

SAINTFIELD'S GREEN COMMITTEE

Introduction to our team and volunteers:

We are a very small group of community-minded folk who take immense pride in our small town. We work the year round and communicate through a WhatsApp group outside our regular Green Meetings. One of us will send a message to say that they are going to work at a particular site on a given day and time, and the others reply to say if they are available to assist. We are recognised around Saintfield and have been rewarded with positive words of encouragement and thanks as well as crisps and drinks, even ice lollies from grateful residents!

This year a 17-year old volunteer joined us. Lorcan is working towards his Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award and regularly litter picks around Saintfield - on a weekly basis. We put Lorcan's name forward for the NI Housing Executive sponsored Rural Community Awards Programme and he won first prize! Lorcan also painted an old pump on the roadside and planted up two planters which he positioned either side of it for the community to enjoy. This display is positioned just beyond the Maxol Garage on the Crossgar Road.



Our Developing Projects:

Our work continues in the maintenance and development of our existing sites as well as some new ones. We update, enhance and improve all sites.

At **Queens Park** we continue to upgrade the hard and soft landscaping of our bio-diversity flowerbeds. This area is very much appreciated and enjoyed by



the local residents. The Committee have been truly delighted with continuing compliments from the local



residents and passers-by. The area has mindful, sensory and sustainable perennial planting. The bug hotels, which the pupils of St Mary's PS and Academy PS helped to make, remain points of interest. This year we sanded and painted the bench and replaced some of the plants which did not survive the winter.

In the **Memorial Garden** we planted more bulbs and specific plants to encourage wildlife.



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The carefully chosen varieties of bulbs, shrubs, flowers and wildflowers provide significant

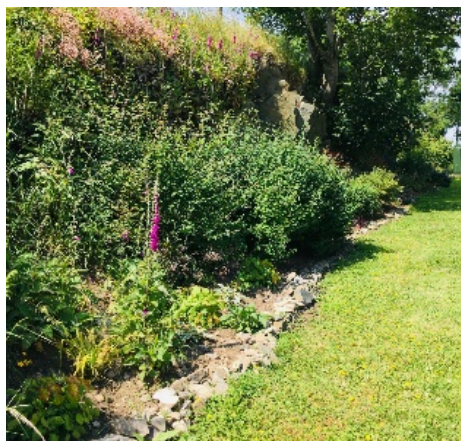


bounty the whole year round. We cultivated an area in front of a lovely stone-built wall resulting in a beautiful wild flower bed. A member of the community donated two wooden half barrels. These were painted and positioned in the Memorial Garden, either side of the bench, and planted up with herbs for anyone to avail. We liaised with the Council's Biodiversity Officer again and implemented more plans to further enhance this area into a special area for pollinators. In April of this year, a Tree Creeper (pictured right) was spotted in the Memorial Garden. This less common bird brought a great deal of cheer to our Group. A bird box (pictured left) was pinned to one of the trees and one of our esteemed Green members built a new bug hotel for the site. It is positioned



against the fence. We are delighted that our wild flowers are a huge success this year again.

The **Cliff-face** at Lisburn Road point is an ongoing project with continual maintenance required. We stripped the rockface of overgrown briars, nettles and ivy to let its natural beauty be enjoyed by all. We liaised with the staff at Rowallane Gardens for advice on native planting and enhanced the site with cultivated Rowallane plants as well as perennial



planting in the three raised beds. We used our own recycled compost. We had to take into consideration the sight-lines on this busy bend in the road when determining the planting for these raised beds. We also have to work within restricted boundaries -from time-to-time utility vehicles park up at this site when accessing their works. Unfortunately, they leave their mark. Their vehicles leave incredible ruts in the ground which we need to repair to reinstate the area's appearance and to prevent damage to our grass cutting equipment. We have to respect that the utilities are on site and we have to leave clear access for the workmen. We are very pleased with the transformation of this originally unkempt site.

Opposite the cliff-face, on the other side of the road (**Lisburn Road Point**) we have cultivated and sown out with wild flowers to provide a splash of colour and food for our beloved wildlife. We also planted a tree on this site. Germination of the wild flower seeds was held back by lack of rain. This is a difficult site to maintain as there isn't a water supply at hand. We have to bring large containers of water to it and carry from our vehicles as safe parking is a distance away.



