

Background:

The Enterprising Woods Highland – Wood Products and Skills proposal aimed to:

- Encourage and support community woodland groups to develop wood products
- Run training in practical skills eg greenwood working, coppicing and machine operation
- Investigate development of accredited training
- Support groups to develop business plans and proposals
- Increase knowledge levels and create a peer support network.

Following a 2 day practical workshop on wood products and skills, CWA supported training for project member Knoydart Forest Trust (KFT). The training was based at Inverie, Knoydart and hosted by Knoydart Forest Trust. The aim of this training was to enable Knoydart Forest Trust and partners to develop a strategy for small product for local tourism markets. It was anticipated that the training would deliver a range of outcomes and benefits around producing wood and other craft products created from within community owned woodlands. The Big Tree Society was appointed to run the workshop and undertook research, product development proposals and liaised with KFT re requirements prior to the workshop running 10th-11th December 2013.



Inverie, Knoydart

Location and Catering:

The event was held in Inverie village Hall, Knoydart. Local company – Knoydart Pottery and Tearoom, provided catering.



Those Involved:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Eoin Cox | The Big Tree Society and Buy Design Gallery |
| Diane Oliver | Community Woodlands Association |
| Suzann Barr | Abriachan Forest Trust |
| Lorna Schofield | Knoydart Forest Trust Manager and Knoydart Foundation Chairperson |
| Grant Holroyd | Knoydart Forest Trust Forester |
| Davie Newton | Knoydart Foundation Local Development Officer and independent Carpenter/ Joiner |
| Ian Dow | Knoydart Forest Trust Forester |
| Amy Dow | Knoydart Forest Trust |
| Eilidh Klemm | Retired teacher |
| Johann Leibenberg | Knoydart Foundation Maintenance Officer and independent Furniture Maker |
| Rhona Miller | Knoydart Pottery and Tearoom |
| Angela Williams | Knoydart Foundation Development Manager |

KFT Directors and members ‘dropped in’ during the workshop and included: Steve Wood, Cath Curd and Roger Trussel.



DAY 1

Welcome:

Diane welcomed everyone to the workshop and explained some of the background. Eoin then set the tone for the next 2 days which aimed to be creative, supportive, look at resources (what and who) – what to do with them, what to make who is going to make and where is it going?

“Happy people make happy products for happy punters”

Everyone was then given 2 sheets of paper – 1 of which was a set of instructions and asked to follow the instructions without communicating with each other. The products were then ranked against each other and the group discussed the importance of buddies – everyone needs a friend and a critic.

Everyone then introduced themselves and outlined their background and skills and aims for the workshop.

Workshop Outline:

Develop a range of 10 products of any size, using locally found materials – make/ mock up some and resolve 5.

As everyone is a member of Knoydart Forest Trust they are a forester and therefore the Forest Management Plan takes total precedence. It is also important to look at capacity and be aware of potential issues and risks including pressure on people, loyalties, over enthusiasm and burn out.



Good soft training and communication is KEY – it all comes out in the product.

As the purchaser trusts the product so the makers need to be able to trust across the production process.

Product Development:

The group split into pairs and began to develop their products – parameters were set including:

- size (had to fit into small boxes),
- didn't need to be of wood but should feature/ have a timber element,
- think about transfer of skills to buddies,
- should be able to produce medium to high volumes of a high quality and a low price point – small multiple runs (not batch) ie 50-200 per week,
- think about any likely problems in manufacture and who the product will be for

ADOPT – ADAPT – IMPROVE

Other points for consideration included the current situation of no workshop, no staff and don't yet fully know their markets. The group looked at materials which included birch, alder and hazel and discussed water/ moisture content, green versus dried wood, different approaches to drying and storing wood and products.

Product Presentation:

Each pair presented their products to the group highlighting how it was made, what tools they used, what materials, options to adapt it, what they learned, the people they aimed to sell it to and how they would sell it.



Markets:

Rona gave the group a very useful first hand experience of the Tearoom visitor and customer. She outlined the profile and key points about customers in the Pottery and Tearoom including minimum spend, amount of time they generally spend browsing products, balance between tourists and locals, and what sells.

The group discussed gaps in products for different potential customers, and other potential local and tourism markets. In Inverie there are currently 2 places selling products – the Foundation Shop and the Tearoom. Other potential routes to market were also covered.

Prototype Development:

The 'new' products were then assessed for further development and grouped into themes – covering:

- Collectables
- Functional
- Interactive

Markets for each were identified – what are the customers like, how would we recognise them, what are there key 'features', how do we reach them and how do our products fit with them?

It is important to recognise that each group requires a different approach with a different product story and mood.

Eoin shared some ideas and prototypes he had made based on the key criteria listed above. He also shared some of his experiences of working to develop products for organisations and what he had learned en route.



