



# Laggan Matters



NEONI AS LEITH AN T-SLUAIGH, GUN AONTA AN T-SLUAIGH

NOTHING ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT OF THE PEOPLE

## Welcome to the first edition of LAGGAN MATTERS...

The new name was suggested by Sheena Slimon. Her entry tied with another suggestion, so we used an online random answer generator to choose fairly between the two. Sheena will shortly take delivery of a bottle of Daffy's Gin. Congratulations!



### Results:

The Glen Gatherer	1 vote	2.13% of the vote
The Blether	1	2.13%
Local Lines	1	2.13%
Laggan Lives	1	2.13%
Laggan Lightening	1	2.13%
The Jibber Jabber	2	4.26%
Splash Back	2	4.26%
Laggan Link	3	6.38%
Laggan Litchie	3	6.38%
Badenoch Blether	6	12.77%
Laggan Matters	13	27.66%
Laggans Snaggal	13	27.66%

Coming out of Lockdown is unsettling. The challenge is to work with the new normal. One of the positives has been the way we feel that the community has come together to support one another. Going forward, let's continue to support each other and our local businesses and be kind to one another.

We are grateful for the suggestions for items to be included in Laggan Matters. We have tried to include some of them in this edition, and plan to use others in future newsletters. It is *your* newsletter, and we are

doing our best to entertain, engage and inform. Please continue to feed back to us and to give us information about events in this glorious part of The Highlands; we need your help to make this the sort of message that you are pleased to see drop into your in-box.

Amanda [amandagallagher17@yahoo.com](mailto:amandagallagher17@yahoo.com) and Liz [macfarlanliz@gmail.com](mailto:macfarlanliz@gmail.com)

Grateful thanks to all the folk who have contributed to this edition and especially to Robyn for the Survey Monkey co-ordination and all her advice, input and design expertise.

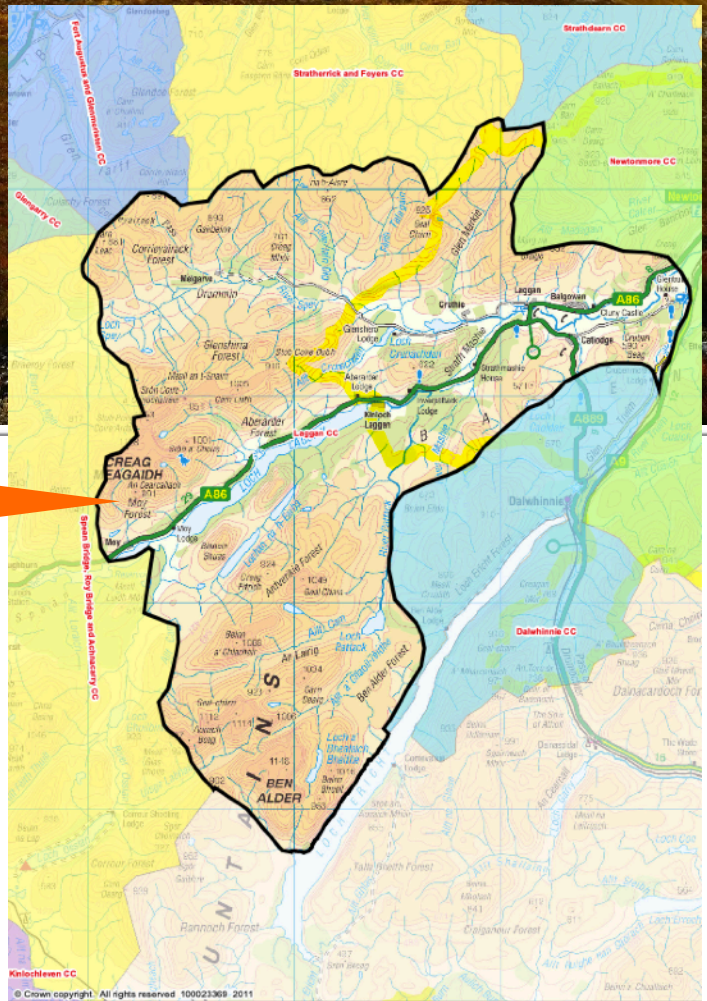
## Gergask Primary School

Gergask Primary has been re-clustered with Newtonmore Primary and we are all delighted to welcome Mrs Sarah Fraser as our new Head Teacher. Mrs Fraser said "I would like to say that I am delighted to be taking on the roll of cluster Head Teacher at Gergask and Newtonmore Primary Schools. I am looking forward to meeting you all and getting to know the school community at Gergask. Hopefully the term will settle and we will get back to doing what we as a staff are used to; teaching and supporting our pupils and their families."

