

Clunes Forest School Buildings and Woodland

Feasibility Study and Business Plan



Fiona Chalmers Associates
In association with Talk Associates
Prepared for
Arkaig Community Forest Group (ACF)
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Clunes Forest School Buildings and Woodland Feasibility Study

Final Report

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1 Executive Summary

This report is a Feasibility Study and Business plan for the acquisition of Clunes Forest School Buildings and Woodland by Arkaig Community Forest SCIO (ACF) under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) from the current owners Forestry and Land Scotland. The site, at Clunes in Lochaber, is a former forestry workers outpost and workshop comprising two simple buildings with an adjacent six hectares of mature oak woodland, Tom an Eireannaich, which also contains a tree nursery and community orchard. The ACF group have been managing the area on a lease basis for the last three years and during that time have been successful in obtaining Scottish Land Fund Stage 1 grant to investigate the feasibility of purchasing the area under the provisions of the Community Empowerment Act (2015) as delivered through Forestry and Land Scotland's Community Asset Transfer Scheme.

This Feasibility Study and Business Plan has been written in response to the request in a brief by ACF to "assess the viability and potential options for developing Clunes Forest School and Tom an Eireannaich wood to achieve a range of long term economic, environmental and community benefits".

The site and woodlands were assessed as part of the study and the results showed that the buildings are very useful to the community in their current form, however there is limited scope for any upgrade due to the nature of the construction. For this reason, the buildings have been recommended in the business plan to be a useful resource for staff and volunteer use in their current state, however in the future they could be replaced if new and successful income streams and/or grant funding are forthcoming in a development phase - post-acquisition. The woodlands have a high conservation value as ancient semi-natural upland oak woodland, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat. However due to the stand structure they have limited scope for any income from harvesting and timber sales. The tree nursery area is of high value to the local residents for food growing, to craft workers for willow and for education activities (if there are staff resources to deliver this), however it currently has limited scope for income generation.

An important part of the feasibility study involved carrying out a full community and stakeholder consultation on the Options or Ideas that ACF had already identified. The community were also invited to submit new ideas for the site as part of the consultation process. This consultation elicited a response from a significant portion of this small community of Achnacarry, Bunarkaig and Clunes and also from nearly thirty stakeholders from varying sectors. The community response was an overwhelming vote of support for ACF to proceed towards purchasing the site on behalf of the community. The Options presented to the community were voted on and ranked and then a long list was presented to the ACF Board who selected those Options they wanted to go forward into the business plan. The stakeholders were likewise very supportive however they did urge caution and some raised concerns about more ambitious plans to develop tourism at the site. From this work, and also the site assessment, it was clear that a number of constraints prevented some of the Options identified by the community being ready to be included in the Business Plan at this stage as more detailed work to develop markets and partnerships, resolve practical issue and address community concerns is required.

Taking all of the above into account, a Strategic Business Direction was developed with a two-phase approach to the development of the options for community benefit:

Phase 1 - these were ideas or options that could be taken forward to form the short list in the business plan that will support acquisition. These are the low risk, achievable and the only currently financially feasible options;

Phase 2 (Development) – these ideas or options that are not feasible as they stand as they require further development work. However, they have great potential and so could become feasible in a post-acquisition development phase.

Given that there is limited scope for revenue generation at present (due to the lack of harvestable timber or other income streams), the business plan has been developed with a 'small and safe' approach that can still clearly demonstrate the financial viability of the site. The resulting practical and achievable business

plan identifies costs and forecasts for managing and maintaining the site and for additional carrying out small scale projects. Most importantly the business plan also identifies that there is latent potential for future income to be realised through development of projects and partnerships. Pivotal to the realisation of this potential is the employment by ACF of a Ranger/Development Officer who can not only start to develop and deliver income generating activities but who can also work to address the constraints and work to collaborate with existing and new partnerships, for mutual benefit.

From the feasibility analysis carried out it can be concluded that the purchase of the Clunes Forest School Buildings and the adjacent Tom an Eireannaich Woodland is supported by the community, is financially viable, and it offers great opportunities for the future social and economic well-being of this small community as well as the conservation of this valuable oak woodland.

2 Introduction and Background

2.1 Introduction

This report is a Feasibility Study and Business Plan to support Arkaig Community Forest (ACF) Group application to the Community Asset Transfer Scheme and the Scottish Land Fund for the purchase of Forestry and Land Scotland's (FLS) Clunes Forest School buildings and associated woodland. The study was commissioned by Arkaig Community Forest Group (ACF) and carried out by Fiona Chalmers of Fiona Chalmers Associates working with Patrick Laughlin of Talk Associates who assisted with the stakeholder consultation and options appraisal.

2.2 Background

The work on the proposal to acquire the Clunes Forest School building and surrounding woodland from Forestry and Land Scotland began in 2017 when the then applicant Achnacarry, Bunarkaig and Clunes Community Group (ABC), was successful in its application to the Scottish Land Fund for a Stage One grant. In early 2018 ABC trustees organised a survey of their community group members to seek their views on the priorities for this asset transfer. At that time the majority were in favour of ABC group remaining focused on social activities in the communities and it was felt that the sister group, Arkaig Community Forest (ACF), should lead on the acquisition of the woodland and buildings. ACF has Members and Directors common to ABC and an existing track record of land management of the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest acquired through a community asset transfer and managed in partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS). Following that feedback from the ABC group, ACF were charged with continuing the community acquisition process and commissioning a full community and stakeholder engagement plan and feasibility study for the proposed acquisition of the Forest School site and adjacent woodland.

2.3 The Communities and Area

The communities of Achnacarry, Bunarkaig and Clunes are located in Lochaber - twelve miles to the North East of Fort William, and seven miles west of Spean Bridge - and they fall within the Highland Council region of Scotland. The communities are relatively remote, they contain approximately 40 residents and are in a rural area defined by postcode units PH34 4EJ and PH34 4EL.

The communities are situated in the Great Glen and on the Caledonian Canal and the area of is high scenic value and includes large areas of both native woodland and commercial forestry along with the large freshwater lochs Loch Arkaig and Loch Lochy. All three communities fall within the Loch Lochy and Loch Oich Special Landscape area. Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are regionally valuable landscapes identified to protect and enhance landscape qualities and promote their enjoyment.

“This area is dominated by the strong linear form of the Great Glen fault line with Loch Oich and Loch Lochy occupying the deep, v shaped glen. The lochs are bounded by steep slopes which rise to prominent and striking combinations of peaks and north-east to south west orientated ridges, these hills contain views within the narrow corridor of the Great Glen. Both lochs, together with Loch Ness and the linking sections of the Caledonian Canal, form part of the “grand processional way” along the Great Glen and which is perhaps best experienced travelling by boat. Views over gentle pastures along the loch shores across clear, reflective water towards wooded banks and rolling hills opposite are often obscured in part by hovering layers of low cloud or diffused by mist.”

Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas, Highland Council, June 2011

The area is also famous for Achnacarry Castle – with strong links to the history of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 and the Clan Cameron, and it is also the site of the Clan Cameron Museum. There are strong military links to the Commandos who trained at Achnacarry during WWII.

The Great Glen Way, a 73-mile national long-distance walking and cycling trail from Fort William to Inverness, passes through both Bunarkaig and Clunes. The route follows canal towpaths, loch shore paths and forestry tracks and goes along the public road from Bunarkaig to Clunes. The Great Glen Canoe trail follows the Caledonian canal and a partnership project was developed in 2012 to further develop this route for tourism and recreation.

3 Study Purposes and Outputs

3.1 Study Purpose and Brief

This study is in response to the Brief provided in an email to Fiona Chalmers from Liam McLoone on 16th October 2017 and subsequently amended following an invitation to re-tender in November 2018 and discussions with Gary Servant on 13th December 2018.

The tender brief required the following:

- ◆ Community engagement initially to assist in identification of community desired social environmental, and economic benefits;
- ◆ Options for developing the assets, assessment of options for a long list and then short list of options, and recommendations;
- ◆ Assessment of community and ACF Board skills and resources, with proposals for addressing any gaps;
- ◆ Risk assessment and mitigations;
- ◆ A funding strategy and delivery plan for acquisition, development and on-going management;
- ◆ A five-year business plan for acquisition, development, and ongoing management, including woodland management proposals, with detailed financials and cash flow for the first 5 years and 25-year outline financials;
- ◆ Assistance in preparing SLF and CATS applications.

The contract was confirmed on 8th March 2019 with a completion date for the report of 31st July 2019. An inception meeting was held with ACF board members on 22nd March 2019, and the following (initial) aims for acquisition were agreed:

- ◆ Formalising and expanding community use;
- ◆ Opportunities for education, tree nursery and allotments;
- ◆ A base and administrative facility for ACF and their partnership with WTS;
- ◆ Enable experiences of Loch Arkaig to be shared – remote cameras, interpretation;
- ◆ Enhancing and protecting the conservation value of the woodland;
- ◆ Opportunities for new micro businesses e.g. woodfuel, non-timber forest products, office rental;
- ◆ Low key tourism facilities – food, drinks, and facilities for walkers, cyclists and canoeists.

A community and stakeholder consultation process was carried out during April and May 2019, and following this process an Options Appraisal was carried out in June. The reports were submitted to the board of ACF on 24th June and these are attached as annexes to this report.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Initial visit

The first stage was an initial site and inception meeting aimed to:

- ◆ Understand ACF objectives and concerns and gather any background information;
- ◆ Discuss the headings for the CATS application;
- ◆ Review the consultation work done so far and agree the engagement plan for further community and stakeholder engagement;
- ◆ Carry out an initial site visit and survey of the area;
- ◆ Confirm the timeline for the work.

3.2.2 Asset assessment - Woodland and Buildings

Information from the site visit, along with survey assessment data from ACF and previous surveys were brought together to form the asset assessment. This was evaluated to underpin the Options and to help identify opportunities and management priorities. The District Valuer's report formed a part of this asset assessment and the existing report analysis of the forest school buildings is included in the report to provide a site overview of their current condition and to assess the capacity of the buildings and layout to meet identified options.

3.2.3 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The proposed project must be firmly rooted in the needs and aspirations of the local community. Not only is funding for purchase or transfer of the buildings and woodland likely to be dependent upon the ability for ACF to illustrate strong community support for the project through consultation, but the transfer will be the start of a long process which will require ongoing community engagement and input to deliver the vision.

There was a clear remit for the community engagement: raising awareness; understanding local perspectives; understanding local need for the facilities and potential use; and gathering evidence of support. A start had been made with engagement by ABC and ACF and it is essential that this was built on as part of the study, to continue informing, enthusing, enlisting and inspiring people.

We sought to maximise the involvement of local people as part of the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan working with ACF and utilising our combined resources to best effect. The engagement plan included the following key stages:

1. Agreeing the Community Engagement process and event with ACF.
2. Information gathering from the ACF board on existing ideas and aspirations.
3. Using agreed channels to raise awareness and to invite people to the engagement event using the 'Postcard Invite' delivered to every household.
4. Staging a drop-in style **Open Day** event to gather views on the existing ideas and any new ideas.
5. Carrying a comprehensive **stakeholder engagement** exercise.
6. Analysing and presenting the results 4 and 5 in a **Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report**.

3.2.4 Options Appraisal

The detailed information on the study area and the feedback and aspirations from the community and stakeholders enabled assessment of the proposed options for the development of the Clunes Forest School and Woodland. Through this process four themes were developed that would help to build up a vision for the Clunes Forest School and Wood, taking account of area and site-specific opportunities and needs.

There are many factors to be balanced in the detailed options process to assess the "right" option or set of options for the ACF and its community. To help balance various options, we have used what is referred to as a light-touch 'multi-criteria decision analysis' (STEEPLE) to identify which factors are most important in arriving at the agreed outcome. The long-list of options favoured by the community through the consultation process was identified and analysed using the multi-criteria assessment tool, which provided a detailed assessment that was then presented in the **Options Appraisal Report**.

The report gave a recommendation of a short list of proposals to take forward to a short list for the acquisition stage, and a list of those requiring more development work in a post-acquisition stage. This process provided a robust basis for discussion by the Board. A Risk Assessment was provided for each option, highlighting the relative risks that each option may not deliver on its assumed community, visitor, and economic benefits. The risk appetite of the ACF and its community will be a key factor in deciding which option best fits.

3.2.5 Final Report – Feasibility Study and Business Plan

The Feasibility Business Plan needs to demonstrate the requirement to meet the "triple bottom line" of social, environment, and economic feasibility. The final report took the results of the ACF Board's review of the Options Appraisal Report alongside the information gained in the asset assessment and the community and stakeholder engagement process to suggest a way forward that would:

- a) demonstrate a sound social, environmental, and financial basis for asset transfer.
- b) Show a feasible and workable plan to prove the viability of the Clunes Forest School and Woodland at day one and a delivery plan over the next five years.

3.3 Study outputs

The Scope of Work in line with the Invitation to Tender is as follows as this has been accounted for in the methodology of the Study as detailed in Section 3.2:

1. Community engagement and asset appraisal to assist in identification of community desired social, environmental and economic benefits along with site potential.
2. Options and recommendations for developing the asset - assessment of options for a long list and then a short list of options.
3. Assessment of community and ACF Board skills and resources, with proposals for addressing any gaps.
4. Risk assessment and mitigations.
5. A funding strategy and delivery plan for acquisition, development and on-going management.
6. A five-year business plan for acquisition, development, and ongoing management, including woodland management proposals, with detailed financials and cash flow for the first 5 years and 25-year outline financials.
7. Assistance in preparing SLF and CATS applications.

The deliverable outputs to the Arkaig Community Forest will be the Feasibility Study Report and Business Plan, supplied in both electronic format and hard copy, to include:

1. Production of Community and Stakeholder Consultation report.
2. Production of the Options Appraisal Report with a recommended short list of proposals.
3. Production of a Final Feasibility Study Report including a 5-year business plan with indicative costings including a 25-year outline.
4. First draft completion of CATS and SLF application forms.

4 Asset Assessment – Buildings and Woodland

4.1 Asset Transfer Site and Background

This study covers the Clunes Forest School Buildings and the adjacent woodland, Tom an Eireannach, which are situated in the community of Clunes, Ordnance Survey Grid Reference NN 202 886, on the shores of Loch Lochy – see Figure 1 below.

