



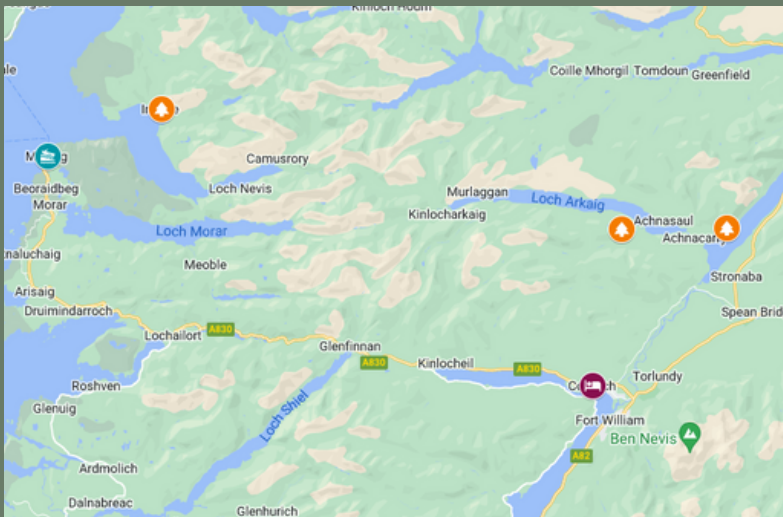
Community
Woodlands
Association

CWA Newsletter Spring 2024

Welcome to the spring Newsletter

I had the absolute pleasure of joining the exchange visits to Knoydart and Arkaig last week, to hear and see what goes on in these wonderful community woodlands.

Day 1 saw us visit Knoydart Forest Trust, then following a night's stay near Fort William, we headed to Arkaig Community Forest for day 2.



The keen interest from all members attending - representing Carsphairn, Culduthel and Dunnet community woods, as well as the host sites and an individual member - and the exchange of thoughts, experiences and ideas between the visitors and the hosts was both heartwarming and inspiring.

We hope you enjoy reading about it in the Newsletter and if you have any feedback or would like to contribute to the next edition (due out on 1st June) please get in touch: admin@communitywoods.org

With warm wishes, Jen + the CWA Team

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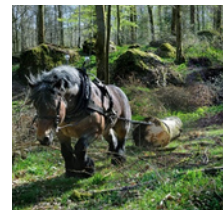
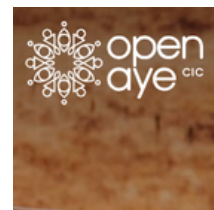
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Knoydart Forest Trust – exchange visit

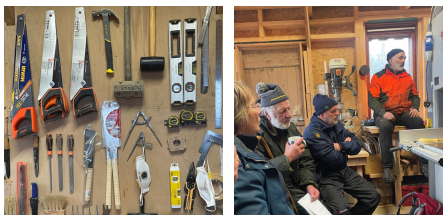
Jen Pittendreigh. CWA Communications Officer



Arriving in Inverie

Day 1 of our adventure saw us sail to Inverie from Mallaig on the 10.15 ferry.

Arrival at Inverie pier was a bit damp and grey, but a bright welcome from **Lorna** (manager of KFT) and a short walk to the forest workshop (no 5 in the map, left) soon saw us with a warming hot drink and a biscuit... or two, joined by **Grant** (KFT forester) and **Finlay**, (KFT countryside ranger).

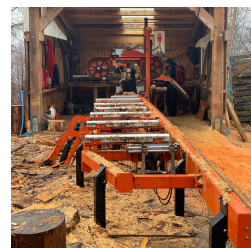


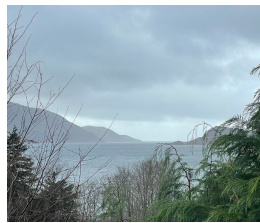
The Forest Workshop and Yard

Whilst the rain hammered outside the workshop, wide ranging and insightful discussions was going on inside - a flavour of which included:

- the history of the Knoydart Foundation, and KFT
- with a population of only 120, and various offshoot community enterprises (around 13), the adult population of Knoydart find themselves wearing many different trustee hats
- Woodland creation/ woodland management/ timber production
- Deer management
- Housing issues/ the rural housing burden scheme
- Rhododendron management versus eradication

We then looked around the machinery in the yard, the other workshop and the drying kiln.





