



Hutting Seminar
Colintraive Village Hall
 Colintraive, Argyll
Saturday 7th May 2016



Synopsis

The last in a series of three events funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Hutting Seminar was delivered in partnership between HIE, Community Woodlands Association (CWA), and Colintraive and Glendaruel Development Trust (CGDT).

The event was timed to take place shortly after the publication of *New Hutting Developments- Good Practice Guidance on the planning, development and management of huts and hut sites*, <http://www.thousandhuts.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/160215-Huts-Guidance-FINAL-screen-res.pdf> to provide an ideal discussion and networking opportunity for people interested in all things hutting.



The seminar, workshop discussions and potential new site visit attracted aspiring and existing hutters and land-owners who would like to achieve the collective vision of a new era for hutting in Scotland.

Seminar Objective

To look at the background of, and the benefits and drawbacks to achieving a resurgence of hutting in Scotland.

Attendance

Pam Noble	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
John Crosby	South West Community Woodlands Trust
Ed Idleheart	South West Community Woodlands Trust
Adam Buchanan	South West Community Woodlands Trust
Ally Aiken	Beechbrae
Chris Marsh	Community Woodlands Association
Robert Smith	Beechbrae
Sue Stubbs	Comraich, Lochgilphead
Dave Smith	Comraich, Lochgilphead
Mark Bamford	Kilfinan Community Forest
Charles Dixon-Spain	CGDT – Stronafian Community Forest
Donald McPhillimy	Reforestation Scotland Thousand Huts Campaign
Frances Higson	Carbeth
Eamon King	CGDT – Stronafian Community Forest
Sara Maclean	CGDT



Introduction

Charles Dixon-Spain, Chair of *Colintraive and Glendaruel Development Trust (CGDT)* – the host organisation – covered the background and development of CGDT's aims through land ownership; to address the population decline in the area; to re-energise the economy and increase community resilience whilst conserving the natural and archaeological assets; to improve social cohesion; to facilitate health and wellbeing and to preserve the tranquility and safety of this small community.

CGDT undertakes various projects, including the upgrade and promotion of The Cowal Way and its aspiration to be one of Scotland's Great Trails, and the purchase in 2013 of over 600 hectares of *Stronafian Community Forest*, so Col-Glen has a lot to offer and the Development Trust are keen to explore hutting as a means to increase visitor numbers by providing infrastructure and facilities to allow more people to access the landscape and explore and enjoy the local area.



Location, Extent and Forest in ColGlen
28 miles top to bottom. Pop. 350-ish. Demographic mix



Access. Orientation. Topography. Management.

Workshops

Donald McPhillimy, of *Reforestation Scotland's Thousand Huts Campaign* and co-author of the *New Hutting Developments - Good Practice Guidance on the planning, development and management of huts and hut sites* - led two sessions exploring the objectives of the day.

Session 1

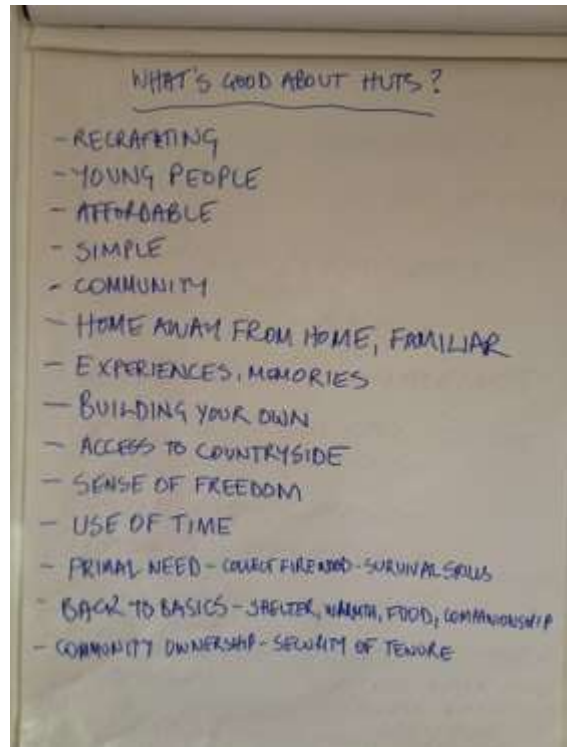
- History of huts in Scotland and elsewhere
- Brief outline of *Reforestation Scotland's Thousand Huts campaign* from *Torridon & Hendersons* to *Scottish Parliament* and *Lloyd Kahn*
- Listing the benefits of hutting
- Listing the barriers to hutting

Early man built shelters which have evolved little to fulfill a basic need; to summer camps for travelling tribes and shielings for people caring for livestock, Hutting has a long history worldwide and is much more prevalent in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and North America today than it is in Britain. Today Norway and Finland have 450,000 and 500,000 huts currently in use respectively.

