



CLEAR ANNUAL OVERVIEW

(August 22-July 23)

CLEAR is a local charity (SCIO 43573) since 2012, initially a voluntary group formed July 2007 and open to all residents. Originally CLEAR Buckhaven, we have extended into neighbouring Methil since 2018 (Buckhaven & Methil used to be a joint burgh). Our aims are: to improve the local environment; and to build pride and engagement in a deprived community and since 2018 we have extended into Methil. We strive to improve the appearance of public areas and greenspaces around town, and create more sustainable environments in the adjoining countryside.

Overall it's been a very busy year on CLEAR's own sites and a number of outreach sites, new and existing. Volunteer numbers have maintained though we definitely need more. Indoor activities (workshop, kitchen, hub) have been busier than ever and there has been greater demand for involvement in other programmes (eg River Leven). Some of the main actions and achievements during the last year (August 22-July 23) are as follows:

A. GROWING

1. Trees (Native & Fruit):

- Community woodlands extended: approx 2,400 native tree saplings planted at Muiredge Park, Savoy Park, Braes (donated saplings -Woodland Trust, Ovo/TCV, Eforestry).
- Orchards: ca 440 fruit trees planted (Methil Brae/Oakvale Rd, Muiredge, Starkies Wood and smaller sites). In addition, 32 large/standard trees planted
- Approx 45 front garden fruit trees offered free (distributed or planted).

Tree Planting Thursdays throughout the winter (16 sessions) were very effective, continuing the bulb planting sessions in autumn. Maintenance especially fruit tree pruning has become a major challenge but a trainee squad enabled us to do more than usual, sadly now ending. Fruit tree pruning and grafting workshops were held. Regular late spring/early summer drought period continues to be problematic. Foreshore planting struggles

2. Flowers, bulbs, shrubs

- Spring bulbs: 80,000 crocuses, 23,000 daffodils planted (mainly Percival Rd, Kirkland Drive, Methilhaven Rd).
- a dozen floral baskets at town entrance (B Builders). No hanging baskets this year again (except at the hub). Women's Group maintenance efforts Buckhaven esp College St Gardens.
- Wildflowers: estimated 500 wildflower plugs propagated from seed planted at Byron Park, some in Methil Brae.
- Shrubs: 30 hydrangea planted. Shrub bed maintenance challenge,

3. Community Growing (and Cooking)

- Continued operation and ongoing development of two community gardens at Buckhaven and Methil. Regular volunteer sessions held 2 days weekly, year-round, therapeutic gardening, work placements, producing plants for distribution, our use and sale.
- Food production: Significant volume of fruit + veg (apples, plums, pears berries, currants, rhubarb, tomatoes, peas, beans, courgettes, potatoes, broccoli, onions, salad, etc.
- Approx 10 community rhubarb patches established (in public orchard areas)

- Home-growing: significant home growing promotion expanded to interest others in growing continued. Approx. 80 potato/tomato/herb planters distributed as alternative to on-site gathering, sunflower challenge (via primary schools and nurseries).
- Events: 5 Open Day events held at Methil and Buckhaven Gardens (large summer events, also Halloween etc) and Sandwell. Several training sessions on cooking,
- Buckhyne Braes production continued - greater participation and productivity in apple juicing

B. ENHANCEMENT, PRACTICAL PROJECTS

1. **Litter clearing & recycling:** Only one significant community clean-up organised this year though smaller sessions arranged regularly. Street Champion scheme continues->dozen active individuals
2. **Community art and interpretation:** A less busy year. Small art project completed at Buckhaven garden. 5 large heritage panels installed along Foreshore. Heritage plaque replacement underway
3. **Recycled wood** (tools, paint, nails): Wood workshop less busy since one key individual left. Some production of birdboxes and repair/refreshing of garden benches etc
4. **Bike Project:** recycling donated bikes (ca 150 this past year) and repair clinics, monthly bike runs (incl ebike taster), local cycle routes leaflets produced. Part of Govt cycling promotion scheme. Electric bike project. Bike recycling and repair numbers continue to increase, incl volunteers.
5. **Food Processing Unit:** (see under Growing) Food unit producing jams, juices, chutneys (under the Buckhyne Braes label) sold through local retailers but also occasional Fair/Market; also running climate-friendly food workshops.
6. **Site development:** Pursuing water for Buckhaven plus offgrid energy at both. Plans for Byron Park development with Council completed. New site identification (eg L'mouth Business Park)