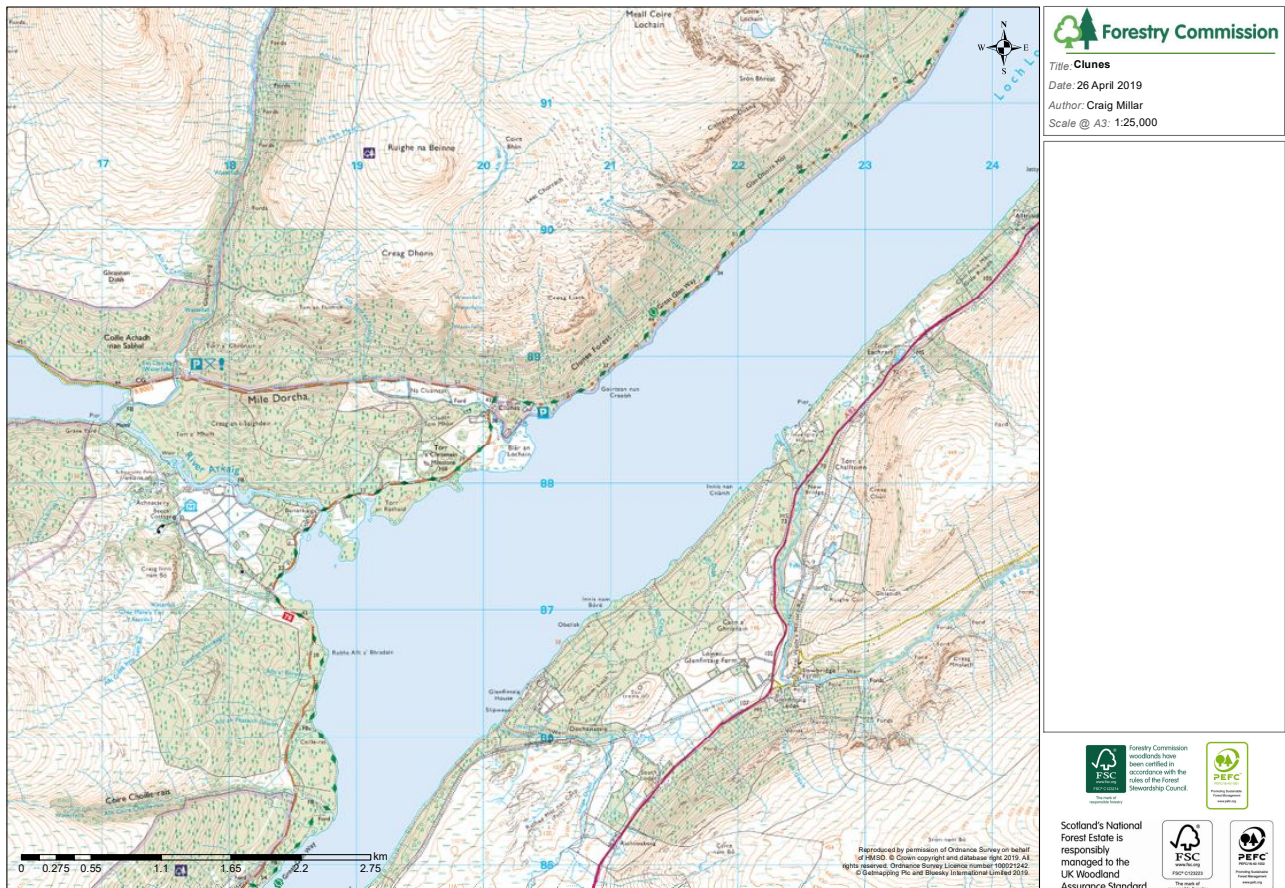


Figure 1 - Location Map of Clunes

The ABC Group have been managing the Forest School and Tom an Eireannaich under a management agreement (renewed annually) since August 2016. This was transferred from ABC to ACF in December 2018. This agreement has been extended annually on the understanding with local forest district staff that the community would progress acquisition of the site under the Community Asset transfer Scheme (CATS), subject to a decision by FLS taking into account the recommendations of the CATS Evaluation Panel. Forest Enterprise Scotland (now FLS) made it very clear in an email in May 2017 that their intention is that unless the community group progresses to acquisition of the buildings; “FES will return the buildings to the Disposals team for demolition. FES does not have the resources available to repair or maintain this liability in a safe condition long term.”

To that end the ABC Group and FCS jointly commissioned a report from District Valuer Services in March 2018, and the valuation was finalised by the District Valuer in October 2018. This involved further consultation with local residents by ACF and ABC in spring 2018 to define valuation boundaries which would meet local aims and objectives. In particular there was much discussion around the popular and well used FCS car park and informal camping area just to the east of Tom an Eireannaich, this was eventually excluded from the potential asset transfer area, in the expectation that FCS and the Great Glen Way Ranger service were best placed to deal with problems associated with informal camping – such as litter and lack of toilet facilities.

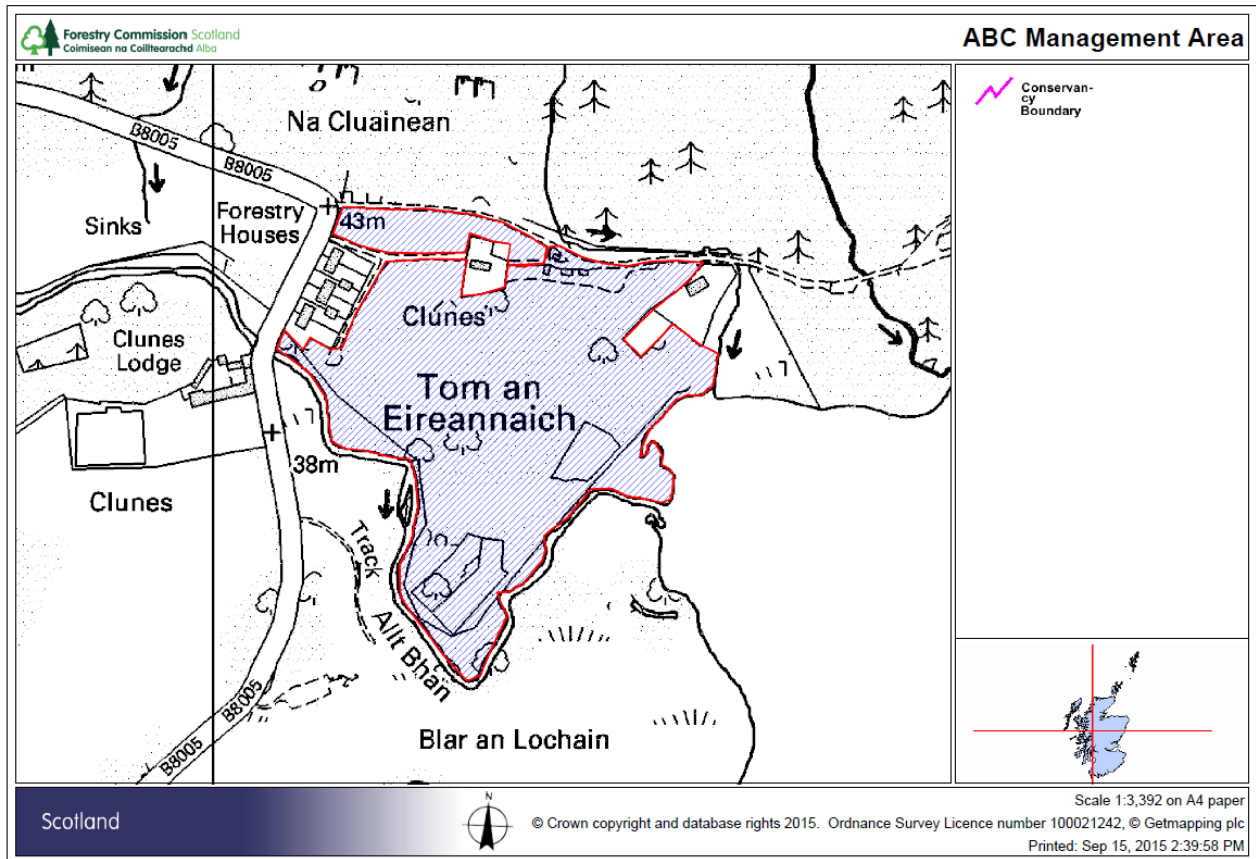


Figure 2 - Map showing existing ABC and ACF Management agreement area (since August 2016)

The area was split into three sections or lots for valuation purposes; Lot 1 the forest school buildings (0.08ha); Lot 2 Tom an Eireannach (5.76ha); and Lot 3 the Allt Bhan to Allt a Mhanain woodland (13.43ha). The map in Figure 3 is taken from the District Valuer's report and shows the areas that were under consideration. (A larger map is shown in Appendix 1)

However, following further feedback from FCS staff and community members, a decision was then made by ACF in autumn 2018 to **only progress asset transfer of Lots 1 and 2** and not to pursue asset transfer of Lot 3 at this stage. The Map in Figure 4 shows the area that is the subject of this feasibility study and report.

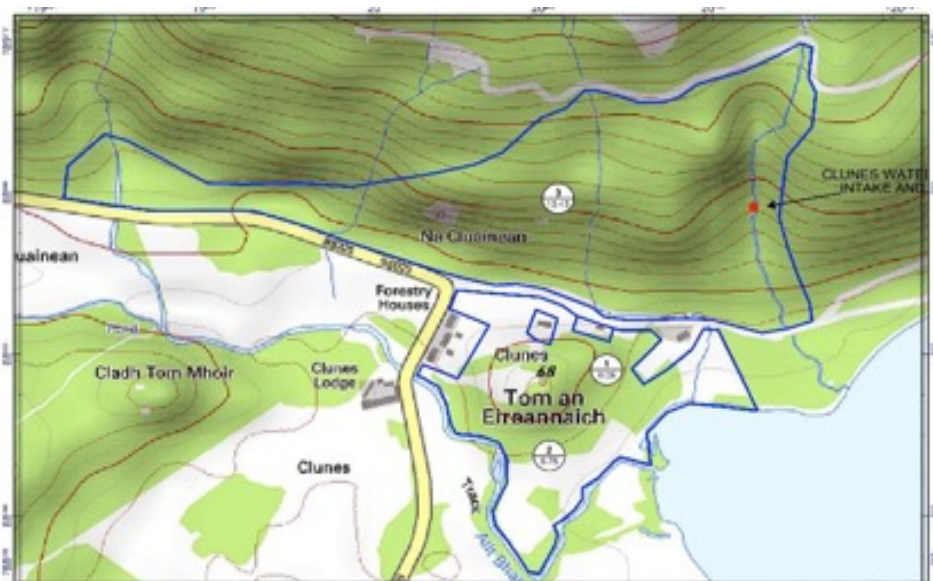


Figure 3 - Map showing Lots 1, 2 and 3

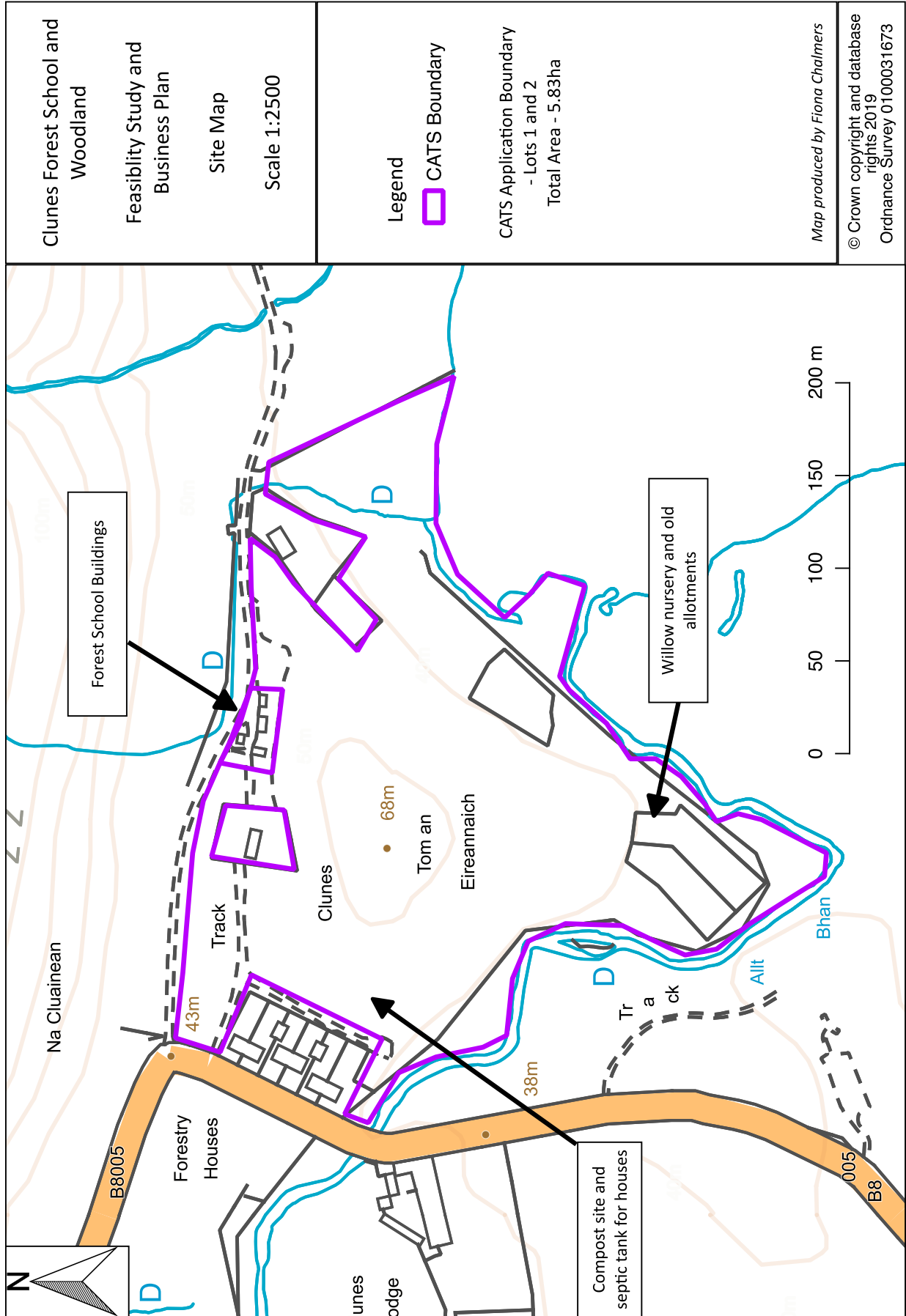


Figure 4 – CATS Application Area – Lots 1 and 2

4.2 Clunes Forest School Buildings

There are currently 2 buildings known as the Forest School at Clunes - a workshop and an office/meeting/venue space. The buildings were used as an 'outstation' for Forestry Commission staff for the establishment and management of the surrounding Loch Arkaig and Clunes forests from the 1950's up to the 1990's. There is also a small enclosure containing raised beds designed as a small tree-nursery and accessible garden.

A third garage building recently collapsed and was demolished by FES although the concrete base was retained at the request of local residents with a view to replacing the garage/shed structure in future. The office space was renovated and re-branded by the Forestry Commission as a 'forest school' in 2002 using funding from the EU LEADER and SNH. This project also established a willow nursery in the adjacent woodlands to produce basket willow for woodland craft demonstrations and community engagement work by the forestry commission rangers/community team.

Following changes in FES policy and funding, the use of the buildings by FES staff to deliver Forest School activities reduced. The buildings have been used since then as a base for both Achnacarry, Bunarkaig and Clunes Group (ABC) and Arkaig Community Forest Group (ACF). In 2016 when ABC took on the management of the site, the buildings have been a base for community activities and conservation works as described in section 2.4.1.

4.2.1 Description of buildings from DVS Valuation Report

There were 3 buildings at Clunes. The Forest School, comprising a single storey timber clad structure with a pitched, asbestos sheet roof. The accommodation comprises a kitchen with sink, separate toilet and wash hand basin, and a meeting/mess room. There is a smaller timber structure to the east and a former structure to the west of the Forest School, which was destroyed in the recent storm with only the concrete base left.

Ref: DVS Report July 2018, ref 1678785

4.2.2 Condition Report of Buildings

The following information is an extract from the condition report carried out by Kearney Donald Partnership, Chartered Architects and was commissioned on behalf of ACF in August 2018.

