



Tuesday 27th February 2018

Blarbuie Assembly Hall (*a.m.*) & **Blarbuie Woodland** (*p.m.*)
Argyll & Bute Hospital, Lochgilphead, PA31 8LD

10:30 am – 4 pm

AGENDA

- 10:15** Arrive Argyll & Bute Hospital (*via Reception for Assembly Hall*) for tea/coffee etc.
- 10:30** **Welcome/Introduction** – Chris Marsh, *Community Woodlands Association*
- 10.35** **FCS Conservancy & Community Fund update**
– Elaine Jamieson, *Policy, Support & Development Officer, FCS Argyll Conservancy*
- & FCS News & Policy update**
– Kevin Lafferty, *FCS Policy Advisor Access, Health & Recreation*
- 11:00** **Friends of Glenan Wood introduction**
– Eve MacFarlane - *Director, Friends of Glenan Wood*
- 11:15** **Dunollie Links update**
– Sophie Isaacson - *Dunollie Links Coordinator, Dunollie House*
- 11.30** **Tiroran Forest update**
– Morven Gibson, *General Manager, South West Mull & Iona Development*
- 11.45** **WoodWatch Heritage Bute update**
– Gordon Stevenson, *WoodWatch Heritage Bute Associates*
- 12:00** **Cormonachan Woodlands update**
– Douglas Locke - *Secretary, Cormonachan Woodlands Association*
- 12.15** **Blarbuie Woodlands – background & briefing**
– Pete Creech, *Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise*
- 12.45** **Lunch & Networking**
- 13:45** **Blarbuie Woodland - Site Visit** (*in hospital grounds*)
Hosts: Pete Creech (*Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise*) & other BWE staff/volunteers
- 16:00** **Finish & Depart.**



Attending:

Peter	Hogbin	Argyll Green Woodworkers
Pete	Creech	Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
Jess	Grant	Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
Grace	MacLeod	Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
Sally	Wilkin	Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
Chris	Marsh	Community Woodlands Association
Douglas	Locke	Cormonachan Woodlands Association
Dinah	McDonald	Deer Park Community Woodland/Benmore Project
Elaine	Jamieson	Forestry Commission Scotland
Kevin	Lafferty	Forestry Commission Scotland
Chrissy	McKay	Forestry Commission Scotland
Sophie	Isaacson	Dunollie
Eve	MacFarlane	Friends of Glenan Wood
Heather	Muir	Friends of Glenan Wood
Mick	Eyre	Kilfinan Community Forest
Neil	Donaldson	Argyll Small Woods Co-operative
Morven	Gibson	SW Mull & Iona Development
Tony	Jeffree	SW Mull & Iona Development
Julie	Ward	SW Mull & Iona Development
Jessica	Herriott	Wood Watch Heritage Bute
David	Herriott	Wood Watch Heritage Bute
Gordon	Stevenson	Wood Watch Heritage Bute

Apologies: Gordon Gray Stephens (Native Woods Co-op)

Welcome:

Chris Marsh welcomed everyone to the 13th Argyll community woodland networking event, funded by Forestry Commission Scotland. The aim of the day was to provide an opportunity for groups engaged in community woodlands to network and share experience of projects as well as visit Blarbuie Woodlands – an exemplar in community engagement focussing mainly on health and well-being project work – and Chris thanked them for their offer to host the event and share their knowledge and experiences.

Finally, Chris took a moment to mark the sad passing of Liz Evans of Lochgoilhead and Cormonachan Woodlands Association. She had been a positive and enthusiastic contributor to AWOO events in recent years and would be sadly missed by all who had come to know her and of her tireless involvement in outdoor education work and community woodland volunteering.

