



North West Mull Community Woodland Co Ltd
Penmore Mill, Dervaig, Isle of Mull, PA75 6QS
Tel: 01688 400600 admin@nwmullwoodland.co.uk
Charity no. SCO37336 Company no. 287343

Autumn Newsletter 2012

Five Year Review

Due to circumstances outwith the control of NWMCWC Ltd the final report was badly delayed, but it has now been received, reviewed by the Directors and is available for the community to look at. The Report can be accessed via our website. Overall the Review of the first five years of the community project is very positive and highlights the achievement of turning landlocked Forestry Commission plantations into a harvestable crop by the building of the haul road. Also positively discussed are the creation of the Forest School, registration of 9 new Forest Crofts, progress towards a Micro Hydro plant and affordable housing, and progress towards developing the access and amenity value of the woodlands and creating a woodland burial site. Results from the questionnaire that formed part of the review process indicate that although most people in the community have positive or neutral views about NWMCWC Ltd there is still a small but significant minority who have negative feelings. It was acknowledged that although NWMCWC Ltd utilise a wide variety of communication media to keep the community informed they still have to overcome a perception by a few people that information sharing has been poor. Looking to the future the Consultants highlight the need for a secure income stream to cover overhead costs and suggest that urgent progression of the Micro Hydro scheme could be a long term solution. Without some form of income it will not be possible to continue to employ staff with the inevitable result that progress on all projects will suffer. The Consultants have presented their discussions with the Directors and other agencies about the future of NWMCWC Ltd with conservative projected costings. The Board believe that the Review document provides a fair assessment of NWMCWC Ltd's achievements so far and hope to use it as a roadmap for the future.

100 Club

The 3rd 100 Club Draw of 2012 was made on Friday 20th July by Diane Dewhurst. 1st Prize £35.00 Tracy Mayo, 2nd Prize £15.00 Pam Brown, 3rd Prize £5.00 Andrew Womack and 4th Prize £3.50 Pete Pinnington. Congratulations to all the lucky winners.

Office Opening Hours

Our Development Manager, Ian Hepburn, has reduced his working hours with a view to retiring completely in the next year or two. He now works for three days a week on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Our part-time Administrator Belinda Hale continues to work on Mondays and Tuesdays. The overlap on Tuesdays allows for continuity of work and information sharing but means that the Office is no longer open on Fridays. If anybody needs to contact NWMCWC Ltd on a Friday (or any time when the Office is closed due to meetings, holidays etc) they should call one of the Directors.



NWMCWC

Five-year review and appraisal of future plans

Catherine Francis & Munro Gauld
May 2012

Forestry Commission Scotland
Comisean na Coilltearachd Ailce

HIE
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd nan Eilean



Producers Market Teas

NWMCWC Ltd was once again invited by the Village Hall Committee to provide the teas at the Bank Holiday weekend Producers Market on Sunday 5th August 2012. This was a great fundraising opportunity and our Members responded enthusiastically to the request for home baking and help with serving. Dozens of sweet treats were donated and served to a seemingly endless stream of visitors to the Producers Market. Volunteers helped to serve, clear and wash up for a busy couple of hours until the rush was over. We had provided enough teas to raise a total of £180.00 – a very good afternoon's work. Thank you to everyone who helped make the afternoon such a success. We are very fortunate to have so many willing volunteers who are prepared to give up their time to help raise funds for the Charity.

Dervaig Toilets

The continued closure of the Dervaig Toilets is an ongoing problem. It has been reported to Argyll and Bute Council that the lack of proper facilities is leading people to use the viewpoint car park as a lavatory. They have agreed to send someone over to take another look at the toilet building in view of the health risks associated with the current situation. However it is now unlikely that any practical solution will be found before the end of this holiday season.

Harvesting and Export

Harvesting in Langamull continues to progress well. There was a good turnout for the Harvesting Demonstration held on 8th August. Spectators were able to watch trees being felled by a modern harvester. The cut lengths of timber were picked up and stacked by the forwarder. The low ground pressure transport vehicle was also on site for the visitors to look at. Feedback received by the Directors is that everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to see the massive machines in action. All the harvested timber continues to be exported via the floating pier at Fishnish. Circumstances outwith the control of NWMCWC Ltd mean that the fixed pier will not be built and in use for some considerable time. This has cost implications for our Company as the maximum boat size able to use the floating pier is 600 tons rather than the 3000 ton boats originally budgeted for. However, the current system still costs a great deal less than road and ferry transport and has a much lower carbon footprint.



The forwarder stacking lengths of timber felled and cut to size by the harvester

Micro Hydro Project

This project continues to offer the best prospect of an income stream to cover overhead costs. With this in mind an application is being prepared for a special type of loan that will cover all the preparation costs up to the start of building. The loan only has to be repaid if the project progresses to actually being built. If granted, the loan will enable NWMCWC Ltd to commission full plans, negotiate grid connection terms and fulfil the planning process as required by Argyll and Bute Council. Once planning permission has been granted it should not be too difficult to obtain a commercial or bank loan to cover the actual building and commissioning costs as the project will have acquired credibility throughout the preparation process. Alternatives to a commercial loan are also being investigated by the Board. One option would involve a local debenture scheme with people from the community being offered a guaranteed interest rate on their investment in the project.

First Aid Course

If you go down to the woods today you're sure of a big surprise! On June 22nd visitors to the Forest School area in West Ardu would have seen a surprising number of badly injured casualties being attended to by efficient and knowledgeable first aiders. Fortunately no-one had really been hurt; it was just the 'realistic scenario' part of an emergency first aid course. As reported in the Summer Newsletter upcoming changes to Health and Safety regulations mean that regular volunteers for our work parties need to have a recognised First Aid Certificate. Many of our work parties involve the use of chainsaws so a course was commissioned that could be tailored to likely forestry related injuries including chainsaw trauma. Thirteen regular volunteers signed up for the course which was delivered by ABC-Response, a company that provides all of UPM Tilhill's first aid training and is recognised by the Forestry Commission and Health and Safety Executive. The day started indoors with scene assessment, CPR and basic first aid but quickly moved on to forestry related injuries. The trainer showed everyone pictures of real casualties who had sustained a variety of horrific injuries and explained how each one should be dealt with to give the best possible outcome for the injured person. By the time the group moved to the forest the trainees were able to deal with the very realistic injuries, blood and fake amputations in a calm and competent way. This was an excellent training day resulting in a large pool of qualified emergency first aiders whose newly acquired skills can be used outwith their forestry activities. Thanks go to Forestry Commission Community Seedcorn Fund who met the full costs of the training for our volunteers.

Affordable Housing

Provision of affordable housing has been an aspiration of NWMCWC Ltd since its inception. Creation of nine forest crofts has gone a long way to fulfilling that obligation as all the crofters are entitled to grants and subsidies to build homes on their crofts. Now the haul road is complete and harvesting well under way the Directors are taking a hard look at whether anything further is required to help local families with housing. The first part of the process was to establish whether there is still a local need for affordable housing by circulating a Housing Need Survey. The results indicate that although a few people would like to purchase a below market value plot to build their own house there is only a tiny demand for affordable rental housing. This level of need is not really sufficient for the new build scheme originally envisaged so the Directors are looking at a variety of alternatives. Any plans felt to be viable will be presented to the community before they are put into action.

STOP PRESS!! The **Forest Fun Day** on Saturday 25th August was a great success. Many thanks to all helpers and those who donated prizes and items to auction. There will be a full report with photos in the next Newsletter.

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