



Community
Woodlands
Association

WELCOME

On the 7th & 8th of November over 120 people from community woodland groups throughout the country descended on the banks of Loch Ness for the 10th Annual Community Woodlands Conference. The weekend was undoubtedly a huge success and I am delighted to share the highlights with you in this special newsletter.

I hope that the buzz of excitement and enthusiasm felt by delegates and staff members throughout the weekend has stayed with you in the weeks following and that the inspiring presentations and workshops provoked thought and debate as delegates returned to their individual community groups.

For those who did not make it to the conference this newsletter provides a taste for what happened over the two days, as well as feedback from those who attended. We hope to see you all next year.

Best wishes, Rosslyn
West Central Scotland Woodland Advisor

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10th ANNUAL CWA CONFERENCE

Throughout the weekend, Little Spark Films recorded speakers and spoke to delegates about the association and the weekend activities. This film will provide a more detailed overview of the weekend and will be available in due course.

SATURDAY

The conference kicked off on Saturday with a key note speech from **Bob Dunsmore, Forestry Commission Scotland**, Highlands and Island Conservator, who welcomed delegates to the event and gave a brief overview of the changes in forestry and forest policy during his time in the Highlands. In his role as Conservator, and also as a director of Highland Birchwoods, Bob has been instrumental in the development of what we now call multi-benefit forestry, including social and community forestry, and latterly has been a very valuable supporter of the community woodland movement. Bob retires from his position with the Forestry Commission at the end of the year. We were delighted to have him open the weekend, and all at CWA would like to wish him a full and enjoyable retirement.

Our first speaker was **Robert Arnott, Chairman of Crossgates Community Woodland, Fife**, who delivered an "*inspirational presentation*" discussing the sometimes difficult path that the Crossgates Woodland Group took to become the first community to purchase land through the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Robert's message was clear: persistence is essential, utilise the passion and experience within your group to motivate and inspire new and existing members and progress with your woodland, to accommodate the needs of your community and woodland users.

Our second speaker was **Suzann Barr**, of Arbriachan Forest Trust, Loch Ness who presented an “*educational and informative*” talk on **lifelong learning in the outdoors**. Suzann talked of the links between woodland skills and the curriculum for excellence, highlighting the buzz words that provide the assurance that the various education departments / services require as well as the benefits of outdoor learning for all ages. Suzann demonstrated how this has been used in the forest in Arbriachan to accommodate disengaged young people who have been excluded from mainstream education.

WORKSHOPS

Following a chatty and noisy coffee break, delegates broke into groups to attend workshops prior to the lunch break. Delegates were offered the choice of four workshops covering a variety of topics. The workshops were well run, with most keeping to time and each providing the attending group opportunity for discussion. Feedback from the conference indicated that a majority of delegates found the information and knowledge gained in the workshops to be of use and interest. Where information is missing we apologise. At the point of publishing we had not received all the scribed reports. These will be available in the new year on our website.

WOODLAND DEER MANAGEMENT

MARK LAZZERI (ASSYNT FOUNDATION, SUTHERLAND)

Either directly or indirectly the vast majority of Mark's working life has been spent managing land. Mark started shooting at the age of 17; rough shooting led to game shooting and then deer stalking which has been his main hobby for over 25 years. Prior to moving to the Assynt Foundation as Development Manager, he had been managing deer semi-professionally for over 15 years. The Assynt Estate is some 44,500 acres in area and had a red deer population of about 2000 adults, which they are steadily reducing through sustainable and effective control. This workshop provided an overview of best practice for deer management in a woodland habitat.

Mark provided a detailed presentation that aimed to provide delegates the knowledge, understanding and skills required to assess, on a site specific basis, their need to control deer population, i.e. Why is there a need to control deer? What is the purpose of control? What is the most effective method of control?

Mark discussed the reproductive rate of a healthy deer population, explaining that the lack of natural predators in the UK has led to over population of deer throughout Scotland and the risk of losing our true natives through cross breeding of native species and non native species. An increased population of deer can severely damage a woodland habitat. However if correctly and effectively controlled the deer may add value to a site, both environmentally and economically. Mark stressed the importance of maintaining a clear understanding of what you hope to achieve through control. This ultimately will determine which method of control is best suited to your site.

