

By [Sue Restan](#)

£1.5million awarded to Argyll forestry projects

Two Argyll organisations have been awarded a total of £1.5million to buy more than 3,000 acres of woodland for their local communities.

The Scottish Land Fund has announced that South West Mull and Iona Development (SWMID) will receive £750,000 to buy the 1,957-acre Tiroran Forest on the Isle of Mull from Forestry Commission Scotland.

And Kilfinan Community Forest Company (KCFC), which already owns 313 acres of the Upper Acharossan Forest, near Tighnabruaich, has been awarded £750,000 to buy a further 1,072 acres from the commission.

Morven Gibson, who is local development officer for SWMID, said: “Much work has gone into the project over the past 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.”

She explained that the forest would be run as a commercial enterprise, providing a means of sustainable income generation for the local community and creating three new jobs in the first year of ownership.

An access programme with increased interpretation for visitors and locals, sites for woodland crofts, plans for the long-term future of the forest, improved biodiversity and the development of archaeological sites are among the ideas under consideration.

And KCFC development manager, Nikki Brown, said: “Our primary aim is to be a sustainable business which can support its own staff and core operations via income generated by the charity. Having control of this much larger area will really strengthen our ability to do this.

“When the charity was first set up, our key objective was to bring the whole of Acharossan forest into community ownership, but for various reasons we were only able to acquire the smaller area.

“It’s a great result that, five years down the line, the entire woodland will finally be under community ownership and management.”

The expanded community woodland will offer financial security to KCFC via an extensive harvesting programme, enabling timber to be sold commercially, as well as continuing to supply the community sawmill and wood fuel enterprise.

Planned projects include circular forest walks, bike tracks and camping areas, as well as the construction of a bunkhouse as low-cost accommodation for visitors to the area and a training centre in the forest to host courses in land-based skills.