construction and work has at last started on the new community centre. The floral displays around the village have never looked better, thanks to the SDA Green Committee who kept them all watered throughout the drought. The Saintfield Show has a new site, closer to Saintfield at Boardmills, which was greatly enjoyed by those who attended.

The infrastructure of Saintfield continues to improve and provide huge opportunities for community activities. My personal goal as Chair of SDA this year is to encourage more people who live in the Saintfield area to find ways to participate in Saintfield community events and programmes and so strengthen Saintfield's community spirit.

When I was growing up, the

population of Saintfield was less than 1000 people, the great majority of whom had long-term family links in the area. The population is now close to 4,000 and over 12,000 reside within a radius of four miles from the town. Much of this increase is due to people moving into the area but who still have links to families, churches, work-places and schools outside Saintfield. These links are important and should be maintained. However, I feel that Saintfield would be a better place for the future if we could strengthen links within the Saintfield community.

To this end, SDA and the Saintfield Heritage Society have been successful in obtaining a grant from the NIHE Community Cohesion Fund to stage a series of events in a programme we are calling "Discover Saintfield Community". The events will take place between September this year and February 2019 and will include:

- a tour of the historical sites of Saintfield
- a community open day in the

new community centre  
- a series of talks has been scheduled for January next year as follows: -

Tuesday January 15th - Alister McReynolds on Early Saintfield

Tuesday January 22nd - Phillip Orr on the Saintfield born philosopher Francis Hutcheson

Tuesday January 29th - Eamon Phoenix on The 1798 Rebellion and the Battle of Saintfield

The objectives of "Discover Saintfield Community" are to encourage more people to know and value the unique parts of Saintfield's history, learn more about the activities of over 50 community groups in and around Saintfield and find ways for them to become more involved in community activities. Look out for details of these events (and lots of other Saintfield events) on the website [discoversaintfield.com](http://discoversaintfield.com) and future editions of Saintfield News.

Please feel free to contact me by email at [editor@discoversaintfield.co.uk](mailto:editor@discoversaintfield.co.uk)

## Animation Workshop A Success

In August the SDA supported an animation workshop as part of Saintfield High School's summer scheme. Michael Carter, the school's co-ordinator, promoted the project within Saintfield High and surrounding schools, both primary and secondary.

Joel Simon of Can Do Academy introduced the pupils to Stop Motion, Disney Animation and FlipaClip, versions

of which are free to download. The participants learnt how to make a fully animated film with iPads, using sound effects with title sequences to give them a more realistic feel.

They animated Lego figures and built film sets with Lego bricks. The basics of film making were also covered, such as how to pace an animation and how to differentiate the various techniques. The

pupils created their own storylines and now know the do's and don'ts of effective animation, which they can continue to develop on their mobile phones and other devices. At the end of the workshop each participant received a digital copy of their film.

"I really enjoyed working with these young people who were very eager and attentive." said Joel Simon.

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## Saintfield Christmas Lights

The new Christmas lights purchased by the Saintfield Development Association for the town have at last been delivered. The photo shows the arrival of the 16 sets of lights, which are of the latest LED design and will bring a fresh seasonal radiance to the town. However, there is a problem! Saintfield's application for a grant for Christmas Illuminations has been turned down by the Council. We are one of a number of towns and villages whose applications were refused. The SDA has appealed this decision and we

understand that our Rowallane councillors are taking up the issue on behalf of those who were turned down. The grant covers the cost of the erection and wiring of the lights to the lamp posts as well as the dismantling of them, and the cost of the electricity used. Last year the contractor's charge for the Saintfield lights was in the region of £4,000. If our appeal is unsuccessful, funds will need to be raised from donations from the community. This year the Christmas Fair will be held on Friday 7th December on Main Street from 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm.



## SDA Green Committee Update

The Green Committee of the SDA work tirelessly to make Saintfield a clean, tidy and colourful place in which to live, commute and shop. We take pride in our small town and encourage others, through our work, to do the same. The areas our small group oversee from conception and ongoing maintenance include: the 15 tubs on the Main Street from The Mill, the churches through to the Maxol Garage which are planted out twice a year to provide colour all year round. Also, in the summer months the hanging baskets at Fair Green and on Main Street as well as 37 railing planters. We are responsible for the colour and maintenance at the five Gateway signs on the arterial roads. The wild flowers at Lisburn Road and Belfast Road, as well as the mammoth task we undertook at the cliff face at Lisburn Road point are also our work. The steep bank on Station Road was also cultivated and planted out. This summer, the AYC offered us an area at the bottom of Main Street at which we created a floral display for all to enjoy on a very tight budget. We liaised with the Council for the replacement of the old planters at Fair Green and were delighted with the very pleasing result.

