

Thursday, March 17th, 2005

SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL 27

'Maybole has benefited in many ways since South Ayrshire came into being'

It is nearly ten years since South Ayrshire Council was established, and I am delighted that the *Carrick Gazette* has given me space to reflect on some of the activity that the Council has been involved in over these years for the benefit of the town of Maybole.

At the same time I would take the opportunity to mention some that are ongoing - and to re-emphasise my continued commitment, both as Leader of South Ayrshire Council, and local member for North Carrick and Maybole East, to my long-held quest to have a by-pass for the safety of the people of the town.

To mention everything that has taken place would fill your newspaper, however let me touch on a range of examples.

One of the most outstanding, and certainly visible changes in the town, and one of which I am especially proud is the restoration of The Carnegie Building, one of Maybole's best known local landmarks.

It was reopened as a multipurpose asset for the local community following a £561,000 restoration, and became the winner of a prestigious National Civic Pride Award.

I am pleased to say that I had personally been involved in campaigning for the preservation - and renovation - of the building. This was a tremendous success story, a truly outstanding achievement, which followed extensive deterioration after the building was closed by the former Kyle and Carrick District Council in 1993.

Every time I pass the building, I do so with a sense of pride that I played a part in gaining a reprieve for it. The building had degenerated into near dereliction after its closure in 1993, and could have been lost to the town.

The refurbishment of the building allowed for the relocation of the library and the Signposts project from their existing High Street locations, and the building also houses Community Education staff.

When South Ayrshire Council was formed, with strong support from the local community, I began efforts to find a new role for the building. It really was in a sorry state and I encouraged a local committee to be formed and began working to define a project to create a multipurpose community facility for education, recreation, social and community purposes.

Early in 1997, potential external funding sources were identified, with a requirement for significant match funding from South Ayrshire Council.

A local group was formally constituted as the Maybole 21st Century Halls Committee, and a refurbishment programme was agreed, after extensive community consultation confirmed the support of all sectors of the local community.

As a demonstration of its own commitment to the project, South Ayrshire Council invested £20,000 in the acquisition of the site adjoining the Carnegie Building in St Cuthbert's Road. Later, partly thanks to my own perseverance, I was delighted when the Council agreed to allocate £300,000 for the project.

A couple of setbacks then almost knocked the project for six. Requests for external grant funding didn't bear fruit. Extensive discussions then ensued, requiring a great deal of detailed work by the local committee, myself, and Officers of the Council.

In December 1998, the Council confirmed its continuing commitment to the refurbishment through the allocation of a further £200,000 for work to the roof and windows. This enabled the renovation work to be completed.

While this has been the biggest development many others - perhaps equally important to those involved - have taken place.

Developments at Cairn

For example, a new toilet wing was built at Cairn Primary School to the delight of staff, pupils and parents alike.

Extensive building work led to an up-to-the-minute suite of toilets being created replacing outdated facilities which had been the subject of criticism in the past.

The total replacement of the toilets at the school - with separate facilities for boys and girls of differing age groups - was carried out by South Ayrshire Council's Department of Education, Leisure and Life Long Learning.

Nursery class pupils at Cairn Primary School are also benefiting from a special construction initiative which took place at the school.

A carefully designed play area was built within a courtyard bounded by the school buildings. It means that the youngsters can enjoy the fun and freedom to play among themselves in their own secure area - with a facility to allow them to be kept under constant observation.

Special soft flooring was put down, and an additional door created, together with a special access ramp, to ensure that all necessary safety regulations were met.

Outdoor playground

A new £30,000 outdoor playground was developed at Dailly Road, to provide play experience for toddlers and youth of the area.

The creation of the new playground area followed South Ayrshire Council's recognition of there being a shortage of recreation facilities in the Dailly Road area of Maybole. The outcome of local consultation led to detailed proposals being drawn up with the assistance of the Ladywell Activity Projects Community Group, and the school children of Cairn and St Cuthbert's Primary Schools.

Facilities include a multi-play unit, swings, a roundabout, log steps and bridges, and a range of toddler equipment. The equipment has been set in brightly coloured surfacing, and fencing has been provided to improve the site safety. The area surrounding the site was landscaped, and footpaths provided to link the site with the nearby roller hockey facility.

Miller Terrace Improvements

The town's Miller Terrace has undergone significant improvements - initially in the form of emergency repairs to the retaining walls at the front of properties, and then as a major enhancement project.

The work was carried out in phases and as the work progressed further improvements were carried to resolve problems caused by the gradients of the garden areas.

The front areas of the houses in Miller Terrace, were dramatically improved - following the successful implementation of a scheme of improvement which also enhanced the area at the rear of the houses.

The work carried out at Miller Terrace is one of a range of enhancement projects under way throughout South Ayrshire.

A total of 20 homes benefited from at Miller Terrace as the "eyesore" front areas were transformed.

Maybole Paths Network

A new £36,000 rural paths network has been established, based on the town. As well as connecting Maybole with the surrounding countryside, the network provides links to the nearby communities of Dailly, Dunure, and Kirkoswald.

The new network is the sixth in a series initiated by South Ayrshire Council.

