

## COMMUNITIES ALONG THE CARRON ASSOCIATION (CATCA)

AGM 11<sup>TH</sup> May 2011, St Martha's Hall, St Francis Xavier's RC Church

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

CATCA has achieved a tremendous amount since the formation of the management committee and becoming constituted in March 2010. Most of our undertakings will have gone unnoticed, so this is brief report of our achievements to date.

CATCA is an enabling association. We formed the association to complement the excellent work carried out in the 16 Communities Councils in the Falkirk area. Our approach is to assist local organisations with a bottom up approach to achieving improvements e.g. capital projects that councils cannot fund, but which CATCA can apply for and gain funding. CATCA does not interfere with the work of the many local organizations, statutory and non-statutory bodies. The philosophy behind our association is to work in partnership with other individuals and organisations to achieve common, shared goals.

Our first management committee meeting was concentrated on drawing up a list of 31 projects, from which we identified an achievable priority list. We presented our list at a meeting with the major grant awarding bodies to explore the likelihood of gaining funding from them for the projects. Following a successful meeting with the funding representatives, we produced a development plan and began to attend numerous meetings and network with many different groups to establish the best way forward for CATCA and to seek out potential stakeholders to assist us to achieve our aims and objectives.

Since March 2010, CATCA has raised in excess of £120k in grant aid from numerous funders. The funding enabled us to commission a **Community Path Network Feasibility Study (inclusive of bridge crossings)** and to commence with our **River Carron Clean-Up: Phase 1 i.e. Fankerton to Larbert Viaduct and four of the tributaries** using both professionals and volunteers.

Although funding is limited by the recession, CATCA has been lucky to receive a total of £57k in grants for the River Carron Clean Up Project, £46k of which is coming from Falkirk Environmental Trust and £11k from the following organisations.

Falkirk Council Planning and Environmental Services  
Callender Estates Trustees

River Carron Fisheries Management Group (RCFMG)  
SNH, SEPA and Forth Fisheries Board providing technical support

The funding will allow a professional and volunteer assisted project to take place between June and July, before the Atlantic Salmon begin returning to the River Carron for their breeding season in late August. Furthermore, we hope to gain more grants in 2012 - 2013 to allow the second phase of the river clean up between Larbert Viaduct and Grangemouth to be completed.

In conjunction and in addition to the river clean up, there is huge problem that must be tackled concerning Invasive Species. Many plants fall under this category, which cause undue damage to the biodiversity system of the River Carron. Unfortunately, problems of this nature do not solely pertain to the Carron. It affects all main rivers and burns, railway tracks and private and public owned land across the country.

It is fair to say that tackling invasive species by spraying may not be a top priority for many landowners, although a legal requirement exists. Moreover, we may see little improvement unless statutory authorities gain sufficient funds to police the weed problem.

To this end CATCA was instrumental bringing together a number of statutory and non-statutory stakeholders to work jointly to discuss the matter and find a solution to the problem. Falkirk Council agreed to chair the steering group and to discuss how best to monitor and hopefully control the plant pests. I would like to thank Anna Peaks and Ian Edwards from the Council's Environmental Department for their assistance in this matter. The project really demonstrates that with "togetherness" we can go forward.

Falkirk Council added their invasive species database to their website recently. We hope that it will attract and inform members of the general public and building contractors to encourage them report incidents of invasive species, which can be added to the database and allow Council officers to investigate.

To highlight this matter even further, an invitation was extended to CATCA to host an **Invasive Species Awareness Event**, which will be similar to the successful **River Carron Expo Day** that we ran last September in Grangemouth Town Hall. The aim of the day is to raise awareness and encourage public contractors and individuals to the problems associated with these invasive plants.

In tackling invasive species, we are mindful that sustainability of both personnel and funding is the key to success. It will take a slow and concentrated effort over time by all concerned to try and to remove the problem. The program of works must commence at the top of the river system and work down the river. According to scientific experts, we must approach the problem in this order to ensure that all sections are included.

Emerging from these activities and others was a need for CATCA to become involved with Falkirk Council Education Department and the schools. Committee members working with the River Carron Fisheries Management Group have given talks in local schools on the life of the river and invasive species. More recently, CATCA started working with Julia Swan, Falkirk Council Director of Education and her head teachers from the 9 Primary and 3 Secondary Schools within the River Carron catchment area to meet the desire for education packs to support the Curriculum for Excellence initiative. These will enable the schoolchildren to participate in the life of the river, from placing tiny fish into the river system, to conducting scientific studies, to investigating the problems associated with Invasive Species like Japanese Knot weed.

Once again, we are adopting the bottom up approach. Whilst speaking with the education staff we were able to assess fully what the schools really wanted. Our plan will be to submit our concept ideas to various grant bodies to seek their views on granting funds to develop the education packs as required.

