



Wednesday 22nd February 2017

**Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre
& Cormonachan Woodlands, Lochgoilhead**

10am - 4pm

Outline of the Day

- 10.00** Arrive Lochgoilhead car park. Take minibus to AOEC.
- 10:15** Tea/Coffee etc @ AOEC
- 10:35** **Welcome/Introduction** – Chris Marsh, Community Woodlands Association
- 10.45** **Seedcorn & Community Fund update** – Elaine Jamieson, Policy, Support & Development Officer (FCS Argyll Conservancy)
- 11.00** **FCS News & Community Asset Transfer Scheme** – James Ogilvie, FCS Head of Social & Planning Policy & Rebecca Carr, CATS Manager (FES)
- 11:20** **Community Woodlands Association update** – Jon Hollingdale, Community Woodlands Association
- 11:35** **Blarbuie Woodland update** – Pete Creech, Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
- 11.50** **ACT: Branching Out & other projects** – Elaine Jamieson, Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust
- 12.05** **Kilfinan Forest update** – Mick Eyre, Kilfinan Community Forest Company
- 12.20** **Beechbrae Social Enterprise** – Ally Graham, Project Manager, Beechbrae & brief intro: Amy Davidson, Central Scotland Green Network Trust (Comm. Development Officer)
- 12.35** **Cormonachan Woodlands** – Liz Evans, Cormonachan Woodlands Association
- 12.50** **Tesco ‘Bags of Help’ funding** – Tamara Hedderwick, Greenspace Scotland
- 13.00** **Volunteering - Round Up discussion**
- 13.20** **Lunch @ AOEC**
- 13.50** Depart on minibus for Woodland Site Visit
- 14:00** **Cormonochan Woodlands Site Visit**
Hosts: Members of Cormonochan Woodlands Association & AOEC's Phil Thompson
- 15:50** **Finish & Minibus back to Lochgoilhead for 16:00.**

Attending:

Phil	Thompson	Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre
Neil	Donaldson	Argyll Small Woods Co-operative
Pete	Creech	Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
Daniel	Griffiths	Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise
Ally	Graham	Beechbrae
Darius	Mellet	Carrick Castle Estate
Amy	Davidson	Central Scotland Green Network Trust
Chris	Marsh	Community Woodlands Association
Jon	Hollingdale	Community Woodlands Association
Douglas	Locke	Cormonachan Woodlands Association
Liz	Evans	Cormonachan Woodlands Association
Donald	Kamsley	Cormonachan Woodlands Association
Emily	Brennan	Colintraive & Glendaruel Development Trust
Rebecca	Carr	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Will	Huckerby	Forest Enterprise Scotland
David	Robertson	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Elaine	Jamieson	Forestry Commission Scotland
James	Ogilvie	Forestry Commission Scotland
Richard	Horrell	Friends of Duchess Woods
Tamara	Hedderwick	Greenspace Scotland
Gordon	Gray Stephens	Native Woods Co-op
Mick	Eyre	Kilfinan Community Forest
Jessica	Herriott	Wood Watch Heritage Bute
David	Herriott	Wood Watch Heritage Bute
Gordon	Stevenson	Wood Watch Heritage Bute

Welcome: Chris Marsh welcomed everyone to the 11th Argyll community woodland networking event, funded by FCS. 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 Cormonachan Woodlands – an FCS woodland managed by local volunteers. It was hoped that a number of presentations would give different perspectives on engaging and managing volunteers. There were 9 presentations in the morning (indoor) session as follows:

FCS Community & Seedcorn Funds – Elaine Jamieson, Policy, Support and Development Officer (FCS)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/IyyABw8NkKY>

Elaine explained the objectives and eligibility for the two FCS grant schemes that she administers. These are targeted at supporting the social aspects of woodland development that fall outwith the more operational remit of the Forestry Grant Scheme:-

- The FCS Community Fund supports community groups and projects which facilitate greater use of woods by people for health, wellbeing and community benefit. The Perth & Argyll budget for 2017/18 will be roughly the same as this year (c £60k). Up to 100% funding for projects under £5k, 90% for £5-20k projects and 75% funding for >£20k projects. 15 projects were funded through 2016/17 with Elaine giving a brief description of some to demonstrate the typical range of projects and themes likely to gain support.
- The FCS Seedcorn Fund has a smaller budget and is aimed at helping facilitate projects that fall outwith the Community Fund remit e.g. materials and tools. Of a budget of £25k for 2016/17, £20.6k had now been committed. Again Elaine detailed the projects funded.

