



## Report by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees to the 2017 Annual General Meeting

This report covers the period from the 2016 AGM in November last year to November 2017.

This is the end of my second year of a three year appointment as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of FCWT.

Over the year I have been ably supported by my fellow **Trustees**. We are 9 in number at present and as ever on the lookout for new blood. We can have a maximum of 12 members. During the year we co-opted two members to the Board; Karen Mitchell and David Rooke, both of whom are standing for election tonight. Without singling out anyone in particular I would like to thank them for their support. We have a broad range of skills within the group which are pertinent to the business of running the Trust and much effort has been expended by all.

**Member** numbers are sadly in decline. Year on year since the highs of 2012 we have seen the total numbers drop from 289 to 88 this year, down 18 from last year. Membership subscriptions and donations are important source of income for the Trust. We have simplified the method of renewal and payment of annual subscriptions to allow manual, electronic or standing order payments. We are grateful to those of you who continue as members and also to those who have made donations. We value your continued support.

With the exception of specialised services, the maintenance work in the Woodlands is carried out by **volunteers**. Work parties take place in both Muiry and Sanquhar on a monthly basis. A Volunteer Action Plan has been developed for Sanquhar. The work comprises mainly of clearance of non-native invasive species and path maintenance. In addition we have an extensive maintenance programme on the bike track. We are grateful to those who give up their time to the monthly work parties and we continue to look for new volunteers.

**Major achievements** over the past year have included; the installation of new sign boards at the Sanquhar entrances. This was partially funded by Paths for All.

Our 5 year programme of rhododendron and laurel clearance continues successfully into year 4 with the help of a specialist contractor. An application for funding of this activity has been successful with £6,800 pledged by Berry Burn Community Fund.

Development of the Coffin Field as a wildflower meadow continues with encouraging results.

Extensive maintenance work has been carried out on the bike track to allow an event to go ahead in August. Two of our Trustees have undergone formal training in maintenance and safety.

The bike track hut which we reported having been repaired last year has suffered further damage from vandalism. The repairs go on.

A squirrel nesting box and 13 bird boxes were manufactured and installed by Matt Devlin in the early spring.

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On the **admin front**; the website is now fully functioning and we are receiving correspondence from members and others through that medium and we are posting news of events. In an effort to truly embrace the electronic age we have plans to launch a Face Book page in the near future.

A new brochure has been created and copies have been distributed by means of the boxes on the new sign boards and at various events.

A new membership application and renewal process has been developed and launched. Newsletters were issued three times over the course of the year and mainly distributed electronically. Although we still cater for those without computer access.

## Awards

The **Co-op** awarded us a total of £1,392 from their members' charity scheme. This donation went towards the rhododendron eradication programme.

Berry Burn Community Fund awarded us £6,840 which also went towards the eradication programme.

## Events

**Caroline Inckle**, a local artist, following on from her work last year ran a project called "Creative Pathways" to highlight the Woodlands as a place of inspiration and reflection. Using material from the woods she created artistic pieces and conducted several walks in the woodlands.

The **bike track** continues to be used fairly heavily by local and visiting bikers. It hosted another Dirt Crit event in August, one of a series of events held over the North. 72 bikers participated and favourable comments were received about the tracks condition.

**Moray Orienteering** again held an event in Sanquhar with over 100 participants.

**School visits** continue from all the schools in town. It is pleasing to see the youngsters in the woods and we will continue with our efforts to encourage more of them.

**FCWT** hosted a "Woodlands Wander" as part of our launch event for our new signboards in April.

**Findhorn Bay Arts** held an "Outdoor Workshop for Children" at the Giants' Heads in July.

**Wild Things** continue to run courses at Sanquhar throughout the year. These include UHI/Moray College, John Muir Awards with Forres Academy participants and other public events.

## Planning Issues

The Trust has responded formally to the Dallas Dhu Development consultation which would adversely impact Sanquhar Woodlands and to the A96 Dualling (Southern Route) which would impact both Sanquhar and Muiry/Newforres but more so the latter where the proposed roadway would come within 200 metres of our boundary.

## Plans for the coming year

Continue into year 4 of the rhododendron and laurel clearance.

The forestry plan has been completed and plans have been made for thinning works in Sanquhar. A new bench will be installed at the east end of the large lochan in Sanquhar, courtesy of Benromach.

A paths survey has been carried out in Muiry/Newforres with a view to upgrading an existing path in Newforres to "all abilities grade" and the construction of two new paths in Muiry. All subject to funding being sourced.

Paths in Sanquhar will be surveyed and a maintenance plan developed.

The construction of an amphibian hibernaculum and development of a plan for the management of our ponds in Sanquhar is still on the agenda.

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## **Financial**

Eddie will go into the details. However I would like to stress that we are an organisation dependent on three sources of income, namely; subscriptions, donations and grants/awards. In the past financial year we took in only £1,700 mainly from donations and there were no grant awards, mainly due to timing, resulting in a deficit of £10,000 for the year. Fortunately we have a cash balance of £25,000 with no big commitments imminent. We also have the potential for income from the thinning at Sanquhar.

In closing, I would again like to thank our members and volunteers for their continued support and you all for your attendance tonight.

Don Wright  
Chairman