There were 8 presentations as follows: -

Seedcorn & Community Funds update – Elaine Jamieson, Policy, Support & Development Officer, FCS Perth & Argyll Conservancy

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2utbgxd>

Elaine gave an overview of the two main FCS grants relevant to community woodland groups available through application to the local Conservancy. Her accompanying powerpoint presentation outlined their salient features and uptake/expenditure for the 2017/18 financial year: -





- The **FCS Community Fund** supports community groups and projects that encourage greater use of woods for health, wellbeing and community benefit. There is up to 100% funding for projects under £5k; 90% for £5-20k projects; and 75% funding for >£20k projects. The Perth & Argyll budget for 2017/18 was £60k and was now fully committed (16 projects supported - details given in presentation). Currently, Elaine is unsure of the fund's budget for 2018/19.
- The **FCS Seedcorn Fund** has a smaller budget aimed at helping facilitate projects that fall outwith the Community Fund remit such as one-off events, specialist consultancy, or funding other community resources and tools. Of a budget of £25k for 2017/18, over £24.5k was committed. Again, Elaine's presentation detailed the projects funded.

Elaine finished by encouraging groups to get in touch with her or other Conservancy staff (details in presentation) if they are exploring projects that might fit the eligibility criteria of either fund. There are no online forms so personal contact with Elaine is fundamental to progressing any proposal. She can be contacted at elaine.jamieson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. More info about FCS can be found at <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk> and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ForestryCommissionScotland>

FCS News & Policy update – Kevin Lafferty, FCS Policy Advisor Access, Health & Recreation

Kevin covered two specific themes in his presentation (no powerpoint): an update on ongoing political and structural changes in Scottish forestry and Forestry Commission Scotland; and an insight into the current emphasis within social forestry policy that may of relevance to community woodland groups.

- The ongoing devolution of forestry matters to the Scottish Government is progressing with a new Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill currently going through parliament. The draft Bill is proposing that forest policy, grants and licences (currently administered by 5 FCS Conservancies) be moved into Scottish government as a new Forestry division. At the same time, Forest Enterprise Scotland – currently managing all state-owned forestry across 10 Forest Districts – would become 'Forestry and Land Scotland': a separate stand-alone agency but re-organised into 5 management regions. Whilst there is still a lot of cross-party debate and stakeholder consultation to be considered, the Stage 3 vote on the Bill is in 2 days' time, and the next twelve months would be a transitional phase towards agreed new arrangements to reach a full implementation date of 1st April 2019.

Questions from the floor:

What was the likelihood that fracking be approved under any changes being made within the new Bill? Kevin said the devolution of forestry did not incorporate any fracking considerations at all and that the Scottish Government's current moratorium on exploring new fracking proposals would not be impacted by the Bill.

Where will the offices be for the new Forestry & Land Scotland regions? There will be no changes in the number or location of physical offices and staffing arrangements in the transition from FES to F&LS. The current intention is for West Argyll Forest District to be merged with Lochaber Forest District under a new name (yet undecided).

Likewise there is a lot going on in Social Forestry policy at present. Kevin focussed on two particular aspects:-

- **"Our Natural Health Service"** – led by SNH with partners including NHS & FCS – is a cross-sectoral initiative to realise the potential that the natural environment can play in improving public health. There is an Action Plan (<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-07/A2239751%20-%20Natural%20Health%20Service.pdf>) outlining the ambition and focus of the initiative. In terms of opportunities for community woodland groups, there are already a few projects of relevance being promoted as exemplars including Blarbuie Woodlands. Groups wishing to develop their green health infrastructure and more pro-active partnerships in delivering health and exercise programmes should visit <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/contributing-healthier-scotland/our-natural-health-service> as well as contact local SNH and NHS offices to understand what the current state of provision is locally and explore potential opportunity to become involved in both/either 'Local Green Health Partnerships' and 'Green Infrastructure for Well-being Partnerships'.

- **Early Years Childcare provision** – there is a Scottish Government (SG) target to double pre-5-year-old childcare provision (<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/early-years-framework/>). This is expected to require a large expansion in facilities and new jobs – with community woodlands well-placed for outdoor nursery provision. Policy makers have been influenced in particular by Scandinavian models for childcare and are keen to see outdoor play incorporated as much as possible given its benefits to the broadest spectrum of young people as well as to encourage more men into working in this sector. The charity “Inspiring Scotland” has been given an SG budget of £830k to increase outdoor play provision and uptake. Their role is to work with local authorities, private companies and third sector organisations to this end (www.inspiringscotland.org.uk) and would be a good starting point for anyone wanting to understand the opportunities, contacts and options/processes within any locality. There is also a new ‘early years’ provision qualification (SVQ Level 7) which will be funded through this budget and planned for delivery through the network of local higher education colleges.

