



Abriachan Summer 2023

If you have an interest in the future of the community's woodland and support its aims, why not become a member of Abriachan Forest Trust ?
 AFT £3 Annual Memberships are due to be paid in April.
 Some members have set up a direct debit & can claim back Gift Aid.
 You will find the on-line membership form on www.abriachan.org.uk under the Get Involved tab.
 Other methods of contributing to Abriachan's nature recovery through reforestation, conservation and activities which benefit people and wildlife are Scan this QR code
 Or www.justgiving.com/Abriachan-Forest
 Thank you for your support.



**AFT monthly meetings usually happen on third Wednesday of a month at 7.30pm.
 All are very welcome...hall in summer/classroom in winter.**

We have recently secured Scottish Land Fund Stage 1 funding to look into the feasibility of purchasing land which borders the Abriachan Forest Trust at Rivoulich. It is currently for sale, on the open market, The sales particulars can be found here:

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

The feasibility work will take around 9 months to complete and will assess if this asset could potentially be brought into community ownership. As the land is on the open market the owners could, understandably, sell at any time. Fortunately, the Scottish Land Fund feasibility funding has been awarded on the basis that this could happen. 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

**Forest Trust : Annual General Meeting
 Abriachan Village Hall
 Friday 18th August 2023 at 7.00pm**

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes AGM 2022
3. Chairman's Reportwith forestry, conservation, outdoor learning, facilities updates.
4. Finance report March 31st 2023
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner
6. Election Directors/Trustees to the Board (***New Volunteer Trustees must apply by 28/07/2023)
7. Setting of Annual Subscription Fee
8. Looking to the Future & Setting Date of 2024 AGM

**Short AGM will be followed at 7.30 by a competitive, interactive
 25th Anniversary of Community Land Ownership**

Who, What, Where, When, Why?

This will involve natural and cultural history, local artefacts, rocks, assorted photos pre and post digital age, creative skills, citizen science ...something hands on for all ages to participate in.

All are very welcome to attend.
 Contact 01463 861278 for details *** about Trustee nomination



Alan Milton, the Trust's trusty administrator and bookkeeper for more than 20 years has decided to step down and take up garden leave full time. His penchant for cultivating cucumbers and Sage has become more and more evident as the limitations of showing others to use Excel formulae and QuickBooks has been causing him endless frustration. His current task is to identify everything he does for AFT and the staff every month... he's already on the fourth page of close lined foolscap! His boots will be hard to fill but we wish him and Sheona all the very best with his relaxing new hobbies.

Outdoor Learning

The team continue to deliver quality outdoor learning for all throughout the seasons.

Nursery provision for 3-5 year olds follows the Early Years curriculum with between twelve and fifteen children attending each day. Roni, early years manager, works closely with the Highland Council ensuring the youngest learners are working towards and achieving their developmental targets through carefully supported play-based learning. Anne has managed to convert her English teaching qualifications to register with the GTCS while Lorna and Kerry have surpassed themselves with gaining top marks in the first year of their Graduate Apprenticeship BA with UHI. It is a work-based course, so they have covered a variety of relevant pedagogical topics, written essays and completed assignments...for example producing floor books with the children. This means the children, parents/carers and colleagues are all benefiting from the experience in different ways. Kerry's floor book brought the spring garden and growing season to life and Lorna's documented egg incubation and much anticipated hatching of chicks.

Once again, there are approximately the same number of five year olds leaving as there are three year olds joining. We will all miss the Scottish Junior Foresters Chisholm, Sorley, Liliana, Catriona, Mirren, Innes, Jessica, Daniel, Connor, Millie and Juniper but know they will come back to play in their woods and check that we are caring for their trees...indeed, most of them have been already in July!



Despite some of these images being inside, all our learners spend most of their days outdoors but, if it is too cold or dangerously windy, we are able to shelter in the yurt, tipi, classroom, polytunnel, green woodworking shed or roundhouse. It is particularly special to hear them take pride in and ownership of whatever area of the forest they are in, no matter what age they are.

There are so many photos which tell the year round story, it has been tricky to choose them for this newsletter.





