



Tighnabruich, Tuesday 30th October 2012

A networking event for those who are or wish to become involved in forests which are community owned or managed for community benefit.

Background:

This was the second Argyll networking event, the first being held in March 2012 following the publication of the Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy (<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/node/30827>). At the meeting in March it had been agreed to meet again – perhaps every 6 months.

The aims for this meeting were to:

- Allow communities and related interests to share experience of a variety of community based woodland projects
- Encourage networking between key interests.

Agenda:

10.00	Arrive, tea and coffee
10.25	Welcome and Introductions - Syd House
10.30	Forestry Commission Update - Bob Frost
10.50	FCS Seedcorn Funding – Elaine Jamieson
11.00	Community Woodlands Association Update – Diane Oliver
11.05	North West Mull Community Woodland Review - Ian Hepburn
11.35	Break
11.40	Workshops and Discussion
12.30	Collecting Native Seed – Peter McCracken
13.00	Lunch
14.00	Site Visit to Kilfinan Community Forest – Eamon King

Attending:

Alistair McLaren (Argyll Voluntary Action); Ben Robinson and Emma Cooper (Bute Community Land Company); Bob Frost, Elaine Jamieson and Syd House (Forestry Commission Scotland); Caroline Cuddihy (The Wood Chip Shop); Colin Campbell, Hugh Fife and Pete Creech (Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise); Diane Oliver (Community Woodlands Association); Eamon King, Eve MacFarlane and Willie McAllan (Kilfinan Community Forest Company); Ian Hepburn (North West Mull Community Woodland); James McLuckie and Rhona Sutherland (Colintraive & Glendaruel Community Development Trust); Sara MacLean (Warmer Colglen); Neil Donaldson (Argyll Farm Woodland Collaboration Project); Peter McCracken (Taynuilt Trees) and Vicky Neville (Ardroy Outdoor Centre - Cormonachan Woodlands)

Apologies:

Gordon Gray-Stephens (Native Woods Co-op); Lynda Mitchell (AliEnergy); Merle Ferguson (Ardentinny Community Trust); Dinah McDonald (Benmore and Kilmun Community Development Trust); Matt Huddleston and Tom Davies (Forestry Commission Scotland); Alastair MacBeth (Friends of Duchess Wood); Claire Hannah (Highlands and Islands Enterprise); John Potts (Jura Development Trust); Andy Robinson (RSPB); Jim Frame (Scottish Environment Protection Agency); Ian Mathieson (SCVO); Morag Duff; Penny Cousins (Perthshire & Argyll Regional Forest Forum) and Audrey Martin (Argyll and Bute Council)

Presentations Summary:

Forestry Commission Scotland Policy Update – Bob Frost

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/4p1Xm9515FQ>

Bob set the scene regarding national context and policy, reminding people of recent/current consultations around community empowerment and land reform. The Forestry Commission has also been getting involved in wider issue including renewables which brings it into contact with new and different partners eg Community Energy Scotland.

Seedcorn Funding – Elaine Jamieson

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/QLRzmp-pEZU>

Elaine highlighted the projects currently receiving/ in discussion with FCS re Seedcorn funding and emphasised that FCS is keen to receive further applications for both the Seedcorn Funding and Community Seedcorn Funding. The idea of placing a deadline on applications was discussed.

Community Woodlands Association Update – Diane Oliver

Diane updated the group re CWA staff who are Jon Hollingdale, Chief Executive (part time), Rosslyn Mills, Woodland Advisor (full time), Diane Oliver, Enterprising Woodlands Development Officer (part time) and Caroline Derbyshire, Administrator (part time). Diane is working with groups in the highland area to support the development of 3 social enterprise themes – health in woodlands, growing woodlands and wood products & skills. CWA is keen to involve groups from Argyll in this project through facilitating links and networking, offering training and running training in Argyll.

CWA encourage groups to promote their events and successes via their monthly e-bulletin, yahoo members group and Facebook (www.facebook.com/Communitywoods). Event notices and stories (making sure there is plenty of notice for events) and requests to join emailing lists/ yahoo group should be emailed to Caroline at admin@communitywoods.org.

North West Mull Community Woodland Review - Ian Hepburn

This presentation is available online at http://youtu.be/i6A0PR_Rxqg

NW Mull Community Woodland was purchased 6 years ago and recently commissioned a review (in partnership with HIE and FCS) to assess progress to date and identify opportunities for the future. The report highlighted that the woodland is a long term project and faces challenges in terms of perception, timing, quick win issues and change management. Ian outlined the projects the Company is currently working on/ investigating including harvesting, woodland burials and micro hydro.

Collecting Native Seed – Peter McCracken, Taynuilt Trees

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/Tb-oGFqu32g>

Peter has been running a micro- tree nursery for nearly 20 years and covered the challenges and advantages of collecting seed and growing trees. At Taynuilt Trees they work with many partners to share resources and benefit from technology. He shared where to find further online support materials.