Kevin also recommended the organisation OWLS –Outdoor Woodland Learning Scotland – as a good starting point for resources, training opportunities and local branch contacts.

Friends of Glenan Wood introduction – Eve MacFarlane - Director, Friends of Glenan Wood

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2utbgxd>

Glenan Wood is 146 hectares of ancient woodland on the Cowal peninsular, just north of Portavadie. The woodland is recorded on pre-Victorian maps, includes the ruinous settlement of Glenan village with its associated dykes, cairns etc and a rich flora and fauna typical of long-established native woodland. Currently owned by Forestry Commission Scotland, a notification of intent to sell was posted in 2016 stimulating the community into a period of discussion, woodland meetings and ultimately the formation of Friends of Glenan Wood – to consider the opportunity and feasibility of community ownership.

Friends of Glenan Wood was established in April 2017 and formally registered as a SCIO by September. They successfully applied for Scottish Land Fund Phase One funding to pay for a consultant-led joint Feasibility Study and Business Plan - intended to inform local ambitions to acquire the wood through the Community Asset Transfer Scheme. Essentially the group want to conserve the wood for the future but enhance access and interpretation of wildlife and cultural features for the benefit of the local community as well as visitors. Due to their proximity to Kilfinan Forest there are good opportunities to collaborate and share resources in some aspects of future development as well as possibilities of exploring partnerships with other local concerns where interests coincide (Portavadie’s Loch Fyne leisure development, local schools, Kyles marketing group, CalMac etc). A consultant has recently been appointed for the Feasibility/Business Plan so these are interesting and exciting times for the group.



Ancient Tree Survey day (June 2017) with Woodland Trust Scotland The wood already has a rudimentary circular trail as well as shoreline path

You can find out more about the Friends of Glenan Wood at <http://www.glenanwood.org.uk/> , on Facebook at www.facebook.com/glenanwood/ and contact the group directly at info@glenanwood.org.uk .

Dunollie Links update – Sophie Isaacson - Dunollie Links Coordinator, Dunollie Museum, Castle & Grounds

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2GEj6cA>

Dunollie Links is the community engagement ‘arm’ of Dunollie Museum and Castle and has been running for over four years now. As co-ordinator, Sophie works 3 days a week bringing in and hosting volunteer work parties, schools and youth groups and other community organisations. The wooded grounds contain two distinct areas for children’s outdoor learning and play: the Woodland Shelter area and Fairy Garden. Sophie runs holiday activities and events utilising these areas and surrounding woodland trails and has developed 8 distinct workshops for school groups. Recent funding from FCS Community Fund has allowed her to develop a new ‘Squirrel Book’ – with stories, poetry, colouring-in and wildlife-spotting hints. A similar themed interpretive storyline has been developed around the concept of the Raven Tree & an associated trail and sculpture have been established in the grounds.

Dunollie Links have been active in delivering Branching Out (24 sessions in 2017) and have extended this to host ‘New Routes’ sessions – a more structured follow-on programme to increase the role and responsibilities of attendees into the wider volunteer-led grounds work and maintenance. Dunollie have a very active volunteer workforce (over 70 regular volunteers) and this obviously makes a natural link between those needing mental health support and integration into a broader community of interest. Finally, there are a number of one-off community event held throughout the year – mainly serving as seasonal celebrations or arts and craft days etc but also serving as important fund-raising and volunteer recruitment opportunities.



You can find out more about Dunollie Museum, Castle & Grounds at www.dunollie.org and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DunollieOban/ . Sophie can be contacted at sophie@dunollie.org and she also maintains a blog of community engagement work at www.dunollie.org/blog .