Pupils were delighted to get back to school - we think! Apart from being a little bit tired and pretty hungry, everyone has adapted really well to the "new normal". We are so happy to have a couple of new pupils - welcome to Arracah in P1 and Imogen returns to Gergask to P5. Thanks to the glorious weather we have enjoyed during these first two weeks back, pupils have loved taking their learning outside - long may it continue!

Lisa Ross





## The Moy Wall Mystery

Many of us don't appreciate the size of the Parish of Laggan. It is around 30 miles long and to the West it stretches down Loch Lagganside to Moy, almost reaching the big Laggan Dam.

This is not just the border with the Parish of Kilmonivaig, but also the ancient march between Badenoch and Lochaber and until 1835, between lands of Gordon(east) and MacKintosh(west)

The march is delineated by an impressive but puzzling structure - the Moy Wall. Dry-stone built, at least 5 feet high, its lower section from the North bank of the River Spean, which flows from Loch Laggan, is now mostly destroyed by flooding and road construction. Above the road it can be found among the brackens, and but for a short stretch beside Loch na Caillich and a couple of breaks caused by deer damage, it makes its superb ascent for approx. 4 miles, to around 3300 feet, almost to the summit of Creag Meagaidh (3707ft). The Wall, despite its age, is still in good order and inspected and maintained by Rory Richardson and SNH.

Despite being such a huge, logistically daunting and expensive undertaking, it is not known who built and paid for the Wall - and for what purpose. Was it a vanity project, or merely for controlling sheep and/or deer stocks, or could it have been a means of very accurately fixing the march line?

It is known that in 1796 there was a dispute as to the position of the marches at Urchar - the most easterly MacKintosh holding, bordering with the Duke of Gordon's land at Moy. In 1798, Donald McDonald in Tulloch wrote to the MacKintosh of MacKintosh charging £40 for the building of 1200 yards of dyke. He said "and so far as is done I can say with great truth that there is not a better Stone Dyke in the Highlands than what I built. I had masons from Argyleshire that is really good. I began in the March between you and the Duke at Urchar." Could this have been the start of the Wall construction?

Later, in 1872, the 1st edition OS map shows the march with a Wall as its very lowest section, whereas the 2nd edition in 1899 shows a Wall to 3300ft.

Perhaps someone out there has further documentary evidence!

**Graham Grant**



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## **SSE Community Benefit Funds** **... a reminder on behalf of the** **Local Grants Committee**

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Applications for Micro Grants (up to £500) and COVID 19 (Recovery) grants (up to £1,000) can be submitted at any time during the year

to [treasurerlcc@laggan.com](mailto:treasurerlcc@laggan.com) by any community group or group of individuals wishing to progress a project that will benefit the community.

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Applications for Large Grants (up to £10,000) can be submitted in March and September each year. Please go to <https://sse.com/communities/fundlocations/stronelairg/> for more details. This newsletter has a report from Laggan Heritage on their successful application and activities resulting.

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The COVID 19 (Recovery) Grant (up to £1,000) is available to any of the community groups who can demonstrate that their activities in support of the community have been compromised as a result of the lockdown, have not been able to provide the services needed to benefit the community and who now wish to open up activities to provide such a benefit.

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The grants committee will meet "as and when" required in the coming months to ensure a timely response to any applications.



## **SSE Stronelairg Community Fund** **update**

With the successful application to SSE Renewables and a donation from Laggan Heritage for funding of the Sarah Justina monument it was possible to go ahead with the restoration of this monument. Cluny Estate was also helpful with the uplift of materials. The stonework has now been restored and phase 2 of the project, with funds from Laggan Heritage and Clan Macpherson Association, resulted in the railings surrounding the monument being painted. Laggan Heritage hopes to have a walk up to the monument in the autumn.

