

Council Recognition for Lawrence Murphy

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NMD Council Chairperson, Cllr. Laura Devlin (centre) with Rowallane councillor Kathryn Owen and Lawrence Murphy, holding the award.

Saintfield man Lawrence Murphy BEM was recently recognised by the NMD Council for the outstanding contribution he has made to Saintfield over the years. At a ceremony in the Down Leisure Centre in Downpatrick at the end of May he was presented with the award by the Chairperson of the NMD Council, Cllr. Laura Devlin. Lawrence was nominated by Rowallane Councillor Kathryn Owen.

Lawrence's service to the Saintfield community stretches back to 1974 when he was a player and junior coach for Saintfield Hockey Club. He has since then progressed to Committee member, treasurer and trustee of Saintfield Sports Club.

He has become involved in all aspects of sport administration in

Rowallane and represents the Sports Association of Newry, Down and South Armagh (SANDSA) on the Rowallane District Electoral Area forum.

He has been involved with the local town committee (formerly the Saintfield Town Regeneration Committee, now the Saintfield Development Association) since 2006 and is now a trustee, treasurer and heads their Green Team. The team is responsible for the many floral displays and planters in and around the town, which have won numerous awards over the years. Lawrence is also a committee member representing sports groups on the Saintfield Community Trust, which runs the Saintfield Community Centre.

Lawrence is frequently seen on the streets and byways of

Saintfield in his Hi-Viz jacket, either picking up litter, cleaning verges or tending to the planters around the town. He is busy doing something around Saintfield on most days and people might mistake him for a Council worker!

Lawrence said that he could not have achieved as much without the support of the various community and sporting organisations. He added, "I am grateful that I had the opportunity to make a contribution to Saintfield and I intend to continue as long as I can."

We in the SDA are proud to have Lawrence as part of our team and are thrilled that his dedication and hard work for Saintfield has been recognised.

Chair's Viewpoint

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE LAST YEAR?



Martyn Todd
Chair of Saintfield
Development
Association

"We have been reminded about what is most important in life."

"SDA has started a few exciting projects."

1. We are very fortunate to live in or around Saintfield.

- With Rowallane Gardens, the sports ground and a few circular walks, Saintfield was a good place to be for a pandemic lockdown.
- We have a very good range of shops on the Main Street and shopping local was easy and safe.
- During the first lockdown the Council organised food parcel deliveries throughout the district to those who needed them. SDA arranged these for the Saintfield and Darragh Cross area. Many more people volunteered to help than were needed, showing that Saintfield people do help Saintfield people.

2. We have been reminded about what is most important in life.

- Contact with family and close friends matters more than we realised.
- Safe spaces to meet for recreation and exercise are very valuable
- Some of us need not commute to Belfast as much as we used to. More of us will be spending more time in Saintfield in the future.
- People who work in the health service, carers and those delivering front line services have been undervalued in the past and are vital to all of us in an emergency.
- Fresh air and exercise, ideally shared with those who matter to us, is vital for our mental wellbeing.

3. Local and central government has borrowed hugely to help those most affected by the pandemic.

- Unfortunately, this borrowing will have to be repaid in future years. This means that, in the next decade, there will be less money from local and central government for non-essential services.
- People will have to accept fewer services or step in as volunteers to maintain community services.
- The Newry, Mourne and Down Council Corporate Plan for 2021-2023 lists in its key actions the principal projects Council aims to progress as:
 - New Theatre and Conference Centre in Newry
 - New Civic Centre

- Downpatrick Regeneration
- Newcastle Centre
- Community Centre provision in Warrenpoint and Camlough
- 15 Acre Albert Basin Park
- Local Development Plan Strategy
- Organisational Transformation
- Progress Projects contained within the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) including skills and innovation.

- Saintfield and the Rowallane District Electoral Area need not therefore expect significant Council investment during this period.

4. SDA has started a few exciting projects

- As you can read elsewhere in this newsletter, SDA has submitted a bid to NMD Council to expand the community centre facilities and is applying to the Heritage Fund for funding to develop the adjacent windmill field as a community park.
- The Coordinating Team for SDA (currently with me are Barbara Graham, Brendan Burns, Brian Gamble, David Greer, David McMinn, Ian Mack, Lawrence Murphy and Paul McGeown) are all very committed to making Saintfield a better place for our children's future.
- The team are working hard, but will need additional support to realise these bigger projects.
- We are commissioning a person with experience in helping community groups to work with us to put together a plan for the next 3-5 years and identify what additional skills will be needed to make the plan a reality.

5. Where you come in

In the last Saintfield News Update I asked the question "What can you do for Saintfield?" I ask you again to think about what you can contribute, whether volunteer time or financial donations, towards making Saintfield a better place for your children and grandchildren. As soon as the pandemic restrictions are eased, SDA will be arranging consultation, recruitment and fund-raising events focused on identifying future priorities for the community and implementing these in a new 3-5-year plan.

