

*A productive, working forest*

*providing measurable social, economic and environmental benefits  
for local residents and visitors alike*

## **Newsletter – January 2016**

### **Forest Design Plan Consultation**

Aigas Forest was purchased by the community on 5th March last year, nearly six years to the day since the public meeting in Kilmorack Hall which launched the community buy-out campaign. Over the past 10 months we have undertaken a wide range of different activities and already are seeing some small scale benefits for local residents—more of this overleaf. However, the most critical thing we need to do, and our current priority, is to gain approval for a new Long Term Forest Plan. This document not only lays out our felling and planting intentions but once approved by Forestry Commission Scotland allows us to undertake our first harvesting operations.

In terms of forest management we would like to convert Aigas Forest to a more diverse woodland incorporating public access and delivering a range of biodiversity benefits, while still generating local jobs and income for management. The forest at present is very evenly aged having largely been planted in the 1960's. Traditional commercial management would see this clear felled in large blocks and restocked with predominantly conifer species. Our aim is to move,



where possible, to continuous cover forestry (CCF), retaining permanent tree cover but producing timber from thinning and selective felling. This will however take some time to achieve. We will be able to convert most areas of Scots Pine within the woodland to CCF immediately as the trees are slow growing and will respond to thinning. However some other areas will require clear felling and restocking before CCF can be delivered as the trees are too large and will be susceptible to windblow. We will also remove trees from areas of deep peat and diversify tree cover to include mixed broadleaves particularly along watercourses, on steep ground or to assist landscaping.

**Forest Consultation Day**

**Saturday 30th January**

**Two guided walks led by our  
Development Officer**

**09.30—12.00**

**13.00—15.30**

**Park at forest gate.  
Adjacent to Aigas Golf Course**

The outline of our plan entered a 28-day period of statutory consultation on January 12th. You can download a copy from our website or Facebook page. Copies are available to view at Beaully Library, Kilmorack Hall, Aigas Field Centre and Aigas Golf Course or request a copy from the ACF Secretary, North View, Crask of Aigas IV4 7AD. We are also offering a consultation day in the Forest on 30th January with two opportunities to attend. Please take the time to read and comment on our ideas.

## A busy 12 months

We received notification from the Scottish Land Fund of the grant we needed to buy the forest in **November 2014** and the final piece of the funding jigsaw came with a substantial grant from The Aigas Trust confirmed just over 12 months ago. So what have we done these last 12 months?

In **January** and **February** the focus of activity was on the legal transfer of the title. Agreeing boundaries and road access for a parcel of land that hasn't changed hands for over 50 years can take time but this was finally completed on March 5th.

In late **March**, Nicola Sturgeon chose Aigas for her first official visit to community-owned land. With a new pair of wellies and coat for the occasion she spent time with ACF representatives learning more about the journey we had taken to get to ownership and our ambitions for the future.

Every Thursday evening in **May** we offered community consultation walks. Led by our Development Officer, Donnie Chisholm, these took different routes and allowed us to gain input as well as to try some ideas out. Across the four evenings over 70 people attended.

Early in year we used a £2,000 grant from the *Bank of Scotland* to buy equipment for volunteers and in **June** we hosted volunteers from *Lifescan Scotland* for four days with 12-15 people attending each day. They carried out path maintenance, cleared debris, cut down roadside regen and cleared rubbish from around the picnic area and roadside. At other times local volunteers cleared windblow from the road, paths and a burn. In **November** a group chopped much of this into firewood which *Kilmorack Community Council* have distributed free to those in need in our community.

In **June** we celebrated community ownership with a barbecue up at Lochan nan Losgainn.

Throughout the year we hosted a number of organisations including *Woodland Trust Scotland*, the *Heritage Lottery Fund*, the *Native Woodland Discussion Group* and two visits from *Scottish School of Forestry* students. The Woodland Trust supported the production of an ancient woodland inventory and restoration plan for Aigas.

Our partners at *Aigas Field Centre* have taken guests for walks in the forest a number of times where, along with wildlife sightings they enjoyed learning about community ownership. The Forest has also been used for ranger training and Field Centre staff are conducting a number of surveys including for red squirrel and dragonflies and invertebrates which will support our Forest Plan.

In **September** we welcomed the pupils and staff of *Teanassie Primary School* for a sponsored walk and forest education day. The pupils raised over £800, had fun building shelters and initiated what we hope will be a long term partnership. Pupils have since returned for further outdoor learning and to pot-up Christmas trees they sold at their annual fayre along with a few bags of Aigas firewood generating funds for both organisations.

Roland Spencer-Jones, other members of the *North of Scotland Archaeological Society* and some forest volunteers are currently conducting a series of walkover surveys which will inform our planning and provide information for future interpretation of the history of the area.