Laggan Heritage has also made a successful application to SSE Renewables for the restoration of the memorial to Mrs Grant of Laggan, which lies within the Laggan Church graveyard, and for groundworks to the Calum Piobhair cairn, to allow better access and parking. It is hoped that work will start on both of these projects in the near future.

**Valerie Macpherson.**



## Laggan Community Council

The Community Council has continued to “meet” virtually during the COVID 19 pandemic and has been joined on these calls by a good number of local residents, as well as our representative Highland Councillors. The minutes of recent ZOOM meetings are routinely posted on the Laggan Village Notice Board and on the laggan.com website.

**Key items to have been reviewed or progressed are local planning applications, road closures, road works and forestry discussions with Bear, Transport Scotland, SSE and Jahama Estate. We were especially pleased that finally, the resurfacing of the A889 from Lagg Cottage to The Monarch/Drumgask Farm was completed without too much disruption in July - albeit 2 years after the issue of “craters” on each side of the road was raised. Bear continue to undertake studies on the A889 for its potential widening to national trunk road standards. The Community Council works hard to ensure that community interests are shared with the roads authority.**

We expect that the narrow road bridge over the railway at Dalwhinnie will be strengthened during early November. The A889 will be closed completely to and from the A9 for up to 2 weeks. These dates have moved around a lot in recent months and are now back to our initial request. We will be discussing appropriate diversion routes with Bear. We intend to move on to discuss all the A86 issues as well with Bear and Transport Scotland.

**Since lockdown eased, the vexing question of littering, and wild and dirty camping in our area has been a challenging one to resolve easily, however a number of our local estate landowners have now placed the LCC “Thank you for taking your litter home” signs in lay-bys and other areas where there have been issues. We still have plenty of signs available to place. Please contact any of the Community Council officials.**

Finally, elements of the Community Development plan had to be put on hold during lockdown, however the “Connecting Laggan” project, which aims to connect all of the hamlets of our wide area safely and off the trunk road network has recently re-started. We were fortunate that SUSTRANS, who have been funding the initial feasibility studies, agreed to carry over the funds allowable into their new financial year, so we will be able to complete the phase 1 feasibility, which will include a community engagement process on potential priority routes.

**Colin Morgan**

## Ardverikie News

Many of us have enjoyed visiting Ardverikie and Aberarder gardens on their Open Gardens Day usually held in May, but because of Covid 19 and lockdown this couldn't happen this year. However a huge thanks to Ardverikie estate, who have decided that local causes should not miss out from funds usually raised by this event. They have generously donated £500 to Laggan church and £1,000 to Highland Hospice, which is a larger sum than normal.

**Amanda Gallagher**



## A Tale of a Public Toilet

Highland Council own the Public Toilet in Laggan. It is built on land gifted to them by Laggan Community Trading (LCT). If the Public Toilet is no longer required, the land and building revert to LCT. The sewage from the Public Toilet discharges into a septic tank which sits behind the Public Toilet on land owned by LCT. This septic tank is shared with other users all of which have a responsibility to maintain the sewage system. LCT are aware that concerns have been expressed for some time about the smells coming from this septic tank and have been trying to convince the users that action needs to be taken on the septic tank and its soak-away to resolve this issue. After protracted discussions Highland Council have agreed to contribute to the repairs. Despite the delay caused by Covid, the contractor is hopeful of attending the site shortly to carry out repairs.

Through some historical anomaly cleaning of the Public Toilet is funded through a Comfort Scheme provided by Highland Council, which is normally offered to Public Toilets operated by non-Public Suppliers. This was originally administered by Laggan Community Association and more recently by Laggan and Newtonmore Church. Post-Covid it has been extended by three months.

Concurrently Highland Council have announced that the Public Toilet is no longer required by Highland Council, which has not been discussed with either LCT or the Community.

**Angus Macpherson.**

Editorial note: The Community Council is working with the stakeholders towards a sustainable resolution for all and the continued availability of the public toilet.

### Did you know...

Moorland tea made from heather flowers was supposedly a favourite of Robert Burns. Stretching further across the mists of time, the ancient botanical symbol of Scotland was fermented into a drink by the Picts.