Elaine finished by encouraging groups to get in touch with her or other Conservancy staff if they are exploring projects that might fit the eligibility criteria of these two funding streams.

Elaine 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 update – James Ogilvie, Head of Social & Planning Policy (FCS)

James provided an update on a broad range of subjects relevant to the community land and forestry agenda as well as emerging forest policy context.

- There was a well-subscribed public consultation over the Future of Forestry in Scotland in autumn 2016. An analysis of responses was published in Feb (available at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00513966.pdf>) and this evidence is to be taken into account by Scottish Ministers in developing their proposals.
- The new Forestry Grant Scheme (opened April 2015) has seen significant increases in the number and value of applications. Of £36 million available, £30 million is for new woodland creation. Ministers are contemplating new administrative arrangements to promote more and faster woodland creation applications. 2.3k ha of native woodland was established last year toward the ambitious 10k ha total annual woodland creation target.
- FCS has recently partnership-funded a Shared Apprenticeship Scheme (administered by Rural Skills Scotland Ltd) aimed at attracting young people into the forestry sector. The first five apprentices are to be placed by RSS with rural SMEs for training and ultimately recruitment where currently no apprenticeships exist. A new UK Apprenticeship levy may help large businesses in the medium term.
- Arkaig Community Forest (a SCIO) and the Woodland Trust have recently acquired the 1095ha Glenmallie and South Loch Arkaig Forests through the NFLS.
- Hutting: FES is developing a trial site in Fife. Keen to stress that although 2014 Scottish planning policy is generally encouraging toward the establishment of huts for recreational purposes, planning permission was still required for hut buildings.
- The deadline for entries for the 2017 Scottish Finest Woods Awards is 31st March – with categories for small and large community woodlands as well as the best overall community project (Tim Stead Trophy) and New Native Woods Award (WTS Trophy).

FES update – Rebecca Carr, Community Assets Transfer Scheme Manager, FES

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/TBpm9cLH5a4>

The Community Asset Transfer Scheme replaces the National Forest Land Scheme and sets out how Scottish Government will administer and can transfer rights in Scotland's National Forest Estate (NFE) to communities covered in Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Rebecca is overseeing the Scheme and new web-based guidance is now in place (see link below) to help people contemplate and apply to the scheme. The site has four main sections: How to Apply; a map-based Register of all NFE landholdings and property; a register of Asset Transfer Requests; and a register of all NFE land and assets currently up for sale.

The evaluation of applications is adjudicated on by an independent evaluation panel (as per previous NFLS) and considers applications against criteria of community benefit and Scottish Government's National Outcomes, viability, competency in land management, local support and intended utilisation (i.e. benefits relating to scale).



If you would like any further information, please contact Rebecca Carr on 0300 067 5407 and you can find more information on CATS at <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/managing/get-involved/community-asset-transfer-scheme>

Community Woodlands Association Update – Jon Hollingdale, CEO, CWA

Jon provided an update on the areas of policy support and representation that CWA has been involved in lately.

- Brexit has provoked a debate around the future of Scottish Government support for rural sectors – CWA want to ensure that the community sector's voice is heard.
- The proposed reorganisation of Forestry Commission Scotland – who have been very supportive of community forestry – CWA want this to continue under whatever future arrangements are developed.
- There is a lot of support for community ownership from the Scottish Government: Scottish Land Fund, Community Empowerment Act, Million Acres target – CWA are involved to try and ensure that these deliver community aspirations.
- The Cabinet Secretary, Fergus Ewing, is very interested in and engaged with forestry, which gives it a high profile – this is a big opportunity but we need to make our case in terms that resonate with Mr Ewing.

