



Argyll & Bute Hospital, Lochgilphead - Wednesday 26th February 2014

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

Agenda:

10.00	Arrive, tea and coffee
10.25	Welcome and Introductions - Syd House
10.30	Regular Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forestry Commission - Bob Frost• FCS Seedcorn Funding – Elaine Jamieson
11.00	Woodlot Licences – Jamie McIntyre
11.20	Break
11.30	Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust – Charles Dixon-Spain
11.50	A Wood of Our Own: A Review and the Future – Proposals & Discussion
13.00	Lunch
13.45	Project Updates from Around Argyll <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stronafian Forest – Mark Chamber• Dunollie Woodland Walk – Fiona Thomson
14.15	Presentation and Site Visit to Blarbuie Woods – Pete Creech, Patrick Harvey & Colin Campbell
15.45	Sum Up and Thanks
16.00	Finish

Attending:

David Inglis (Ardrishaig Community Trust); Neil Donaldson (Argyll Farm Woodland Project); Blair Fletcher (Argyll Green Woodworkers Association); Ceci Alderton and Robert Marr (Argyll Permaculture Network); Colin Campbell, Patrick Harvey and Pete Creech (Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise); Ben Robinson and Nina Graham (Bute Community Land Company); Charles Dixon-Spain and Mark Chambers (Colintraive and Glendaruel Community Development Trust); Diane Oliver (Community Woodlands Association); Fiona Thomson (Dunollie House); Bob Frost, Elaine Jamieson and Syd House (Forestry Commission Scotland); Stewart Campbell (Friends of Duchess Wood); Gordon Gray-Stephens (Native Woods Co-op); Jamie McIntyre (Scottish Woodlots Association); Catriona O’Keeffe, Catherine Hill and Andrew Hill (South Loch Awe Community Company).

Apologies:

Sybil Johnson and Anna Watkiss (Argyll & Bute Council); Kate Craig (Glenorchy and Innishail Community Orchard and Woodland); Jamie Chaplin-Brice (Kilfinan Community Forest Company); Ian Hepburn (North West Mull Community Woodland Company); Anne Rae (South Loch Awe Community Company); Blair Duncanson (Wild About Wood)

Welcome:

Syd House, Perth and Argyll Conservancy Area Manager, Forestry Commission Scotland welcomed everyone to the fifth Argyll networking event. He emphasised the importance of chatting and meeting new people as key to increasing the number of people involved in the forestry sector.



Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) Policy Update – Bob Frost

Bob explained that this forum had now been meeting for 2 years, which is longer than many other places that have tried something similar. He is keen to explore whether this is a model that can be used elsewhere and believes that strength is built on sharing and hearing about issues. Resources are ever tighter and only by sharing can we overcome this potential shortage/ challenge.

There are still National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) and large community buy outs happening. There are also now community renewable schemes beginning to develop and Morvern is the first community to raise the investment required to run their own scheme. The first application to use NFLS for allotments has been submitted. Other discussions ongoing include investigating the use of national forest estate for woodlots and a potential hutting site (linked to the Reforesting Scotland 1,000 huts campaign - www.thousandhuts.org). Forest Enterprise is still undertaking a health check with Ian Ross (previous chair of Forestry for People board which ended in 2005) heading up the panel.

With the Community Empowerment Bill consultation having closed at the end of January 2014, FCS are now assessing potential impacts on NFLS and some changes to the scheme are likely over the next 18 months to reflect the Bill's process through parliament.

Seedcorn Funding – Elaine Jamieson

This presentation is available online at http://youtu.be/MC_leZS39Tg

Elaine talked about FCS policy and how FCS can engage with community woodlands with lots going on in Argyll in terms of the range of activities and involvement. This is done mostly through the Community Seedcorn Fund supporting projects and activities. Nationally 80-90% of grants are below £20k and Elaine highlighted where the money had been spent in Argyll in the last year (see presentation).

The Seedcorn Fund is not so well used in Argyll – the majority of the Area Conservancy budget is spent in Perth District but this fund covers activity that is not community based – again it is for very small amounts.

Elaine can be contacted at elaine.jamieson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. More information about Forestry Commission Scotland can be found on their website www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/enjoyscotlandsforests and you can follow them on Twitter @FCScotlandnews and @fcscotland.

Woodlot Licences – Jamie McIntyre

This presentation is available online at http://youtu.be/Tol4qDBA_B8

Jamie explained that he is still involved with Woodland Crofts and is now also doing some work with Scottish Woodlots Association. He outlined what a Woodlot licence is and confirmed that it is more about small scale family forestry and productive woodland management.