Tiroran Forest update – Morven Gibson, General Manager, South West Mull & Iona Development

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2Gkmeqk>

Morven opened with an overview of the breadth of work that SWMID are involved in – from assisting in the organisation and running of key annual events (Gala and Feis), gaelic childcare services (Croileagan) to feasibility and development work into new local enterprises (incl. seaweed harvesting, harbour development and communal marine fuel initiative, Columba Centre tourism and local business hub). SWMID hosted the 10th AWOO meeting in September 2016 when the community had recently succeeded in acquiring Tiroran Forest (c.790ha) through the National Forest Land Scheme from Forestry Commission Scotland. This ‘project’ had not originally been on the community’s Wish List but the opportunity to use timber income to not only pay off purchase loans but provide income to employ wider development staff as well as commence restructuring of the forest as a local amenity for wider community and tourism benefits was envisaged during feasibility and business planning stages.

Since acquisition however, SWMID have been shackled with a total of 8 separate Tree Plant Health notices requiring felling and removal of significant areas of diseased larch (mostly 'pre-commercial' timber) and tight haulage restrictions on timber haulage on the fragile B-road that serves the forest. This resulted in considerable time and effort being asked of all staff and Board members to deal with evolving contract management logistics and third-party interests (RSPB, local authority, neighbours etc). This work finally concluded at Christmas winter and SWMID are now re-evaluating future cashflow, future project priorities and the inevitable restocking commitments that felling-to-date has brought about. Despite the challenges of the past and immediate future, the group remain optimistic and determined to transcend these early distractions from their intended path. On a more constructive note, their Forest Officer has run numerous school and community events in the forest, they have been part of RSPB's Mull Eagle Watch programme (Tiroran hosting a breeding pair of sea eagles), developed a forest school area, a field study cabin, compost toilet and some heritage village interpretation as well as a Woodland Masks trail. Currently they are working with a number of local families wishing to set up forest crofts at Tiroran and SWMID hope to incorporate these into forest plans once more definition and broader planning constraints have been addressed.



A plant health visit from FCS to consider obligations & options



Children's activities on a pre-school visit to the outdoor classroom area

You can find out more about SWMID on their website at <http://swmid.co.uk> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/southwestmullandionadevelopment>.

WoodWatch Heritage Bute *update* – Gordon Stevenson, WoodWatch Heritage Bute Associates

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2GBIH5S>

WWH Bute Associates was constituted in 2011 initially to continue environmental and heritage engagement work first started during the Discover Bute Landscape Partnership project. Gordon and Jessica Herriot offer a wide range of events and courses mainly from a leased woodland space in Black Park Wood – an idea supported by estate owners, the Mount Stuart Trust. Although skilled in a wide range of green timber working and woodland food- and craft-making themselves, WWH also bring in outside specialists to lead some courses. Through delivering all this work they have developed a considerable variety of 'features' in the wood: bridges, longhouse and numerous shelters, firepits, large and small kilns, cob oven, underground smoker, green woodworking and textile loom apparatus etc.

Approximately 3,000 people per year attend WWH workshops (2k adults, 1k children) including a lot of tourists in the summer 'drop-in' sessions and school groups on weekdays throughout the rest of the year. They ran their first Branching Out sessions in 2017 in collaboration with Argyll & the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust which proved very successful and they intend to do more. Mindfulness and Nature Therapy workshops are also proving increasingly popular. They are also looking to the future and have been in exploratory discussions with directors of Bute Community Land Company to see whether they might be able to develop a new base in community-owned Bute Forest which would contribute to BCLC's own ambition for more active community engagement there.



Jessica at the textile loom...



the subterranean smoker and...



...Cob Oven.

You can find out more about the WoodWatch Heritage Bute Associates at www.woodwatchheritage.co.uk/ and contact Jessica directly on jessica.herriot@googlemail.com.

Cormonachan Woodlands update – Douglas Locke, Secretary, Cormonachan Woodlands Association

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2J1Agiq> & Squirrel Trail video at <https://bit.ly/2lc21n9>

Cormonachan Woodlands Association are no strangers to AWOO events having hosted last February's outing. For new groups in the audience, Douglas gave a quick overview of Cormonachan Woodlands and the workings of the CWA before bringing the meeting up to date with developments since this time last year.

