

Dervaig Village Hall, Isle of Mull - Tuesday 27th August 2013

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

Agenda:

- 09.30** Arrive - coffee etc
- 09.45** Welcome – Ian Hepburn, North West Mull Community Woodland Company
- 09.50** Regular Updates
- Forestry Commission - Bob Frost, FCS
 - Community Seedcorn Funding– Elaine Jamieson, FCS
 - Community Woodlands Association– Diane Oliver, CWA
- 10.10** Bute Forest: People, Products and Progress – Emma Cooper, Bute Forest
- 10.40** Duchess Woods Management Plan – Alasdair Macbeth, Friends of Duchess Woods
- 11.10** Visit to Donegal – Elaine Jamieson, FCS
- 11.30** Project Updates from Around Argyll
- Kilfinan Forest – Jamie Chaplin-Bryce
 - Horslelogging at Blarbuie Woods – Hugh Fife
- 12.00** Lunch
- 12.45** Site Visit to North West Mull Community Woodland
- 15.15** Coffee and Summing Up

Attending:

Emma Cooper (Bute Community Land Company); Diane Oliver (Community Woodlands Association); Bob Frost, Elaine Jamieson and Tom Davies (Forestry Commission Scotland); Jamie Chaplin-Brice (Kilfinan Community Forest Company); Gordon Gray-Stephens (Native Woods Co-op); Ian Hepburn, John Morrison, John Addy and Andy Robinson (North West Mull Community Woodland); Alastair Macbeth, (Friends of Duchess Wood); Alan Parker (Mull Woodfuel Group); Jan Dunlop (Mull & Iona Community Trust); Lynda Mitchell (Allenergy); Ross Preston (Argyll Forest Education Initiative) and David Greenhalgh.

Apologies:

Colin Campbell, Hugh Fife and Pete Creech (Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise); Charles Dixon-Spain and Rhona Sutherland (Colintraive and Glendaruel Community Development Trust); Lorna Elliot and Sheila McLean (Argyll and the Isles LEADER); Morven Maclean and Colin MacFarlane (Scottish Natural Heritage); Charlie Cairns (Friends of Duchess Wood); Aonghas Murray (Dunollie House); Syd House (FCS); Vicky Neville and George Bruce (Ardroy Outdoor Centre) and Moray Finch (MICT).

Welcome:

Ian Hepburn, Development Manager, North West Mull Community Woodland Company welcomed everyone to the fourth Argyll networking event.

Forestry Commission Scotland Policy Update – Bob Frost

Bob referred to the NW Mull Community Woodland Company case study as a good example of a group continuing to deliver (available online at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-882KX5>).

He highlighted emerging issues from the recent Community Woodlands Association conference including collective training/ consultancy support opportunities around shared issues and themes and confirmed that Argyll is unique in terms of having this network – one of the questions from the conference was about how this network could be replicated elsewhere across Scotland.

Bob touched on different funding streams including the Community Seedcorn Fund (CSF) which is run by the local conservancy offices and is for 100% funding up to a £5,000 limit. FCS has been receiving positive feedback and they are discussing options for a similar allocation for next financial year. Forestry for People (ended) was a mixed experience but it was a multi-year fund, usually for larger amounts. If Seedcorn funding seeks to allocate larger single chunks of funding then the related relevant bureaucracy will follow – FCS is keen to keep the paperwork as simple as possible for CSF. At the moment there is no large multi year fund scheme and FCS are investigating several options in terms of how to perhaps deliver this in the future.

Bob highlighted the current ongoing consultation processes – Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill (www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/engage) and the Land Reform Review Group which has until April 2014 to report (www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Review/land-reform).

