

COVERED!

Fife Society for the Blind newsletter

Summer 2011



Jim Crooks (Client Services Manager, front row second left) and Alan Suttie (Chief Executive Officer, far right) with students and staff at the View Foundation in Budapest, Hungary

SEE MAIN STORY Help for Hungary page 5

on Fife Society for the Blind's recent trip to Budapest

A quick word from the Editor...

Hello again. I hope there is plenty for you to enjoy in another 20-page edition of Covered! Amanda Graham's regular 'Recreation rambles' reflects on plenty of exciting events... and looks forward to a ramble at Coaltown of Balgonie on Saturday 23 July. We have details of BASE's great summer programme of events, as well as some special user events in Kirkcaldy, St Andrews and Dunfermline. These 'roadshows' are of course a wonderful opportunity to get together and should be of interest to all. See 'Special events' on page 4.

We have news from Alan Suttie and our regular feature 'Volunteers corner', as well as many more forthcoming events. Turn to page 5 to find out more about FSB's recent visit to Hungary, promoting our services and expertise.

If you have any comments, or ideas for articles then please do get in contact with me by e-mail: [**geoff.barker@fsbinsight.co.uk**](mailto:geoff.barker@fsbinsight.co.uk)

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News from our CEO, Alan Suttie

How good are we? Are we delivering services that meet the needs of people in Fife who lose their sight? These are important questions that constantly challenge us. We like to believe that at Fife Society for the Blind (FSB) we are innovative and are trying all the time to provide cost-effective services that meet the needs of the majority, whilst being mindful of minority interests.

We were delighted to receive a request from Hungary to deliver training at the University to a group of rehabilitation workers on developing services for older blind and partially sighted people. They had heard about some of our new services targeting dual sensory loss, neurological vision loss, sight loss and dementia and falls prevention — and thought that we might be able to help them. Despite the many financial and resource challenges in Hungary our group of 30 students were a joy to work with, demonstrating against all the odds a tremendous enthusiasm to make a difference to the lives of the people they work with. They were an inspiration to us all in times when we too are facing financial and resource constraints.

Over the summer we will be holding local ‘roadshows’ across Fife when we want to meet with as many service users as we can. This will provide you with the opportunity to put across your priorities for the Society. See the following page for further details. I encourage you to respond positively to your personal invitations — do come and meet us when we are in your area of Fife.

Alan Suttie

Chief Executive Officer

Special events

By now you should have received your invitation to one of our user events which are to be held on the following dates:

Wed 13 July 2011 The Byre Theatre, St Andrews

Thu 21 July 2011 Erskine Church, Dunfermline

Wed 3 August 2011 Fife Sensory Impairment Centre, Kirkcaldy

Each event will start at 10am and finish at 2pm.

What to expect from the day

Each of our regional events will be different but they will all include information, demonstrations and the opportunity to experience some exciting new developments. We will provide lunch and you will have the opportunity to join in small discussion groups and talk about the issues that are important to you.

Don't forget to let us know that you will be attending – details of how to do this are on the invitation. We look forward to seeing you!

WRVS update

The WRVS Volunteer Transport scheme has recently relocated from St Monans to their Kirkcaldy office and is now based at:

West Bridge Mill, Bridge Street, Kirkcaldy KY1 1TE

tel: **01592 269654**

This move will not affect any services.

Help for Hungary

Fife Society for the Blind's reputation as an innovative organisation leading development in rehabilitation and care for elderly blind and partially sighted people has spread across Europe. FSB was invited to deliver a two-day training course to professionals at The View Foundation in Budapest, Hungary at the end of May.

The View Foundation, having acquired funding to have foreign experts deliver training, was impressed by the pioneering programmes developed by the FSB in Fife and invited representatives to share knowledge about service development with specialist workers in Hungary.

Chief Executive Officer Alan Suttie and Jim Crooks (Client Services Manager) provided training on 'Effective Rehabilitation for Ageing and Sight Loss' at the ELTE University, Faculty of Special Education. Alan Suttie described how: 'The course was customised to meet their needs, providing training on new programmes FSB have developed including those supporting neurological vision loss, dual sensory loss, dementia and vision loss as well as new work on falls prevention. Training was delivered through lectures, practical exercises and group discussions, with a strong focus on helping participants to apply the learning to their own work situation.'

Part of the course was to help the rehabilitation workers develop new programmes for the elderly. Previous training delivered in Hungary was almost exclusively focused on rehabilitation for young blind people. However, as in Scotland, the majority of blind people are aged over 65. Previous EU funding in Hungary was available only for rehabilitation of people of working age, aiming to get them into employment. This meant that the elderly blind were generally left to be supported by family members. There was a need, therefore, to provide input on supporting elderly blind people – which the FSB delivered during this training programme.