Attendees were presented with various options for the control of deer in a woodland, including; stalker with gun, excluding the deer altogether from the site / plantings using fences or tree guards, planting unattractive tree species and using chemical deterrents. When wishing to keep or attract a deer population in the woodland Mark suggested the use of sacrificial plants and areas, as well as providing food and shelter. Mark recommended that any person or group interested in learning more about the management of deer should purchase the Deer Commission Scotland's' Best Practice Guide which is available from DCS, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW



Photo from Mark Lazzeri

HOW DO YOU FINANCE WITHOUT FUNDERS? **DOUGLAS WESTWATER (COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE LTD)**

Douglas has worked in a variety of roles in the third sector in Scotland for over 20 years. He is experienced in local research and community needs assessment, project business planning, organisational management and funding / financing. Douglas was heavily involved in regeneration in the Coalfields and from that role has moved to be Director of Community Enterprise, a social enterprise business support agency. Community Enterprise is a social enterprise itself that has moved from grants to trading while continuing to provide services and capacity building to the social enterprise sector. Douglas covered cooperatives, social enterprise, small loans and community stock options and discussion revealed a general need for more information. **FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:** www.communityenterprise.co.uk

HEALTH AND THE BENEFITS OF WOODLANDS **HUGH FIFE (BLARBUIE HOSPITAL PROJECT)**

Hugh provided attendees at his workshop with a potted history of his background explaining that he developed an interest in woodlands and became aware of the possible benefits to those with mental health issues while working in Argyll & Bute Psychiatric Hospital, which is surrounded by Blarbuie Wood. Hugh explained that the woodland had been planted over 150 years ago to provide sanctuary for the patients of the then newly established hospital. However over the years the woodland had fallen into a poor state and became unusable.

In 1997 Hugh resigned from his role in the hospital and became the Woods for All project officer at Reforesting Scotland, where, amongst other projects, Hugh worked on developing a partnership for the Blarbuie site with Argyll Green Woodworkers Association, NHS Scotland, Scottish Association for Mental Health, and Lochgilphead Community Council. Reforesting Scotland was considered best suited to take the lead on this project and the partnership was officially established in 2002, each organisation coming to the partnership organically. The ambition was that Blarbuie Woodland would be for the benefit of people who used health and social services in Mid Argyll and beyond, as well as those living in or visiting the area. Lots of work has been done and the working groups have restored paths, done a great deal of woodland management, timber construction, development of signage and much more.

The workshop started with a 20 minute film about Blarbuie after which the group were allowed to ask questions. Open discussion was encouraged at this point. Discussion was raised about the struggle to involve or excite the health professionals in the area, although with persistence and patience some doctors within the hospital were now referring patients to activities within the woodland. Participants wanted to know how the sites Health & Safety was handled, and Hugh was eager to stress the simplicity of their risk assessments, feeling that no over-complication was needed. It was then asked - Was the project bogged down by target driven output and how did they measure outputs in relation to funders? Hugh said that much of the outputs were measured by anecdotal evidence or retrospective research.

WOODLANDS COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE **GRANT HOLROYD, KNOYDART FOREST TRUST, INVERIE**

After leaving school at the earliest opportunity, Grant started out in commercial forestry on the Cowal Peninsula. After doing time with EFG (now Tilhill) in establishment he got into self-employed woodcutting. In 1987 a week before the storm in the south of England he moved on to tree surgery and arboriculture. Grant then spent the best part of 2 years in Kent "tidying up" the south east, then returned to contracting. In 1990 he had a Eureka moment when he discovered the tree Planters Guide to the Galaxy and realised that he was not alone in thinking that Scottish forestry was not all that it should be.

In 1994 Grant landed the job of estate forester at Inverie on Knoydart. After a period of unrest and dodgy landowners the Knoydart Foundation managed to buy the Estate in 1999. He is now employed as Community Forest Manager for the Knoydart Forest Trust, who manage the woodland owned by the Foundation and its neighbours.

