

NATIVE WOODLANDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

~ creating new woodlands and jobs, capturing carbon ~

KNOYDART FOREST TRUST



COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

Build community wealth



- Increase confidence
- Enable innovative partnerships
- Bring diversification

Enable access



- Improve health and wellbeing
- Increase learning and skills
- Bring nature connection

Empower local stewardship



- Ensure communication
- Consult and engage with all
- Find creative solutions

Utilise natural capital



- Generate and sustain jobs
- Attract funding
- Create circular economies

Scotland's native woods - where over half of the dominant tree species naturally occur in Scotland



Community Woodlands Association has researched the social and economic benefits of native woodlands under community management through focussing on four community woodlands located within the area identified as home to Scotland's rainforest.

The results are:

- highlighted in four case studies
- showcased in a series of films

Knoydart Forest Trust was established in March 1999 and works in close partnership with Knoydart Foundation, managing 1,095 ha of forestry land which is owned by the community as part of their purchase of Knoydart Estate in 1999. The Trust is focusing on developing a circular economy through the life cycle of trees - growth, products and planting.



Community Woodlands Association



Local population - 110



Community woodland - 1,095 ha



Annual visitors - 30,000



Native woodland created - 451 ha

Situated on the north shore of Loch Nevis, the Knoydart peninsula is only accessible by boat or on foot. Main access across the 6 miles of sea loch is by ferry from Mallaig to the village of Inverie where the majority of people live. A popular tourist destination, much of the land and infrastructure is owned, managed and run by the local community.

Knoydart Forest Trust's objectives are to manage the woodlands within its remit to the highest silvicultural standards and create multi-purpose forests that function as an economic and environmental resource to the local community, enhance biodiversity and provide landscape and recreation benefits to the wider community.

The long term vision is for new planting of native woodland to link up woodland habitat across the peninsula from Loch Nevis to Loch Hourn, creating stepping stones for plants and wildlife, supporting the resilience of the habitat and addressing global climate change issues.



NATIVE WOODLANDS

Community ownership of the land lies with Knoydart Foundation and the Trust has a management agreement which enables them to manage the woodland on the land and the right to retain income from timber sales in the course of implementing a 20 year Woodland Management Plan.

Over the next 5 years they are establishing four new woodlands on community owned land - a total of 193ha and over a quarter of a million trees.

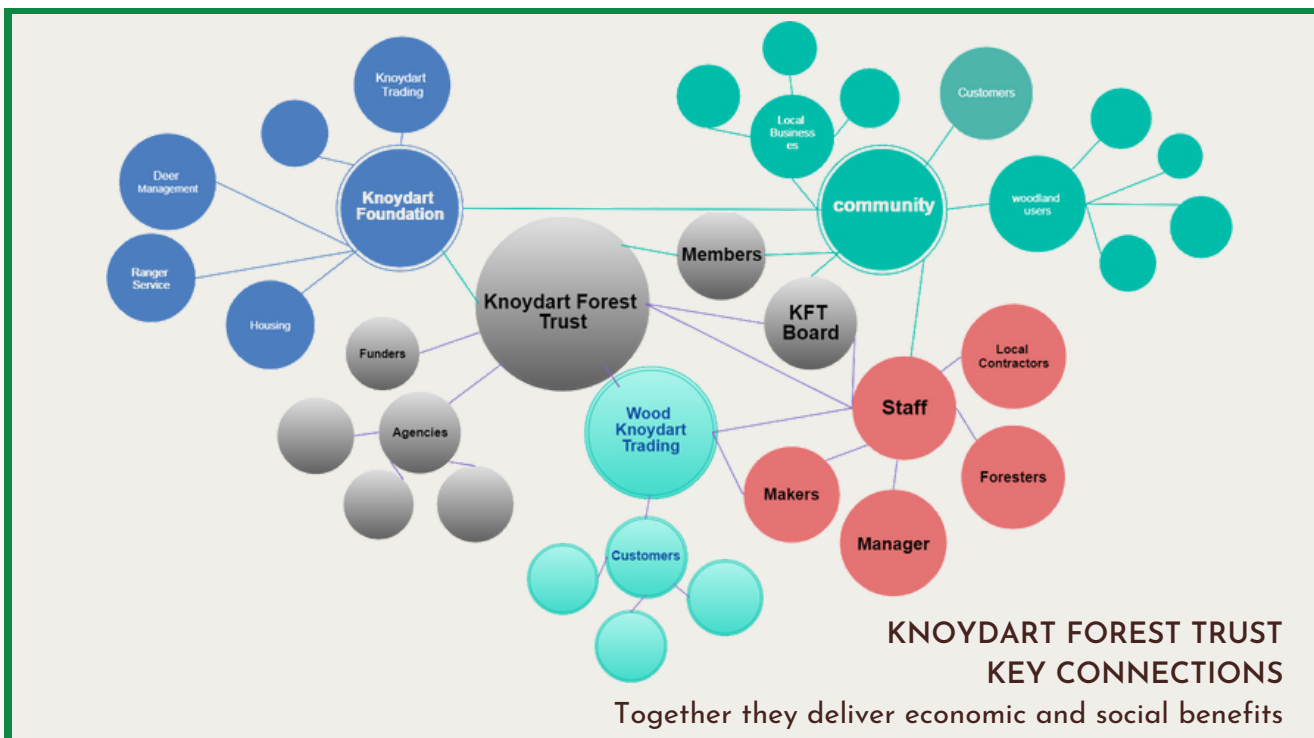
Activities in the native woodland include;

