



The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative

“increasing countryside awareness through education . . .”



Combining Barley September 2021

**Year Twenty Four Report
December 2020 – November 2021**





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RNCI Summary of Activity 2014-2021



Legal and Administrative Information

Current Trustees:

Philip Wrigglesworth (Chair)
Carla Coghlan (Vice Chair)
Ewan Johnston (Treasurer)
Chris Stockwell
Martin Birse
Ellis Mutch
William Stewart

Charity Number: SCO33448

Company Number: SC234500

Current Registered Office:

The Laundry
Home Farm
Fintray
Aberdeen,
AB21 0HY

Independent Examiner:

Jane Dempster
JD Accountancy
16 Nelfred Terrace
Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 4TJ

Bankers: Virgin Money

During 2020/2021, three bank accounts remain operational:

- Current Account
- 30 Day Notice Account
- Business Term Deposit Account

The trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ending 30th November 2021. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements and are attached to this report. The Executive Committee is elected from members of the Initiative as detailed in the Constitution. The Committee meets a minimum of six times a year. It directs the activities of the Initiative through the Project Manager who also acts as committee secretary though not Company Secretary.

This report was approved by the board on 22nd August 2022 and signed on its behalf.

Martin Birse, RNCI Trustee (for period)/Director
On behalf of the RNCI board




















Background

The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI) has grown from links between the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) and the Royal Northern Agricultural Society (RNAS), together with the participation of several leading local agribusinesses. An informal partnership was formed between the participating organisations and businesses to further the aims of the Initiative. An Executive Committee was established with membership drawn from the various partners involved with the Initiative and reporting annually to the funding partners. We are now an extremely strong volunteer committee leading the way in countryside education in the North East of Scotland.

1. Aim

"To develop a greater understanding of farming and the working countryside by children and their teachers in the North East of Scotland."

The Initiative has sought to achieve this by:

-  Linking schools with a local farmer/landowner/working estate and/or agricultural related industries.
-  Encouraging discussion with farmers, landowners and schools on the countryside, food production, farming and the environment.
-  Encouraging and supporting learning about the countryside by practical experience and example, particularly by facilitating school visits onto working farms.
-  Pioneering the Countryside Classroom on Wheels, the first of its kind in Scotland, as a valuable resource in the understanding of countryside education to school children, their teachers and the wider general public.
-  Providing a pre-school box and resources for pre-school age children and their teachers accompanied by pre-school farmer visits to develop an understanding at a young age.
-  Providing a resource box and resources for schools with information on the Working Countryside in the UK, Scotland and the North-east.
-  Providing teachers with cross-curricular learning and teaching resources in support of local and national curriculum initiatives.
-  Establishing links with local authorities and their officials.
-  Providing in-service training for teachers involved with the Initiative.
-  Providing training and resources for farmer speakers going into schools.
-  Providing subsidised transport, where required, to facilitate school visits onto farms.
-  Encouraging communication and partnership with and between other local countryside organisations.
-  Providing information and encouragement on careers in the countryside and agricultural related industries.
-  Keeping schools informed about local events and new resources.
-  Attending shows and educational events.
-  Encouraging and developing novel ideas and different methods of delivery and engagement.
-  In collaboration with LANTRA and SRUC, we aim to facilitate awareness of the wide array of career opportunities available within the land based sector.

2. The Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET)

RHET has provided back up and supporting administration to the Initiative. A RHET Board representative attends meetings of the RNCI Executive Committee as an observer.

RHET has a network of thirteen Countryside Initiatives throughout Scotland: Angus, Argyll, Ayrshire & Arran, Borders, Clyde, Dumbarton, Lomond & Renfrew, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Forth Valley, Highland, Lothians, Perth & Kinross, and RNCI.

RHET is itself supported financially by The Royal Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland (RHASS). RHASS provides sufficient funding to RHET to cover staffing and administration of the organisation itself but not that of the Initiatives for which funding is sourced by RHET staff, from outside trusts and organisations. RNCI remains the only self-financing Initiative.



3. **Strategic Plan**

RNCI works closely with RHET and will continue to do so. 2020-2021 saw the initiative continue provision of free services to the North East of Scotland. The strategic plan lays out improvements to the services, with a target to increase the number of children educated and improve health and safety measures.

The educational goals are:

- 🏠 Promoting understanding of the environmental and economic changes taking place in rural Scotland and its environment by:
 - Providing opportunities for young people to experience the Scottish countryside through visits.
 - Providing opportunities for young people to engage with people who live and work in the countryside in a variety of settings and vice versa.
- 🏠 Working in partnership to develop resources and activities (in the context of rural Scotland) to support educational professionals to provide motivating curricular learning opportunities for Scotland's young people.
- 🏠 Enabling educators to access reliable and balanced information on farming and rural issues.
- 🏠 Supporting and developing people across the North East.
- 🏠 Securing adequate funding to enable the above actions.

