

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL NORTHERN ENGLAND

Notes of the PROGRAMME ACTION presentations

Saturday 18th November 2023

THE CHANGING FACE OF FORESTRY - 100 YEARS GROWING THE NATION'S FORESTS:

Alex Maclellan : Recreation, Public Affairs Manager, Northumberland : Forest England

Alex opened his presentation with the fact that Forest England employs 144 staff and the area that he covers is from Blackburn up to the Borders. There were a series of colourful slides and these were some of Alex's comments :

- The Forestry Commission was established in 1919 to create a timber resource for the UK.
- Kielder was one of the earliest planting areas.
- The land was originally owned by Roy Lister Robinson (Baron Robinson) of Kielder Forest.
- There are 150 million trees in Kielder - over 20% of England's trees.
- The trees are grown for timber production and their planting covers 230 sq. miles.
- For a fuller history see : www.forestrymemories.org.uk
- On 15 November 2013, the UK Forestry set the first world standards for the forestry industry. It covered soil; water; growing conditions; and the first modelling of the patchwork effect.
- Following Storm Arwen in December 2021, the current felling programme is being reviewed. The age of the Forest is very diverse and there are plans to overcome the problems of wind damage. The resulting felled trees provide a sustainable timber supply.
- Kielder Forest has 60 direct employees, another 160 on contract work and the trees provide 650 primary processing jobs in such places as saw mills. A major employer in a rural area.
- Kielder provides recreational facilities; tourism opportunities and education. 30% of the North Tyne population live in and around Kielder.
- BOGS are important and there is a programme to restore Northumberland Peat Bogs. It is a 50 year long project "Restore Border Mires". (anecdotes recounted of Northern Power Grid using large diggers to set up poles for electricity supplies. The drivers of the diggers are not always aware of the dangers of the peat bogs and pictures illustrated diggers sinking deep into the soft terrain).
- There is a very diverse wild life living in the forest including the largest UK colony of ospreys as well as adders; roe deer; red squirrels. goshawks, owls, feral goats and water voles.
- Work is continuing to improve access trails and creating such attractions as the "Gruffalo" giant wood carvings.
- Sporting events such as the Ralymojo; dog walks; Kielder Marathon; and cycle rides are gaining popularity and increasing in numbers.
- Combatting ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ; particularly in Slaley Forest where illegal use of powered vehicles and bikes are damaging the environment. There is a balance to be made between freedom of use of these spaces and protection of the environment . A monitoring programme has been started in collaboration with the Police and the results are being watched by others with similar problems.
- Attractions such as the Kielder Observatory have drawn many visitors to see the wonders of the 'Dark Skies' and the images demonstrate the problems of light pollution - especially around Newcastle upon Tyne and South Shields.
- <https://youtu.be/9rd21jglcGM>

President Jan gave a vote of thanks. It is hoped that the power-point programme might become available to members.

CLAIRE RAWLINSON (SI COCKERMOUTH & DISTRICT) ; AN ADVENTURE TO MERA PEAK IN NEPAL AND THE RUWON-NEPAL PROJECT

Claire enthralled us with her account of a self-funded trip of a lifetime to trek in the Himalayas. Her target was to reach the summit of Mera Peak at 6,476m which is the highest trekking peak in Nepal. Sadly she was unable to acclimatise to the high altitudes which restricted her trek to a height of 5,100m - but she did get to see Everest from a great distance. The trek lasted 14 days of walking for 7 hours per day and sleeping in tea houses with very basic hygiene facilities. The opportunity out of this challenge was an idea to raise funds for a Nepal charity and the PA Officer from SI Kathmandu was helpful to Claire when deciding to raise funds which will make a difference to the lives of Women and Girls in rural Nepal - RUWON Nepal Sewing and Tailoring Program.

RUWON Nepal (Rural Women's Network) is a women's organisation that has been working hard to improve the condition of marginalised girls and women in rural Nepal since 2007. This organisation has the special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In August 2022, RUWON Nepal set up a free Sewing and Tailoring training program for underprivileged women from rural areas to become experienced tailors and seamstresses. The program can teach 14 at-risk women and lasts a total of 6 months. On successful completion, they will receive an official Certificate of Completion. This certificate and skill set enables women to secure employment or start their own business. To date there have been 3 cohorts of trainees - that is 42 women who have gained skills to empower their lives. A mixture of funding set up the program but they now need additional funding to allow the programme to continue. A training course costs about £3,300 (£235 per student). These costs can be broken down into monthly costs of :

• Rent :	25,000 NPR
• Trainer :	27,500 NPR
• Project Co-ordinator:	17,000 NPR
• Electricity :	2,500 NPR
• Communication :	2,500 NPR
• Fabric :	15,000 NPR
TOTAL	89,500 NPR or £550 per month.

