



ISLAND WOODFUELS

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Summer Newsletter 2014



Information Board at Kildavie

Kildavie

The new path and signage are now in place on the haul road side of Kildavie. The old path is fairly clear creating a circular walk from the roadside car park at Langamull. Care needs to be taken on the old bridge, but it is intended to form a work party to repair it in the next few weeks. The Archaeology Management Group has been approached by the organiser of a University Summer School about the possibility of a fully supervised excavation at Kildavie this summer. There will be opportunities for local people to participate in the dig under the guidance of the University team, and contact details for this will be circulated when they are available.



New Path Down to Kildavie

AGM

The Annual General Meeting for NWMCWC Ltd was held on Tuesday 15th April in Dervaig Village Hall. The Minutes of the 2013 AGM were signed as a true record of the proceedings, proposer Tony Proud, seconder Mike Hale. The Chairman, Colin Morrison, gave a brief resume of the year's events and thanked Ian Hepburn for all his hard work as Development Manager over the past five years. Ian will be staying in close contact with the Company, having agreed to maintain continuity on all projects until the new Development Manager is fully operational and to become a Director. Ian then gave his last Development Manager's Report including an illustrated presentation about the year's activities. Two Directors, Iain Thomson and John Addy, were re-elected for their second term of office under the Director's rotation rules. Ian Hepburn was elected onto the Board for the first time. Andy Mayo, Finance Director, presented the Annual Accounts and noted that Clements have been re-appointed as auditors. There being no other competent business the AGM was closed and was followed by an opportunity for attendees to ask questions. Matters raised included the plans for replanting Langamull, and progress concerning the Dervaig toilets.

Retirement

Our Development Manager, Ian Hepburn retired at the end of March after five years of hard work moving a wide variety of projects forward. Ian had been working part time for the past year but still maintained a high level of responsibility for the day to day management of NWMCWC Ltd. During his time with the Company Ian has overseen the planning and building of the haul road, the commencement and continuation of harvesting in Langamull, the floating pier at Fishnish which directly led to the building of the new fixed pier, and the creation of 9 new Forest Crofts. He has also seen the Micro Hydro generation scheme through to the point where a planning application is imminent and been heavily involved in the affordable housing project. In the past year Ian has also negotiated the purchase of the Crannich assets and organised the woodfuel operation including the day-to-day management of our Woodfuel Operator. Ian was elected to the Board of NWMCWC Ltd at the 2014 AGM so we will continue to benefit from his knowledge and expertise. As mentioned in the Development Manager item, Ian has also agreed to continue helping with the major projects for a while to ensure that there is continuity until the new Manager is fully functional. Many thanks to Ian for the huge contribution he has made to developing the community land in NW Mull.

Harvesting

Harvesting in Langamull South is progressing well despite the presence of a pair of white tailed sea eagles (WTSE) in the area. These are believed to be the same birds that attempted to nest at Kildavie last year. The Directors of NVMCWC Ltd, UPM Tilhill and the harvesting contractors have worked closely with RSPB officer Dave Sexton to minimise disturbance to the eagles. This has meant making some changes to the sequence of clear felling, but overall the programme remains on time. The most recent information we have from Dave is that the birds appear, once again, to have been unsuccessful in hatching a chick despite everyone's best efforts to protect their nest site. These two eagles are still young and it is believed to be quite common for WTSE to make several attempts before successfully hatching and fledging a chick. The Directors are committed to working with the RSPB to ensure that WTSE and other protected species are able to live safely in the NVMCWC Ltd forests.

Harvested saw logs and pulpwood continue to be exported via the new fixed pier at Fishnish. All fuel wood is now being retained on Mull and seasoned in stacks to provide a sustainable source of supply to our woodchip, bulk fuel wood and domestic firewood customers.

Development Manager

The Scottish Government has introduced a new grant scheme to help community groups to increase capacity in their local area. NVMCWC Ltd, assisted by Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS), applied for funding for a full time Development Manager to replace Ian Hepburn. A grant has been awarded to cover the employment costs for two years including a small sum towards recruitment. The job was advertised in the local press and via other community organisations, resulting in twelve applications. These were reviewed by the Board and three people will be offered interviews. The interview panel comprising 4 - 5 Directors will have a really difficult task choosing between some very strong candidates for the position. It is hoped that interviews will take place in the middle of June and that an appointment will be made soon after that. Ian Hepburn has agreed to work free of charge for two days per week to ensure a smooth hand-over and continuity for all the current projects. We are delighted that this is the second, year round employment opportunity to have been offered by NVMCWC Ltd in the past six months.

Woodfuel

The woodchip side of our Trading Company continues to progress well. Our Woodfuel Operator, Alan Quinn, has now completed his training and is gaining experience by working alongside Robin Sedgwick on the deliveries with a view to taking full charge of them in the next few weeks. A shelter has been erected to keep cut and split firewood dry and work is ongoing to streamline the domestic firewood side of the fuel supply business. There have been some hiccoughs and setbacks along the way with machinery breakdowns leading to higher than expected repair bills, but overall the Directors are very pleased with the profitability of the whole fuel supply business since the takeover of the assets at Crannich six months ago.



Lochdonhead Community Cafe

On Thursday 24th May I was invited to visit the Community Cafe at Lochdonhead Primary School. The school are in the running for an education award and the assessors were due to attend. The children gave me a terrific welcome, showed me to a table laden with homemade cakes and brought me a cup of tea. There was a good attendance including many people I knew so the atmosphere was very convivial. The children distributed a leaflet they had published to welcome French visitors to Mull. It included maps, photos and drawings, all captioned in French, and will be available in the tourist office at Craignure. We were then given a first aid demonstration in which the children showed us how to deal with conscious and unconscious patients. All the information about this had been put onto small, laminated cards with lovely drawings, which were handed round for us to keep. There was a very interesting display about the Lochdonhead Forest School (see picture). It is great that the Forest School idea flourishes so well on Mull, particularly in relation to the primary schools. A final cup of tea (and another piece of cake) brought my very interesting and rewarding visit to a close. Belinda Hale



Training

NVMCWC Ltd is very pleased to have delivered another successful chainsaw training course. Three Island candidates, including our Woodfuel Operator Alan Quinn, were trained over five days in chainsaw maintenance and safety, cross cutting with a chainsaw, and felling and processing small trees. After assessment by an independent assessor they were all awarded City and Guild NPTC qualifications. Over the past few weeks Alan and some of our volunteers have also received training for all the woodfuel processing and delivery machinery and vehicles. This has created a pool of qualified operators who will provide assistance and holiday cover for Alan. Some of the training was supported by grant funding from Forestry Commission Community Seedcorn Fund.

100 Club

The 2nd 100 Club Draw of 2014 was made on 6th May. The lucky winners were: 1st Prize - Tony Proud, 2nd Prize - Caroline Wood, 3rd Prize - Pam Brown, 4th Prize - Cath Mayo. Congratulations to all our winners. The 3rd draw will take place at the end of July.