Within the organisation we plan to:

- 🏠 Maintain and develop further partnership relationships with educators of sustainable food, farming and countryside for all young people in Scotland.
- 🏠 Expand the current offering to ensure services are kept up to date with changes in the industry and relevant to the curriculum.
- 🏠 Embrace the use of information and communications technology, and to optimise the use of financial and other resources in pursuit of our aims.
- 🏠 Develop further a framework to support reflection and continuous improvement across all aspects of RNCI activities, enabling progress towards our outcomes to be demonstrated.
- 🏠 Continually strive to improve the efficiency and health and safety of how we operate and deliver our educational services.



4. Benefactors and Funding Members

The benefactors and funding members for the Twenty third year of the Initiative were:



*The Royal Highland
Education Trust*



*Royal Northern
Agricultural Society*

The MacRobert Trust, Mains of Loirston Charitable Trust, Morayshire Farmers' Club, Stewart Agricultural Ltd, ANM Group Ltd, Benzies, East Coast Viners Grain, Farm Management Association, JD Accountancy Ltd, Harbro Ltd, Johnston Carmichael, Kinermony Ltd, Ledingham Chalmers Charitable Trust, Mackies Ltd, Malcolm Allan Housebuilders Ltd, Aberdeen Grain, Groundwater Lift Trucks Ltd, Ravenhill Ltd, Turriff Agri Parts Ltd, The Demigryphon Trust, Turriff Show, North East Show Forum, Morrison Motors (Turriff) Ltd, Norvite Animal Nutrition Company Ltd, Forest Farm, The Organic Dairy, Balgownie Ltd, New Deer Agricultural Association, Duncan Farms, C Pirie Steel Fabrication, Stratton Contracting Ltd, Pedal Power, Inverurie.

We also have a number of anonymous benefactors.

(Please note these parties provided aid in 2020-2021)

RNCI would like to record our sincere appreciation to the Trusts and Organisations for their continued financial support.

5. Other Organisations

RNCI continues to establish and maintain contact with other individuals and organisations interested and involved in countryside education and the environment. With new funders being added each year we welcome new funding partners. Some benefactors wish to remain anonymous, and we wish to extend our thanks to these parties.

Some of the partner organisations we work alongside to provide delivery

Royal Northern Agricultural Society
Royal Highland Education Trust
Quality Meat Scotland
LANTRA
Game and Wildlife Trust



Year Twenty Four of the Initiative

1. **General Comment**

No change in Trustees for 2020-2021.

Alison Johnston continues as Project Manager with Claire Green as Educational Assistant.

With the Covid 19 Pandemic still affecting access to schools, the Project's Manager furlough was continued until the end of September 2021. However, RNCI looked at different ways to provide fun educational activities for schools and the decision was taken to roll out the Windowsill Garden Project for primary schools right across the North East, resulted in over 9,500 pupils having the opportunity to take part. The RNCI saw a huge increase in the number of children reached from 1,393 in year twenty-three to 10,121 in year twenty-four.

2. **Early Years Box**

The Early Years Box is targeted to the pre-school to P3 age group and comprises of a variety of items ranging from books, toys, puppets, tabards, jigsaw puzzles, samples and elementary worksheets to encourage the young child to establish the early link between the farmer and the food that they eat. In 2020-2021 RNCI supplied 5 boxes reaching 152 pupils.

3. **Classroom Speaker Visits**

RNCI worked hard to provide alternative options for teachers and pupils to access. Our Farmer Q&A sessions were popular and in 2020-2021 RNCI undertook 5 Q&A's and 1 Playground talk reaching 346 pupils

4. **Countryside Classroom on Wheels – CCOW**

2 visits were undertaken by the Countryside Classroom on Wheels (CCOW) throughout 2020-2021. The number of children seen was 56.

5. **Farm Visits**

No Farm Visits took place in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

6. **Windowsill Garden Project 2021**

400 Gardening kits were delivered into primary schools to enhance the Curriculum for Excellence. Each kit contained 5 different packs of seeds (peas, beans, radishes, salad leaves, cress), compost, seed trays, teachers booklet and a How to Sow film on our YouTube channel. The result was 400 kits into 129 schools and 9,567 pupils. This was a huge undertaking and was not possible without help from Directors, Committee and Volunteers

7. **Evaluation**

Alison Johnston has continued to grow into the role as Project Manager. Despite the difficulties caused by Covid-19 the Project Manager along with the Educational Assistant have continued to provide a high standard of education across the North East. Such work would be impossible without the support of our sponsors and benefactors. RNCI applaud the work currently undertaken by our staff but wish to keep expanding and increasing the number of children we educate but still with a strong focus on the quality of the education.