Jon also outlined some current and future CWA projects:

- Making Local Woods Work is a Big Lottery funded project to support the development of around 50 woodland social enterprises across the UK - 11 in Scotland. MLWW also funds research, the production of case studies and training events which will be open to all. This year's CWA conference (20/21 October, Cumbernauld) will be bigger than usual and held in association with the MLWW project.
- CWA is just starting a new project to gather evidence on the economic benefit of community forestry.
- Later in the year CWA will begin a project to survey the extent of and benefits delivered by health and education projects in community woodlands.
- CWA are in the process of developing a project to increase CWA staffing to help support more groups to acquire and create woodlands.
- CWA are in the early stages of developing a project supporting community woodlands to bring young people into forestry.

The Community Woodlands Association is a membership organisation established in 2003 to support and promote community woodland ownership and management in Scotland. You can find out more at www.communitywoods.org and at www.facebook.com/Communitywoods. The CWA website contains a range of information including back copies of all the A Wood of Our Own reports (<http://www.communitywoods.org/resources-details.php?id=16>).

Blarbuie Woodland Update– Pete Creech, Blairbuie Woodland Enterprise

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/EHz8Neke3rY>

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

Pete explained there was no standardised plan for working with such a wide range of volunteers - the important thing was 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 in the past. BWE benefit from some windfarm grant aid as well as deliver Branching Out in collaboration with local NHS mental health services. This

programme has seen many users developing both in confidence and new personal connections/bonds but Pete is frustrated that the programme only provides a short period of support and there is currently no longer term programme of support for clients (see ACT presentation below re “Moving On” programme).

BWE have achieved many projects over the years: making raised beds, picnic tables, constructing new paths and boardwalks, designed and built a new octagonal building, held numerous tree planting events, 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 is an ongoing 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.



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>

ACT: Branching Out & other projects – Elaine Jamieson, Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust

As an ACT Trustee, Elaine gave two presentations: the first relating to broader partnership working, objectives and achievements of ACT (<https://youtu.be/imIishXZsuk>); the second focussing specifically on ACT’s role in the delivery of Branching Out Argyll (<https://youtu.be/QT0Xa4FRoqM>).

ACT is a charity that is core-funded by SNH, NHS, FCS and Argyll & Bute Council and dedicated to achieving benefits and opportunities for local people through environmental stewardship and experiences. In association with local housing associations in 2015/16 they provided 11 traineeships for unemployed young people as well as 9 Environmental Assistant placements through JobCentre+. They also have a number of landscape scale environmental projects in the pipeline including a large rhododendron eradication scheme in Glen Creran, a Natura habitat improvement programme and a community-led invasive non-native species project. ACT also facilitate a forum of multiple landowners to maintain and promote Argyll’s long distance routes for local and visitor enjoyment. Finally they run numerous campaigns with local schools and communities to promote outdoor activity and creativity.



Elaine then elaborated on the aims and activities of Branching Out Argyll (BOA) – a referral programme for people with chronic mental health issues - for which ACT are the lead partner in the region & bring together the Community Mental Health Team with a network of approved Branching Out leaders and host sites (e.g community woodlands, Blarbuie Woodland Enterprise see above) and oversee the programme delivery and budgets. By March 2017, eight BOA programmes have been delivered (22 by April 2019) with associated leader training and CPD. From 2018, there will also be 8 complementary “Moving On” programmes to support those participants who have gone through Branching Out but want ongoing involvement and support.



You can find out more about ACT at www.act-now.org.uk/ and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/actargyll/

Kilfinan Forest update – Mick Eyre, Kilfinan Community Forest Company

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/mzwXHMPEZ6M>

Mick has been the Forest Access Co-ordinator & Community Engagement Officer with KCFC since summer 2016. He oversees a range of projects and programmes that involve the local community. He began with a quick overview of the scale and breadth of the workings of the Kilfinan Community Forest Company that includes conventional forest management and operations, creation of woodland crofts, polytunnels/allotments, sawmilling, low cost housing development and a hydro-electric scheme. Mick's focus is on getting local people – in particular young people – involved in the woodland mainly through training initiatives and volunteering. A Young Skills Development Programme in 2016 saw five local young people trained in a variety of activities (hands-on woodworking, environmental management, First Aid, and employability skills). All training was delivered by 11 locally recruited trainers/mentors. Similarly a total of 8 one- and two-day skills workshops (fencing, stock husbandry, willow weaving, green woodworking etc) were delivered by local trainers to over 66 locals. They have an FC-funded woodworking Tool Library and Hobby Club as well as a Women's Woodwork Club. Coupled with the skills training is a wider (very successful) volunteers programme.