C. VOLUNTEERING, WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

1. **Schools and other groups:** Levenmouth Academy regular DAS and environment groups have continued (and occasional other schools eg Kirkcaldy secondaries), and several local primary schools and nurseries. Arrangements with MCCI, and CTH for holiday groups. Princes Trust periodic involvement.
2. **Individual Volunteers:** Open to all local residents, some come farther. An estimated 900 participants at events over the year, approx 30-50 weekly for practical activity.
3. **Corporate:** Fife College, Amey. Some R Leven agencies running stalls at Open Days.
4. **CTH Academy partner:** CLEAR providing horticulture and environmental skills course under CTH Guided Start programme – Richard (course supervisor) funded by CTH and working under CLEAR management but due to end August 23.
5. **Climate Action Fife (CAF):** CLEAR is one of 12 partners in project (led by Greener Kirkcaldy) – continuing CLEAR areas of work (cycling, climate action food and growing, tree planting etc).

D. EVENTS, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY & PARTICIPATION

1. **Information:** Regular updates via local media (weekly plus features), e-bulletin, websites, facebook, and noticeboards. 3x yearly Newsletter delivered door-to-door. Regular heritage items we post on facebook get large outreach
2. **Advocacy and Participation.**
 - Initiators/drivers of the LevenMouth Rail Campaign, hosts the office, continue to play significant lead role.
 - Participate in Levenmouth Reconnected, R Leven programme (several components); Sports Hub, H100, new Buckhaven Heritage Regeneration project; Council eg Levenmouth Local Plan

- Participate in Buckhaven & Denbeath Community Council (no council exists in Methil).
- Inputs to consultations and planning events – more than usual this past years - raising issues.
- Members of SFCG, CWA, DTAS, SCVO/FVA, SMSA, SURF, CyclingUK, Age Scotland, etc.

E. RESOURCES

1. **Hub Office-shop, and others** – Workshop-kitchen at Sandwell St, community gardens in Methil & Buckhaven (still awaiting leases!), Hub at College St, 7 leased lockups maintained (2 new).
2. **Human:** CLEAR has a core group of around 35-50 volunteers active on a regular basis. The Board of 8 holds bi-monthly meetings, staff meetings are fortnightly. We rely on collaboration with other groups to assist with labour demands of an ambitious programme. Part-time staffing is 5 plus occasional sessional worker.
3. **Financial:** Annual financial report is now being finalised. Turnover for financial year ending March 2023 is approx £160,000 (awaiting confirmation from final accounts). Current funders are National Lottery, Robertson Trust (now ending) plus several smaller one-off sources, Climate Action F, DTAS Resilience, Levenmouth Reconnected, FET. An Investing in Communities award has just commenced and Crown Estates. Constant juggling required.

Grants are supplemented by our own ongoing fundraising efforts through sales of food and produce, donations in money and kind. (estimated perhaps £8,000+)

G. SOME CHALLENGES

1. ***Sustaining the programme and maintaining the assets***, especially community gardens. Ongoing maintenance and sustenance of established sites (weeding, maintaining trees, watering etc.) Some new sites/projects – always planned with minimal maintenance in mind.
2. ***Volunteer numbers and capacities***: mobilising new volunteers for civic activities, especially outdoors, remains very challenging in highly deprived Buckhaven & Methil. Co-ordination of activities among part-time staff, volunteers with limited time. The capacity of a proportion of volunteers is very limited due to their own personal challenges; some need heavy supervision. Succession, especially of Trustees and attracting appropriate skills, professional experience and motivation is needed. More staff employed adds capacity but also additional challenges. We have limited capacity to participate in other agency planning and other exercises yet are often in demand as large projects (eg railway, H100) seek community engagement. We also sense a new challenge recruiting suitable staff.
3. ***Logistics/Inefficiency***: operating around several scattered main sites and many smaller sites, means greater inefficiencies, costs (time, budget). Only 3 working days per week, limited admin support for compliance demands which constantly increase, etc.
4. ***Harm***: increased vandalism (damage, fire, theft of stakes/trees/bowser/bikes, weedkillers, etc). Natural threats and pressures (increasingly severe drought spells, deer + rabbits, bindweed, coastal erosion, sawfly, bent banana disease) + certain Council actions (spraying weedkiller, strimming, early mowing of spring flowers).
5. ***Grant funding dependence and funding environment***: Generating funds in a competitive environment, meeting increasing demands to maintain and add to the programme. Nevertheless some investment in facilities improvement has been possible incl energy saving. Some longer - term funding achieved (Levenmouth Reconnected, Climate Action Fund, and very recently Investing in Communities).

CLEAR – RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