- ◆ The two buildings on the site are currently used as (1) an office and (2) a workshop.
- ◆ Both buildings have been constructed in a similar way and there are two timber frame and timber clad sheds.
- ◆ There is no vapour barrier, insulation or breather membrane within the outer walls. The external timber lining boards are fitted directly onto the timber frame and there is no sheathing ply battens or counter battens.
- ◆ The roof in each case has a fibre cement sheet covering which does contain low grade asbestos as identified in the recent Asbestos Report.
- ◆ The superstructure in each case sits on a brick/block underbuilding which is ventilated but it is not known if a damp-proof membrane was installed.
- ◆ The rainwater from the roof discharges into the ground and requires to be collected and taken to either the adjacent burn situated across the track or to a manufactured soakaway.
- ◆ Making the internal layout compliant with current Building Standards is also very difficult.
- ◆ Provision must be made for disabled access not only for visitors but for any disabled employees who maybe working in the building. So fully accessible toilets and kitchen facilities need to be provided. Ramped or level access is also a requirement.
- ◆ There is a new septic tank on site, but its capacity is not known nor is the capacity of the soakaway. Note: the septic tank is located on FLS land adjacent to access track on the north side.
- ◆ There is also electrical power and a good private water supply.

4.2.3 Summary Assessment of Buildings

It is clear from this report that the buildings at Clunes are old and may not be of a sufficiently robust construction to allow for easy conversion. While they are not suitable for upgrade to a greater degree of public use – e.g. café or visitor facility, they are in fact very useful as they stand for informal use as a meeting venue, volunteer base and (temporary) office facility.

4.3 Tom an Eireannaich Woodland

The woodland adjacent to the Forest School Buildings is known as Tom an Eireannaich and covers an area of 5.75 hectares. This woodland consists largely of ancient semi-natural oak and birch woodland, with two areas of open flat ground, and also including a relatively small enclosure (around 0.5 hectares) which used to house chicken pens and allotments belonging to each of the forestry houses, and which now contains a willow nursery and a maturing community orchard or forest garden.

The following site information has been extracted from Assessment of Ancient and Native Woodland Interest Report by Gary Servant in June 2019 as part of Woodland Trust Scotland Ancient Woodland Restoration Outreach Project

4.3.1 Historical context

The Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) identifies significant ancient woodland interest of 'ancient semi-natural' origin, of 'other' origin (i.e. areas shown as woodland on the 1745 Roy maps) in the vicinity of Clunes (see Fig 3 below), however the AWI boundaries appear somewhat inaccurate and they serve to highlight some of the inadequacies of the existing AWI dataset.



Figure 5 - Roy Military Map 1747-52

Some of the earliest maps of Scotland depicting woodland are the General Roy military maps from 1747-52 (Fig 4). However, this map is fairly silent for Clunes – which was at the time undergoing some fairly brutal military repression as the epicentre of the Jacobite Rebellion – in fact it is fair to say that both the settlements of Achnacarry and Clunes seem to have been wiped from General Roy's map. A smatter of trees along a burn to the north of Loch Lochy in Figure 5 (above) may represent native woodland along the Allt Bhan in Clunes.



Figure 6 - OS 6 inch series from 1843-82

The OS surveys from the 1843 onwards are the first cartographically reliable maps and the 6 Inch to the mile map from this period (Figure 6) clearly shows the Tom an Eireannaich woodland situated to the east of Clunes Lodge and at the eastern end of the meadows (Na Cluainean). This map along with the Roy map should have been used when compiling the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) dataset (see Figure 7), however in many cases the OS First Edition One inch to the mile map was used instead and it provides relatively poor coverage of many woodland habitats by comparison.

OS maps from the early 20th Century show the continuity of the Tom An Eireannaich woodland habitat, and of the native woodlands to the north of the road throughout the period, although the latter were engulfed within a newly established conifer plantation in the period between 1948 and 1955-60.

Ancient Woodland Inventory Scotland

- Ancient (of semi-natural origin)
- Long-Established (of plantation origin)
- Other (on Roy map)

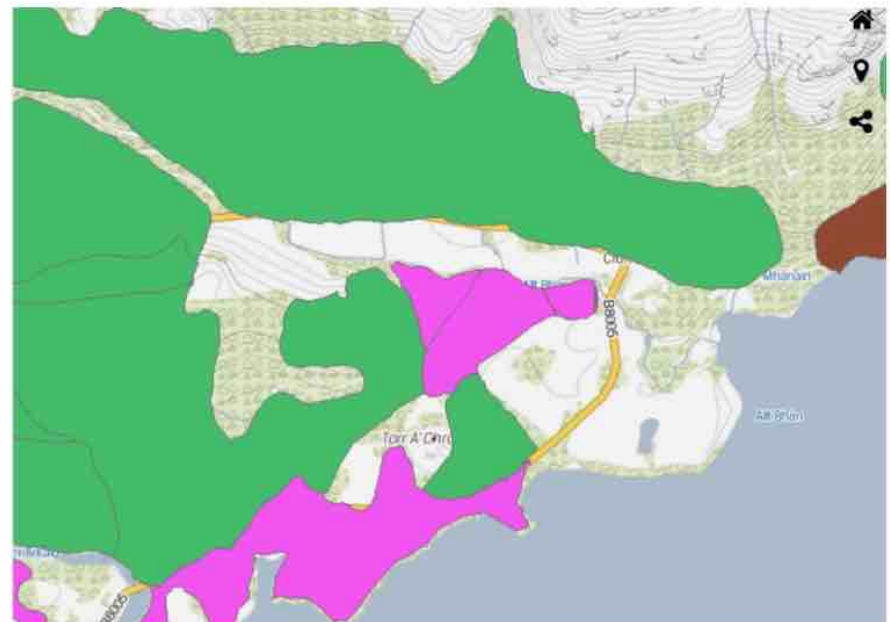


Figure 7 - Ancient Woodland Inventory map of Clunes from 'Scotland's Environment' website

4.3.2 Survey Findings & Recommendations

The site has been mapped with 6 compartments, as shown on Figure 8 below and described further in the following table.

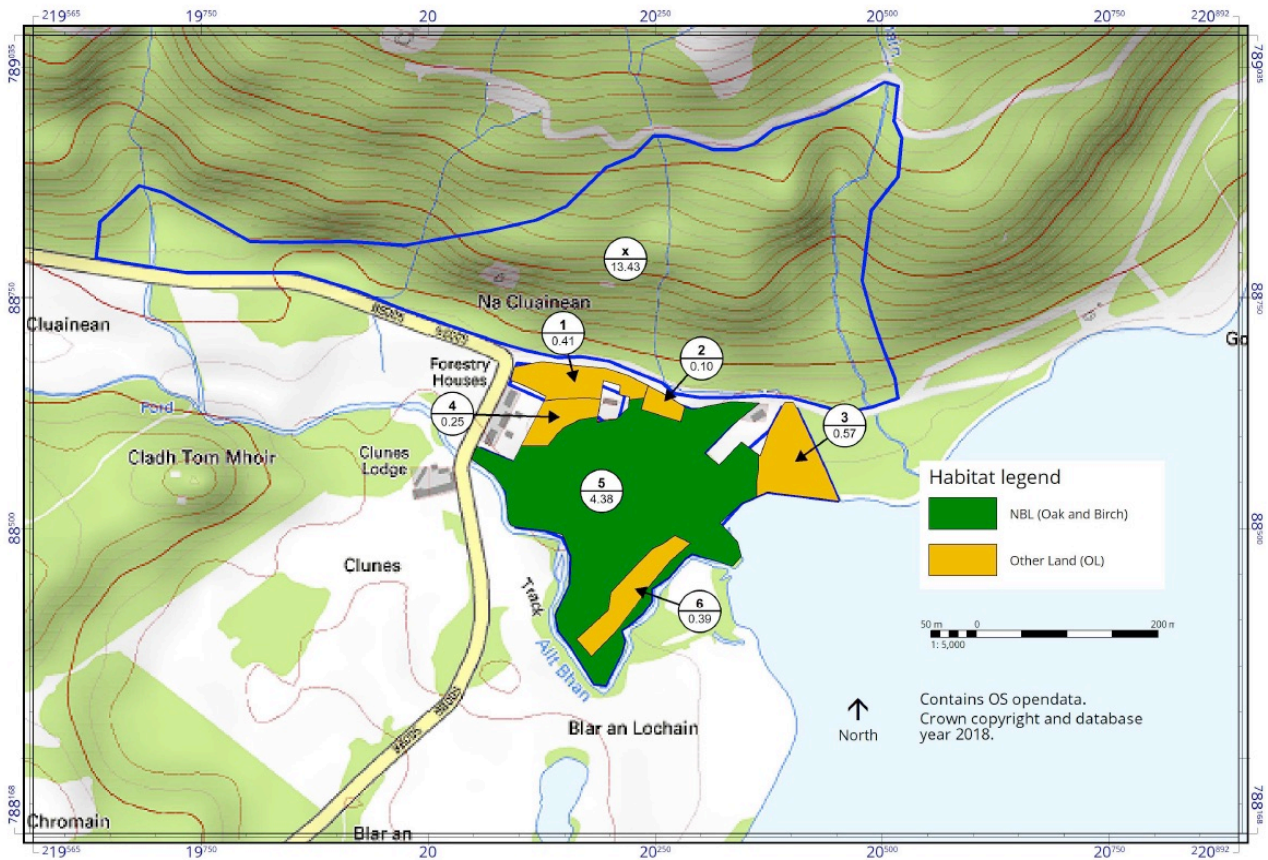


Figure 8 - Tom an Eireannaich Compartment Map

Compartment	Area (Ha)	Description
1	0.41	Damp grassland/bracken (U20/W25). Currently used for football/shinty. Includes overhead powerline/wayleave (11kV?).
2	0.10	Clunes Forest School buildings and associated infrastructure – parking, vehicle ramp, hard standing and raised beds.
3	0.57	Damp grassland/bracken/rush pasture (U20/W25/M23)
4	0.25	Damp grassland/bracken (U20/W25) with a group of mature Silver Birch as well as childrens’ play equipment, community chicken shed, boat storage and bee hives.
5	4.38	The main area of mature native woodland – the north western half of this sub-compartment consists of ancient Upland Oakwood BAP Priority Habitat (NVC W11 and W18) and the south eastern half is dominated by a mixture of Upland Birchwood BAP Priority Habitat woodland (W17, W11 and W4) and Wet Woodland BAP Priority habitat woodland in riparian areas (NVC W7).
6	0.39	This area is now a forest garden and a willow nursery, and is enclosed within a deer fence erected by FCS around 10 years ago, and repaired by the community in recent years. It was also formerly an area of chicken coops and allotments used by the residents of the forestry houses. FC staff and local residents planted a variety of fruit trees and also established a variety of basket willow cultivars in the period 2003-2007. Additional fruit trees were planted in 2017 with support from a local food growing project in Spean Bridge. The enclosure also includes a number of veteran Oak trees as well as some mature Ash, Alder, Birch and Larch trees.

4.3.3 Sub-compartment 5 – further description and discussion

As can be seen from the review of available old maps (Section 4.3.1), the oak dominated woodland in the north-western sector of compartment 5 appears to be true ‘ancient woodland’ in the sense that it was clearly present on the first series of Ordnance Survey maps in the mid nineteenth century, whereas much of the birch woodland in the east of the compartment appears to be secondary woodland and to have become established by natural regeneration in the twentieth century.

One or two mature and pole-stage **Sitka** and **Larch**, as well as a number of **Beech** trees, are present in Cpts 5 and 6, and whilst these do not currently pose much of a threat to the native woodland habitats it is recommended that they are removed to favour native tree species in the medium term. A very small number of large ***Rhododendron ponticum*** bushes and a handful of *Rhododendron* seedlings are present in Cpt 5. One or two of the deciduous ***Azalea lutea*** bushes are also present. These are starting to produce large quantities of seed and should be removed with some urgency to prevent them spreading into the oak and birch woodland at the expense of the natural field layer vegetation. Many successful examples of *Rhododendron* control by the modified ‘lever and mulch’ technique can be seen nearby in the Glenmallie section of the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest, where Arkaig Forestry Co-op Ltd have been undertaking this work for Woodland Trust Scotland over the past 18 months.

As of 2019 **Ash dieback** now appears to be present in the vicinity, and notably on a tall Ash sapling at the back of the houses. It is recommended that this tree is removed and that the abundant Ash regeneration in the W7 Wet Woodland riparian areas is encouraged to become established – in the hope that some of the young Ash trees may prove to be resistant to the disease in future.

A large ‘**community compost heap**’ area is located near the western edge of Cpt 5 – consisting of a heap of organic material and garden waste deposited by residents. Whilst this is a relatively innocuous ‘development risk’ and is likely to be better for the environment than transporting the material to the nearest ‘recycling centre’, it is somewhat unsightly and is also a source of non-native plants (e.g. *Monbretia* and *Narcissus*) within the woodland. Perhaps a regular annual session with a wood chipper could be used to tidy this up, combined with control of ‘garden escapes’ as required.

Browsing pressure in the vicinity is perhaps much lower in 2019 than it has been since sheep replaced people during the clearance of the old settlement of Clunes/Na Cluainean in 1802. The last sheep in the glen here (and in the whole watershed of Loch Arkaig) disappeared around 2006, before which a few stragglers could often be seen wandering freely around Clunes. The browsing impacts of deer also seem to have been reduced by the new fence on FLS ground north of the road and track, before which deer would often come down from the hill to graze on the meadows in the evenings and in the spring especially. Nonetheless there are still some recent browsing impacts from Red and Roe deer – most noticeable on the dwarf shrubs (such as the Blaeberry) and on tree seedlings of palatable species such as Oak, Rowan and Holly. Regular monitoring of herbivore impacts within the woodland is recommended. By contrast the re-introduction of carefully managed livestock grazing could be considered to maintain and enhance open habitats in some of the non-wooded compartments (e.g. Cpts 1 and 3). The loss of hay-meadow and species-rich grassland habitats across Lochaber – and elsewhere in the West Highlands – has been highlighted by the Lochaber Biodiversity Action Plan group and others in recent years.

4.3.4 Willow Nursery and Community Orchard

This is a fenced off area of approximately 0.5ha situated within the woodland – see Compartment 6 in 4.3 above. The area is now a willow nursery and community orchard. It was also formerly an area of chicken coops and allotments used by the residents of the forestry houses. FC staff and local residents planted a variety of fruit trees and also established a variety of basket willow cultivars in the period 2003-2007. Additional fruit trees were planted in 2017 with support from a local food growing project in Spean Bridge. The enclosure also includes a number of veteran Oak trees as well as some mature Ash, Alder, Birch and Larch trees.

4.4 Summary Assessment of Forest School Buildings and Woodland

The Forest School Buildings are extremely useful to the community in their current form and are used for meetings, office space, group events, volunteer facilities and tool storage. However, due to the nature of the construction there is limited scope for major upgrade although the interior could be improved through redecoration. They serve the needs of the community just now but if the community ownership progresses and it develops more income generating projects, then there could be scope for redevelopment into a modest new build facility that would offer more opportunities for use. As the buildings already have a footprint and current use as an office/educational facility, the planning process to upgrade should not be too problematic. An architect's report was commissioned as part of a previous study and so ACF have some options to consider in the future.

