



Abriachan Summer 2021



How much we owe is still for us to know....

Andrew McMillan has been involved in the management decisions and on the ground operations in the forest since before the millennium. His steady work in thinning the forest, processing and delivering firewood, his mechanical empathy with machinery, his pragmatic input to directors' meetings, his common sense and liaising with Dietrich the forestry consultant have been invaluable for more than twenty years. We are extremely sorry to be losing his skills and his willingness to carry out tasks at the drop of a hard hat, so will be looking for someone who can fill his steel toe cap boots very soon.

"On behalf of the whole community, who you have delivered firewood to over the years, we wish yourself and Marion all the very best for the future."

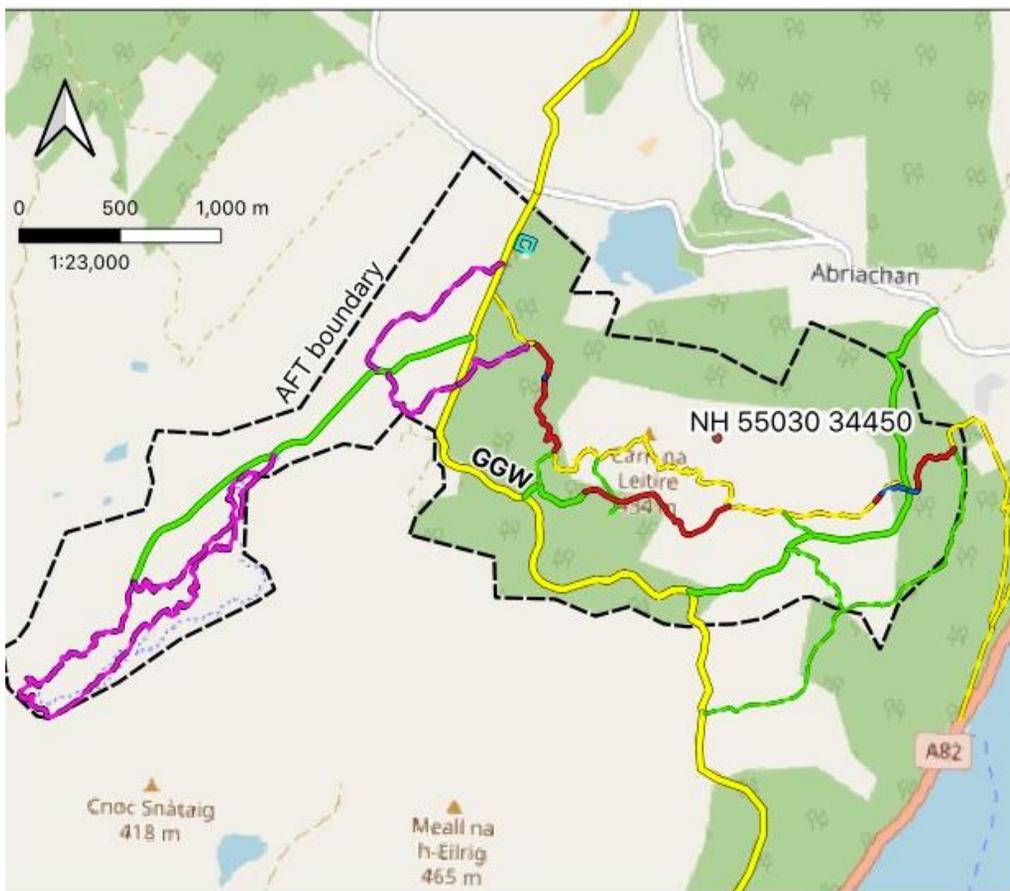


Now that the age structure and species diversity of the forest is so much improved after over 23 years of sensitive management, Dietrich from <https://www.sylvestrus.co.uk/> is developing the next phase of the Long Term Forest Plan (2022-2042) so please look out for the opportunity to comment in the next few months.

Some of you will have noticed the fire damaged west end of the Rivoullich block is currently being harvested by Euroforest. This area of lodgepole pine was beginning to blow over so it's value was dropping continually. It will be replanted with a mix of native broadleaves, Scots pine and spruce. So far the timber harvested has gone to be chipped, milled for slats and some for saw logs. Euroforest have taken their usual care with only three lorries a day avoiding commute times; they've protected the bike trails with thick brush mats. Thanks for your patience whilst this forest operation is ongoing.



Anna Flugel is our summer ranger, thanks to funding from NatureScot's Better Places' Fund. This image on the left shows her in action demonstrating some hapazome under the watchful eye of Charleston's dusty badger. This funding will also support the creation of some overflow parking along the verge of the Rivoullich road where sometimes orienteers or cycle trail users park amongst the rocks and rashes.



