



RAINCLIFFE WOOD COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE

Chair's Report 2022

(For the year ending October 2021, but carried forward to June 2022)

Raincliffe Wood Community Enterprise CIC (RWCE) has over the last twelve months moved into a different era, with the continuing activities lead by the Community Woodland Manager, Paul Thompson, the completion of a new five-year Business Plan, and the appointment of two new members of staff; Thomas Webborn as the Woodland Heritage Project Officer, and Gillian Astbury as the Events and Outreach Project Officer.

The Business Plan has identified that income from woodland operations (felling and thinning programmes) is reducing and will continue to reduce. In the short term the loss of income is being made up by a successful funding programme which will enable RWCE to refocus on different income streams – mainly events, training/education and wood and timber products.

The outreach programme of events will also encourage more volunteering initiatives and visits by the public to the woodland.

Woodland management

Thinning and felling has continued throughout the year to open up the canopy (allowing more light into the under story) and to diversify the tree species to create a better mix of broadleaf and conifers. This continues the policy of continuous cover forestry.

The thinning programme recommenced in November 2021, gradually restoring some of the more at-risk plantations on ancient woodland sites.

During September and October, North Yorkshire County Council carried out extensive repairs to the public highway through Forge Valley, which enabled the management team to carry out a programme of removing dangerous or diseased trees alongside the highway. This work was supported by a team of volunteers who committed 120 hours to the week's work. Furthermore, in February additional tree safety work has been taking place in the area of the Old Man's Mouth removing several large ash trees affected by ash dieback disease. Tree safety work is an expensive responsibility which is a significant challenge to an under resourced organisation, which is seeking to deliver improved access to and enjoyment of the woodland.

The woodlands were battered by storms through the winter months creating a significant amount of windblow. This has created an immense amount of work, which thankfully has been supported by Natural England in their role as guardians over the Forge Valley Nature Reserve.

Following funding support from Natural England and North York Moors National Park Authority, new interpretation boards and maps have been erected at the carparks. Additional grant aid from Power

to Change has also enabled the car parks to be more accessible by resurfacing and filling potholes, increasing parking capacity, creating disabled parking bays and removing old rotting fencing.

Volunteering

The volunteering activity has increased considerably, and an indication of the varied volunteering projects include;

- A number of community litter picks in partnership with Keep Scarborough Tidy.
- An Ancient Tree Survey in collaboration with the Woodland Trust
- Tree safety inspections along public rights of way with trained volunteers
- Charcoal making by carrying out a burn using a cast iron kiln in collaboration with the Scarborough Conservation Volunteers
- Controlled vegetation clearance to include Himalayan Balsam which is in danger of spreading into the Forge Valley Nature Reserve
- Managing the meadows, maintenance of the public bridleways and controlling snowberry
- Students from Graham School also assisted in removing snowberry encroaching into Forge Valley
- Clearing non-native rhododendron and shrubby honeysuckle preventing it from choking native trees
- A joint initiative with the Scarborough Field Naturalists Society to install bird boxes to attract spotted flycatchers into Raincliffe Wood
- A water vole monitoring initiative, using floating rafts along the River Derwent

Sirius Minerals Foundation has awarded RWCE a Capital and Training Grant which will enable volunteers to deliver essential work safety such as managing dangerous trees and transporting tools and equipment to site.

Health, Wellbeing and Education

Our Woodland Wellbeing Walks continue and are proving to be very popular, bringing together people from a whole range of backgrounds and abilities to appreciate the woodland atmosphere and to explore the network of footpaths.

A significant grant has been awarded by the HEY Smile Foundation through the Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership and further supported by the North York Moors National Park Authority through their Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme to deliver a programme of green social prescribing through woodland heritage craft workshops aimed at people with mild to moderate mental health difficulties. Green social prescribing is the practice of supporting people to engage in nature-based interventions & activities to improve their mental and physical health. We will do this by providing opportunities to meet new people, learn new skills and spend time in nature.

