

PARTNERSHIP PLANTING WITH ARGYLL AND THE ISLES COAST & COUNTRYSIDE TRUST (ACT) at KILMORY HOME FARM

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A planting partnership is proposed between Argyll and Bute Council and ACT. An area of 60 hectares of native woodland planting on Council owned land, principally around Kilmory Home Farm is suggested. Of the 60 hectares total, 30 hectares will be part of ACT's compensatory planting agreement with Scottish & Southern Electric Networks (SSEN) to deliver part of their obligation for the LT40 powerline. ACT will register the other 30 hectares for replanting under the Forestry Grant Scheme, and also register it on the Woodland Carbon Code allowing Argyll and Bute Council to secure carbon credits which can either contribute towards their CO2 emissions targets or be traded.

This proposal will progress an innovative and environmentally friendly approach to compensatory planting, allow Argyll and Bute Council to progress towards their CO2 emissions targets, support ACT to deliver skills and training, health and wellbeing and biodiversity projects benefitting communities across Argyll, and progress towards a significantly improved woodland at Kilmory.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy & Resources Committee note and consider:-

That Climate Change Board, the Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services and the associated Departmental Management Team have agreed the following recommendations:-

- A)** Agree to Licence up to 30ha of land at Kilmory Home Farm to ACT to be used as compensatory planting of native woodland and funded by Scottish and Southern Electric Networks (SSEN) thus supporting rural skills, biodiversity creation, and carbon sequestration,
- B)** Agree to Licence up to an additional 30ha of land at Kilmory Home Farm to ACT to be used for direct carbon sequestration to offset our Council's Carbon Footprint by using funding from Woodland Grant Schemes and formal Carbon Credit arrangements.
- C)** Agree to appoint ACT to develop a woodland management strategy for existing conifer woodland blocks at Kilmory Home Farm (Blocks 7 and 9) including strategy for removal of commercial timber crop, felling licences and replanting scheme with reinvestment from timber income into replanting or climate change related activity on Council Estate; and
- D)** Agree that preferred areas for planting will be Blocks 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and east of 11 with options on the remaining numbered blocks shown on **Appendix A** following collaboration with Argyll and Bute Council officers to identify planting sites which will complement other development opportunities under consideration.

3.0 DETAIL

Background

3.1. ACT was established in 2014, following community consultation, and with the support of Argyll and Bute Council, Forestry Commission Scotland (Scottish Forestry), Scottish Natural Heritage (NatureScot) and NHS, to work with Argyll's people to make the most of our environment. Our objectives are:

- To care for and enhance our unique natural environment.
- To give people opportunities to experience, learn in and be inspired by nature.
- To encourage investment in Argyll's natural capital to support our economy.
- To increase opportunities for employment, skills development, and volunteering in our environment.

3.2. One of ACT's foremost priorities is regeneration and expansion of Argyll's unique and threatened rainforest, through strategically connecting and expanding existing woodland. This diverse habitat supports a variety of globally rare species and is a valuable resource for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, communities and eco-tourism. Much of this habitat is under threat from over-grazing (particularly by deer) invasive species e.g., *Rhododendron ponticum*, and other land uses.

3.3. A planting partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and ACT would mark significant progress in Argyll and Bute Council's Decarbonisation Plan action OFF1 – "*Develop opportunities for Carbon Offsetting with ACT and partners*". It would also go some way towards achieving the aims of ACT's rainforest project - new and improved woodland, expansion, and connectivity of existing woodland clusters. This approach is endorsed by the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest and align with Argyll and Bute Council's Argyll and Bute Forest and Woodland Strategy, Local Development Plan, Outcome Improvement Plan and Biodiversity Action Plans.

3.4. ACT was invited to join Argyll and Bute Council's short life working group on Climate Change which now regularly meets as a Board. ACT's projects approach climate change and environmental awareness through a range of initiatives;

- Peatland restoration on Islay within the [CANN](#) project,
- [MAKI Pups](#) outdoor Nursery for 3-5-year-olds in Kilmory Walled Garden,
- a climate change awareness project [ACTNow](#) based in Mid Argyll which has recently been boosted by Crown Estate funding. This has provided a climate change hub at [Blarbuie Woodland](#) by Lochgilphead with satellite hubs for Cowal and Bute under development.
- Outdoors health and wellbeing activities, including the award winning [Branching Out and Moving On](#) programmes which ACT have delivered across Argyll for over 5 years.

