

# FORRES COMMUNITY WOODLANDS TRUST

Chairman's Report 2020



## Annual General Meeting 2020

### Report by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees

This report covers the period from the 2019 AGM in November last year to November 2020.

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

Like most organisations our activities were impacted by the lockdown and we are still being affected by the tier 1 restrictions. Our monthly meetings were suspended from March onwards until they were resumed as Zoom meetings in August. Work parties stopped in March, re-starting in July in a socially distanced format.

On the plus side the number of visitors to our woodlands greatly increased with many long term Forres residents visiting our woodlands for the first time. Regrettably we also saw a rise in anti-social behaviour with fire raising, partying and littering in Sanquhar and fly tipping at Muiry and Newforres.

#### **Governance**

Over the year I have been ably supported by my fellow **Trustees**. We have been 7 in number. Regrettably we are still too few in numbers. We have 2 trustees standing down; David Rooke and Gisela MacFarquhar. I would like to thank both David and Gisela for their valuable contributions over their time as trustees. David retires after 3 years and Gisela after 8 years. In the case of Gisela, it is an enforced retiral due to her having served 3 terms as a trustee. Gisela has kindly offered to continue with her secretary duties during her sabbatical.

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 35 family memberships and 20 single members which is much the same as last year. We gained a few new members by placing notices in the woodlands at Christmas time and during the pandemic lock-down. We continue to encourage lapsed members to re-join by sending out reminders.

Membership subscriptions and donations are an important source of income for the Trust. Most membership subscriptions are now paid directly to our bank account. However, we are happy to accept manual payments by cheque or cash 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.

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## 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 8 work parties in Sanquhar over the year with an average number of 5 volunteers. Regular work parties were curtailed in the period April to June due to the lockdown. Additionally, our trustee Steve Hull carried out over 40 individual work sessions.

The Bike Track squad were less active over this period having lost one of their lead volunteers. However, the track is in good condition and scheduled inspections were carried out.

We are grateful to those who give up their time to the monthly work parties and we continue to look for new volunteers.

## Events

In December we hosted a visit of 22 Pilmuir Primary pupils in Sanquhar. The event was part of a WildThings! initiative to provide every primary school pupil in Forres with an opportunity for a learning experience in their local environment. We supplied each participant with a tree to plant.

In January our trustee Dan Puplett who is a naturalist, conservationist and outdoor educator led a well-attended and much enjoyed winter tree identification event.

In November we hosted a 27 strong group of Anderson's Primary 6 pupils who worked on removal of invasive species and planted oak saplings in Sanquhar Wood.

## Admin

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

The FCWT Facebook page is receiving a lot of visits and we get many 'likes'. It targets a different audience from the website and we are optimistic that it will raise general awareness of our activities and attract members.

Newsletters were issued three times over the course of the year. Thanks are due to Gisela, the Editor and to trustees Dan Puplett and Steve Hull for their interesting contributions.

## Chris Piper

During the summer our former chairman Chris Piper died after a long illness. During his 9 years as a trustee of which 7 years were served as chairman Chris made a valuable contribution to the Trust and to the Community. He was the driving force behind the acquisition of Sanquhar Woods and the development of the bike track.

## Plans for the coming year

Continue with invasive species containment.

Paths maintenance work in Sanquhar, Muiry and Newforres.

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## Financial

At Year End 31 March 2020 an operating deficit of £3,965 was reported (2019 – £7,990 deficit) The deficit was mainly attributable to expenditure associated with 3<sup>rd</sup> party costs for invasive species remedial work and path maintenance.

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 abbreviated Financial Statements which are contained in the meeting papers. A complete set of Financial Statements can be provided on request. Reports to Companies House and the Office of Scottish Charities Register have been completed.

In closing, I would like to thank our trustees, members and volunteers for their continued support.

Donald J Wright  
Chairman