

### GCW Gains Development Trust Recognition

We are pleased to announce that GCW has been recognised as a Development Trust by the Development Trusts Association for Scotland (DTAS). This is a significant moment for the community which deserves celebration. Some of you may remember that back in 2015 the independent feasibility study which explored potential community ownership of the woodland concluded that its purchase should be used as “the catalyst for developing and achieving a vision for delivering a broader range of benefits for the local community”. Based on this vision, GCW was set up with an intentionally wide remit.

In the six years since it was established, GCW has been working hard to deliver on our remit. Most recently, we’ve brought into community ownership two additional areas of land: Ardochy, which will be the site for the creation of new community housing and crofts; and the field opposite the Depot, which is there for future community-led projects.

Development Trusts all over Scotland operate to enable communities to develop their assets for the benefit of local residents, and GCW has done this since it was established. Without needing to change our name, our recognition as a Development Trust by DTAS will allow us to access an even wider network of support and resources to help us deliver for the community. For more information on the work of Development Trusts across Scotland visit:

<https://dtascot.org.uk/>

### A Community Plan for Glengarry

Transfers of land from public to community ownership in Glengarry have resulted from being told when land became available. Now we think it's time to be proactive about our community's needs so that we can actively try to address them instead of just responding to opportunities. With proposals for more windfarms in the area, new hydro schemes coming on-line, and the potential for significant levels of community benefit and legacy payments from Coire Glas, it's an exciting time. We must now focus on creating a plan that prioritises the community's greatest needs. So, with additional professional support from DTAS we will develop a Community Plan over the next year. We will try to gather everyone's views about our community's most important needs. This will help us to plan the future development of land we have already bought, consider possible future acquisitions, and the potential use of community benefit funds. The community may miss out on new opportunities if there is no solid plan with a recognised legal structure in place.

### Eco-tourism Cabins

Though funds and planning permission are mostly in place, work on the cabin business has been held up by the lengthy process of getting the permissions and assurances required by Transport Scotland to upgrade the access onto the A87. We are obliged by a planning condition to complete this work before any other work is started. Though it has taken nearly nine months to get to this position, we can now finally make a start. Our contractors are arranging traffic management with BEAR, and we hope they will be starting in the next few weeks. Once the new access is finished, the next step will be upgrading the track into the forest that leads to the cabin-site. The delay has been frustrating and as well as putting back the date which the business can open, the cost of building materials has risen significantly during this period.

The next step will be the Community Share Launch, which we will announce shortly.

### Into the Woods

After two years without any public events in the woodland, it's been great to resume our holiday club 'Into the Woods' which took place over four days at Easter. The club is aimed at children in P1-P6 and runs for six hours each day, using Forest School principles to teach children about the natural environment, and carefully monitored risk-taking activities such as campfire cooking, using knives and axes, and other bushcraft skills.



*Into the Woods club in the Community Woodland this Easter*

We'll soon be starting up 'Junior Rangers', our club aimed at older children from P7 – high school which will run on weekends. The first session will start in May. Get in touch with Bruce [Bruce@glengarry.org](mailto:Bruce@glengarry.org) for more details.

## Spotlight on the Board

The third instalment of 'Spotlight on the Board' is from Joanna Rodgers, GCW Chair:

*"Come to the new Community Woodlands AGM with me", my Mum said, a few months after I moved back to Invergarry to study at UHI back in 2016. "Let's go find out what they're doing down there". I was young(ish) and naïve, and I hadn't yet learned that community groups use AGMs to inspire folk to join Boards by describing all their important work and then explaining that it all depends on the contribution of volunteer Directors. I managed to resist during the meeting, but it was inevitable. The following year the GCW Treasurer stepped down and I was asked to join the Board as Treasurer, a role I held from 2017 until the AGM in 2021 when I was elected Chair.*

*I was an easy target. I'd just come back from a two-week research trip to the island of Tiree which is the focus of my PhD on community-led ancestral tourism. As I drove back up the A82 from Oban I found myself appreciating the trees I passed in a way I'd never done before. I suddenly realised that I hadn't seen a single tree in over a fortnight and I'd missed them. That was reason enough to get involved with my local community woodland! But something else had happened in Tiree. I'd seen first-hand how the local residents used the island's assets – its people, its history, and its land – to create a confident, resilient, sustainable community. They might not have any trees, but among their many assets they have Tilley – a community-owned wind turbine which generates income for community projects and helps to fund 8 staff at the Tiree Development Trust. I was inspired.*

*Glengarry doesn't have a community-owned wind turbine (or beaches!) but we do have amazing assets. The community woodland is one of the resources which local people can use to strengthen our community. Establishing an eco-tourism social enterprise in the woodland will help GCW to contribute to a sustainable future for Glengarry by employing more people, creating woodland crofts, and building affordable housing at Ardochy.*

*All of this work will have real and lasting benefits for the Glengarry community. It's also part of a much bigger movement of communities shaping the social and economic regeneration of their own local places. Over the past two years I've been working as the part time Development Officer for the Community Woodlands Association (CWA), a membership organisation which supports around 200 community groups across Scotland to realise their visions for their local woodlands. In this role, I see the difference that community woodlands make to people's lives all around the country. I feel very lucky to be part of a great team of Directors at GCW who all bring their own unique skills and experiences to help make the most of Glengarry's amazing resources for the people who live here. But I still haven't finished writing the PhD - I blame my Mum!"*

## Why Community Shares: Part 2

In his second (and final) instalment, Jamie McIntyre from Strontian Community Renewables and Strontian Development Trust explains how community shares helped his community:

*"In the first part of this blog I mentioned that my community had run two community share offers, for two quite different projects, underlining their usefulness as a source of funding.*

*As well as differences between the projects, the outcomes of the share offers themselves were quite different in terms of how many people invested, and how much was raised. In exploring why this was I hope to illustrate some of the key factors involved in people choosing to invest.*

*Essentially, all such investment is about engagement – people choose to buy shares because they believe in what you are doing and want to be a part of it. But our first share offer raised around £750,000 from 250 investors, whilst our second raised £155,000 from 70 investors. Why the difference?*

*Firstly, the nature of the project: the first being a renewables project appealed to a wide constituency of people wanting to do their bit to help save the planet. The second, the Strontian community school building project, was more 'specialist' and arguably appealed mainly to people who had a more direct connection to the community itself.*

*Secondly, but perhaps more significantly, the potential return on investment. All returns on community share investment are capped by law to 'what is sufficient to attract and maintain investment'. However, that is an upper limit, and many share offers will pay less or even nothing. Clearly people will be persuaded to invest more the greater the potential return, and vice versa – in the latter case most will only subscribe for the minimum allowed quantity of shares.*

*The returns can typically take two forms: (i) interest on the sum invested, and (ii) tax relief offered by HMRC. The former is at the present time not usually more than 3 or 4%, maximum. The latter depends on whether the project activity is eligible for tax relief (not all are), and if so which kind – EIS, SEIS, or SITR. EIS (Enterprise Investment Scheme) offers 30% of your investment amount off your annual tax bill, as does SITR (Social Investment Tax Relief) which I believe will be available in GCW's share offer.*

*So when I tell you that our renewables project offered 4% interest plus EIS tax relief, while our school building project paid 3% but was unable to offer any tax relief, it goes a long way to explaining the different amounts raised overall – together with the other factors highlighted earlier."*