



The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative

“increasing countryside awareness through education . . .”



CCOW visit to Uryside Primary – Sept 2019

Year Twenty Two Report December 2018 – November 2019





Year Twenty Two Report **December 2018 – November 2019**

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Legal and Administrative Information

Current Trustees:

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

Charity Number: SCO33448

Company Number: SC234500

Current Registered Office:

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Independent Examiner:

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JD Accountancy
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Inverurie
Aberdeenshire
AB51 4TJ

Bankers: Clydesdale Bank

During 2018/2019, 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 2019. 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 26/8/2020 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. The RHET North Countryside Initiative Developer attends meetings of the RNCI Executive Committee as an observer.

RHET has a network of twelve Countryside Initiatives throughout Scotland: Angus, Ayrshire & Arran, Borders, Clyde, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Forth Valley, Highland, Lothians, Perth & Kinross, and RNCI covering 26 local authority areas.

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.



The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative

"increasing countryside awareness through education . . ."

3. **Strategic Plan**

RNCI works closely with RHET and will continue to do so. 2019 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 second 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, Ian S Roger, Turriff Agri Parts Ltd, The Demigryphon Trust, Turriff Show, North East Show Forum, Morrison Motors (Turriff) Ltd, Norvite Animal Nutrition Company Ltd, Donview Veterinary Centre,

Forest Farm, The Organic Dairy, Balgownie Ltd, New Deer Agricultural Association, Duncan Farms, C Pirie Steel Fabrication, Mackintosh of Glendaveny. We also have a number of anonymous benefactors.

(Please note these parties provided aid in 2018-2019)

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



In order to fund additional specialist events throughout the year, RNCI has to source additional funding and this remains a priority for the RNCI Executive Committee. Financial donations and assistance in kind was gratefully received during 2018/19 from:

RNAS Spring Show	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance In Kind</i>
Scottish Government	RGU, QMS, Lantra, Norvite
RNAS	SRUC, Balgownie
ScotBeef Event	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance in Kind</i>
RNAS	SRUC, Lantra
Sustainability Day (RHET Angus)	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance in Kind</i>
Aberdeenshire Council	Brae of Pert Farm, Muirden Energy, Forster Group, Strathcathro Estates, SOYL, Burghill Farms
Grow Your Future Day – Dipple Farm	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance in Kind</i>
	Dipple Farm, Pitgaveny Estate, Shearwell Data
	AGRII, Norvite, Glenrinnis Estate, Spey Fishery Board, UHI, Ravenhill, Christie Elite, James Jones,
	SRUC, ANM Group, Wasteswitch,
RAF STEM Event	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance In Kind</i>
N/A	Pitgaveny Estate, SRUC, Mark Garrick
Pitgaveny Higher Biology Day – Pitgaveny Estate	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance in Kind</i>
<i>Savills</i>	AGRII, SRUC
	Moray Coast Veterinary Group
	E Macfarlane, J Anderson

5. Other Organisations

RNCI has and continues to establish and maintain contact with several 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.



Year Twenty Two of the Initiative

1. General Comment

Unfortunately, our Project Manager, Rob Clunas decided to move on to new pastures in June 2019. The job was advertised and after interviews the directors were delighted to appoint Alison Johnston to the position of Project Manager in early August. Alison is from an Agricultural background and brings a wealth of experience with her. Ellis Mutch is still chair with Phil Wrigglesworth Vice Chair.

The RNCI saw an increase in the number of children educated from 9600 in year twenty-one to over 10700 in year twenty-two. This is solely down to the hard work of the PM, educational assistant, committee and volunteers.

Plans for future progression are continually evolving and only remain possible through the continued generosity and support of our benefactors and funding members and our continuing endeavour with applications for funding from Trusts and external organisations. We aim to work in conjunction with other organisations to stream line educational efforts.

2. Pre-school Classroom Speaker Visits

The Pre-school Classroom Speaker Box is targeted to the pre-school 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.

The principle behind the box is that the speaker visits the nursery/pre-school group with the box and gives the children a very simple chat based around the pre-school and nursery teachers learning outcomes for the visit loosely based around farming, food production and the countryside. The box is left with the pre-school/nursery staff for a recommended three weeks whereby the speaker goes back in to conduct a follow up visit to collect the box and chat with the children and see what they have learned and retained. This is hopefully sowing an early seed in the child's mind that the farmer produces the food we eat and comments helped us to improve and develop future visits. Keeping track of where the pre-school boxes are located and delivery and uplift of the boxes and rotation around the north-east, during the school term, continues to be an ongoing challenge for the Committee.