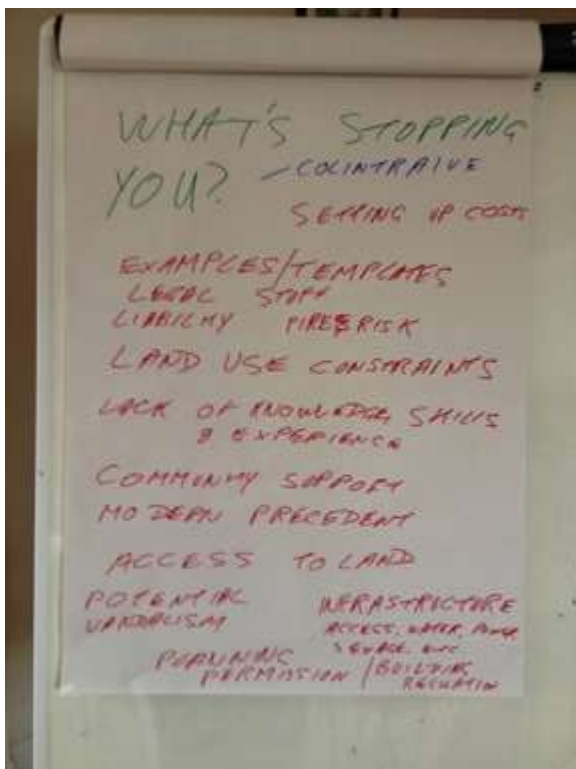
In 1947 the Town and Country Planning Act brought to an end the inter war resurgence of people from towns and cities building small communities in rural settings to get out into the fresh air and countryside. Scotland only has 300 huts left today for various reasons, including insecurity of tenure and increased affluence changing behaviours. Reforestation Scotland's Thousand Huts Campaign aims to redress the balance and support individuals and organisations to achieve their aims.

The workshop began by discussing “*the benefits of hutting*” and the following key points were made;

- Re-crafting – pride and achievement of self-building / making your own
- Young people – connecting with the outdoors, outdoor play, life experiences, creating memories
- Affordable holidays and weekends away
- Simple / uncluttered
- Sense of community
- A home away from home – a familiar place
- Access to countryside
- A sense of freedom
- Mindful use of your time
- To fulfill a primal need e.g. collecting firewood, survival skills taking care of basic needs
- Back to basics – shelter, warmth, food, companionship
- Community ownership – secure tenure
- A place of retreat and solitude



Consideration was then given to the barriers “*What’s stopping you?*” Participants responded:



- Capital costs to set up e.g. for CGDT as a landowner on a new site
- Legal stuff
- Examples or templates for documentation
- Liability
- Land use constraints
- Lack of knowledge, skills and experience
- Community support; lack of
- No modern precedent
- Access to land / secure tenure
- Potential vandalism
- Fire risk
- Infrastructure – access and utilities
- Planning permission / building regulations

Session 2 – New Hutting Developments



Donald outlined the new planning guidance and the project at *Carnock Wood Hutting Site*. This project on a Forestry Commission managed site has carried out extensive community consultation, with unanimous support from the community, a feasibility study, site, ecological and tree surveys, environmental studies and other preliminary work, consulting with the Local Authority roads department, SEPA and other statutory consultees. 12 huts are planned, two to be managed locally plus a school hut / outdoor classroom. Once complete, this new project might

provide a model that could be replicated or used to help successive other new projects through the learning that takes place.

Land in community ownership - such as community woodlands - offers good opportunities to secure tenure, might have on-site timber and materials, access, infrastructure, skills and capacity to set up new sites, thus removing some more barriers.

Scottish Planning Policy defines a hut as ***“a simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (i.e. not a principal residence); having an internal floor area of no more than 30m²; constructed from low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace at the end of its life. Huts should be designed in accordance with this definition.”***

A discussion took place around stretching the concept of intermittent use patterns and how often / long people spend in them. Not connected to utilities, therefore minimal legislation regarding building regulations. However building control *will* be involved with waste-water / soakaways and wood burning stove installation.

Delegates considered how many huts should be in a given area; how close together they should be and how is the outdoor space allocated / managed. Rules of tenancy will differ from site to site depending on landlord's preference e.g. regarding size and development of outdoor space. In Scandinavia huts tend to sit in the unaltered landscape with native re-generation allowed to flourish. While often in the UK many people build boundary fences or hedges and develop food growing, have sheds and other outdoor areas, creating a suburb of small gardens.



Discussions continued during lunch, including finding sources for capital funding. The idea of a community or charity hut being built first as a prototype and helping to fund some of the infrastructure might attract funding in the third sector if the aims and targets are in line with funders outcomes. The concept of time-share huts was explored. The allocation process was also discussed as it would be likely that any hutting development to open for new tenants would be very oversubscribed. This may be self-limiting once hutters' responsibilities are fully explained to applicants.