Jim Crooks commented: 'I have never delivered a training course with more enthusiastic students. The participation was fantastic and feedback was positive as we brought real practical suggestions which they could implement to help their elderly clients.'

The professionals at The View Foundation were able to gain valuable knowledge and skills that had previously been lacking. They created Individual Action Plans and developed these in the group discussions. These plans will influence change in their own professional practice as well as on a national level.

Krisztina Kovács wrote to FSB after the course: 'In the name of the participants and the staff of View Foundation, I would like to express my warmest thanks for your excellent presentations.' FSB is confident that this training course will help improve the support of elderly blind people in Hungary. FSB also provides training courses for both the public and private sector. More information is available on the FSB website:
www.fsbinsight.co.uk/dda

Volunteers corner

When I was asked to produce something for the summer edition of 'Covered!' with a tight deadline, I thought, what? Well...suffice to say one could have heard the 'cogs' in my grey matter turning as far away as Crail! But it's always good to have an opportunity to communicate with everyone at any time of the year.

The voluntary services of FSB were as busy as ever over the winter and spring periods with all our volunteers working flat out to support the many social, recreational and educational activities. There's a slight breather during the summer months when the blind social groups have a break and the blind bowling starts up but it gives us time to evaluate what's just happened, what is happening in the present and what preparation is needed for events still to happen in the future! Phew! >

Wanted! Minibus escorts

Volunteer escorts for the minibus are still required to help out on the Dunfermline run taking passengers to Baldridgeburn blind social group. This could be done on a rota basis if we can get two or three offers of help. The clients and volunteers are a super bunch of people who would make you so welcome and they have an interesting and varied programme which includes guest speakers, musical turns and games. The bacon rolls are good at snack time too!

Administration volunteers

We are currently looking to recruit a bank of suitably experienced volunteers to work alongside us on a weekly basis, for a minimum four hours per week between the busy period of 10am–2pm and to provide additional ad hoc support as required. Tasks will include the organisation and administration of our regular fundraising and voluntary activities, attending to the voluntary transport schedule and keeping the diary up to date, general administration and reception support and much more. To find out more about this worthwhile opportunity email:

marlyn.murdoch@fsbinsight.co.uk

Enclose a CV and a letter outlining your experience and availability.

Befriending

As financial cuts to charities begin to bite, there has never been more need for volunteers to help out on a one-to-one basis. The word 'befriending' can be misleading and conjure up thoughts of 'big commitment' or 'this may go on forever', but every referral is different and the needs of users are wide and varied.

For example, a Kirkcaldy lady used to enjoy walking and birdwatching. After losing the sight in one eye her confidence has taken a knock too. She would love to join Fife Council's 'Bums of Seats' programme. ➤

However, she would like to get her fitness levels up first. A volunteer or two, on a rota basis would be so beneficial in accompanying her for a walk around one of the local parks every week for a few weeks and then she could move on. This task has a clear beginning and an end.

A very elderly gentleman with low vision due to macular degeneration and living in Glenrothes is looking for someone to read his mail as his family do not live locally. This could be a half-hour visit every 10 days or so — not a huge commitment really.

An elderly, partially sighted lady in St Andrews would benefit from a wee half-hour chat every week or two to alleviate the loneliness. Her family do what they can to support her but their jobs involve a fair amount of travel and there are spells when she is left on her own.

And to support all the above mentioned and so much more, we need to keep bringing in money to fill the 'coffers'. This leads nicely on to...

Fundraising

We have held a number of store and street collections this year and raised the following:

Tesco Store, Cupar	£610.80
Asda, Dalgety Bay	£406.67
Kingsgate Centre, Dunfermline	£306.11
Asda, Glenrothes	£722.58
Main St, Dalgety Bay	£334.38

Thank you to everyone who collected — you really are the stalwarts of our organisation!

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Forthcoming collections for your diary are:

Morrisons Store, Glenrothes	Fri 8 July
Leven High Street	Sat 16 July
Cupar Main Street	Sat 13 August
Tesco Store, Rosyth	Fri 19/ Sat 20 August

A busy summer beckons and we would be grateful if anyone could give an hour or two at any venue. Come and give the magnificent volunteer 'A' Team a bit of help and support. We enjoy a great rapport with our generous public while enjoying a blether and banter along the way.

Volunteer expenses

Talking of 'coffers', our volunteer drivers will now benefit from an increase in mileage from 40 to 45 pence per mile as from 6 April this year. This can only help towards the increase in costs of petrol and diesel prices we are all feeling these days.

