

CCWT Chairperson report 2017

I am starting this report on a rather sad note. After chairing the Culag Community Woodland Trust for more than 15 years Anna Mackay has decided to step down as Chair. We are very fortunate to have had Anna as our Chair for so many years and are grateful for her countless contributions and her dedication. We are very happy to announce that she will remain a member of the board and will stay on as one of our Directors, hopefully for many years to come.

There is very good news regarding the Coigach Assynt Living Landscape partnership projects. CCWT is leading three of the projects under this partnership scheme, the 'Outdoor and Woodland Learning' project, the 'Woodland Artisan' project and the 'Culag and Little Assynt path' project. We are delighted that the OWL project has started and Fiona Saywell and Katrina Martin have been busy teaching young people all over Assynt and Coigach since September last year. We're positive we will be able to find match funding for the other two projects soon and can't wait for these projects to start and get going as well!

Deer seem to be a constant topic on our agenda in the last year. The members of the Assynt peninsula deer management group have worked hard to reach agreement over the deer management plan that has now been drafted and will be submitted to SNH. Unfortunately the agreed cull numbers were harder to reach this year than we had originally anticipated. We would like to thank Don O'Driscoll and our community stalking group for all their efforts in trying to reach our agreed cull numbers and to try and keep the deer under control at Little Assynt. Although we have had help from Robert Stuart, resident deer in Culag woods remain a bit of a problem.

There have been a few organisations that have been of great help to us in the past year. A new and exciting 2-mile circular self-guided walk has been created by Plantlife recognising Culag Woods as a part of the West Coast Important Plant Area (IPA). They have printed a brilliant new leaflet to accompany the walk and provide information about the plants and fungi of the Celtic Rainforest. Froglife has been a great help in tackling the dragonfly bog to make it more amphibian friendly. They have also been out to Little Assynt where they created a better habitat for reptile species.

Our Woody group has been very active over winter and was joined by a few new members. They have been tirelessly mending paths, digging ditches, cutting trees and doing much more to keep our woods and Little Assynt in good order. Thank you Mel for all the organising and providing wonderful cakes and a big thank you to all the volunteers who helped out.

The new Culag Woods website has been up and running for wee while now. We're hoping it will be a great help in providing information, advertising our events and making it easier for people to make donations.

Unfortunately we have not found a way to create a regular stream of income yet so we remain solvent and poor (we again owe a great deal of gratitude to Ian MacKenzie for balancing our budgets and Fiona Saywell for being such an expert fund finder). But we have been very busy fundraising with various events some of which are now turning into an annual tradition like our Easter egg hunt, the White Shore bbq and camping, our summer ceilidh. We have also been at the Highland games again and provided refreshments at several craft fairs in the village hall.

I would like to thank Rosemary Baines and Ken Fairchild for diligently emptying our donation boxes, all the Directors and Office bearers for all their hard work and commitment, our members for all their support, all the volunteers without whom we would not be able to exist, and all those who have enjoyed the woods, walked the paths and left us with their words of appreciation.

And last but not least, I would like to thank you all for coming to our AGM and showing us that you care.

Thank you!

Jorine van Delft