The Joy of Hutting

Carbeth hut owner **Frances Higson** talked about the history of Carbeth – showing a slideshow with images from WW1 to the present day, during lunch. Before WW1 the area became popular with the Outdoor Movement – e.g. the Clarion Cycling Scouts Group - who cycled from Glasgow to Carbeth to swim in the pool, and pitched tents, which each year gradually evolved to slightly more permanent and robust structures. The Clydebank blitz of WW11 saw many more working class refugees follow the West Highland Way out of the city to Carbeth and the slideshow of Carbeth through the ages gave a fascinating insight into hutting past and present.

Over the next couple of decades Carbeth expanded until finally with the onset of relative affluence in 1980s, began to decline. In 2013 the remaining Carbeth community managed to purchase the land and now the number of huts is rising again with the security of tenure, with nearly 200 people on the waiting list.



Frances designed her own hut and built it with the help of friends.

Delegates enquired about issues such as plumbing and soakaways; proximity to other huts; the definition of non-permanent e.g. stretching the concept and who / how to enforce it; outdoor 'garden' development and how the tenancy agreement works.

Stronafian Community Forest site visit

Eamon King, Stronafian Forest Development Officer for CGDT led the site visit and gave some background into the community forest's development plan, outlining the different areas and archaeological and natural features, and explaining the reasoning for choosing the site. Community consultation will be key to gaining support from local people and care must be taken not to displace existing local businesses such as the local caravan and campsite, but to offer something unique that appeals to a different market. Consideration to also be given that there is already a very high proportion of second homes in Cowal that distorts the community – and not to add to that issue.

Eamon asked for people's first impressions and comments on the site e.g. potential drawbacks, advantages and other ideas.

Delegates carried out visioning, visited the viewpoint, and discussed access for building materials / vehicles, parking and emergency service access – and what control measures might be to the risk of fires e.g. water tanks, distance of huts from vehicle access. Adequate access for emergency vehicles should be built in at the design stage, and organisations such as Scottish Fire & Rescue should be consulted early in the project – they are usually happy to advise at a local level.



Feedback

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Location	7	5			
Organisation	10	2			
Catering	11 (2 said excellent)	1			
Facilities	8	3	1		

All delegates agreed that the event met their expectations.

Delegates wanted to take part because;

- To find out more about hutting as a concept
- To share my experience of being a hutter
- I work with Community Woodland groups with potential interest
- To learn about hutting!
- Networking
- To get an intro to hutting
- To learn more
- To understand the process of how and why more
- To improve my knowledge of how hutting works to take forward developing a hutting site at a community forest
- To learn more about hutting / introduction
- Interested in social and personal benefits of hutting
- To increase my knowledge of the hutting movement and new regs on hutting – Whether hutting can be a permanent living arrangement
- To learn more about the benefits and challenges
- To learn more about hutting

Benefits gained include;

- More knowledge
- Lots of info and contacts
- It was very informative and summarised definition and the rules and regs surrounding creating one
- More perspective
- Better informed / Good background
- Networking and connecting with Thousand Huts Campaign
- Lots of signposting
- Networking / intro to hutting / learnt more
- Gained more insight into all the issues to consider when thinking about setting up a hutting site in community woods
- Meeting new people
- Confidence to take ideas and info to interested groups
- Contacts / information / inspiration

Will do with the experience gained;

- Eventually have 2 huts built
- Take ideas to interested groups
- Solidarity
- Mull over and send details to colleagues

- Report back to group / Think about future possibilities
- Hopefully use it to develop a new site
- Plan for huts at Community Woodland
- May seriously look into hutting / community projects
- Help hutters
- Look into the potential of living a hutting lifestyle
- Have more conversations and move forward
- Make better decisions

All would recommend others to take part because;

- Pleasant way of gaining knowledge
- Helpful and informative
- Informative with great discussions on hutting
- Good community knowledge
- If you want to start off a hutting site this was very useful
- Up and coming projects around Scotland so likely use of huts will increase
- Networking / intro to hutting / learn more
- Opens your eyes to the possibilities and helps understand history and concept of hutting, opportunities and challenges

CWA were requested to;

- Begin to provide land to non-owners for building huts, especially for the younger generation who cannot afford the huge costs involved in purchasing
- Keep up with progress / decisions of hutting groups. Promote hutting further and other related creative ideas
- Create a hutting community

Other training / seminar opportunities;

- Woodland landscaping
- Something about developing educational opportunities in community forests

Other comments included;

- Donald was great
- All good – many thanks
- Food was fantastic!
- Bit rushed – a more relaxed timetable would have been favourable