FCS recently announced it is undertaking a "health check" of Forest Enterprise's work with communities on the National Forest Estate (David Jardine is the local Forest Enterprise manager). FCS has set up the study to look at what has been achieved over the past ten years and to identify and build on good practice to help focus resources to deliver maximum benefit in future. The working party is chaired by Ian Ross, former chair of the Forest for People Advisory Panel and CWA CEO (Jon Hollingdale) is also on the panel. There will be opportunities over the next 12 months to feed into the study, any comments in the meantime can be passed on to Bob or Jon.

Bob gave an update on the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) with regards to community renewables. Following a bid process there are now 18 hydro schemes under investigation and potentially 14 future wind schemes. MICT is one of the projects. This is a different process and dialogue for FCS with groups as it is not about the trees but about other land areas and the trees could be an issue in terms of access to sites. Elsewhere across Scotland there are developer led projects and FCS has contracted with private schemes with investment options for communities – potentially delivering investment and income/revenue streams for communities.

Bob raised some questions for the groups to consider around the areas of issue/ things to look at ie could FCS support engagement with the private sector / forest design planning – woodland design course / conflict resolution – managing local expectations within communities?

Seedcorn Funding – Elaine Jamieson

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/f-s62eyyE64> (first part of clip)

Elaine highlighted the range of projects which have accessed Community Seedcorn Funding (CFS) to date. Elaine is on hand to help groups with the application process and encouraged groups to come forward with ideas. Current projects include Stronafian Paths for All training on design, Tarbert Castle wood restoration and tree planting and Dunollie House Gaelic interpretation project. The CSF can fund training, consultancy and other advice but does not cover capital costs.

The Seedcorn Fund is potentially more flexible than CSF. The Forest Education Initiative also has funding which can be used for community forest school leaders and the guidance is now clearer than before.

Community Woodlands Association Update – Diane Oliver

Diane gave a presentation highlighting work in community woodlands across the highlands associated with the CWA Enterprising Woods project. The presentation is available to view online at <http://youtu.be/oJGoKall5bk>

There are 3 themes to the Enterprising Woods project – growing woodlands; timber products and health in woods and the project runs until December 2013. Funding from Awards for All has assisted with travel costs to support people from Argyll attend training.

Bute Forest: People, Products and Progress – Emma Cooper

Bute Forest is owned by Bute Community Land Company which purchased 161 hectares of forest in 2010. The forest ‘splits’ into two areas – oak and commercial. Plans for the oak area include creation of a wilderness kayak campsite, a shelter for schools to use, bird hide at the WW2 bunker and a hydro scheme. The commercial area is being managed by continuous cover approach and they have created a work area from which they manufacture and sell sheds, fencing and other timber related products.

Their timber business plan included creating a work area by removing 1 row in 5 of Sitka spruce area and they had a volunteer forester to lead this work. A sawmill was purchased for the work area and Bute Forest now employs 2 people to process timber and make products. Other events have included a logging open day where they felled and milled their first tree and horse logging. Bute Forest is now working with a 3rd sector intern from Glasgow University to develop a new product range. Volunteering continues to play a large role in activities and following a couple of training events there is now a green woodworking group.

By creating a pond and access routes, Bute Forest is now working with schools, youth and other groups and wildlife walks. The trust built their own compost toilet and worked with local groups and volunteers including the Boys Brigade to build paths. The toilet has been a key asset as it is located close to the main access points including vehicle access and push chair friendly paths. Other current project developments include a hydro feasibility study and linking with the Argyll & Bute Kayak trail. This will include a camping area, shelter with fire pit and a compost toilet and will only be accessible from the sea.

Bute Forest undertook considerable amount of work during their bid to the Millennium Now Fund. Although they got down to the last few groups they unfortunately did not make the final selection. It has however created a good working relationship with the Big Lottery and Bute Forest is continuing to develop their ideas for the visitor centre and bunkhouse and are working towards a full feasibility study. During this process they discovered that feedback changes in particular around the spend/person:break even point – it has come back as much higher than expected. A café will now be an integral part of the centre and the bunkhouse will aim towards the higher end market. Bute Forest is aiming for a stage 2 funding bid early 2014 and hopefully a positive outcome mid 2014.

