

**Leases, licences and charges in community woods seminar**

**Laggan Wolftrax Centre, Strathmashie, Laggan PH20 1BU  
Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016 - 10am – 4pm**



## Leases, licences and charges in community woods seminar

### Synopsis

This one-day event focused on the various ways that community woodland groups and other community land owners can generate income through leases, licences and charges to others for using their woods. The programme covered long term leasing arrangements for woodland crofts and woodlots, as well as private and public sector approaches to charging for activities such as organised sporting events, car parking, sporting rights and filming.

### Report

Twenty-six participants gathered at the Wolftrax Centre, Strathmashie, for this CWA 1-day seminar, supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

**Jon Hollingdale** (CWA CEO <http://www.communitywoods.org>) welcomed delegates, outlined the schedule for the day, and gave an overview of the background to the event. In a time of financial constraint, community woodlands are increasingly required to diversify their income sources, including charging others for the use of their woods. The Land Reform Act established a right of responsible free access to land and inland water, but there are still many opportunities for entrepreneurialism on the part of land managers.

Although forestry has usually depended on selling “variously-sized lumps of wood”, it can be a much more wide-ranging business: forest managers might seek to access many other income streams including providing public benefits (linked to associated government subsidies), selling carbon-offsets, non-timber forest products (NTFP's), game shooting and renewable energy installations (especially hydro).

**Ian Hall** (Chair, Laggan Forest Trust [www.lagganforest.com](http://www.lagganforest.com)) gave a brief history of LFT, which started out as a partnership project between the community and the Forestry Commission back in the 1990's with a strong emphasis on creating and retaining local forestry based livelihoods in a remote rural area. In 2003 the Trust signed a 25 year management agreement with the Forestry Commission relating to the management of the whole of Strathmashie Forest.

In 2004 FCS set up the Wolftrax mountain bike centre on the site (due to capercaillie issues at their preferred site at Glenmore); car parking fees from the car park here are used to defray the costs of upkeep and maintenance of the mountain bike tracks. In 2007 the Trust also purchased 3 parcels of land (19 hectares in total) from FCS with funding from the Land Fund, and in 2014/15 the new Laggan Wolftrax centre was built with £400k funding from the Cairngorms National Park. This is an excellent facility, but has on-going running costs which must be met.

Ian also mentioned that his partner was involved in a grant-giving trust called The Pebble Trust ([www.thepebbletrust.org](http://www.thepebbletrust.org)) which was keen to support community woodlands and similar initiatives.

**Dietrich Pannwitz** (Sylvestrus Ltd <http://www.sylvestrus.co.uk>) gave a perspective from the private sector, reflecting on how forestry has changed in the last twenty years, in terms of the public expectations, the challenges faced and the outcomes delivered. He emphasised a few of the challenges (e.g. climate change/windthrow/disease, ageing workforce, extensive

red tape, fluctuating timber demand/prices, erratic grant schemes and a skills shortage) before going on to talk about the opportunities to make money from forests.

The first priority for a community, as for any forest owner, is to be clear about your objectives for the woodland and to ensure that this is well documented. The next question to ask is - 'are you getting a benefit' for any given activity - if not why do it? Dietrich ran through a variety of potential income sources - timber, NTFPs, sale/lease, firewood, sawn timber, renewables, events, utility companies/wayleaves, cafes, sporting/grazing lets, outdoor activities etc. He further emphasised the need for communities to address the basics of any contract in relation to these activities - who? where and what? for how long? what payments/benefits? The benefits of regular/annual payments rather than one-off deals was noted, as was the benefit of engaging someone with more experience to represent your interests, as was the value of seeing what others are doing in similar fields - and trying to do better yourselves!

The same fundamental business principles apply for all new initiatives: is the proposal in agreement with your principles? is it sustainable? is it quantified and documented? who is in charge/supervising/controlling? and does the benefit justify the effort? Dietrich noted that lots of woodland benefits were taken for granted, and that these represented undeveloped income streams.

This presentation is online at <https://youtu.be/rAq3j9wIzbo>

**Brian Duff** (Recreation Forester, Forest Enterprise Scotland <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk>) outlined the Forestry Commission Scotland approach to charging, focussing on four main areas: permissions, leases, car parking and firewood and discussing the advantages and challenges of each. FCS has standard permission agreements for a variety of sporting activities which have been negotiated with governing bodies. Car parking brings in substantial income but raises expectations, has proved controversial and requires considerable input to enforce charges and service the infrastructure.

Brian discussed the need to factor-in (and charge for) your time when dealing with locations for filming and events; he talked about the general willingness of tourists/visitors to pay for car-parking (especially if facilities are present); Demand for firewood has grown substantially in recent years but is proving difficult to manage for FCS, and he suggested community woodland groups need to explore ways to monetise the volunteer resource.