The Council's tree planting at **Fair Green** and adopted long grass regime is a great enhancement to this area. Due to cut-backs the Council are not supplying hanging baskets at the mini-roundabout. The terraced building at Fair Green is

currently for sale. We conducted a health and safety assessment here and decided not put up our usual hanging basket display.



We continue to work on the difficult site at **Station Road**. This site is very much a work in progress. Phoenix Gas have been working around Saintfield for many months now and unfortunately, they parked up their vehicles on the site and left their equipment piled up for a very long time, which ruined the grass and inhibited our work.



The wildflower bed at **Comber Road Point** was changed to a cottage garden bed this year as the soil on this site is too fertile for the wildflowers. Ongoing maintenance

of the grass on this site is regularly carried out by one of our members who brings his own equipment to this awkward site. He keeps this whole area



strimmed, neat and tidy the whole year round. This is hard work and we are indebted to him.



This year in the enclosed area beside **Scentsations** flower-shop at the bottom of Main Street, we added to the planting as well as cleaning down and repainting the railings. This formerly neglected dirty area is now a colourful triumph. We get many compliments for our work here.



Our annual winter planting of the **15 tubs along Main Street** yielded colourful displays of violas, tulips and daffodils. Our displays added to the warm welcome



to Saintfield on a cold winter's day. Over the autumn and winter months we worked tirelessly sweeping the footpaths and roadsides of leaves and street debris, as well as regular litter picks. We fill large plastic refuse bags which the Council kindly provide. Our Chairman can take 30 full bags on his trailer and 20 full bags in his van to Downpatrick Refuse and Recycle Centre. This he does on a regular basis!



The summer planting took place mid-June with local businesses joining in with vivid hanging baskets, window boxes and floral displays.



A new project this year, and a big one, is the **Community Garden** at the rear of the new Community Centre. Permission was sought from the Newry Mourne and Down District Council for use of the site for a community garden and this was secured in 2021. A design and consultation process, including a public meeting took place with regard to the community garden which gave people the



the opportunity to put forward their ideas for its development and management. The objectives are to create a space where the people of Saintfield and the surrounding district can meet and participate in a high-quality successful garden. Our project is for everyone - the opportunity to work in and/or visit the garden, to include young people, older people, people with specific

needs, groups, individuals' families; anyone and everyone from the local area with an interest or who would like to try something in horticulture, gardening and the environment. The overall mission of the garden is social cohesion and education about growing plants. As the garden



emerges individuals, families and



community groups will also be able to enjoy growing, education, training and social meetings. It is our plan to make the space versatile and diverse in its use as a new community resource that will be made openly available. We aim to promote succession and sustainability. The garden will also be a base and muster point for volunteers.

The site has been converted into a horticultural area containing a polytunnel a greenhouse a shed a rainwater harvesting



tank with 14 raised beds and a border bed. An Open hard stand area with seating will be used with pots and containers and a children's area. The garden will be used



to grow both flowers, fruit, herbs sensory plants and vegetables. It is also intended that the garden will be used by local Mental Health/Learning Disability Charities

as a working and therapy facility. A community heritage wildlife park is in the planning, beyond the community garden, in the Windmill Field to the rear. It will be a perfect set up for biodiversity with trees, woodland scrub, shrubs, hedgerows and grassland. A planned Bio-blitz is scheduled for late June in which a study of the 'creature inhabitants' will be conducted and logged. The organisation of the community garden and the windmill field site is completely voluntary.

Ongoing maintenance: We work independently, as well as in work parties the year round to weed, litter-pick, sweep the footpaths and roadsides. Occasionally we ask for permission or assistance from the Council. We also organise regular litter-picks.



PLEASE TAKE A STROLL ON OUR SUGGESTED ROUTE

Please note that everything printed in red is maintained by the Green Committee of the Saintfield Development Association Enjoy!

