

# Ranger Report. 2023 AGM.

2022 was a lenient year for staffing, and this presented a lot of challenges for community engagement, with a lack of funds it was inevitable that the ranger position would be terminated entirely in the Spring of this year. I mitigated this by a reduction of hours to a day a week, and concentrated with board support on obtaining future funding. This has been followed by a period of unpaid leave beginning in January 2023.

Despite this very difficult period, we managed to make the following advancements at the wood:

- **Workload.** Katherine took over long term forest plan management report, seeking consultant Angus Bevan who undertook our PAWS report.
- **Deer:**  
Secure a volunteer deer manager in lieu of likely termination of ranger post. I am hoping to gain experience with him and increase skill base obtained from the Level one DMQ I completed last year.
- **Argyll Countryside Trust**  
Ian Dow and I oversaw local contractor who felled: a total hectareage of 37.6 with an Average density of 26.5% at Glenan Wood between the 1st January and the 20th March. Crucially, we obtained geolocated images and baseline maps for further phases of ponticum removal in the wood.
- **Ring barking.**  
Work continued on a day a week basis ring barking sitka trees.  
  
I did get away on two trips outside of the area:
- **Path/Trail building course in Tioran community forest.**  
This looked at assessing and grading trails using basic handtools.
- **CWA conference in Perthshire.**  
Good to gain perspective and meet contacts old and new. Learned a great deal from other community woodlands, and some of the different forms of community land use.
- **OWL group argyll summer programme with teens.**  
With input from myself, craftsperson Mark Bamford; supporting local outdoor practitione MaryLou Anderson and lunchtime guest speakers with specialist ecological expertise. Look forward to more quality events of this nature . Of note was a collaboration with Andree Hawkes Gaelic in the landscape event which was well attended.
- **Apple day at school.\_**  
Not a big apple year in terms of yield but pressing equipment was put through it's paces and we have laid the ground for pressing to be a Community event for future years. This represents the social and economic yield that can be harnessed from nature with community cohesion and celebration at the heart of it. More of these sort of occasions!
- I was involved in a study of social and economic benefit of community woods in scotland; this resulted in a Case study document and [a commissioned video](#); this will help with raising profile of the wood and our aspirations.

## **Community Consultation**

Over the winter period, it became apparent to me that there wasn't really a mandate from the community for activities and events within the wood, & since the initial consultation was undertaken prior to the woods purchase for the business plan it was time to gain a snapshot in time of community interest. Whilst I would hope there will be many more visioning from community as well as consultations and surveys on the broad range of activity in future.

This particular survey was very well responded. 144 local respondents set a very interesting mandate for a range of activities which can be used to form the basis of a programme that caters for all local demographics, from little ones to the elders amongst us; and of course all the people in between. There was also some really useful dissent in the comments which helps get a flavour of a fundamental care people have for the wood. Have a look for yourself on the FOGW website, it is really insightful.

## **Long term biodiversity funding**

- Behind scenes, I have also been in discussion with Ian Dow of ACT for 35 year biodiversity fund. This will aim to deal with *Ponticum* to the point of complete eradication and involve training and education for local workforce in lever and mulch application.

## **Following consultation process:**

I realised the necessity for meaningful and informed consultation for change of use of the plantation woodland. I believe this presents opportunity for sustainable enterprise for members of community, something sorely needed in a cost of living crisis; but we need both research and input from members to choose the right option for the good of the community as well as the environment. We hope to present a number of options to community in future.

Following the consultation before Christmas, I honestly thought I would be winding down towards the end of the post.

## **Successful Community Lottery Bid.**

However, I'm pleased to announce that our community Fund bid fund was successful, despite a very competitive climate. A fixed term grant of three years has been secured; which will allow for a four day per week post. My start date is June 19<sup>th</sup>.

The aims of the grant over this period will focus on:

1. Regeneration volunteering: Weekly party, likely focus is paths, orchard and ring barking in first instance.
2. Community Events. Trick will be to get range right and source from/help facilitate local expert as well as my own delivery. I have a keen interest in youth focused events/clubs.
3. Working group model: We aim to overcome the bottleneck of an overburdened board by setting up and training a number of autonomous working groups. A board member will sit on each of the groups.

Hoping to partner with Volunteer Cowal South West and to apply to TDDT for tool shed.

The project start date is projected to be the **19<sup>th</sup> June 2023** and the range is looking forward to making a return to work on this date and to facilitate a full summer of activities.

### ***To that end:***

An outdoor classroom space is being prepared with purchase of new roof and commissioning of an oak door. Likely cost is around £1500, this is at my own expense and donations are welcomed.

- On look out for local experts who have some kind of Gist. Hope to facilitate local people sharing their passion and specialist knowledge in an accessible and engagng way. Call out for participants.
- Weekly event called Brew and Blether. A few hours for residents to bring a cup, share, tea and stories and find out what's happening in the wood. This could involve special guests, but simple format will make for regular conversation about whats happening at Glenan.
- Cowal walking festival- Hope to offer some guided walks and nature connection activities.
- Establishing the right day for working party through consultation. This will include identified need from Portavadie to engage workforce, form part of community and anticipate footfall to come from there.
- As well as putting on events from identified need in consultation, very open to responding to requests or offers from community members. As long as we record participation for grant purposes, we are open to anything.

With my very best for the wood,  
Rhyddian Knight.