Please be ready to join in!

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Windmill Park Project Update



In the previous update we reported that SDA was preparing to submit a planning application for the windmill field, to change its use from agricultural to amenity, thereby allowing it to be developed as a community park.

As the area of the field and access to it exceeds one hectare, it was classified by planners as a major project and so required a 12-week pre-application consultation before the application could be assessed by the planning office. This consultation has been completed and the report provided to the planners with the planning application. Thank you to everybody who responded to the consultation. In total 72 responses were received, all but four being supportive of

the proposed park. Because the windmill and other buildings in the field are classified as scheduled monuments, the planners have asked SDA for an Archaeological Impact Assessment. Being classified as a major project they have also asked for a Drainage Assessment. Both of these need to be completed by qualified people. Two specialists have been appointed to do these and their reports have been completed and sent to the planners. We now await the planning officer's recommendation and the Council's decision.

During the pandemic many grant providers closed their funds to new applicants and focused on existing

projects that were financially damaged by the pandemic restrictions. One of these grant providers, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, reopened in February 2021 and SDA submitted an initial application for the development of the park and stabilisation of the windmill buildings. This initial submission was successful and SDA has been invited to submit a full application to their Heritage Fund. As the sum required to complete all of the planned work will be over half a million pounds, the application process is complex and the competition will be very tight. Anyone in Saintfield who has experience of the Heritage Fund grant process would be very welcome to join the SDA team working on the application. (Contact editor@discoversaintfield.co.uk)

Should the Heritage Fund application fail, SDA will apply to other funders to develop the park, accepting that the windmill buildings would have to stay as they are until another suitable heritage grant becomes available. The cost of the park without stabilising the windmill buildings is estimated to be around £200k. As soon as the pandemic restrictions allow, a local fund-raising campaign will be re-started. The goal of a shared open-air park for the benefit of future generations of local people makes worthwhile the work to overcome the many hurdles on the way.

Windmill Road Bridge Cleaned



A good example of residents getting involved. David Williams and Michael Boyd from Saintfield Heritage Society recently cleared the ivy and other unwanted growth from the bridge on Windmill Road.

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Community Centre Extension - Where Are We?

In the last edition of Saintfield News we advised that NMD Council were seeking expressions of interest for the empty buildings on the community centre site (Building B, at the back of the large canopy and the empty part of Building C, where the big hall and studio are).

SDA, in partnership with Saintfield Community Trust (who manage the community centre) submitted a joint bid for the remaining part of Building C. The bid was to convert the rest of Building C into a large function room, a small cafe and a heritage display area, allowing possible future expansion upstairs for 'hot desk' work space. The bid process was in two stages. The joint SCT/SDA submission to Stage One was initially failed by the assessing panel, but after a formal appeal, it was accepted and SCT/SDA were invited to put in a submission for Stage Two of the process. At the time of going to press NMD have not yet announced the results of Stage Two.

When Down District Council originally applied for planning permission for the

community centre, the plan was to convert all three of the old warehouse buildings into community facilities. This plan also included a pedestrian crossing with traffic lights between the community centre and Saintfield High School. After the merger that formed the new NMD Council, the funding for the Saintfield Community Centre was reduced so that only one and a half buildings were developed.

The Council also then decided not to fund the pedestrian crossing. SDA, knowing that it was not safe for High School pupils to cross the road without a proper crossing, lobbied NMD to provide one. The good news is that the lobbying, to NMD and the Department for Infrastructure, Roads, has been successful and we are advised that the pedestrian crossing will be in place during this summer.

There remain some on-going problems with the building, particularly concerning ventilation, which is so important since the pandemic. The Council have worked

on rectifying these while the facility was closed but they are not yet fully resolved.

We have now received permission to open but only under severely limiting conditions. These include keeping a one-hour interval between bookings to allow for cleaning; no new or unaffiliated users; no single use bookings. We are hoping that these conditions will be relaxed towards the end of June so that we can fully open the doors at last. We just have to wait and see what the Council say!

Newry, Mourne and Down Council opened a grant at the beginning of the year to fund capital improvements to community centres. The Saintfield Community Trust and Saintfield Development Association put in a joint application for £100,000, which would have gone a long way towards funding the planned extension. Unfortunately this bid, which took many hours to compile, was judged by NMD to be ineligible.

Events In Saintfield

The Events team at SDA are normally busy at this time of year fundraising, alongside organising and planning our Summer and Christmas events calendar.

It seems a long time since our Christmas Fair in December 2019 and after such a difficult time for everyone we hope that with restrictions easing, we can start to look to the future. Organising Events in a post - Covid world is likely to be challenging and the health and safety of everyone

involved will be uppermost in our minds.