To streamline and make payment of volunteer expenses easier, we are now able to pay them directly into your bank account and have produced new mileage forms for you to complete and submit for the future. Get in touch if you wish any of these forms sent out to you.

And on that note, I hope you all have a lovely summer and that the weather is kind to us. Thank you for the tasks done and for the tasks still to occur. If you know anyone who would be interested in the work that the society does, please tell them to get in touch.

Liz Reid

Volunteer Co-ordinator

BASE summer events

Welcome to the summer programme of events from BASE (Blind Activities Support and Events). BASE aims to provide transport and sighted guides for those living in East Fife. Here is the programme for the next few months (although occasionally these dates may change):

Thu 14 July	Hill of Tarvit Mansion and grounds
Thu 18 August	Discovery Point, Dundee
Thu 15 September	Doune Castle
Thu 13 October	Local walk Springfield or coastal path (bad weather alternatives: Fisheries Museum, Anstruther or Scotland's Secret Bunker)
Thu 17 November	Verdant Works, Dundee
December	Christmas lunch

Bad weather alternatives will be organised for the outdoor events where possible. Details of each event will be available nearer the time but please contact Joe or Morag for further information on:

Dr Joe Lamb

01334 475 909

or

Ms Morag Stewart

01334 840 490

Or email us via our website:

www.fifebase.com

We look forward to meeting you at our events —
from Gladys Taylor on behalf of BASE.

Recreation rambles

Hello everyone. Since I wrote my last article there has been more activity with the rooks — another eight nests appeared so that was 16 in total! Unfortunately after the very strong winds in the middle of May some of the nests were blown out of the trees and some of the adults were injured or killed. We also had several young rooks trying to shelter in the garden — I suppose this is how the laws of nature prevail — fortunately the RSPCA came to the rescue. I hope you all survived the hurricane winds — at least we have solid bricks and mortar to protect us.

Outdoor activities have now begun again in earnest and I hope as many of you as possible will be able to take part in some way. Seize the day: now is the perfect time for getting out and about!

Rambling

A group of VIPs and sighted guide volunteers recently met at Aberdour to catch the train to Inverkeithing. We then walked along the coastal path back towards Aberdour. The views over the Forth were quite spectacular with the rail bridge looming in the background. We stopped for a lovely picnic in the grounds of a ruined churchyard. Oh those sandwiches tasted good! The group then continued along a straight stretch towards Aberdour and finally along the golf course back to the start. Thanks especially to Chris Mercer who suggested and co-ordinated this walk.

If you are reasonably fit and would like to come along to any of the walks or would like a programme of future walks then contact the office.

The next walk is Coaltown of Balgonie on Saturday 23 July. Meet in the car park on Standing Stane Road (A915) at 10.30am. The car park is situated on the north side of the road opposite the junction to Coaltown of Wemyss. This is a circular walk on good paths but it could be muddy in places so wear good footwear. Dogs are welcome. >

Swimming

We now have two swimming groups — special thanks to Bert Bag and Boyd Brannan for volunteering at the Cowdenbeath pool.

We also have a group at Bowhill Pool. Thank you so much to Thelma Grieg and Bill Campbell for driving and everyone. Thanks also to Beth Coates for assisting. Come along and join the group.

We need new volunteers at both pools — so if you know of anyone who could spare an hour or two on a Tuesday please tell me.

Romance at Bowhill

Ian Sievewright who swims at Bowhill Pool and is a rambler and curler was actually involved with the construction of the building over 30 years ago. He also met his wife there. She used to come with her father from Arbroath to swim there. Ian spotted her in the pool and she spotted him too! They set a date to meet at the cinema, which proved to be the start of a beautiful relationship. Ian proposed and produced the engagement ring in Edinburgh on the bridge at Waverley Station. Yes, you've guessed what the answer was! What a romantic story!

Bowling

Congratulations to Maria Spencer — she attended the International Bowling for the Disabled in Pretoria, South Africa in May this year and is now the Ladies Single IBD World Champion. Maria plays at Abbeyview bowling club in Dunfermline. Well done Maria — what an achievement!

The bowling season has now started — new members are always welcome. Come along and have a go — even if you haven't bowled before! Bowling groups meet in Leven, Cowdenbeath, Kirkcaldy, Abbeyview, Kingseat and St Andrews.

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Gardening

We have a wonderful little plot at the ecology centre in Kinghorn. Thank you to Brian Reidpath who looks after it and keeps it weed free. All we need now are some budding gardeners to go along and help Brian — if you feel this is for you then please get in touch. It's all about being outside and doing something you enjoy.