Abriachan Forest Trust
Walk and cycling trails upgrade project

Planning Application no. 100407594

Overall project map no. 1 MB1plan_v1_040521

- Legend**
- new path
 - new cycling area
 - upgraded walk trails
 - upgraded cycling trails
 - connection paths
 - other trails
 - GGW
 - core paths
 - AFT boundary

The easy access paths continue to be very popular with those pushing buggies, using wheelchairs and the less mobile groups we support – for example those affected by dementia or those referred to Green Prescriptions by their health providers. People who walk around the paths regularly will have noticed some recent improvements, weeding, widening, resurfacing on some and this has highlighted the need to maintain more of the original 2004-2007 network. To this end two separate funding applications have been made – one to drain and resurface the whole of the Peat Path across the hill (red on map) getting rid of the boggy stretches, and the other to improve the Kelpie’s bike trails (purple) where the surface has worn away and weeds have encroached. The intention is also to include a practice area beside the carpark where cyclists can develop skills before riding out on the trails. It would be helpful if comments or letters of support were posted on [Highland Council Planning](#) as this will evidence support to the funders.

The images below show Aaron Redpath in action after he had completed his excavator training certificates and a group from L’Arche Highland who took part in safely distanced sponsored walk in their household bubbles on the lovely smooth paths .



Abriachan Forest School : 2021

*An t-ionnsachadh òg
an t-ionnsachadh bòidheach
Learn young..... learn well.*

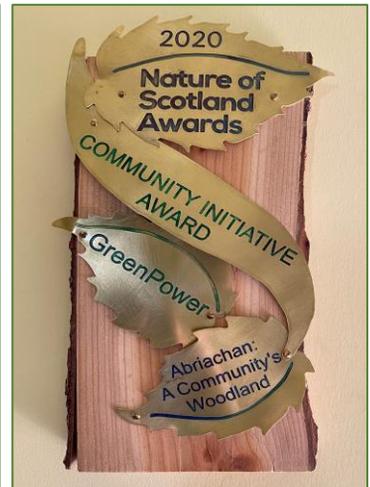
This whole newsletter could have been devoted to all the fantastic images of the children attending our outdoor nursery on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. To avoid confusion with Abriachan Gardens we call it Abriachan Forest School : Early Years. The Early Years' team Roni, Forest School Manager, alongside Polly and Lewis, facilitate lots of experiential learning opportunities, developed from the children's self directed play. It's amazing how effectively they target most curriculum benchmarks no matter what the game is, which site they are at or what the weather conditions are.

If we need shelter we are fortunate to be able to choose between the peace trail site, the thatched round house, the green shelter, the yurt in the garden and Christine's Cabinet of Curiosities in the bothy. We do lots of exploring finding trout in the burn, setting up the trail cameras, building bridges, practising plumbing, growing crops, and creating works of art all over the place. You will usually hear us wherever we are – always singing Gaelic songs on Mondays, playing 1,2,3 Where are You? and giving each other loud, problem solving instructions! (Guess who?)

The fact that there is a waiting list until 2023 is testament to the word of mouth success of this provision. If you wish your child's name added to the waiting list please email abriachangrow@gmail.com



Cheerio p1s Alistair, Ailsa, Keir, Angus, Annie and Bruce!



As well as scaffolding play and learning in the early years we also support specific learning intentions for pupils who are referred by the Highland Council's alternatives to mainstream and placement services change team. Liaising with their schools and ensuring what they learn in Abriachan is relevant, helps them engage and cope better in school thus raising levels of achievement for these pupils.

During school holidays we have provided family programmes for Home Start, Hilton and also siblings' contact sessions for children and young people who have been looked after in separate households so the woods continue to ring out with the noise of children playing together.



Young boys learning from big boys and their toys

More Active : More Often

Polly's Lollypop was definitely required when the children took their bikes, scooters and assorted wheels to the forest school at the end of term. Some of the older pupils who attend on Wednesdays and Thursdays had designed and helped the little ones on an exciting course with obstacles, chicanes, ramps, hoops and speed bumps safe and suitable for 3-5 year olds skirling round corners at speed. We even put flags up at the pitstop for the occasion.



[Wee Adventure Scotland](#)

Organised a **Wee Cycle Day** on the following Saturday in June when families turned up in sequence to participate in some cycle skills sessions with Nathalie and bike maintenance at the previously mentioned pit stop with Velocity. This event was held to publicise their new "Wheel Adventure" book featuring places to cycle ideas for families. We wish them all well in their new venture.



