

Community-level woodfuel enterprise case studies

John Muir Trust, Skye

The Trust manages ~250 ha of forestry plantations as part of its Strathaird estate on the Isle of Skye. As the plantations have matured, the Trust has initiated a programme of clearfelling and restocking with mainly native species. Trust staff currently process small roundwood held back from clearfell operations on a stand-alone Palax Combi Mark II firewood processor, purchased from Jim Watt at Caledonian Forestry in Auchterarder. The harvesting operation itself is contracted out to the private sector: the most recent operation left 1000 m³ at roadside, stacked in a windy, exposed location either side of a forest access road. From here, the Trust uses a County and timber trailer to forward the wood to the Palax processor set up on an area of hard standing, and logs are processed straight into an Ifor Williams tipper trailer and delivered to the customer. The Trust estimates production of 250 m³/annum, turnover of £8000-10,000, and supplies c.30 customers between Broadford and Elgol. Competition locally is limited, with a supplier in Sleat and other suppliers quite far away in north Skye. Current stocks in John Muir Trust's woods will be exhausted in 3-4 years. The Trust is exploring how to ensure there is no future gap in production. The Trust has 3 staff at Strathaird and recently took on an additional part-time staff member to focus on firewood production.



Abriachan Forest Trust, Inverness

Abriachan is a scattered rural community of about 140 people set high above the shores of Loch Ness in the Highlands of Scotland. There are still some active crofts but the majority of inhabitants are employed in Inverness and beyond. The local school closed in 1958 so Abriachan's children now attend Dochgarroch Primary and Charleston Academy.

In 1998, the community purchased 534 hectares of forest and open hill ground from Forest Enterprise (now Forestry Commission Scotland). Since then, as a social enterprise, the Abriachan Forest Trust has managed this land to create local employment, improve the

environment and encourage its enjoyment by the public through a network of spectacular paths, family suited mountain bike trails and innovative education opportunities.

Over recent years, Abriachan Forest Trust has been processing small roundwood from harvesting operations and selling firewood to the local community. The timber is stacked for 1-3 years at a quarry on the edge of the woodland and processed by local crofter Andy McMillan, who is paid per hour by the Trust for his time. The firewood processor is a Japa 300 purchased from Doug Beattie at Farm & Forestry Equipment in Ardersier. The timber is processed straight into a 3-ton agri trailer, which is hitched to the tractor and tipped direct into customers' drive/site.



Dunnet Forestry Trust, Caithness

Dunnet is an atypical forest for the depth of sand on the site. This 104 hectare forest was planted as an experiment on ex-grazings at the same time as the Dounreay power station experiment was underway 16 miles to the west. Forestry Commission managed the forest by 'remote control' from Lybster and much of the crop was never thinned. Following an approach from Scottish Natural Heritage, The local community became involved in managing the forest in 1999. The steering group had limited forestry knowledge but received support from North Highland Forest Trust.



The first major intervention was to take out ~2700 tonnes at the northern end of the forest. It was low grade timber, sold to Nexfor for a negative return of £5.80/ton. Residues were extracted with a quad and trailer, and additional windblow has been handfelled to provide additional wood for the woodfuel operation.

Initially, monthly Saturday sales during the winter months (Sept-April inclusive) were held from 10 am -1 pm. The wood is sold by estimated volume. The only machinery is a chainsaw, quadbike and logsplitter. Roundwood is extracted in 2 m lengths for ergonomic handling (windblow is drier and lighter than green wood). All roundwood is stacked in the forest and dries for 2 years prior to extraction. Dunnet participated in the Northern Woodheat drying trials. The report is available at www.northernwoodheat.net

Erisort Trust, Lewis

The Erisort Trust owns and manages Aline Community Woodland, a 633 hectare plantation equidistant between Stornoway and Tarbert, and one of the few substantial woodland areas on the island of Lewis. Motormanual (chainsaw) harvesting of small coupes of mainly Lodgepole pine has been undertaken, with extraction using an (unconventional) all-terrain ex-military transporter (see left-hand photo, back right). The roundwood is converted on a Posch Spaltfix processor; some is delivered direct and the remainder sold in bags through an agricultural supplier in Stornoway. The business also has access to a shed where a kindling machine processes roundwood logs and bags the kindling for sale. The operation contributes towards maintain several jobs on the island.



Jake Willis

Community Woodland Advisor

Dec. 2009



Community
Woodlands
Association