

Land fund backs communities' control of their local woodlands



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Between them two community projects in Argyll are receiving £1.5m from the Scottish Land Fund to take more Forestry Commission woodland under the control of local people.

The South West Mull and Iona Development Ltd (SWMID) gets £750,000 to purchase the 2,000 acre Tiroran Forest on the west side of the island of Mull. Meanwhile Kilfinan Community Forest Company also receives £750,000 to bring the remainder of the Upper Acharossan Forest, near Tighnabruaich on the Kyles o Bute into community ownership. Both purchases will be made under the National Forest Land Scheme, operated by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS).

SWMID believes Tiroran Forest will provide more employment opportunities, support for local businesses, sustainable tourism opportunities and improved facilities for visitors and local people.

It will investigate plans for the woodland including an access programme with increased interpretation for visitors and locals; sites for woodland crofts, and the development of archaeological sites.

Morven Gibson, Local Development Officer, SWMID, said "Much work has gone into the project over the last few years and this is an enormous boost for local people. We are getting closer to Tiroran Forest becoming an income generating, community owned asset which will be managed by the community, for the community."

Kilfinan Community Forest Company acquired 300 acres of Upper Acharossan Forest, from FCS in 2010. The £750,000 from the land fund will allow them to purchase the remaining 1,000 acres creating more development opportunities.

Dr William McAllan, director of the forest company, said: "The Kilfinan Community Forest Company has ambitious plans to strengthen the Kilfinan communities by providing jobs, affordable housing, environmental education and recreation. The Scottish Land Fund award allows us to expand our horizons not just geographically but also to the economic and social benefit of the Kilfinan community."