**Robyn Woolston**

# **Ian Brown Interview**

Managing Director, Highland All Terrain Ltd

**Tell us about your earliest family car?**

Vauxhall Victor

**... and your first car?**

Vauxhall Viva

**Tell us about the most exciting expedition/adventure you've been on with your profession?**

An overland expedition in the Andean Mountains, South America

**What do you like most about running an all terrain/quad bike/4x4 touring business?**

The variety and beauty of the land we get to travel through

**If you could only drive one car for the rest of your life, what would you pick?**

Discovery 4

**What do you like most about operating a business in the Highlands?**

The sheer beauty and diversity of the landscape

**Have you ever worked with anyone famous?**

I once took Valteri Bottas off-road driving



**Rollercoaster or dodgems?**

Roller Coaster

**Bond or Bourne?**

Bourne

**Early bird or night owl?**

Early bird

**Duran Duran or Wham?**

Wham!!

**Money or fame?**

Money, not one for the spotlight

**Eggs or cheese?**

Cheese



## **Background:**

Highland All Terrain was formed out of an idea that came to fruition back in 2005. Beginning with one 4x4 vehicle, half a dozen quad bikes, a clay stand and a shed in the corner of a field. Set up (and still run) by Ian Brown, they now have access to more than 300,000 acres of wild land and work with more than ten different estates and land-owners, offering the largest network of off road driving in the UK. Ian has more than forty years of practical experience in 4x4 off road driving and loves to share his passion for both the 4x4 vehicles and the Scottish Highlands.

<https://www.quadbiketours.co.uk>

<https://www.highlandscenicsafari.co.uk>

**Interview & photographs // Robyn Woolston**





## LAGGAN COMMUNITY TRADING

Times are changing at Laggan Community Trading (LCT). The Management Committee of Angus Macpherson, Frank Ross, Phil Lloyd, Richard Spencer and Sheena Slimon have been considering LCT's future role. It is clearly no longer its original purpose, which was to run a Community Shop.

We looked at the assets LCT owns on behalf of the Community, its shareholders. Six houses at Strathmashie, which are rented out to Highland Council to provide affordable housing to the Community, and the land on which the Community Play Park sits and came to the conclusion that there was a role for a creator and maintainer of affordable housing in Laggan.

LCT is considering the possibility of building a further 4 or 5 houses in Laggan, perhaps continuing the line of the Albyn houses at Gergask Avenue. This project is being facilitated by the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust, who carried out a local survey at the end of 2019 and a wider survey of neighbouring communities in early March 2020. The responses showed there was a potential demand for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom affordable houses for both rent and sale in Laggan.

LCT wishes to update its constitution to reflect changing legislation and is considering changing its name to Laggan Community Housing and Amenities Trust to reflect this change in role

To take these projects forward LCT needs and is actively seeking new members to join the Management Committee, as well as a new minute secretary and treasurer. If anyone is interested, please can they get in touch with any member of the Management Committee. You need not be a shareholder to assist.



If you wish to learn more about LCT and these projects, please come along to the AGM at Laggan Village Hall at 19.30 on Monday 28 September 2020. As places are limited due to the limitations imposed by Covid-19 please contact Sheena Slimon on [sheena.feithbuidhe@icloud.com](mailto:sheena.feithbuidhe@icloud.com) to confirm your place.

**Angus Macpherson**

## Going Places

The Laggan area punches above its weight in terms of interesting and exceptional folk. Jules Molyneux is one of these; he was only 11 years old when he climbed the Matterhorn, with his dad Chris. He is the youngest person ever to accomplish this feat.