SITE VISITS

GLENURQUHART LAND USE PARTNERSHIP *walking tour

(information from www.gulup.org)

The Glen Urquhart area, lying west of Loch Ness, covers over 250 square kilometres of outstanding natural beauty, containing diverse wildlife habitats and many sites of historical and cultural interest. The Glen Urquhart Land Use Partnership (GULUP) is a grassroots organisation which has been in existence for over ten years to serve the community. They are a voluntary, non-profit, community-led limited company. The partnership aims to give the local community a voice in determining and sustainably developing the long term economic and environmental goals for the area. GULUP members and partners include local residents, businesses, farmers, foresters and fishermen and others who have an interest in the management and use of the land, lochs and rivers.

From its source amongst hill lochs at 500m, the River Enrick flows across a mosaic of bog, small lochs and heathland in its upper reaches before descending through dense conifer forests, broadleaved woodland and grassy fields on the mid-altitude slopes. On the lower ground the river, now joined by many tributaries, is surrounded by farmland and broadleaved woodland as it flows through Loch Meiklie before continuing its journey to Loch Ness.

The River Enrick catchment has been influenced by man over hundreds of years. The present landscape and habitat diversity continues to be shaped by local people as they live and work in the area. Many local businesses rely upon maintaining the quality of this environment. The conifer forests are plantations of varying age. Some provide habitats for birds of conservation interest such as black grouse. The woodland on the lower slopes is dominated by alder, bird-cherry, ash and willow with small areas of oak and aspen.

The delegates who opted to attend this visit walked through the Woodland Trust's SSSI "Cover" woodland in the River Enrick Estuary – where it joins Loch Ness. The woodland has famously flooded several times in the past decade. The group discussed the flooding work taking place on site, as well as the removal of exotic species from the "Cover" woodland as well as the wider role of the GULUP in the Enrick area. The group looked at the flooding work taking place upriver of the A82 road bridge in Drumnadrochit, before discussing methods and ideas for using plantings to control the flow of the river.

REELIG GLEN FOREST

Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Trust

Led by: Annie Griffiths (woodland sub-group coordinator)

This 15 hectare area of Reelig wood was mainly planted by FC in 1953 with Douglas Fir, Norway Spruce, European Larch and Beech. Previous management is not known but there are widely spaced beech from 1860 throughout the site and significant numbers of mature Oak, Ash and Elm with occasional Whitebeam. A single stem of Aspen has been identified. In 2000 when the community became interested in the area, the plantation conifers had been under-thinned and the Beech plantation un-thinned. An area of beech plantation on wet ground had become mainly Ash wood. Paths within the wood were indistinct and offered limited access. The mature Oaks were deteriorating through competition by Beech.



Since 2000 the Community Trust, through agreement with FCS, has re-instated paths, thinned the Beech plantation and started to restore the Ash dominated area to native woodland. Mature Oaks have been released by gradual thinning.



A biological survey method has been instituted to record the impact of future management. Small-scale charcoal production is being developed and income currently comes from the sale of firewood. The wood has been used for educational and other activities.

In March 2008, FCS incorporated the Community Trust Management Plan for Upper Reelig into the Reelig Forest Design Plan. Management objectives aim to meet the desire of the community to provide a diverse range of activities and training for both Trust members and others, ranging from silviculture and timber processing to native woodland restoration, biological recording, charcoal making, and educational activities - all within the context of an area of high amenity value.

There will be three principal areas of activity:

1. Timber Production and Processing .

Plantation of conifers and beech will be managed by selection forestry, felling the annual increment each year and milling timber near the stump with mobile sawmills.

2. Improving Biodiversity

Areas rich in native species will be gradually restored through felling exotics and conversion of some to standing and lying dead wood, improving the biodiversity. Biological recording will be undertaken to monitor changes.

3. Community Involvement.

The wood offers the opportunity for many diverse types of community activity from volunteer work days – the Trust and others – to training volunteers, to use as an educational environment and recreational space.



Funding : All work is undertaken by volunteers. Insurance costs are covered by sale of firewood. Members use their own machinery free of charge. Grant aid for a mobile sawmill will lead to a financially self-sustaining management system.

