



## **Raincliffe Wood Community Enterprise C.I.C**

### **Chairman's Report 2020**

#### **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.

The Board of Directors has seen a few changes in the last year with the addition of two replacement Scarborough Council representatives; Cllr Phil Kershaw and Cllr Subash Sharma and also a co-optee, Alex Robinson. It is, however, with great sadness that I report the passing of Alex, whose service on the Board was cut far too short by his untimely death last month. The Board's sympathy goes to his family and friends.

James Risker has decided to stand down from the Board and he will be replaced following the members' ballot for three new members at the 2020 AGM.

The Board has been very ably supported by the Management Focus Group (all of whom are volunteers) who have very successfully learned the hard way the peculiarities of managing woodland, maintaining and improving access, enabling volunteering and applying for funds. **Local people giving local support to a local environment.**

The Board is also very grateful to Scarborough Borough Council for their assistance in helping to keep the woodlands tidy with litter picking and removal of fly tipping. Volunteers have also been working with the woodland maintenance team in assisting in maintaining the paths and clearing up after the woodland operations.

#### **Woodland Management**

The Focus Group has continued to manage the woodlands as sympathetically as possible which continues the task of opening up the canopy to create a mix of species more in keeping with a former ancient woodland site. The plan is to bring the thinning and felling programme back to a local level by employing two contractors and using the support of Thorn Park Farm. Sadly, this has been delayed due to the Covid 19 shutdown and maintaining sufficient regular work to make it worthwhile for the local contractors. It is still very much an ambition of the Focus Group to continue the search for local support.

The woodland programme generated a surplus of £18,275 which has given RWCE the opportunity to reinvest in the woodland and to purchase some much-needed small tools. All surpluses are reinvested back into the woodland.

## **Power to Change**

The Board have been successful in being awarded by 'Power to Change' a significant grant of £113,000 over two years to employ a Community Woodland Manager and purchase equipment to provide a sustainable business plan for the woodlands. This is an important achievement by the Focus Group and by employing a Manager will give greater impetus and viability for the long-term future of RWCE.

An application has been submitted to the Forestry Commission for a Higher-Level Stewardship Grant, which will provide additional financial support for the woodlands over the next five years.

## **The Boardwalk**

After months of encouragement and an enormous amount of work put in by one of the Directors, Robert Peacock, DEFRA at the last minute withdrew their grant offer to replace the boardwalk and a new bridge in Forge Valley. This formed a key part of improving accessibility (and therefore softer tourism) to Forge Valley and the wider Derwent Valley, and the loss of this grant causes the Board a great concern for the public's enjoyment of the existing boardwalk which is becoming increasingly unsafe. Other funding possibilities are being explored.

## **Forge Valley Nature Reserve**

Discussions continue with Natural England for the renewal of the Nature Reserve Agreement. This is an important document which sets out the management prescriptions for the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The final draft Agreement is awaited.

## **Other but Important Activities**

For Raincliffe, Row Brow and Forge Valley Woods to thrive and serve its purposes it aims to:

- Offer volunteering opportunities – making a contribution
- Enhancing and learning new skills – opening up employment opportunities
- Providing access to children and young people – new outdoor activities
- Promoting health and wellbeing – being part of a group and making a contribution
- Providing access to all regardless of background, health, hardship, disablement, infirmity or gender

Examples of planned or actual activities include:

- Volunteer days to help with litter picking, brash clearing, path clearing and planting.
- Forming a closer relationship with Scarborough Conservation Volunteers to help maintain the woods and improve access for pedestrians and cyclists.
- North York Moors National Park Youth Educational and Development programme working with Graham School.
- The Girl Guides provided with an area of the woodland for their own use.
- A project for Sheffield Hallam University to use the woodland as part of their field studies.
- Discussions with the student engagement officer at Coventry University Scarborough campus for volunteering opportunities for the students.
- Discussions with Thrive Alive for the establishment of a mobile classroom.

Many of these activities are yet to happen (largely as a result of Covid 19) but there is a wide breadth of interaction with those organisations and individuals who are keen to make a genuine use of the outdoor environment within the woodland.

.....and let's not forget the many local people who continue to enjoy walking, running, cycling, picnicking, painting, or simply admiring a wonderful and growing landscape.

**Robert A H Sword**  
**Chair, July 2020**