

Many thanks to Chantelle Morris for our new logo. We hope you like it.



AIGAS COMMUNITY FOREST

Coille Coimhearsnachd Aigeis

A productive, working forest providing measurable social, economic and environmental benefits for local residents and visitors alike

## Newsletter – June 2010

### The Future

It is well over a year since the campaign to bring Aigas Forest into community ownership was launched. In this time we have come a long way, but really the hard work is all in front of us. Not just the next 12 months, in which we have to raise the ambitious sum of £750,000, but after that, if we succeed, the forest is a long term operation. It is a legacy from this generation to the next and hopefully to the many after that. Maybe in 100 years time the residents of our community, who can all see the forest from their homes, will be looking out onto a massively different woodland. A woodland balanced between native species and commercial planting, criss-crossed with paths providing easy and enjoyable access, home to a wide diversity of wildlife and producing an income not just to reinvest in the forest but also to support other activity in the glen. A place to be really proud of. This is the vision that we try to capture in the phrase '*a productive, working forest providing measurable social, economic and environmental benefits for local residents and visitors alike*'. This is the vision we on the steering committee want to share with the wider community. This is the vision we need our funders to believe in.



### Business Plan

Our feasibility study showed that timber production has the potential to generate a significant cash surplus over the first 5-year period and beyond. But we need to make the most of the forest and many other ideas have been suggested. You can see some of these on our current website. In the early stages it was important to encourage ideas and foster enthusiasm but, through the feasibility study and with continued feedback from the community, we have been able to focus on those ideas that should provide maximum social and economic benefit whilst also fitting in with our community ethos and not impacting our environmental aims. All ideas are welcomed and are discussed openly, but not every idea can or should find its way into our plans. We are now in the



process of fleshing out our first draft business plan and so are investigating potential income from the following activities: wood fuel production; woodland burials; small-scale high-end eco holiday accommodation; and renewable energy production. We are also developing plans for providing parking adjacent to Aigas Golf Course and an improved path network to encourage access by locals and visitors. Access was highlighted as a priority during last summer's community consultation. Once this plan is completed we will seek an independent evaluation of the wider social and economic benefits that would accrue from its implementation. Both the revised plan and the statement of benefits are vital in securing the support of funders and are being funded by Highland LEADER and The Highland Council.

## Community Ownership

As is the case with the vast majority of community ownership schemes, Aigas Community Forest has been established as a Company Limited by Guarantee. We have also applied for charitable status. Over the summer we will be inviting you to become a 'Company Member' and have a direct say in the way the forest is managed. Company members are a bit like shareholders but with no financial stake or risk in the company. The majority of directors are elected from the company members - Kilmorack Community Council have the right to nominate one director and the option exists to co-opt up to three others if specific skills or experience are not otherwise available. The existing directors joined the board when the company was formed and had previously served on the Steering Committee established after the initial public meeting in March 2009. If we are successful in securing the Forest we will start holding Annual General Meetings from June 2011. At each AGM, company members will be asked to vote on a third of the directors. Any company member will have the option to stand for the Board and of course the chance to remove directors from the Board. Additionally directors can only serve a maximum of two consecutive terms of three years before stepping down. This puts control of the company and the way the Forest is managed directly in the hands of the Community. If you don't like the way things are going, or think you could do a better job, then once a year you will have the chance to take a hands-on role. When the time comes please take the opportunity to become a company member and exercise your right to direct the future of Aigas Forest.



## Family Quiz Night

Due to snow the Family Quiz Night was postponed from February to April 16th. We had 12 very competitive tables and a lot of laughter. A total of £395 was raised and split equally with the Hall. The quizmaster is already writing next year's questions so start studying!

## Q&A

### How can I make a donation?

Please send any donations to our Secretary, Andrew Leaver, North View, Crask of Aigas, Beauly IV4 7AD. Cheques should be made payable to Aigas Community Forest.

### Would my donation be spent on your charitable aims or used to cover admin expenses?

We are conscious that people want to support our aims and not the use of consultants for business plans, and designers and printers for fancy leaflets. But we do need further expert support and we want to present a professional image to potential funders, so we have secured grants from Highland LEADER and The Highland Council which we can use for our admin expenses. This ensures your donation goes where you want it to be spent.

### Where can I get more information?

Contact us at [AigasForest@aol.com](mailto:AigasForest@aol.com) or go to our website [www.aigasforest.org.uk](http://www.aigasforest.org.uk) where you can register as a volunteer as well as download copies of all our minutes and other useful documents.

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