

Eglingham Community Association

Review of 2018

This year seems to have gone by in the blink of an eye for ECA, but the village has probably never benefited as much from our activities.

We left last year arranging evening classes in Watercolor painting, to take place weekly in Eglingham Village Hall. The classes continued to a successful completion in spring, with many locals taking advantage of the low cost high quality lessons. The grant finished with a flourish at the Flower Festival in Eglingham Church where many paintings were on display and Frances, the class tutor painted several arrangements that were used as prizes in the raffle. The grant seems to have encouraged the Tutor to 'go it alone' this year, and she is trying to arrange 10 classes financially independent of any funding. Best of luck and I hope it works out.

A project to help strengthen and grow the two Craft Groups in the parish was also established with a little grant funding from the wind farm Community Benefit Fund. This provided financial help with tutors for the groups, as well as trips to Craft Fairs and 'away day' craft tutorials. It has boosted interest and membership (Eglingham have 15 current members, up from 5), reinforcing and improving community throughout the parish. Exactly what the project aimed to achieve. So good an experience has it been that the groups are looking to extend funding for 2019.

The Cultural Events Project was mentioned in last years ECA Review. It got underway this year with a small programme of events being arranged. The events could range from classical music, theatre, puppetry, comedy, choirs, folk, dance, sculpture/art displays or anything else that falls under the 'culture' banner. As mentioned before, the general idea is to bring a variety of cultural events to the Parish and see if there is an audience for this kind of thing. If there is an idea you wish to see tried out in the Parish, we are always open to new suggestions. To date, we have had six events, with increasing attendance at each event. The current average attendance stands at 60!

I would like to thank each member of ECA for wholeheartedly supporting these events. It has proved to be one of the more interesting projects to manage, as it involves many other people in different organisations, with differing aims, objectives and ways of operating to ECA. It is why the initial project was spread over two years, so that the organisations have time to get used to it, get comfortable and recognise the benefits (both financial and social) that it can bring. This, I think, is beginning to happen.

The second Festival on the Field was the fourth Cultural Event of the year. An audience of 80 people enjoyed four very professional acts over four and a half hours of top class entertainment. The whole of ECA pitched in to make it happen, from fixing up the BBQ,

sorting out the toilets, erecting the gazebos, installing the sound system, providing the hospitality for the entertainers, then taking it all to pieces again. I have heard nothing but positive comments from everyone in the village who attended. Here's looking to next year...

If this was all that ECA did, we would have had a successful year with this alone.

But it is not. There is so much more.

Another fantastic Calendar sold out at Christmas, providing an injection of funds that we then directed towards improving the look and infrastructure of Eglingham Community Field. Again, carrying on from last year, the banking at the field was extensively planted up over the spring period by a dedicated team who have voluntarily decided to meet each Monday afternoon and do a little maintenance work. The difference this work has made to the appearance of the field is astonishing, and I would like to thank them for their dedication and commitment. They have turned quite a plain old school field into a place of beauty and tranquility, ideal for families and a very pleasurable place to play tennis or other sports. And now there are three beautifully refurbished benches on which to sit and enjoy it.

Improvements to the entrance, including a small gate for people on foot, steps and a handrail down to the path plus the concreting of the ramp for vehicular access were proposed as a grant project to the Parish Council. The Council however, were happy to take on the improvements themselves, so quite quickly the work was completed by Greenfingers. Having the steps and handrail has greatly improved the access. They were appreciated by the audience at the Festival and since then by pretty much every field user.

The Parish Council were in action again when a tentative new Tennis Club broached the subject of the court being relaid as it was unplayable. Nicky Dickinson was the driving force behind the grant application, with a little help from ECA in completion. The PC made the application, got the grant and the court was promptly laid and is now in operation with a new Tennis Club holding toddler lessons each week with a professional coach. The Club also have open social tennis nights every Wednesday during the season. The hut next to the court has been turned into a mini tennis pavilion, where players can get changed ready for a game. Seating, mirrors and blinds have been installed to assist the players. A remarkable transformation has taken place in a very short space of time, showing what can be achieved when we all work together.

Finally, one more thing that needs to be mentioned. When David Jackson left the village, ECA stepped in to take over running the community Oil Buying Group, thereby ensuring that all those who use it get nearly 5p/L off every delivery. On an average 500 Litre order, you save £24 just by placing your order with the group.

Malcolm Angus

Chair

Eglingham Community Association