The model is based on one developed in Canada however there woodlots are based on the public forest estate – in Scotland discussions to date have been with private landowners but there are opportunities for community owners to benefit as well. Licences generally last 20 years and are renewable and they have the Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) as their unique selling point.

More information about the Scottish Woodlots Association can be found on their website at <http://scottishwoodlotassociation.co.uk> and they are also on Twitter @ScottishWoodlot.



Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust – Charles Dixon-Spain

This presentation is available to view online at <http://youtu.be/AezO0VVkoll>

Charles (who is also a director of Colintraive and Glendaruel Development Trust and one of the new directors of this new trust) introduced the 4 core organisations of the Trust (ACT) and their vision. Driven to date by Argyll and Bute Council and a steering group the Trust is now a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and the directors have a mandate to take the Trust’s objectives forward. Charles outlined what ACT will do and some key dates including a launch in April/May 2014 with a website and series of events.

The Trust will be focussing on access, environment, health, built heritage and supporting the economy. The main contact for the Trust is Julie Young at Argyll and Bute Council, email: aicct@argyll-bute.gov.uk

“ACT now, enjoy forever”

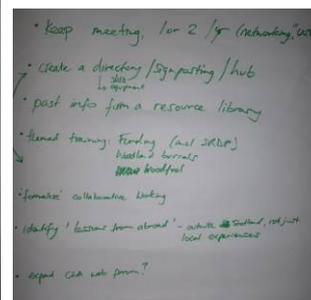
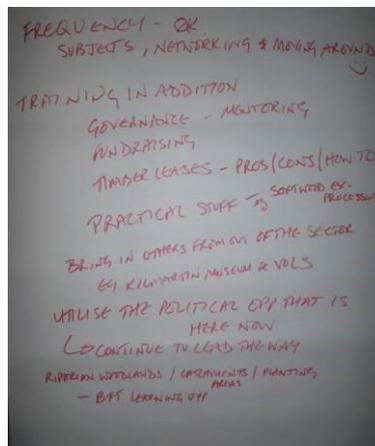
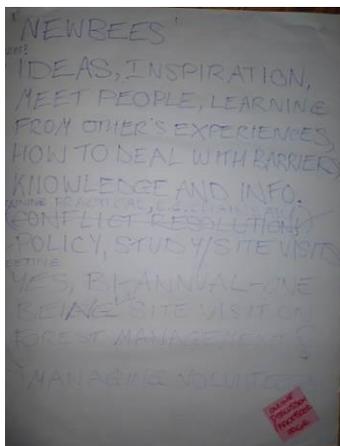
A Wood of Our Own – A Review

Diane Oliver gave a short presentation summing up the background and outcomes to date of this networking forum. The presentation <http://youtu.be/J0eyp1U6fAw>. The presentation outlined the background, previous presentations and outcomes from Wood of Our Own networking including related workshops attended by groups from Argyll.

Folks then divided into smaller groups to discuss the future of the forum and then feedback to the wider gathering.



training ideas from previous meetings



The ideas and feedback will be used to inform future meetings, workshops and training opportunities.

Stronafian Forest Update – Mark Chambers

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/-sS0Eikmws8>

Colintraive and Glendaruel Development Trust (CGDT) purchased Stronafian Forest last year and has leased 500 hectares to a private contractor for silviculture. The community will manage the rest of the land and has access across all of it. CGDT has a number of projects in the pipeline including:

- **Renewables** – CGDT received CARES funding (Community and Renewable Energy Scheme – more info on www.localenergyscotland.org) and will be undertaking a 2 year feasibility study



- Woodland crofts – undertook a desktop survey with assistance from Jamie McIntyre who continues to act in a consultancy role. Initially CGDT is looking at 5 crofts (as per local plan) and following a workshop is now seeking to develop criteria and selection processes.
- Archaeology – CGDT has been working with Archaeology Scotland as part of the Adopt a monument programme (www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/our-projects/adopt-monument) for a chambered cairn and is using community seedcorn funding to train local people to undertake the surveying, consultation and practical work (rather than hire in a consultant). The local primary school now also has a toolkit and is keeping records and helping with the interpretation work for the site.

Colintraive and Glendaruel Development Trust can be found online at cgdt.org

Dunollie Woodland Walks – Fiona Thomson

This presentation is available online at <http://youtu.be/NZdmD8MQdFE>

Initially Dunollie House, Oban undertook a community consultation to receive feedback about their plans. The interpretation panels took research from volunteers, staff, the designed and photos from the Dunollie museum and then were then designed working with the volunteers. I of the volunteers was a recent geology graduate and focussed on the rock formations and sea stacks. The volunteers studied the flora of the area and included the gaelic names. They have received positive feedback from people using the paths.

Following the success of the woodland paths project which generated lots of interest from local groups wanting to get involved in future projects this year, the work will continue with developing a world of trees space – incorporating woodland animals, sculptures and benches.

