



# NEWSLETTER 2021

## Issue 37

### GROUP NEWS

**GROUP AGM TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY ON ZOOM 13 May 2021 7:30pm**  
**OFFICIAL NOTICE AT END OF NEWSLETTER**

### Your Current Committee

Acting Chair	Mark Elder	0797 3217256	chair@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Secretary	David Allan		secretary@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Treasurer	Lindsay Pyall		treasurer@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Membership/Liaison Secretary	Mark Elder	0797 3217256	membership@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Kenneth Grant	01324228126	newsletter@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Motorcycle Chief Observer	Fiona Robertson		chief_observer_bikes@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Car Chief Observer	David McCall		chief_observer_cars@forthvalleyiam.org.uk
Committee Member	Scott Tulip		
Committee Member	Peter Serhatlic		
Committee Member	Amanda Aikman		
Committee Member	Belinda MacDonald		

## CAR / MOTORCYCLE SECTION

### Solar Powering My Car

I've wanted a garage for my car for many years, but our house (which we love and don't want to move from) has no suitable land on which to build a garage (we are on the side of a hill, off a steep road-way and our existing drive is cut into the hill, but a garage on the driveway would block all the light into an important room). I've thought about it long and hard and I've never found a solution.

So I've put plenty of energy into trying to buy or rent a garage elsewhere. Finally, about 6 months before lockdown, I found a suitable garage and my car is now very happy in it.

Of course, that led to a new problem once lockdown started. Normally my car is used once or more a week so the battery is happy and ready to start the car. But with lockdown, with the supermarket delivering food, and all exercise being taken very locally, there was no cause to use the car and keep the battery charged. My campervan (which hardly moves most winters) is kept on a C-tek charger through the winter to keep the battery nicely conditioned. (As an aside, I really do recommend C-tek chargers. They exercise batteries, not just recharge them. A battery that Kwik-fit may tell you is on its last legs can often be brought back to good condition by a month on a C-tek charger). The campervan is on our drive at the house, so the C-tek plugs into a weather-proof external socket.



But my new garage has no power! So after the first month of lockdown, the car's tracker system sent me a text "hey my battery is down to 9 volts". I used a portable jump-starter so I could put some energy back into the battery but that was not a long term solution.



Hence the title of this newsletter article – I researched solar panels! It is very difficult to know what size to buy. I cannot, because of its location and T&Cs of my use of the garage, erect a panel at an angle facing the sun. It must lie flat on the flat roof of the garage. In winter, as we all know, we don't get a lot of sun and when we do, it is for a very limited number of hours. All the reading you can do simply explains the energy calculations in perfect conditions, not with Scottish weather, a panel pointing vertical rather than south and trees dropping leaves in autumn and accumulating on the panel!



So, I pretty much stuck a pin in the list of options and went for a 150watt panel with a controller to condition the battery (and ensure it does not overcharge). I also bought a monitoring device that logs the state of the battery over time. It supposedly can connect to my computer to display charts of charging vs time and sunlight, but I haven't linked it up yet.

### Does it work?

Nearly! My car did not leave the garage from early April 2020 (when it went for its MOT) to late February 2021, and when I turned the key in February it started up instantly! However, from mid-November to mid-January the solar panel was not getting enough sun to keep the battery charged. I did have to visit once to top the battery up from my jump-starter during that period. Much better than doing so every two weeks for the whole year, but not perfect.

So, I've now purchased a second car battery (identical to the one in the car) that is now connected in parallel with the car's battery (but it is on the floor of the garage). The purpose of this is to have a higher total charge in reserve as we go into next winter with the hope that the car can get through the dark winter period without the charge in the car's own battery dropping so low that it can't start the car when I need to.

I've also learned that the panel only needs very few cells blocked by leaves or moss to significantly drop its voltage. So, I now have a long pole with a window cleaner's rubber squeegee on it, and a step-ladder to keep the panel clean whenever I visit the garage.

The available power has also meant I've been able to install LED lighting in the garage (I bought some 12v lights designed for caravan interiors) and an alarm system that sends me a text if anyone opens the garage door. I'm getting slightly carried away and have been looking at CCTV options (with internet connectivity). Then I'll need a 3<sup>rd</sup> battery! I'm determined not to move house!

**Mark Elder**

## **NATIONAL NEWS**

### **Global Road Safety Week - Low speed streets save lives**

20mph low speed streets save lives and are the heart of any community.

At the heart of Global Road Safety Week 17 - 23 May is the message: '30 km/h (20 mph) speed limits where people and traffic mix make for streets that are healthy, green and liveable, in other words, streets for life'.

[RoadSafe: Global Road Safety Week - Low speed streets save lives](#)



### **Webinar highlights achievements of award winners**

March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021 saw the first webinar for the Prince Michael International Road Safety Awards. Bringing together several projects that focus on road users, this webinar will spotlight work to promote effective policies that deliver improved safety, an intervention that delivers life-saving protection to vulnerable young motorcycle passengers and innovative campaigning that embraces behavioural science to address high risk groups.

[RoadSafe: Webinar highlights achievements of award winners](#)

Notice is hereby given by order of the Group Committee that the

## **Annual General Meeting of Forth Valley Group of Advanced Motorists**

**will be held on Zoom on Thursday, 13 May 2021 at 7.30p.m.**

to enable the Trustees of the Group to present their Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended March 2020 for approval by Group Members.

All Members, Associates and Friends are invited to attend but only Fully Paid-up Members of the IAM and the Group may vote. A Member entitled to vote at the General Meeting may appoint a proxy to vote in his or her stead.

A proxy need not be a Full Member of the Group. Nominations are invited from Full Members to stand for Committee. Any nomination must be on the form below and must reach the Secretary at least seven days before the election.

### **CURRENT COMMITTEE**

All Officers retire annually and may offer themselves for re-election. One third of the Committee (excluding Officers) must retire annually and may offer themselves for re-election.

#### **OFFICERS**

Chair	Mark Elder	Prefer to step down
Secretary	David Allan	Stepping down
Treasurer	Lindsay Pyall	Willing to stand for re-election

#### **OTHER POSITIONS AND COMMITTEE**

Membership/Liaison Secretary	Mark Elder	Willing to stand for re-election
Newsletter Editor	Kenneth Grant	Willing to stand for re-election
Chief Observer Motorcycle	Fiona Robertson	Willing to stand for re-election
Chief Observer Car	David McCall	Willing to stand for re-election
Committee Member	Amanda Aikman	Stepping down
Committee Member	Belinda MacDonald	Standing for Group Secretary
Committee Member	Scott Tulip	Assisting from HQ
Committee Member	Peter Serhatlic	Assisting from HQ

Virtual Meeting Details:

Please attend the meeting by using Zoom at the following link. The Zoom session will open at 7:25pm

<https://zoom.us/j/99264761597?pwd=ZEU1Mi9zYXJLelhNZXEVRG9Eak10Zz09>

Meeting ID: 992 6476 1597  
Passcode: 405926

