

---

**Argyll and Bute Community Planning  
Partnership**

**Helensburgh and Lomond  
Area Community Planning Group**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Agenda Item [*for office use*]**



---

**Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust**

---

**Summary**

Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust has transformed over the past two years from a start-up project to a fully operational countryside trust. We have already delivered 4 projects and are rapidly expanding our activities through our 5 current projects.

We are meeting our objectives and achieving the goals set out in our initial business plan. We are progressing towards a sustainable financial model and estimate that we will be able to provide our partners with value for money and Argyll communities, businesses and individuals with positive social and environmental outcomes.

**1. Purpose**

We are keen to let the Helensburgh and Lomond Community Planning Group know what ACT has achieved since start-up in 2014. We have delivered social, environmental, financial and community capacity building benefits across Argyll, and put plans in place to continue and increase these outputs.

Our 3-year start-up funding package will conclude in September, and whilst we are making progress towards financial sustainability, we are not yet in a position to operate without partner support. No other countryside trust in Scotland or comparable organisation in Argyll has operated without agency support within 3 -5 years of launch.

**2. Recommendations**







This report is for noting, and to encourage ACT membership and support.

### 3. Background

In 2012 a feasibility study was conducted to assess community and existing network support for establishing a new countryside trust in Argyll. 350 stakeholder groups were consulted, of which 135 participated in the study. 89% of participants were in full support of creating Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust.

In September 2013 a Development Officer was appointed, and in April 2014 the Trust, now with Act as its identity and with the website [www.act-now.org.uk](http://www.act-now.org.uk), branding and charitable status in place, was formally launched.



The feasibility study documented clear guidelines on how Argyll's communities wished to see Act structured and operated. This resulted in the trust adopting the following objectives:

-  To care for and enhance our environment - working strategically and locally.
-  To encourage people to enjoy and benefit from our environment.
-  To encourage investment that will improve our environment.
-  To share ideas on how to care for, enhance and enjoy our environment.
-  To increase opportunities for local people such as work, training and volunteering.
-  To work in partnership with individuals or groups with an interest in our environment.

These objectives are even more pertinent in the current financial climate given Argyll's increasing need to retain and increase its working age population in order to create sustainable local communities.

### 4. Detail

To date, ACT has:

-  created 1 FTE job and 2 PTE jobs within the Trust
-  started to address the need for traineeships in environmental improvement works through our commercial arm – Act Argyll Ltd

- 🌀 created 3 new FTE jobs and 7 PTE jobs with ACT Argyll Ltd.
- 🌀 engaged over 200 people in outdoor activities.
- 🌀 engaged 45 community groups and schools in outdoor activities through our 3 delivered campaigns
- 🌀 provided over 80 hours of volunteering opportunities, providing both experience and fulfilling leisure time
- 🌀 secured £233,802 in external funding for our projects, more than matching start-up funds invested
- 🌀 developed 5 access, health and environmentally focussed projects, three of which have already started to generate income for ACT and one of which has the potential to bring around £1M of employment and habitat management to Argyll (via Interreg Va with Irish partners).
- 🌀 delivered training to 17 Argyll and Bute residents, now qualified to deliver “Branching Out ” – woodland activities on referral for mental health services, which to date has not be available in Argyll
- 🌀 secured 3 year funding of £195K for Branching Out Argyll.

Our key projects are currently:

1. Act Argyll – two teams one of which based in Helensburgh, providing training and work experience.
2. Branching Out – woodland activities on referral for patients receiving treatment for mental health problems.
3. Invasive Non-Native Species Management – rhododendron management and peatland restorations, European bids under development.
4. Long Distance Routes – ACT facilities a new forum for all of Argyll’s routes to work together.

ACT has started to generate project income and has clear potential to bring significant economic and capacity building benefits across Argyll. As we move beyond our 3-year start-up phase we are prioritising:

- stronger community representation within our network of Board and Advisors, and continued progress towards community driven initiatives.
- clear alignment with ACT and area objectives, which includes a robust economic model and contribution towards ACT’s sustainability, within all our projects.
- Initiation and partnership development of projects which will meet area and funding priorities.

## **5. Conclusions**

In our first two years we have matched our partner's investment as well as delivering social, environmental and financial returns. We are moving towards a sustainable financial model. Continued investment is required in order to consolidate the progress we have made and to realise the benefits of all that has been invested to date.

### **6.0 SOA Outcomes**

ACT's objectives align closely with

Outcome 1 – The economy is diverse and thriving

Outcome 2 – People live active, healthier and independent lives.

#### **Name of Lead Officer, and for further information:**

Julie Young, ACT Development Officer  
Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust  
01546 604309  
julie@act-now.org.uk