

16th Argyll Community Woodlands Networking Event Report

A Wood of Our Own (AWOO)

10th December 10:30am – 12:30pm Online

Agenda

10:30 **Welcome/Introduction** - Amanda Calvert

10:45 **Mull and Iona Community Trust update**

Moray Finch

11:15 **Kilfinan Community Forest Company update**

Robert Borusso

11:45 **Bute Community Land Company update**

Richard Whitcomb

12:00 Discussion

12:30 Finish

In Attendance:

Name	Organisation
<i>Andrew Primrose</i>	North West Mull Community Woodland Company
<i>Julie Young</i>	Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust
<i>Richard Whitcomb</i>	Bute Community Land Company
<i>Jamie Dick-Cleland</i>	Individual Member
<i>Moray Finch</i>	Mull and Iona Community Trust
<i>Robert Borusso</i>	Kilfinan Community Forest Company
<i>Gordon Gray Stephens</i>	Argyll Green Woodworkers
<i>Colin Morrison</i>	North West Mull Community Woodland Company
<i>Robin Webster</i>	Friends of Glenan Wood
<i>Douglas Locke</i>	Cormonachan Community Woodlands

Summary of event and talks

Welcome & Introductions

Amanda Calvert welcomed everyone to the 16th AWOO event, the first online. Six groups attended, plus one in the process of application with updates provided by three of the groups through online presentations. The meeting started with all attendees introducing themselves which was then followed by the presentations.

Mull and Iona Community Trust

Moray Finch, the General Manager of the Mull and Iona Community Trust provided an update on Ardura Community Forest, a 200ha mature conifer woodland north of the River Lussa, 7 miles south of Craignure on the Isle of Mull. The asset transfer was completed from Forestry and Land Scotland in September 2019 with a grant from the Scottish Land Fund.



Around half of the woodland is planted with commercial timber mainly Sitka spruce with some larch and lodgepole pine. A proportion of the woodland is officially designated as Ancient Woodland where remnants of oak, holly and birch can be found dotted within the Sitka spruce.

The aims of the community include a gradual restructure of large areas of the plantation to native broadleaf, improving the overall biodiversity of the woodland.



Community access for the woodland is good with a long-distance track and two circular walks, with a car parking area, composting toilets, several picnic areas, and a wild camping spot.

A community tree nursery has also been established with the aim of producing trees for the community woodland.

The first trees should be available for planting in around 2-3 years' time.

Kilfinan Community Forest Company

Rob Borusso provided us with an update from Kilfinan Community Forest Company. The talk included a discussion about forest management, woodland crofts, the firewood business, and the sawmill which is currently providing a range of products for use locally. The boards and planks are produced for sale locally from Sitka and larch from the woodland, all untreated and sawn to order. We were also shown some of the products that are made and sold including the woodwam, an original design for a wooden wigwam!

Bute Community Land Company

Richard Whitcomb from Bute Community Land Company gave us a review of Community Forest activities including the old oak woodland, the Rhubodach plantation area and Shalunt (aka) Moss Wood as well as their future plans.

Located in the north of the island, the woodland covers 167ha and has been in community ownership since 2009. A mix of native woodland and plantation, it can be broken down to three distinct areas – a SSSI oak woodland, a Sitka/larch/Norway spruce plantation and a mixed birch/alder wood in the south.

Oak Woodland

Plans include:

- Continued management of the woodland
- Deer management; and suppressing invasive species
- Path management
- Increasing community access and events (e.g. heritage events at Balkanailly settlement, annual Christmas Treasure Hunt etc.)

Rhubodach Plantation:

The plan with respect to the plantation is to fell in phases over the next 25 years in partnership with the Bute Estate. Restocking will reflect a gradual restructure to native woodland. Adjacent woodland has Phytophthora, so the plan is to fell this more quickly to try and limit the spread. Income from this will support forest planning and restock. This area of the woodland has been used for some community events such as fungal forays.

Recent work has included:

- Ongoing deer management (under license)
- Removal of invasive species (notably rhododendron)
- Management of path access from the Balkanailly Bridge to the settlement
- A new way marked path (the Bridge via Tangled Wood)
- Ongoing maintenance of the Kayak Shelter on the northern shore



Shalunt (aka) Moss Wood

This is where most of the community events have taken place and is the closest part to Rothesay. There are a number of facilities located here including:

- Two temporary shelters
- A composting toilet
- Barbeque and firepit
- Two picnic tables (donated by Bute Brew Company)
- Parking for 3 cars and turning area

Plus, on the shore side

- A viewing bench (installed by Beachwatch Bute)
- Additional parking (6 cars or so) and turning area



There are also a number of trails and walks, including a poetry trail and the Stags Trod which is a link way path to the West Island Way. There is also the shore walk north to the Rhubodach Plantation.

As well as the community this part of the community woodland is used by North Bute Primary school (last year), Two Branching Out groups (in conjunction with the NHS) including current use of Moss Wood under COVID-19 exemption and other volunteers and visitors.

Future plans include the development of huts and the creation of a community shelter including lockable storage.