



Raincliffe Wood Community Enterprise

AGM

25 April 2017

Chairman's Report

Raincliffe Wood Community Enterprise (RWCE) was established in April 2015 with a mandate from Scarborough Borough Council (the owners of the Woodland) to take over the management of this important landscape feature overlooking Scarborough which includes Forge Valley, Raincliffe and Row Brow Woods, all of which is either a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or a Protected Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) or both, and is situated within the North York Moors National Park. Its special qualities are therefore well protected. The woodland extends to 222 hectares (548.50 acres).

RWCE's vision remains as outlined in the Business Plan

RWCE's Vision

To build a strong community enterprise that secures a safe and sustainable future for the woods while enhancing wildlife and community benefits

Ownership, Governance and Management

RWCE is a Not-for-Profit Company owned by just under 200 Members (Stakeholders) and managed by a Board of Directors, all of whom are volunteers. Six of the Directors are elected by the Members at the AGM on a rotational basis every three years. Directors must be members, which includes elected Directors all who sign up to support the ideals and objectives of RWCE.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association (M&Arts) were reviewed in 2016 and amendments were adopted at the AGM in 2016.

Management of Raincliffe and Forge Valley Woods is structured within a Business Plan and advice from the Woodland Trust. RWCE has a five year Management Agreement with the Woodland Trust, which is due for review in this the third year.

The Board have decided to use the three year review as an opportunity to revise the Business Plan and structure of management. This is taking place with the assistance of the Plunket Foundation under their initiative "Making Local Woodlands Work". This process is being managed by Mark Walton of Shared Assets and Nigel Lowthrop.

Financials

RWCE has continued operations through the year with limited resources from timber sales, and grants from WREN, Wild about Woods, Stronger Communities and North York Moors National Park. Will Watts from Hidden Horizons has been overseeing the Wild about Woods and Stronger Communities programmes. Mark Feather of the Woodland Trust has been providing Woodland Management Consultancy, free of charge.

The Accounts for the year ending 31st October 2016 are presented with this Report and indicate a surplus in the year of £7,565. Income is represented by timber sales in the year of £10,206, and Grants / Donations of £10,174. The principle costs relate to the delivering of the Wild about Woods and Stronger Communities programmes and other administrative costs. RWCE employs an Administrator for 10 hours per month.

Cash held in the current account amounted to £7,685 (31st October 2016), and currently is £8,269.07 (excluding the two grant funders).

The future financial liability of RWCE remains dependent on grants or support funding as timber sales alone do not provide sufficient income to cover the running costs, despite the majority of the labour input coming from volunteers.

Woodland Management

In 2016 thinning took place of mainly conifers over an area of approximately 8 hectares (19.77 acres) with around 450 tonnes of timber harvested producing a net income of £3,400. Timber was sold standing, the contractor bearing the cost of felling or thinning.

The restorative thinning work covered just over 10 hectares (24.71 acres) and included sites within Forge Valley, Row Brow and a small part of Raincliffe Wood.

As part of the thinning process two guided walks were arranged by the Woodland Trust to explain the Woodland Management work.

Endeavours have been made to use local contractors, and although local approaches have been made it has proved difficult to engage contractors with current Certificates and Health and Safety compliance. The Board, however, continue to impress on the Woodland Trust the desirability to use local contractors and also to explore the opportunity for added value. This is difficult to achieve without an employed Project Manager, who can build and develop suitable local markets.

Plans for 2017 include thinning approximately 12 hectares (29.65 acres) of woodland which will include an area of hardwoods (beech). The under thinned beech has created a dense canopy and heavy shade which prevents any form of natural regeneration of the ground flora. The thinning of this compartment of beech, will open up the canopy and introduce more light and a great variety to the understorey.

In addition to the more traditional thinning work it is hoped that work will commence on the removal of rhododendron. This exotic species is extremely invasive, contaminates the soil and dominates the native ground flora. It can also be infected by phytophthora, which is a very serious disease affecting Larch.

There is also a small amount of new planting with native trees and shrubs.

Management of the woodland takes place within the Ten Year Management Plan approved by the Forestry Commission.

As has been mentioned previously the Board are keen to encourage an increasing use of local contractors and added value. The Woodland Trust have expanded the list of contractors to 17, who have been invited to submit expressions of interest for the 2017 programme.

Communication

The Board have struggled with communication, largely due to the delayed commissioning of a new website. A new website is now in place and is being managed by two Members of the Board and a contractor, Jack Kapinski.

A public meeting was held in 2016, at which approximately 28 people attended and another similar event is planned in July / August of this year.

Volunteering / Public Involvement

The main volunteering programme has been led by Will Watts of Hidden Horizons by way of the two funded programmes, Wild about Woods and Stronger Communities.

During the year 30 volunteer sessions have been organised with 200 people attending them. In addition 20 public events have been organised with 250 attendees. Other highlights have included Barrowcliffe Forest School sessions throughout the year and 3 corporate volunteer days with Yorkshire Coast Homes, McCaines and Scarborough Hospital.

Planned events include the following:

- Barrowcliffe School – 3 mornings a week with younger children.
- Volunteer Sessions – Tree planting and way-marking surveys.
- First Woodland Explorers Club
- Sidewalk and Scarborough + Ryedale Carers Resource.
- Gallows Close Summer Club workshops
- Bushcraft – 3 organised so far
- International Dawn Chorus – Barrowcliffe and Northstead Residents
- University of Hull Centre for Environmental and Marine Studies
- Endurance Event

The Board are exploring the possibility of providing temporary facilities (WCs and storage).

Summary

RWCE remains very active and is keen to develop the volunteering and in due course training programmes. It is also keen to introduce more local involvement in woodland management and added value to timber sales. There are limitations due mainly to the reliance on volunteers and lack of financial resources. The Business Plan review, however, is timely and hopefully RWCE can move onto the next stage of its development.

RAH SWORD
RWCE Board Chair