Since launch in 2014 ACT has:

- Created employment – over 25 new work opportunities.
- Attracted investment – secured over £2M of external funding.
- Launched projects – 15 new projects benefitting communities and our environment.
- Generated income – 5 projects generating income that we are re-investing in ACT to achieve our objectives.
- Built networks – facilitated new strategic partnerships.

ACT are focussed on the climate change and biodiversity emergencies, on improving people's quality of life and on Argyll's Green Recovery from Covid-19.

- 3.5. An initial desk-based review of Council owned sites around Kilmory Home Farm has identified the areas with planting potential detailed on Appendix 1. ACT are working with Council Officers to establish the most favourable sites to enable renewables initiatives and other proposals to be developed alongside planting schemes.

ACT has recruited a qualified Forester with 20 years' experience to lead their Woodland Enterprise. He participated with Council officers on site visits around Kilmory Home Farm during week beginning 26th April. ACT's Woodland Co-ordinator is supported by ACT Board, Advisors, and project Steering Group.

Scottish & Southern Electric Networks (SSEN) Compensatory Planting

- 3.6. Planning consent for the LT40 Inveraray to Crossaig OHL was granted by Scottish Ministers on 23rd July 2019 subject to a set of conditions. *“a woodland planting strategy will be submitted to and approved in writing by the Scottish Ministers, in consultation with the Planning Authority (Argyll and Bute Council). The Woodland Planting Strategy shall set out an approach for the replanting of 272 hectares or as otherwise agreed with the Scottish Ministers. The approved Woodland Planting Strategy shall then be implemented in full.”*

Option 2 within that Strategy is to deliver via a not-for-profit partnership. ACT and SSEN are close to signing a partnership that will engage ACT to plant 50 hectares of that planting obligation. ACT is seeking to plant 30 ha of high social value woodland on Argyll and Bute Council land, and where possible will do so providing training and volunteering opportunities and working with community groups.

Carbon Sequestration to offset Council Carbon Footprint

- 3.7. Argyll and Bute Council's carbon footprint for year 19/20 was 28,643 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tco2e) with a target of reducing those emissions by 75% by 2030 and achievement of net zero by 2045. Native woodland planting on Council land offers a valuable contribution to those targets and these proposals at Kilmory would make a significant first step towards further development of that offsetting opportunity.

- 3.8. The benefits of this proposal:

It would launch an approach to high social and nature value woodland planting more widely, establishing a model which would be applied to developments, landholders, and renewable energy developments.

It would facilitate a strategic approach with continuous coherent investment into the regeneration and development of Argyll's Rainforest and woodland with high social value.

It would enable Argyll and Bute Council to benefit from carbon offsetting, and progress towards emissions targets.

It will support ACT to deliver its environmental, community and health and wellbeing projects, which have been benefitting Argyll's communities since 2014.

- 3.9. The proposed 30 ha of new woodland that is not part of the SSEN compensatory planting area would be eligible for Scottish Forestry's Forestry Grant Scheme. This scheme offers financial support for the creation of new woodland and the sustainable management of existing woodland in the form of:

- an initial planting payment;
- annual maintenance payments for up to five years; and
- capital grant (for ground preparation, fencing and tree protection)

ACT would apply for and receive these payments.

- 3.10. In addition, the new woodland can be registered on The Woodland Carbon Code which is the mechanism that allows the sale of carbon units sequestered by the woodland. Woodland carbon credits currently sell for between £7 to £15/tCO₂ sequestered over a 100-year time span. The carbon credit owner has the option to sell units if they are not using them to offset their own emissions.
- 3.11 A new 30 hectare native woodland can capture between 9000-12000 tonnes of Co₂ equivalent by year 50. By year 100, it can capture 12000-18000 tonnes of Co₂ equivalent. Averaging this out would equate to about 240 tonnes equivalent per annum within the first 50 years. The carbon credits would be registered with Argyll and Bute Council and if recorded and sold at higher scale could generate £270,000.