A Rainforest Taster

As the rain went off our happy little crew started to make their way from the forest workshops to the deer larder via Policy Woods (numbers 7 and 8 on the map), and that's when we began to get a feel for the rainforest aspect.

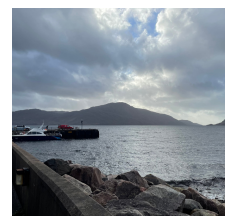
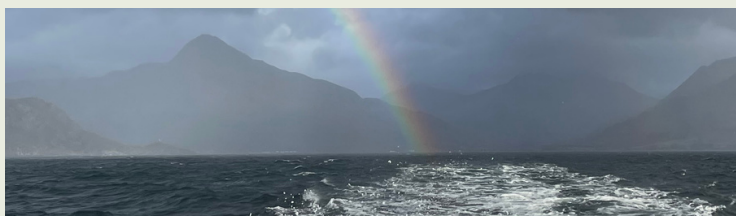
A lovely walk along a meandering path took us through the woods which have fairly much been cleared of rhododendron ponticum, allowing habitat restoration - lichens, mosses, bryophytes and polypody ferns were all evident, and there were spectacular views over Loch Nevis as we dropped down the hillside.

The Deer Larder

Arriving at the deer larder we were welcomed by Liz who gave us good insight into the selection and processing of the deer, as well as the teething issues regarding packaging, storing and delivery. We also had a look at the hanging room, butchery and shop.

A delicious picnic lunch supplied by the community pub, The Old Forge, coincided with our visit to the deer larder. We ate whilst standing outside and chatting, and by the time we finished it was time to walk back to the pier (via the gift shop) to catch the penultimate ferry back to Mallaig, just as the sun came fully out!

Huge thanks to Lorna, Grant, Finlay, Liz and the Knoydart team for a great visit!



To find out more about Knoydart Forest Trust, visit www.knoydartforesttrust.org (where you can find the fuller version of the map shown overleaf).

Arkaig Community Forest - exchange visit

Jen Pittendreigh, CWA Communications Officer



Tom an Eireannaich - the Irishman's Knoll

On arrival at the Arkaig Community Forest offices in the Forest School, Clunes, we set off for a tour of the small oak woodland situated behind the offices with **Anna** (Tree Nursery Manager) and **Catriona** (Development Officer).

Tom an Eireannich, one of 3 sites belonging to Arkaig CF, is used by the local community and for Arkaig CF events. Along the way we were joined by **Rob** (Deer Larder Manager) before heading back to the forest school where we enjoyed wide ranging chat which included:

- the history of Arkaig Community Forest and their unique partnership with the Woodland Trust
- insight into the other 2 woodland sites which make up Arkaig CF: the pinewood in Glen Mallie, situated above Loch Arkaig located around 5 miles away, and the pine forest - Gusach - situated on the shores of Loch Arkaig and only accessible by boat
- venison production as a by-product of woodland management
- the benefits of retaining brash to protect growing seedlings

There followed a tour of the deer larder before we headed to Glen Mallie to see the progress with the pinewood restoration. On our walk to the pinewood we passed through Woodland Trust land where evidence of a massive fire in 1942 can still clearly be seen- slightly eerie.

Access to the ACF pinewood in Glen Mallie is via a bridge - the Friendship Bridge - which was built in partnership with the Woodland Trust to allow easier access to the site.

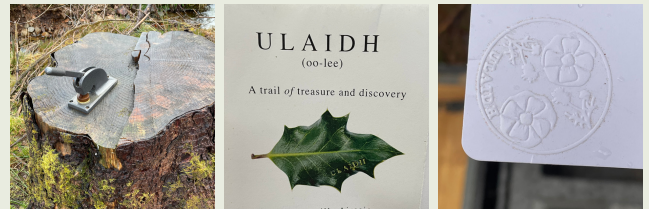




The Sculpture Trail

Although we'd been told there was a sculpture trail in Glen Mallie we didn't really know what to expect, so were delighted when we came across our first sculpture of a magnificent boar.

