

Newsletter - Summer 2020

The COVID 19 pandemic has undoubtedly slowed down not only touristic activities, but also the functioning of the Verco R2 Committee. However, despite this slowdown, the Committee has managed to meet three times since the statutory meeting in February: twice, by teleconference in April and in June and the third time, in person at the end of July. Membership fees have also been received satisfactorily and we thank you warmly for your prompt payment. We have even seen new members join, so that our association currently has in excess of 100 members.

1. Water, Sewage and Garbage Taxes

On the basis of information gathered from Municipal Administration of the Val d'Anniviers (as a basis of comparison), the taxes in Vercorin are about 300 Francs higher for second home owners than those in the Val d'Anniviers. In Vercorin, they amount to 800-900 Francs for a 3-room dwelling (4 UPH, or Units Per Household) compared to around 550 Francs in the Val d'Anniviers. This difference can be explained by the fact that the second home residents of the Municipality of Anniviers pay only 30% of the variable part of the fees as compared to those who live on site all year round. The fixed part of the fee is the same for everyone. The discount on the variable part of the fees is a gesture that has all its importance, both materially and symbolically. We will address this issue at our next meeting with the Municipal Authorities.

2. Tourist Tax 2020

The invoices for the Tourist Tax will be sent out in October to the 1'150 owners of second homes. This tax will be calculated taking into account the units per household (UPH). To define the UPHs, the Municipality will base itself on the data it has in its records and on the information that the R2s gave when they applied for their discount booklets (Carnet d'Avantages).

3. Vercorin Tourism Ltd Co.

This entity began its activities at the end of 2019. It has been supervising the Tourism Office since January 2020 and defines the tourism policy for Vercorin, within the framework of a service contract with the Municipality. Jacques Perret sits on the Board of Directors of this organisation on behalf of the R2. The current priority is to find a new director for the Tourist Office and the Vercorin Tourism Co. Ltd has decided to launch renovation and improvement works at the Creux du Lavioz, with the aim to offer to families with children a wide array of winter and of summer activities. A call for tenders for the planning and implementation of the first stage of the work is currently under way. The Board will make a decision this fall and work will begin next spring.

The choice of the benefit booklet - 20 non-cumulating 2 Franc coupons - has caused a certain amount of surprise among the Verco R2 Committee; the amount per non-cumulating coupon seems very modest to us. We will find out about practices in this area in other resorts and we will come back to the Verco R2 members with new proposals.

4. Tracui Chairlift - Mont Major

The works to install a four-seater chairlift to connect Tracui with the Mont Major for a total expense of CHF 6.4 million should commence, in principle, during the summer of 2021. The Tracui button lift will be eliminated and the Cabanon button lift will be shortened to end at the bottom of the top slope of the Mont Major. However, the button lift of the Mont Major will be maintained. This investment justifies, in our opinion, a reflection concerning its integration into summer tourism, both to improve the return on this investment and to develop summer tourism. There would be a reflection to be carried out, for example, on its integration into a mountain bike circuit or its articulation with cultural activities. We are aware that this is a complicated process, but we believe it is essential that this issue be taken into consideration by the Board of Directors of the Vercorin Cable-Car SA.

This autumn, meaning, before the coming winter season, a "magic carpet" will be put in place to facilitate skiers' return to the Crêt du Midi from the small Les Chardons button lift.

5. (Tourism) Development Society (DS)

The new DS was formed in mid-July. Michel Minnig is its new president. This new DS will no longer be responsible for the management of the Tourist Office and will henceforth take care of the coordination (not to be confused with the organisation) of events of a certain importance such as the "dérupé", the 2336 cinema, Flavours of the World etc. During this constitutive assembly, the participating members expressed a strong desire to have Verco R2 join the DS committee. The Verco R2 Committee therefore decided to apply to the DS via a collective membership (i.e. Verco R2 would be the member, not an individual person) and to pay the membership fee of 80 Francs. Martine Favarger will be our representative on this Committee. Our concrete participation in DS activities will be done by encouraging our members to participate as volunteers in these events. Such an attitude shows that we are not only users of services, but that the R2s are also ready to lend a hand, which is already the case at present for many secondary residents.

The statistics for overnight stays presented in the DS report raised a certain amount of question marks. For example, the tourist taxes of the professional rental companies (BAT etc) and the Peak Resort have decreased between 2018 and 2019 by approximately 25%. On the other hand, tourist taxes for private rentals and secondary residents increased by 15% without any explanation for this difference. It seems important to us that Vercorin Tourism Ltd Co, which took over this activity at the beginning of 2020, should provide reliable statistics in the future and be able to explain them.

6. Meeting Between the R2 Associations and the Prefect of Sierre

The Prefect of the district of Sierre brought together the R2 associations of Montana, Crans, Aminona, Anniviers and Vercorin (Verco R2) as well as the director of the ski lifts of the Val d'Anniviers. The aim of this meeting was to reflect on the improvement of mobility between Sierre and the lateral valleys, an approach which is part of a Cantonal, or even National project. This is a very complex problem and for sure, it will be challenging to bring all the diverging interests under one roof. However, we consider it very positive that the authorities are addressing this issue in order to reduce car use as part of the energy transition. The director of the Val d'Anniviers ski lifts also mentioned the fact that more and more young people who come to the resorts, no longer have cars and that more thought needs to be

given to this segment of tourists. Another complicated problem to solve is the last kilometer (the last mile) to one's destination. Michka Kovats represents us in this structure.

7. Energy transition

At the Committee meeting at the end of July, we addressed the issue of energy transition with the help of Gaël Packer, a young energy and environmental engineering graduate from the HES Sierre.

In Vercoirin, the main energy consumption comes from the travel and heating of private individuals (mainly due to permanent residents). These activities are responsible for about 80% of the total energy consumption. The ski lifts account for 10 to 15% and the rest is for shops. It seems that the commune will make an energy "balance sheet" and will update it regularly. Such a "balance sheet" will allow us to intervene in a slightly more precise way to then suggest possible measures in favour of the transition to cleaner energy.

On a practical level, the Municipality could take measures to encourage the installation of solar cells and wood heating to curb the use of oil and gas. It should be remembered that the latter fuel allows only a modest reduction (compared with fuel oil) of about 20% in CO2 emissions.

8. Miscellaneous

This autumn, elections for the Municipal Council will take place, followed two weeks later by the election of the President of the Municipality. This election will be quite open as the current president, Alain Perruchoud, is stepping down. There will certainly be several candidates and, for the first time, there will probably be women running for this position. There will also be a change in the Municipality's administration because the current communal secretary, François Zuber, is retiring.

Andreas Saurer,

President of Verco R2