Orienteering also featured during May and June, again with numbers less than 50 spread throughout the day. The latest orienteering option is a couple of virtual courses using the MapRunF App – one easy access and the other on the hill. Huge thanks to Lawrence from INVOC for these. Email abriachanforest@gmail.com for instructions.

Assorted visitors : all going for a walk !



CBeebies' Ranger Hamza alias Hamza Yassin

Between lockdowns during autumn 2020 a few postponed projects had to be squeezed into four months. These included a visit from **Landward with Dougie Vipond** having a chat with Sam about what we do and why. The film crew definitely seemed more interested in the creative works of the nursery children. This programme was aired in late November to highlight Abriachan winning the prestigious Nature of Scotland : Community Award. Following on from Dougie came CBeebies' **Ranger Hamza who went for a walk** with some little people from Inverness. He was absolutely delighted with the fact that we are also enthusiastic about encouraging lots of learning outdoors and just loved the peaty gutters in the play area but we're not sure the parents were as enamoured!

Peter Souness, the thatcher, had a quick return to the roundhouse after it required a total rebuild and rethatch. A crowd funder was organised after the fire in July 2020, this created lots of positive support and comments about our work and the publicity raised many generous donations. Thanks to all those who contributed both practically and through funding. The skinned larch and noble fir frame was erected in October and Pete worked through November scything reeds as the base and rashes for the outer layer. Once again the weather was kind and the tidy job was completed before the long period of snowy conditions in January and February when it proved its worth as another shelter for people exercising in the woods.



Marco skins noble & Pete scythes rashes



Landward filming Sam, Dougie and nursery



[Paul Campbell](https://vimeo.com/user15132038) could also be seen walking around the forest over winter and the lovely A* end result can now be found on <https://vimeo.com/user15132038> . Have a look at his sensitively shot **Confluence** too...recognise anyone?

Richard Bracken : Our Artist in Residence

describes his project working with some of the volunteers, the local children, young people and folk who live and work in Abriachan.

“The collection of 16 engraved walking-sticks created as part of the Artists and Community Landowners commission is the endpoint in a process of research, engagement and making. It is also a beginning; an invitation for the hand and the land to connect, and a prompt for new journeys, stories and conversations.”

In working with Abriachan Forest Trust, my aim has been to understand how the different generations see their place in their land, and to explore themes of journeying, custodianship and growth.

Inspired by tales of old Abriachan sticks and encouraged by the Trust’s appetite for developing and sharing skills already present in the community, the accessible, traditional craft of stick-making became a natural focus for the project. Through walks, workshops and conversations with community members of all ages, I was able to learn about the land itself and the things that resonated with its people.”



The beautifully executed text on the sticks was created by local craftsman [Evergreen](#) Simon Baker. This project was one of a series - **Artists and Community Landowners** a collaborative project digging down into the stories of community landownership across Scotland and the impact it has for communities. [The Stove](#) worked with [Community Land Scotland](#) and six Community Trusts, including Abriachan, to explore stories of “ownership” and the effect it has had for local people, their identity, decision-making and the economic and social benefits for their community.

Squelchy old wellies and some hubble, bubble lichen trouble

Now that some of the restrictions have eased we have recently been able to run a few of the pandemically postponed [Outdoor Woodland Learning](#) workshops. Logistics had to be carefully thought through to ensure safe, but still sociable, distancing was adhered to.

Christine ran an informative session on identifying lichens and using windblown samples to dye locally shorn and spun wool. No mordants were required to obtain a good mix of fast colours so the participants went away happily planning their next textile creations. Some samples can be seen in the basket and hanging on the willows to dry.

A couple of Saturdays later Roni led a squelchy stroll around the paths after the group had carded rolags, moulded, soaped, wrapped tightly and carefully slipped their dainty feet into outsized, old wellies. Photos below show the lovely slippers and the beautifully clean pedicure which resulted from the process.



Abriachan's Latest Young People

After saying cheerio to Gary last autumn, once the restrictions eased in the spring of 2021 we were able to begin working with some new young people on what used to be called Activity Agreements but now are Positive Pathways.

They have been developing a variety of skills for their future workplaces – some maintenance and repairs around the woodwork, designing mountain bike skills obstacles, learning how to create digital artworks, helping with Global Goals' resources, painting the birds and bunting, strimming and lots of tasks around the garden.