Bute Forest can be found online at www.buteforest.com and www.facebook.com/ButeCommunityForest

Duchess Wood Management Plan – Alastair Macbeth

This presentation is available to view online <http://youtu.be/5NewP4WddPQ>

Friends of Duchess Wood (FoDW) is a voluntary organisation and charity and exists to assist Argyll & Bute Council in the management of Duchess Wood, Helensburgh which is the largest settlement in Argyll & Bute. Duchess Wood is designated a Local Nature Reserve (the only LNR in Argyll & Bute) and was once a small part of the castle woods and estate which from the 19th century was owned by the Duke of Argyll (only a tower is now left of the castle) and half of the land has been developed for houses and playing fields. The wood is an open space protection area and is now owned by Luss Estates who have an agreement with Argyll & Bute Council who manage it via an LNR committee – assisted by the Friends of Duchess Wood.

Tourists, walking groups, visitors from across the Clyde and local people, use the wood. The woods are built up on two sides and have all abilities paths around the outside to maintain a wildlife area in the middle.

This is the 4th management plan produced for the wood – the previous ones were produced by consultants but this one was drafted by Friends of Duchess Wood and edited by Argyll & Bute Council prior to adoption by the Council. Key actions are now part of the plan and include:

- Management of invasives including rhododendron and Japanese knotweed
- Creating glades
- Removal of storm damage (lost 70 trees last winter)
- Boundary management (issues with old trees dropping limbs onto neighbouring sites/ near houses)
- Path signage, resurfacing of all abilities path, replacement of bridges with culverts, drainage and improving car parking
- Liaising with police, fire and environmental services due to persistent vandalism issues
- Research
- Education – linking with local schools and adult education services

FoDW liaises with a range of organisations including national/ large wildlife charities, local organisations such the employability's team, tree protection officers, community payback orders, green gym group, natural history group, walking theatre and other arts groups. FoDW has developed a range of information leaflet covering flora and fauna, produces a members newsletter, maps of the wood, an education pack for schools plus run a range of public events. They are finding that the number of requests to use the woods for events eg cross country races, is increasing and recently a commercial organisation has requested use for between 100-300 participants – this obviously increases pressure on the infrastructure in the woods and the 'balance' with tranquil use. The events are going ahead, but impact will be closely monitored. The Council has already banned use of motorised vehicles in the wood and gentle horseriding and cycling is ok but cycle races are not accepted.

Friends of Duchess Wood and the management plan can be found online at www.duchesswood.org.uk

Donegal Visit – Elaine Jamieson

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/f-s62eyyE64> (second half of presentation)

Elaine presented highlights from a recent study trip to Donegal, Ireland to meet a well established farmers woodland cooperative (DWOS). Irish forestry is quite young in terms of private ownership – mostly generated by EU grant incentives which are now ended but have create a network of small farmers with woodland. The farmers are now looking to thin their timber and supply woodfuel markets. Key issues include dispersed woodlands and distance to local markets. At DWOS all are membership organisations who ‘pay in’, give volunteer time and share the market. In order to create a reliable market, DWOS has persuaded a local nursing home to install a log boiler (via the DWOS ESCO – community energy company) and supplies logs at a guaranteed price (5-10% less than oil price). The group undertook all the capital investment and initial business modelling demonstrated that it would generate income to support 1 FTE (full time equivalent job). Delivery to the boiler is on a daily basis.

Project Updates from Around Argyll

Kilfinan Forest – Jamie Chaplin-Bryce

This presentation is available to view online at http://youtu.be/ISk1J_ICfvY

Jamie has now been in post for 6 months. Kilfinan Community Forest Company (KCFC) has recently installed a new access road in order to begin clear felling timber which will be processed for wood fuel (KCFC also has a new processor). Current income from woodfuel is around £4k per year and they hope to increase this to £10k. KCFC employs a forester, works with volunteers and has had input from the HELP project team.

