



## Report for Annual General Meeting

*BDCH's objective is "to maintain conserve and enhance our community's heritage". In practice we focus on natural heritage while Biggar and District Civic Society continues to focus mainly on our built environment. The two bodies work closely together.*

2020 started on a very positive note with a well-attended AGM. Little did we realise that this would be almost the last large public gathering which we would see before Covid-19 changed all of our lives.

Agreed priorities for 2020 were:

- to raise our community profile by completing the re-launch of our website
- to revise the Biggar Town Trail leaflet
- to continue to maintain Little Mitchellwood and the Old Quarry
- to further develop and publicise the Biggar Country Path Network
- to create an action plan in relation to Biggar Biodiversity
- to establish simple clear and effective governance arrangements through the revision of Articles of Association.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, there has been good progress with several of these priorities.

The **new website** was launched soon after the AGM and has been regularly updated with the very able support of our local web designers Big Decision. In addition, we have established an up-to-date membership list and produced regular newsletters. We now have over 50 members and volunteers.

An outstanding achievement has been the revision of the **Biggar Town Trail leaflet**, which is available to download from our web-site, and also in a print version partly funded by a Biggar Community Council (Ventient Energy Glenkerie Community Fund) micro-grant. We will distribute this to local businesses and the museum when restrictions permit.



Basic maintenance has been carried out at both **Little Mitchellwood and the Old Quarry**, and we have maintained good links with the Biggar Forest School which uses the Old Quarry as a learning resource for young people in our community. On the other hand, we have not been able to undertake major work in the community woodlands because of Covid restrictions. We have, however, successfully applied for a South Lanarkshire Community Grant for equipment needed for this work.

In relation to the **Country Path Network**, we are currently obtaining tenders for our proposed upgrading of the **Bizyberry** path and intend to apply for a windfarm grant for this work in the immediate future. We have also been involved in issues relating to the **Hillridge to Huntfield** path on Biggar Common, having worked with the Council to ensure that a suitable gate was installed in the new forestry fence which cuts across this path. We are supporting the Council in negotiating a suitable diversion at the Huntfield end of the Right of Way which will take the path away from a private house where there had been some conflict around access over recent months. In addition, we intend to apply for a Scotways small grant to install suitable gates in fencing which currently makes use of the path difficult. Finally, we have begun discussion with Symington and Biggar

Community Councils to investigate the possibility of establishing a **Biggar to Symington multi-use path**. It seems unlikely that the old railway will provide a suitable route for this project, but there are viable alternatives if we can establish sufficient local interest and support.

A **Woodland Trust Tree planting scheme** organised by John Reilley in cooperation with Biggar Primary School was supported and the planting has now been completed.

There has been no progress with the **Biggar Biodiversity Project** because meetings have not been possible in the present circumstances. We have established the procedure necessary to update our existing **Articles of Association**, but it has not been possible to prepare a revised draft in time to present to this meeting. We hope to complete this review and to call an Extraordinary General Meeting in the coming year to adopt the proposed changes.

Our draft priorities in the coming year are:

- Commission and see completed work on the Bizzyberry path
- Complete the upgrade of the Hillridge to Huntfield path
- Undertake significant maintenance and improvements in Little Mitchellwood and the Old Quarry
- Investigate the viability of a Symington to Biggar multi-use path

The possibility of conservation work in the Session Fields will also be considered. Further changes in this area may happen as a result of the Biggar Water Restoration Project sponsored by SEPA.

In addition, as soon as conditions permit, we will return to the possibility of establishing a series of talks at the Corn Exchange both to raise awareness of environmental issues, and to raise funds for BDCH.

In conclusion, I believe that the past year has re-established BDCH as a significant contributor in our local community. This would not have been possible without the hard work of trustees and committee members, and the support of you, our members and volunteers. It has been challenging to conduct all of our business on-line, and to hold our regular meetings via Zoom. I am especially grateful to Graeme our treasurer and to Andrew who has continued as Secretary despite the demands which the pandemic has clearly made on all health professionals.

Let's hope for an increasingly free and productive 2021 as the vaccine rolls out.

David Chalmers (Chair)