

Chair person's report 2020

My normal routine before sitting down to write my report is to read through all of our past year's meeting minutes (available on our website) to remind myself of all that has happened in the woods, the activities that took place, questions that came up, issues that needed solving, the ideas that people had and all the work that has been done. It's not just a good tool to jog my memory, it's also a great way to relive events and reminisce. This time around it really helped me to look back on the time between now and our 2019 AGM and realise how much we were able to do despite it being so disrupted. When I sat down to write this report my first thought was, 'but what can I write about, this recent pandemic has really impacted everything we were planning to do!'. But while reading I realised that the months of lock down and phasing back into a new-normal were actually only a fraction of our woodland year. It was a strange feeling. To me it seemed that time had started to move so slowly at the start of April that it now feels like the previous 4/5 months lasted longer than the 10 months preceding them. And for those last months when it sometimes felt like all we could do was trying to deal with the consequences of this pandemic, sort out rules, regulations and guidelines, postpone planned projects, cancel events and worry about missing several income streams we depend on, these minutes showed that that wasn't all we were doing. Things were still happening in the woods! And people were still able to go to Culag Woods and Little Assynt and just enjoy being outside, getting their daily exercise and walking their dogs.

So what else happened this year?

In July we had a fantastic performance by Oceanallover at the Little Assynt all abilities path where we were taken on a journey discovering the music, poetry and song of the Orographic performance. In Culag woods we were able to replace quite a few bridges with the help of the John Muir Trust Volunteers, making it a bit easier to get over the burns. As part of The Woodland Trust's national Big Climate Fightback events programme, CALL/P hosted a tree planting event at Little Assynt in November. An interesting thing to mention is that this was the most northerly event as part of the programme! We are also very happy we managed to get our lovely compost toilets at Little Assynt completely emptied and they are now ready to start composting again as soon as it's safe to open them. Our project officer made some fantastic newsletters that we were able to send out to all our members. If you have missed these, they're available on our website. Over the winter the Assynt Field Club & CCWT have been working on creating larger than life size versions of several dragonflies (made by Chris Goodman) that can be found amongst the bog pools in the woodlands. These can now be found in Culag Woods. We also managed to find funding for several projects among which a new storage facility for the OWL project and additional path maintenance and signage. Unfortunately some of these projects have been postponed for the time being. We are also looking forward to starting our Eco school project at the dark pool area. Not in the least because we are hoping to organise a horse logger to come and help us with this! Vicky Campen organised some volunteer days for us, thank you Vicky! Unfortunately, we have not yet found anyone who is able to organise regular woody groups for us. If you are interested in doing this for us please contact Fiona Saywell, info@culagwoods.org.uk.

We would like to thank all volunteers that have helped us in the woods and beyond in all kinds of weather throughout the year, specially Julian Jacobsen. We would also like to thank everyone who has donated to us or became a member. Thank you Ian MacKenzie for keeping our books in order. Thank you to Mel for looking after the compost toilets. Thank you Ken Fairchild for looking after our donation boxes in Culag Woods and Susan Pease for looking after the donation boxes out at Little Assynt. I would also like to say that during these last months we have been reminded how very lucky we are to have a fantastic project officer who kept working through all this and who has proven to be very good at finding solutions. Thank you, Fiona Saywell!

And finally, thank you all for finding the time and making an effort to come to this AGM. Your support means a lot to us!

Jorine van Delft