

New defibrillator installed in Polwarth

A new defibrillator is now operational in Polwarth.

Funded by the local community, for the local community, the life-saving equipment was installed in memory of local Polwarth Tavern publican Alan Laidlaw, who sadly suffered a fatal cardiac arrest in 2020.

Now, assisted by St John Scotland, locals have been given free training on how to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and use the equipment to help save a life as the country marks 'Restart a Heart Day'.

It is estimated that every minute of delay in bystander action reduces the likelihood of survival after *out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA)* by 10 per cent, making early recognition by those nearby and prompt call for help followed by bystander CPR key to survival.

Ben Prowse, owner of Polwarth Tavern said: "The local community came together to raise the vital funds for this life-saving equipment to help as many people as possible in the local area in memory of our dear friend Alan. Over many years Alan was instrumental in doing so much for the local community and this is very fitting in memory of our 'man of the people'.

"We are very thankful to all who donated to our raffle and who purchased tickets to raise the funds. And we also are extremely grateful for the support from St John Scotland by providing expert training for everyone, and to our local political representatives for continued support."

Public access to defibrillators is vital to improving the chance of survival and anyone can use one even without training. The Scottish Government has addressed the need for more accessibility to the equipment in its Scotland's OHCA Strategy 2021 to 2026.

Attending the recent training at the Polwarth Tavern was Ian Murray, MP, who said: "The local Polwarth Tavern community has done a tremendous job in getting a community defibrillator installed.

"The initiative came from tragedy, but this will undoubtedly help others. The community training project with St John Scotland will equip many more local people with critical lifesaving skills. I was delighted to help support the fundraising efforts and send my congratulations to all involved."

He was joined by Daniel Johnson, MSP who said: "It's fantastic to have been given the opportunity to come to the Polwarth Tavern, speak to residents and see first-hand how effective defibrillator training can be in our communities.

"The St John Scotland training initiative, which is equipping local people with vital life-saving skills is hugely important and I would definitely like to see similar schemes across Edinburgh.

"The work of those involved in the project will be hugely important in the years to come and save many lives."

A critical medical emergency, where the heart stops pumping blood around the body, an OHCA affects around 3,200 people in Scotland each year. Unless treated immediately, it leads to death within minutes, with just one in 10 surviving in Scotland.

The use of a defibrillator is a crucial part of 'The Chain of Survival' which is a sequence of steps that together maximise

the chance of survival following cardiac arrest. Starting CPR immediately keeps the blood and oxygen circulating to the brain and around the body, with the defibrillator then delivering a controlled electric shock to try and get the heart beating again. In some circumstances defibrillation within three minutes of a cardiac arrest can increase the chance of survival to above 70 per cent.

Unfortunately, currently in Scotland defibrillators are not often used before the arrival of paramedics, with the equipment only being used by the public in around eight per cent of cardiac arrests in Scotland.

The Scottish Government and health organisations are working with communities to familiarise people with the use Public Access Defibrillators (PADs), ensuring people feel confident to use a defibrillator in the case of an emergency to give people experiencing a cardiac arrest the best chance of survival.

Training becomes crucial to teach everyone what to do in this type of situation and to increase confidence in using the equipment. As well as assisting with the provision of the PADs, St John Scotland delivers vital training to people across Scotland.

Angus Loudon, CEO of St John Scotland, added: 'We are delighted to assist the local community in Polwarth with this PAD and the associated training. St John Scotland is proud to be working with communities to save lives, and every session of training not only equips people with this potentially life-saving skill, but also takes the number of citizens trained in Bystander CPR ever closer to the Government's target of one million by 2026.'

The new Polwarth defibrillator is also now registered on 'The Circuit' – a UK-wide registry of defibrillators developed by the British Heart Foundation – so the Ambulance Service can

notify a caller to have it collected saving time, and in many cases lives.



Young residents gathered to learn life saving skills in Polwarth



Polwarth locals gathered to learn life saving skills









L-R Anne Mitchell CPR Lead, St John, Daniel Johnson MSP, Ben Prowse, Polwarth Tavern and Ian Murray MP with new community defibrillator equipment