- rainforest and Atlantic oakwood conservation
- Caledonian pinewood, upland oak and birch woodland expansion

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Building good relationships and fostering strong connections has strengthened the wider contribution of the Trust to community forestry. They regularly host visits from other community woodland groups who come to learn from their experience.

Visiting groups take away inspiration and confidence for their own future plans. Strong connections help the Trust with their own future sustainability and throughout the years a great deal of social capital has been nurtured.



WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

There is a 20 year Woodland Management Plan with a Forest Plan in place. Prepared with extensive consultation with the community, neighbouring landowners and other stakeholders, the Forest Plan, part of the Woodland Management Plan, focuses on felling and replanting but also includes public access, invasive species management plus native woodland creation and maintenance.

Linking the woodland habitat across the peninsula to create a seed source, increase biodiversity and the resilience of the habitat is a core part of the Trust's work.

451ha of new native woodland have been created by planting 600,000 native trees.

Surrounding the main settlement of the peninsula, Inverie Woods are the focus for social and economic activity as well as being important for biodiversity. They are a mix of conifers, pockets of ancient native woodland and naturally regenerating native trees.

The woods are being restructured through phased harvesting and replanting. Areas with better soil and access are replanted with species that will be useful for timber in the future such as oak and western red cedar.

Other areas are replanted with species that have a high habitat value such as Scots pine, birch and rowan. Eradication of Rhododendron has been essential to safeguard and increase biodiversity.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

INVESTMENT

The aim is to create a circular economy; using timber to create products, the financial return from sale of products is used to plant more trees. This keeps the benefit local and ensures a woodland resource exists for future generations.

Woodland management and creation is not all on community owned land. Their connection to neighbouring landowners means they extend their reach across the area.

By making the most of the woods the Trust is able to employ local people and invest money back into the woodland and local economy.

As well as designing and building their wood fuel storage shed and A-frame style worker accommodation using their own timber, KFT also own plant and equipment including wood processing equipment, forestry tractor and trailer, excavator and dumper. This infrastructure enables them to add value to timber products and generate income from firewood and milled timber.



Knoydart Forest Trust Income

2019 - 2021

Grants - £317k

Earned - £291k

Wood Knoydart - £47.5k



I purchase wood for construction and fuel and there is the future potential, planting trees to grow food, store carbon and enhance the landscape

EMPLOYMENT

The Trust employ 3 foresters and a manager, all of whom also work for trading subsidiary, Wood Knoydart. They also employ local contractors to assist with woodland creation work including deer fence construction and ground preparation.

Knoydart Foundation is responsible for managing the woodland deer supporting employment of stalkers and ghillies. Venison is then processed locally and available for sale in the community shop in Inverie.

The Foundation run tours within the Inverie and nearby woodlands - daily in the summer and 3 days a week in winter - generating revenue which supports a ranger position.



The woodland creation plans have enabled a new native tree nursery to be set up as a social enterprise by a local resident. This will supply trees for the new woodlands plus provide employment and volunteering opportunities.

Woodland Related Jobs

(full time equivalent)

Knoydart Forest Trust - 4

Knoydart Foundation - 2



ECONOMIC BENEFITS

TIMBER PRODUCTS, CONTRACTS AND SKILLS TRAINING

Established in 2013, trading subsidiary, Wood Knoydart CIC, enabled the Trust to diversify activities and reinvest in the woodland and the local economy. Wood Knoydart undertakes a variety of contract work, including woodland creation and management work for neighbouring landowners and has developed a range of high quality wood products using local timber and makers.

Wood Knoydart also runs green woodworking craft courses popular with locals, visitors and school groups.

WOOD KNOYDART



COMMUNITY TOURISM

I promote the Knoydart in a Nutshell walks and the mountain bike track and guests love it

Providing an attractive place for visitors provides indirect economic activity and benefits private businesses such as accommodation providers, the local shop, restaurants and the community owned pub.

External, often adventure based companies, come to Knoydart, capitalising on the rugged, challenging and beautiful landscape for adventure sports and activity holidays.

Events include an annual ultra marathon, trail running, wild swimming, foraging, yoga and photography. These generate income that supports the local economy and investment in the natural habitat.

