



Convenor's Annual Report 2024/25

This has been an eventful year in many ways, in most areas nothing out of the ordinary but in one other in particular great change now and potentially in the future for the Horizon Charity.

Plants

This is our focus, as KSB said, “stick to what you are good at, and keep it simple”. Our main area as per usual was the town's Market Square and surrounding streets with our floral displays. These went up in June and throughout the long hot summer they looked superb.

I think everybody agreed that they looked as good as they had been for several years, this down to the quality of plants, the weather but mainly due to the teams who watered and fed the displays to keep them looking great right up until they were taken down in October. And taken they were with an extremely efficient plan helped in no small part to a great group of Council gardeners.

We were a bit concerned to hear that David Penny (Cove Bay Nurseries) is planning to retire but thankfully he will still supply us for the year ahead. Eventually, we will need to find another nursery, but we have one particularly useful contact, an ex-pupil of mine who runs his own nursery business and who has intimated that he would be willing to supply us.

All other key areas, Orchards I and II, the Beach seating areas, Cowie Mill sign area, the Burns Garden, perennial beds & David St corner were all given their best attention, as well as the never-ending weeding of the surrounding areas.

One major new venture was the Green Bridge Garden. This had become an unkept mess after the flood defence team left but due to a number of work party days of weeding, cutting, digging and moving it is now starting to take shape and become a much more pleasant area for people to sit and contemplate. Real progress by all concerned.

When all of these areas are taken into account it is truly amazing to think that a small band of not so young people get it all done.

Volunteers

A short statement about our group. On paper we have a sizeable membership, but in reality, it is down to a smallish core of regular work party members who turn out in all weathers to keep the town looking as good as it does throughout the year.

Every work party is one of great fun as well as good gardening and I as a member, like everybody, gets a lot out of it, physically and socially.



And, of course, our work does not go unnoticed by the public and our civic leaders.

I must also mention the Council employees who give us great assistance when required.

Finances

At the moment we are in a very healthy condition thanks to donations from individuals and local businesses but also fund raising. Bulb and plant sales and this year for the first time our own calendar have really helped to swell the coffers.

A great deal of thanks must be given to those volunteers who give up some weekends to carry out these sales.

Base

This, of course, has been a perennial issue. Throughout the year we have been in negotiations about sealing a permanent position at Forest View. Meetings at the STCIG and at private times went on and time went on also. Frustrations came to the fore but eventually through some lively discussion we eventually got somewhere. We wanted a Lease, but this was not forthcoming, but we were granted a Licence to Occupy (LTO). This was followed by a meeting which seemed to grant us free reign to develop the area at Forest View. Overjoyed, but we had not considered the lack of cross-party communication between certain Council members.

Sadly, the Forest View management team were not happy with this plan, and within days many restrictions were put in place which in all respects made the site pretty much unworkable for us and was deeply disappointing.

Further talks and meetings occurred to try and get a consensus, but it really was never going to be the site we hope for.

What next? Storm Amy answered that for us. It hit hard and wiped out our polytunnel. A nightmare possibly... then Carron Den popped up, a real opportunity and suddenly there was hope. This vacant piece of land formerly the site base for Carron Den Construction was made available to us and other community groups by the farm owner. He wishes community groups to develop this land tastefully with Horizon as a key tenant. The STP is fully behind this venture, already giving us backing and excellent funding advice. It is now up to us to develop a plan for the site, in particular our designated area and to this means we have a working group who will draw up plans to give to STP for review.

This is not going to happen overnight, so we are remaining at Forest View for the meantime, the LTO still holds but no rental has to be paid. Storm Amy may well have been a blessing in a windy disguise.

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Lots of work ahead but if Carron Den progresses, and there is no reason to think it will not then Horizon will have what it has always needed, a permanent base for horticulture and a safe and secure meeting place.

Let us look forward to another successful and busy year in 2026.

Thank you all.
David Dredge
Convenor Horizon 2024 - 2025