The woodlands have a high conservation value as native upland oak woodland stand but there is only limited scope for any income from timber sales unless from occasional thinning or selective felling under a Low Impact Silvicultural System (LISS). However, parts of the woodland could be restructured to provide a coppice area where there is a more open oak stand or thickets of birch. This might yield future firewood supplies on a limited scale. The woodland has good evidence of natural regeneration of birch oak, ash and hazel in places and future activity could enhance the biodiversity and age structure of the woodland by including control measures to reduce the browsing pressure by deer as well as control any non-native invasive plants such as rhododendron.

The willow nursery/community orchard is of great value to the local residents for food growing and to craft workers for willow. It could be used for future formal and informal education activities if there are staff or volunteer resources to deliver this. Currently it has limited scope for income generation but a food growing scheme could be developed there in the future.

It should be noted that FLS will retain ownership of the forest road that is contiguous to Lots 1 and 2 and so any disposition agreement must ensure that provision is made for appropriate rights of access. The same provision should be made for access to the water supply and the septic tank both of which are situated on FLS land to the north.

5 Community and Stakeholder Consultation

The community and stakeholder consultation was carried out in May and June 2019 and took the form of;

1. A community Open Day event
2. A community online survey
3. A structured interview survey with key stakeholders.

A Community and Stakeholder Consultation report has been produced as part of this study and contains the full results of the open day, the online survey and the stakeholder liaison. This report is available as a separate annex to this Feasibility Study. The sections below detail the methodology, summarise the responses and give the conclusions.

5.1 Community Consultation – Open Day Event

5.1.1 Aims

The Open Day event which took place on Sunday 5th May between 11am and 3pm and the aims for this event were to:

- ◆ Create an opportunity for local people interested in the community purchase of this woodland and forest school buildings to find out more about it.
- ◆ Stimulate conversation between members of the community on the identified ideas and issues already identified by the Arkaig Community Forest Group (ACF)
- ◆ Record opinions on the ideas and issues to help firm them up
- ◆ Gather more information or ideas not previously recorded

5.1.2 Invitation

It was important that everyone in the community had the opportunity to attend and so it was agreed that the best way to achieve maximum attendance was to hold it on a weekend day – Sunday was preferred – and to coincide with the monthly work day. A specially designed “postcard invite” (see Appendix 2) was produced so that people could indicate their willingness to attend.

On the response side the community were invited to tick the following statements;

- I am/we are* supportive of the community taking on ownership of Clunes Forest School and woodland for the benefit of local people and visitors to the area
- I /we* would like to attend the Open Day on 5th May.
- I /we* would like to become a member/members of Arkaig Community Forest SCIO and be kept in touch with news about Clunes Forest School and other activities.

The first statement was designed to provide a means to record support for and interest in the community purchase of the woodland. In addition, for those unable to attend there was an invitation to take part in an online survey with similar questions to those to be asked at the Open Day.

The postcard invite hand delivered to every household in the three settlements of the postcode areas PH34 4EL and PH34 4EJ. The event was also publicised and circulated within the community by way of emails. For those unable to attend the Open day the Postcard Invite contained an option for them to record their opinion and deliver the postcode to ACF. ACF encouraged attendance of their members and they also provided teas, coffee and cake.

5.1.3 Participatory Consultation Methodology

The participatory consultation at the Open Day was designed to be as informal as possible whilst at the same time providing a structured way to stimulating discussions and ideas, stimulate feedback and record opinions about the potential purchase of the woodland and Forest School. The event was also designed to communicate some of the opportunities and existing ideas already being considered by ACF.

The Open Day used both rooms of the Forest School building and comprised two elements:

- ◆ Social area with refreshments, information tables and live video feed from the osprey nest at Loch Arkaig Pinewoods to inform and create conversation.

- ◆ Participatory material to inform, stimulate discussion and gather new information, ideas and opinions.

The participatory materials used were;

- ◆ Charts using 'H' diagrams or tables to ask specific questions. People were invited to show agreement or not on the question using sticky dots and space was allocated for comments about the question. The completed charts and 'H' diagrams and the materials used are shown in the full Community and Stakeholder Consultation report.
- ◆ A map showing the boundaries of the proposed purchase area on which people were invited to add comments by writing/drawing on the map or writing comments on sticky post-its.

5.1.4 Attendance and Reaction

The Drop in Event was well-attended with approximately 20 people attending throughout the event. Given this community has only 30 households located and over a widely dispersed area, this is considered to be a good turnout for a participatory event in a sparsely populated rural community. Apart from 3 people who were walking along the Great Glen Way and dropped in, the people attending were all local residents. Various ACF board members were available to meet to people coming to the event and there was overall a warm and welcoming atmosphere and most folk had a chat over a cup of tea.

There was good circulation in the second room - the participatory consultation area. The map proved to be a good information and discussion point as well as gathering a few ideas. The 'H' diagrams were used and were well populated with sticky dots indicated opinions. On the whole the impression was one of consensus to the idea of community purchase of the woodland and buildings. The **respondents were wholly supportive of the proposed acquisition** and they were also supportive of most of the ideas being suggested with just one or two receiving less support (such as the campsite ideas and toilets/showers). The annexed Community and Stakeholder Consultation report presents the recorded feedback.

5.2 Community Consultation – Online Survey

As mentioned in section 5.1.2, the Postcard Invite delivered to every household also contained an invitation for those unable to make the Open Day event to respond with their ideas. The Postcard Invite contained a link to an online survey and that survey was open from 27th April 2019 to 12th May 2019 – a week before and a week after the Open Day event.

5.2.1 Online Survey questions

The questions used in the survey were designed to match the ones being asked at the Open Day and respondents were also asked to vote on the Ideas list that had been provided by the community group (This was Question 1)

Q1 - Do you agree with some of the existing ideas about what the community could do with the land and buildings?

Q2 - Do you have any other ideas about how the community could use the Forest School buildings and the woodland?

Q3 - Now that you know more about the various ideas being considered, are you supportive of bringing the Forest School and adjacent woodland into community ownership?

Q4 - If you are not supportive please let us know your reasons. Please select all that apply and/or leave any other reasons you have in the comments box.

Q5 - Do you have any other feedback?

Q6 - Please let us have your postcode.

(This last question was only used for verification purposes to ensure respondents lived in the local area)

5.2.2 Online survey results

There were 12 respondents in total, and of those, 7 were within the local postcode area for the Arkaig Community Forest – PH34 4EJ and PH34 4EL - and 5 were associate members of ACF but who lived outwith the area. Although the postcard was only delivered to households within the area, ACF decided to also send it to their associate members by email and it was also publicised on social media (Facebook). The results for Question 3 showed that of all the local respondents, 43% answered 'yes, definitely' and 29%

answered “yes, I think so”. Therefore, a **total of 72% local community respondents were in favour of community ownership**. Of the non-local respondents, 65% were in favour of community ownership.

The full results are in the annexed Community and Stakeholder Consultation report.

5.3 Stakeholder Consultation – Structured Survey/Interviews

As the views of local residents began to emerge via the “Open Day” event and household survey, consultation with a broader group of stakeholders got under way. During May and June, a wide range of public sector agencies, third sector organisations, local businesses, politicians and knowledgeable individuals were contacted.

5.3.1 Methodology

Each consultee was interviewed either by telephone, via email, or (in a few cases) face-to-face. Though each discussion was tailored to consider the expertise and interests of the interviewee, a core series of questions similar to those in the online survey was asked of everyone: this ensured that the responses contained a good degree of consistency and comparability.

5.3.2 Responses

The stakeholder consultation elicited responses from a broad range of organisations and knowledgeable individuals, some of whom provided extensive amounts of their time to provide insights and ideas. In total, 27 such responses were received. The stakeholders who replied – with one exception - displayed a very high degree of empathy and support for the proposed ACF land acquisition.

The stakeholder respondents were grouped into the five categories as shown below (though this is a somewhat artificial categorisation, as many respondents had views about several aspects).

- ◆ Community (including elected politicians)
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Businesses and economic development
- ◆ Tourism and recreation
- ◆ Conservation and environment

What was also notable was the degree of realism and pragmatism displayed by consultees – they seem very aware that the small local population will have limited capacity in terms of manpower and financial resources, and equally aware of the continuing funding cutbacks to public sector agencies, which limit the scope for external funding. As a result, not one of the consultees suggested ideas for the site which were over-ambitious or unrealistic, and indeed several were at pains to caution ACF about the risks of trying to establish any commercial-type activity at this little-trafficked location.

In summary, it is felt that the breadth and depth of the stakeholder consultation exercise gives the findings real value and credibility.

5.4 Community and Stakeholder Consultation Conclusions

The participation in the community consultation process was a successful continuation of the on-going community engagement process for this project. Given the size of the community there were good numbers turning out to talk about the ideas and make their views known with over 30 individuals in total (who were almost all local) taking part in the consultation process.

An overwhelming majority of people who responded both at the Open Day and through the online survey **were in favour of the community acquiring the woodland and forest school buildings**. People agreed with all the existing ideas put forward - with the exception of the response to the idea of “shower facilities for walkers/cyclists/canoeists” in the online survey.

The community consultation Open Day event provided a good forum for members of ACF to talk to people in the community about the ideas and gather their views. The opportunity to have conversations will help enormously in raising awareness and building consensus about the project. It would be useful therefore for the group to continue this engagement as an on-going process, for example there is an open invitation for

local residents to attend the monthly ACF board meetings and there are regular updates by ACF board members at the ABC meetings

The results of the stakeholder consultation showed that almost all the respondents ***displayed a very high degree of empathy and support for the proposed ACF land acquisition***. There were however some clear concerns about capacity and the viability of business opportunities at Clunes. Some of the constraints identified were due to:

1. the lack of footfall and visitor numbers (i.e. less than 9,000 walkers per annum on Great Glen Way)
2. site constraints such as the water supply and waste facilities;
3. the potential negative impact on the only existing other local tourism business, the Clan Cameron Museum at Achnacarry .

6 Options Appraisal

6.1 Introduction

The ACF group had started the process of shaping some of the ideas and options for how they might manage the Clunes Forest School Buildings and adjacent woodland by engaging with their community at an early stage. The consultation programme as part of this Feasibility study built on that work by asking people what they thought of the Ideas or Options already being discussed, and also to ask for any new ideas.

This section is a review of the long list of 'Ideas' or 'Options' developed during the consultation process. The community and stakeholder consultation exercises provided a great deal of information, evidence and well-informed ideas for the development of the Clunes Woodland and Forest School Buildings and then these various options for the site were rigorously appraised and assessed as part of the Options Appraisal process. There are many factors to be considered and balanced to assess the 'right' option (or set of options) for ACF and its community. To help with this complex process, a STEEPLE analysis framework has been used. STEEPLE – Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, and Ethical – is a light-touch multi-criteria decision analysis which is explained in Appendix 3.

In addition to using STEEPLE to appraise each option for the site, a brief initial Risk Assessment has also been incorporated for each option. This might all seem like a highly laborious method (and in some ways it is) but the effort expended on rigorously assessing, rejecting, and developing options at this stage was the most critical part of the whole process. With each option being assessed in exactly the same way, the conclusions reached by the Options Appraisal will be demonstrably unbiased, balanced and robust.

To provide some structure to the Options Appraisal and to aid the developing vision for the project, each of the options has been grouped under one of four themes:

1. **Social, Community and Partnerships** (social and environmental outcomes)
2. **Conservation, Woodland Management and Produce** (social, economic and environmental outcomes)
3. **Tourism and Recreation** (economic outcomes)
4. **Environmental and Outdoor Education** (social and environmental outcomes)

The strategic context for these four themes is outlined in 6.2 below.

6.2 Strategic Context for the Themes

The four themes not only harness the aspirations of the ACF group but they also provide a good strategic framework for assessing the feasibility of the purchase of the woodland by the community. They provide a robust platform for demonstrating that there could be positive economic, social and environmental benefits for the community by acquiring this land. This is a key objective of Forestry and Land Scotland's Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) and it is also a major requirement for funding from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) and applications to both CATS and SLF need to demonstrate that there is significant positive impact for the community showing economic, social and environmental outcomes.

6.2.1 Theme 1 – Social, Community and Partnerships

This theme covers social and community benefits such as community development, social cohesion, health and wellbeing, sustainable economic growth and stakeholder and partner relationships.

The strategic policy framework in the Highlands strongly support community ownership and the positive benefits that can come from that with public and third sector agencies working to deliver this. The Highland Community Planning Partnership brings together public agencies, third sector organisations and other key community groups to work collaboratively with the people of Highland to deliver better outcomes. As part of this commitment, the Highland Community Planning Partnership put forward a bid to the Scottish Government for LEADER funding. The Local Development Strategy that the Partnership produced for the Highland area has an overall vision to deliver:

- ◆ Stronger communities, leading to improved quality of life for those who live in them.
- ◆ Growth and diversification of the local community.

The four themes of the Local Development Strategy support this vision and also deliver against the [Scottish Government National Outcomes](#) detailed in the National Performance Framework. The four themes of the strategy are:

1. Stronger and More Resilient Communities.
2. A Growing and Diversified Economy that Promotes Sustainability.
3. Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities.
4. Enhanced Cultural and Natural Assets.

The Highland Community Partnerships were formed in 2016 as an extension of the work of the Community Planning Partnerships and as a direct response to the enhanced roles and responsibilities articulated in the Community Empowerment Act (2015) for Community Planning and to ensure that community planning is delivered successfully at a local level. They have three core aims:

- ◆ Equality, meeting diverse needs of people and communities.
- ◆ Resilient places and communities.
- ◆ Supporting wellbeing and health.

[The Lochaber Local Community Partnership](#), one of nine in the Highlands, produced a Local Community Development Plan, through a wide-ranging consultation programme in 2016. The plan sets out a number of themes of which the following support the plans for the Clunes Forest School and Woodland community asset transfer:

- ◆ Support safe, responsible use of the natural environment for health promoting activity.
- ◆ Jointly promote opportunities for increased physical activity and physical & mental health promotion for children and young people.
- ◆ Encourage the adoption of healthier life choices by providing enhanced, locally based projects and initiatives.
- ◆ Strengthen the image of Lochaber as a tourist destination of choice, and improve the quality of the tourism offering locally.
- ◆ Provide the opportunities and conditions for businesses to grow and become more productive.

The West Highlands and Islands Development Plan (The Highland Council, 2019) also supports the importance of local community ownership e.g. Para 1.6 mentions the “building of community self-reliance through the ownership of land and building assets.”

Community ownership of the Clunes Forest School and Woodland has the potential to deliver against these strategic plans and their aims by:

- ◆ Increasing the potential for local employment.
- ◆ Enabling activities that add value locally and create economic, social and environmental opportunities.
- ◆ Delivering social and cultural objectives including health and wellbeing.
- ◆ Enabling mutually beneficial and synergistic growth through partnerships such as with Woodland Trust Scotland.

6.2.2 Theme 2 – Conservation, Woodland Management and Produce

This theme covers the practical management and conservation of the woodland, along with its potential for forest products such as woodfuel and willow and Non-Timber Forest Products such as fruits and nuts, wild mushrooms, honey, vegetables, venison and crafts such as willow weaving and green woodworking. The good stewardship of Scotland’s woodlands is enshrined in the new [Scotland’s Forestry Strategy 2019-2029](#) which sets out the following 50-year vision for Scotland’s forests and woodlands;

In 2070, Scotland will have more forests and woodlands, sustainably managed and better integrated with other land uses. These will provide a more resilient, adaptable resource, with greater natural capital value, that supports a strong economy, a thriving environment, and healthy and flourishing communities.

