

NATIVE WOODLANDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

~harnessing natural capital - ancient trees bring fresh inspiration~

FRIENDS OF GLENAN WOOD



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

Friends of Glenan Wood purchased 148ha of woodland from Forestry and Land Scotland via the Community Asset Transfer Scheme in 2019 at a cost of £294k and are working to ensure there is a balance between preserving and restoring their wood and developing projects to support the local area and people.



Community Woodlands Association



FRIENDS OF GLENAN WOOD



Total woodland - 148 ha



Native woodland - 100 ha



Local population - 700

ANCIENT WOODLAND

The local community is dispersed across the townships and parishes of Portavadie, Millhouse, Kilfinan, Otter Ferry, Kames, Tighnabruaich and Glendaruel where there is an imbalanced housing economy with over 30% of homes in the area being 2nd homes (Scottish average is 1.5%).

The area relies heavily on tourism with some commercial forestry for economic survival.

It is essential to retain
Glenan Wood as
a source of inspiration

Glenan Wood lies on the west coast of the Cowal peninsula, Argyll and stretches from the sandy/shingle shores of Loch Fyne to over 170m on the summit of Barr nan Damh.

Considered a jewel of a woodland Glenan rainforest contains ancient veteran oaks which are possibly 300 years old, fantastic bryophyte and fern communities and species-rich grasslands.

Steeped in historical heritage and home to remains of a medieval settlement, the wood also includes 44ha of open ground and 4ha larch and lodgepole pine plantation.

Most of Glenan Wood is included the Native Woodland Inventory and forms perhaps one of the largest intact and most accessible areas of native woodland in Cowal.

It is, however, surrounded by commercial conifer woodlands that historically, in parts, were planted over and through native woodlands (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites - PAWS) and there are issues with self seeding non native conifers, Rhododendron and overgrazing by deer.



Of the 700 people in the local community it is estimated that 33% of them use the wood

Of the 200/night visitors to Portavadie Resort, it is estimated that 50% of them walk in the wood



CONNECTIVITY

Glenan Wood is part of several wider networks and initiatives including:

- Scotland's Rainforest
- Loch Lomond and Cowal Way
- Argyll's Secret Coast
- Northwoods Rewilding Project, Scotland The Big Picture

Although the location of the wood may at first appear isolated as it is not directly close to a village or town, it is well serviced by public transport and right beside the ferry terminal at the Portavadie - Tarbert (Kintyre) ferry and only 4.5 miles from Tighnabruaich.

Also adjacent to the Wood lies Portavadie Leisure, Spa and Marina and a fish farm.

There are early discussions with neighbouring landowners re a Kilfinan Connect network which would aim to create opportunities to attract young families into the area. Glenan Wood plays an important role as a local seed bank and inspiration for what can be achieved through supporting and creating diversity of woodlands and communities.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

As part of the purchase process Friends of Glenan produced a feasibility study and business plan in 2018.

With the business plan yet to be updated, the group undertook a community survey in 2022 and has recently established working themed headings:

- arts and events
- business and eco-tourism
- land and forestry
- buildings group
- ecological education and training
- orchard
- governance

Each is led by a board member. Recent funding has been minimal with the organisation relying on donations - it is vital that grant applications are successful to ensure they can deliver their vision.

It is important for any woodland group to know and understand the habitat and a Woodland Management Plan is currently being written following a PAWS Report, 2018 and an Ecological Survey Report, 2022.

These ancient woods are under threat and the group has been concentrating on building some deer enclosures, ring barking the non native conifers and removing Rhododendron.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

INVESTMENT

Friends of Glenan Wood (FoGW) attract funding through grants, donations and legacies. Membership is currently free and total income 2019 - 2021 was £416k which includes the purchase price of the woods of £294k but not finance spent by other organisations such as Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust who employed contractors to remove Rhododendron or Cowal Outdoor Woodland Learning who run summer camps for young people.



EMPLOYMENT

FoGW have employed 1 or 2 part time staff since they purchased the Wood however, funding has come to an end for these and the group awaits outcomes of funding bids in order to be able to re-employ their Woodland Ranger who is essential to the ongoing development of their resource - both in terms of woodland management as well as the economic and community regeneration that the project can bring to the area.

Already this small amount of job creation has enabled a young family to move to the area, improving demographics.

The group are investigating options for the 4ha of planted larch and lodgepole pine as these could potentially become woodlots or similar in a bid to diversify and support local jobs and families.

Glenan is a key destination for my running retreats - we use the beautiful paths and learn from the wild surroundings

TOURISM

Glenan Wood makes an excellent venue with many local businesses and groups using it for courses, retreats and events. The wood is located right at the start / end of the Loch Lomond and Cowal Way beside the ferry terminal linking Cowal to Kintyre peninsulas. Ferry passenger numbers increase significantly over the summer months and in 2022 were 13,500 in July and 14,800 in August.

Managed by Colintrave & Glendaruel Development Trust, the Loch Lomond & Cowal Way is one of Scotland's designated Great Trails. In 2017/18 footfall on the Portavadie to Tighnabruich section increased by 34% and it is estimated that the benefit of the Way to the Cowal communities is around £1.5m.

Many people benefit from the sense of wildness and freedom of these ancient woods including families with children who love the intricate paths, gnarly old trees and caves to explore. Although not bringing money directly to the wood, these tourists will be spending money elsewhere in the surrounding area.