The Kyles Allotment Group now has 28 raised beds in the tunnel and is oversubscribed. KCFC are aiming to install a second polytunnel to help meet demand and develop a garden outlet. The long term forest plan has now been submitted and they hope to have it completed shortly. KCFC has installed a Met mast and may apply to keep it up for longer as the figure are not yet conclusive – there may not be enough wind to justify installation costs for a turbine. Hydro is also now a potential energy supply and is being investigated. SRDP funded rhododendrons clearing has been ongoing.

Kilfinan Community Forest Company can be found online at www.kilfinancommunityforest.co.uk and www.facebook.com/pages/Kilfinan-Community-Forest/145208138905268

Horselogging at Blarbuie Woods – Hugh Fife

This presentation is available to view online at <http://youtu.be/A2ubBiyIv3Y>

Hugh was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting however, Diane showed his presentation and Gordon Gray Stephens helped with some of the details.

Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise can be found online at www.blarbuiewoodland.org and www.facebook.com/pages/Blarbuie-Woodland-Enterprise/305698996135299

Site Visit to North West Mull Community Woodland:

Ian Hepburn gave a guided tour of North West Mull Woodlands which covers West Ardhu Woods where they plan to build using their own Sitka and Langamull Woods where they are harvesting and clearing timber at the moment, across to the forest croft site and out to the end of the haul route where there is a potential site for woodland burials and archaeology village of Kildavee which was inhabited up until the late 1700s from probably Viking times.



In terms of woodfuel NWMCC are now in a position where they can supply between 1,200-1,500 tonnes of 2 year-old dried timber annually. Their market will increase, as another supplier in the area who they did not wish to displace is no longer trading and have a processor and kindling machine arriving shortly. They also supply bulk fuel wood to the dairy, the bakery and the local woodchip producer. NWMCC has a contract with Tilhill who delivered the haul route and undertake the harvesting in return for timber, and a management contract fee based on timber sales. Timber is exported from Mull via a floating pier (a fixed pier is currently being constructed).



Off into North West Mull Community Woodland



Exploring the area used for education, schools and children's groups



Under a shelter used by groups



Wood fuel production area



Crofter Andy Robinson outlines the plans for his woodland croft



Current felling, clearing areas for woodland crofts and access to archaeological sites



More photos are available online at the CWA Flickr site <http://flic.kr/s/aHsjJ5SoUY>



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 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 6 | 8 |
| good | 1 | 2 | 2 | | 4 | 3 |
| fair | | | | | 1 | |

Delegates felt they gained the following benefits:

- Networking, experiencing Mull’s developments
- An insight into semi urban woodland issues
- Good understanding of broad range of issues facing the development of community woodlands
- Networking, knowledge
- Agreement to work together with two other groups
- Insight into other groups, networking
- Education about schools
- Networking, insight into Mull
- Networking, training opportunities (potential)
- Shared resources potential
- Prompting action in certain areas
- Greater understanding of common issues and topics for future discussion
- Meeting people from other groups
- Really enjoyed visiting the community woodland
- Discovering new links for the FEI group

Next meeting agenda suggestions included:

- Use of woodlands as an education resource
- Buying land and creating woodlands
- ‘every community deserves a woodland’
- Training session and networking day
- Development of woodfuel and monetising woodland
- Forest plans, visitor management, disabled access, permaculture

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

- Useful learning experience and way to explore what others do

Delegates would like further training in:

- LTFP and SRDP assistance/ advice
- Applying for funding/ availability of training
- Attracting visitors
- Risk management
- Forest plan planning
- Contract management
- Equipment options (can we go to a forestry show?)

Other general comments included:

- Breaking up speakers into smaller sections ie 1hr speakers, 1/2 hr network and so on
- Great to hear from other woods eg Duchess Wood