The Cupar social group have met with Elmwood staff to discuss the development of a sensory garden. This is an exciting venture in partnership working with Elmwood College. The garden we looked at has great potential and we were able to pass on our ideas and suggestions.

Under-60s group

If you feel you would like to join the under-60s group you would be welcome. The group is looking for younger members to join them. They go to the theatre, concerts, meals out and various other activities.

Audio description

Audio description is available at most theatres locally and nationally. If you have access to the internet, the Access Scottish Theatre website is excellent. I know that some of our clients like to attend some of these events. The Byre in St Andrews also offers audio description on some performances. For further information please contact me or the venue.

Please get in touch if you would like anything included in this newsletter. It can go into the next issue. Thank you for listening and do contact me if you have anything to discuss. I'm always pleased to hear from you.

Amanda Graham

Social and Recreation Project Worker

The power of friendship

Has sight loss knocked your confidence when you are around other people?

Evidence shows that many people who experience a sight loss feel more dependent on others afterwards — no matter how much they still do for themselves. Such changes in the way people feel about themselves and their relationships can lead people to change the way they behave: they may go out less, join in fewer activities or feel like a less equal partner in friendships.

It doesn't have to be this way though.

If this experience resonates with you, you may be interested in a programme we are running called Friendship Enrichment, which aims to tackle the problem of people feeling socially isolated as a result of their sight loss. This group programme runs for ten weeks and focuses on activities and discussions designed to deal with aspects such as low self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as some of the social skills we all need to participate in social life.

If you are interested in finding out more about Friendship Enrichment, please contact me in full confidence:

tel: **01592 644979**, asking for William Chainey, or
email: **William.chainey@fsbinsight.co.uk**

William Chainey

Social Worker

Everybody's talking...

Everybody's talking about Talking Tandems — are you?

If you know nothing about this... read on.

Talking Tandems is a newly formed charity which aims to give people with a sight loss the chance of experiencing the thrill of tandem cycling.

Regular tandem cycling has many benefits including:

- meeting new people
- improved health and fitness
- increased confidence and well-being

All of Talking Tandems' front riders are experienced cyclists and have gone through full enhanced disclosure. In April this year Talking tandems began an extensive cycle ride programme, which will continue until October.

A management team made up of both sighted and visually impaired volunteers runs the charity. An annual membership will cost only £10.

You can get more details about the cycle ride programme by contacting secretary Sheanagh Swanney. Her contact details are:

tel: **01383 412935**

e-mail: **Sheanagh@btinternet.com**

Or have a look at Talking Tandems' website to find out more:

www.talkingtandems.org

Talking Tandems charity is always on the lookout for new members and would love to welcome new people to the fold.

Cabaret!

Fife Society for the Blind is pleased to announce a fundraising cabaret concert to be held at the Halfway House Hotel, Kingseat on Sunday 6 November at 2pm. The event will feature local comedian and performer Bert Allan and FSB's own David Ross.

Bert will be performing a mixture of comedy and song while David, accompanied by Gifford Lind on guitar, will be performing a selection of modern and traditional folk songs. Tickets are only £6 for adults and £4 for children and will be available either from the office or on the day itself.

There will also be a raffle as well as stalls with FSB Christmas cards and Braille and tactile jewellery.

Fife Society for the Blind would like to thank the performers as well as the venue for their co-operation in organising this event.

Folk club celebrates 50th

On 30 September 1961, the first Dunfermline folk club was held in the Houfe on Charmers Street in Dunfermline. To mark the 50th anniversary of this date, there will be a range of events held at the Glen Pavilion — culminating in the Dunfermline folk weekend during the last weekend of October.

Events happening include a ceilidh on Friday 28 October and a concert featuring Barbara Dickson and Archie Fisher on the Saturday evening (29 October). Originally from Dunfermline, Barbara first performed at the Houfe before gaining worldwide recognition as a singer and performer. Come and hear Barbara perform some of the songs she performed 50 years ago. For this special one-off concert Barbara will be joined by Archie Fisher a legend in his own right. Both the ceilidh and the concert will be held in the Glen Pavilion.

Tickets for both events will be on sale from the end of August and details of how they can be purchased will be available either from the visit Dunfermline website:

www.visitdunfermline.com or

check out the Dunfermline Folk club website at:

www.dunfermlinefolkclub.art.officelive.com

Finally, if you are a fan of folk or acoustic music why not come along to the Dunfermline folk club? The club meets every Wednesday at the Thistle Tavern in Dunfermline. Doors open at 8pm.