This presentation is online at <https://youtu.be/Skzd5986y2s>

Delegates proposed and discussed various trading ideas in the next session.

There were several ideas and examples of buildings, from the Kirkton treehouse (<https://lochcarroncommunity.wordpress.com>) to the bunkhouse and leasing of craft workshops of the Knoydart Foundation (<http://www.knoydart-foundation.com>).

There was further discussion about firewood, and how it could be made into a viable income stream. Positive examples were reported from Dunnet and Knoydart amongst others. Green burials were mentioned as another income stream: people are willing to pay up front for a 'lair' in a desirable woodland site, which can provide a means of financing the venture, although it is not without its share of planning issues though - as ongoing work at North West Mull Community Woodland Company demonstrates. CWA are hosting a seminar on this topic on 5 March 2016

The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust ([www.isleofeigg.net/eigg\\_heritage\\_trust.html](http://www.isleofeigg.net/eigg_heritage_trust.html)) supports the sustainable development of the island, providing opportunities for numerous individuals and businesses in a variety of different ways. One of the key short term aims is to establish tourist accommodation of their own: initially a 'glamping' enterprise consisting of 3 camping pods or wooden 'wigwams' which will be let out as camping/holiday accommodation. They estimate the initial cost of establishing these will be repaid in 3 years. It was noted that tourist accommodation of this kind can often include woodstoves or fireplaces/BBQ sites - and that these in turn can provide a ready on-site market for firewood.

Jon then showed a brief promotional film which had been partly filmed in Dunnet Forest, which had also served as the base for the film crew, and delegates pondered an appropriate fee level for this sort of usage.

After lunch Ian Hall and Jim deBank (Laggan Forest Trust) led delegates on a brief guided walk around the Wolftrax site.

**Jamie MacIntyre** (Woodland Croft Partnership / Scottish Woodlot Association [www.scottishwoodlotassociation.co.uk](http://www.scottishwoodlotassociation.co.uk) <http://www.woodlandcrofts.org>) described the potential benefits to community land managers of two models of longer term leasing: woodland crofts and woodlots. Jamie outlined the development of woodland crofts and woodlots, and compared and contrasted the two models. Both are relatively new but have considerable potential to bring in income for community woodland owners whilst delivering other objectives such as supporting the local economy, and involving more of the community in management. This presentation is online at <https://youtu.be/Ddq4ipBc78E>

**Pam Noble** (Development Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise <http://www.hie.co.uk>) outlined the support available from HIE, including the Scottish Land Fund, which offers pre-acquisition support e.g. for Business planning) as well as capital and post-acquisition revenue funding, and Community Account Management. Other support is available e.g. from Business Gateway and Just Enterprise ([www.justenterprise.org](http://www.justenterprise.org)). Groups are recommended to check the term and conditions of any grant funding for assets to ensure that these do not inhibit their plans.

A final discussion session reflected on the day and considered the way forward, in particular how CWA might assist groups in developing their plans. It was clear that this field is still in its infancy, however, there are some good models out there to learn from, including within the community woodland sector.

Key future actions for CWA were:

- Maintaining and developing the network so that groups know what others are doing and can learn from their experiences
- Producing case studies of successful initiatives
- Producing guidance notes on particular topics (e.g. woodland burials, filming)
- Producing templates for agreements for sporting and other events (perhaps by adapting those already in use by FCS)

## Schedule

- 10.00 Arrival, registration (tea/coffee available)
- 10.30 Welcome and Introduction – Jon Hollingdale (CWA)
- 10.50 Laggan Forest Trust – Ian Hall (LFT)
- 11.00 Private sector experience – Dietrich Pannwitz (Sylvestrus Ltd)
- 11.30 Tea/coffee break
- 12.00 The Forestry Commission approach – Brian Duff (FES)
- 12.30 Discussion – ideas and proposals from participants
- 1.00 Lunch, including a tour of the Wolftrax site
- 2.15 Woodlots and Woodland crofts – Jamie MacIntyre (WCP/SWA)
- 3.00 SLF considerations and HIE support – Pam Noble (HIE)
- 3.10 Discussion – what can CWA (and others) do to support
- 3.50 Close

## List of participants

Donnie Chisolm	Aigas Community Forest
Steve Morris	Ancient Woodland Restoration
Ally Aiken	Beechbrae
Jon Hollingdale	CWA
Chris Marsh	CWA Director
Adrian Clark	Evanton Wood Community Company
Craig Millar	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Brian Duff	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Gary Servant	Glengarry Community Woodlands
George Cross	Glengarry Community Woodlands
Pamela Noble	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Eric McNally	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Ian Leaver	Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust
Lorna Schofield	Knoydart Forest Trust
Fiona Lennie	Knoydart Forest Trust
Jim deBank	Laggan Forest Trust
Ian Hall	Laggan Forest Trust
Ewan Reid	Lochcarron Community Development Company
Colin Duncan Campbell	Nether Lochaber Community Trust CIC
Malcolm Ward	North West Mull CWC Ltd
Jamie MacIntyre	Scottish Woodlots/ Woodland Crofts
Katharina Lenz	Sleat Development Trust Environment Group
Peter Roberts	Sleat Development Trust Environment Group
Tim Godfrey	Sleat Development Trust Environment Group
Dietrich Pannwitz	Sylvestrus Ltd
Iwan Thomas	The Vat Run