When heading back onto the track we stumbled across an embossing press - most unexpected, but decided to give it a go and it worked! It turns out there's a different embossing press for each different sculpture, and a map to go with the trail which has spaces for you to emboss. Great fun!



Arkaig Tree Nursery

After a delicious lunch, Anna conducted a tour of the tree nursery. First off, everyone observed the anti-contamination measures (below middle) at the gate, with Anna describing their DIY cost-cutting alternatives to 'off the shelf' options. Next a look at:

- the Alder seedlings being hardened off outside (below right)
- hazelnuts being stratified in pots of sand (below left)
- the inside of the polytunnel

..... and all the while, Anna giving excellent insight and instruction into how best to collect, select, and grow seeds, as well as answering lots of questions.

A great visit!

Huge thanks to Anna, Catriona, Rob and the wider team

To find out more about Arkaig Community Forest
visit www.arkaig.org



What our visiting members thought

A great, very well organised and educational visit to Knoydart and Arkaig. I was amazed at the sheer scale of the forests and the huge amount of work that is being put in. A really inspirational trip.

I found the trips extremely interesting and worthwhile and both locations though similar in many respects had a variety of interests to offer. The common thread for both locations was the dedication, passion and commitment for the work both teams undertake and the contribution they make to the Communities they represent. Also the interest and discussions among other attendees showed the same level of commitment to the ideals and benefits of Community Woodlands.

Although both locations were so different from our own urban woodland it demonstrated the diversity that exists under the banner of Community Woodlands throughout the country and this was further demonstrated in discussion with the other attendees. All of us staying in the hotel overnight helped to engage in these discussions.

I think future exchanges should become a permanent fixture of CWA Policy and I would certainly attend and encourage others in our Culduthel Community Wood Group to attend.

With thanks to:



for providing funding support and making this exchange trip possible

Native Woodlands Project

Find out more about Knoydart and Arkaig woodlands by checking out our [Native Woodlands Project](#) on the website.

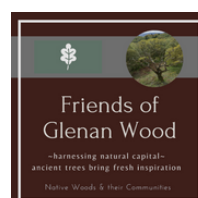
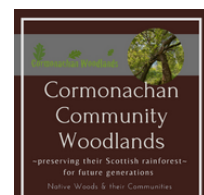
The CWA Native Woods project (2023) liaised with four diverse Scottish community woodland groups to identify and showcase the economic and social benefits of native woodlands:

1. Arkaig Community Forest
2. Cormonachan Community Woodlands
3. Friends of Glenan Wood
4. Knoydart Forest Trust

For each woodland there is a:

- case study (pdf)
- short film (YouTube)

A project report is also available, and a webinar (recorded in March 2023)





Visit Carsphairn Community Woodland Saturday 23rd March 2024. 10am - 3pm

Here's another opportunity for CWA members to experience and benefit from an exchange trip, this time to Carsphairn Community Woodland who are at the early stages of all their plans.

The plan for the day includes:

- A discussion about Carsphairn Community Woodland and the journey they are on
- A walk around the site to see all the different aspects of the woodland as well as the hide
- Explore the shed site and equipment and experience a demonstration at the sawmill and log processor
- Explore the tree nursery and hear about the seed collections taking place
- Visit the timber store building, which is nearing completion and was built by volunteers

[Find out more and sign up for a place](#)

Fire Safety in Woodlands

On-line - Thursday March 28th



Fire Safety in Woodlands is becoming a greater concern each year as we face ongoing cold, dry springs and dry, hot summers. The risk of wildfire is ever increasing as is the risk of our woodlands catching fire.

To ensure our members prepare well for wildfire management we would like to invite you to attend a session with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Cairngorms National Park Authority

Join Colin McClean, Head of Land Management at Cairngorms National Park Authority, and Deputy Assistant Chief Officer Bruce Farquharson, Head of Training and Wildfire Capability Lead Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Chair of the Scottish Wildfire Forum, who will discuss:

- Essential steps to help prevent wildfires
- How to prepare wildfire plans, and what information should be contained within them
- How to identify risk, and what you should do as a result
- What happens should the Fire and Rescue Service be called to your woodland/ forest

[Find our more, and sign up for a place, on the Events page of our website](#)



Scottish Forestry Budget Cuts

Willie McGhee. CWA Chair

The news that the Scottish Government has shaved more than £30m from its 2024 forestry budget has come as a blow to the forestry sector and will have a direct impact on new planting.