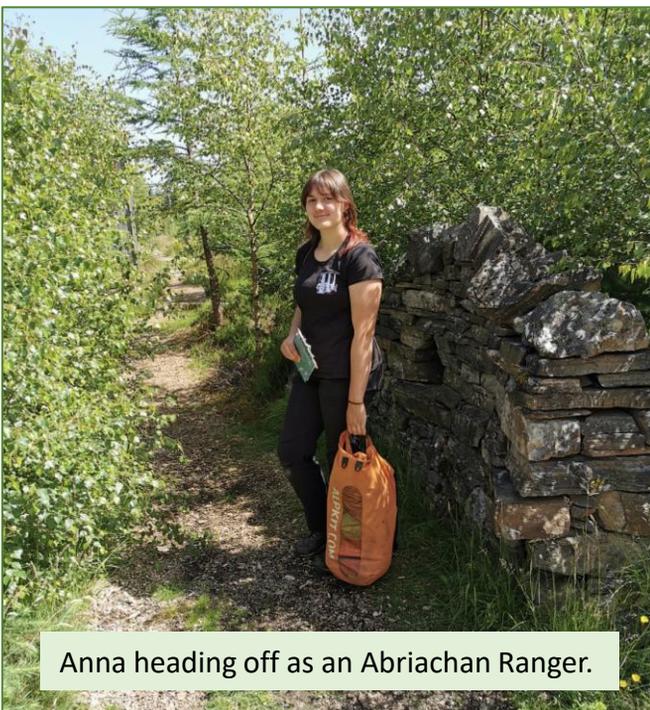
We have also had some senior pupils completing their Duke of Edinburgh community volunteering, Abigail on work experience and Anna, who has become our summer ranger thanks to some funding from NatureScot's Better Places Fund. She will be working from July to October so is continuing the stakeholder audit, ensuring cars are parked sensibly, carrying out site checks, working at the nature craft table in the carpark and training apprentice Aoi bhe..



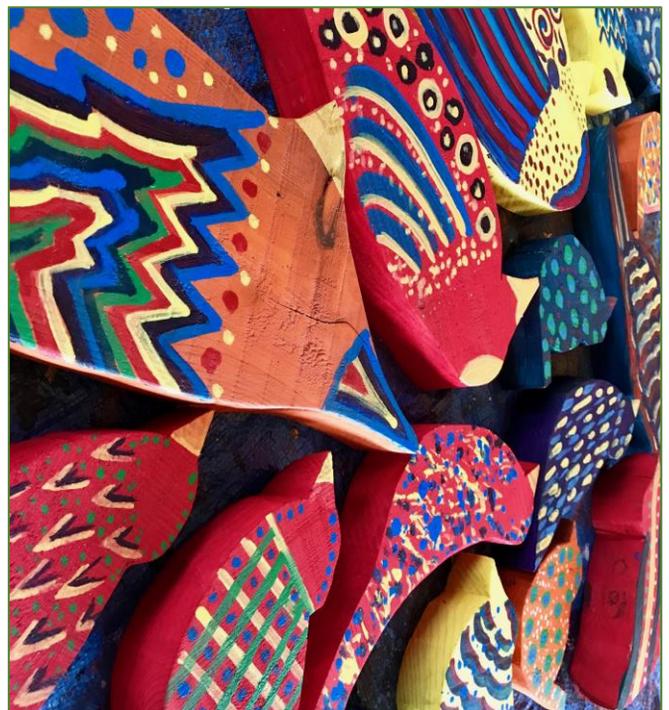
Julia's precision painting



Beth's dragonfly sketch – a very still life on I-pad

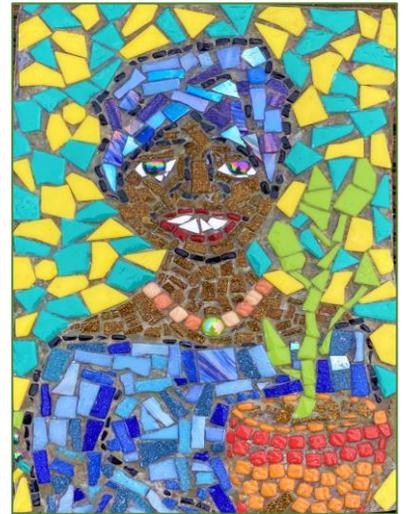


Anna heading off as an Abriachan Ranger.



Global Goals Challenge

We have continued to collaborate with Trish Matthews on some current projects supported by Highland One World Group and the [Great Glen Energy Cooperative](#). At this stage the most obvious is the Global Goals Challenge which incorporates seventeen QR coded posts, around the easy access paths linking to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Following the trail you will find the SDG5 Gender Equality mosaics of internationally important women, created by the local girls with Sally Purdy and a fantastic art gallery in the hide featuring art work by groups from Sutherland. By the start of September 2021 next term some practical on-site activities will be available for groups to use as a springboard to more learning for sustainability back in school. Once completed, they can earn a sequence of badges...all very relevant learning and awareness raising in the run-up to COP26.



