

Reforesting Scotland News

Life at Dunbeag

It's late autumn, with the season changing slowly but surely. We've had a fantastic summer, and the forest garden has been abundant. The apple harvest was bountiful to say the least and chutney making continues. The chickens have settled in and visit most mornings. They keep us very amused and well supplied with fresh eggs - when we can find them. The polytunnels produced asparagus, sweetcorn, cucumber, butternut squash, tomatoes, and grapes amongst everything else. Fresh basil and chillies also flourished in the greenhouse.

The summer was also busy with energetic friends, volunteers, Wwoofers and visitors alike. Some people helped with building the new bunkhouse and some in the garden. More recently, a hardy bunch of Dirty Weekenders came and engaged in some serious Rhodie-bashing for the weekend. Well done and thank you to you all!

In early spring, we felled a stand of Sitka spruce and milled the timber up in the woodland. The building site was prepared and the essential foundations and groundworks completed, allowing the timber to be delivered to the site using the log chute. By the beginning of May we were building in wood and constructing the frame.

We did manage some brief escapades, including Isle of Rum Festival and the

essential Knockengoroch Festival at Carsphairn in May. But then we had to seriously focus on the build so that the bunkhouse was wind and watertight as soon as possible.

Six months from the date of the fire, the building was almost complete and we moved in shortly afterwards - as soon as the sofa arrived! It is now finished (almost), and looks and feels stunning. It's a fine home and we're well warmed, both by an extremely efficient wood-fired stove and by the joy of space and light again.

But the building gang couldn't stop there and headed off to Inverary Primary School to build a 6-meter diameter, seven-sided, turf roofed outdoor classroom using the reciprocal frame roof. The classroom was completed in two weeks, and was dedicated as a peace building by the school children. It was an awesome experience both for us and for the kids. The children were involved in the entire process from funding through to carving the roof beams and hand-printing the walls.

As the nights are drawing in there's more time to think, reflect and take stock... rest even... but there are plenty of unfinished and new projects to work on depending on rain or shine. But it is one day at a time and every day is special.

Michaela Hunter & David Blair

Kilfinan Community Forest Project

We are pleased to report that, at last, the feasibility consultants have been selected and funding is almost in place to begin the feasibility study of the Kilfinan communities potential purchase of 450 hectares of Acharossan Forest. **Chris Morgan** will be conducting the housing aspect and **Chris Piper** will face the socio-economic study and takes the lead consultant role. The environmental consultants are **Bob Black** and **Peter Quelch**, who will be looking at the timber resource and biodiversity within Acharossan Forest and the irrepressible **Rob Borruso** is assessing the minutiae of renewable energy factors. All in all a fine team!

The steering group have also been 'oot an about' visiting Abriachan Community Woodland by Loch Ness and Milton Community Woodland in Inverness-shire in April. The investigative visit was to see what other groups around Scotland are doing and explore other community woodland projects. Members of the group have also recently returned from the housing conference on Gigha and the Community Woodland Association conference in Strontian. Both events inspired and filled the group with enthusiasm. With so many like-minded and dynamic community groups around it would be difficult not to.

We are currently preparing for our next public meeting and AGM in December, where we can amend our constitution so we can become a Community Company with charitable status and register our official interest in the forest. Exciting times indeed.

We have also engaged two local Animateurs. An Animateur fulfils a variety of roles. In this instance, we are aware that many people may have concerns or misconceptions regarding the project. We hope that these can be more easily and effectively dealt with in an informal manner, round the kitchen table for instance. This way we hope to promote the project, dispel myths and capture real community views and opinions.

Michaela Hunter & David Blair

Photo: David Blair



The new roundhouse at Dunbeag