

## **AGM: CCWT 24th August 2020 - Project Officer's Report – Fiona Saywell**

The end of the reporting period for 2019-20 for this year's AGM is affected by the start of the lockdown restrictions that came into effect in the second half of March.

**CCWT in lockdown:** Immediate affects were the cancellation of our March Directors meeting and the closure of toilet facilities at Little Assynt. After initial concerns and not being sure of whether paths should be closed, access to both Little Assynt and Culag Woods remained unchanged during lockdown in compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Being able to go to these areas for exercise has been a huge benefit for all who have used them. From a personal point of view it was a relief that the paths were able to stay open. It felt like at least CCWT could help with keeping some sense of normality, providing a space for folk to escape to on a daily basis if they needed it. It also became apparent quite quickly that income for the Trust over the coming year would likely be restricted. Visitor donations, fishing permit sales and fundraising activities are all at their peak in the spring and summer. No face to face meetings has been a challenge but it has been great to get most of the CCWT team meeting virtually. Meetings we have held have been full of laughter, just great to get everyone together.

So that's been the CCWT covid restrictions journey so far, time to look back to pre covid times.....2019 to 2020 was a fairly quiet year in terms of new activities, but nevertheless plenty to do!

**CALLP:** CCWT are still very much part of the CALLP scheme which is just about to enter its final year of project work. The Outdoor and Woodland Learning Project has continued with its regular programmes, John Muir Award, Hill to Grill, Isle Martin Island Explorer but also included some new accredited training for both pupils and teachers. A BASP two day Outdoor First Aid course was run for High School pupils and quite an intensive week long Woodland Activity Leader training course was held in October in Culag Woods for local teaching staff. Extra funding has been approved for more path improvements at Little Assynt and Culag Woods, a storage facility in the Main car park and for assistance with recommissioning the compost toilets.

**Compost toilets:** This year the toilets have been the source of many discussions, emails and basically a lot of work to get things fixed. Thank you to Mel for all your assistance and research on this. (see Winter 2019/20 Newsletter for details). Currently both the toilets have been "sorted" but are likely to remain closed for the season. The rigorous cleaning regimes required at the moment are unable to be implemented by the Trust due to capacity. But will keep this under review with the hope that there is a more normal situation next year.

**A dramatic prickly problem:** Last spring reports started coming in from walkers in Culag wood that the trees were dying! The trees that were suffering were the sitka spruces. The needles had turned brown and the new spring growth was also being affected. The needle drop was staggering and the paths became quite carpeted. All ages of trees seemed to be affected from the new saplings to very mature trees. Looking around outside Culag Woods it was noted other sitka across the area were showing the same signs. We were worried that some virulent disease could be spreading. I was due to go to a small woodland in Scourie with the School and didn't want to spread anything further, I was worried that any disease might be carried within the kit that I use with schools in the woodland. A bit of detective work was then undertaken from two approaches and it turned out that there were a couple of types of fungi present and also a heavy aphid infestation. Apparently these were quite widespread across the country last year and nothing practical could be done. We just had to let it run its course. Looking at the trees this year, many of them do seem to have recovered although some of the smaller ones were lost.

**Membership & Newsletters:** After overhauling the membership database into a more user friendly and practical format, have worked on reviving the CCWT newsletter. There have been a winter and spring issue so far this year and will be looking to put together a summer edition for publication next month.