Woodland Management at Kilmory Home Farm

- 3.12. ACT can prepare an outline management proposal for existing Council-owned woodland at Kilmory, some blocks of which are over-age and have fallen out of management. The revenue available to invest in the replanting obligation and further sustainable management is dramatically reduced as over-age stands begin to blow down and felling/extraction becomes more complicated and less cost effective. If ACT were to re-establish and enact active management of Kilmory woodlands, it would enable A&B council to:
- Maximise the return on existing over-age stands that are beginning to blow down.
 - Capitalise on the fossil fuel substitutions available when existing plantations are felled and utilised.
 - Invest in long term native woodland replanting at these sites, that will increase and stabilise carbon storage capacity.
 - Restock with native woodland that would improve biodiversity, water quality, and soil condition. Enhancing the ecosystem services that these aspects of the environment contribute towards.
 - Demonstrate a commitment to ScotGov net zero emissions and biodiversity net gain targets.
 - Promote productive and resilient native woodland management that can provide a renewable resource for local enterprise operating in a low carbon economy.

Agreement on delivery of the management proposal can be negotiated once the details and financial viability has been established following ACTs Woodland Co-ordinator's surveys.

Priority Blocks for Planting

- 3.13. Kilmory Home Farm has been reviewed and grouped into 11 sections totalling around 80ha with up to 60 ha having suitability for planting. Due to development plans designation some areas there is a prioritisation of planting – like Kilmory Business Park or residential zoning at the north.
- 3.14. The preferred areas of planting are shown on **Appendix A**.

Conclusion

- 3.15. A consensus response was sought from the Climate Change Board prior to seeking the delegated agreement to enter into 20 year Licence Agreements with ACT.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Policy - This proposal is entirely consistent with climate change policy and action at local, national and international level.
- 4.2 Financial –
- 4.3 Legal – Will be a legal requirement to achieve net zero by 2045
- 4.4 HR - None
- 4.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – N/A
- 4.6 Equalities – protected characteristics – None
- 4.7 Socio-economic Duty – N/A
- 4.8 Islands – N/A
- 4.9 Risk – Varied depending on tracker item
- 4.10 Customer Service -None

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services
16th July 2021

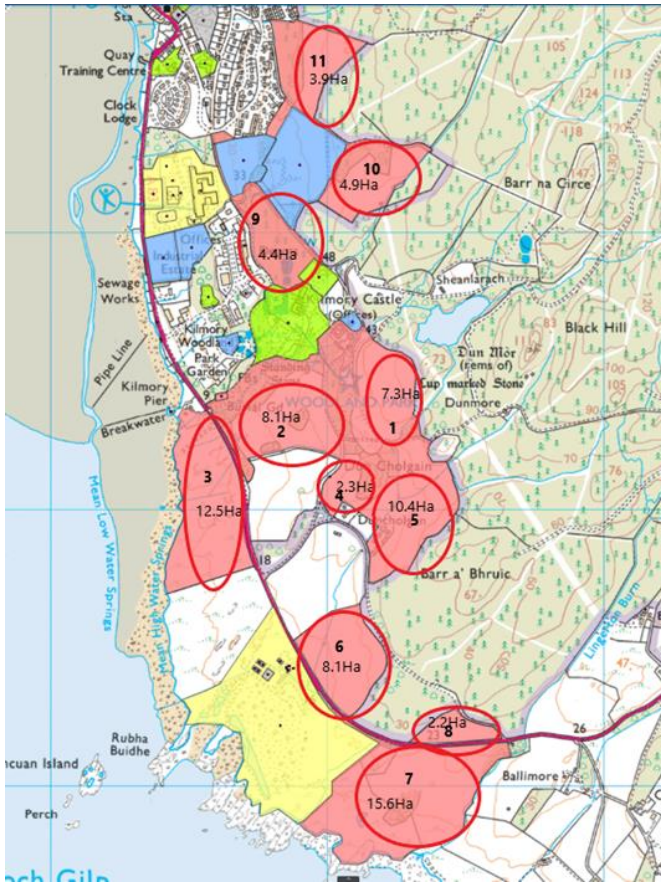
Councillor Robin Currie, Policy Lead for Climate Change.

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Appendix 1: Argyll and Bute Council Land Holdings - Kilmory Home Farm Estate



Based on

[Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015](#)

[LDP maps](#)

[Google Maps Satellite Imagery](#)

Areas estimated from GIS measurements.