Mick has also ensured there are a number of wider community events through the year including cycling promotion, family camping, allotment guided tours/talks, a sponsored walk and bonfire/fireworks display complete with Viking boat building and burning ceremony! He recommends the Lottery Celebrate fund as useful for developing such ideas. Finally they have also been involved in delivering Branching Out Argyll and use a follow on programme of Forest Days to allow users of Branching Out to continue involvement and important connectivity with the forest and other people. For the near future they have a bewildering number of wide-ranging plans – see the presentation for full listing!

All this work earned KCFC the 2016 Scottish Finest Woods Award for 'Promoting Viable Livelihoods' in the Community Woodlands category. You can find out more about Kilfinan Community Forest at <http://www.kilfinancommunityforest.co.uk/> and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Kilfinan-Community-Forest

Beechbrae Wood – Ally Graham, Project Manager

Beechbrae Wood initiative is, strictly speaking, outwith the catchment for AWO. Ally was visiting (along with Amy Davidson of Central Scotland Green Network Trust) to see whether the AWO programme had merits that could be replicated in the Scottish lowlands and Central Belt. Ally gave an overview of Beechbrae Wood – a social enterprise located on the edge of Blackridge, West Lothian – an ex-mining village of c.2,000 with a number of social issues associated with high levels of unemployment, economic deprivation and limited opportunity.

Ally described the evolution of Beechbrae whose aims are to use holistic woodland management as a catalyst for wider social and environmental improvement including the supply fresh quality produce, practical skills training for the local community, biodiversity improvements for the local area and increased physical and mental health & wellbeing. You can find out more about Beechbrae Wood at www.beechbrae.co.uk/ which includes an archive of blogs going back as far as May 2012 charting the progress of the project (also Facebook at www.facebook.com/beechbraewood).

It has been a particularly challenging 'journey' for Ally and the volunteer board and (2 additional) funded staff with demoralising levels of vandalism at the outset which Ally feels is now decreasing. Now over four years on, they have a number of strengthening relationships with the community, including an emphasis on local children and school groups, in food growing, woodland and orchard tree planting, tree seed collection and nursery establishment as well as summer activities programmes, outdoor cooking, food tasting, composting, bee keeping, and study visits to other like-minded woodland/growing projects.



Cormonachan Woodlands – Liz Evans, Cormonachan Woodlands Association

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/iOJI0LO-vaU>

Cormonachan Woodlands are situated on the west shore of Loch Goil between Lochgoilhead and Carrick Castle. They 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 Atlantic Oakwood with areas of hazel, with under- and inter-planted conifer plantation. FCS has been felling maturing conifer stands since the 1990's to restore and extend the deciduous forest cover.

The CWA work across the entire property with a well-attended and enthusiastic volunteer programme tackling rhododendron and bracken control, trail development & maintenance and native tree planting. The woods are used year-round by local school groups as well as the Ardroy Outdoor Centre and are an important local and tourist attraction offering walking & wildlife appreciation (wildflowers & red squirrels in particular). The Association are currently fundraising to extend the considerably limited car parking available at the threshold to the woodland trails. Funds for CWA come from £10p.a. membership, displays & fund raising at local events through the year, open days and regular guided walks through the tourist season. They maintain an informative website & Facebook page and have an Instagram account where visitors can post their photos from visits to the woodland.



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.

Tesco ‘Bags of Help’ funding – Tamara Hedderwick, Greenspace Scotland

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/SbgFEV4t2Xc>

Tamara explained the aims and eligibility criteria of this fund. She works as one of a number of regional Community Enablers with Greenspace Scotland - who administer the fund in Scotland – helping community groups define and work up project ideas if needed. The fund now makes bi-monthly awards of between £1 to 4k and an organisation can reapply for a similar (previously funded) project in a new area or for a new project in the same place.