All teachers and farmers who request or undertake a Pre-school Visit, Classroom Speaker Visit, CCOW Visit, Farm Visit and visits to specialist events have the opportunity to complete an evaluation survey, results of which are collated by the RNCI and utilised to improve the service.



8. John Telfer Trophy

The John Telfer trophy is presented annually to an individual or organisation that has provided extreme help to the Initiative. The directors and committee vote each year and in 2021 awarded the prize to Derek MacDonald, Aberdeenshire Council for his support. Previous winners have been Jim Green, Roy Mitchell and Maxine Garson.

9. Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

RNCI were asked to help judge the GWCT Art Competition covering various school areas in the North East. Due to the pandemic the prize for the primary school winner was a selection of Wildlife/Farming books and a Farm Visit (post covid). The judging was extremely tough and the standard very high. We hope to arrange a Farm/Estate visit as soon as it is safe to do so.



*The John Telfer Trophy 2021 being presented to Derek MacDonald, Aberdeenshire Council
Phil Wrigglesworth, RNCI Chair, John Telfer and Derek MacDonald*



Other Events

1. RNAS Spring Show, Thainstone

There was no Spring Show in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Raising the Initiative's Profile

1. Publicity

Fewer press releases and photo calls were issued during 2020-21 than in previous years. This is due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As always, the RNCI is extremely appreciative for the support that is received from all media sources. Clear, positive coverage in farming, educational and general media has proven invaluable to the ongoing success of RNCI. For a mainly voluntary, charitable organisation, which is built on goodwill, this route of communication has had a significant positive impact in recruiting farmers for visits, enlisting the help of volunteers and sourcing funding.

2. Website

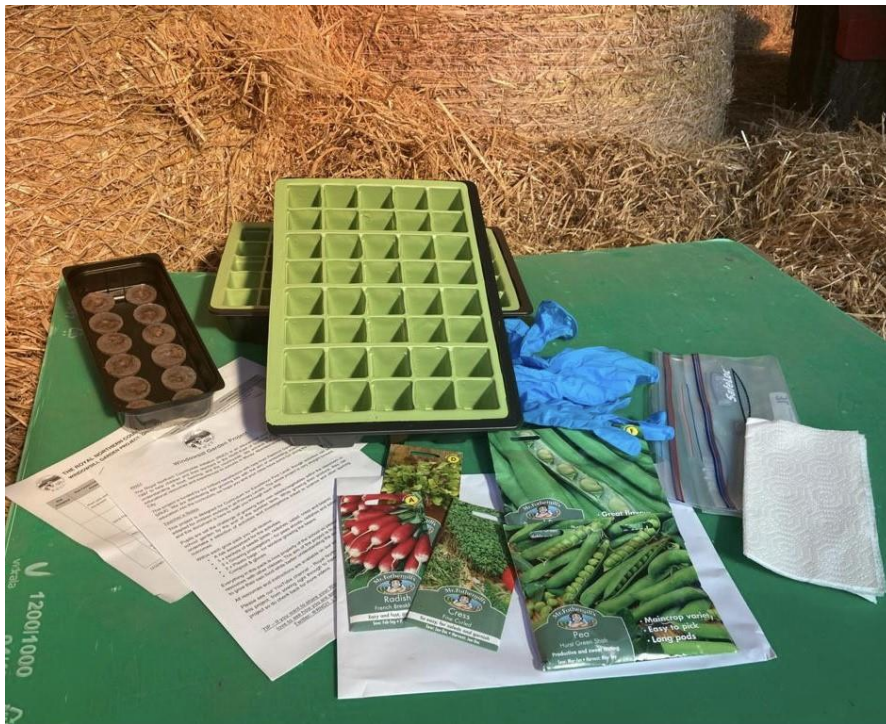
As we now have full control of our web platform, we can tailor our content and monitor our visitor's experience. This allows us to have up to date headlines and control over forms and requests in this fast-changing time.

3. Social Media

Social Media has continued to be our window to the world in the time of this pandemic. It has continued to grow and we have worked hard to maintain a presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We regularly have 'hits' of 1,000 per week.

4. Contacts

RNCI continues to build on the many useful links and contacts that have been made over the years here in the North East both within schools and the farming and food community. We work in partnership with leading Scottish organisations to benchmark our delivery and provide a quality service.