I hope today is a warm sunny one

Let's start at **The Square** in the middle of Main Street. The ornate signpost at The Square is filled full of flowers the year round and is our most decorative piece in the town. Please walk along Comber Street, past the butchers on the corner to the churchyard gates on the right. (I'm taking you this way to the Memorial Garden - just in case the gates directly into the Memorial Garden are locked). Through the gates you turn left and walk through the graveyard to the very bottom where **The Memorial Garden**



is situated. This area is designed to be a serene place where one can sit, enjoy the biodiversity work we've done here, and perhaps reflect. Hopefully you witness some wildlife on your visit! There are



twenty plus different types of bulbs planted here to produce food the whole year round for the insects, and a colourful interest for all to enjoy. Did you see our wonderful new bug hotel? If the bottom gates are open and you can walk through them, back onto Comber Street. If not, you will



have to retrace your steps through the graveyard. Please turn right and continue along Comber Street, then bear right at the mini-roundabout onto Comber Road. You will walk up a slight incline past the rear of the High School.

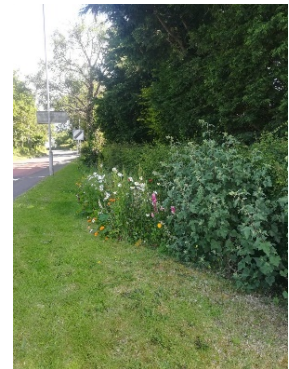
At the top of the hill, please take the footpath on your right and walk down it towards the main Belfast Road. We keep this area tidy and have planted **two trees and a new cottage garden bed** here. This site has been reworked. We opted for



the new bed as the soil is too fertile for wildflowers sown in the past. One of our Green Committee members made another bug hotel, which is located at this site close to the hedge. We are delighted with it!



Please cross the road and turn left towards the **Ballygowan Road Junction** past one of our five **Gateway Signs**. On the opposite side of the Ballygowan Road you will see new planting. This area



has been cultivated from a barren wilderness. We have had to respect sight lines and the fact that there are utility outlets here.





About turn here, and walk along the main road back to the traffic lights at the bottom of Main Street. The **long bed along the fence at the High School** on the right we maintain with sustainable planting. This bed looks absolutely glorious in spring with hundreds of bright yellow daffodils to cheer passers-by.

On your left is the new Saintfield Community Centre. To its rear is the **Community Garden**. If the gates are open, please enter and walk through the open area between the two main buildings to the back right-hand corner. Proceed through the opening and turn to your left to walk towards the back of the complex. Here you will find the new Community Garden, which is still under construction. This is an exciting project for the benefit of the whole community and perhaps beyond!

Please continue along the main



road towards Saintfield.



At the traffic lights please cross over Station Road (R Savage & Co, Accountants is in front of you). Then cross over Crossgar Road to the side of **Scentsations Flower Shop**. Please look over the newly painted railings at our work in this **enclosed yard**. We painted the railings this year and are very pleased with the end result.



I'd like to invite you to walk along this main road towards the Maxol Garage. As you approach the garage you will see one of our fifteen **planters**. Please walk past the garage to an area on your right which we have transformed from an abandoned scrub land. We hard landscaped this area and put in place **three sizeable planters** with

a mix of sustainable and annual plants, which brings cheer to the passing pedestrians and the motorists stuck in a queue at the traffic lights. We also painted the fence this year.



Please continue along the Crossgar Road where you will see our young volunteer Lorcan's **painted pump and floral display**. He did a great job! More cheer for the passers-by!

Please keep walking along this road and cross the New Line until you come to **Queens Park** on your right.

Turn into Queens Park and walk through the arch to a project that we are



incredibly proud of. We methodically planted for the butterflies and bees. There is also sensory planting either side of the bench. We liaised with the Housing Executive to achieve this very pleasant seating area and the local primary schools worked with us to make the bug hotels. We sanded and painted the bench to refresh it this year.

FYI: Further along the main Crossgar Road is Rowallane Gardens and one of the Saintfield's Gateway signs. There are **five Gateway signs** in total, which we clean, plant out and maintain with the help from volunteers the whole year round. These are sited at the arterial routes into the town. You definitely passed one on your way here!

Please turn back and retrace your steps to the corner of Main Street at the traffic lights. Turn left and walk along Main Street again. We have placed **planters** up Main Street, where permissible to do so. Our footpaths are narrow and we cannot position where they might be hazardous to pedestrians, those with buggies, wheelchairs or disabilities. We always risk assess before embarking on any project. The floral displays behind the blue railings at **AYC**, on your left, are our



work. We continue to support 'Action Mental Health New Horizons' in Downpatrick, who work with adults suffering from mental ill-health issues, by purchasing plants and returning the flowerpots etc to them for recycling. This is a neglected church site which we sought permission to cheer up.