- **6 month course for 14 women costs approx. £3,300 - or £235 per woman.**

Claire gave some examples of the stories of some of the women whom she met and the difference that this scheme has made to their lives and their families.

Claire's aim is to raise **£3,300** to fund another Tailoring and Sewing Course. She has currently raised about £1,300 through Gofundme or direct donations and she has plans to hold some fundraising events.

So if members wish to support her with a donation then there are 3 ways of doing this :

1. Donate to Gofundme <https://gofund.me/9fe6dd35>
2. By cheque to "SI Cockermouth Charity Account" - send to Claire Rawlinson, Holly Bank, Tallentire, Cockermouth CA13 0PR
3. By direct bank transfer to Sort Code 16 52 21 Account number 54232213 Cumberland Building Society. PLEASE use RUWON as the reference and also email Jane Shaw (Club Treasurer) to let her know the amount so she can pick it up and allocate appropriately (jane.e.shaw@btinternet.com)

Claire thanked everyone for listening to her.

PROGRAMME ACTION REPORTS FROM CLUBS :

Each club in SINE had been asked to prepare a 3 minute talk on a club project that was to do with "The PLANET" which was President Jan's theme for this meeting. This produced a long list of varied projects :

- SI Carlisle : Recycling Tetra Pak cartons - over 4,000 recycled.
- SI Darlington & District : Setting up a tree nursery to foster baby trees - in a tray of 'root-trainers' . The members involved look after about 40 baby birch trees for up to 2 years. These trees ultimately go to be planted in the wooded area surrounding the original route of the Darlington - Stockton railway.
Also litter picking in the weeks and days before the 'Britain in Bloom' judging.
- SI Durham : Projects to protect and nurture native high forests with their bio-diverse systems. This included supporting and joining the Guides in planting trees.
- SI Middlesbrough : Planted trees in local parks; working with the local council to promote energy efficiency; reduce food waste; litter picking in partnership with other groups (60% of all litter are cigarette butts); awareness of the dredging and pollution on Teeside with fishermen becoming unemployed.
- SI Newcastle upon Tyne : The club has been working with Canning Street Primary School which is a diverse inner city school in the West End of the City. 28 different languages are spoken. Teachers are being trained to create and use the "Forest School" project to increase children's awareness of nature and climate change. Practical help has been the provision of children's wellington boots and wet weather clothing. Previously the club had funded wooden sets in the tree area.
- SI Penrith & District : The club has focussed on recycling clothing and textiles. Research into those textiles that are better to recycle and have written to their local M.P. about this. Information provided to Charity Shops on how to choose items for sale and sending clothing to other countries. This is a huge subject and a need to recycle clothing and textile to save them going to landfill and waste.
- SI Stockton-on-Tees : The club has focussed on recycling and reducing waste to land fill sites. Some clothing was re-directed to their Meserani project in Africa. 3 separate donations have been made of baby clothing and toys. Members have used the SHAW Garden Centre to buy hanging baskets and their cafe was supported.
- SI Tynedale : Collect and recycle foils from tablets. They also support a village shop. Ideas exchanged for the foils collections from Aldi supermarkets to local pharmacies.
- SI Tynemouth, Whitley Bay & District : Their FREDA project focussed on the amount of light plastic items which are non-recyclable . FREDA is a giant fish which has an opening at her mouth which allows children to deposit non-recyclable item into her cage/tummy. This is taken round schools to spread the word about non-recycled plastics, especially those that end up in the sea and on beaches.

Finally, Shirley Hallam-Gould thanked all the contributors for their diverse projects on the PLANET. Shirley also asked members and clubs to check out their local Women's Refuges as it appears that many have lost or suffer from reduced funding and may need extra support at this time.

- Reread the 'where we stand documents.
- Revisit pledges from Martha's Year.