

MONKSTOWN VILLAGE TIDY DISTRICT – AGM 2021

Committee report on activities in 2020 (and to date in 2021)

Overall evolution

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, the group continued to develop strongly in 2020 with a steady increase in the number of new members, volunteers and participants in the wide range of in-person and online events we organised throughout the summer. We believe our impact on the appearance of the village and on the sense of community in Monkstown is steadily growing through the sustained hard work of our volunteers but also through a growing network of support from our members, local residents and from various departments in DLRCC.

We built up our reserves again which leaves us in a position where we can confidently plan ahead for enhancements to the village's appearance, investment in our biodiversity and for activity programmes which are free to access. We have been able to do this by supplementing the grants we got from DLRCC and others with generous support from local businesses and subscriptions from our paid-up members. We are grateful to them all.

COVID-19

This was the dominating theme for the year and initially stopped our plans for 2020 in their tracks. We then started planning for different things which we could deliver under lockdown, but these in turn were overtaken by more rapid opening up than we anticipated. Since then we have had to operate on a stop/start basis with restricted numbers for all our outdoor events last summer but holding everything online since the autumn.

Early on, we adopted a COVID-19 policy which ensures compliance with HSE guidelines and applies to all tidy-up or other in person activities.

Tidiness and appearance

A principal aim of MVTD is keeping Monkstown Village and its environs looking their best. There are two main components to this: our regular clean-ups and our flower planting.

Due to the COVID Level 5 restrictions we were unable to proceed with organising our regular Saturday morning clean-ups during several long periods in 2020. Nevertheless many of our committed volunteers continued to show up as usual on Saturday mornings to do clean-ups on an individual basis. No doubt you will have seen them wearing their blue MVTD vests most Saturday mornings. During 2020 several new volunteers joined and so the amount of litter clearance has remained impressively high. Not surprisingly the COVID closure of pubs and restaurants has led to an explosion of al fresco drinking and dining so our clean-up activities are more important than ever.

With the kind permission of Fr Kevin, we moved the base of our clean-up operations to the carpark of St Patrick's Parish Centre. When the roofing work on the church is finished, we will move our equipment storage containers there also (to the area behind the centre).

Part of our Saturday clean-up routine involves removing all recyclable can and plastic and glass bottles from the litter collected and bringing them weekly to the recycling centre in Glashule. Some weeks during the good weather the number of cans and bottles recycled are in the hundreds. In response to this problem MVTD approached DLRCC during 2020 for placement of recycling bins beside the existing Big Belly bins in the village and this paid off earlier this year with a new Big Belly recycling bin at Spar, with more promised.

We also managed to do some midweek evening weeding blitzes: our “Wednesday Weeds” initiative, which we hope to shortly restart this year. We tackled a number of heavily weeded streets, including Longford Terrace, parts of Monkstown Crescent, Pakenham Road, Cumberland Street, the Link Road and Clifton Avenue. Since the Council have stopped spraying the street weeds, the problem of unsightly weeding has become a lot worse and they also act as litter traps.

Another key aspect of keeping the village looking its best is planting of flowers. We tend a number of flower beds around the village: at the roundabout at the top of Carrickbrennan Road, in front of Carrickbrennan Cemetery, at the beginning of Richmond Hill and at the Ring and the beds at Avoca. No doubt you’ll have noticed the lovely cyclamen planting at the Ring which brought much needed colourful planting to that area during the winter months.

There was no Tidy District competition last year (or indeed this year) so we have no awards to show for all this hard work but we must however acknowledge the one-off grants we receive from DLRCC in lieu of awards to support our work.

Nature, biodiversity and other events

We started 2020 with the launch of the biodiversity survey we’d commissioned covering eight of the green areas around the village with many follow-up actions to support our biodiversity. We’d also held walks looking at our trees and seabirds as well as a highly successful training session on CPR and got halfway through a Stop Food Waste programme before COVID struck.

Despite this, we held more tree, bird and bat walks, seashore exploration and pond dipping in the Stradbrook stream for kids, a climate change webinar over the summer.

Last summer we placed eight pollinator planters in prominent positions in the village, arranged with CBC Monkstown to install swift boxes at the back of their buildings and distributed 2000 nature leaflets to homes around the village which show the diversity of nature we have and the type of activities we’re doing which people can get involved in.