Firstly, it would be great to hold some type of event in the Summer, possibly utilising the Community Centre site. We have some ideas but must wait a bit longer to assess their viability. Secondly, we are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to organise a Christmas Fair this year on Friday 3rd December. This will depend entirely on any restrictions on gatherings etc that might be in place. Fingers crossed!

Keep an eye on our Facebook page [discoversaintfield](#) and Website for details.

In the meantime, we would love to hear from YOU to help shape the Events that we run in the future. After all, our purpose is to serve Saintfield and the people who live in the area, so we need your input. If you have any ideas, thoughts, opinions etc of what you might like to see happening in Saintfield please let us know at discoversaintfield@gmail.com



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Saintfield Man A Community Hero



Denis Conn (right) receives the Community Hero citation from SDA Chair Martyn Todd

Denis Conn of Saintfield was a recipient of a Community Hero award on Community Heroes Day, 23rd March. The award is given by the UK Community Network in recognition of those who have selflessly contributed their time and effort to their community over the years. Denis's nomination reads: "Denis has been a member of Saintfield Development Association for many years.

He is a member of two committees within the organisation and takes an active role in both. He is an anchor-man in the Green Committee who work relentlessly making Saintfield and the lead-roads into it litter-free, colourful and tidy. He can be seen in his high-viz vest and overalls sweeping roads and footpaths, weeding flowerbeds, planting floral displays,

watering plants throughout the summer season and strimming grass every week from early spring through to late autumn. Even in the winter months he braves the elements to keep Saintfield clean and tidy. He helps organise regular community litter-picks and the two cycle runs. In the summer months, Denis's wife Maureen joins him deadheading the many floral displays every Saturday morning. All community events organised within the Saintfield Development Association; Denis is to the fore. He is the 'go to' man for contact with the churches and organisations. Saintfield holds a very successful Christmas Fair every year and is always a serious contender in the annual Ulster in Bloom Competition. Both, of course, require funds and Denis excels when bringing voluntary monetary contributions in. This is a reflection on how much Denis is respected in Saintfield by the traders, businesses and residents. Denis's caring for people shows in his actions outside Saintfield Development Association. He is active in his church and visits the unwell and lonely, running errands for them and taking them to medical appointments. I'm proud to declare Denis Conn our 'Community Hero'.

The full list of UK Community Heroes can be found here: <https://ukcommunityday.com/communityheroes/>

SDA Wins Translink Ulster In Bloom Award



Vivien Lovell of the SDA Green Team, with the Translink Ulster in Bloom award for the 'Best Judges Briefing Pack' in the 2019 competition. Vivien was the team member who diligently prepared the pack. She is flanked by Greg McKernan, depot inspector at Translink, the sponsors of the competition; and Cllr. Robert Burgess, president - elect of the NI Local Government Association, who co-ordinate the competition.

This presentation of the 2019 awards had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The competition showcases partnership working between councils and local community 'In Bloom' groups and associations under the headings of Horticultural, Environmental and Community.

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The SDA has been lobbying the NMD and the Department for Infrastructure, Roads, for many months to instal a pedestrian crossing on the Belfast Road between Saintfield High School and the community centre. DfI Roads have at last advised “that work should start at the end of July and it should take approximately two weeks to complete the crossing so hopefully it will be completed before the end of the summer”

We are relying on Council to ensure this timetable is adhered to so that the high school pupils have safe access to the community centre facilities in September.

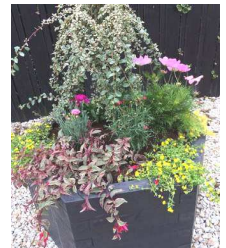
A Big ‘Thank You’

The Green Team of the SDA are very grateful for the support they receive from the local community, both financial and in kind, which enables them to keep Saintfield an attractive and tidy village.

Fund raising activities have been badly hit by the Covid pandemic. The team would like to thank Beth Lunney of Saintfield Nurseries who is generously supplying the summer planting this year free

of charge.

A special mention must also go to James Lappin, who plants out and maintains the large planters beside the Maxol service station, at his own expense, every year.



Keep Saintfield Clean

The SDA’s Green Team are encouraged by the number of residents and business owners in the town who make an effort to keep their surroundings clean and free of litter. However, they believe there is a need for a greater initiative to broaden this aspect of keeping the town presentable.

The Green Team have proposed that a volunteer from each street or area of the village heads up a group of neighbours to regularly litter pick and tidy the area in their vicinity. Would you as a resident of Saintfield consider helping the Team in your area? The Green Team would offer support, advice and will supply all

the equipment necessary such as litter pickers, gloves and plastic waste bags. These can be requested by emailing info@discoversaintfield.com If you are willing to take the lead in your street, please drop a line with your contact details to editor@discoversaintfield.co.uk



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