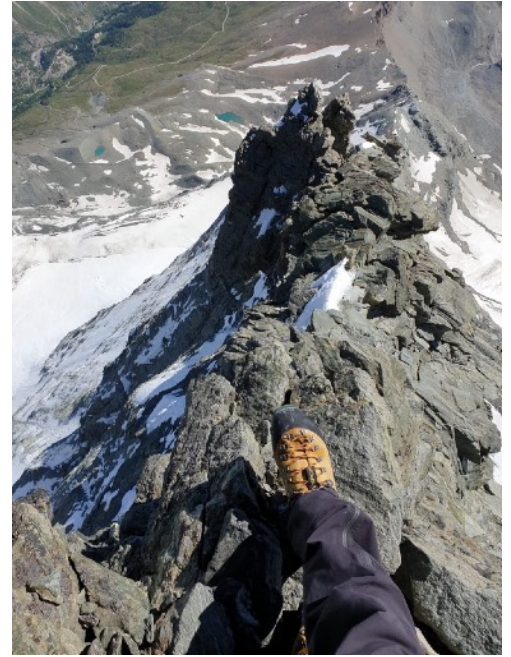
It was all Jules's idea. A keen climber from the time he could walk, he graduated from trees and rocks to climbing-walls and crags, using ropes. It was when he was set a project to do at school in 2018, that he came up with the subject, "The History of Climbing the Matterhorn" - and the rest is history. Literally.



Jules and Chris, who live at Strathmashie, embarked upon some serious training to prepare for the challenge, using the crags and frozen waterfalls at the back of Creag Meagaidh and on Craig Dubh. There was fitness and endurance training too. The emphasis throughout was to make the expedition as safe and as risk-free as possible, so Jules had to be at the top of his game.



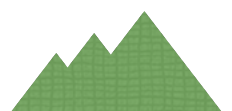
The Matterhorn opens up for climbers in June/July. The pair drove to Zermatt in their camper van, leaving time for Jules to be assessed for his technical ability by the team of specialist guides and climbers in Switzerland. Nobody under the age of 16 is usually allowed to attempt the climb, so the testing process was rigorous and extreme. But the months of Highlands training and Jules's own ability, dedication and courage shone through. He was passed fit for the challenge.



Jules and Chris, accompanied by 2 Swiss guides, set off from the Hornli Hut at 03.30, with the need to summit by about 08.30, before the sun on the snow could cause any avalanche problems. The climb needed to be fast. And it was. Chris said that there were places where holds were finger-tip and toe-tip small. The drops were immense, but Jules was un-phased and 'on a high'. Once at the summit, there was just time to take in the spectacular views and snatch some photographs.

Then they had get down. This necessitated multiple abseil sections; leaning back before jumping from the top then carefully controlling the descents. With tired limbs and aching muscles, the descent can be the toughest section of the climb, but the group of 4 all returned safely to base camp by 13.00. What a day, and what an adventure!

## Liz MacFarlan



With the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic in March Laggan church had, at quite short notice, to close its doors, not only on Sundays but also for people to pop into at any time. Meanwhile Sunday services have been made into audio files which have been posted on the church website: [www.stbrides-newtonmore.org.uk](http://www.stbrides-newtonmore.org.uk) and which can be accessed through a telephone by dialling 01540 210322 (use the whole number, including the area code).

It is not possible to open the church building for people to pop into at any time, because we need to know where people go in the building, so that we can clean and disinfect behind them. So what we have done, for the casual visitor, is to put reflections and inspirations for prayer outside the church, attached to the bench at the door. These are changed around every three weeks, and anyone can use them.

As yet we have not re-started Sunday worship in our churches either. This is due to the restrictions which would have to be enforced on the pattern of the services, with people masking and sitting 2 metres apart, and a ban on singing. I know that while the audio services have been appreciated by many, what people miss is being together and singing. And these are the two elements which we cannot reinstate. So for now we are keeping our Sunday worship online.

However from the beginning of August we have been holding prayer services in St. Bride's on Mondays at 6.30 and Thursdays at 7.30, with the service being the same for both services each week. In this way we can see how people feel about coming to worship in masks and having a service which is not what they are used to. Because we have to be sure that we do not over-fill the building (not a problem as yet) and because of Track and Trace, we ask that people let me know when they would like to attend a service. ([CBuchan@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:CBuchan@churchofscotland.org.uk) or 01540 673238) Our hope is that we may be able to open the Laggan building for some uses in the near future.

**The future and the new normal are unknown, but I want you know that although your church building may be closed for now, the church itself, which is the people, is very much open and finding its way forward.**

**Catherine Buchan**



## The Laggan Forest Trust

The trust's activities have naturally been curtailed during COVID 19 lockdown - the paths and trails around the Wolftrax centre remaining open to pedestrian traffic and dog walkers keen to take advantage of the area for their daily exercise.

