



Kilfinan Community Forest Spring Newsletter



New funding puts path improvements on track

Kilfinan Community Forest has been awarded just under £78,000 to reinstate the old Kilfinan Way and upgrade of the forest's path network from the Scottish Government's Improving Public Access fund. The grant will help us to build wheelchair accessible paths and boardwalks that will make muddy woodland tracks a thing of the past. Part of the money will pay for new bridges, benches and signposts that will make walking in the Forest a more pleasant experience for dog walkers and visitors. And with Tighnabruaich-based contractors bidding for the work, it means that the money will be spent here in the community.

Constitutional Changes

The AGM voted to make four changes to the way that the charity is run. Directors will now have to attend at least four board meetings and gain the signature of two members and one director before being eligible for election to the board at AGM

Annual General Meeting elects new Directors



KCFC members and visitors gathered at Kames Church Hall for this year's AGM. Co-chair Mark Bamford gave a progress report on the Forest's various projects including the creation of woodland crofts and housing. Director Nikki Brown provided a financial summary for the year 2016-17 and these accounts are now available to be viewed in the documents section of our website. Co-chair Steve Williamson gave a report on behalf of Rob Borruso the Operations Manager which covered the new forest centre, felling and timber extraction. Forest Access Coordinator Mick Eyre described the various volunteering and activity groups that have taken place during the year, before the meeting moved on to business. Two new directors – David Blair and MaryLou Anderson - were elected to the board and new changes to the charity's constitution were approved (*see below*). The meeting expressed its thanks for the hard work of the Directors who stepped down this year – Hannah Buss, Jo Coley, Don McInness and Ali Porter.

Changes to the constitution will now need a majority of 60% of the ordinary members present at the AGM to take effect. One director will be required to retire each year. Finally, an appointed directorship has been created for Tighnabruaich Primary so that the school will always have a seat on the board.

Photo: John Skarp



Dark Nights, Bright Lights 2018

For the second year running Kilfinan Community Forest played host to the community for a New Year's celebration featuring fireworks, free food and a Viking boat bonfire. Over 150 people braved the cold on Sunday 7th of January for a last hurrah before the kids went back to school and 2018 began in earnest.

Kids enjoyed our craft workshop where they made chinese lanterns and fridge magnets before seeing the boat set alight and fireworks go off with a bang. Bob Brady of the Kyles Allotment Group was again master of the BBQ and kept the crowd fed with hamburgers and hotdogs. And special thanks go to the folks from the Twigging Out supported volunteering group who made this year's Viking boat. Well done to all involved for a memorable night!



Catherine with her lantern as featured in the Dunoon Observer

Progress on forest centre

The highly insulated, airtight walls of our new forest centre are about to be clad in larch felled, sawn and finished entirely in the Forest. Using our new four-sided planer – purchased with support from the Forestry Commission – we will be able to give the building a durable and attractive exterior finish.



Hot tunnel project gets warm reception

One drawback of having a sawmill is that it produces literal piles of sawdust that we sometimes struggle to get rid of. However, with the right equipment the sawdust can be turned into the sort of wood pellets increasingly used to fire domestic boilers. Our new project will see the construction of a heated poly tunnel using our waste sawdust to grow cut flowers, salads and micro greens. And with the potential to create employment while simultaneously reducing the carbon footprint and road miles of food consumed locally, the logic behind the idea of the hot tunnel has attracted the backing of the Lottery Awards for All fund. We hope to start work this Spring and have the tunnel in production before the end of the growing season.



Visitors learn about brash hedging on the permaculture course

Courses attract learners from afar

As the season begins to turn we reach the end of our annual schedule of fun and learning. This year's programme has had something for everyone and finished with two popular courses. The first, delivered by Nicola Greenall and Director Marylou Anderson, focused on Permaculture techniques on clear-felled areas – how to create native woodland on the landscape left behind by commercial felling. This is an issue for Kilfinan Community Forest but also for many parts of Scotland dominated by non-native conifer plantation. Visitors came from Skye, Mull, Penicuik and even Germany for the two day course.

To finish the year we staged a three-day woodworking weekend with different craft projects presented by four experienced woodworkers. Visitors were able to learn how to use a traditional pole lathe, make their own shrink pots, build greenwood chairs and coathooks, and make a decorative keepsake box. Feedback from both events was very positive and over 50 folk attended.

Youth Skills 2018

It won't be long until the summer's here and our annual youth skills programme will take place. If you know anyone 15-18 who wants to learn about outdoor activities and sample the type of jobs available in West Cowal, get in touch with Mick on

01700 811 159 or

michael@kilfinancommunityforest.com