Workshop Summary:

Workshop 1 - Purpose, aims and objectives of this group

The purpose of the group is to bring together a wide range of partners to share expertise and knowledge, network and develop ideas and skills. This will include:

- Site visits as they are really useful and inspiring including issues and successes
- Seeing and hearing about other/ different projects
- Introducing new people to the wider picture
- Covering specific topics
- Identifying different/ complimentary forums eg Strategic Housing Forum, Woodland and Farm Collaboration Project and Argyll Woodfuel forum
- Identifying what part(s) of the woodland strategy this group can take forward

It was agreed that the meetings should be open and aimed at communities, community projects, development trusts, small businesses, partners, agencies and intermediary organisations

The group would like future agenda/ meeting topics/ activities to be themed and to include:

- Creating templates eg woodland burials, micro hydro
- Useful policy updates and context
- Inventory of common subjects
- Bringing controversy for discussion
- 1:1 discussion
- Interactive workshops rather than just talking
- Strength in numbers
- Becoming social enterprises, business models and reducing reliance on grant funding
- Sharing training opportunities
- Working towards self generated income
- Bringing in sector experts to chat through issues, pitfalls and best practice

Workshop 2 - Future aims and aspirations for community forests in Argyll

The groups and organisations highlighted some of their pipeline/ upcoming projects which are wide ranging and include:

- Renewables - Micro hydro, district heating schemes, wind, solar, biomass, boilers
- Affordable housing/ woodland crofts/ derelict building regeneration
- Building acquisition
- Food growing
- Practical woodland management – ie how to get work done on your wood
- Business and product development
- Leisure amenities – getting people into forests – Paths for All
- Woodfuel supply chain development – requires awareness raising across suppliers, purchasers and sectors re future regulation changes
- Health promotion/ benefits including creating links with schemes such as Healthy Options (Oban GPs can prescribe walks, sessions @ Atlantis Leisure) and the Warm and Well initiative (targets GPs Argyll wide).
- Investigating the potential to roll out new and existing models such as the Stramash Forest Nursery



Site Visit to Kilfinan Forest - Eamon King

Despite the rain, the group walked up to the Forest to see first-hand the progress made at Kilfinan Forest since its purchase in 2009. Entering via a path which enables direct access from the village and the primary school (who participate in forest school activities in the woods); the group passed the area leased to the local allotment group. As well as visiting the completed projects – composting area, paths, shed, firewood and timber processing, polytunnel, new access road and parking area, Eamon outlined proposals and ambitions to create a larger path network - potentially linking up with old routes, picnic areas, timber extraction, further buildings, a bunkhouse and micro hydro.



Looking back to the allotments



The polytunnel which benefits from the wormeries just outside



Eamon outlined future paths and opportunities for new projects.



View from above the main working area



The new community composting facility



The main working area



Feedback Summary:

General verbal feedback was very positive and 12 feedback forms were completed. All felt that the event met their expectations. Delegates were asked to score the following (none scored poor):

	Organisation	Location	Venue	Catering	Speakers	Site Visit
very good	7	9	6	3	8	4
good	4	3	6	7	4	2
fair	1			2		

Delegates felt they gained the following benefits:

- Success stories and listening to other projects
- Excellent networking/ info sharing opportunity
- I am relatively new to community forests so this was an excellent introduction to the topic and to other people in the emerging network
- Networking – sharing knowledge x 3
- Keeping informed on current/ future initiatives
- Inputting to future direction of the group
- Good to learn about what is happening
- Got people thinking outside the ‘public sector’ box
- Networking and looking to the future and how we can support each other
- Meeting and re-meeting others x 2
- Ideas for community involvement and funding updates
- Networking, funding ideas. Inspiration/ new ideas and how to develop things we already do

Next meeting location suggestions included:

- At the location of one of the woodlands x 2
- Mull
- Lochgilphead x 2
- At a venue which would include a site visit

Next meeting agenda suggestions included:

- As today - mix of presentations, networking and site visits x 3
- Social benefits/ health/ disability
- FC funding update, CWA, talks and skills workshops eg seeds, coppicing, and networking
- Project finance/ the pros and cons of public funding/ funding opportunities/ revenue generation
- Feedback from the community forest groups and support agencies ie current activities
- Case studies

All would recommend others to take part in similar events, because:

- New ideas, strengthens networks
- The partnership potential
- Networking and understanding national issues
- I would like to see HIE attend to discuss displacement
- Exchange of information

Delegates would like further training in:

- Marketing
- Community renewables
- Woodland management
- Woodland policy (UK/ Scotland/ Argyll)
- ‘how to’ guides
- Successful events

Other general comments included:

- Brilliant site visit
- Keep up the good work!
- Good event – thank you
- Contacts for delegates would be useful
- Very valuable