Scottish Forestry's budget for 2024-25 has been set at £70.1 million, compared with £103.7 million in 2023-24. Planting grants will be reduced from £77m to £46m for 2024-25. A quick bit of maths indicates this is enough funding for 10-12,000ha, meaning that communities involved in woodland creation may find woodland creation applications squeezed or possibly shelved.

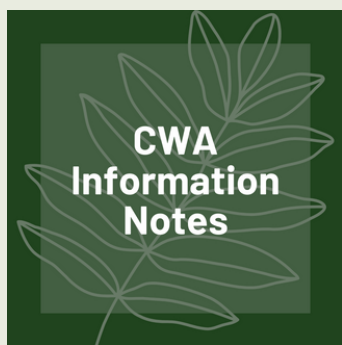
The cut in grant applies to capital grants, such as the planting grant, but should not apply to revenue grants, such as Scottish Forestry's Community Fund , which is a bit of good news. Nor will management grants be impacted, for now.

Take home message is that whilst woodland creation reduction is not great, communities accessing other Scottish Forestry grants should be OK.

Please let us know what your experiences are with respect to this topic.

New website section

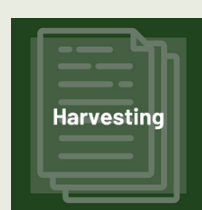
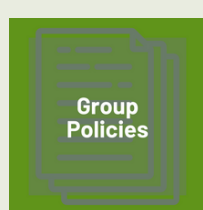
Templates + other useful forms and guidance



We're pleased to let you know about a new website section.

Complementing the **CWA Information Notes, Templates (+ other useful forms and guidance)** aims to provide a starting point for community woodland groups who are tasked with developing new forms or documents which they might not have encountered before.

We aim to add additional forms to this section as and when a requirement is flagged up. Have a look and if there's something you'd like to see there, let us know. Equally if you feel you have something useful you'd be happy to share, again please get in touch:
admin@communitywoods.org



Creating a collective image library

Becky Duncan

Earlier this month Sharon and Jen greatly enjoyed a photography workshop organised by the [Scottish Community Alliance](#). Presented by the very engaging Becky from [Open Aye](#), we were delighted when she agreed to write a summary of the session to share.



All Images shown here: Evanton Community Woodland, 2020 Copyright: Becky Duncan / Open Aye, for Scottish Communities Alliance



Community woodlands combine lots of my favourite things... trees, folk, collective efforts, community ownership, engagement, biodiversity, environmental protection... the list is long. So, when Scottish Communities Alliance commissioned me to photograph [Evanton Community Woodlands](#) in 2020 I was delighted. I travelled up, looking for a what felt like a mythical forest, and I found it, at the edge of a rainbow.



I tried to capture the beauty of the place, the people who were in it, the activities going on and I attempted to visually tell a story of the social and environmental impact. Which, in just half a day, is challenging! I could have easily spent days, months, years, trying to capture what's there and all that goes on. Which is why I think there is a real benefit to CWGs co-producing documentation of their own places. CWGs know the nooks & crannies', all the best bits to see, they will know where the light falls at certain times of year, who comes when and what they get up to. They will have their favourite spots to be in and will know where signs of wildlife can be noticed. This knowledge, and the feelings that they evoke, should be the centrepiece of a photo image library of a place. For example, I worked with [Malls Mire Community Woodland](#) volunteer photographers for a year, from 2022-2023, to capture the forest through the seasons. It was a brilliant project, support by Urban Roots & well worth it. The project improved community engagement as well as documentation.