Events

Establishing Raincliffe and Forge Valley Woods as the principal south eastern gateway into the North York Moors National Park has become a key objective of RWCE as we launch our new events programme supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Gillian Astbury's appointment as the Events and Outreach Project Officer will enable this objective to be realised over the next two years as we bring all parts of the community together

to help them reconnect with the nature on their doorstep. Forthcoming outreach activities will include:

- Guided walks highlighting the important heritage, geology and ecology of the community woodland
- Craft workshops
- Family events
- Outdoor education visits for local schools and colleges
- The creation of a youth ambassador group of Young Rangers
- The creation of digital resources to enable us to take the woodland to those who cannot physically visit the site

The Directors will continue to explore ways of improving foot and cycle access from Scarborough to the woodland and in the longer term the possibility of a visitor and education centre as a gateway into the National Park.

Forge Valley Nature Reserve (SSSI)

RWCE continue to work in close partnership with Natural England to manage the National Nature Reserve. A number of joint task days have been delivered managing the species rich meadows and the dangerous trees within the Forge Valley, with particular support with the significant threat posed by ash dieback.

Fundraising

Paul Thompson and some of the Directors, to include Julia Clark, have been working hard to secure funding for the wide variety of projects required to effectively manage a large freely accessible public green space, and deliver our organisational objectives.

A wide range of funding bodies have provided support to RWCE over the past 12 months. These include;

Power to Change

North York Moors National Park Authority

The National Lottery Community Fund

DEFRA (Countryside Stewardship Hier Tier scheme)

HEY Smile (Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership)

Natural England

Sirius Minerals Foundation

Yorkshire Water

Locality Budget from SBC Councillors

Woodland Heritage

Scarborough Borough Council

Media & Communications

We continue to produce our quarterly newsletter for our Membership and subscribers.

RWCE made its debut with BBC Radio 4, Radio York and Look North on the somewhat unlikely subject of fly tipping which is a blight which even affects some of the more secluded woodland habitats. Following our recent fundraising success, we have also been featured in the Yorkshire Post, Woodland Heritage and Living North magazine.

The Directors are considering ways of improving communication with our Members and are considering the development of a Membership scheme.

Business Plan

The Business Plan was completed earlier in the year and sets out the objectives for the next five years. One of the key objectives is to develop income from within the resources of RWCE as opposed to a reliance on grant aid. This is an objective over the next five years.

The Business Plan is on the RWCE website, and I would encourage you to read the Plan and also express your views by emailing either the Community Woodland Manager or Chair.

The Board and Administration

Paul Thompson has continued to display great energy and enthusiasm in the growth of RWCE. He has been supported by Sharon Glaves, who has recently stood down as the Administrator to be replaced by Jennifer Hobson. My thanks go to both of them and I welcome Jennifer to her new part time role.

RWCE now has its own office located in a secure cabin very close to Raincliffe Wood. This also provides a more secure area for storage of the ever growing list of capital equipment.

The Focus Group which includes Robert Peacock, Dave Evans, and Stephen Parker have given tremendous support and Board guidance to Paul Thompson and his team.

My thanks go to all members of the Board for bringing individual skills, time and ideas to the running of RWCE. The Board works as an active and cohesive team, resulting in many positive achievements in the success of managing what still remains as one of the largest Community owned and managed woodlands in England.

Julia Clark has sadly decided to stand down as a Director and I would like to thank her for support, in particular helping Paul Thompson with the funding applications.

Several new Directors are being put forward to join the Board, to include Terry Smithson, Martha Cattell and Charlotte (Lottie) McFarlane.

Finally, as I have left the immediate area, this leaves me to announce my decision to stand down as Chair and as a Director of the Board with effect from the AGM. I became involved at the very outset of RWCE about nine years ago and was appointed Chair. The not-for-profit company went through some difficult moments in its early years but I am pleased to say RWCE is now in a robust and confident position and will, I believe, move forward and deliver some real natural benefits, enjoyment and inspiration to Scarborough Town and the surrounding communities. It has been a privilege to be involved and I thank all those past and present who have made RWCE possible.

I am proposing that Robert Peacock, the current Deputy Chair, will replace me as the new Chair.

RAH Sword
Chair, RWCE CIC
20th June 2022