Many thanks to Sandra Hogg for the photographs and information.

DUNAIN COMMUNITY WOODLAND

Led by: Alastair Cunningham (chair) and John Cheadle

DCW is situated on the north-west boundary of Inverness and forms part of the land which historically was part of the old Craig Dunain hospital. The land is currently owned by a developer. DCW are in protracted negotiations with the company to establish a leasing arrangement ultimately to gain ownership.



DCW was established as a company limited by guarantee in 2004, with the intention of securing open access and improving the amenity of the woodland for the general public of Inverness. Although the boundary is not yet agreed upon, we are hoping for an area of approximately 90 acres (37 hectares) which includes open grassland, mature native woodland, a small pine plantation, the disused hospital reservoir with several interconnecting ponds, plus a number of interesting historical and geological features. The land is bisected by the Great Glen Way and sports stunning views of the city and Wester Ross mountains.



A development package has been prepared but implementation has been hampered by delays in obtaining the lease. Despite this difficulty, a number of activities have been undertaken including the establishment of a **children's forest** and **forest school**, limited **path development** and **gorse clearing** to reveal a **chambered cairn**.

DCW has little income generating capacity in a commercial sense, their viability is based on grant aid, donations and membership subscription and voluntary input. During the visit we visited the **healing well**, the **reservoir**, a **restored pond** and a **woodland cemetery**, and get spectacular views over *Inverness*.

Many thanks to Neil Gerrard for Photograph Alistair Cunningham for information

ABRIACHAN FOREST TRUST

Led by: Suzann Barr and George Hawco

The visit to Abriachan was very inspirational and shows what can be achieved by a small community of just 140 people. The area of 534 ha was purchased in 1998 from Forest Enterprise. The Forest Trust was established and developed as a social enterprise by local people to create employment and to manage the forest as productive woodland whilst providing opportunities for access and rural tourism. In addition there has also been a strong emphasis on education, physical activity and social inclusion. Around 90 local volunteers are actively involved in supporting the project.

Our visit started in the forest classroom, complete with woodfuel heating system. This acts as a focal point for activity in the woods. We learned about the background to the project and how activity has been funded through a variety of sources including timber sales from thinning and grants from wide ranging bodies. New income streams potentially include wind turbine development (which remains controversial) and through use of the site for training, team building and special needs skills development.



We then went out outside and looked at some of the impressive work on the ground. This included;

- The innovative woodland play area created on a section of windblown pine.
- Composting toilet
- Boardwalk created by Inverness special needs group APEX
- Treehouse and Iron age hut designed by and for local children

Forest Schools training area.

Delegates were most impressed by the quality of infrastructure which has already been created by the Trust. We then looked at the business end of woodland management and how small scale mechanisation, including a log splitter and mini forwarder, has enabled commercial returns at a scale which hasn't undermined the recreational value of the forest.



We then saw a demonstration of the log splitter in action and discussed the economics of firewood sales. The Trust are able to sell a 3 cubic metre load for £120 plus delivery. There is increasingly an emphasis on commercial return from the woods.

Despite no shortage of ideas, the key task of the Trust is now to maintain present infrastructure rather than to facilitate major new investment programmes. This will be an ongoing challenge for the Trust which will require continuing innovation and adaptability. We all came away extremely inspired by the work we had seen on the ground, the scale of ambition and the "can do" attitude of the Trust.

Many thanks to Abriachan Forest Trust for the photographs and information

SATURDAY EVENING

MOVIE PREMIERE—"UNFOUND"

"Unfound" is a **CWA supported film**, which was made by children from the Drumnadrochit Area, during the October school break. The film saw the children head for a night camping in the wood. One by one the children start to disappear... The film will be available to CWA members in the new year and will be on show at various events in the coming year, so I will not give away the ending. Needless to say it was highly entertaining, well made and fun! The movie was entirely the creation of the children involved, with support and editing from Little Spark Film Ltd. The children had a fantastic time making the film and their hard work and dedication was obvious. Well done!