Lottery results

And finally, the 200 Club lottery results from April and May:

April 2011

1 st Prize	No. 081 Peter Wakefield	£200.00
2 nd Prize	No. 009 Isobel Hardie	£40.00
2 nd Prize	No. 100 Ron Oliphant	£40.00
3 rd Prize	No. 028 Mrs C Bennett	£24.00
3 rd Prize	No. 159 Eric Russell	£24.00
3 rd Prize	No. 006 Florence Macdonald	£24.00

May 2011

1 st Prize	No. 044 Helen Fairgrieve	£198.75
2 nd Prize	No. 081 Peter Wakefield	£39.75
2 nd Prize	No. 116 Rona King	£39.75
3 rd Prize	No. 137 Margaret Pullar	£23.85
3 rd Prize	No. 131 Mary Manzie	£23.85
3 rd Prize	No. 141 W. Suttie	£23.85

June results have not yet been drawn.

‘Your Call’ counselling services

We have received some information about a free telephone counselling service which may be of assistance to people who wish to discuss their personal situation.

This year **‘Your Call’ Counselling Service** is happy to be celebrating its fourth year of service, providing free telephone counselling for disabled people across Scotland. Since it was first launched in 2008 it has helped over 150 clients and has delivered over 1700 hours of free tele-healthcare!

At **‘Your Call’** the aim of counselling is to help individuals to become more aware of their personal resources, more skilled at coping with difficulties that they face and better able to live independently. As a result, over the past three years 82% of their clients either agreed or strongly agreed that counselling at **‘Your Call’** had improved their well-being.

Some comments from disabled people who have used **‘Your Call’** include:

- ‘By talking things through in a calm, rational way, my anxieties dissipated quite a lot and I was able to come off medication — talking is by far the best medicine and I am eternally grateful for the support I have been given.’
- ‘I am so grateful for the support I've had from Your Call — the counsellor has been warm, friendly and knowledgeable when I needed it... I think this service is a lifeline — I wouldn't like to think how awful the last year would have been without it.’
- ‘It's an excellent service for disabled people who have difficulty getting out of the house or are feeling isolated.’

If you would like to learn more about the service or to receive free information, leaflets and business cards about the service please contact Claire Marchant-Collier on:
tel: **0131 475 2670** or
email: **claire@lothiancil.org.uk**

RNIB product information

Do you miss reading your favourite magazine or newspaper? **National Talking Newspapers and Magazines (NTNM)** has over **200 top-selling titles available on audio CD, which can be sent direct to your home. Each issue has all the best highlights including features, editorials and top stories, so just pick your favourite, sit back and wait for it to arrive through the post.**

If you use a computer you can pay one annual fee and choose from full text or audio files sent straight to your inbox. To find out more, talk to NTNM Customer Services on **01435 866 102** for a free catalogue.

If you are interested in **magnifiers**, then why not order a free "Choosing your magnifier" guide from RNIB. The guide covers assessments, eye health checks and explains about the different types of magnifiers. RNIB also sells a range of magnifiers up to a maximum magnification level of six times — including handheld, stand, pocket and hands-free.

Lighting can make all the difference to reading and the amount of magnification you may need. Two particularly useful portable lights that you can take out and about with you are the OttLite portable desk light and book light. Both have LED lights which never need replacing. DH292 booklight — £11.22; DH293 desk light — £20.41

If you're out and about, the new iGlasses **ultrasonic detection device** will vibrate to warn you of obstacles at head and chest level. Developed by RNIB and AmbuTech, and used in conjunction with a guide dog or white cane, they will detect obstacles up to 3 meters away. Available with tinted grey or clear lenses they can be adjusted to suit you. ME14 and ME14TINT £79.99 (excl. VAT)

Football fixtures for the 2011/2012 season are out. Listings cover Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland and are presented by date and also contain the final league tables from last season. All fixtures are available in Braille and by email. Scottish and English fixtures are also available in DAISY audio. Price: £2.75.

For further information contact Reception at FSIC.

Looking for a cure

Clinical trials in the USA are using a revolutionary technique with stem cells in a bid to restore sight to the blind. 24 patients have recently enrolled in two separate trials at a specialist eye institute in California to treat two different forms of blindness — the most common form of age-related blindness, ‘dry’ macular degeneration, and a form of juvenile blindness. Patients will have millions of embryonic stem cells injected into their eyes to try to heal visual damage.

Stop press!

Forthcoming events:

Thursday 15 September

Stableford Golf Competition for teams of four at Thornton golf club.
The fee for a team is £120.

Monday 17 October

A curry night is to be held at Reya Indian Restaurant, Leslie.
Ticket price is £11.90, of which the FSB gets 50%.

Further details for the curry night will be available in the next edition of the newsletter — due out in early October.



FIFE SOCIETY FOR THE
BLIND

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