Since lockdown eased, the mountain bike trails and café have re-opened, some extensive forestry felling is taking place in Strathmashie Forest and EE are presently installing an emergency services telephone mast in the area - so a lot of construction traffic in the area.

Unfortunately Forestry Land Scotland gave the Trust very short notice in mid July about their approval to allow Camper Vans to overnight stay in the Wolftrax car park without any monitoring of the impact of this on nearby residents. The matter continues to be discussed with FLS staff, presently without resolution. However we were very pleased to see CNPA rangers clearing up litter and the consequences of wild/dirty camping during late August at Gorsteane, Wolftrax and the Pattack area, so our thanks to CNPA for that resource.

A plan to improve about 250 metres of the path/trail network in the Blackwood forest to connect to Feagour and Pattack falls area is in preparation with funding for this from both FLS and the European Leader programme. This will provide an all abilities path/trail from the Wolftrax Centre to Pattack Falls, hopefully by the end of October.

**Colin Morgan**

## Village e-Bikes



**One of the few positives of lockdown was the very quiet roads and being able to cycle on my e-bike from my front door. Cycling is great fun and an e-bike gives even greater range and accessibility, allowing the user to explore far and wide .... and there are some great routes around Laggan!**

**Did you know you can try an e-bike for free from Laggan Wolftrax centre, thanks to an e-bike Grant Fund administered by the Energy Saving Trust.**

**You can book a loan by clicking the link on the Laggan Forest Trust website**

**<https://www.lagganforest.com/ebikes-for-laggan>**

**or**

**by phoning LFT office on 01528 544366 or email [business@lagganforest.com](mailto:business@lagganforest.com)**

So far more than 40 individual residents have borrowed and used an e-bike, of whom 15 have used the scheme more than once. At least 7 bikes have been bought as a result of the initiative. If anyone wants to know more about the Energy Saving Trust 0% loan, residents can speak to Duncan at the Wee Bike Hub at Wolftrax.

A huge thank you to Gordon and Stuart at Laggan Coffee Bothy and Gallery who helped run the scheme.

Amanda Gallagher



### Survey Evaluation and a wee bit more...

In total 47 respondents answered our Survey Monkey questionnaire earlier in the year.

Alongside helping us to decide on a new name for the newsletter we asked you to describe Laggan in just three words.

The 'word cloud' (right) gives a great overview of peoples thoughts and feelings in response to the area as the **LARGER** the word appears the more people shared it.



Some chose a sentence to describe the area:

*Like coming home // Always been home // Very narrow minded // Mikes Bikes // Birds of prey*

*Its-afa-fine // Too many cliques // Good clean living // James Bond*

Equally as revealing were the answers to the final question where we asked if there was anything else you'd like to add or share in terms of future newsletters. The results revealed a complex set of experiences that reflect a wide variety of opinions.

There were requests for a mental health column, arts and crafts ideas, news related to Laggan and the surrounding areas, events, local history, small ads, community group updates, guest contributors, tales from former residents, tourist info, gossip, photographs, expert insights into farming life, top car maintenance tips from Nathan (Laggan resident), bird and wildlife info, film locations, spotlights on local businesses, walking/cycling paths, recipes, contact details, Gaelic translations, school and church news, a diary of local events, accommodation, short and informative articles, the need to connect with those that are NOT online, road maintenance and safety issues, upcoming developments in the area and estate life in general.

Equally as important was the constructive criticism. There was a clearly voiced desire that the newsletter should be a '*vehicle to bring the community closer together*'. It was noted that the engagement levels were low previously and that the vision was perhaps '*not long-term enough*' to keep the publication '*relevant and sustainable*', this opinion was further shored-up with the assertion that it was important that we '*looked hard before starting it up again*'. Some of these points were similar to a few of the word-cloud responses such as 'too many cliques' and 'very narrow minded'.

With reference to these (and looking to the future) our opening mission statement is likely to give us a few clues to help us move forward:

'NEONI AS LEITH AN T-SLUAIGH, GUN AONTA AN T-SLUAIGH'

'NOTHING ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT OF THE PEOPLE'

**...with this slogan firmly in mind we will always attempt to look long-and-hard at our newsletter contents as we strive to make a publication that is both about the people and for the people.**



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