Please continue up Main Street. You will walk past Massey's Paint Shop who place colourful floral displays out every year and are very supportive of the Greens. I invite you to turn left at the Square (Millbank Greengrocers is at the corner). Please walk along Downpatrick Street until you get to

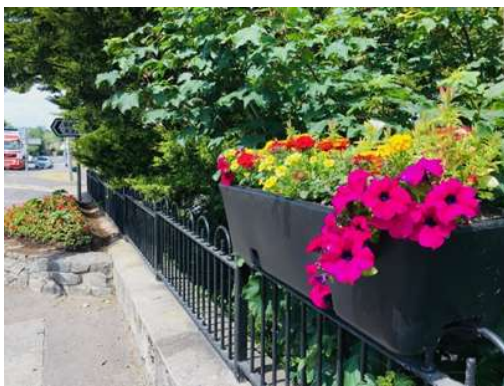
the other end of **New Line**. On the corner we worked hard to rejuvenate a much-neglected Housing Executive site. We wed this shrub-bed and cut back many overgrown bushes. We spread a thick layer of composted bark to suppress the weeds and enhance the area's appearance.



Please cross over Downpatrick Street and head back to The Square and Main Street. Turn left to see the **window boxes** at **The Danske Bank**. We provide this blaze of colour with financial assistance from the Bank Manager. Continue walking up Main Street, with the bank on your left, to the mini roundabout. Please cross the road at the little island just past Gordons chemist shop to the other side of the road. Turn



left and walk towards The Mill development. To your right, we have **two railing planters**. Please stop outside the Mill shops. Here you will see a row of **our planters**.



Opposite there are **three large plastic planters**. We funded these planters and have an arrangement with the Council who kindly add annuals to our sustainable planting to add a pop of colour over the summer months.



We also sanded and painted the nearby bench.



Please continue to walk along the Lisburn Road to the junction of Lisburn Road and Old Belfast Road. To your left you will see the results of our extremely hard work at the **cliff face**. This was a huge undertaking. We had to clear decades of overgrowth to strip it back to the bare rock. We researched the planting and liaised with a volunteer from Rowallane Gardens to source the correct plants for this charming area.



To your right, on the opposite side of the road, within a triangular site we have sown **wild flowers**, which unfortunately will not be at their prime in time for judging.

Please turn back towards the town to The Mill development. Cross the road at the newly painted bench, just before the aforementioned 3 large planters opposite The Mill. Walk up the incline to meet the Ballynahinch Road. Here you will have an excellent vantage point to admire **Fair Green**. The Council has planted new trees here and continue to adopt a long grass regime. We thank and acknowledge the Council's work which is appreciated by all. We also work at this site keeping it tidy and maintained.



excellent display outside Massey's Butchers shop on the opposite side of the street back



Please turn left at the top of this incline and walk back to the mini-roundabout and down Main Street again. You will see a lovely display of window boxes outside the White Horse public house and an



at The Square. Just before you reach The Square, please step into **The Hub** on the left side of the street. Here the Men's Shed and Hen's Shed meet. There is a great deal of camaraderie and appreciation of the fruits of their labour. Saintfield folk working together enhancing their physical

and mental health. They both work from a purpose-built building at the back of this beautiful niche - it's a special area which is well worth popping into.



After your visit to The Hub, please continue down the Main Street to The Square where your 'tour of Saintfield' ends.



SAINTFIELD'S GREEN COMMITTEE



SDA Green Members [in bold print] - Left to right: **Heather Foreman**, **Lawrence Murphy** (Chairman), **Muriel Massey**, **Santha McGrath**, Cathy Wright NIHE, Lorcan Doran, **Malcolm Foreman**, **Vivien Lovell**, **Dorothy Walker** and **Seamus McGrath**.

Missing from the photograph; **Denis Conn** and **Michael Coyle**

[This photograph was taken at Lorcan's 2021 Young Rural Volunteer award presentation held in March outside the Community Centre]

