

Abriachan Winter 2023



Proposed beaver translocation update

This idea was first put forward a couple of years ago when the moribund sitka spruce behind the hide was felled to waste to create a boggy area. Since then, a habitat feasibility study has been carried out and shared with NatureScot. This study found that there is sufficient habitat around Loch Laide for a small group of beavers initially. To further improve the habitat we will be looking to plant more willow and aspen around the site. On the 19th of September we held a session in the community hall, [Scotland the Big Picture](#) presented information on beaver and there was an opportunity for questions and discussion. In total 31 members of the community attended and all were broadly supportive following the session. To help paint more of a picture this was followed by a visit to South Clunes farm on the 20th October where beavers have been present for some time. Again around 30 members of the community attended and viewed the beaver evidence on site. Fred Swift from South Clunes was a great host and explained all about the beavers and how they have moved around that site and built dams storing water and creating habitat for many other species. Unfortunately no beavers were spotted on this occasion as it was the middle of the day but lots of fascinating field signs were explored.

Galvanised by the positive reaction of those who attended that visit we are looking to submit an application to NatureScot for a licence to translocate beavers, we intend to submit this by the end of January 2024 in the hope that it may still be possible to move beavers to Loch Laide in the early Spring. Our next step is to share an online survey with the local community and arrange one to one conversations with key stakeholders which will be captured and included in the licence application.

For anyone curious to hear more please contact Sam sam.hesling@gmail.com or Kirsten Kirsten@scotlandbigpicture.com



All the above images belong to...