Dunollie House can be found online at www.dunollie.org, on FaceBook at www.facebook.com/pages/Dunollie/159136367455187 and Twitter @DunollieOban

Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise – Pete Creech

This presentation is available online at http://youtu.be/N5t_iwmNBxs

Pete gave a presentation covering the brief history of the 150+ year old Argyll & Bute psychiatric hospital and grounds. Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise (BWE) has a core aim to improve people's mental health and around 2004 began to re-open the woods. Change is on the horizon as the hospital is now much reduced in size and will shortly be redeveloped with construction of a new smaller residential unit, BWE has undergone some staff changes and will soon have to relocate their bases (polytunnels and growing space, workshop, composting and storage) to a different site.

Current activities include:

- A 2 year Heritage Lottery funded project based around the history of the hospital and delivering new interpretation of previous activities on the site
- Social enterprise activities including training, path maintenance for the Dalriada Project and in Crinan Woods
- Ongoing maintenance – still recovering from the major storm damage of 2012
- Ensuring the woods are well used and remain accessible to all

Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise can be found online at www.blarbuiewoodland.org and www.facebook.com/pages/Blarbuie-Woodland-Enterprise/305698996135299 and you can follow them on Twitter @BWELtd

Site Visit to Blarbuie Woods:



More photos are available online at the CWA Flickr site <http://flic.kr/s/aHsjU15gAZ>



Feedback Summary:

General verbal feedback was very positive and 10 feedback forms were completed. Delegates were asked to score the following (none scored poor):

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

9 delegates felt the event met their expectations and 1 felt it partly met theirs – “My interest is in managing a wood for recreation for the community. The speakers and much of the audience were concerned with woodland on a much larger scale, more like commercial forestry”.

Delegates felt they gained the following benefits:

- Meeting other people, ideas on how a woodland could be developed by crafting or woodlots and possible grant sources
- Meeting new contacts and keeping up to date with new initiatives
- Information and meeting others with similar aims
- Funding advice and new ideas
- Networking
- Information on what others are doing through presentations
- Opportunity to influence future developments of the forum
- Greater understanding of the benefits of community woodlands to communities and the wide range of activities and objectives that can be achieved
- For a ‘newbie’ it was useful to gain an insight into how other projects are managed. The event provided a platform for sharing valuable information eg where to find out about volunteer training and monitoring systems. The site visit was particularly inspiring
- Networking and ideas
- Meeting people and gaining a better understanding of what the sector comprises in terms of people, landscape and funding
- Networking, realising we are not alone (or crazy) in our venture/ project
- Updates from FCS

Next meeting agenda suggestions included:

- Fundraising
- Speakers from SNH
- Volunteer management
- Insurance
- Proposed development of the forum (SRDP2 cooperation measure?)
- Workshop on above
- Presentations from other potential partners
- Skills and experience required by boards/ directors in managing public funds, including resourcing and financial forecasting
- A similar balance of current issues and either presentations from other members of round table discussions
- A workshop on how best disparate woods can work together to share expertise, staff, equipment – start pulling together a skills audit
- The reality of managing ambition, as well as operational tasks, when heavily dependant on volunteers
- Grants
- Ways of raising revenue
- Working with forest Enterprise
- Practical ideas for SRDP applications



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

- Useful was to learn about community woodlands and to meet those involved
- Having time to engage with forestry commission staff and volunteers and staff from across Argyll was invaluable
- I think it would be useful to have an event held specifically for inexperienced volunteers working on developing their own woodland projects. This could include training/ information on how to manage your group, where to look for information on funding and training etc
- Great for ideas and feeling of support from other groups and FCS
- Contacts across the sector and geographically
- Good to know what happens elsewhere – what works and what doesn't
- As discussed at Blarbuie a visiting speaker from a specific external organisation eg funder, could provide detailed information on a subject where a need had been identified
- I am a director of a Trust and I would like to see other directors taking an interest and becoming involved. Their attitude is that they see it as a liability and would like to pass it on

Delegates would like further training and events in:

- Governance/ trustees responsibilities
- Working with volunteers
- An example of how woodlot (leasee) and woodland crofts (leasee/owner) work eg a visit to each to see the differences – pros and cons
- Practical skills eg maintaining footpaths, building bridges
- Fundraising
- Mentoring scheme

Other general comments included:

- Very helpful intro for this arena
- Maybe a bit more time for questions would be nice?
- Since there can be a lot of movement of people within the sector, both employees and volunteers, it is important to have meaningful events of this kind to provide support and information for organisations to work effectively through change
- A valuable network and it is useful sometimes to learn from the mistakes of others as well as the successes