Windowsill Garden Project 2021



Hillside Primary School working on the Windowsill Garden Project 2021



Future Plans

RNCI will continue to fulfil its aim of increasing countryside awareness to the school children and their teachers in the north-east of Scotland whether in person, virtually or through funded projects.

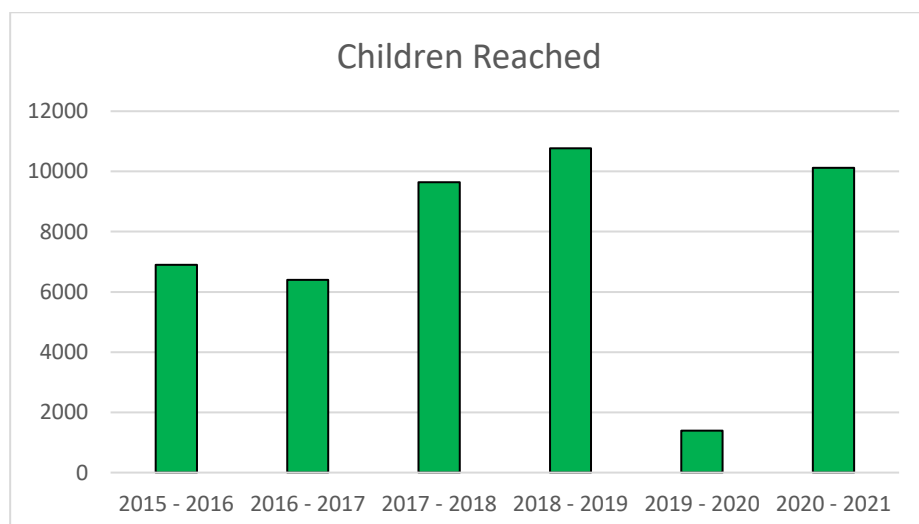
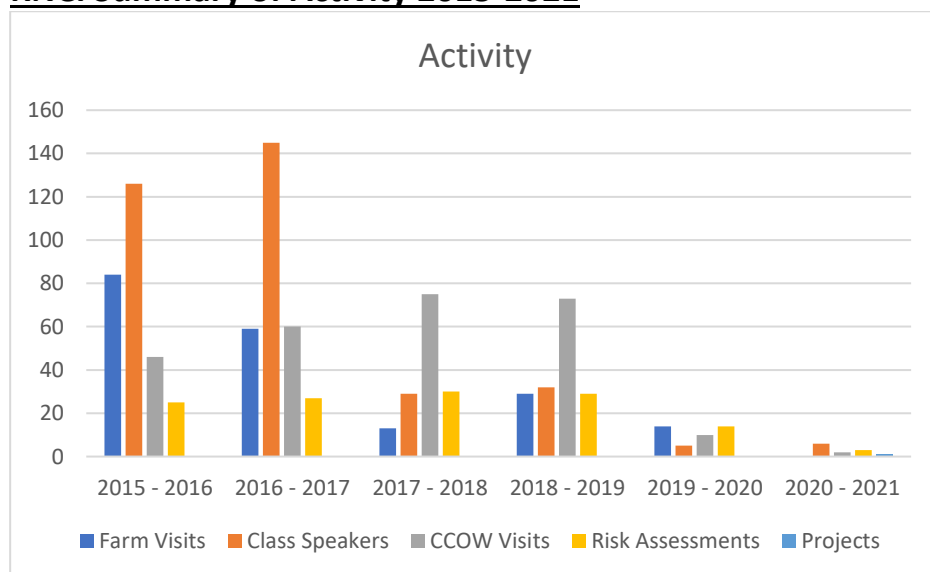
We will be lead by teachers and resume full services once allowed access into schools. In the meantime we will continue our social media, Farmers Q&A, projects and playground talks.

We received funding for a iPad Air which will improve our film editing and uploading onto our YouTube channel. We plan to run the Windowsill Gardening Project again in the springtime as the evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and shows the need for our services. The project will not only be easy for teachers but educational and inspiring for pupils as well as help in the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.

We remain deeply indebted for the continuation of financial support from our existing benefactors and funding members and will continue to enlist the support of new benefactors and funding members to support us. Applications to grant aid bodies will continue and, with the support of donations from individuals and/or organisations, we will achieve our aim.

The RNCI Executive Committee remain committed to their goal and are looking at the resumption of visits and events that pupils, teachers, farmers and volunteers enjoy alongside developing new projects and events which support schools in the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence.

RNCI Summary of Activity 2015-2021





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