At this point, I must take the opportunity to thank Michelle and Christine for the continuation of their work the schools, which followed their 18 month community consultations in 2009-2010, during the CATCA steering group phase and prior to the birth of CATCA as an association.

In conjunction with the work to rid the river system of old industrial and domestic wastes and to find ways of tackling Invasive Species, we hope to attract funds to improve the existing pathways and to build brand new pathways and bridges in 2012-2013. If successful, the plan is to link the village communities from the Carron Reservoir to Grangemouth when completed.

This will of course not happen overnight. It will be challenging to link into the old and new Helix pathways at Grangemouth and Bainsford and similar networks as you go up the river system. The public must be patient, when work is seen to be taking place at their particular location ahead their own immediate location. We hope that no matter the order of building the paths the overall improvement will help to improve the general

lifestyle of the local people and CATCA will gain early wins.

We were fortunate to secure £36k funding to ensure the assessment of the full engineering costs associated with repairing and building new paths and bridges. Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER provided the main grant with contributions from the following organisations in time and funding.

Falkirk Council

Sustrans

Central Scotland Forest Trust

Paths for all Partnership

With these funds, CATCA was able to award a contract to P4 Projects to act as our consultants and to deliver the study by the end of September 2011.

We cannot second-guess the number of new bridge crossings that the study will highlight at this stage. CATCA is currently acting as the enabler to bring together 5 individual groups within the Denny and Dunipace area to raise the capital funding to replace the 225 year old **Dale Bridge**, now considered unsafe by the Council. It is at present closed. The bridge is an important linkage for the local people in the area and we hope to be successful in commissioning a new replacement with the support of Falkirk Council

This project demonstrates how CATCA adopted the role of enabler to represent the interests of the community. It would be beyond the scope of the local individuals within towns like Denny and Dunipace to achieve success with this major project without the additional help provided by CATCA and Falkirk Council.

However, CATCA cannot claim a guarantee of success in securing the grant funding required. However, we will work to demonstrate to the various grant agencies that a joint approach can work and to persuade them of the huge, beneficial impact that the new bridge will have on the community.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the hard work of the management committee.

Vivien Murchison

Stan Antczak

Alex Russell

Val Hunter  
Bridget Riddell  
Violet Kirkwood  
Dianne Sweeting  
Peter O'Donnell

Sadly, Mick McIntosh is very ill and our prayers and thoughts are with him at this time.

Thanks are due to Christine Bell and Michelle McCallum, C&M Community Consultants LLP for their continued support the CATCA management committee. Although not part of the Management Team, because of their consultancy roles, their total commitment to setting up the new website, participating in our education projects and in organising the CATCA annual Litter Picks is invaluable.

Thanks also to Andy McLagan who has become part of the group during the past 12 months and who will we hope will become a member of the management committee today.

Thanks to Tony Harris who resigned from the CATCA management committee in January for business interests, but who continues offer a great deal of technical advice and assistance with the CATCA/RCFMG Litter Picks and more recently with Invasive Species Mapping and with his appointment as Project Officer for the River Carron Clean Up: Phase 1.

Thanks to Stan and Tony for building bridges with local landowners to enable them to undertake the survey work that was necessary prior to the River Carron Clean Up operation.

However, as is the nature of any committee system the heavy lifting falls upon several individuals more than others and I must publicly thank our Ssecretary Vivien for her assistance with all the grant filling, countless meetings and letter writing that has had to be done during this past 12 months,

As previously intimated, we are greatly indebted to many officers within Falkirk Council for all their hard work in assisting others and me to complete the very difficult grant forms sometimes. It would be greatly remiss of me if I did not mention Frank Mc Cord of the Local Community Services Department in particular who has spent countless hours with us to that end. Many thanks and to others like Richard Broadley, Angus Duncan,

Mandy Brown, Catherine Wilson, Ian Edwards, Anna Perks and Art Berg, all of whom have provided invaluable assistance and been real champions to CATCA.

Sincere thanks to our grant funders and to all of the individuals, who have helped us during the past year. We hope we will do you proud and deserving of the faith you have shown to this very young enabling association, who hope to make a real difference to the biodiversity of the area and the lives of the folk who live alongside the River Carron.

Finally, Bridget our fundraising committee member would like me to mention two events she has planned this year to demonstrate to the funding bodies that we are not just relying on their goodwill.

The first event is a fundraising “**Prize Bingo**” evening in Denny Bowling Club on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011. Admission is £1.00 per ticket £5.00 for a book of bingo tickets and we have many prizes for the raffle to be held on the night.

The second event is a **Ceilidh Dinner Dance** to be held in the Dobbie Hall on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011. A bar will be available and we will hold another raffle to raise funds.

We will advertise the events to allow local community members to come along and enjoy the events.

Ian R. Howarth

14<sup>th</sup> May 2011.