

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, taken from 2017/2018 Annual Accounts.

Achievements and performance (Chairman's report)

Overview.

The purpose of the Chairman's report is to highlight all the progress and improvements that have been accomplished during the year, any issues that exist and thoughts for the future. The various sports and leisure activities are thriving and the number of visitors to Kinghorn Loch continues to grow. The 'Barn at the Loch' café, run by Bruce and Sarah Stuart, is proving a big draw for people who are walking in the area or using the loch for water sports. Our success is proof of all the hard work that a lot of people have put in over many years and the extent of co-operation between everyone. I would like to greatly thank everyone who has volunteered their help in completing the latest Trust project "Provision of visitor facilities at Kinghorn Loch and its environs" and making it such a success. Practical matters are progressed through the informal 'Loch Users and Projects Group' of CRCT. Representatives of several groups who work with the Trust are invited along together with any Friends of CRCT who express an interest in this work. We would ask all Friends if they might be able to offer practical, technical or specialist help through this group.

The water quality of the loch remains excellent and just one loading of barley straw onto the four rafts now suffices to keep algal blooms away. Banchory Farm has always donated the straw and the Trust is very grateful to Jimmy Cochran for continuing to do this.

Renewing the barley straw rafts has made a big difference to the nesting opportunities for the birds, and the swans have always taken full advantage. In early 2017 the male swan was so badly injured by fishing line that he was put down by the SSPCA. The female successfully reared five healthy cygnets and has recently returned to the loch with a new mate and examined the usual raft for this coming years nesting.

The 'Come and Try' Day on the 6th May 2017 was again a great success with wonderful weather. We had a record number of youngsters trying out canoeing, the sailing dinghy was kept very busy and so was the new attraction, the Coastal Rowing Club skiff. On land there were lots of families that took advantage of the weather, walking through the woods, visiting the 'Earthship' and taking advantage of the viewing scope to check up on progress with the swan on its nest on the far barley straw raft. There were also a couple of brand new families of mallard ducks scurrying around to keep children entertained and a great spotted woodpecker close by.

The final part of last year's project, which is yet to be completed is to construct the nesting platforms and Goldeneye nest boxes. This was held up because of problems procuring the materials, resolved thanks to help from Web Rigging Services, and to avoid disturbance during the nesting season. The base frames were put out in December and then the wooden frames put on. All this was done in icy conditions and breaking the ice and the tendency for the frames to slide on the ice proved a challenge. The surfacing of the platforms again proved a challenge with a greater expanse of ice to break through and snow. The platforms were enhanced

with boughs, rocks and duckling shelters to provide protection from predators. It has been a big collective workload for all the groups to help with.

The loch was heavily polluted from the 1950s to 1983 and, while Ron Edwards was Chief Chemist with the Forth River Purification Board, he undertook a PhD study to remove the pollution (1980-1986), which has proved completely successful. The legacy of high arsenic and vanadium in the sediments has been further studied to elucidate the longevity of the pollution. Having now completed the follow up research on the fate of arsenic in the loch as part of an international review, Bryan Spears, from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in Edinburgh, held a conference in December as vanadium is becoming a pollutant of concern in the far-east particularly with the possibility of vanadium being used in battery technology. Ron has been involved in preparing this paper and CRCT wishes CEH success.

The kingfishers returned to their usual haunt this winter and the number of visiting bird watchers rocketed.

Kirkcaldy Canoe Club is the longest established group at the loch, with more than thirty-six years canoeing at Kinghorn Loch and continues to thrive well. The Sailing Club has also been wintering here for a long time. Kinghorn Radio Sailing Club now has weekly sessions on the loch each Saturday and Wednesday. The open water swimmers continue to meet informally at the loch (from May to September) on Tuesdays and there were twelve hardy souls recently. CRCT also has the pleasure of having Kinghorn Coastal Rowing Group using the loch for training for a second winter. The Trust is working with the Scottish Carp Group to help regulate fishing and rules are being drawn up. Altogether things are looking very healthy. The combination of the water, the ducks, wonderful walks and the countryside, with a drop off at the café is attracting more and more people, particularly young families and it is great to see. The Cromwellian Re-enactment, organised by Bruce Stuart proved to be very successful and certainly spectacular.

The highlight for many was a trip out to Inchkeith in November, in co-operation with Burntisland Heritage Trust, and guided by Ron Morris, Conservation Officer for the islands in the Firth of Forth, principally to count the seal pups; over 500 seen. The usual second trip was cancelled due to poor weather.

The Walking Group meets each month throughout the year, with an additional mid month walk from April to September. Kathleen Curley and Pat Convery organise the monthly walks and have developed a regular group of walkers. Marilyn Edwards organises the mid month schedule. The Mini Walking Festival, held in March/April was very successful, with the change in month making access easier than in September. About half the participants are existing friends of CRCT and half are from throughout Fife. It is lovely to have such a good feel to the walks. Weed growth is less on paths and there are no cattle in fields in early spring giving more freedom to choose walks. Some routes went through locals farms and landowners were very welcoming. There was very good participation (most walks were full), a friendly atmosphere and plenty of photos.

A big thank you to Gordon Reid who has repaired the Swan Bench that was damaged last year. It is now in place and an attraction for lots of children. We still

need to improve the surround and this is scheduled for this winter. Hilary Payne has been organising Defibrillator training through Alex Macdonald of Burntisland First Aid and most people who wanted training have now been accommodated. The new Information Board at Woodland Rise Path is now in place and looking good.

During the accounting period, CRCT has commenced a full review of Policies, Method Statements and Risk Assessments and completed its obligations under Data Protection (GDPR) regulations.

Lovell, the house builder, has commenced house building and helped to clear the roads during the severe weather in March. It will be good to see the area improved at last. We will continue to work with developers if and when appropriate to achieve the best and most attractive outcome.

The area covered by the Trust, from the loch through Craigencalt woodland and right up to the old Binnend village, has been greatly improved by all our volunteers over a few years with great help from Alcan and funders and now with increased numbers of visitors, there is a buzz in the air. A big thanks once again for all your support.