

## Constantine Enterprises Company

### Chairman's Report May 2021

'Dormant' has been a word used of so many organisations and activities over the past year however I can honestly say for the Constantine Enterprises Company it has absolutely not been the case!

Thank goodness for technology, Zoom meetings have kept us all in contact and informed, so each of our project committees with their many volunteers have been able to meet. Regular email, What's App and texts, how could we have coped without it all?

Our many CEC projects are all community based and although the doors to the Tolmen Centre may have had to close to our audiences and hirers, we are aware of the enormous benefit the Bosahan Woodlands has given our Constantine community over the past year. It has been a year of contrasts, change, highs and lows, but the most used facility in our portfolio has been the woods. Thousands this year have walked the paths for exercise, a crucial space for our wellbeing. We pay tribute to our Benefactor and the many volunteers who have continued to maintain paths, clear trees when fallen, and erect many bird boxes inspiring us to stop and listen to take time. It has become a space for many of us to reflect and take stock in today's new world.

Public spaces and public buildings such the Tolmen building and garden, Bosahan Woodlands, Constantine Museum, and the various Transition projects cannot be left dormant for 14 months. Behind the scenes there has been activity, weekly at a bare minimum, but on many occasions daily. Volunteers have worked under strict Covid guidelines but have managed to continue. The most visible work undertaken has been the Tolmen roof, project managed by volunteer Richard Thomas working with local firm Landstone Construction. Work began in October 2020 and was completed in January 2021. A building enveloped in scaffolding and a carpark and café space full of builders equipment, and crates of slate is not conducive to audiences arriving for a pleasant evening's entertainment, so being positive, this closure could not have come at a better time. Due to water ingress and high humidity levels some small areas of plaster had fallen and some larger areas from the reveal around the large window at the rear of the auditorium had to be repaired and then the whole area replastered and redecorated. Satisfied we have now done all we can and with monthly inspections we are confident the building is ready to reopen as and when the government roadmap allows. In addition a vast amount of painting, cleaning, and clearing has taken place.

Behind the scenes a programme of music for the remainder of the year has been organised and hours of research is still ongoing as we hope live theatre will return in the not too distant future.

The fascinating Museum collection may not have been available to visitors, however enquiries have continued to come in and under the team's watchful eye the artefacts have

been kept under strict museum conditions with regular monitoring of the temperature and moisture levels. Not quite the British Museum but our objects truly matter to us.

Books and reading have never been more important and so we are already looking forward to the book group welcoming back some local and international writers.

We also have new projects in the pipeline with the taking on of the Glebe Garden lease, a rewilding of this incredible Victorian space to compliment the Bosahan woods. I also hope many of you will remember our lockdown painting challenge 'Through the Window' overseen by volunteer Sally Spens, launching our third and final phase of our planned major work at the Tolmen to repair and restore twenty two windows. We were hoping to exhibit the pieces of art as soon as we reopened last year but here we are, May 2021, and the first Art Exhibition in the Tolmen Centre will be the pieces of work produced by a variety of our community during the first lockdown. We have chosen a selection to have reproduced into packs of postcards which we hope to sell to raise vital funds for our window work.

As you are aware from the annual accounts our projects, with careful management, all went into the Pandemic in a financially secure position, and through the generous support received from central and local Government with 'Business Support Grants' and continued local support with regular contributions, our projects are all able to continue, but there is no doubt that without such phenomenal support our future may not have been so promising.

We are, an organisation run by volunteers and it is therefore to those individuals I must say an enormous thank you, from me personally, but also from the Constantine and wider County community . Individuals who have kept the faith and continued to work hard to take our projects forward many of whom are behind the scenes. If I listed names I would invariably miss someone out, but we are a team and each individual is important. One man however, has become synonymous with the Tolmen Centre. For 16 years his vision and drive has set us aside and, I believe above many other Arts Centres. Daily he has ensured the Tolmen Centre is ready to run for the next event. I could list all of his roles but when I asked him for a full list it ran to three pages so I won't reprint them here. Charlie Pugh has decided to step sideways, thankfully not down, and although he will remain at the heart of what the Tolmen Centre is about he will leave some of the tasks of keeping the show on the road to several, yes, several other individuals! We pay tribute to his endurance, enthusiasm, and stoicism and hope that as we move into a new phase of working that he will continue to enjoy volunteering along with what has truly become an inspirational team.

If you feel you have the drive, enthusiasm and stamina there are many volunteer roles in all of our projects – get in touch, don't leave it until tomorrow.

I cannot conclude without acknowledging the time we have all been through. We are all changed, we have all had time to reflect on the lives we have had, and the lives we want to now lead. The common factor is that we are all creative social beings and the projects which the CEC hold most dear, and which we, as volunteers uphold, will with your continued support and our determination continue to benefit us all.

Tracey Clowes (Hon Chair)