The work on this project was a demonstration of South Ayrshire Council's continuing commitment to the development and promotion of public access to the countryside in South Ayrshire, in line with the aims of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill.

The creation of a Maybole-centred paths network was considered to be a logical stage in the rural access development work undertaken to date in South Ayrshire under the auspices of the South Ayrshire Paths Partnership.

This semiformal Partnership, comprising the Council, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and Scottish Natural Heritage, was established in 1996 to foster ready public access to the countryside of South Ayrshire, particularly around rural settlements.

The Maybole project involves the sign posting, way marking and upgrading - including the installation of route furniture and surface improvements - of existing routes, comprising rights of way, permissive paths and minor public roads, to form 3 circular routes to the south of the town and a linear, long distance route to the north, over the Carrick Hills to Dunure.

All weather pitch

A new all-weather sports pitch beside Carrick Academy was warmly welcomed by members of the public, schools and community groups in Maybole, and also by people in other parts of South Ayrshire who will be able to make use of the facility.

I believe that it is important for children to develop the habit of exercising regularly and carry this trend through the rest of their lives. The all-weather sports pitch has made accessing sport much easier for people of all ages.

Class of diamonds

It is not just to practical physical developments that the Council has given support.

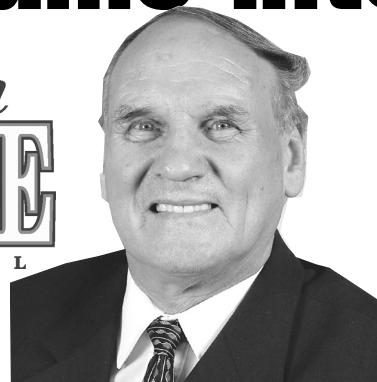
The Council has been supportive of the Class of Diamonds which has proved to be a great success for the 'more mature' people of the town who have enjoyed a range of activities.

Maybole Health Day

A "Day of Health" has been the subject of



By Councillor Andy Hill, Leader of South Ayrshire Council



Council support for a variety of activities to encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Special "clinics" for both men and women have been set up within Maybole's Town Hall to encourage local people to look after their health ... with help and advice not just on medical matters but on makeup and makeovers.

Demonstrations of massage, reflexology, thought field therapy, and healthy cooking and eating have been available and advice given on giving up smoking.

The Health Day has been organised by a Multi Agency Group consisting of Maybole Community Development Group, South Ayrshire Council, local people, Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, and supported by Safeway, and the local business organisation.

The Council's Sports Development Team will be a major contributor to the Maybole Health Day that this year takes place on Thursday 19th May and will provide: Fitness Testing for males and females; a free swimming ticket for individuals attending (aged 8 and above), and sport and fitness activities for young individuals

Getting youngsters active

I am pleased to say that South Ayrshire Council secured funding from the Scottish Executive's Local Action Funding to introduce "Midnight" Football Leagues and a Motivational Activity Programme (MAP), to encourage young people to participate in sports during their leisure time.

Multi-sports activity programmes are being run at Cairn Primary School, Maybole, with Sports Development Coaches encouraging the participating primary school youngsters - from both Cairn Primary and Gardenrose Primary - in a variety of sporting activities.

These types of free activity projects provide further opportunities for young people to become involved in physical activities during their spare time.

Projects such as these benefit those taking part, but are also of great assistance to local communities, as they help to keep young people physically active, happy and out of trouble.

The majority of young people use their leisure time wisely, having fun and taking part in a wide range of activities with their friends. However, I really do hope that the very small number of youngsters who become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour, or are tempted to do so, will get involved in the projects and put their spare time to good use.

Boag skatepark

In conjunction with the Maybole Youth Action Group who brought the idea to me, I was delighted to give personal support to the Boag Skatepark project.

The Council's Rural Affairs Committee supported the scheme with a grant of £10,000, and I obtained a further £10,000 from the Council's Community Enhancement fund.

Full credit to all who have been involved in the physical side of creating the facilities that are now here.

Sport development team

The Council's Sports Development Team has entered into a Service Level Agreement with Maybole Men's Health Forum on the basis that the Council assists the Group to meet the cost of instructors and premises hire over a three year period on a decreasing basis.

The aim is to allow the Club to develop to an extent where it becomes self sustainable. We also provide add-on benefits to its members such as Fitness Testing.

A similar arrangement is being negotiated with Maybole Women's Health Forum as from 1st April, 2005.

Holiday programme

Maybole is a regular venue included in the Sports Development Team Programme. During the past year the following activities have been provided:

Swimming Lessons and Crash Course Swimming Instruction at Maybole Swimming

Pool; Funzone/Fit Kids/Playground Games; Football Coaching;

Rugby Coaching; Motivational Activity Programme.

The Easter programme is being provided to all school pupils and the Summer Programme for this year is currently being prepared.

Maybole Resource Centre

The Maybole Resource Centre situated in the High Street, Maybole, was officially opened by my colleague, the Convener of the Council's Lifelong Learning Committee, Councillor Alan Murray.