Two of the three objectives in the strategy are aimed at:

- a) increasing the contribution of Scotland's forests and woodland to a healthy and high-quality environment; and
- b) increasing the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

The priorities in the strategy that are relevant to Clunes Forest School and Woodland are;

- ◆ Ensuring forests and woodlands are sustainably managed;
- ◆ Improving efficiency and productivity, and developing markets;
- ◆ Increasing the adaptability and resilience of forests and woodlands;
- ◆ Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands;
- ◆ Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands.

There are many opportunities to fulfil these objectives if the woodland is managed by the community, and for the community, such as:

- ◆ Managing the woodland for wildlife and conservation;
- ◆ Caring for and developing the Community Orchard and Willow Nursery;
- ◆ Developing community woodfuel supply;
- ◆ Developing non-timber forest products;
- ◆ Providing a contribution to the physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life of the community.

6.2.3 Theme 3 – Tourism and Recreation

This theme is an important driver for demonstrating the opportunities for developing more economic activity thus creating opportunities for business development and employment for local people through tourism and recreation management.

The Scottish Highlands rely heavily on the tourism industry for economic activity and growth and so this is a key sector. The industry includes accommodation, visitor attractions, transport, retail, food and drink, and leisure activities. The area's high-quality landscape and scenery along with cultural heritage attracts many visitors thus providing economic benefits to the region.

The Tourism Industry Leadership Group, The Scottish Tourism Alliance, through a collaborative effort, have developed a strategy for Scotland's tourism industry - [Tourism Scotland 2020](#). The Strategy states that:

“Without doubt, tourism is one of Scotland's key economic contributors with overnight visitors generating in excess of £4.5bn annually and day visitors contributing a further £6.2bn, giving a total spend close to £11bn (2011 figures). Not only that but tourism accounts for over 200,000 jobs – many in rural areas, helping less populous communities to prosper – across 20,000 different tourism-related businesses, while also feeding into other sectors such as food and drink, retail, transport and construction.”

The 'Tourism Scotland 2020' document also identifies 'Nature and Activities' as a key asset for Scottish tourism growth. It specifically highlights the growth opportunity for rural Scotland, stating:

“In many of our rural destinations, where tourism is often the mainstay of the local economy, businesses and industry groups are working together to grow the value of tourism in their areas by making more of assets such as walking and cycling.”

Addressing the issue of sustainability, the Strategy goes on to add:

“We must seek to maximise our operational efficiency and environmental performance, minimise our impact on the local environment and connect with our communities to deliver real benefits.”

The importance of woodlands for their contribution to Scotland's Tourism is recognised in Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029 which states that;

“Tourism is a significant economic sector across rural Scotland and around a fifth of the economic value generated by Scotland’s forests and woodlands is derived from tourism (e.g. mountain biking and wildlife tourism). Enabling more local businesses and woodland owners and managers to benefit from this expanding market will help provide them with additional income streams and support local economies.”

Other strategies equally support the potential for nature and activity-based tourism. The Tourism Development Framework for Scotland (VisitScotland, 2013) encourages local authorities and other stakeholders to:

“consider the potential for developing cycling infrastructure” and to “investigate development opportunities along designated path networks to enhance their tourism potential.”

The Highland Tourism Action Plan (Highland Tourism Partnership, 2013 and reviewed in 2017) contains a very relevant action point:

“Improve infrastructure that supports growth in nature, heritage and activity markets”.

The importance of taking such actions in order to enhance the visitor experience was reinforced in the 2017 review.

The 2018-25 Lochaber Tourism Strategy (Lochaber Chamber of Commerce) highlights six “Key Strengths and Opportunities” for the area including:

“Growth potential in nature and wildlife tourism” and “Marine tourism/long-distance walking hub”

6.2.4 Theme 4 - Environmental Education

This theme is about environmental and nature-based education. This covers both formal and structured school and college visits aligning to the national Curriculum for Excellence and college curriculum outcomes, and also informal events, workshops and training. The importance of Environmental, Outdoor or Nature Education is now enshrined in the Curriculum for Excellence. The core values of Curriculum for Excellence echo the key concepts of outdoor learning: challenge, enjoyment, relevance, depth, development of the whole person and an adventurous approach to learning.

“Evidence also shows that for children who are given the opportunity to experience outdoor learning and play, often there are associated improvements in their physical, social and emotional development, as well as in their disposition to learning and their attainment levels”

Natural Environments – healthy environments? An exploratory analysis of the relationship between greenspace and health (2003).

The Clunes Forest School and Woodland has an opportunity to provide a venue for high quality outdoor learning for both the local school and visiting schools. It also has great potential for activities such as training courses, [Forest School](#) programmes, woodland nurseries, craft days, etc.

6.3 Feasibility of Options

As part of the Options Appraisal each Option was reviewed with regard to whether it was feasible at acquisition stage or whether there would be a requirement for further development. The Options were put into three categories as part of the appraisal:

1. **Phase 1** - these were ideas that could be taken forward to form the short list in the business plan that will support acquisition. These are the low risk, achievable and financially feasible options.
2. **Phase 2 (Development)** – these are ideas that are not feasible as they stand as they require further development work. However, they could become feasible when looked at further in a post-acquisition development phase.
3. **Reject** – These are the options that are not at all feasible or outwith the scope of this study.

There are recommendations shown at the end of each assessment in 6.4 below were made to guide the ACF Board’s decision making. The recommendations shown in GREEN boxes are those which it was felt

could go straight into the business plan and support the case for acquisition with a low key and financially risk-free start but still delivering community benefits. Those in ORANGE boxes are ones are not currently feasible as which require further development work as there is either no clear revenue funding streams for these at present and/or there are issues to resolve with regard to demand and local concern. There is one idea in a RED box that is recommended for rejection due to it being outwith the scope of this study and the land and asset in question.

6.4 Options - Long List

Each idea or Option has been reviewed using the analysis methodology described in 6.1 above and the options have been presented within each of the four themes.

6.4.1 Theme 1 – Social, Community and Partnerships

The following ideas from the list under this theme are:

- a. Create a new play area.
- b. Run activities for children and young people.
- c. Create a 'community hub' for social events and meeting space.
- d. Create office space for Arkaig Community Forest and Woodland Trust Scotland.
- e. Improve parking facilities at Forest School.
- f. Provide community business and IT facilities.

a. Create a new play area

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would meet an identified need expressed by local residents. Would improve children's health and well-being.	Community consultation.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Capital investment needed for site preparation, purchase and installation of play equipment and grounds maintenance equipment (e.g. tractor/ride-on mower). Equipment might need occasional low-cost maintenance in subsequent years.	Community consultation.
Environmental	A small, low-key play area close to the Clunes houses would have minimal visual impact.	Site visit and visual assessment.
Political	This is a non-contentious project.	No objections received from any source.
Legal	A health and safety inspection regime would be needed.	n/a
Ethical	A good fit with the needs of local residents and ACF in general.	Community consultation - unanimous support expressed.
Key Risks	Volunteers would always be required for routine maintenance e.g. grass cutting.	
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding being raised	

b. Run activities for children and young people

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would benefit children's education, health and well-being and be in line with educational policies and standards.	Community consultation – unanimous support expressed.
Technological	n/a	n/a

Economic	Requires staffing and funding or partnerships with e.g. Highland Council, FLS, Room 13, John Muir Trust, Woodland Trust Scotland etc. It is assumed that the activities offered would run at zero cost or in some cases participants would pay fees.	n/a
Environmental	No impacts (assuming Forest School is used).	Site visit and visual assessment.
Political	This is a non-contentious project.	No concerns at all received.
Legal	Depending on activities undertaken, there might be health and safety and/or insurance implications.	n/a
Ethical	Fits entirely with the ethos of ACF.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	At this stage it is not clear exactly what activities might be planned, or who might deliver them.	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer	

c. Create a 'community hub' for social events and community meetings

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would assist community cohesion and create a 'neutral' space in which local people could meet and socialise.	Community consultation – unanimous support expressed.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Modest capital investment needed for upgrading furnishings (e.g. chairs, video screen?) and redecorating the building.	Community consultation and site visit.
Environmental	No additional impacts (assuming Forest School is used)	Site visit and visual assessment.
Political	This is a non-contentious project.	No concerns at all received.
Legal	Depending on events held, there might be health and safety and/or insurance implications.	n/a
Ethical	Fits entirely with the ethos of ACF.	Community consultation.
Key Risks	Few if any risks – using an existing building for similar purposes.	Site visit
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

d. Create office space for ACF and Woodland Trust Scotland

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	A practical example of two local organisations working in partnership, for mutual benefit.	Community and stakeholder consultation
Technological	Opportunity to use modern communications platforms to demonstrate effective collaborations, remote working etc.	Stakeholder consultation.

Economic	Rental paid by Woodland Trust Scotland would offset many of the annual running costs of the Forest School buildings. Small-scale capital investment would be needed for upgrading office environment (redecorating etc).	Stakeholder consultation.
Environmental	No impacts.	Site visit and visual assessment.
Political	This is a non-contentious project.	No concerns at all received.
Legal	Possible insurance implications. Health and Safety audit and risk assessment of building for office use required.	n/a
Ethical	Fits entirely with the ethos of both ACF and Woodland Trust Scotland. A 'win-win' scenario for both organisations and the community in general.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	Few if any risks – using an existing building for similar purposes.	Site visit
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

e. Improve car parking at the Forest School

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would benefit Clunes residents by stopping the current haphazard parking arrangements.	Community consultation.
Technological	n/a	
Economic	Capital costs would be entailed to improve the car parking. Would make the building more appealing to potential (fee-paying) users.	Stakeholder consultation.
Environmental	Care would have to be taken to avoid negative visual impacts (e.g. by using a solution like 'Grasscrete' or similar).	Site visit and visual assessment.
Political	Unlikely to have political implications unless planning application proves contentious.	No concerns received at this stage.
Legal	Likely to require planning consent.	Background knowledge.
Ethical	Car usage is hard to avoid at this location – so car sharing and cycling should be encouraged for all users of the building. Could be combined with electric vehicle charging facilities and parking for a community minibus.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	Capital costs might prove prohibitive.	Site visit
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding and ACF decision	

f. Provide community business and IT facilities

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would be a new facility for the community, potentially supporting existing or start-up enterprises, home-workers and the elderly/those who lack modern IT facilities.	Community consultation – near-unanimous support.
Technological	Would encourage and support the use of IT to assist rural businesses and individuals.	Community consultation.
Economic	Small-scale capital investment would be needed for upgrading office environment (redecorating etc) and provision of IT equipment.	Community consultation.
Environmental	No impacts.	Site visit.

Political	This is a non-contentious project.	No concerns received at this stage.
Legal	Possible insurance implications. Health and Safety audit and risk assessment of building for office use required.	Background knowledge.
Ethical	A good fit with the 'keep it local' ethos of ACF.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	Space may prove prohibitive for multiple use	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to demand and ACF decision	

6.4.2 Theme 2 – Conservation, Woodland Management and Produce

The ideas under this category are:

- Manage area for wildlife and conservation.
- Continuing Management of Community Orchard and Willow Nursery.
- Develop community firewood processes.
- Improve community workshop and tool storage.
- Food production - Keeping chickens, bees or other animals.

a. Manage area for wildlife and conservation

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Well managed woodlands and nature would enhance wellbeing for residents and visitors alike.	Community and stakeholder consultation – unanimous support.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Costs depend on the level of interventions required. Rhododendron control is on a scale which could be managed effectively by volunteers. Possible income sources from native woodland management include venison supply, hardwood timber, firewood, non-timber forest products.	n/a
Environmental	Would enhance nature conversation and wildlife benefits. Would ensure that the woodland is not threatened by inappropriate development.	Community and stakeholder consultation – unanimous support
Political	Strongly-expressed view through the consultation process to conserve the environment here.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Legal	n/a	n/a
Ethical	This is one of the principal arguments for community acquisition. A perfect fit.	Community and stakeholder consultation – unanimous support.
Key Risks	Possible scarcity of volunteer labour.	n/a
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

b. Continuing Management of Community Orchard and Willow Nursery

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	The existing Orchard and Nursery are a proven way of bringing local residents together to undertake routine	Community consultation.

	maintenance tasks, helping maintain the sense of community and bringing health and well-being benefits.	
Technological	The willow nursery provides materials for workshops and training courses reviving the craft of willow weaving	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Economic	These existing assets can be maintained and upgraded at low cost. Volunteer labour means overheads are kept to a minimum.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Environmental	Appropriate for their landscape setting. Visual impact is very low (out of view of houses and public roads/paths). Natural heritage benefits in terms of increasing biodiversity. The production of fruit is environmentally sustainable and helps to improve the resilience of the community in terms of 'food-miles'	Site visit and visual assessment.
Political	These are already-established projects.	Support from all local elected politicians. No objections at all received from any source.
Legal	No regulatory requirements or consents needed	n/a
Ethical	This project is a good fit with the ethos of ACF and feels right for the local community.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	Scarcity of volunteer labour. Enthusiasm may ebb and flow over time. Only a few individuals locally have the specialist knowledge required. Climatic conditions may make fruit growing difficult.	Background knowledge.
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

c. Develop community firewood processes

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would provide a reliable local source of sustainable locally sourced firewood.	Community consultation.
Technological	Encouraging more use of a sustainable energy source.	Community consultation.
Economic	Equipment/buildings would be needed, however it is unlikely that the oak woodland would yield sufficient quantities of harvestable timber to enable a commercial business to be viable. However the workshop may provide a venue for processing of timber brought in from elsewhere.	n/a
Environmental	Would use locally abundant renewable materials to provide heating and to substitute for non-renewable fuel sources (principally heating oil and coal)	Background knowledge. Site survey
Political	Clearly expressed local demand for improved access to firewood, firewood processing machinery and improved firewood storage facilities. Clear fit with forestry strategy, renewable energy strategies, 2040 target for 100% renewables etc.	n/a
Legal	Planning consent might be required depending on what is proposed.	n/a
Ethical	A logical proposition for a community forest group.	Good level of support in principle from local people.

Key Risks	“Community firewood processes” is undefined at this stage. There is limited opportunity for firewood harvesting on the oak woodland site but the buildings may be used as a processing venue in the future.	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to site management and ACF decision	

d. Improve workshop and tool storage at the Forest School

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Upgrading amenities which are already in place. Better facilities could encourage increased usage. Fort William ‘Mens’ Shed’ community project provides an example of a project that provides social inclusion benefits.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Technological	Encouraging people to learn and develop their skills.	Community consultation.
Economic	Small capital cost probable to improve security etc. but minimal ongoing maintenance costs. May generate income from local businesses using the workshop for tool storage and maintenance (e.g. Woodland Trust, Arkaig Forestry Coop)	n/a
Environmental	No additional environmental impacts.	Site visit.
Political	An uncontentious proposal.	No objections mooted.
Legal	No consents or permits required.	n/a
Ethical	An ideal low-cost project for the community forest group.	Unanimous support from consultees.
Key Risks	Low risk.	n/a
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

e. Food production (Keep chickens, bees or other animals)

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Shared ownership and responsibility for growing food and produce helps community cohesion and provide some food for local residents – reducing ‘food miles’ and increasing local resilience.	Community consultation, ongoing use of community garden by ABC and ACF volunteers for herbs, vegetables and fruit
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Modest revenue-generating potential (fruit, jams/preserves, eggs, honey etc). Modest capital investment required for improved growing space (e.g. polytunnel) or for improved bee-keeping and chicken-rearing facilities. Good fit with many current funding streams.	n/a
Environmental	Environmentally-friendly: reducing food miles, helping pollination, creating natural fertilisers etc.	Community and stakeholder consultation
Political	Apparently non-contentious.	n/a
Legal	No consents/permissions required.	n/a
Ethical	Good fit with ethical food policies and government support for these.	Widespread consultee support, but one objection.
Key Risks	Volunteer support needed on an ongoing basis.	Community consultation.

Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition
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6.4.3 Theme 3 – Tourism and Recreation

For tourism and recreation category, the Ideas are as follows:

- a. Develop a cafe/catering facility to generate income.
- b. Provide public toilet facilities.
- c. Create interpretation display for Loch Arkaig Pine Forest project.
- d. Improve mountain bike trails and paths.
- e. Provide camping pods.
- f. A small-scale tourist campsite.
- g. Provide shower facilities for walkers, cyclists and canoeists.
- h. A pop-up coffee station (seasonal).
- i. A public charging point for GPS/phones.
- j. Bird feeding/bird watching station.
- k. Wildlife watching along the lines of 'Mull Eagle Watch'.

a. Develop a cafe/catering facility to generate income

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would notably enhance the visitor experience by filling a much-noted gap in provision, and would help put Clunes 'on the map'. Would create local employment.	Stakeholder consultation
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Income-generating potential to support the other work of ACF. Could potentially entail quite high capital costs.	Stakeholder consultation.
Environmental	No adverse impacts foreseen.	n/a
Political	Could be contentious – risk of damaging viability of one existing local businesses.	Stakeholder consultation.
Legal	Planning consent, food trading and food hygiene licences needed. Insurance implications.	Background knowledge.
Ethical	Would be welcomed by visitors and activity providers, but would make ACF unpopular with existing local businesses.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	Considerable risks: finding and retaining staff locally; annual visitor numbers are low; tourism is very seasonal here; risk of low ROI.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer	

b. Provide public toilet facilities

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would notably enhance the visitor experience and could increase awareness of the Clunes Forest School facilities.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Capital costs would be entailed. User donations might offset running costs?	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Environmental	Would help eliminate current pollution issues caused by human waste.	Community consultation.
Political	If achieved, would be universally popular.	Stakeholder consultation.
Legal	Insurance costs	Background knowledge.

Ethical	Would be a very good fit with the ethos of ACF and would be a 'feather in the cap' for the organisation – but is it deliverable?	Unanimous support from consultees.
Key Risks	Financial – who would pay for any capital and ongoing costs? Volunteers – who would be responsible for cleaning, and how often? Security risks to building?	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer	

c. Create interpretation display for Loch Arkaig Pine Forest project

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would notably enhance the visitor experience. Could help local economy by encouraging longer stays and repeat visits.	Stakeholder consultation.
Technological	Potential to incorporate new technology into the displays.	Background knowledge.
Economic	Capital costs could be substantial, depending on what is being proposed; however, certain costs shared with Woodland Trust Scotland.	Background knowledge
Environmental	Would improve environmental education and boost awareness of the area's ecology.	Stakeholder consultation.
Political	Non-contentious.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Legal	No implications.	n/a
Ethical	A perfect fit for the ethos of ACF.	Community and stakeholder consultation – unanimous approval.
Key Risks	Finding capital costs. Security risk (if displays were indoors).	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer and development of partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland	

d. Improve mountain bike trails and paths in adjacent woodland

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Unclear whether this proposal is aimed mainly at local residents or visitors. No evidence of unmet demand.	Community consultation.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Substantial costs could be incurred in path construction and maintenance, with no real prospect of generating any income.	Background knowledge.
Environmental	Care would have to be taken to minimise environmental damage caused by MTBs.	Background knowledge.
Political	No opposition voiced to date – but proposals are unclear and this Option refers to land outwith the scope of this project as it is on neighbouring FLS land.	Community consultation.
Legal	Possible insurance liabilities?	Background knowledge.
Ethical	Not a particularly good fit with the aims of ACF. Not at all clear where or how trails could be constructed on the community woodland.	Community consultation.

Key Risks	Financial costs. Ongoing maintenance needed by volunteers.	n/a
Recommendation	Not in scope of this project	

e. Provide camping pods

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would enhance the experience for walkers, cyclists and canoeists. Would raise the tourism profile of Clunes/Loch Arkaig.	Stakeholder consultation
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Could generate modest income for ACF.	n/a
Environmental	Visual impacts minimal if pods sited out of view of houses and public road. Positive impacts if unregulated wild camping on loch shores was reduced as a result of this new facility.	Stakeholder consultation.
Political	Does not appear to be any local opposition.	Community consultation.
Legal	Planning consent probably required.	Background knowledge.
Ethical	Would be in keeping with the ethos of ACF.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	No clear evidence of visitor demand – risk of low ROI. Partnership working with activity providers needed along with staffing and volunteer support.	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer	

f. A small-scale tourist campsite

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would enhance the experience for walkers, cyclists and canoeists. Would raise the tourism profile of Clunes/Loch Arkaig.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Could generate modest income for ACF.	n/a
Environmental	Visual impacts minimal if tents/huts housed out of view of houses and public road. Positive impacts if unregulated wild camping on loch shores was reduced as a result of this new facility.	Stakeholder consultation.
Political	There was no major opposition but there was minor local concern from a neighbour	Community consultation.
Legal	Planning consent probably required.	Background knowledge.
Ethical	Would be in keeping with the ethos of ACF.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	No evidence that wild campers would pay to use a new campsite. Partnership working with activity providers needed along with staffing and volunteer support.	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer	

g. Provide shower facilities for walkers, cyclists and canoeists

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would enhance the experience for walkers, cyclists and canoeists.	Community consultation

Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Could generate a small income for ACF.	Stakeholder consultation
Environmental	No negative impacts.	n/a
Political	No foreseen implications.	n/a
Legal	Possible insurance required?	n/a
Ethical	Would provide a useful service to visitors, but there also seem to be concerns - no other option attracted as much local opposition as this.	Community consultation.
Key Risks	No proven customer demand. Tourism is very seasonal. Partnership working with activity providers needed along with staffing and volunteer support.	Stakeholder consultation.
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer and alleviation of local concerns.	

h. Pop-up coffee station (seasonal)

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would enhance the visitor experience and help in a small way to put Clunes 'on the map' for tourism. Could create part-time job(s) locally or justify ranger post.	Stakeholder consultation.
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Capital investment needed for equipment. Could generate a small income for ACF.	Background knowledge.
Environmental	No adverse impacts anticipated.	n/a
Political	Could be contentious – risk of damaging viability of an existing local business.	Stakeholder consultation.
Legal	Street trader licence needed.	Background knowledge.
Ethical	Would be welcomed by visitors and activity providers, but would make ACF unpopular with one existing local business.	Stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	Relatively low visitor numbers even during high season. Are local staff available? Partnership working with activity providers needed along with staffing and volunteer support.	Stakeholder consultation.
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer and alleviation of local concerns.	

i. A public charging point for GPS/phones

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Would enhance the experience for some visitors and ensure visitors are able to call for help in an emergency (health and safety).	Community consultation.
Technological	Assisting visitors to make the most of their technology.	Community consultation.
Economic	Small initial investment needed.	n/a
Environmental	No impacts.	n/a
Political	Non-contentious.	n/a
Legal	No implications known.	n/a
Ethical	A straightforward, small-scale project which could be of assistance to some visitors.	n/a
Key Risks	None	n/a
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

j. Bird feeding/bird watching station

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Could provide Clunes/Loch Arkaig with more of an identity/public image.	n/a
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Low cost.	n/a
Environmental	Would provide environmental education, with no adverse impacts.	Community consultation.
Political	A non-contentious idea.	n/a
Legal	No implications.	n/a
Ethical	A simple project which would be a very good fit for ACF.	n/a
Key Risks	Very low risk. Volunteers needed.	n/a
Recommendation	Could be implemented on acquisition	

k. Wildlife watching along the lines of 'Mull Eagle Watch'

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Could provide Clunes/Loch Arkaig with more of an identity/public image.	n/a
Technological	n/a	n/a
Economic	Could provide income for ACF and/or create a job locally or justify ranger post.	Community Consultation.
Environmental	Would provide environmental education, with minimal impacts.	Community Consultation.
Political	A non-contentious idea.	Community Consultation
Legal	Public Liability Insurance needed	n/a
Ethical	Would be a good fit for ACF.	No concerns noted from consultees.
Key Risks	Level of demand for this service is unproven. Reliability of wildlife appearances?	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer and development of partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland	

6.4.4 Theme 4 – Environmental and Outdoor Education

There was only one idea that was suggested through the consultation process falling within this category.

a. Develop environmental resources and programmes for schools and others.

	Assessment	Sources of evidence
Social	Revitalising a facility which was much-liked by teachers and young people in the past. Considerable educational and health benefits.	Stakeholder consultation.
Technological	Fairly extensive use of technology anticipated.	Stakeholder consultation.
Economic	Capital costs for upgrading forest school, its equipment and learning materials. Possibility of generating modest income through renting out the building.	Stakeholder consultation.
Environmental	Increasing awareness and knowledge of environmental/conservation issues.	Stakeholder consultation.
Political	Politically uncontentious – indeed, popular.	Stakeholder consultation – unanimous support.

Legal	Possible insurance requirements.	n/a
Ethical	A perfect fit with the aims and aspirations of ACF.	Community and stakeholder consultation.
Key Risks	No guarantee that upgraded resources would actually be used by schools etc. Funding cutbacks could restrict usage.	n/a
Recommendation	Development Phase 2 project post acquisition – subject to funding for Ranger/Development Officer and development of partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland	

6.5 Review and Approval of Options - Shortlist

The ACF board reviewed the long list of Options at their meeting on 3rd July 2019. They decided that some but not all of the options should be taken forward to the next stage and the shortlist is as shown below;

6.5.1 Summary of Approved Shortlist - Phase 1 (Acquisition)

This is the list of options approved by the ACF Board that are to be taken forward into Business Plan

Theme 1 – Social, Community and Partnerships

- ◆ Create a 'community hub' for social events and meeting space.
- ◆ Create office space for Arkaig Community Forest and Woodland Trust Scotland.

Theme 2 – Conservation, Woodland Management and Food Production

- ◆ Manage area for wildlife and conservation.
- ◆ Continue management of Community Orchard and Willow Nursery.
- ◆ Improve community workshop and tool storage.
- ◆ Food Production (Keep chickens, bees or other animals).

Theme 3 – Tourism and Recreation

- ◆ Charging point/s (e.g. for mobile phone, GPS).

6.5.2 Summary of Approved Shortlist - Phase 2 (Development)

This is the list of projects approved by the ACF Board and recommended to be taken forward into Phase 2 as **they require more development and partnership work to determine their feasibility and this is outwith the scope of this report**. The work required covers building and improving markets, target audiences, collaboration and partnerships. As a result, these are **not** included in the business plan in this report.

Theme 1 – Social, Community and Partnerships

- ◆ Create a new play area.
- ◆ Run activities for children and young people.
- ◆ Improve parking facilities at Forest School.
- ◆ Provide community business and IT facilities.

Theme 2 – Conservation, Woodland Management and Produce

- ◆ Develop community firewood processes.

Theme 3 – Tourism and Recreation

- ◆ Interpretation for Loch Arkaig Pine Forest.
- ◆ Seasonal pop-up coffee station (if linked to events/ races on GGW).
- ◆ Wildlife watching tours/facilities along the lines of 'Mull Eagle Watch'.

Theme 4 – Environmental and Outdoor Education

- ◆ Develop environmental resources and programmes for schools and others.

7 Community and Capacity

7.1 Community Vision

The community represented by the ABC group and the ACF group had a vision for community ownership of the Clunes Forest School Buildings and adjacent woodland at Clunes and they began a process towards achieving this in 2008 (on formation of the ABC Group).

Since Dec 2018 ACF have taken on the role of pursuing this vision they and commissioned this study and report. Their aims articulated at the study inception meeting in March 2019 were confirmed as wanting to bring about social, environmental and economic benefit. Their initial ideas list (though this was not exhaustive) was as follows;

- ◆ Formalising and expanding community use
- ◆ Opportunities for education, tree nursery and allotments
- ◆ A base and admin facility for ACF and their partnership with WTS
- ◆ Enable experiences of Loch Arkaig – remote cameras, interpretation
- ◆ Enhancing and protecting the conservation value of the woodland
- ◆ Opportunities for new micro businesses e.g. woodfuel, office rental
- ◆ Low key tourism facilities – food and facilities for walkers, cyclists and canoeists

7.2 Community Support

The results of the community survey showed that an overwhelming majority of people who responded both at the Open Day, and through the online survey, were in favour of the community acquiring the woodland and Clunes Forest School buildings. The attendees at the Open day were invited by a postcard hand delivered to all the households in the community. The postcard included an option for those unable to attend to fill in an online survey – this link was only available on the invite and to associate members of ACF (the decision to include the associates was made by ACF). Apart from three Great Glen Way walkers who dropped in, all respondents were from the local community area. Similarly, the stakeholder consultation results displayed a very high degree of empathy and support for the proposed ACF land acquisition. ***The summary of the community and stakeholder engagement process is detailed in Section 5 and the full results are shown in a separate report annexed to this report.***

7.3 Community Need

The strategic context set out in 6.2.1 highlights the importance and benefits of community ownership and what policies and support is in place to enable communities to acquire and manage land and buildings. The communities at Achnacarry, Bunarkaig and Clunes are relatively remote and would benefit from a shared community ownership project through:

- ◆ Social cohesion through engagement with conservation work and food growing.
- ◆ Increased opportunities for employment.
- ◆ Potential to develop new projects that could yield socio-economic benefits.

7.4 Arkaig Community Forest Group - Land Management and Skills (Capacity)

Arkaig Community Forest SCIO (ACF) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation set up in 2014 to acquire and manage woodland for multiple community benefits and for native woodland restoration in the area defined by postcodes PH34 4EJ and 4EL in the vicinity of Loch Arkaig in Lochaber. During 2016 ACF, in partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland, acquired the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest covering some 1064 hectares located on the south shore of Loch Arkaig – see Figure 9. The land was acquired by ACF from Forestry Commission Scotland in December 2016, under the National Forest Land Scheme and with funding and support provided by largely by Woodland Trust Scotland (the two woodlands having been declared ‘Surplus’ by FCS and put up for disposal in 2013).

After this successful community acquisition, ACF retained direct ownership of two woodlands totalling around 53 hectares of the site (Loch Arkaig Pine Forest) and then transferred the rest of the forest to Woodland Trust Scotland at zero financial gain. This was on the understanding that the community group would retain significant common rights in the management and utilisation of the whole forest, in perpetuity, and that that the two organisations would work collaboratively towards common aims underpinned by a formal ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ signed up to by both organisations in 2016. ACF

has established a strong and successful partnership approach with Woodland Trust Scotland in order to support conservation management and sustainable rural development working towards a shared vision of restoration of native woodland habitats across the site.

