

STRONAFIAN FOREST NEWSLETTER



The acquisition of Stronafian Forest is probably the biggest single project the community will tackle and, at a cost of £1.55 million, it was never going to be easy – or quick!

Not only is the purchase price an enormous figure – we anticipate legal fees will be in the region of £18,000. Negotiations begun in March re funding of this element of the project and the Trust is pleased to report that the necessary funding for fees was secured in June through grants received from the Forestry Commission and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, at which time Burness Solicitors were appointed as the Trust's legal representatives.

Originally, the Trust had accepted that the purchase would be concluded by the end of November this year and, whilst we were diligently working towards this date, the Forestry Commission have been extremely slow in issuing the terms of the sale and these were only received by our own solicitors at the beginning of October. The complexities of the legal work deemed the original timescale impossible and we are in the process of seeking an extension which will remain within this financial year.

The Lessee identified as the operator of the commercial timber crop has been extremely patient but the complexities of the legal work impact on agreeing final terms of the lease. Representatives of the Trust will shortly meet with our Forestry Adviser to address the requirements of the Forestry Commission and be in a position to respond. Income of £1.3m from the lease will meet the largest element of the purchase price and is therefore an important element of the project.

Negotiations are ongoing regarding funding of the bulk of the remainder of the purchase price with the Scottish Land Fund and Highlands & Islands Enterprise agreeing to accept applications for £175,000 and £50,000 respectively.

As a community land buy-out, the Scottish Government and the funders expect that the community will contribute to the acquisition costs and this can be a combination of donations from private trust funds and donations from individuals. So far, two applications have been submitted to private trusts but in the current economic climate, it is by no means certain that these applications, or indeed any others, will be successful. We therefore need to raise £25,000 to complete the funding package and donations from the community will be welcome.

The Trust recognises that, on taking ownership of the Forest, an immediate task will require appointment of a Forest Officer to work towards co-ordinating the phased development of the Stronafian. The importance of robust groundwork is critical to ensure well researched and developed applications for future work meet the potential funders' criteria while supporting the Business Plan. To this end, applications are currently being submitted to Argyll & the Islands LEADER Programme, the Scottish Land Fund and Highlands & Islands Enterprise.

It will be a condition of public sector funding that there is permanent recognition of their contributions to the project and this will of course apply to private benefactors. This is likely to be dedication of a tree within the retained area of the Forest or a timber artwork specifically created for the purpose.

The vision for the Forest remains as the catalyst in regenerating ColGlen offering opportunities for affordable housing and the creation of forest crofts providing not only economic opportunities for small businesses, but supporting affordable housing development. Coupled with the development of leisure activities from footpaths to more adventurous activities, the Forest will not only offer an outstanding amenity value on our doorstep but have downstream economic benefits to existing businesses and offer opportunities for new service sector businesses.

The Colintraive and Glendaruel Development Trust is supported by:



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