Coinciding with the filming of Unfound, Henry Fosbrooke and the **Woodland Orchestra** spent time with the younger children from the local area learning the words, music and movements to "Mighty Tree". The song was recorded and played during the film credits. The eager audience were then treated to the live version with even the youngest toddlers taking part in the dancing circle. The local children also provided the beautiful decorations for the Glenurquhart Hall, which brightened up our evening. Thank you to all involved.



Funding for this project came from HIE – Community Land Unit and Highland Council, Loch Ness and Aird Ward Youth Fund.

COMMUNITY BONFIRE & FIREWORKS

The Community Woodlands Association conference was fortunate to be held over bonfire weekend and we were delighted that our members were made so welcome at the community firework display.

Young and old from the village braved the cold and muddy ground to witness a beautiful display and bonfire supplied by the local Community Council



GLENURQUHART VILLAGE HALL - MEAL AND CEILIDH

The evening meal was provided by Cobbs Catering, one of the biggest local employers, and was praised highly by everyone. There was ample food in the buffet, catering for all tastes with wild Scottish salmon, venison stew and a delicious vegetable goulash - not to mention the fantastic desserts! Bellies were full, conversation and wine flowed freely, getting the social off to a superb start.

The evening ceilidh was, as usual, energetic and great fun! As soon as the evening meal was cleared, tables were separated and dancers took to the floor. The enthusiasm and passion of CWA's members was never more evident than during the Orcadian Strip the Willow and the chaotic Dashing White Sergeant! Music for the ceilidh was provided by "The Broch Inspectors", and we were delighted that Henry Fosbrooke took to the stage with his band over the interval, allowing dancers to catch their breath and top up their glasses whilst listening to his wonderful music. The dancing went on until late in the evening, and, even though there were sore feet and a few sore heads the following morning, the night was a huge success. Thank you to everyone who danced, clapped, sang and chatted.

WEEKEND PHOTOS

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE WEEKEND CAN BE VIEWED AT THE COMMUNITY WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION FACEBOOK GROUP AND WILL BE AVAILABLE VIA FLICKER IN THE NEW YEAR

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HOME.PHP#/GROUP.PHP?GID=182245501795&REF=MF



SUNDAY

The excitement and enthusiasm of Saturday evening continued to grow and become more electric throughout Sunday. The hall was buzzing with anticipation and conversation. Gordon Grey Stephens facilitated the morning. The first of our speakers was **Chris Piper of Forres Community Woodlands Trust, Moray**, who gave an excellent presentation on the development of their **mountain bike trails**. Chris' presentation took delegates through the various ups and downs of the 18 month project, concluding with the success of the trails and jumps since opening officially to the public. **Eoin Cox** from BuyDesign took the floor as our second speaker; BuyDesign have been contracted by CWA to carry out the **Arts, Culture and Heritage Feasibility Study** for the association. As part of the process, Eoin demonstrated what culture means in relation to community woodland by reading his own beautifully written **poem**. The poem and accompanying images highlighted the potential within a woodland. The presentation was amusing, amazing and provided food for thought, heavily discussed during morning coffee break and highly praised in the feedback forms.

The speakers continued with, chief executive of CWA, **Jon Hollingdale**, who gave a brief overview of why we should manage **woodlands for biodiversity**. Jon introduced the topic, opening the subject up for the next four speakers to provide a more detailed look into their specific area of interest. **Lucy Sumsion**, regional manager Argyll and the islands, NFU Scotland, gave an interesting presentation on the benefits of **woodland grazing**. Lucy provided examples of species that could be encouraged to graze in a woodland habitat and how to manage woodland successfully to do this. **Tom Prescott**, Butterfly Conservation, Highlands, gave a quick guide to the species of **Butterfly and Moth** that might be found in a woodland habitat, the methods used to attract them and monitor them, as well as explaining why maintaining a healthy woodland habitat for biodiversity is so important for declining butterfly and moth species.