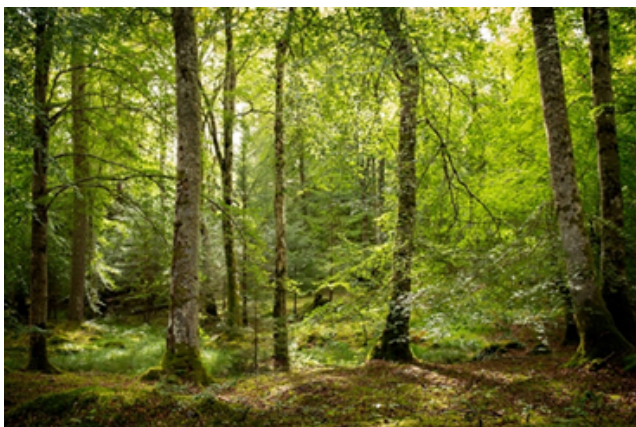
I'll be taking woodland photos for SCA again soon and I'm pleased to be working alongside CWA to understand better what images are needed and why. In the meantime, Jen asked me to share some ideas here, on thoughts about woodland image libraries, so here goes:

Why have a photo library?

Photos can bring stories to life, support many views, demonstrate social impact, improve awareness, encourage action, and inspire engagement. Images can be used to show what has happened, who was involved and what the outcomes were. These types of images are very useful for funding applications, reports, monitoring & evaluations. Or photos may be used for direct promotions, to post on social media, for posters and leaflets, signs, and guides, to encourage visitors, caretakers and re-invigorate support. This may seem obvious, but understanding who the audience of the images are, where they will see it and what message they will take from it, helps to determine what kinds of images are required.

Subject choice

Photos likely to be of use for a CWA image library may include everything from big overview images, showing the context of a place, to tiny details of what is found on close inspection. Photos of people in woodlands can be good, giving a sense of perspective, but also this enables others to imagine themselves there, too. Considerations should be given as to who is shown, why and in what way. A range of activities, wildlife and infrastructure helps to tell a fuller story. But depicting emotions, and portraying the feeling of a space, will go further in capturing the essence of what it's all about.



What about permission?

There are legal considerations, of course. Signed permissions are required for anyone identifiable in the images. Full informed consent for use of the images should be given. Data should be stored securely. Copyright of images must be acknowledged. Licence to use the images should be understood and adhered to. Ethical guidelines must be considered.

But these important aspects should not put groups off, in documenting and disseminating photos of their woodlands. Once a process is established, these things are straight forward.

The usefulness & impact of having a library of decent images is worth it, for sure.

What makes a good photo?

What makes a good photo is a very subjective thing. There's tips and techniques photographers use, such as lighting, content, composition, angle of view and timing. But sometimes it's just a feeling, or a colour, or a streak of visual intrigue, that makes it right. By surrounding yourself with your subject, images are likely to present themselves.

Enjoy the process, appreciate the views & remember the good stuff, then great images will shine through.

**I'd love to hear other thoughts and ideas on this! Please get in touch:
hello@openaye.co.uk**

Andy was recently acquainted with the ERCS at a networking meeting.

Thanks to Julia for writing this newsletter article to raise awareness of this service.

The Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS) works to assist individuals and groups, particularly those who face the biggest barriers, to exercise their rights in environmental law and protect the environment.

We do this in four ways:

- awareness-raising of our legal rights and supporting public participation in environmental decisions
- our free legal advice service
- advocacy in policy and law reform to improve environmental law
- strategic public interest litigation to tackle systemic environmental problems

We understand environmental law to include law relating to land-use planning, climate change, pollution control, environmental health, the conservation of biodiversity, and any other field (e.g. cultural heritage, transport, energy) to the extent that it impacts on the natural environment and our right to live in a healthy environment.

So far, our free legal advice service has responded to over 250 enquiries relating to all aspects of environmental problems. These range from water pollution to land contamination, include enquiries about Environmental Impact Assessments, how to access environmental information, as well as issues relating to nature conservation and afforestation.

Concerns about tree felling and lack of enforcement

Examples of environmental problems relating to trees and forestry raised by our advice clients include unlicensed tree felling which Scottish Forestry has failed to intervene in. For the past 10 years, Scottish Forestry and the Scottish Forestry Commission before it have investigated less than half and prosecuted fewer than 1% of the unauthorised tree fellings reported to them. If you have an example of unlicensed tree felling that you are concerned about, you can contact us for free legal advice.

Clients have also raised concerns about felling in parks or of locally significant trees. One way of legally protect trees and woodlands from felling is through a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). To find out more, read our TPO guide.