DAY 2

Workshop Outline:

- Focussed on product and backstory
- Putting ourselves into our product
- Knoydart – great place to be with a great package
- Importance of shared creativity to maintain inspiration and confidence
- Working in isolation can lead to loss of confidence and lack of motivation

Backstory Development Part 1:

The group reflected on the previous day's work and began to pick out key words from the flipcharts to use for marketing. Each person identified 3 words summing up Knoydart and wrote them on a piece of slate. This then formed a mood board of words.

Making Session:

Using a walking stick as a product the group identified materials and set up a production line with quality checks, moving people around the system for different experiences and to ensure effective use of time and skills with 2 or 3 people working on each stage.

The group reviewed the process and their learning.

Production line key points:

- Collaborative process to make things work eg developing products and prototypes, planning, making the product and developing the script
- Allocate tasks across the team eg checking and editing the backstory, maintaining the tools, ordering packaging
- Rotate jobs but don't pressurise folk to do things they don't want to – leads to non happy team which slides across into production.



Backstory Development Part 2:

The group reviewed the mood boards of words and using coloured markers identified words appropriate to describe

PRODUCT - PLACE - PROCESS

Splitting into smaller groups, each wrote 2 paragraphs to describe the product/ place/ process on flipcharts and presented them to the group for discussion.

Product Packaging:

Key points include:

- Look at provenance/ sustainability of packaging (FCS labelling, Scottish made etc)
- Boxes – are more expensive but look good and keep things to a size to fit in luggage, external buyers like boxes and good for online sales
- Clear labelling
- Keep packaging free of bar codes, prices etc
- Quality assurance is really important – what is in the box must match the label
- Ensure clear marking inside to match consignment records
- What does the product 'say' on it – can its 'story' still be identified after the packaging is disposed of?

Product Production:

Trust is important – build trust in the brand through quality and truth in the backstory ie what say's made in Knoydart, is made in Knoydart. This may increase production costs compared to batch production abroad but it is important to keep the money circulating locally.

The group discussed the ethics and pros and cons around production and potential rebranding or other people's products. Not everything can be produced locally in Knoydart and it is important to find the balance.

Point of Sale:

The group developed labelling and experimented with different packaging and display techniques.

Action Plan:

- Look at arts and crafts contracts
- Confirm product straplines, work and refine backstory
- Identify and confirm which products belong to KFT (intellectual property is important to establish from the outset)
- Discuss Knoydart wide brand potential with other partners in the area and the community
- Develop a process and place to make products, look at tools required etc
- Develop pricing strategy
- Undertake trials and get feedback
- Use webplan and refine marketing strategy



Feedback:

All delegates completing feedback forms said that they felt the event in terms of organisation, location and catering was 'good' or 'very good' with one marking the facilities as 'fair'. All said the event met or exceeded their expectations.

People wanted to take part in the seminar because:

- To be able to better understand product development and routes to market
- I love making wooden stuff, but want to learn to work with wood closer to the source
- We had attended previous courses run by Eoin Cox and not been disappointed. Groups we work with often use skills we learned from Eoin – one hope is that we can develop an Abriachan 'brand' from enterprise
- General interest
- How to use/ develop/ market local resources
- Future opportunities
- Interest in craft production and development of community services
- To collaborate on making things to sell
- As a potter/ craft maker I wanted to learn more about marketing and branding and get my enthusiasm back on track
- Want to make more
- To help us realise our potential to add value to our woodland resource

The benefits they felt they gained included:

- Ideas, inspiration, understanding of how we can work together
- Marketing ideas
- Start of a process that will allow us to start making and selling lots more...
- Broader understanding of product and development
- Enthusiasm and reassurance (I'm not on my own) as a maker
- Focussed minds
- Practical skills, greater insight into community issues
- Awareness of potential
- Insight into process of
 - identifying makers/ craft
 - Bringing them to point of sale
 - Being aware of constant need to research
- Ideas for engaging all sectors of the community
- Product development and seeing the potential of what we have
- Realisation about the potential of what we have here in Knoydart

With the skills gained, participants will go on to:

- Make stuff
- Use the ideas and confidence gained to help set up a cascade/ training programme for other project staff to use when supporting groups/ communities to create creative enterprises
- Need local discussions on lots of related issues
- Experiment and develop new craft ideas
- Assist the Forest Trust where possible
- Get back into my workshop
- Develop a range of products and brand and facilitate wider community involvement in the process

Delegates would like CWA to do next:

- Ongoing support please!
- Hold more advanced, more creative courses
- Draw up the activities and methods used in the workshop – it would be relevant to many community groups
- Run more practical and creative courses

All delegates would recommend others to take part and reasons include:

- Building knowledge and skills
- Coming together to build economies and jobs
- Great mix of experiential/cerebral for all interests/ skills/ abilities
- Go for the 2 full days!
- It was very informative and business based which was useful

Other comments included:

- Thank you for giving us the opportunity to learn from Eoin and receive/ benefit from his energy and enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge and skills
- Many thanks for 2 great days x
- Thank you

