

FORRES COMMUNITY WOODLANDS TRUST

Chairman's Report 2019



Annual General Meeting 2019

Report by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees

This report covers the period from the 2018 AGM in November last year to November 2019.

Governance

Over the year I have been ably supported by my fellow **Trustees**. We have been 8 in number. We have 2 trustees standing down; Tom Ireland and Gareth Whyment. Gareth is standing for re-election but Tom is leaving the Board. I would like to thank Tom for his valuable contribution over the time that he has been a trustee. David Mac Farquhar was co-opted in January and he is now seeking election to the board.

Without singling out anyone in particular, I would like to thank my fellow trustees for their continued 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. As ever, we are on the lookout for new blood. We can have a maximum of 12 members on the Board.

Members

Membership numbers are 28 family memberships and 20 single members which is much the same as last year. An effort has been made to encourage lapsed members to re-join by sending out reminders. Membership subscriptions and donations are important source of income for the Trust. The simplified method of renewal and payment of annual subscriptions by standing order payment is working well. Most membership subscriptions are now being paid directly to our bank account. This has lessened the admin burden. However, we are happy to accept manual payments by cheque if that is what best suits the member. We are grateful to those of you who continue as members and also to those who have made donations. We value your continued support.

Volunteers

With the exception of specialised services, the maintenance work in the Woodlands and on the Bike Track is carried out by volunteers. We have three volunteer groups: Sanquhar, Muiry / Newforres and Bike Track. The work comprises mainly of clearance of non-native invasive species and path maintenance.

The Muiry work parties are scheduled on an ad hoc basis whilst those at Sanquhar are held monthly as a minimum. There were 16 work parties in Sanquhar over the year with average numbers of 5 volunteers.

The Bike Track squad held four maintenance sessions and five inspections over the year. We are grateful to those who give up their time to the monthly work parties and we continue to look for new volunteers.

In addition to our own regular work parties, volunteer work has been carried out by Wild Things.

FORRES COMMUNITY WOODLANDS TRUST

Chairman's Report 2019



Major achievements

Our 5 year programme of rhododendron and laurel clearance in Sanquhar, which was funded by the Berry Burn Community Fund, was completed with the help of a specialist contractor. Unfortunately that is not the end of it. Containment of invasive species will be an ongoing feature of the Trust's future work.

In Sanquhar, some 12 mature trees were lost to wind blow in January. Birch thinning and tidy up was carried out around the lochan. Illegally removed tree guards were replaced and some new trees planted at the new planting behind the houses.

In Muiry and Newforres path remedial work and edge trimming was carried out by our contractor. Two benches were installed; in Muiry, a replacement and in Newforres a new build.

Admin

Our website is functioning well. We are receiving correspondence from members and others through that medium and posting news of events.

An FCWT Facebook page has been set up which is attracting lots of interest. This allows us to target a wider audience beyond our website.

Newsletters were issued three times over the course of the year and mainly distributed electronically. Although we still cater for those without computer access.

Planning Issues

Of the three areas which have a potential impact on our woodlands there has been some progress as follows:

1. Dallas Dhu Development – the master plan has been adopted and we now await detailed plans when we would get an opportunity to comment.
2. Small field to north of Muiry Woods – our objection to this being included within the planned Lochyhill Development has been successful. The field will remain as green space.
3. OPP4 Cathay Housing Development – Moray Council rejected the application. Some 80 objections and a petition organised by FCWT were received. However, the developer has now taken his appeal to the Scottish Government and we await the Reporter's decision.

A96 Dualling consultation – the northern route around Forres has been selected which means there will be no impact on our woodlands.

Plans for the coming year

Continue with invasive species containment.

Bike Track safety signage to be upgraded.

Paths maintenance work in Sanquhar, Muiry and Newforres.

FORRES COMMUNITY WOODLANDS TRUST

Chairman's Report 2019



Financial

At Year End 31 March 2019 an operating deficit of £7,990 was reported (2018 – £14,587 surplus) This deficit was attributable to expenditure associated with the logging clear-up, bench installation, bike track and road repairs.

Our current cash position is healthy. I would remind members that our income from subscriptions and donations falls some way short of our annual operating costs.

Further details are contained in the Financial Statements which are available for your perusal and we will field any questions.

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

Donald J Wright
Chairman