3. Classroom Speaker Visits

A total of 32 Classroom Speaker visits took place in 2018-2019, inclusive of pre-school visits. The number of children seen was an astonishing 2456. Classroom speakers range from basic farming talks right through to specialist lectures within secondary schools from industry experts.

4. Countryside Classroom on Wheels – CCOW

An amazing 73 visits were undertaken by the Countryside Classroom on Wheels (CCOW) throughout 2018-19. The number of children seen was 4171. By using the RNCI educational assistant and PM to deliver these sessions they have become more accessible. It is hoped to target more city schools in the years to come.

5. Farm Visits

An amazing 29 Farm Visits took place in 2018-19, an increase on previous years. This accounted for 1705 children having a unique Farm Visit experience. A huge increase from 450 children in 2017-2018. The RNCI is delighted with the result and hopes to see this figure increase over the coming years as we understand the huge benefits children gain from visiting a farm. Something a lot of both town and rural children have never done.



6. STEM and Career Events

The RNCI has been invited to an increased number of careers focussed events and is happy to offer impartial advice to students on career choices in the land-based sector. The incorporation of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) is something that the RNCI is keen to highlight to teachers and pupils. STEM is an integral part of Agriculture but it is commonly overlooked for other industries such as oil and gas.

7. Evaluation

Alison Johnston has settled in extremely well as our new Project Manager and we are delighted with the increase in children reached in 2018-2019. To continue providing the quality of service across such a large geographical area we rely heavily on 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.

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 committee votes each year and in 2019 awarded the prize to Roy Mitchell, Drimmies Farm, Inverurie for his continued support. Previous winners have been Lucy Mair, SRUC and Jim Green.

9. Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

RNCI were asked to help judge the GWCT Art Competition covering the Marr school area. The prize for the primary winner was a Farm/Estate visit in the local area. The judging was extremely tough and the standard very high. A very enjoyable prize giving evening was arranged and the children were delighted to attend to collect their prizes.



The John Telfer Trophy being presented to Roy Mitchell, Drimmies Farm, Inverurie



Other Events

1. RNAS Spring Show, Thainstone – 27th February 2019

Children attended - 350

P4 – P7 primary school pupils attended the Spring Show from 12 schools in Aberdeenshire. They were shown around various stands where they attended workshops from various local employers and industry experts. Including RGU, Lantra, QMS and Norvite. They also had talks on Sheep production, Dairies, Crops, Beef and Machinery. This remains a huge event in our calendar and we aim to continue to work with the RNAS to provide this opportunity.

2. ScotBeef Day – North Belthelnie – 30th May 2019

Children attended - 290

Scotland's bi-annual ScotBeef event was held in Aberdeenshire this year which gave us the opportunity to host Academy students studying Geography and Biology. They were guided around a variety of educational stands including talks on Beef Production, LANTRA, Food & Drink, Genetics, Mechanisation, Soils & Environment, Digestion and Nutrition. The students also had an opportunity to go on a Farm Tour.

3. Sustainability Day in conjunction with RHET Angus – 25th June 2019

Children's attended – 121

RNCI and RHET Angus joined forces to bring together a Sustainability Day courtesy of Mr Hugh Campbell Adamson, Brae of Pert Farm. Showcasing how agriculture is being used to produce sustainable energy. Students from Mearns Academy and Montrose Academy had a range of talks and workshops on various subjects including Wind Energy, Solar Energy, Biodigester, Precision Farming, Crops and Machinery used for the biodigester and Oil Seed Rape and its use in renewable energy.

4. Grow your Future Day – Dipple Farm – 13th June 2019

Children reached - 113

Run in conjunction with Maxine Scott from Moray Council and the Moray Skills Pathway, this was the first of the land-based sector days. Inviting students from all secondary schools in Moray to experience workshops provided by various employers from a water bailiff through to a tree surgeon. The highlight for many pupils was the chance to drive a self-driving tractor or to operate a log lorry through virtual reality.

5. RAF STEM – RAF Lossiemouth – 18th – 20th September 2019

Children reached – 1200

Every Primary School in Moray P6 was invited and 1200 children attended over the 3 days. All students got to have a land-based session either on the CCOW or with our Tractor Simulator. Focussing on the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) of farming this event built on the previous success of last year. RNCI received support from Pitgaveny Estate and Mark Garrick Ltd.

6. Pitgaveny Estate Higher Biology Day – 7th November 2019

Children reached – 130

This is becoming a regular fixture in our calendar and the RNCI are delighted to continue to support this very worthwhile event. Students had the opportunity to see various topics including Technology, a Veterinary Surgeon, talking about symbiosis, Animal Welfare, Ethics, Genetics in Food Production, Field Trail Plots, Careers and Crop Protection.