Situated on the west shore of Loch Goil, Cormonachan Woodlands are owned by FCS but managed as a partnership of FCS, the Ardroy Outdoor Education Trust and the Cormonachan Woodlands Association (CWA). The woodlands are historically Atlantic Oakwood with areas of hazel but also under- and inter-planted conifer plantation. FCS have been felling maturing conifer stands since the 1990's to restore and extend the deciduous forest cover and the CWA – through volunteer effort and fund raising – have been tackling rhododendron encroachment, trail development, Outdoor Centre participation (>1k children p.a.), interpretation and general forest management/maintenance tasks.

Since last February, the Association had completed fund raising necessary to improve the limited car parking at the threshold to the woodland trails and this expansion work was now complete. For the year ahead, Douglas has secured further funds for construction of a new Red Squirrel wildlife hide whilst considerable donations and commitments have also been received towards a new Contemplation Shelter to be erected in the memory of Douglas' partner Liz who had been such a driving force in the entire Cormonachan Woodlands partnership. Other events on the immediate horizon include a Walking Theatre Group Shakespearean production at Easter and – finally – Douglas presented a new 2-minute film promoting the woodland's Squirrel Trail, funded by Argyll Holidays and starring Douglas himself.



The new, improved trail threshold area...



proposal for new Red Squirrel Hide...



and Contemplation Shelter

You can find out more about Cormonachan Woods and the CWA at www.cormonachan-woodlands.co.uk , at <https://www.facebook.com/cormonachan> and contact their secretary at Secretary@cormonachan-woodlands.co.uk.

Blarbuie Woodlands – background & briefing – Pete Creech, Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise

This presentation is available online at <https://bit.ly/2pOiUxz>

The Blarbuie woodland forms 5 ha of Argyll and Bute Hospital's grounds - serving both Lochgilphead Hospitals and the wider public as a place to walk, relax, regenerate, learn and improve fitness. Featuring all-abilities access, outdoor exercise facilities, raised beds & community polytunnel/workshop, picnic tables, sculptures and other artworks, the woodland is open to all and is planted with a mix of native and exotic trees. The Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise charity organises users of mental health services and volunteers from all walks of life so that they can get involved in carrying out woodland restoration, provision of new facilities and contribute to ongoing maintenance. It offers folk a chance to learn new skills, gain a greater sense of self-worth and social interaction through provision of meaningful, supported volunteering opportunities.

BWE do not employ any standardised plan for working with such a wide range of volunteers - the important thing is to invest in and value each and every one. This attitude has helped retain the volunteers they have and even provided permanent multi-skilled staff placements from volunteers attracted in the past. BWE benefit from some windfarm grant aid as well as deliver Branching Out in collaboration with local NHS mental health services. They have also pioneered a 'Moving On' programme of follow-on sessions which also has other social worker referrals. Two Branching Out volunteers now run a Men's Shed facility and BWE's community polytunnel/growing area has yielded produce sold through a number of local outlets.

BWE have achieved many projects over the years: making raised beds, picnic tables, constructing new paths and boardwalks, designed (and still building!) a new octagonal building, held numerous tree planting events (the most recent, for example, with 48 Scouts from Paisley, Dumbarton and Renfrew), and partnered in heritage projects (Dalriada) and with other volunteering organisations to extend their reach and capacity to achieve things. BWE have had their fair share of ups and downs: e.g. it took six years to get NHS to even meet with them to establish a formal partnership at the outset, and vandalism can be a sporadic and demoralising issue. Some negatives do have positive outcomes: a recent fairly damning and demoralising Facebook post about the amount of dog poo on the paths led to an anonymous donation and a spate of additional financial contributions which has financed four new dog poo bins.