You can find out more about Bags of Help funding at <http://greenspacescotland.org.uk/bags-of-help.aspx>

Site visit: Cormonachan Woodlands – hosts: Liz Evans, Douglas Locke & Donald Kamsley, Cormonachan Woodlands Association

(For background to the site and the relationship of Cormonachan Woodlands Association with the site see the CWA presentation summary and presentation link above).

Our AWOO group followed one of the circular footpath trails around the woods – stopping at various locations to see areas of bracken control and rhododendron clearance, a number of (colourful, innovative) new sculptures/art ‘installations’ that the CWA have recently installed, pockets of retained conifers retained as good exemplars of how conifer wood ground flora biodiversity differs from that of adjacent native deciduous woodland and a number of the older veteran oaks that CWA wish to include in a future “Mighty Oak” heritage/veteran tree research project.

It was great to be sharing the woods with a group of Fife primary school children (a residential group from Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre) all busy den building under the tall spruces and seemingly oblivious to our group of chatty and inquisitive Old People passing through! The path network through the woods is extensive, meandering and well maintained (vegetation and structure) with useful way-marking and there was clear admiration for the efforts of the CWA volunteers in maintaining these. The woodland also houses ‘Jan’s Hideaway’ – a well-built-and-maintained hut (secure, weather-proof, wildlife posters, wood-burning stove, a large window offering panoramic views over the lower woodland and Loch Goil). This building with its adjacent picnic tables, wood and tool store and covered area is a vital resource in the successful running of school visits and volunteering.



Feedback Summary

Please rate the following by ticking the statement which best matches your opinion:

	Organisation	Location	Venue	Catering	Speakers	Site Visit
very good	8	9	7	5	4	8
good	1		1	3	4	1
fair			1	1	1	
poor						
n/a						

Do you feel that the event delivered your expectations?

Yes: 7 **No:** **Partly:** 1 **n/a:** 1

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

I didn't know what to expect but enjoyed the day.

Venue probably better as a classroom, than a meeting room (but even then I wonder if they do not suffer from a shortage of oxygen!). Not sure if the lack of oxygen or the length of the morning session was the issue, but I felt I had had more than enough of being talked to by the end of it.

Excellent networking event with peer organisations and funders.

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

Excellent update on news, funding and networking.

Site visits always interesting to see what others are doing.

Networking with other organisations – Updates on Governance – Available Funding.

Meeting other woodland owners. Discussing common issues. Visiting a members wood.

Networking and opening up opportunities for future events and contacts.

Networking, opportunity to re-visit a project and hear how it is being re-energised.

Updates on funding and different approaches to community engagement.

Good spread of presentations with plenty to take back to our group in Helensburgh

Meeting other people, seeing the setting of other woodlands and how they deal with their opportunities and challenges.

Where would you like the next event to be held?

Tighnabruich

Optional.

Bute might make an interesting venue (maybe in a year or so to give them time to re-energise).

Tarbert: involved in creating an orchard at the castle, and various other community gardening/health projects.

Willing to travel for these events but would be happy to host at KCFC.

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

Rhododendron ponticum eradication talk.

Would like to split into smaller groups of similar interests/projects – for discussion and transfer of info.

Happy to do a short presentation on our Shared Forester Survey or could do one on MyForest plans (Argyll Small Woods Co-op).

Revenue raising activities for community forests, advice for diverse operations in community forests, maybe something about food assemblies and how we can fit into that.

Somewhat shorter presentations so that time allowed for general discussions/questions.

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

Yes: 9 No:

Please explain why / why not:

Awoo events are very informative.

Great way to make contacts with similar organisations and learn about funding opportunities.

It is a good opportunity to find out what is going on with woodland management and a chance to get some ideas which might be relevant to each groups future plans.

Meeting and experiencing other woodlands and projects. Camaraderie.

Please list any other training/ events you would like to see organised:

Lever & mulch system.

Any West Coast.

Nothing I can think of just now.

Any other comments:

Chris Marsh does a good job.

I personally have an issue with ‘crammed’ agendas. Would prefer fewer/more focussed input plus more time looking at specific issues in a member’s wood.

Gender:

Male: 4

Female: 3

Age Group:

16-25:

25-60:

60+: 7

Ethnicity:

British: 3

Scottish: 1

“Mongrel”(!): 1