Opportunities to tap into and enhance the offering for eco / adventure based tourism are gradually being developed - both by local businesses and FoGW.





PORTAVADIE OPPORTUNITIES

Sitting on the shores of Loch Fyne, opposite the entrance to Glenan Wood, Portavadie promotes itself as the perfect place to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life and unwind amid glorious scenery.

The popular venue hosts world-class marina facilities plus offers a range of holiday accommodation, restaurants and bars, beauty and wellbeing treatments, shopping and event spaces. Their story is one of transformation as the site was previously a derelict oil rig construction facility.

Many of the Portavadie guests travel from the Scottish central belt. Portavadie is a dog friendly resort and is keen to educate dog owners to ensure impact on the local environment is positive for both people and wildlife.

Like so many businesses in rural locations, Portavadie struggles to retain staff due to local housing shortages, isolation and potential lack of other interests outside work.

In order to overcome this they recently installed staff accommodation pods onsite and are seeking ways to involve staff in practical activities such as woodland maintenance in the adjacent Glenan Wood.

Volunteering in the woods will help develop their own sense of community and gaining friends, a sense of being able to give to the area, physical exercise and new skills.

 30,000 visitors per year

 70 staff



Portavadie is often used as a venue for retreats and activity based holidays - which then use the woods for outdoor activities.

In 2021, Scotland's Wild Medicine Retreat based itself at Portavadie and used Glenan Wood for foraging, meditation, forest bathing, cold water swimming, breath work, walking, a 'find and make' herbal workshop, picnics, cooking and learning about seaweed.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

There are many ways to volunteer:

- on the board, assisting with governance, developing and delivering ideas
- with woodland management and maintenance including traditional scything in the meadow area
- creating and managing the community orchard

These activities:

- bring people together to work towards a common 'cause'
- increase skills in terms of managing projects and networking with partners
- require team work
- enhance the sense of community
- reinforce the importance of caring for nature
- build practical skills and share traditional heritage skills with current and future generations



Outdoor learning experiences and walks are a good way in which to introduce people to nature and to the delicate balance we have when interacting with nature

LEARNING & EDUCATION

The local OWL (outdoor woodland learning) network runs playschemes for under 12s and programmes for teenagers at Glenan Wood during school holidays. These are often in conjunction with nearby Kilfinan Community Forest (Tighnabruaich) which enables sharing of resources and leaders.

The post pandemic woodland playscheme:

- gave children a safe place to catch up with their friends and play in a nurturing environment
- reduced isolation
- encouraged connection with the local woodlands and community
- boosted health and well being

The Glenan Wood teen basecamp created a fun, comfortable, safe space for young people to hang out and socialise with peers and featured a wide range of activities including:

- coppice and green woodworking
- safe firelighting
- foraging and cooking outdoors
- mapping and navigation
- age appropriate nature games
- storytelling

These activities were designed to potentially signpost the young people to careers in forestry and enabled them to learn about:

- community ownership and woodland management
- Atlantic rainforest and Sitka spruce ecosystems and their roles in local climate adaption
- factors that impact the health of our community woodlands



SOCIAL BENEFITS

HEALTH & WELLBEING

The importance and role of being active in the outdoors to support our mental and physical health is well documented.

Many people enjoy a walk in Glenan Wood - either regularly with their dog or family, or occasionally whilst waiting on their ferry, visiting the area perhaps seeking to spot wildlife. People come to swim from the beach, picnic with their friends and families, meet new people and enjoy a sense of freedom.

Other groups and companies run workshops and events including: tai chi, chi gong, yoga, forest bathing, labyrinth walking, running retreats and fitness camps.

Some of these are based at Portavadie or other local tourism and accommodation providers such as Auchgoyle Farm and use the woods for their outdoors activities, others come just for the day.

Time in the woods gives me mental refreshment and renewed health



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Community events have included:

- bioblitzes
- sign making
- orchard days
- apple juice pressing with local primary school, farmers and wider community
- arts trails and sculptures in the woods in partnership with Argyll Arts Collective

Events bring together different aspects of local community and create:

- sense of community
- motivation to learn about nature, care for the environment
- nature connection
- vibrant community bringing resilience
- improved family cohesion
- awareness of resources and local food production - all part of building community wealth



Through engaging with wider networks, arts and cultural events:

- encourage people from a wider area to visit - increasing the woodland experience for all
- bring more creativity into the woodland
- enable artists to engage with the environment

NATIVE WOODLANDS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

~ a symbiotic partnership ~

FRIENDS OF GLENAN WOOD



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

There's a great opportunity with community forests and how they compliment business and lifestyles to the benefit of the communities that they are in and which they serve



 glenanwood.org

 [@glenanwood](https://www.facebook.com/glenanwood)

SCIO : SC047803

COMMUNITY WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION

 communitywoods.org   [@communitywoods](https://www.instagram.com/communitywoods)

 [@CommunityWoods](https://twitter.com/CommunityWoods)  [@CWAcommunitywoods](https://www.youtube.com/@CWAcommunitywoods)

company SC275097 : charity SC038374

COMMUNITY WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION NATIVE WOODS PROJECT
FUNDED BY



Future Woodlands Scotland