BWE are always looking to attract new involvement and annually run a series of Open Days across the seasons: Easter Egg Hunt, Seed Swapping Days, Summer Picnic etc. They are also keen to try to involve the difficult-to-attract High School children and are now taking Rural Skills students from both schools and local UHI college. They have also joined the local tourism alliance organisation to promote the facility and raise awareness their profile both locally and further afield.

You can find out more about the Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise at <http://www.blarbuiewoodland.org/> and at <https://www.facebook.com/Blarbuie-Woodland-Enterprise-Ltd>



Site visit photos: Blarbuie Woodlands



Inspecting the Bridge to Nowhere & chainsaw seating



Formal interpretation boards in an informal setting



Trying out the green gym equipment



Dropping in on the weekly woodworking session



Work going on to complete octagonal 'bandstand' roof



Locals dog-walking on well-made woodland paths



Event Feedback Summary

Please rate the following by ticking the statement which best matches your opinion:						
	Organisation	Location	Venue	Catering	Speakers	Site Visit
very good	11	8	4	7	9	7
good		3	3	4	3	3
fair			4			
poor						
n/a	1	1	1	1		2

Do you feel that the event delivered your expectations?

Yes: 12 No: 0 Partly: 0 n/a: 0

If your answer to the above was 'No' or 'Partly' please tell us why, and how we can approve things.

An informative and enjoyable event.

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

Networking, funding advice and information on future of forestry commission.

Update of FCS future. Learned a lot from the experiences of other Community Woodlands.

Learned about the CAT process and available grants.

Great to see Blairbuie and the work they're doing. Very interesting venue! Updates from other woodlands always interesting and great to meet and chat to people.

Networking /ideas/funding advice

As usual I came away with new ideas to try at Kilfinan Community Forest.

Great to touch base with people. I have a few new ideas for projects and was enthused by the "people" projects which are happening. Learned a lot about the FCS Community Fund and potential for funding. Got a chance to discuss housing/visitor centre construction with another commercial woodland.

Meeting woodland owners

As always extremely useful to get updates on latest developments and funding, particularly in regard to FCS in this instance. Also managed to put some names to faces, share ideas and let off steam!

Made useful contacts and got some good ideas

Lots of ideas as to activities/installations that we could transfer to our own woodland project

Its good to see how other organisations are doing, their problems and successes and the networking is always extremely useful.

Where would you like the next event to be held?

Anywhere. (x2)

Any other community woodland

Don't mind/No preference. (x4)

Similar

Could try and get a site visit to one of our ASWC members

Glenan Woods is on the wish list





What would you like to see on the agenda for the day?

Similar/usual agenda (x2)

Funding streams, activity ideas, hearing about developments at other community forests.

I like the usual layout and hearing from people from other groups.

Keep it as it is. The format works.

More of the same – practical experiences from other groups. However, I would suggest if there is to be another FCS policy/structure-related presentation, it should be limited to 5 mins max. I was losing the will to live towards the end – it could have been summarised in very brief form.

Would you recommend others to take part in such an event?

Yes: 12 No: 0

Please explain why / why not:

Yes, particularly good for our directors who came along as we have been bogged down in some serious issues for the last year. We are now planning a community project for this year, this was inspired by the things that we heard about yesterday. I think that the positive impact on our energy levels is enough to recommend this event.

As noted above the opportunity to discuss matters with other participants is really valuable.

Useful networking/knowledge exchange days.

For current information.

Useful event.

Please list any other training/ events you would like to see organised: (no responses)

Tree planting – how and what, forestry management. Improving the ground

Will have a think...

Maybe a 'Community Asset Transfer' benefits and pitfalls training session would be useful?

Any other comments:

Being vegetarian I find the choice of sandwiches fairly limited.

I enjoyed visiting this venue – the buildings were very atmospheric and the woodland had a lot going on.

Really valuable day out of the office.

Always a useful and enjoyable day – need cake

Gender:

Male: **7**

Female: **5**

Age Group:

16-25:

25-60: **6**

60+: **6**

Ethnicity:

British/Scottish/Anglo Saxon White/Caucasian: **7**

Irish Glaswegian: **1**

No comment: **4**