This year, we planted out the tubs with red flowers to commemorate the WWI anniversary. At the Lisburn Road point commemoration beds were created; one bed attributed to 'Peace 1918-2018', one for the Suffragettes anniversary 'Votes for Women' and one for 'Remembrance 1918'. We were given a special gift of poppies from Flanders, and they flourished and put on a very poignant display. The traders, residents, churches and other



organisations assist financially and are very supportive of us. Some local residents have also given plants in support of our work. We are most grateful to them all. The three local schools are also encouraged to participate in 'green' projects. This summer has been extremely demanding due to the hot weather and the hosepipe ban. It has badly affected our wild flowers and put a strain on members watering the numerous

tubs, planters and baskets. Every Thursday evening from April-September three or four of us meet for two hours to clean the Main Street, Downpatrick Street carpark, etc. We are the ones in the high-viz vests! If anyone would like to join us, or indeed help out for a few hours without obligation, you will be assured of a very warm welcome from a very friendly Green Committee. We look forward to meeting you!

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# Construction Starts On Community Centre

Continued from the front page

And so therefore the Down District Council plans for Saintfield were shelved. The new Council comprised many new councillors and council officials who were not familiar with Saintfield or its need for a community centre. This resulted in the Saintfield Development Association having to demonstrate this need once again. Further public consultation and additional studies resulted in the production of a business case that was accepted by the new council, though the council had now limited the funding to a maximum of £1.5m. This sum was not sufficient to refurbish all three buildings on the site and so it was agreed that the current project would refurbish the largest building and half of a second one.

It is planned that the remainder of the buildings will be developed at a later stage as funds become available. The priority needs and wishes from the public consultations were used to decide what facilities should be provided. The largest building (some 60m by 30m) will be an indoor training space for large ball sports. The artificial grass surface will be ideal for soccer and Gaelic football and will be very much welcomed by Saintfield United Football Club and St Mochai's GAC, both of whom have had to hire pitches outside Saintfield for their extensive youth training programmes. The new facility will provide a safe and dry space for training in all weathers - a boon for young players and their parents.

Half of the second building being refurbished will comprise a large hall, meeting rooms, a studio, a small kitchen and a welcoming entrance area. This space will have large windows looking out over the landscaped surroundings, which will include, in time, a modern play area.

The building will be very energy efficient and the goal is to make it carbon neutral. Half of the large roof area faces south and will have photo-voltaic panels. There will also be heat pumps and a rain-water catchment system to reduce running costs.

sport and community groups in and around Saintfield. Some of these are having to use premises outside Saintfield for their meetings as all the available halls in Saintfield are busy most nights of the week.

The new centre will provide facilities for these groups to return to Saintfield and also allow new groups to form and use the shared spaces being provided. It is hoped that the new facility will be completed early in the new year, when a special opening

event will be held to allow the community in Saintfield and surrounding area to inspect the new centre. Martyn Todd, current Chair of the SDA said, "It is fantastic that everybody in the Saintfield area will have a new shared space for indoor sports and community activities.



The interior of Building A

The Saintfield Development Association has been the prime mover behind the project for most of the eleven years. However, to widen the involvement from the community, a separate organisation, the Saintfield Community Trust, has been established to oversee the management and running of the new centre. Damian Scarlett, secretary of Saintfield Bowling Club, chairs the working group for the new Trust and has worked closely with Barbara Graham, Brian Gamble, Paul McGeown and Martyn Todd as the project team liaising with Newry, Mourne and Down Council since its formation three years ago. Public consultation revealed that there are over fifty school, church,

We are delighted that funding from the Rural Development Programme and Peace IV were added to the money committed by Newry, Mourne and Down Council to make this happen. Over the years of the project, many different people, council officials, councillors and organisations have contributed to the project. Without their input and support we would not be where we are today, with the reality of a community centre just a few months away. I hope this long-awaited amenity will bring new heart to our village where people of all ages, backgrounds and interests can interact and enjoy a variety of activities in a shared space."



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## 80th Anniversary Of Saintfield WI

The Saintfield Women's Institute celebrated their 80th Anniversary recently where the special guest for the evening was Rowallane Executive member Agnes Black.

The President Elizabeth Moore welcomed everyone to the event and after Grace was said by Vice President Linda Peak, the gathering enjoyed a delicious dinner and good fellowship.