Murdo MacDonald, author of "Highland **Bumblebees**", gave a brief overview of how woodland glades and clearings can be managed to attract and sustain healthy bee population, as well as providing a home for other flying and crawling insects, explaining that micro-habitats such as these are vital to the overall health of woodland habitats. Our presentations ended with an informative talk from **Juliet Robinson**, Forestry Commission Scotland, Highland **Red Squirrel** Group. Juliet talked about the importance of protecting our native red squirrels, limiting the impact of the encroaching greys and the threat of Squirrel Pox. Juliet gave examples of successful re-homing of squirrels and the various methods that delegates could use to attract reds into their woodland, encourage them to stay and breed, while ensuring that the habitat remains unattractive to greys.

The weekend concluded with a touching speech from Jon Hollingdale, who thanked everyone involved for all the hard work, stating that it was by far the best conference CWA had held to date. Special thanks goes to Diane Campbell for taking control of the organisation, planning and running of the entire weekend.

**FURTHER INFORMATION FROM THE CONFERENCE WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON AT THE
COMMUNITY WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION WEBSITE.**

WWW.COMMUNITYWOODS.ORG

MISC INFORMATION

FEEDBACK FORMS – FEEDBACK...

Thank you to everyone who completed their delegate feedback forms. The comments will be collated into a report to allow us to improve the conference, should there be one next year. Overall the forms were positive, with very few negative comments. The most common comments received we would like to address just now... giving you “feedback on the feedback”.

All workshops and Speakers received a great deal of praise; the most common reason why people attended was to be inspired and network with others doing similar things. The weekend was considered one of the best conferences attended by several delegates and extra kudos was given to the superb catering for the evening meal, and the great opportunity for networking on the Saturday evening.

There was a great deal of praise for the venue and location, however there were a few forms that mentioned that the hall was too cold for sitting in. We would like to apologise for this, the heating system had incredibly noisy fans in the hall, when they were active it was difficult to hear what was being said by our speakers, this was also mentioned in the comment forms. This will be taken into account if we are to use a similar venue in the future. There were suggestions on ways to make our events more “green”: suggestions included using car sharing to get to the venue and carbon off-setting. This is something that we will look into for future events.

For those who were unable to attend, I hope that the example comments below will encourage you to attend future events, these are genuine comments from CWA members who attended the event.

WHAT BENEFITS DO YOU FEEL YOU GAINED FROM ATTENDING THIS EVENT?

“new contacts, I feel re-energised and have been able to discuss technical issues I am currently dealing with”

“I did widen & deepen my knowledge and made many new relevant contacts”

*“where to start...? probably inspiration and refuelling so that I can get out and do more”
“many, too big a list!”*

“large number of ideas and suggestions for possible future activities”

“I learned more than expected and met some amazing people”

DO YOU FEEL THAT THE EVENT DELIVERED YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

“Well no actually, because it exceeded my expectations (which were high) by a considerable amount”

“A very well organised event. Well done”

All delegates who returned feedback forms answered yes to this question, 100% stating that they would recommend the event to a friend.

CWA AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Community Woodlands Association took place in Drumnadrochit on Sunday 8th November 2009 directly following the weekend conference. The meeting was chaired by Director Paul Cookson, minutes taken by Director Gordon Grey Stephens. Minutes from the AGM are available via your local woodland advisor.

Following the AGM, the Community Woodlands Association are pleased to welcome a new chair Gordon Grey Stephens, and four new Directors to the board: **Mike Steele** of Closeburn Community Council, **Mark Lazzeri** from the Assynt Foundation, **Sasha Mitchell** student at Scottish School of Forestry an individual member from Morayshire and **Michaela Hunter** from Kilfinan Community Forest Company.

Thank are given to Piers Voysey for chairing the past three years of the Community Woodlands Association

DELEGATE PACK SUPPLIERS

Our delegate packs this year were neatly tucked away in a practical eco-friendly, reusable hessian bag. We received a number of compliments about these bags and several requests for the contact details for the company who supplied them. Below are the contact details for the company we used. Please quote the Community Woodlands Association when contacting Eco Bags.

www.ecobags.co.uk

+44 (0)1752 600367

info@ecobags.co.uk

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED WITH THE CONFERENCE
AND CONTRIBUTED TO ITS HUGE SUCCESS.
CWA WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND BEST OF WISHES FOR 2010

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!PLEASE NOTE CHANGE!

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