RNCI would like to record our sincere thanks to our sponsors for supporting all these projects and events.



Raising the Initiative's Profile

1. **Publicity**

Fewer press releases and photo calls were issued during 2018-19 than in previous years. There is a clear shift in press releases to online presence and social media. As always, the RNCI is extremely appreciative for the welcome 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**

Following the redevelopment of the website last year, it has continued to allow for better connectivity with schools and the wider public. Now having full control of our web platform, we can tailor our content and monitor our visitor's experience.

3. **Social Media**

The RNCI Facebook page is regularly updated with details of visits which have taken place, and now has over 1500 'likes'. The expansion of Twitter and Instagram has now been undertaken to allow us to promote our services and recruit volunteers.

4. **Contacts**

RNCI continues to build on the many useful links and contacts that have been made over the years and the circulation of initial and subsequent follow up material to these contacts is seen as a valuable way forward for the Initiative.



RNCI Director Martin Birse at the RAF STEM event - Sept 2019



Future Plans

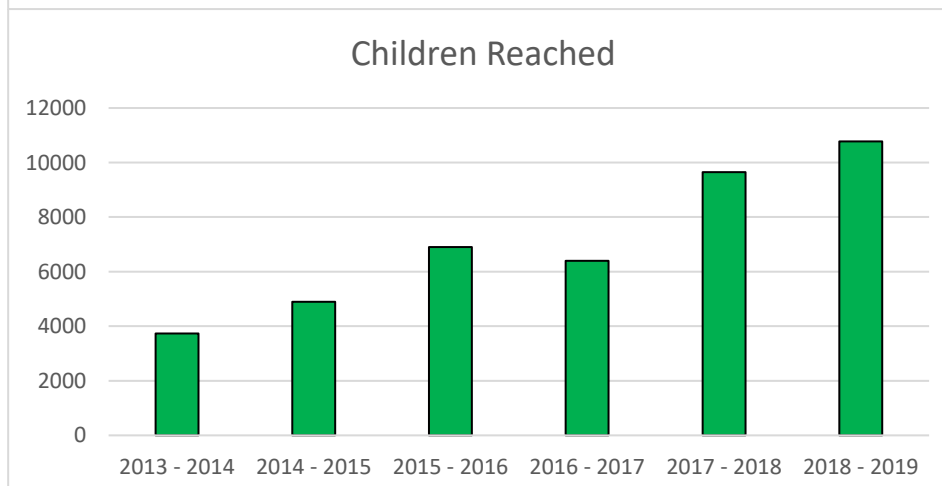
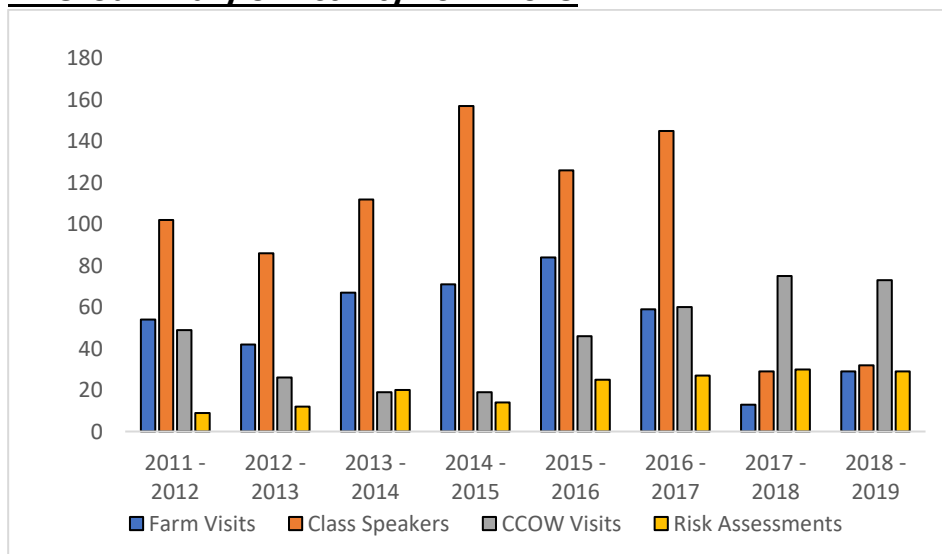
RNCI will continue to fulfil its aim of increasing countryside awareness to the school children and their teachers in the north-east of Scotland.

Farming has suffered many problems with the current climatic changes but we will endeavour to continue to build on this strong foundation, encourage learning and teaching as well as highlighting the availability of careers in farming, food production and the countryside.

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 continuation of visits, projects 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 2011-2019





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