

The Black Dog of Glengarry!

Despite a bit of rain, there was a huge turnout for our annual Halloween event. This year we based the event on a local ghost story 'The Black Dog of Glengarry'. The story, which tells of a mysterious black dog lurking in the forest between Invergarry and Munerigie, (so could actually be in the area now owned by the community) was told to everyone at the beginning of the event by Andrew our storyteller. Then there were craft tables, covering a variety of ghost themed creations, a tombola, and a face painter, unlucky dip and lots of other nasty things to occupy the children!



Setting the scene: 'The Black Dog of Glengarry'

After a while, and once the sun had started to go down, the children were led on a ghost walk through part of the woods where they heard the mysterious sounds of dogs, before finishing with a hot drink, hot soup, and a tray of Welsh cakes cooked on the campfire.

AGM 2019

Saturday 16th November was the fourth AGM at the Old Depot. The room was nearly full of members who came to hear the staff and board report on previous year and hear plans for future. The financial year to 31 March 2019 had been very challenging for GCW, but Colin, the chair confirmed that the organisation had made it through this challenging time and was now in the fortunate position of having a lot get on with. Tom (the Development Officer) gave a presentation which covered everything GCW is working on during the forthcoming year, with details on the planned tourism business, proposals for Drynachan 2, and Ardochy as well as the clubs and events.

Eco-tourist business - update

The community's plans to use the woodland to establish new businesses took a step forward in November with the appointment of architects to design the new cabins. A locally based cabin designer is working on a Scandinavian-style of building to be built using mainly timber from the community's own woodland. The plan is to build up to twelve cabins, with two sizes, which offer sleeping for either two adults or four adults. The cabins will be located a five-ten minute walk into the woods, away from the road and any local housing, and will be off-grid but have a log burner for heating and some simple cooking. We hope to build a new, fully serviced amenity building near the Depot to provide a full range of facilities including wifi, showers, a fully equipped kitchen, and lounge. We have also appointed Bell Ingram (Inverness) to help us design the infrastructure we need to support the business, including upgrades to the access track, new drainage, and applying for planning permission. Once Bell Ingram have produced the masterplan, we will make it available for everyone to see.

Five year Development Plan

Earlier this year we started working with Chris Piper to produce a five year Development Plan for Glengarry Community Woodlands. Chris is no stranger to Glengarry, having helped the community prior to buying the woodland back in 2015, when he wrote Feasibility Study, and then in 2016/17 he wrote our forest plan. The development plan takes a general view and loosely sets out some of the priorities over the next few years, pointing out the major challenges that have to be overcome in order to achieve them. It suggests a sequence for the delivery of the community's original aspirations for the woodland, highlighting the importance of generating revenue to keep the organization running before anything else can be achieved. To download a copy of the plan go to: <https://www.glengarry.org.uk/other-documents>

Drynachan 2

In October we held two drop in sessions at the Depot to hear views on community ownership of the field opposite the Depot. People who came along to the event were asked specifically what they thought were the community's most pressing needs, and whether ownership of the field could help address them. There were a range of different responses including new housing, business facilities, holiday accommodation, cemetery car park extension, and a community garden.



Drynachan 2 with superb views up the Glen to Ben Tee
Everybody we spoke to supported community ownership of the field, and most people mentioned the need for any changes to be done sensitively near the cemetery. The biggest challenge would be upgrading the access into the field which would not be straight forward because of the fast section of A87 it joins on to. However, after talking to Transport Scotland and the Highland Council we think a new access could be combined with an extension to the cemetery car park and the Highland Council would fully support the proposal. In November we were invited to submit an application to the Scottish Land Fund for the funds to purchase the field, and cover some costs related to post-acquisition technical support. All going smoothly, the field should be in community ownership within a few months.

Ardochy

On November 26th we held a drop in session with our partners the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT), and the Woodland Crofts Partnership. The event was a chance for people to get information about the proposal for new housing, including how the Rural Housing Burden works, which part of Ardochy we are proposing to purchase, what Woodland Crofts are, and how they are allocated. The event was very successful, with a constant flow of people coming to tell us that Glengarry needs new housing which is specifically available for the community. Everybody involved was very impressed with the level of support, and feels there is a strong mandate to move on to the next stage, which will be producing feasibility study to summarise all the options.



We are also looking at whether a community-owned hydro electric scheme could be supported on the Allt a' Bhora burn that runs through the middle of Ardochy. This is a separate piece of work that is being supported by Local Energy Scotland.

Firewood

Firewood sales have been strong throughout Autumn, but we still have tonnes of seasoned, dry birch which can be delivered or collected. Contact Tom to arrange.

A special thanks to Helen Fraser of Ardriseal, Mandally for the kind donation of corrugated tin which we used on the roof of our woodshed and a new wood shelter that we built in 2019.

Upcoming events and courses

Green Woodworking for Beginners. Starting Thursday 30th January, 6.30 - 9.00pm, Weekly for 6 weeks. *This course is aimed at anyone from novice – intermediate level. Suggested donation. Booking essentials. Contact: tom@glengarry.org.uk*