



North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd

PRESS RELEASE

AGREEMENT REACHED TO BUY ISLE OF ULVA FOR THE COMMUNITY

Negotiations have been successfully concluded for the purchase of Ulva Estate on behalf of the community of the island and neighbouring North West Mull.

Binding contracts were concluded today and ownership will transfer on 21st June.

The bid to buy Ulva was launched around a year ago when the present owner, Mr. Jamie Howard, decided to put the estate on the market.

North West Mull Community Woodland Company as a recognised Community Body with land holdings close to Ulva on the mainland of the Isle of Mull and whose membership area includes Ulva, applied for a Community Right to Buy under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

The aim is to bring about social and economic development of Ulva for the benefit of the community now and for future generations, with a key objective being repopulation of the island.

After a long and complex process, a Community Right to Buy was granted over the bulk of the estate at a price set by an independent valuation ordered by the Scottish Government. However, in order to purchase the entire estate; lock, stock and barrel, negotiations have continued to the point reached today when we can announce final agreement between the parties.

In parallel with the above process, an ambitious fundraising effort was mounted to secure the money needed not only to buy the estate but also carry out some of the most important development work in the first months and years of ownership.

Colin Morrison, NWMCWC Chair, commented: *“To say we are extremely grateful to all our supporters and to the various funding agencies, organisations and individuals would be an understatement.*

We cannot thank everyone enough, not just for the financial support, but also the encouragement we’ve been given throughout the process. We have been heartened by the degree of interest and depth of support we have received from official agencies, commercial organisations and also private individuals at home and abroad.”

The bulk of the purchase price and also assistance with project management over the first two years will be coming from the Scottish Land Fund. The SLF offer to award a grant of up to £4.4M is unprecedented in community land purchases in Scotland. It is testimony to the

commitment of the Scottish Government to Land Reform, repopulation and stimulation of the development of remote areas of the highlands and islands.

Ulva was the birthplace of Lachlan Macquarie, seen by many as the “Father of Australia” and the National Trust for Australia has offered to help promote the tourism opportunity for visiting Macquarie’s birthplace.

Planning and design services have been offered *pro bono* by Moxon Architects Ltd to get the existing houses renovated as quickly as possible.

Over 500 individuals from around the world have made donations via the Ulva Buyout JustGiving crowdfunding site. Many also added supportive comments which were very gratefully received.

Various fundraising efforts in the community such as jumble sales and pop-up cafes have all played their part – not only raising money, but also building awareness and maintaining enthusiasm for the project.

In addition to the above, letters of support were received from a wide range of local and national organisations including; Mull and Iona Community Trust, South West Mull and Iona Development, Mull Fishermens Association, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Woodland Trust Scotland, Community Land Scotland, Turus Mara, Our Island Home, Mull Charters, Development Trusts Scotand, Rural Housing Scotland, Community Woodlands Association, The Boathouse Restaurant, local fishing boat owners and other businesses.

So, to all our supporters we want to say a huge **THANK YOU** for helping us make this happen.

The island of Ulva has been home to the Howard family for over seventy years and clearly the decision to sell must have been a very difficult one. NWMCWC recognises that the community buyout process over the past year has been demanding, and at times stressful, for all concerned. As stewardship passes from the Howard family to the local community, we look forward to an amicable transition based on mutual respect and the Board is keen to wish Mr. Howard and his family all the best for the future.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

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.

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