

Planning Permission is granted!

The forest cabins were finally given planning permission at the end of April. This is a big step forward, and means that we can start the next phase of setting up the social enterprise, which will create employment and underpin the organisation's finances so we can deliver other projects for the community – such as housing and new crofts at Ardochy. Now we must apply for a building warrant for the amenity building, which will provide showers, kitchen & lounge.

In line with the planning conditions, our first task is to upgrade the access onto the A87 Trunk road so that it complies with the latest regulations. This means widening it from a single vehicle width, to a double vehicle width, along with all associated fencing and drainage. Because the access joins straight onto a Trunk road, the design process and the formation of the new access has to be of a very high standard, and will be costly! There are a number of other planning conditions, some of which have already been discharged.

We have been looking at different options for financing building the cabins and amenity building, these include loans, grants and Community Shares. The present scarcity and increasing cost of building materials means we must revise our budgets and plan carefully to keep the financial risk to a minimum. To obtain finance at an affordable rate, we are considering issuing Community Shares, and also whether to build the cabins in phases. Look out for the new A87 access works in the coming months, which will begin once Transport Scotland have reviewed our designs and contractors have become available.

New Shed

Though delayed by coronavirus, work on the new shed finally got underway in April 2021. It was constructed using 5 utility poles that had been left in the community woodland and donated by local residents, and all other timber & materials was bought. The groundworks required shifting a substantial amount of stone to build up part of the site, before the upright poles were cemented in.

The shed is for the storage of machinery and tools, now that the renovated Depot is no longer available for this. We have recently purchased some new machinery, including a tractor mounted winch, and tipping trailer for the tractor, which is stored in the shed.



The shed frame goes up in early April

The shed was put up in two stages – firstly the frame, and then roofing steel.



The roof sheeting goes on, and the community woodland's new trailer in position in the shed!

We plan to clad the sides with larch later in the year. Everybody at Glengarry Community Woodlands would like to thank the Great Glen Energy Cooperative for funding the shed, Sandy MacRae Contracting for his excellent work on groundworks, and George Cross for his help on the roof; but particular thanks go again to Bryan Millar who oversaw the whole project – from designs to putting in the last screw - and without whom the shed probably would not exist!

Ardochy: Community Asset Transfer Panel Member Visit

The community's asset transfer request for 'Lower Ardochy Forest' has been under assessment for two months. In May, a member from the assessment panel came to meet with members of Glengarry Community Woodlands to discuss the proposal. Professor Bill Slee from the Hutton Institute in Aberdeen spent 3 hours walking the site and discussing proposals for new crofts and community housing with us. The discussions were very positive and there is general recognition that our proposal is a real step towards tackling some of the economic and housing problems faced by rural Highland communities such as ours.



The asset transfer panel visit with members of the GCW board, Jamie MacIntyre from the Woodland Crofts Partnership, and Professor Bill Slee from the Hutton Institute

Although we haven't yet had a formal decision on the asset transfer, we have had positive feedback about our proposal for Ardochy. The proposal – to convert public forest to crofting tenure - pioneers a model of community asset transfer in Scotland. The Scottish Government recognises that it is an innovative model that could be rolled out in other areas to address the challenges of rural housing

Upcoming events

With the continuing uncertainty around coronavirus, we have decided to delay the resumption of events at the community woodland. We will keep everybody updated as the situation changes.

and economic regeneration and has commended the project team (GCW, Woodland Crofts Partnership, and Communities Housing Trust). There are still some policy issues to overcome before anything else happens, but we will keep everyone updated as soon as there is news.

Registering interest in the GCW Board

Glengarry Community Woodlands is a registered company with charitable status, and was set up by the community in 2015 to manage the community woodland (then called 'Invergarry Wood') and any other property that the community should want to purchase. In the six years since its establishment the organisation has grown and is playing an ever-important role in the development of Glengarry. Governance of the company is very important – to deliver the projects we are working on takes dedication and a lot of time from a skilled and enthusiastic board of directors, who use their own skills and experience to support the Development Officer to deliver the projects for the community.

The company is governed by a modern governing document, the 'Articles of Association' which has fixed terms for board members. This is designed to ensure that new people are included in the governance of the organisation, so that it reflects the changes underway in the community. The current board of directors is compiling a register of people interested in joining them. If you think you have the skills, experience, background, enthusiasm for the community, and time to help progress the work we do, please get in touch. Although the board is not actively seeking new board members at the moment, we will get in touch once positions become vacant.

Annual General Meeting

Following the success of last year's first ever online AGM for us, we will be holding this year's AGM online once again. The AGM will be on Saturday 18th September at 11am. An invite and other AGM documents will be sent out nearer the time.