The Trust have built, and maintain; two mountain bike tracks, walking paths, shelters and benches in Inverie Woods and manage these on behalf of Knoydart Foundation.

Ensuring safe access:

- facilitates nature connection
- supports environmental education
- creates a sense of belonging
- provides opportunities for physical activity
- enables the local school and nursery to use the woodlands so young people can have fun and learn about the woods and nature.

The woodlands provide the 'wow' factor for Knoydart Foundation Ranger tours which host around 550 visitors a year.

Visitors benefit from the consciously responsible, tourism experience and learn about the woodland and trees, ecology and community stewardship, often gaining unexpected information just by getting out into the landscape.

The aim of the tours is for people to feel like they leave a bit of themselves and take little piece of Knoydart with them in their memory when they leave.

Guests like to walk in the woods and use the bike track and the trails are great

SOCIAL BENEFITS

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

From 1999 'rhodie bashing' has been an ongoing part of KFT's work. Rhododendron ponticum is a threat to the environment and has significant impact on biodiversity. With a lot of help from volunteers and countless workers, nearly all Rhododendron was removed from the peninsula.

Rhododendron is extremely hard to eradicate entirely and a project in 2021 educated 25 new residents to Knoydart in how to spot and remove new growth. An associated citizen science project was established to continue this work and visitors and locals are encouraged to continue 'Rhodie Spotting'.

Instrumental in developing a community made sculpture trail in the woodland, KFT continue to maintain it with the help of local volunteers. They also hosted a project to create a community designed and built totem pole to celebrate the 10th anniversary of community ownership.

These projects involved a wide range of age groups all of whom input to design, learned new skills and made art; creating a sense of belonging and pride in the woodland and natural space.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

The people of Knoydart use the forest regularly. As well as walking, other activities include foraging, running, horse riding, family outings, organised community events and mountain biking.

People enjoy the physical and mental wellbeing benefits. They value the woodlands for the peaceful and calming atmosphere.

They like learning about the ecology and being in nature.

Volunteers make a significant contribution.

Various groups including John Muir Trust, the Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Edinburgh University and New Caledonian Woodlands plus visiting college and school groups have all been hosted by the Trust over the years.

Directly organised volunteer activities have included mountain bike shelter building and bridge construction.

Due to limited resources there has been fewer volunteer events in recent times, although courses continue and several people volunteer to collect seed for the tree nursery. More volunteering and community events will be organised as resources allow.



Training courses - 13



Volunteers - 30



Investment equivalent £5k pa



Connection with the woodlands also offers opportunities for foraging for local food and some use the woodland resource to gather materials for crafts.

The native woods give me physical and mental health and wellbeing, I learn about nature and care for the environment

SOCIAL BENEFITS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As well as their direct connection with the woodlands locals also participate in the direction of the work of the Trust. Residents are invited to contribute to community consultations, including reviewing plans and new woodlands and attend Knoydart Forest Trust annual general meetings.

People feel that having a say, being interested and involved develops their understanding of trees and woodland habitat. The wider community understand how and why active forest management improves the native woodland biodiversity.

The Trust and Wood Knoydart boards are volunteers elected by the community. They provide strategic and financial oversight for the direction of the organisations.

Just being in the woods is beneficial, the smells, the chemicals from the trees, the atmosphere



A VIBRANT FUTURE

The Trust continues to create new native woodlands on Knoydart, aiming to increase the area of native woodland by another 500 hectares in the next 10 years.

Working in partnership with the Foundation, a new 3,000ha regeneration project has been launched. - the Blackhills Project.

This landscape scale habitat restoration project will facilitate woodland creation, peatland restoration and wider habitat regeneration by joining up existing fencing to create an enclosed area plus managing deer to a level that will enable natural regeneration and tree growth.

The Foundation has secured money from the Nature Restoration Fund for the initial works and continues to seek a range of other funding to continue to develop and deliver the rest of the project including further woodland creation and peatland restoration.

I enjoy improved physical and mental wellbeing, relaxation, opportunities for socialising and hope eventually to have my own hoose in the woods

To enable KFT to have a bigger impact, options to attract funding and investment are being explored that recognise the carbon, biodiversity and community benefits that are achieved through land and woodland management on Knoydart.



NATIVE WOODLANDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

~ a symbiotic partnership ~

KNOYDART FOREST TRUST



COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

on an individual basis may seem small
- collectively they offer a strategic landscape scale role

are frequently undervalued
- the work they undertake is of local, national and often global significance but goes under the radar

rely on local volunteers risking burn out, loss of intellectual property and experience
- are a network of organisations run by busy people

funding is often short term, small amounts and paperwork intensive
- use their diverse skills sets, enthusiasm and adversity to bring creative solutions

benefit from long term staff
- hindered by lack of funding / housing / people / long term opportunities

Forestry and woodland management is a long term game, you get a much better quality of management if the people doing the work live in the environment they are managing



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FUNDED BY



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