The two woodlands owned by ACF are enclosed within the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest perimeter deer fence, and both are now covered by an FLS approved Woodland Management Plan developed in 2018 by the ACF

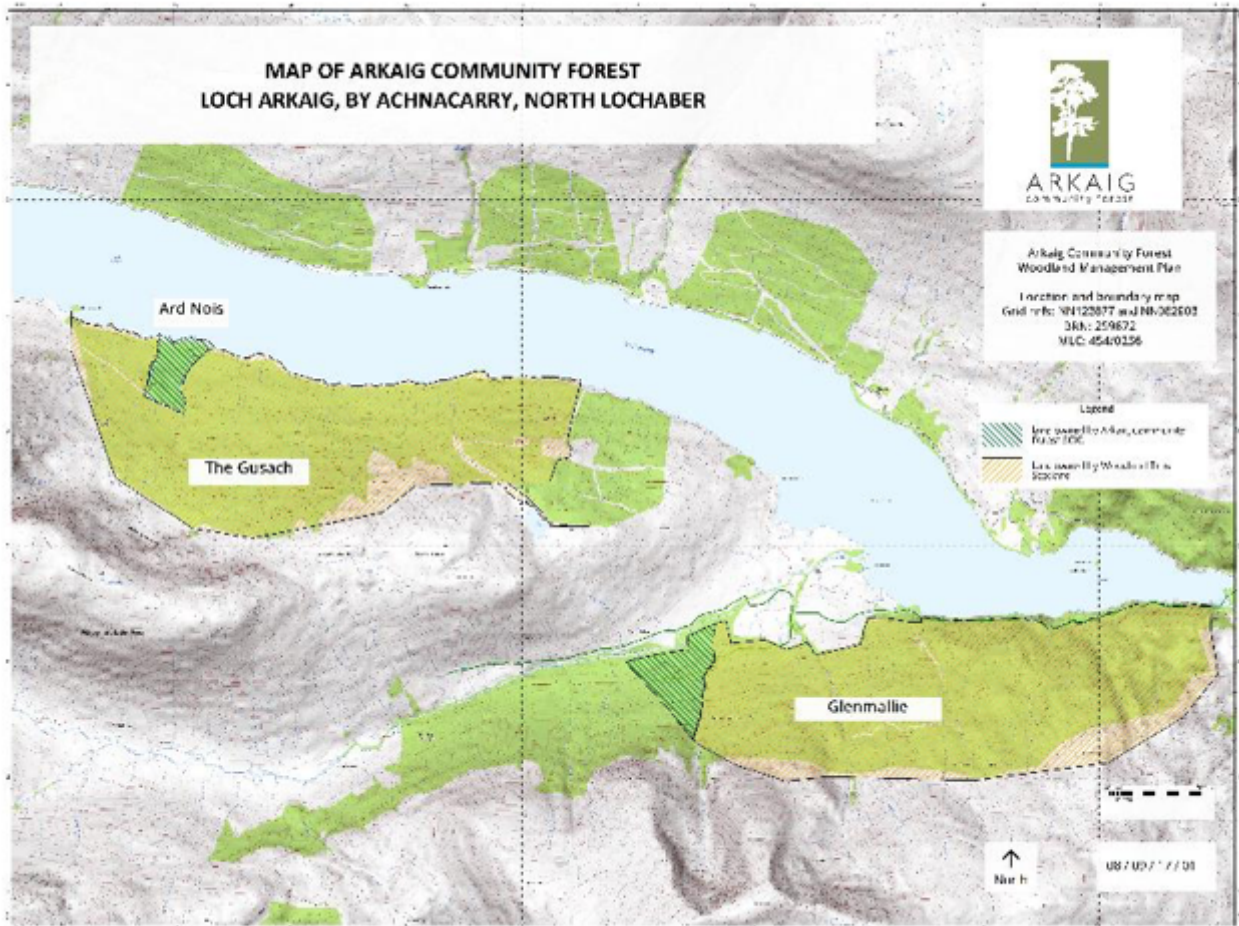


Figure 9 - Loch Arkaig Woodlands

The woods contain significant ancient native pinewood remnants, and are part of the iconic Loch Arkaig Pinewoods - a Caledonian Pinewood Inventory site of great biodiversity importance. The ethos of ACF and its aims are;

“to restore and expand the native woodland habitats, and to improve the ecological, economic and social value of the woods, bringing multiple gains to the area, preserving and enhancing these woodlands for public benefit and reconnecting people with the land”

In addition to its work in managing the significant area of pine woodland at Loch Arkaig, ACF have been managing the Forest School Buildings and the adjacent woodland Tom an Eireannaich since 2016 under a formal management agreement with FLS. They carry out a range of activities to steward the site on a voluntary basis and so far they have:

- ◆ Brought the willow nursery and orchard on the site back into active management on the site of the old allotments.
- ◆ Cleaned out, repaired and maintained the water supply reservoir and storage tanks.
- ◆ Removed unused obstacles and structures on the site.
- ◆ Cleared bracken from neglected areas to create a football/shinty ‘pitch’.
- ◆ Begun to use the old tree nursery beds for growing herbs and vegetables.
- ◆ Reinstated footpaths to the coppice and orchard.

- ◆ Consulted further on possible solutions to nuisance camping on land just east of the area; and consulted on possible woodlots and sites for woodfuel processing and small-scale sawmilling at Clunes.
- ◆ Repaired the perimeter fence around the willow nursery/allotment.
- ◆ Organised and run a number of training courses for locals and visitors

The woodland will continue to be used for practical courses and upgrading/refurbishing the Forest School will provide wet weather and classroom training opportunities. The Group have significant skills and expertise within its Board and members as is demonstrated by its success in community land management thus far.

7.5 Arkaig Community Forest Group - Governance

ACF SCIO currently has 13 Ordinary members and is managed by a Board of five Charity Trustees all of whom live in the area. Details of the current Trustees and their skills and experience is attached at Appendix 4.

The charitable objectives of ACF are:

- ◆ The advancement of environmental protection or improvement.
- ◆ The advancement of citizenship or community development.
- ◆ The advancement of education.
- ◆ The advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science.
- ◆ The provision of recreational facilities, or the organisation of recreational activities with the object of improving the conditions of life for the persons for whom the facilities or activities are primarily intended.

The key aims and purposes of ACF are:

- ◆ to support and promote sustainable community development, where 'sustainable development' means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- ◆ to own and manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the community and the public in general.
- ◆ to restore and protect the natural environment of the area, and in particular to restore and enhance the native woodland habitats and other semi-natural habitats and associated flora and fauna of the area.
- ◆ to support and enhance the understanding and interpretation of the environment, history, culture and heritage of the area.
- ◆ to improve the access, amenity and recreational value of the area.
- ◆ to encourage the advancement of land-based education, training, and personal development.
- ◆ to promote health and wellbeing.
- ◆ to provide a naturally safe, clean and welcoming environment at its locations.

The group have recently reviewed and revised their constitution following advice from FLS, HIE and Community Woodlands Association to ensure that it is in line with the Community Right to Buy legislation (Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) and the FLS Community Asset Transfer scheme.

8 The Business Plan

8.1 Forestry and Land Scotland Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS)

Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) launched the [Community Asset Transfer Scheme \(CATS\)](#) in January 2017 in order to provide a process to deliver the asset transfer rights for communities covered in Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, for national forests and land. Under this legislation, community organisations have a right to request to take over publicly-owned land or buildings that they feel they can make better use of for local people. These community empowerment rights apply to all land and buildings managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. The FLS Community Asset Transfer Scheme sets out how groups can acquire FLS owned land for the benefit of their communities either through direct ownership or a lease.

As part of the CATS, FLS has set up an independent evaluation panel and all Asset Transfer Request applications to CATS are reviewed and considered by the panel against the following set of criteria regarding positive and negative impacts.

- a. Benefits
- b. Viability
- c. Community and wider public support
- d. Impact on management of the National Forest Estate

The panel consider the applications and make a recommendation to FLS on whether the application is suitable for asset transfer to the community and then FLS make the final decision.

8.2 The Scottish Land Fund (SLF)

The Scottish Land Fund (SLF) is a programme which supports community organisations across Scotland to own land, buildings and other assets. It is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership between HIE and the National Lottery Community Fund. The current programme runs from 2016-2020 with an annual budget of £10 million and grants of up to £1million are available. The Fund will support projects that involve land and property ownership, that are community-led, community controlled and will deliver socio-economic impacts.

Demonstrating both community support and benefits is of particular importance in an application to the Scottish Land Fund as it shows that the purchase of the woodland would enable the community to achieve sustained economic growth.

The SLF want to support projects that will:

1. Put communities in control of local land, land assets and buildings which are important to their economic, social and environmental development.
2. Enable communities to manage local land, land assets and buildings well and deliver benefit for the whole community.
3. Empower communities to realise the opportunities they see in local land, land assets and buildings to meet local needs.

The SLF committee will prioritise applications that can demonstrate significant positive impact for the community based on economic, social and environmental impact. They will assess the quality and/or value of:

- ◆ The opportunities that the land, land asset or building represents for your community.
- ◆ The quality of the community's plans to realise those opportunities.
- ◆ The extent to which local people are engaged in and supportive of the project.
- ◆ The economic, social and environmental benefits the project can deliver for the community.
- ◆ The organisation's skills and capacity to deliver the project.
- ◆ Understanding of the liabilities and responsibilities you will be taking on.
- ◆ Understanding of the initial cash flow needed to ensure that there is enough income to deliver a well-managed, financially sustainable community asset.

8.3 Valuation and Purchase

A Valuation Report for the Clunes Forest School Buildings and Tom an Eireannaich Woodland was carried out in July 2018 by the District Valuation Service (DVS) to provide a valuation for ACF and its application to CATS. The valuation included all three Lots detailed in section 4.1 with a total valuation of £34,000. The surveyor split the values into the following allocations:

- ◆ Lot 1: The Forest School buildings - £2,000
- ◆ Lot 2: Tom an Eireannaich Woodland - £13,000
- ◆ Lot 3: The hillside woodland - £19,000

The total value of the asset under consideration for this community acquisition (Lots 1 and 2) is **£15,000** and this figure has been used for the purposes of this report. It should be noted though that SLF may require an updated valuation in due course given that the current one is more than six months old (September 2018), however it is not expected that it would vary greatly.

8.3.1 Request for Discount

The CATS process makes provision for communities to ask for a discount on the valuation price if they believe that a case can be made. ACF would like to request a discount based on the costs saving to FLS who would demolish the building if it was not being sold to the community. ACF have requested quotes for the cost for demolition and these vary from £8000 + VAT for asbestos removal and demolition to £2,650 + VAT for just demolition. It is likely as part of a later phase that ACF may replace the building with one more fit for purpose therefore they could justifiably request a **discount of £5,000** to cover any future costs of safe demolition that takes into account the presence of asbestos.

In addition to the real costs that will be a saving to the public purse, there has been a significant value of the volunteer labour supplied by the ACF group to provide site maintenance work during and before the period that the site has been leased to the community. It is requested that this be taken as an additional consideration and justification in the request for £5000 discount.

8.3.2 Required Shared Access

FLS will retain ownership of the track that is contiguous to the Forest School Buildings and Woodland to allow access to their larger land holding to the north. It is important therefore that ACF negotiate full and unrestricted access rights over this track for the full length that lies adjacent to the site. In addition, ACF will also require access rights and supply to be conferred in their favour for the water supply and waste treatment tank (septic tank).

8.4 Feasibility Analysis and Strategic Business Direction

The Community and Stakeholder engagement was a process that collected views, support and opinions on an existing list of ideas (or Options) for the community ownership of the Clunes Forest School and Woodland. It also provided an opportunity for the community to submit new ones. The Options Appraisal and analysis that followed has provided some distinct messages about the optimal strategic direction for the Arkaig Community Forest Group.

From this work, it was clear there was evidence of strong support from local residents and stakeholders for the principle of community acquisition. Whilst there was certainly support from stakeholders for the ambitions of ACF, there was also a great deal of pragmatism expressed by those consulted and a widespread understanding that in a sparsely-populated area like this, community capacity and financial resources are limited. It is accepted that taking on more ambitious projects will be challenging – particularly when (as at present) all tasks have to be carried out by volunteers.

There was a common message through the feedback that although the tourism market is buoyant in many parts of Scotland (including Lochaber), the relative remoteness and inaccessibility for car borne or motorhome visitors is a potentially limiting factor at Clunes. This is due to the distance from the main tourist routes; the lack of a through route for motorists; and the lack of parking/camping facilities for car borne or motorhome visitors. The main tourism market segment at Clunes stems from the 'active

travellers'; those following the Great Glen Way on foot, bike or canoe. However, this market is not as developed as elsewhere in the country and it was felt by a number of activity providers and groups (i.e. Scottish Canoe Association), that this was not reaching its full potential at present and that if partnerships were established between accommodation providers and activity providers then more could be made of this potential market.

For that reason, ***the recommended strategic direction in this business plan is for ACF is to start 'small and safe'***. There are more than enough benefits across the strategic themes could be realised immediately through the community acquisition of the Clunes Forest School and Woodland. Furthermore, by having the freehold of the woodland and the possibility of staff resources to develop projects there is a great opportunity to foster partnerships and so realise the latent potential for tourism and recreation – in a way that makes sure all business in the area benefit thereby reducing any perceived conflict from any development at Clunes.

Finally, by having freehold of this site ACF will be able to build further on their existing strong relationship with Woodland Trust Scotland and develop the site both as a base for both organisations and for innovative interpretation of the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest project.

Following this analysis, the following stages are suggested as the Strategic direction for the Business Plan:

1. **Acquisition Phase** – take next steps to apply for the Community Asset Transfer of the site based on the implementation of a 'small and safe' business plan with the low financial input/low risk activities identified in section 6.5.1.
2. **Development Phase** – seek funding for the appointment of a Ranger/Development Officer to deliver some of the Options that require staff resources (e.g. interpretation, development of eco-tourism and wildlife watching, upgrade of facilities, development of community firewood/woodfuel initiatives, environmental education for schools) and to take forward development work on the options identified in section 6.5.2, as well as working in partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland and brokering new partnerships to deliver the joint aims.

8.5 Acquisition Phase – Economic Viability

The results of this Feasibility Study have shown that the best business strategy for the community and ACF is to start 'small and safe' with a very simple business plan and cashflow forecast. This is based on known quantities and secure income streams rather than aspirational project incomes that require further development work. These projects requiring more work have been identified for Phase 2 when they can be developed by a Ranger/Development Officer.

The business plan financials are based on this approach which will support the initial acquisition. They include the current running costs of the buildings and woodland, the existing and guaranteed income from WTS and ABC, and also the new revenue costs and potential SLF funding for 1-year fixed term post of Ranger/Development Officer.

8.5.1 Revenue and Costs Forecast Year 1 -5

The following cash flow forecast is based on all expected income forecasts which are either evidenced or expected with a degree of certainty. The community acquisition of this site is still financially viable without revenue funding for a Ranger/Development Officer as there is sufficient volunteer labour to enable the site to operate. However, the potential to expand existing and realise new income streams is greatly enhanced by this post.