## Event Feedback

	V.Good	Good	Fair	Poor	V.Poor
Location	13	3	0	0	0
Organisation	12	4	0	0	0
Catering	11	5	0	0	0
Facilities	13	3	0	0	0

### Do you feel this event delivered your expectations?

Yes 14, No 0, Partly 2

### If answer was no / partly please tell us why and how we might improve things:

*The private sector talk was too basic (i.e. general forestry) and not about income examples.*

*I was expecting slightly more emphasis/detail on technical aspects of leases/licences etc specific to community woodlands.*

### Please tell us why you wanted to take part in the event?

*I work with 2 community groups with leasing ideas they are investigating.*

*To upskill on the background for or community forest.*

*Both contributing experience and learning form others.*

*New to the area – gaining knowledge.*

*Always important to seek alternative ways of using our asset and raising finance.*

*To learn from others.*

*To understand more about community woodland schemes in the Highlands and Islands.*

*Speaker and learner.*

*To help inform advice I give to CWs and explore opportunities to generate income.*

*Find new ways/ideas for developing our community forest (& networking).*

*Woodland crofts.*

*Just joined our community woodland. It seemed like a sensible idea.*

*Time to look to next stage within organisation*

*To find out more about potential income for a community woodland.*

*Networking and sharing info. 1<sup>st</sup> visit to Laggan Wolftrax*

### What benefits do you feel you gained from attending the event?

*Confidence to work up lease proposals a bit further for board consideration.*

*Brought into focus what possibilities and ideas we might investigate further.*

*Meeting and sharing experience.*

*Contacts and knowledge.*

*Networking.*

*Knowledge sharing.*

*Possibilities and pitfalls have been made clear!*

*Excellent networking good information on woodland crofts/woodlots. Less sure about the relevance of FCS and private experience.*

*Inspiration of things to work towards, legal responsibilities are more clear, doubts about possibilities are diminished, enthusiasm!*

*More info and better feel for things.*

*Interesting stuff esp. woodland crofts.*

*Networking and names to faces. Some new knowledge & acceptance that some things don't work.*

*A lot more ideas of income than we had. Good ideas of how leases could work, negotiation and potential value.*

*New contacts, finding info. Opportunity to spread the word, Specific info.*

**What will you do with the experience / skills/ ideas you have gained from attendance?**

*Work up lease proposals a bit further for board consideration.*

*Bring back to the group to develop further.*

*Pass on to other community woodland directors.*

*Put this on to our board members and look to create new opportunities.*

*Hopefully we'll develop some income.*

*Hopefully I have a clearer idea about development of our own community-owned woodland.*

*Speak to other CWs.*

*Use to inform ongoing projects and discussions with a number of community woodlands.*

*Feedback to group, encourage member of the Trust to develop in a more diverse way.*

*Take back to my community – woodland use options. Info about what to do next.*

*Inform others.*

*Follow up with new contacts.*

*Ideas will be taken back to board for their consideration. If they then we'll look into them further.*

*Share with woodland board. But a rope for a string circuit (per Laggan)*

**Would you recommend other to take part in such an event?**

Yes 16 No 0

**Please explain why / why not:**

*It surpassed my expectations.*

*Useful to open your mind to new ideas.*

*Very informative and encouraging.*

*Knowledge and experiences of others gained.*

*Knowledge is power!*

*Good range of speakers to cover the topic adequately*

**What would you like to see Community Woodlands Association do next?**

**Are there other training / seminar opportunities you would like to see organised?**

*I like the idea of CWA guidance notes.*

*Chainsaw course/licensing (don't know if they exist already, sorry)*

*Small scale harvesting demo – I'm trying to put something together with TDB and would be interested in talking to CWA.*

*Loads more – chase FCS on RP!*

*Forest machinery ring – or better facilitate the hire/exchange of tools amongst groups.*

*Adding value to timber. Woodland burials seminar (I know one is coming!).*

*Carry on.*

*Facilitate exchange of lease case studies.*

*Woodland Burial seminar*

**Do you have any other comments on any aspect of the event?**

*Thank you.*

*Fantastic location I hope to return to. Really good opportunity to talk with others.*

*Well structured, informative and enjoyable day.*