“Cheers to Abriachan!” two of our older learners who really enjoyed and benefited from each other’s company here.

Over the year we supported the learning of a variety of different pupils, some because they find the hectic mainstream environment difficult, others because they were working towards specific accreditation or were S3s who came as their introduction to [ASPIRENorth](#). The summer term saw a flurry of primary school visits and their class teachers had requested different topics for us to develop activities around. It is gratifying to note that many of these were repeat visits because the teachers found their previous school trips to Abriachan worthwhile. Earlier in the year we set ourselves the target of supporting learners from 25 different schools and we surpassed this by the end of the summer term.

The regular groups of young people from Kilchuimen Academy and Inverness Royal Academy all achieved their [Scottish Junior Forester Awards](#) , [John Muir Awards](#) and their [FOLA Level 4](#) with their evidence collated through photos relevant to the learning outcomes. Some of this being supported by [OWL](#) Scotland. Katie created an excellent self-led activity resource for some Abriachan Challenges in preparation for the Dot to Dot family group who came up from Ayrshire in April. This was organised via Articulate who are partners with AFT, Moniak Mhor and Calman Trust delivering creative life skills experiences for young people as a Life Changes Trust Legacy.



cal life How beautiful is this?

My youngest, has been going to @abriachanforest on Fridays as part of his schooling. Over the course of the last year he's been making benches, creating and maintaining bike tracks, a bit of tree planting plus other stuff. One of the things he made is this gorgeous stool which he brought home yesterday! Isn't it fabulous?!

Visitors and Volunteers



Fastest record breaker in the hill race from La Reunion, Julian & Titouan who also helped set up the tree nursery



From Spain Rodrigo, Jaime and Sandiago planting willow cuttings and pricking out rowan seedlings.



Cat Davidson sharing lots of pictures as well as facts and figures about the wildlife on her new home, Bruny Island off Tasmania. ...It's called a platypus, don't you know....and controlled burning of scrub vegetation is an important method for reducing the fuel load and ferocity of wildfires. This was a topic for discussion at recent AFT meetings too.

As well as the never-ending stream of campervans using Park4Nite, there have been visitors from all over the planet. Some have participated in volunteering, some in the last Friday of the month knitting group, some riding bikes and others just passing through, leaving their comments all year round in the whisky still visitor book.

New Zealander Dave, didn't manage to fit his bench into hand luggage. His volunteering management role in NZ meant he could speak authoritatively on voluntourism on Radio Scotland.



Family groups from Ayrshire teaching their mums and grannies how to ride bikes again.



Young people from Afghanistan, Sudan, and Albania making spurtles.



Visitors and volunteers



Wee AFT birds spotted in Italy again!
<http://www.mairimcfadyen.scot/abri-achan-project-biennale> for vox pop.



Forest Flower

Our best hopes, aborted:
 the forest, flattened.

With care and skill and love
 regenerating had begun.
 Then a force of nature
 stronger than the steadfast
 exploded and ripped the life out.

Shell-shocked, we surveyed
 the fallen heroes,
 contorted and transgressed.
 No help, but the chainsaw
 and the axe.

But, look! The surgeon's strike
 reveals the inner beauty
 of concentric ages
 and petalled edges.

And now, the blackbird sings.

Alison Sellar January 2012



In preparation for creating this year's exhibition at the Venice Biennale, Andy Summers and a group of curators from Architecture Fringe visited the woods on both sides of Loch Ness. A Fragile Correspondence introduces contrasting Scottish landscapes Orkney, Ravenscraig and Loch Ness through chosen words and language, installations of artefacts and archive material. On our side of the loch Dr Mairi McFadyen recorded conversations with some of those involved in the community's woodland and Dele, seen hanging off a crag above, converted a Scots pine food web into the plexiglass installation on the top left!

<http://www.mairimcfadyen.scot/fragile-correspondence/2023/essay>



Green arches moth
Anaplectoides prasina

We continue to keep busy recording the diverse flora and fauna living in the forest after 25 years of careful management. Despite a night of torrential rain, the moth traps set out by Pete and Hilary provided the group with no less than 52 different species to examine in the morning....amazing names from a Cockscomb Prominent, Dusky Brocade, Beautiful Golden Y, Brimstone, Large Emerald to, appropriately for 25 years, a Scarce Silver Y.



