



**North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd**

**PRESS RELEASE 22nd July 2017**

## **ISLE OF ULVA Community Right To Buy**

When news came out in May that the Isle of Ulva was about to come on the market a strong feeling quickly emerged in the local community that because of the potential for repopulation and increased economic activity the possibility of a community buy-out should be pursued.

A petition was quickly carried out which showed there was very substantial support throughout North West Mull for an application to be made under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 for a Community Right To Buy registration.

That application has now been validated and a hold has been put on any sale of Ulva until Scottish Ministers have decided whether to agree to the registration or not.

This is just the first step of many in the ambition to buy Ulva and its associated holdings at Ulva Ferry on the mainland of Mull, for the community.

Over the coming weeks a feasibility study will be carried out to help prepare a detailed business plan and management strategy. An important part of that feasibility study will be consultation with the local community and more widely, to seek views on the plans as they develop.

The overall aim as stated in the application is to:

**“Manage the estate to provide sustainable benefits for the community in the short to medium term and in the long term for future generations including the repopulation of the island.”**

The reasons put forward in the application are:

**This sale marks a crossroads in the history of Ulva and North West Mull and provides a golden opportunity to ensure the survival and bolster the development of a fragile and remote community, enabling a vibrant and sustainable future for generations to come.**

**Sustainable community benefit is dependent on more people living and working year round on the island itself and the way to achieve this is for the land to be owned and managed by the community.**

**The default position would be continued private ownership with no assurance of significant community benefit. Indeed there could be every chance of continued decline of economic activity and community participation in the event of Ulva becoming a private recreational estate for an absentee landlord – possibly with restricted or much more difficult access than at present. (In this regard the selling agents' comments regarding the estate's international marketing and the estate's right of control over access to the piers are telling). – see link to sales brochure below**

For more details on the proposals to revitalise Ulva please see attachment 1

Or contact us by email: [admin@nwmullwoodland.co.uk](mailto:admin@nwmullwoodland.co.uk) or phone: 01688 400600

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

### **1) NWMCWC**

North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd (NWMCWC) is a community company limited by guarantee. There are no shareholders. Membership is open to all people living in North West Mull – which includes Ulva.

The Company was established in 2006 when it became the first community body to purchase woodlands from the Forestry Commission under the National Forest Land Scheme.

The Company seeks to promote sustainable community ownership generally.

Its woodlands are home to Scotland's first community owned forest crofts.

In addition to managing the forest, current projects include development of affordable housing and installation of a micro hydro scheme.

The company also has a woodfuel business (Island Woodfuels) supplying woodchips and logs for heating.

### **2) SALE PARTICULARS**

Ulva is being marketed by Knight Frank and Bell Ingram. The sales brochure can be accessed via this link:

**<http://content.knightfrank.com/property/edn170053/brochures/en/edn170053-en-brochure-fd638751-4f8b-4cb5-8f3d-01614d247ece-1.pdf>**

## **ATTACHMENT 1. Extract from the CRTB application package**

### **PROPOSALS FOR THE LAND**

#### **Overall Objective**

**Management of the Island of Ulva and associated holdings on the adjacent mainland of Mull to provide sustainable benefits for the community in the short to medium term and in the long term for future generations including the repopulation of the area.**

As this is a “late application” detailed management objectives, funding and business management strategies will be further defined and modified as necessary following the feasibility study and during the development of funding and business strategies. (Tenders for Valuations and a Feasibility Study have been received and these will be under way as soon as possible. Full funding for this work has been agreed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, (HIE))

The main priority areas and potential developments anticipated are set out below.

#### **Proposals**

##### **Improve housing stock and other buildings**

- A phased programme will be implemented to bring existing housing stock (both presently occupied and presently unoccupied) up to modern standards
- Derelict structures will be brought into use including existing farm buildings and buildings elsewhere on the island
- Plots will be made available for affordable housing for rent and/or self-build
- Sale of property with rural housing burdens attached will be considered
- Buildings at Ulva Ferry on the mainland of Mull will continue to provide storage and logistic benefit for Ulva residents. Existing leases on two of the sheds will be continued (one with the owner of Gometra, the other with a local fishery concern.)

##### **Improve infrastructure**

- The Island Ferry service will be maintained and enhanced as a permanent year round provision.
- The piers and slipways on Ulva and neighbouring Mull shore will be maintained and access assured for all users.
- Footpaths and access tracks to the main buildings on the island will be upgraded and some accessible routes provided.
- Opportunities will be sought for micro generation where viable
- Options to turn one of the steading buildings into a public building for social events, entertainment space etc. will be investigated.
- The church will be maintained and its possible wider use for example as a music venue will be investigated.

##### **Revitalise and expand agriculture**

- The existing farm will be re-let.
- New smallholdings or crofts will be made available.

##### **Manage forestry sustainably and seek new opportunities**

- The requirements of the Forest Design Plan which will be inherited on purchase will be met. (As part of the valuation, an assessment will be required of any restocking liabilities)
- Micro harvesting and timber milling using NVMCWC equipment and expertise will be promoted.
- Options for Agro-forestry in existing woodland and in the long term within the new broadleaf woodlands will be investigated.

### **Unlock the very large tourism potential largely untapped at present**

To date, tourism on Ulva has not had the priority which would come with community ownership. Waymarking of footpaths and interpretation of historical sites could be improved in the short term at relatively low cost. Capitalising on the significant cultural and historic connection with Ulva will be a high priority. Connections with David Livingstone, Lachlan MacQuarrie, Beatrix Potter, Boswell and Johnston all have great potential to draw in tourists. The many ruined buildings are a poignant reminder of the effects of 19th century clearances of Ulva. Not least the street of abandoned cottages at Starvation Point which is relatively close to the ferry and would be an ideal location at which to present information on the period in the island and Scotland's history. The historic Telford church is another key point of historical interest for visitors.

To support increased tourism, a number of initiatives will be worked. These will be run either directly by the Community Body or by other people under lease or rental arrangements. The precise mechanisms will be addressed during the Feasibility Study.

- A secure tenancy will be available to the existing restaurant business to allow it to expand
- The partnership with the ferry business will be maintained
- Self-catering properties and hostel facilities will be established.
- Potential for guest house / B&B will be considered
- A camp site with facilities will be established, possibly including pods or shepherd's huts
- Premises for an artist's residency, studio space, shop or gallery will be developed
- The potential to develop Pony trekking, Mountain bike hire will be investigated.
- New marine business will be encouraged in the shallow coastal areas such as sailing, kayaking and coastal cruises.
- Sea fishing trips will be promoted.

### **Enhance biodiversity and safeguard sensitive habitats and species**

- Establishment of an eagle hide to help support a ranger post is proposed.
- Ranger led and self-guided nature trails and study activities will be developed.
- A Biodiversity Action Plan will be prepared.
- A Conservation programme for key species and habitats will be established for Ulva itself and for the outlying small associated islands.
- Maritime and terrestrial habitats on the associated isolated islands and skerries will be protected.
- Scientific research will be encouraged – Geological, ecological, marine and terrestrial

### **Support Marine Industries, Fishing and Aquaculture**

- Sustainable inshore fisheries development will be encouraged and supported by provision of premises.
- Re-instatement of abandoned and / or establishment of new oyster farms will be evaluated
- Feasibility of mussel farming will be evaluated
- Seaweed harvesting could be re-established, particularly in the niche edible seaweed market. Seaweed farming potential will be investigated.
- A boat slip and or boatyard on Ulva could be feasible as a new business.