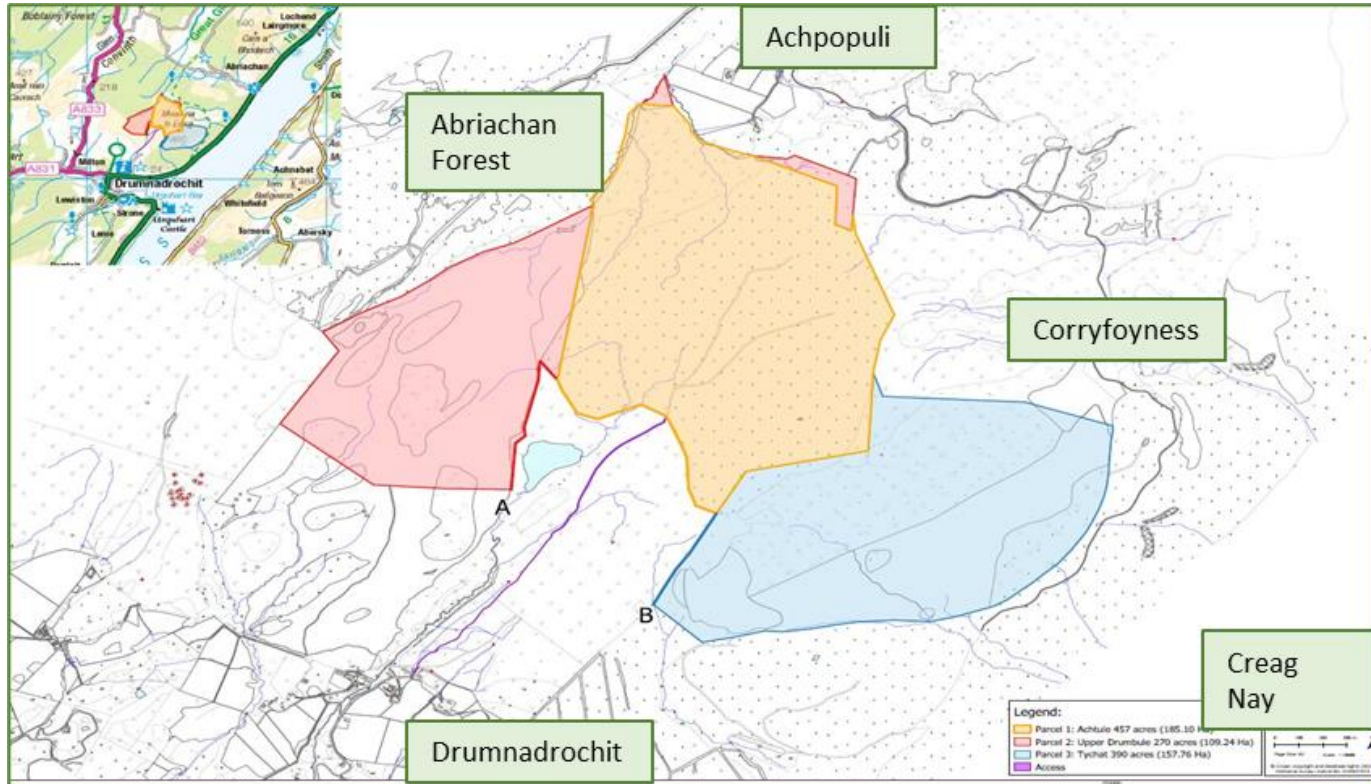


SCOTLAND
THE BIG PICTURE



Proposed land purchase update After the community consultations here in Abriachan and Glenurquhart in September the decision was made to work together and form a separate company limited by guarantee called An Treas Nàbaidh (The third neighbour - pronounced *An tres naapaiye*) to oversee the potential purchase of the Achtuie/Upper Drumbuie/Tychat land bordering AFT at Rivoulich and the GURCA (Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association) community council area. The different aspects of the feasibility study and business plan reports are due in by the middle of January, along with the governance administration in preparation for submitting a bid to the Scottish Land Fund in the first half of 2024. The land is still up for sale on the open market...details

<https://www.galbraithgroup.com/property/inv220048-land-by-Drumnadrochit-inverness-inverness-shire-iv63-6ux/>



Working with Development Trusts Association Scotland and Highland and Islands Enterprise on this has highlighted the fact that some aspects of the original AFT governance documents do not comply fully enough with the charitable purposes recommended by OSCR. Participants at the community consultation provided input into broadening these purposes to include environmental, social and health and wellbeing rather than just forestry. AFT will organise an Extraordinary General Meeting in the new year to follow this process through. If anyone would like to learn more, please pop along to one of our monthly Trustee meetings or drop our Chair Sam Hesling a line on samhesling@gmail.com



The 25th Annual General Meeting of AFT was held in the village hall and incorporated a 25 year quiz for everyone to participate in. This meant raking through hundreds of photos, including pre-digital versions of powerpoint, maps, newspaper cuttings and lots of artefacts from Christine's cabinet of curiosities...we all came away reminiscing and with new information about local geology, what aspen seeds look like, surprised by assorted skulls, how long ago there were fires; as well as what before and after community buyout does to hair colour and current height of wee toddler Tom!

Arts in Nature Project Launch : Health professionals, outdoor learning practitioners, care and employability support workers, health walk leaders, musicians from Feis Ross, singers and other creatives came to the Third Sector Interface launch of Arts in Nature in November.

Charlotte and Isabel from HTSI will collaborate with a range of organisations developing arts projects and events that are designed to enhance wellbeing and creative experiences using a varied programme of activities including arts, crafts & design, music, drama and literature. The workshops running on the day included singing, ink and charcoal sketching, nature printing, creative writing using The Lost Words as inspiration and ephemeral art on the move.



Volunteers : Fridays are usually the volunteering day at the forest. Recent visitors have been from SEPA and Nature Scot, so as well as path maintenance, they have been building bird boxes and squirrel feeders using templates produced by Marco and Jim. Some of our pupils have also been developing their employability skills by propagating seeds and cuttings for the tree nursery. The main challenge after collecting, being keeping the rodents off the hazelnuts and acorns.



For those who haven't got their tree yet, Tom, Fyn and Michael have been busy cutting down conservation Christmas trees; lodgepole pine hold their needles really well by the way. They are available in the car park for collection and a generous donation! The boys can all differentiate between Scots and lodgepole pines, even when they are growing in nutrient deficient conditions....isn't that so?

Donations can be made via BACS to RBS 00757015 SC: 83-23-10 or www.justgiving.com/Abriachan-Forest or scan the QR code



AFT 25 Year Celebration of the very, very long weekend In Spring 2000, as part of the Millennium Forest for Scotland celebrations, we ran a very long weekend of assorted activities including basketry, felting, a 24 hour bioblitz, guided walks, mountain biking before we had trails, treasure hunts for school groups and families and lots more. We replicated some of this in October 2023 with workshops for all ages happening over the second week of the tattie holidays. Huge thanks to all those who helped organise and run things...Marco, Malcolm, Nikki, Jim, Kerry, Katie, Christine, Gregor, Jamie



Teanassie p5-7 Forest Schoolers

Roni has been running a block of six Forest School sessions with 23 pupils from Teanassie. They have used Mollie Hunter's *The Kelpie's Pearls* as their literacy springboard for lots of learning, and, in doing so they became experts at running dynamic risk assessments, lighting a fire to cook on, building and testing shelters, working as clan teams to complete challenges. They planted native trees beside the burn, identified all the trees growing around the paths and created bug hotels and birdboxes to take back to the school playground. Their learning experiences and outcomes were linked to the curriculum and Skills Development Scotland's Metaskills' framework. There will be four more sessions in the summer term and by the end of those the pupils will have gained their John Muir and Scottish Junior Forester Awards.