A special Anniversary cake was cut by the President, who then proposed a toast to the Federation of Women's Institutes. Agnes Black brought greetings from the Federation, congratulated Saintfield W I on this memorable milestone and offered best wishes for the future.

A ballot was held with prizes donated by the Committee and local businesses (Eddie Kirk, Stephen Dugan, Maxol Spar, Saintfield Nursery, Rowallane Beauty and Salon 68 and Dobbies of Lisburn.

Elizabeth Johnston had arranged baskets of flowers which were presented to the Guest and Honorary members. Scrapbooks with pictures of the various events during the years were displayed to bring back memories.

Phyllis Whiteside thanked the President and committee for organising the Anniversary dinner and the great evening, after which the evening was ended with everyone singing the Country Women's Song.



Saintfield WI will resume its winter activities on 12th September in the Parish Hall at 7.45pm. This will be the AGM.

### The programme for the rest of 2018 is:

**1st October** - "For the sins of my Mother" - Marie Therese Rogers-Maloney

**14th November** - "Gardening for Wildlife" - a representative from the RSBP

**12th December** - Christmas celebration

The Saintfield WI extends a warm invitation to all ladies from the Saintfield area who will be made very welcome. Remember, you do not have to be a baker, a jam maker or a craftswoman to join! It's a great way of getting to know more people in the area and make new friends. For more information call or text 07834543772.

## Building Ban In Saintfield

Readers will remember the story in the Spring issue of Saintfield News which highlighted the recurring problem of sewage spills from a manhole cover on the Old Grand Jury Road following heavy rains. Efforts by NI Water to solve the problem have been unsuccessful and pools of effluent after rain continue to blight the area.

Northern Ireland Water has since announced that no new connections to the sewer system will be permitted as Saintfield's sewage plant has almost reached the limit of its treatment capability. However, they state that the facility still complies with the stringent statutory environmental requirements.

It is estimated that a new drainage planning model for Saintfield, which will include the sewage works, will take about 18 months to complete. The implementation of this plan will be dependent on funding availability and the priority ranking given to it.

Barbara Graham, who chairs the SDA Infrastructure Committee, said the group was concerned about the situation at the Old Grand Jury Road which has been an ongoing issue for a number of years. She said, "We are pleased that NI Water is taking this issue seriously and would like it addressed as a matter of urgency. The timescale being suggested is 18 months for the survey work to be completed with subsequent work carried out if finance is available. We would like assurances that this work will be prioritised."



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The Events committee of the Saintfield Development Association is staging their sixth "Pedal the Peninsula" cycle ride on Sunday 9th September. The 56-mile circuit around Strangford Lough starts and finishes in Saintfield. Details of the route are on the website [www.mapmyride.com](http://www.mapmyride.com)

This event has attracted an increasing number of cyclists each year, reflecting the growing popularity of what is an exhilarating but not strenuous ride through the rolling Down countryside.

The event is open to all classes of cyclists and the route will be pre-marked. Marshals will be situated at strategic points around the course to ensure nobody gets lost! There will be a pace car for the first few miles and a sweeper car will follow the riders to assist with any problems.

Registration takes place at the Downpatrick Street car park in Saintfield (behind Danske Bank, BT24 7AA) from 8.30 am and the ride commences at 9.30 am. The entry fee is £20 per rider, reduced to £15 if you register online at [www.entrycentral.com/pedalthe peninsula](http://www.entrycentral.com/pedalthe peninsula)

Entry includes the ferry crossing, delicious home-made tray bakes and refreshments at Portaferry during the cycle, and delicious stew at the finish at the Rowallane Inn, Saintfield.

Funds raised will go towards providing entertainment for the children at the SDA Christmas Fair on Friday 7th December and other SDA community projects.



## Food & Wine Taster Hits The Spot



The Events committee of the SDA staged a Food Taster in the courtyard of The Rowallane Hub on Main Street on the afternoon of Saturday 11th August.

The event was just an hour in duration and was intended to give the food and drink outlets in Saintfield an opportunity to showcase their menus and products.

Entry was free and over 130 people came along to sample the offerings. The weather was very unkind and the rain continued throughout the afternoon, although this did not dilute the enjoyment of those attending.

The consensus of opinion was that the quality and range provided by our local outlets was excellent.

Those outlets who showed off their wares were pleased with the response and the Events committee hope that next year more of local eateries and food suppliers will put their products on show.

The SDA thanks The Hub for providing the venue and the following businesses for their support: - Fish 2 Fry, The White Horse Inn, Tribe Coffee House, Serendipity Bistro, Winemark, Saints and Temple Golf Club.



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