



## Annual General Meeting 2024

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

This report covers the period from the 2023 AGM in November last year to November 2024

#### **Highlights / Lowlights**

- Work parties have been well attended in both Sanquhar and Muiry / Newforres.
- Paths improvement work carried out by a contractor in Sanquhar.
- Coffin Field was cut
- Virtual monthly meetings continued throughout the year.
- Membership numbers are down.

#### **Governance**

Over the past year, I have been ably supported by my fellow **trustees**. We are now 8 in number, which is still too few. I want to thank them for their continued support. We have a broad range of skills within the group pertinent to running the Trust. 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 41 family memberships and 33 single members, totalling 117, down 9 from last year. We continue to encourage lapsed members to re-join by sending out reminders. Membership subscriptions and donations are an essential source of income for the Trust. Most membership subscriptions are now paid directly to our bank account. We are grateful to those of you who continue as members and those who have donated. We value your continued support.

#### **Volunteers and Maintenance Work**

In addition to specialised services, volunteers perform maintenance work in the Woodlands and on the Bike Track. The focus continues to be on the clearance of non-native invasive species. Funded by the Berry Burn Community Fund, Contractors were engaged to spray rhododendrons and cut down laurel and sitka. Our trained volunteers treat the stumps to prevent re-growth. Further path resurfacing has been carried out in Sanquhar, partially funded by a Tesco award. A contractor performed a mulching cut of the Coffin Field. The Bike Track hut has undergone some repair work, and volunteers continue to keep the area as litter-free as possible.

Work parties of varying sizes have turned out regularly throughout the year. The focus has been mainly in Sanquhar. Some FFWF volunteers have also assisted us.

#### **Woodland Users / Events**

**School parties** have been regular visitors under the guidance of WildThings! (see below) We have had an increasing number of groups wishing to use Sanquhar Woods for recreational and educational purposes. These include the Wildlife Watch Group (a branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust), Guided Forest Bathing Walks, Glasgow School of Art, and Moray Mountain Bike Orienteering.

# FORRES COMMUNITY WOODLANDS TRUST



**WildThings!** has continued to bring primary school children from Anderson's Primary in spring and Pilmuir Primary in autumn to Sanquhar Woods, along with home-schooled kids. For six weeks, they engaged in games and hands-on learning about native woodland habitats. Similarly, a group of disaffected teenagers from Forres Academy participated for two months to explore woodland ecology and learn introductory bushcraft skills. Wild Things also used the woods for 60 after-school nature club sessions for primary and secondary students through the Army Welfare Service at Kinloss and holiday club days during school breaks. Additionally, Sanquhar Woods serves as a venue for Wild Things' Woodland Activity Leader Training courses for adults, with four courses and a couple of shorter 'Introduction to Bushcraft' sessions held in the past year.

**Walkers:** footfall in all our woodlands has increased substantially. The increase in Sanquhar can be attributed to the new housing developments at Mannachie and Knockomie.

**Moray Woodland and Forestry Strategy:** we participated in a Consultation Workshop.

**Forres as a Forest Town:** we are registered participants in this initiative.

**UK MTB Trail Alliance:** we have registered as members

## Admin

Communications: Our website is functioning well. We are receiving correspondence from members and others through this medium and posting news events.

The FCWT Facebook page receives many visitors and 'likes'. It targets a different audience from the website, and we feel that it is raising our profile. We hope it will attract new members and volunteers.

Newsletters were issued three times during the year.

## Plans for the Year Ahead

Invasive species eradication/containment work will continue.

The car parks at Muiry and Newforres will be resurfaced.

The Coffin Field wildflower meadow project will continue.

Bird and bat boxes are to be installed in Sanquhar.

Possible felling of Western Hemlock at Woodend and Douglas Fir at Mannachie Rise.

## Financial

At Year End 31 March 2024, an operating loss of £3,297 was reported (2023 - £2,375)

Our current cash position is reasonably healthy, with approximately £16,000 in funds, which remains the same as 2023. However, I would remind members that our income from subscriptions and donations falls far short of our annual operating costs.

A complete set of Financial Statements has been issued to the members. Later this month, reports will be made to Companies House and the Office of Scottish Charities Register.

I thank our trustees, members, and volunteers for their continued support.

D J Wright