

Eco-tourism development

After a lot of discussion, planning, and fundraising we have finally instructed consultants to help us plan our eco-tourism business. The idea for a tourism business was a core part of the community's case for purchasing the woodland in 2015. It was identified early on as the best way that the community could use the woodland to generate revenue, support new jobs, and fund activities. The eco-tourism business will be one of the most important developments that we undertake and its success will allow us to do everything else that the community want from the woodland. The consultants were chosen for their experience in setting up successful tourist businesses across Scotland. They will be helping us with designs and business planning so that the community's business doesn't negatively affect trade for private businesses. Once designs are agreed, they will begin a business plan which will forecast all costs and revenue for the first five years of operation.

Eco-tourism seminar

In January, we hosted a one-day seminar in conjunction with the Community Woodland Association to look at different examples of tourism projects in community woodlands. There were presentations from Broadford and Strath Community Company (Skye), and Comrie Croft in (Perthshire) who all shared their experiences. The day gave us a chance to run our own ideas past people with more experience and get some very useful feedback.



Eco-tourism seminar in the Depot, January

Drynachan 2

We have made good progress with our plans to purchase the field opposite the Depot, (known as 'Drynachan 2'). We are currently raising funds from the Scottish Land Fund for a feasibility study to assess all the potential uses for the field. There is no doubt that community ownership will bring long term benefits, helping to increase the amount of land that the community have control over. There will be a chance for people to have their say on the future of the field, and once the feasibility study is complete it will be made public. We'll keep everyone updated as it develops.

Ardochy Forest

In December the Forestry Commission notified the community council that they are planning to sell Ardochy Forest. After a lot of discussion the community council and community woodland decided it was in the community's interest to formally express an interest, temporarily stopping the private sale. The community now has a short time to decide whether it wants to pursue community ownership of Ardochy Forest, (or part of it), and how it should be used. Ownership of part of the forest could bring major benefits to the community, creating space for community-run enterprise or housing.



The Ardochy Forest, outlined in blue, up for sale

The forest also has a burn running through it which is suitable for a mini-hydro scheme. If developed, this could be a community-owned hydro scheme. To discuss these issues, and to gauge the support for community ownership, we are helping to set up a steering committee of local residents. The first meeting will be **Tuesday 19th February in the community hall, 7pm.** Please come with your ideas and opinions.

Firewood update

In December we bought a hydraulic log splitter and started filling the new log shed. We now have a good supply of cut, split logs which are drying out in the shed. It's roughly 80% birch and 20% other hardwoods. Once dry we'll put up posters to advertise it's for sale. To start, it'll be collection only but we hope to be able to deliver shortly.

Sustainable Energy Project WINNER!

In October the Glengarry Trust encouraged us to enter the 'Sustainable Energy Project Competition' held by Falck Renewables (who own the Millennium windfarm). We entered our plans for the firewood business and won the competition! We've been awarded £5,000 to help scale up firewood production, which we quickly matched with an award for £3,000 from the Great Glen Energy Cooperative. We're now looking to buy a small tractor, a winch, a firewood processor and some other machinery which will help produce more firewood.



Glengarry Trust presenting our award at the AGM

Upcoming events (all free!)

Weekly Green Woodworking course, starting Feb 21st or 28th for 6 weeks, 7-9 in the Depot

This free course will be a chance to try out our new woodworking tools! Aimed at beginner – intermediate ability and led by local expert Bruce.

Junior Rangers, new forest skills club for teenagers. Weekends, monthly, starting end March

A new club for children ages 13-17. Get in touch if you're interested or for more details, this new club is still being planned.

New volunteer sessions for 2019

During 2019 we're asking volunteers to help us with firewood. Bags of wood will be available to the most dedicated helpers! Get in touch to discuss. We will also have family volunteer sessions on weekends through spring/summer. Dates to be announced.

Easter Eggstravaganza Saturday 20th April

Our annual family Easter event with Easter egg hunt, face painting, children's crafts, egg and spoon race and lots more!

Green Woodworking Course

After it's success last year, we're running a green woodworking course again this spring in the Depot. It'll be on a Thursday evening, starting late February (exact start date to be confirmed) and run weekly for six weeks. The course is designed for beginner-intermediate level and participants will learn traditional methods of making items such as spoons, butter knives and spurtles. All tools and materials are provided. This course is free but donations are welcome.



Green woodworkers at the course in 2018

Annual General Meeting

On Saturday 19th January we had our third AGM in the Depot. We moved it to a Saturday so that more of our membership could attend. Despite the cold weather and unheated venue, there was a very good turnout who all enjoyed hearing about the achievements of the last year before learning more about the plans for the upcoming year. Thanks to everyone who came, and for the ongoing support of our plans and activities.