FOCUSING



FEELING



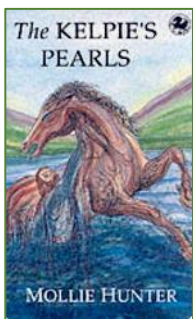
LEADING



COLLABORATING



USING INITIATIVE



COMMUNICATING



ADAPTING



Creativity and Care Programme

This has been a Life Changes Trust Legacy Fund project and involves AFT participating in a partnership with Moniak Mhor, Creative Writing Centre, the Calman Trust and Articulate Cultural Trust. It involves offering creative and other developmental opportunities for young care experienced people in Scotland.

AFT have hosted sessions for pyrography with Lee Borthwick, green woodworking for a group of unaccompanied minors with Richard Bracken and mountain biking with Jill Gudelis. The resulting creations are remarkable. These young people, all seeking asylum, carved and painted "Hello, welcome, how are you?" signs in Arabic, Afghani, Sudani, Persian, Albanian and Gaelic! All are now attending education in their local secondary schools in the Highlands.

We also supported outdoor activities during a residential week with family groups from Ayrshire through Articulate. They participated in varied creative challenges around the forest – plus mountain biking, tree planting, recording on the – creating positive environmental legacies and making special memories for all generations.

Collaborating with Home to Highland we also support the learning provision for other young people who have lived experience of the care system. In doing this we develop individually tailored programmes for the pupils, ensuring they engage with the curriculum and develop skills for life, learning and future workplace. The pupils work towards FOLA, Scottish Junior Forester and John Muir Awards depending on their age and how long they spend with us. Current projects with the young people are campfire cooking, personalising a shelter/HQ, researching everything relating to deer, speed carving birds, tracks and signs, trail blazing, whittling walking sticks, collecting seeds, planting trees and removing non-native trees for a conservation Christmas trees enterprise.



legacy partner
life changes trust

MONIACK MHOR
SCOTTISH CREATIVE WRITING CENTRE
108-8 BENTLEY STREET GARDINBURGH G2 3 5EE



Calman Trust is celebrating 25 years of serving and empowering young people in the Highlands, with the launch of a new membership scheme, Friends of Calman.
Become a Friend of Calman!

articulate

Outdoor Early Years Practitioner

Salary £ 27,285 pro rata

Subject to experience & qualifications

27 hours over 3 days/week during term time

Interested in joining Abriachan Outdoor Learning team to help deliver Early Learning and Childcare provision 9-4pm Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they enjoy working outdoors in all weathers, are versatile and can evidence experience supporting holistic child-led learning - all relevant to the curriculum.

Contact forest@abriachan.org.uk for a job description and application form.

Closing date 14.01.24

Interviews will be arranged w/b 22.01.24



Stride into the New Year...
Hogmanay Ceilidh 8pm - late
on 31st December in the
Abriachan village hall

Employment updates : We are all, really sorry to be losing Lorna in the middle of February. She is an inspiring member of the Early Years' team, identifying lots of learning opportunities in any situation...including puddle gazing! The children will be especially sad about Lorna leaving their midst, so we have not yet spoken to them about this upcoming change, leaving it to nearer the time she departs. However, we have just advertised her role, so please share widely, she will be a very hard act to follow.
email forest@abriachan.org.uk for an application pack.

Forest Maintenance officer : After an exhaustive selection process, we have made offers of part time employment to Jude Monson, Caiplich and Alan Paterson, Blackfold - on a job share basis, starting 15/01/24. There was significant interest in the post from a range of talented individuals and the final selection was not a clear-cut decision. We are fortunate to have on our doorstep a good depth of resource should any future similar roles be identified.



Abriachan Fibre Update : We understand from a recent Openreach update that the works to complete the first phase of the Abriachan installation are now almost complete. This phase included Blackfold- Abriachan village, and the road along by Loch Laide from the triangle junction north as far as Cragganvallie. It also included the forest trust access road and up to the houses at Achpopuli and Rhivoulich. The fibre cable then runs from the triangle junction down past the hall as far as the pumping station at the Balmore junction. We understand these houses all have connection boxes installed and should have fibre services available to them in early 2024. As part of this phase, a fibre cable has also been run up from the A82 to Balmore junction which will significantly reduce the time and cost required to complete the next phase of the installation, which would see the houses in the lower part of the village get connections. Openreach are currently in discussions with the Scottish Government to get funding approval to start these works and, if successful, works would be programmed to start as early as possible next year.

To keep up to date with the progress of the funding approval, register your interest on the Openreach website.