



The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative

“increasing countryside awareness through education . . .”



Spring Show February 2020

**Year Twenty Three Report
December 2019 – November 2020**





Year Twenty Three Report **December 2019 – November 2020**

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Legal and Administrative Information

Current Trustees:

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

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: Clydesdale Bank

During 2019/2020, 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 2020. 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 23rd August 2021 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 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, 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, Stratton Contracting Ltd, Pedal Power, Inverurie.

We also have a number of anonymous benefactors.

(Please note these parties provided aid in 2019-2020)

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 2019/20 from:

RNAS Spring Show	
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Assistance In Kind</i>
Scottish Government	RGU, QMS, Lantra, Norvite
RNAS	SRUC, Balgownie

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.



Year Twenty Three of the Initiative

1. **General Comment**

Phil Wrigglesworth took on the role of Chairman, with Carla Coghlan stepping up to Vice Chair and Ewan Johnston took on the Treasurers role at the AGM.

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

The RNCI obviously saw a huge decrease in the number of children educated from 10700 in year twenty-two down to 1393 in year twenty-three. This is solely down to the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of schools with learning moving online and a huge focus on Numeracy, Literature, Health and Wellbeing. The Directors took the decision to furlough the Project Manager and move to social media interaction via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please see page 9 for further comment regarding Social Media.

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.

3. **Classroom Speaker Visits**

A total of 5 Classroom Speaker visits took place in 2019-2020. The number of children seen was 232. Classroom speakers range from basic farming talks right through to specialist lectures within secondary schools from industry experts.

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

10 visits were undertaken by the Countryside Classroom on Wheels (CCOW) throughout 2019-2020. The number of children seen was 1008. 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**

14 Farm Visits took place in 2019-2020. This accounted for 385 children having a unique Farm Visit experience. With 355 pupils getting a very unique experience at the RNAS Spring Show.

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. To continue providing the quality of service across such as 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.



The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative

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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 2020 awarded the prize to Maxine Garson, ESO, Moray Council for her support. Previous winners have been SRUC, Jim Green and Roy Mitchell.

9. **Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust**

RNCI were asked to help judge the GWCT Art Competition covering the Huntly school area. Due to the pandemic the prize for the primary school winner was a selection of Wildlife and Farming books. 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 2020 being presented to Maxine Garson, Moray Council
Martin Birse, RNCI Director, Maxine Garson, Alison Johnston, RNCI Project Manager*



Other Events

1. RNAS Spring Show, Thainstone – 26th February 2020

Children attended - 355

P4 – P7 primary school pupils attended the Spring Show from 13 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, Dairy, 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.

Raising the Initiative's Profile

1. Publicity

Fewer press releases and photo calls were issued during 2019-20 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 become 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. In August we launched an ambitious project called '52 weeks Farming in the North East'. Our profile increased and posts over all social media were being regularly seen by between 250 – 1000 people weekly. This equates to approximately an extra 7,000 – 28,000 views.

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.



Pupil leaning how to milk a cow, RNAS Spring Show 2020



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.

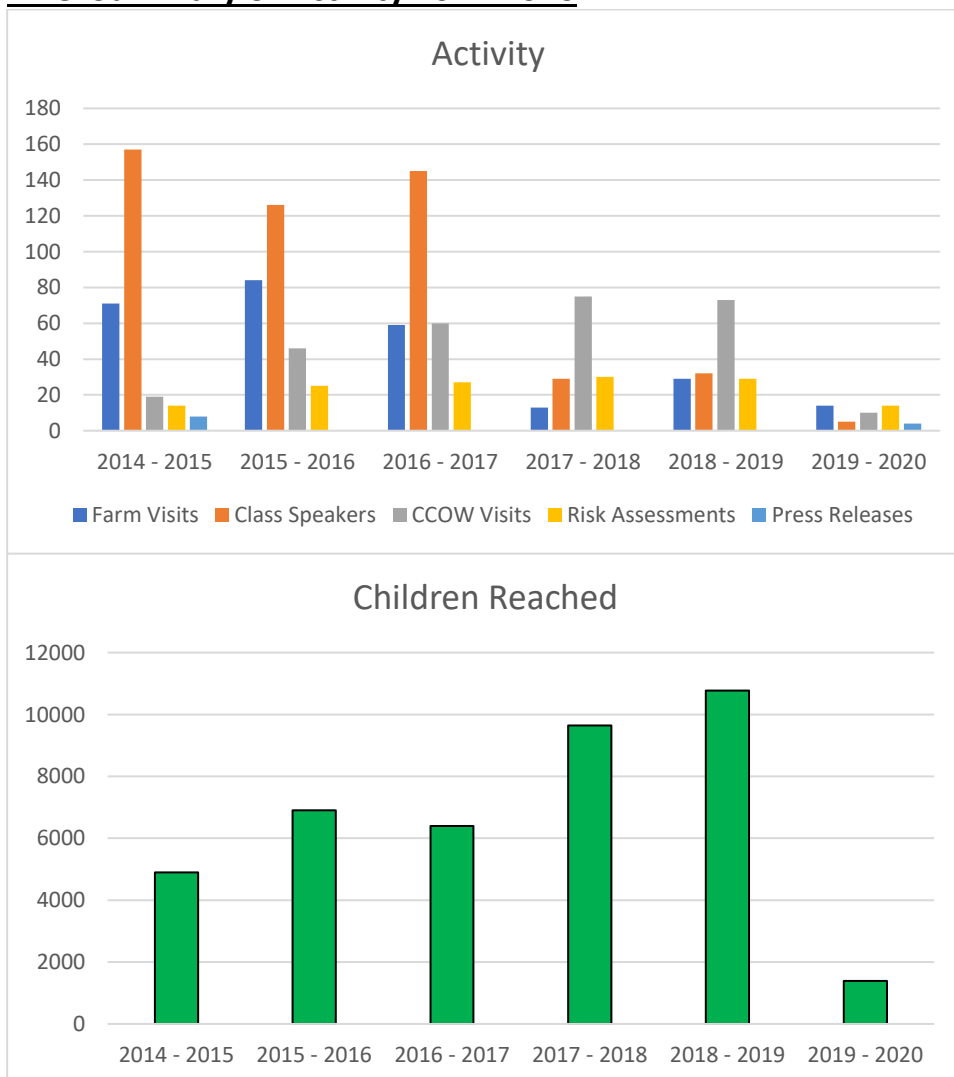
We are looking to launch Farmer Q&A as soon as possible, where teacher submit questions from the pupils and we answer the questions while on farm. Also looking at getting funding for a Cellular Data iPad to be able to do live streams into classrooms.

We would also like to launch a Gardening Project for classrooms in the springtime which will 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, 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 2014-2020





RNCI Project Manager

Mrs Alison Johnston
The Laundry
Home Farm
Fintray
Aberdeen,
AB21 0HY

Telephone: 07716 424147

E-mail: info@rnci.co.uk

Website: www.rnci.co.uk

RNCI Chairman

Mr Phil Wigglesworth,
Balnoon Shop,
Forgue,
Huntly
AB54 6DG