Forestry and growing update



Firewood : Please note the new prices

Dietrich has been telling us that we have been underpricing firewood for years....

“To just about break even it will need to be £70 per m3 plus £10 delivery. The price rise will be advertised on the website and newsletter with all existing orders honoured at the uneconomically low current rate. “ Reluctantly we have had to implement this increase from 1st August 2023.

Trailer load is 4 m3 abriachanforest@gmail.com

After the successful harvesting of 2021 the main forest operations in 2022-23 have been replanting, beat up of areas damaged through drought or weevil attack, removal of lodgepole regeneration and respacing of birch. The forest road verges have been flailed and trees blocking ditches removed. These activities will continue to ensure the management of the forest is carried out to the current FSC certified standard.

Dietrich Pannwitz, Syvestrus continues to advise and inform the Trustees on best practice at their monthly meetings. On occasion, he also supports the young people and volunteers who attend the forest school, explaining forestry facts and figures, the importance of growing trees to store carbon and the essential bonus for the industry of following forestry as a career option. Abriachan has contributed to more than ten land based industry careers over the years....foresters, fencers, drystone dykers, tree planters, tree nursery assistants, early years outdoor practitioners, plus more than thirty Branching Out Leaders and Forest School practitioners.



With chanterelle season upon us, here are some photos of a workshop organised by [Highland Good Food Partnership](#) when [Rhyze](#) demonstrated how to grow our own fungi. Since then we have been enjoying oyster, shitake mushrooms and amazed by spawn growing in sawdust, straw and grain under brassicas in the polytunnel. Birch logs take much longer. We could repeat this workshop if there was interest.



Pull & heave an enormous turnip!





Forestry and facilities update

The upgrade of the Peat Path, hill track and bike trails has been completed to great acclaim from the regular local walkers, Fergal, his team, and visiting mountain bikers. The benches, build by the volunteers and the young entrepreneurs along the hill path have been located at strategic view or rest points. Favourite amongst the younger cyclists has been the pump track and the old jump track, now a stretch of red trail. The alternative Great Glen Way route over the Leitir has not been signposted yet but hopefully will be before the end of the season. Potholes have been filled in around the car park, the main road to Achpopuli was graded to reduce the puddles but unfortunately the 10mph recommendation is not adhered to and, as soon as it rained, they have reappeared....much to the distress of those who tried to remedy them. Grateful thanks are due to all who helped improve these facilities....volunteers, including regular locals, MonsterBikes, Ronan Taylor, Hitrak with funding from AFT's own timber income, [SportScotland](#), [Great Glen Energy Cooperative](#) and [Highland Council](#). It has been a protracted team effort but very well worth it.



Hamish showing his commonwealth medals to local admirers



Nature Restoration Funded Tree Nursery : Keep Our Community Seed Collecting



The location identified as most suitable for a tree nursery is situated behind the classrooms and beside the garden polytunnel. This means that it is conveniently close for the groups and individuals we support to work in – those with physical mobility challenges can access it easily, as can the early years and the pupils who have time constrained sessions. The polytunnel and water supply are also nearby. Once the lodgepole stump removal and drainage was completed the fencer made a start and the resulting deer and hare-proof area is now ready for action. Unfortunately, the fencing coincided with the extremely dry May and June so the trees had to be heughed into deep beds until they are ready for planting out in autumn. The collection of and sowing seeds has begun already with wych elm, willows, bird cherry and gean all planted so far. Last year's rowan and hazel seedlings have been pricked out into root trainers ready to move out to the new protected area. Vigorous aspen suckers have also been transplanted from the carpark verges to areas nearer the loch...future beaver habitat perhaps?

These images show the weed suppressing and hare prevention work by volunteers in progress. The hazel trees and oak seedlings can be seen waiting in the garden deep beds ready for planting out in the tree nursery later in the year. As well as schools and adult groups plus some of the Family Tree planting events organised as 25 year celebrations this spring there have been hundreds of native deciduous trees planted between April and the end of May.