We started implementing some of the recommendations from the biodiversity report such as clearing alexanders, planting 4000 spring bulbs and native wildflower seeds in Vesey Park, and creating a bank of native hedgerow trees, pollinator shrubs and perennials at Monkstown Castle.

So far in 2021, we’ve held more online talks on birds, pollinator planting, butterflies and ladybirds, as well as exploring the idea of becoming a Sustainable Energy Community. We have a programme of activities prepared for the rest of 2021 but this depends very much on how the rolling back of COVID restrictions unfolds.

Much of this work has been done in collaboration with residents, businesses and DLRCC, and we are very grateful for their help.

Other Community Engagement

We have kept up a very active digital media presence throughout the year, especially on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and through our website. We now have a large number of followers through many channels and our profile is well-established. In practical terms, this has been very successful in attracting many new people to our clean-up and other activities and led to all our in-person activities in 2020 being fully booked.

Our paid-up membership in 2020 covered well over 150 people and is continuing to grow, while our relationship with many of the local businesses remains very positive even if others have necessarily been dormant. We look forward to working with them again as soon as they are able to reopen.

We have kept in close contact with DLRCC in several areas – on litter and tidiness, planting, biodiversity, heritage etc, and have made submissions in respect of their draft Heritage and Litter Management Plans.

Finances

Our Treasurer, Brendan Walsh, will present the detail of our finances for 2020. This produced a surplus for the year of €1,279, giving total year-end funds of €2,427.

Our grant income increased substantially in 2020 while we did well to maintain income from memberships and business support at the same level as 2019, helped by the facility to pay online via Stripe. This has allowed us to continue our policy of keeping events & activities free to encourage the maximum participation. This has proved very successful but does mean we need to continue to grow our own income to support our expanding activities. Overall, the Committee's view is that our finances are healthy.

Organisation

Our Committee for the year was Anne Harrington, Brendan McCormack (Secretary), Brendan Walsh (Treasurer), John Edmondson (Chair), Marian O'Shea, Michael Garvey and Paula Corcoran.

Towards the end of 2020, our expanding range of activities led us to set up three Sub-Committees focussed on Tidiness, Appearance and Waste, on Biodiversity, and on Community Engagement led by Brendan McCormack, Marian and Michael respectively. This has helped us work more effectively as a group and also brings in energy and ideas from a wider range of people.

We have a maximum term of four years for Committee membership, so we needed to start planning for rotation of the Committee. In anticipation of this, four members were recently co-opted to the Committee – Grainne Dunne, Liam Kilmartin, Ronan White and Tony Gallagher. For reasons of rotation and for some personal reasons, John, Anne and both Brendans will all be stepping down at this AGM. As a result, there is plenty of scope for more members and volunteers to get involved either on Sub-Committees or the main Committee

and help develop new ideas and put them into practice. Anyone wishing to get involved, or would like to discuss it, should contact us at monkstowntidydistrict@gmail.com.

Back in 2017, we drew up our Constitution based on that of another group. While it serves us well, we are aware that there are several points which could be improved, either for clarity or to reflect the way the group and our activities have evolved. The outgoing Committee decided that this should be a task the incoming Committee should take on. Any changes will need to go to an Annual or an Extraordinary General Meeting for approval.

Recently, we reviewed our compliance with the Governance Code (applicable to the not-for-profit sector) and have drafted documents relating to duties and responsibilities of the Committee and financial management. These will be considered by the incoming Committee.

In summary – thank you!

We believe that despite the challenges over the past year, we've continued to have a growing impact on the tidiness and appearance of the village, together with a sense of ownership and of community.

On behalf of ourselves, and the community at large, your Committee would like to extend a huge thank you to all our members, our business supporters, the public at large, our public representatives (several of whom have got involved in different ways), the staff of DLRCC, the churches, and all those who have offered a wide range of support.

But above all thank you to those of you who have really put the effort in. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge the sustained (and largely unseen) hard work, commitment and support from Anne Harrington, Brendan McCormack and Brendan Walsh now that they are standing down from the Committee. We will not pick out other individuals for mention but we know who you are, and so do many others.

Thank you all!

John Edmondson, Chair

On behalf of the Committee, 23 April 2021