Unlicensed clear felling in ancient woodland in 2021 Photo credit: Audrey Baird.



Concerns about forestry and afforestation regulation

We have also received a number of concerns about the lack of regulation on forestry and afforestation. For example, one enquiry related to Forestry Land Scotland's policy on ditching (i.e., digging ditches and draining them) and the associated impacts on biodiversity.

We are particularly grateful for the insight that Audrey Baird from the Help Trees Help Us campaign has given us on the issue of non-native conifers spreading aggressively outside plantations, and the work needed to improve Scotland's forestry regulations and enforcement. In her Voices for Justice blog, you can read more about Audrey's experiences in fighting invasive commercial conifers and unlicensed tree felling to save Scotland's last ancient and native woodlands.

'Glen Douglas, a site for new native woodland is instead covered in invasive non-native conifers. Photo credit: Audrey Baird'

A worrying theme in our advice cases has been the lack of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for afforestation projects. We wanted to investigate this further but discovered that Scottish Forestry's screening opinions for requiring EIAs were not easily available. We then made a Freedom of Information request to access this information, which revealed that Scottish Forestry has required an EIA for only one afforestation proposal since 2019. This means that tree plantations, many in areas of nature conservation designations, have often been planted with no investigation of their impact on the environment. We are now working to ensure that Scottish Forestry is more transparent in how they make their decisions, including by making direct complaints to them.

Can our advice service help you?



Do any of the above issues sound familiar to you?

If you know about similar cases or have a concern about any kind of environmental problem in Scotland, we hope that our advice service can help.

[Get in touch and bookmark our advice service here](#)

We are also currently working to organise an event this spring to share knowledge about issues relating to forestry in Scotland. Bringing together the evidence from our advice work and the learning and experience of CWA members and other organisations, we hope it will be an opportunity for reflection and agreeing collective action to protect our woodlands.

It would be brilliant to have CWA members join us. If you are interested, sign up to our mailing list and follow us on social media to stay updated on our work to improve environmental law and enforcement in Scotland.

- [Follow us on X](#)
- [Join our mailing list / become a member](#)
- [Find out more about us on our website](#)

Finally, we would like to say a big thank you to the Community Woodland Association for your work on stewarding healthy woodlands for everyone to enjoy.

Horse Logging

Simon Anthony Lenihan

New member Simon works logging horses. Too good an opportunity to miss, he was immediately enlisted to write an article.



I grew up surrounded by working horses - there is an unbroken chain in our family working with the beast of burden going back to 1710 and probably beyond. I have always had an affinity with the working horse but also a great love of our forests. It was no surprise to anyone thirty four years ago that I took hold of the reins and headed to the island Wood in the south west of Ireland.

The influx of machines during the 90s all but finished the role of the working horse. A census in 1999 showed that I was the last woodsman working with horses in the thirty two counties .



We were seen as outdated, old fashioned and just a bygone from the past. It was frustrating to say the least, a harvesting system that is sustainable, low carbon footprint, powered by nature in the form of hay and grain with the by product going back into the soil, yet no place in mainstream forestry.

Machines will continue to be the main mover of timber in the future and in the main do a great job but we cannot continue to do every job with the same sledge hammer. We have to be site specific and especially aware near rivers and streams and ecologically sensitive sites.

We currently work in Aberdeenshire for Mr Malcolm Hay and Lam forestry, both parties very much ecologically minded and forward thinking. We currently have four North Swedish stallions which have been bred for hundreds of years for forestry extraction. We have various forwarders to increase productivity and handle longer extraction distances. We are a family business and my sons are hopefully going to carry on the tradition. I have sent my sons abroad for months at the time to work with some of the best practitioners in the world . This has no doubt enhanced their skills ,not just as horsemen but it has given them a better insight into how our forests should be managed.

The cost of using horses on sensitive sites far outweighs any mechanical method. The amount of times we have heard comments like "we made 10k profit from timber sales", but no reference to the thousands spent in reinstatement of roads and forests alike. It is a myth that you can reinstate ground within the forest, it's purely superficial, covering over the ruts is not restoring the forest floor Lets be site specific when it comes to harvesting in the future and help restore our forests back to good health.



Find out more about Simon and his horses at: www.celtichorselogging.com