May-Tag which was previously located in Maybole Castle has relocated to the Maybole Resource Centre. Staff at the centre work with local voluntary community voluntary groups to provide support in and around the area of Maybole. The Resource Centre provides a place for local groups to access meeting facilities and computer systems where they can produce leaflets and posters to publicise their events.

Importantly advice and support is available for groups who are seeking funding, community committee skills courses, or training on a variety of computer systems.

Broadband connection

Maybole has been officially connected to the high-speed BT Internet service Broadband - a facility for which I personally actively sought, and along with hundreds of local residents, business people and Councillors have been campaigned for, to enable local people access to the latest information technology by logging on to the system.

The system has so much to offer, and provides people living and working in rural communities the opportunity to access a wealth of information, and the same access as those living in urban areas.

Social work, housing and health

Developments within Social Work, Housing and Health, have seen the Maybole Day-Care facility at Crosne Street augmented, resulting in the creation of 13 additional day-care places, five of which are for people with dementia and eight for people with "general" care needs.

We are also changing the way we arrange transport. Using in-house services, has enabled us to bring additional people to day-care for the same amount of money, resulting in uptake of the additional places.

The Social Work, Housing and Health Department is continually looking for new service providers, in an effort to widen user-choice and availability of care.

The Council is about to tender for an additional day-care provider in Maybole.

I am pleased to say that the Department has a highly commendable commitment to social work training. It has a clear departmental policy of training "our own" workers.

In a Maybole context, this is of particular interest, given the difficulty of recruitment in rural areas, in the face of a national shortage of qualified staff.

At Maybole, we currently have one member of staff, a local woman, completing her final year of training for dipsw. We have recently played host to a first-year dipsw student and at the present time, have an hnc student here, whose ambition is to become fully-qualified and to work in this area in the future.

Kerbside recycling

I would like to take the opportunity to point out that a new system for uplifting household waste starts on 18th April in Maybole.

The European Union Landfill Directive requires a reduction of waste that is being disposed of by landfill, and the only way to achieve this is to change the way that waste is disposed of.

Funds received from the Scottish Executive's Strategic Waste Fund are being used to finance the implementation of new systems for collect-

ing waste.

The new collection system has been very successful in the other areas where it has been introduced. Sorting out waste before placing it in bins does require a little bit of extra effort from everyone, but the long term benefits to the environment are incalculable.

South Ayrshire Council has chosen what is termed a '3 bin system' for household waste, and offers a service to householders to enable them to have used glass, which they place in a black box, uplifted from the kerbside of their home which is then taken for recycling.

New bins and boxes will be delivered to householders prior to the system being implemented. Each household will be issued with an information pack and a calendar two weeks prior to the implementation date for their area. Existing collection days will be maintained wherever possible.

Under the new collection scheme waste will require to be separated by householders prior to collection and placed in the appropriate coloured bin.

The change in the collection system will require flexibility from all taking part, and the Council is endeavouring to make the transition from the old way of collecting household waste to the new system as smooth as possible for householders.

However, problems can arise and in order to supplement the handy information pack each household receives the Council has established a special Helpline. Council staff are ready to offer guidance to callers on the new collection system and can be contacted on 0845 601 2020.

Litter abatement

Talks are currently ongoing with Carrick Academy with regards to a litter abatement programme and there are also proposals for the recycling of school waste.

Maybole by pass plea

South Ayrshire Council has consistently campaigned for a by-pass for the town of Maybole and further upgrade work on the A77 between Ayr and Stranraer since the council came into being.

I have taken every opportunity to press the case for a by-pass, and backed by a delegation of fellow councillors and supporting officials I have emphasised the need in meetings with Scottish Transport Minister Nicol Stephen.

From South Ayrshire Council's point of view the importance of having work carried out on the A77 both in terms of road safety and in support of tourism, business development, and links with Northern and Southern Ireland cannot be overstressed.

The Council is also acutely aware that road improvements and facilities in the area are likely to prove a major factor when the R & A take a final decision on when to bring the Open Championship back to Turnberry.

Since South Ayrshire Council came into being, I have been actively involved in pressing for improvements on the A77 south of Ayr, and in particular I have had a personal interest in pressing for a bypass for Maybole, and have been in discussion on numerous occasions with members and Ministers of Central Government and the Scottish Parliament to put forward the case for one.

The dangerous situation that exists in the High Street of Maybole with the constant volume of heavy vehicle traffic has to be seen to be believed.

I am delighted that Nicol Stephen has publicly declared his support for a by-pass and look forward to hearing firm time-scales for the project to be initiated.

A77 Safety Group

South Ayrshire Council is delighted to be part of the A77 Safety Group which has made a long term commitment to proactively highlight the importance and need for improvements on the A77, and in particular on the road south of Ayr, through Maybole, and I am pleased to give my personal support.

The multi-agency group aims to encourage people to drive more carefully, and to make the road safer for everyone using it. This message will be delivered using a variety of media, so that all motorists have road safety at the forefront of their minds when driving.

Many people have been injured or killed while travelling on the A77, and each time this happens it brings heartbreak to the relatives and friends of those involved. One accident or death is one too many.