<http://stridemagazine.org.uk/schools/item/489-forest-changemakers>

<https://sites.google.com/view/globalgoalschallenge/home>



Biodiversity 2021

It is difficult to imagine that just over twenty years ago you could walk through what is now the AFT woodlands without hearing a bird singing, seeing a dragonfly in flight, or enjoying the sight and scent of wild flowers.

Under AFT's careful and sensitive stewardship, what had once been a dull and lifeless forestry plantation has evolved into a very special area with diverse habitats supporting some rare and interesting species.

Bogbean, a species in decline in Britain, has colonised the dragonfly pond and is spreading to other damp areas. It has a very distinctive white star-shaped flower, with a flush of pink on the outside and the inner surface of the petals are delicately fringed with white hairs. This plant was called *Tri-bhileach* in Gaelic - on account of the leaf being divided into three leaflets. It was and in some areas of the Highlands is still a highly regarded plant and a tonic was prepared by boiling the whole plant in water and straining the liquid.

We have many interesting species of orchid including the relatively rare Bird's Nest Orchid and the Greater Butterfly Orchid. Nationwide, orchid numbers are decreasing so it is important that we protect our orchid habitats. This year we saw large areas of Early Marsh Orchid, Common Spotted Orchid, Northern Marsh Orchid and the Heath Fragrant Orchid.

The increase in diversity of flowering plants has attracted a range of different insect types by providing sources of nectar for the adults and food for their larval forms. The pearl bordered fritillary which 100 years ago used to be one of the commonest butterflies throughout Britain is now one of the most threatened species. It can be seen in various sunny and open sites in our woodlands. The larvae feed on violets and the adults' preferred source of nectar is bugle but they can also be seen feeding on bird's foot trefoil, tormentil, dandelions, hawkweeds and self-heal.

A relatively recent newcomer to Abriachan is the 6 spot Burnet moth, a species of grasslands, and in Scotland is usually found near the coast. It has very striking colouration- black wings with red spots and this to warn off predators. At every stage of their life cycle they are able to produce hydrogen cyanide which gives them an unpleasant taste and in large quantities can kill a predator. The caterpillars feed on bird's foot trefoil and the adults mainly feed on knapweed, thistles and ragwort.



We are fortunate to live in an area of clear air.... we know this because a recent [OPAL](#) citizen science air pollution survey has been conducted by our local lichenologist and Abigail, her apprentice! As well as this survey we have recorded data on fresh water invertebrates, red squirrel sightings, successful fledgings on Loch Laid, black grouse counts, flying ants, bat surveys and await the results from the local lepidopterists' summer season. Biodiversity records are a standing item at the trust's monthly meetings.

Abriachan Forest Trust : Annual General Meeting 2021

Friday 20th August at 7.30pm

Once again held at Forest Classroom: outdoors/indoors/Zoom option (abriachanforest@gmail.com to get the link.) Similarly, those members wanting to be elected as an AFT Trustee and to receive information regarding the duties, can email the above address or call 07833964512 to ask for a nomination form. This will need to be signed by the applicant and two proposers and received at Tyeantore or the Forest Classroom by 6th August.

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes AGM 2020
3. Chairman's Reportwith forestry, conservation, outdoor learning updates.
4. Finance report March 31st 2021
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner/Auditor
6. Election Directors/Trustees to the Board
7. Setting of Annual Subscription Fee
8. AOCB
9. Setting date of 2022 AGM

ABRIACHAN PRODUCE SHOW : 12.00 start 4th September 2021



Arts and crafts with an environmental twist.....
repurposed, upcycled, carved, painted, involving yarn, photos, , mini-garden etc.



Basket of produce ... flowers, fruits, vegetables



Root vegetables ... deliciously displayed



Important stuff ... bread, eggs, scones, oatcakes,
pancakes, generally the basics



Abundance ... alcohol, vinegars, cordials, jams,
preserves, chutney, honey etc.



Compost... involving a bucket or a barrow



Healthy eating....salads, herbs, healing produce



Any fruits....soft, hard, stoned, wild, tame. .



Naughty but nice... cakes, sweets, biscuits etc. .

Same format as 2020, with some Clachan-based music as a bonus!
Further details from abriachanforest@gmail.com or 01463861259.

The **greenwood-workers** have begun again with some new members joining the quietest, most focussed and self-reliant group ever to work around the forest. If you are interested in joining please contact Marco who is coordinating the sessions. marco.macbag@gmail.com

