

### Spring Activities

Easter is usually a busy time at the community woodland. The school holidays mark the beginning of our children's clubs, and our Easter egg hunt has become an anticipated fixture in the annual calendar. The cancellation of all spring activities has therefore left the woodland feeling very quiet. However, we plan to make up for this when we can, with more days of *Into the Woods* and *Junior Rangers* in summer or the October holidays. To give everyone something to look forward to, we can also guarantee that next year will be our best Easter event yet, with new activities for the children, and for the first time ever there will be a spectacular Easter egg hunt for adults that will definitely make you work for your chocolate!

### Forest Cabins

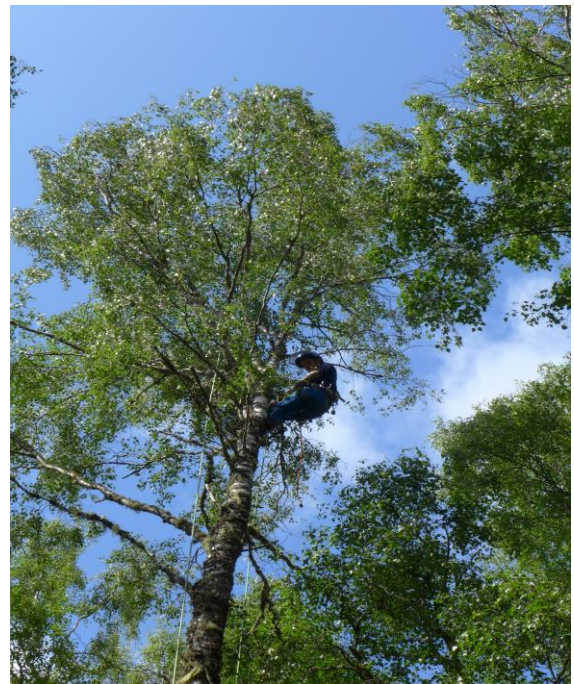
Our proposal for a community owned forest cabin business has made progress; in January Bell Ingram supported us with a pre-application planning enquiry to the Highland Council. Taking this step will help to gauge the requirements for a full planning application. Unfortunately, due to office closures feedback from the council has been delayed. However, we are still able to carry on with planning for the first stage to upgrade the forest track, renovate the Depot, and install new drainage. In early March percolation tests were carried out to test ground conditions for new drains linked to the proposed new buildings.



Civil engineers and a local contractor dig test-pits to assess water table  
Over the last month, we've had to change cabin architects and are now working with North Woods Construction (near Ullapool). North Woods have a lot of experience of wooden buildings and forest cabins, we're very pleased to have them involved with this project.

### Birch Seed Stand

Researchers from the Future Trees Trust (<http://www.futuretrees.org/>) visited to collect seed last autumn. We asked them to write a brief account of their work: 'Future Trees Trust is a charity comprising researchers, tree nurseries and seed suppliers, who breed broadleaved trees. The aim is to provide seed from the best trees for people who want to grow hardwoods for timber. Tree breeding in this context is finding the tallest, straightest trees of a particular species, then bringing them together in small plantations called seed orchards so they can breed together and produce seed.'



*A seed collector scaling trees at the birch seed-stand*

This counteracts the problem that result when woodland owners and timber buyers harvest the best trees as part of a timber sale, leaving only the poorer trees behind as a seed source for the next generation. In 2019 seed orchards were set up comprising of about 60 trees from different parts of the Highlands, including some from Glengarry. But to make sure those trees are genetically superior, we collected seed from several other trees known to be equally as good-looking (straight and tall), so as we can grow on young trees from them and see which are actually the tallest, straightest, and most suitable for commercial birch crops.'

## The Mallet Strikes Again!

Late in January, a group of people from around Lochaber joined our local wood carver Bruce, for 6 weekly evening sessions to learn the traditional craft of Green Woodworking. The course draws on a combination of British and Scandinavian traditions, and the group worked on a freshly cut log each week. One of the first tasks was to make a mallet that they would each use throughout the course. With a new skill and a new tool introduced at every session, each week the fresh, green log was transformed into a finished product in just a few hours. Guidance on safety, keeping the tools sharp, finishing the products with oils and burnishing were explained and demonstrated, and towards the end of the course the participants were confidently using draw horses and a pole lathe to produce their own spurtle to proudly take home. Course organiser Bruce explained *'the joy of this type of work lies in it's simplicity; to take a piece of wood that was a living tree not long before and use the most basic, not to mention ancient, of tools to produce something both beautiful and useful is an act that strikes right at the heart of what it means to be human – to make and to use'*. We hope our participants found a little of this joy in their time with us!

## Drynachan 2

All funds for the community to purchase Drynachan 2 (the field opposite the Depot) have now been awarded, and the sale process is in the hands of our solicitors. With the amount of project development work we are already undertaking, its unlikely there will be any immediate activity to develop any of the community's proposals for the field. This is because we only have one staff member, so have to be realistic about our resources. With limited access to finance we also need to be careful about over-committing ourselves, so all efforts are currently focused on the cabin business, as we all recognise that securing an income stream is the priority.

## Ardochy Forest

The community's proposals to establish woodland crofts and community housing at Ardochy took a step forward last month, when the proposal gained positive feedback from the Highland Council. Site investigations were also carried out in March to examine the suitability of ground conditions. The next step is to complete the Feasibility Study, then invite further comment from the community. However, with current restrictions it is likely there will be some delays to this process.



Flat ground to the west of Ardochy House where community housing is proposed

This proposal is being developed in partnership with the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (<https://www.hscht.co.uk/>) and Woodland Croft Partnership, and is designed specifically to address some of the housing needs in the area.

## Allt a' Bhiora Mini-Hydro

In February we were awarded a small grant to commission an 'Early Business Case' for hydro generation on the Allt a' Bhiora burn in Ardochy Forest. The report, which is a step before a Feasibility Study, will assess the extent that the recent removal subsidy paid to electricity generated from hydro (known as the feed in tariff) will affect the financial viability of the proposed scheme. It will suggest ways of mitigating the loss of the feed in tariff, by for example establishing a partnership with a renewable energy developer, or increasing the sale value of electricity generated by the scheme. Our report will act as a test-case for post subsidy hydro development in Scotland.

## Events

**There are no events scheduled until further notice.**