Each family tagged their trees with copper leaves so they can revisit their copse and take care of them in the future. The school groups all made special sustainability Global Goal (SDG 15) wishes for their trees and the planet as they watered them in.

One of the original aims of Abriachan Forest Trust when it was established in 1998 was to improve the biodiversity of the woodland through sensitive environmental management and, in recent years, the Nature Restoration Funding has helped support this aim.



Proverbs were an effective way of transmitting knowledge. They were based on observations of behaviour; the behaviour of the elements, people, plants and animals was closely observed and noted and became the material of our proverbs.

There are many Gaelic proverbs and proverbial sayings that were used to predict the weather conditions and the following are based on observations of plants and animals.

The Gaels had many proverbs to predict if rain was coming for example :

Thàinig ialtag a-steach bidh frasan a-mach air ball.
[A bat has come in it is going to rain.]

Tha an-t-seamhrag a' pasgadh a còmhdaich roimh thuiltean dòirteach.
[The shamrock is folding her garments before heavy rainfall.] (Shamrock here is wood sorrel.)

Tha an deal a' snamh thig frasan blàth roimh feasgair.
[The leech is swimming warm showers will come before evening.]

Tha seamhrag Muire a dhùineadh a sùil.
[Mary's shamrock is closing her eye.] (Seamhrag Muire is the yellow pimpernel commonly seen in the Abriachan Wood.)

Tha a' chòhmachag ri bròn, thilg tuiltean oirnn.
[The owl; is mourning, a heavy downpour is coming.]

Snow was predicted by cat behaviour.

Tha an cat 's an luath, thig frasan fuar. [The cat is in the ashes it is going to rain. If the cat sits with its back to the fire snow will come

At certain times of the year a change in weather conditions would be expected.

Atharrachadh nan sian ri Gealach a' Bhruic.

[A change of weather occurs at the time of the Badger's Moon.]

The Badger's Moon is the moon following the Harvest Moon. During this moon the badger cuts and dries grass for its winter bedding.

And we are only too familiar with what happens when Spring seems to arrive early:

Chan eil port a sheinneas an smeòrach 's an Fhaoileach. nach caoin mu' n ruith an Earrach

[For every song the mavis sings in February she will repent before Spring is over.]

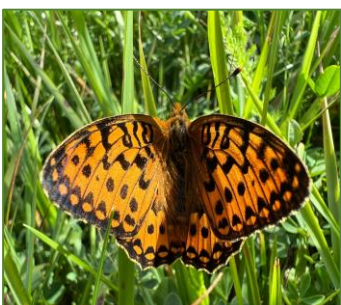
If Spring-like weather arrives too early, there will be an unseasonable return of wintry weather which will destroy the too advanced growth.

Finally a hope for the end of the year:

Oidhche Challuinn bu mhat cuillionn is calltuin a bhi bualadh a chèile.

[On Hogmanay's Night it would be well if holly and hazel were striking one another.]

This proverb meant that a stormy night was wished for during this night to ensure good growing weather for the following year.



Harvest Celebration : Produce Show & Tell

Hold the dateSunday 3rd September, afternoon,
in Abriachan village hall

Details will be announced soon but the suggestion at the last hall meeting and enthusiastic conversations at the Games was that there would be not just displays of beautiful produce but lots of eating, plenty sharing and potentially some live music playing!



Birthday barrow boys!



Back by popular demand, to celebrate 25 years of the community's woodland, [Creeping Toad](#) will lead a storytelling stroll and performance around the woods on **In-Service Tuesday 12th September 10-3pm** Under 8s must be accompanied Booking via [Eventbrite.](#)



Gordon MacLellan, alias Creeping Toad, came to the woods last May and enthralled the pupils from Dochgarroch and Balnain primary schools with lots of creative environmental writing and illustrating activities. The resulting concertina folding story books were absolutely inspired and led to lots of follow up classroom-based learning and imaginative finishing off in school.



How many hidden ants did you spot?