CLUNES FOREST SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND WOODLAND	Phase 1 - Revenue and Costs Forecast				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
INCOME					
Woodland Trust Scotland - facilities rental (1)	£ 1,500	£ 1,530	£ 1,561	£ 1,592	£ 1,624
Forestry grants - SRDP (2)	£ 150	£ 153	£ 156	£ 159	£ 162
ABC Group contribution (3)	£ 2,000	£ 2,040	£ 2,081	£ 2,122	£ 2,165
	£ 3,650	£ 3,723	£ 3,797	£ 3,873	£ 3,951
SLF - Revenue Funding - Ranger/Development Officer (4)	£ 17,338	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
SLF - Revenue Funding - legal fees (4)	£ 2,850	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
SLF - Capital Funding acquisition (4)	£ 14,250	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
SLF - Capital Funding acquisition - immediate repairs (5)	£ 1,425				
ACF fundraising (6)	£ 1,888	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
Total income	£ 41,400	£ 3,723	£ 3,797	£ 3,873	£ 3,951
EXPENDITURE					
Insurances (1)	£ 300	£ 300	£ 306	£ 312	£ 318
Utilities	£ 400	£ 408	£ 416	£ 424	£ 433
Cleaning	£ 180	£ 184	£ 187	£ 191	£ 195
Broadband	£ 400	£ 408	£ 416	£ 424	£ 433
Accountancy	£ 150	£ 153	£ 156	£ 159	£ 162
Subscriptions - CWA etc	£ 100	£ 102	£ 104	£ 106	£ 108
Water supply and waster services	£ 300	£ 306	£ 312	£ 318	£ 325
Building Maintenance (2)	£ -	£ 500	£ 500	£ 500	£ 500
	£ 1,830	£ 2,361	£ 2,398	£ 2,436	£ 2,474
<i>Ranger/Development Officer (3)</i>					
Salary	£ 15,000	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
Employer Costs	£ 2,250	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
Expenses	£ 1,000	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
	£ 18,250				
CATS land acquisition costs	£ 15,000	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
CATS legal fees	£ 3,000	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -
CATS acquisition - immediate repairs	£ 1,500				
	£ 19,500				
Total expenditure	£ 39,580	£ 2,361	£ 2,398	£ 2,436	£ 2,474
Surplus/(Deficit)	£ 1,820	£ 1,362	£ 1,400	£ 1,438	£ 1,476
Accumulated surplus/(deficit)	£ 1,820	£ 3,182	£ 4,582	£ 6,020	£ 7,496

Notes to the Financial Forecast:

The costs and revenues shown above are estimates that are:

- ◆ Based on the scenario for 'small and safe' using the guaranteed income from Woodland Trust Scotland.
- ◆ Based on annual revenue costs plus one-off capital purchase costs in Year 1
- ◆ Based on "present day" assumptions only but incorporating a 2% uplift year on year for inflation.
- ◆ Inclusive of VAT as applicable on the assumption that the ACF Group will not be able to reclaim or charge VAT under its current constitutional structure.

Notes on Income

- 1) Woodland Trust Scotland have confirmed an annual contribution of £125 per month assuming provision of suitable furniture/facilities. They have already made a commitment to this contribution.
- 2) An application to SRDP FGS for Sustainable Forest Management – Native Woodlands is likely to be successful following production and approval of a Woodland Management Plan by ACF in due course.
- 3) ABC currently pay a fixed amount of £180pa for a cleaner for the Forest School buildings but an annual income of £2000 from the ABC Hydro Community Benefit Fund will be applied for on an annual recurring basis for 5 years
- 4) Capital and revenue funding requested from SLF at 95% intervention rate.

- 5) These are repairs required on purchase capital funding requested from SLF at 95% intervention rate.
- 6) ACF fundraising for contribution to acquisition costs. This could include a specific application to ABC hydro fund for acquisition and development costs or use in kind contributions through volunteer hours and/or discount.

Notes on Expenditure

- 1) Insurance costs covers; buildings and contents, public liability, employer's liability.
- 2) Building maintenance costs covers such items as redecoration, workshop repairs/security and external parking improvements. There is an initial higher amount in year 1 to cover improvements requested by WTS to justify their contribution to office costs.
- 3) The costs of the Ranger/Development Officer are based a part time post (3 days/week) with a FTE salary of £25,000 with 15% on-costs for employer's NI etc, and £1000pa for expenses, training etc. The total pro rata is £18,250.

Estimates of grant funding are provisional subject to activities actually undertaken and assume availability / eligibility of funding at the time. An allowance has been included for SLF Revenue funding to support the costs of the Ranger/ Development Officer for one year as the current SLF funding programme ends in March 2021, although if the fund is continued then further revenue funding for the post may be forthcoming.

Capital costs that are project-based such as car parking, food production, interpretation and eco-tourism are not included in the cashflow as they would be subject to their own project budget to be submitted alongside any applications for grant funding.

8.5.2 Revenue and Costs Forecast Year 6 -25

The project for year 6 to 25 is calculated on a headline basis using the same 'small and safe' business approach used for years 1-5 and showing an annual 2% uplift for inflation year on year. Given that the business plan recommends support for a Ranger/Development Officer to develop new income streams based on the Phase 2 projects this projection is likely to change substantially in the short-medium term, but what it does do is forecast that assuming all income sources are retained then the project remains

	income	Expenditure	Surplus/(Deficit)	Accumulated surplus/(deficit)
Year 5 c/f				£ 7,496
Year 6 (1)	£ 2,030	£ 2,524	£ (494)	£ 7,002
Year 7	£ 2,071	£ 2,574	£ (504)	£ 6,498
Year 8	£ 2,112	£ 2,626	£ (514)	£ 5,984
Year 9	£ 2,154	£ 2,678	£ (524)	£ 5,460
Year 10	£ 2,197	£ 2,732	£ (535)	£ 4,925
Year 11	£ 2,241	£ 2,787	£ (545)	£ 4,380
Year 12	£ 2,286	£ 2,842	£ (556)	£ 3,824
Year 13	£ 2,332	£ 2,899	£ (567)	£ 3,256
Year 14	£ 2,378	£ 2,957	£ (579)	£ 2,678
Year 15	£ 2,426	£ 3,016	£ (590)	£ 2,087
Year 16	£ 2,475	£ 3,077	£ (602)	£ 1,485
Year 17	£ 2,524	£ 3,138	£ (614)	£ 871
Year 18	£ 2,575	£ 3,201	£ (626)	£ 244
Year 19	£ 2,626	£ 3,265	£ (639)	£ (395)
Year 20	£ 2,679	£ 3,330	£ (652)	£ (1,046)
Year 21	£ 2,732	£ 3,397	£ (665)	£ (1,711)
Year 22	£ 2,787	£ 3,465	£ (678)	£ (2,389)
Year 23	£ 2,842	£ 3,534	£ (692)	£ (3,081)
Year 24	£ 2,899	£ 3,605	£ (706)	£ (3,787)
Year 25	£ 2,957	£ 3,677	£ (720)	£ (4,506)

financially feasible and viable until at least Year 18.

Note on Income

(1) ABC funding ends at year 5 but it is expected that other funding streams will be online by year 6.

8.5.3 Acquisition Phase Projects - Detail

The mode of operating identified above and accounted for in the cash flow forecast would allow the community to successfully manage the site financially while also working on taking forward the Phase 1 options shown below. These are the Options which supported by the community and agreed by ACF Board, but also identified as feasible in the acquisition stage.

Theme 1 – Social, Community and Partnerships

- ◆ Create a 'community hub' for social events and meeting space
- ◆ Create office space for Arkaig Community Forest and Woodland Trust Scotland

Theme 2 – Conservation, Woodland Management and Produce

- ◆ Manage area for wildlife and conservation
- ◆ Continuing Management of Community Orchard and Willow Nursery
- ◆ Improve community workshop and tool storage
- ◆ Local Food Production

Theme 3 – Tourism and Recreation

- ◆ Charging point/s (e.g. for mobile phone, GPS)

The following table details these projects identified for the acquisition phase giving a description, costs, market opportunity, income streams, and potential funding sources. Many of these projects can be developed further if the application for funding a Ranger/Development Officer is successful and some of the additional potential for income could be realised at that stage. For the purposes of this Feasibility Study and Business Plan only the ones where income can be evidenced at present have been taken forward into the cash flow forecast detailed in section 8.5.1.

Project	Description	Estimated costs	Market Opportunity	Income Streams	Inclusion in cash flow?	Potential for grant funding
Community Hub	Upgrade furnishings and facilities for communities Advertise and promote space	£750 for furniture, redecoration etc. (Optional) Utilities Covered in overhead costs for building	Local community but possibly outside groups as venue hire	£10/hour venue hire. Estimate 20 hires/year = £200pa	Not confirmed yet (£500 costs optional if grant available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Awards for All ◆ ABC Hydro Income Community Benefit Fund, SSE Stronelairg Community Funding ◆ Scottish Forestry Community Fund
Office space	Current rental agreement with Woodland Trust Scotland. Other options for hire being pursued	£500 for new office furniture Utilities Covered in overhead costs for building	Potential for hire by WTS contractors 15 weeks @ £50pw	WTS agreement £125/month = £1500pa	£1500 income from WTS Other hire not evidenced at this stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Awards for All ◆ ABC Hydro Income Community Benefit Fund, SSE Stronelairg Community Funding ◆ Scottish Forestry Community Fund
Manage Woodland for Conservation	Maintenance tasks currently being undertaken by volunteers. Application to Forestry Grant Scheme under Sustainable Management of Forests (SMF) would likely be successful. Potential to apply for Woodland Improvement Grant for capital items	Volunteer or staff labour to develop and maintain Contractor costs on fixed rates if WIG applied for/approved. Note; there is a cost of developing Woodland Management Plan.	Venison partnership scheme – to be developed	Area payment of 6ha @£25pa = £150pa for 5 years under SMF	£150pa for 5 years	<p>Scottish Rural Development Programme Forestry Grant Scheme for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ SMF ◆ Harvesting and processing
Manage Orchard and Tree nursery	Maintenance tasks currently being undertaken by volunteers. Ranger/DO post could develop new markets. Potential to develop food growing e.g. forest gardening or polytunnel food crops.	Capital for polytunnel in Food Option below. Volunteer or staff labour to develop and maintain	Potential use by local craft groups. Potential for sale of produce	None at present	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Awards for All ◆ ABC Hydro Income Community Benefit Fund, SSE Stronelairg Community Funding ◆ Scottish Forestry Community Fund ◆ Climate Challenge Fund
Improve workshop	Upgrade facilities and security if required.	£500 capital budget for improvements. Volunteer or staff labour to upgrade and maintain	Potential use by Arkaig Forestry Co-op, WTS and community memberS	£400 tbc	Not confirmed yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Awards for All ◆ ABC Hydro Income Community Benefit Fund, SSE Stronelairg Community Funding

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Scottish Forestry Community Fund
Local Food Production	Using tree nursery and community orchard for keeping chickens, bees. Improve growing space e.g. polytunnel	£2000 for capital improvements polytunnel, raised beds etc. Volunteer or staff labour to maintain	Potential for sale of produce	None at present	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Climate Challenge Fund ◆ Awards for All ◆ ABC Hydro Income Community Benefit Fund, SSE Stronelairg Community Funding
Charging point	Access to building or an external charging point for visitors to charge phones/GPS. Signage required.	Volunteer or staff labour to maintain	Could promote to canoeists and wild campers	Income by donations. Estimate £100pa	Not confirmed yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Awards for All ◆ ABC Hydro Income Community Benefit Fund, SSE Stronelairg Community Funding

8.5.4 Funding Strategy - Phase 1 projects

There is sufficient evidenced revenue to enable taking on the ownership of this site to be a viable proposition for the community, however a number of the projects could be enhanced and developed further by ACF making an application for a composite project to two or three funders once the ACF has succeeded purchasing the site on behalf of the community. It is suggested that the application covers the options highlighted in the table above and uses the justifications set out in this report to submit a “Phase 1 Development Project” application to the following funders;

- ◆ ABC Hydro Community Benefit Fund, and/or SSE Stronelaig Spean Bridge Area Community Funding
- ◆ The National Lottery Community Fund (Scotland) - Awards for All
- ◆ Scottish Forestry – Community Fund

This project would have as a minimum a capital request for £3750 to carry out projects listed in the table in 8.5.3 above but the ACF committee may wish to review this once the Ranger/DO is in post as other opportunities may have arisen by then.

8.6 Phase 2 - Development (Post Acquisition)

8.6.1 Developing the Options to Realise Further Potential

One of the key messages in this feasibility study is that while there is sufficient evidence and justification to support the purchase of the Clunes Forest School Buildings and adjacent woodland by the community, there are not sufficient pieces in place at this stage for some of the Options to be fully realised. These options, (shown in section 6.5.2), have therefore been identified to go forward to a Phase 2 (post acquisition) when a Ranger/Development Officer will be in place to be able to address some of the constraints that have been recognised through the community and stakeholder consultation. These constraints can be summarised as:

- ◆ **Undeveloped markets** – there is latent potential in tourism markets that could be developed through partnership working with accommodation and activity providers.
- ◆ **Site constraints** – insufficient capacity in water and waste treatment systems. Lack of potential for significant building upgrade.
- ◆ **Community concerns** – some members of the community and stakeholders have concerns around business viability, competition and carrying capacity of the area.

Therefore, we recommend that a Ranger/Development Officer is appointed to work on these constraints and then develop the Options appropriately and with sensitivity to the issues that have come to light in the community and stakeholder consultation.

8.6.2 Priorities for taking forward Phase 2

The following list shows the recommended priorities for ACF to be able to move forward to Phase 2:

1. Appoint a Ranger/Development Officer to co-ordinate taking the process forward.
2. Continue to discuss, build and achieve consensus around development ideas within the three communities and the ABC Group and other stakeholders.
3. Nurture existing partnerships such as WTS and build ones with new partners.
4. Produce a Development Action Plan to include a Woodland Management Plan.
5. Seek financial and other stakeholder support (i.e Highland Council, HIE, FLS) to support the Development Phase and implementation of Development Action Plan.
6. Implement key anchor projects such as the ones shown in the table in 8.6.5 below.
7. Link to and liaise with tourism businesses and other organisations and groups around the Great Glen to create and sustain collaboration and partnerships.

8.6.3 Ranger/Development Officer

Having someone on the ground who can work on these priorities is pivotal in the future direction and the realisation of further community benefits from the management of the buildings and woodland by ACF. The key tasks for this post are:

1. Building on the existing partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland collaboratively develop opportunities for visitor services and links between the Clunes Forest School and the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest.
2. Creating and nurturing new partnerships with tourism businesses and recreation and leisure organisations.
3. Delivering ranger led activities such as educational group visits.
4. Moving forward innovative ideas for the site such as forest gardening, food production, craft workshops.
5. Seek funding sources to support agreed projects.

SLF have indicated that they might fund this post and so this has been included in the Acquisition Phase business plan, however they can only commit funding to March 2021 so this would be a fixed term post until then unless other continuation funding is secured.

8.6.4 Process and Opportunities

The successful implementation of the ideas in Phase 2 requires more work and in particular collaborative and partnership working. This can only be done on the ground and at its own speed – building trust about the ideas, seeking external funding sources and seeking to ameliorate concerns. The following table shows the actions required in order to take these agreed ideas to the next stage.

Theme and Idea	Process
Theme 1 – Social, Community and Partnerships	
◆ Create a new play area	Seek funding. Secure planning permission.
◆ Run activities for children and young people	Ranger led activities. Create connections with schools and colleges.
◆ Improve parking facilities at Forest School	Seek funding. Secure planning permission.
◆ Provide community business and IT facilities	Check demand. Secure funding to improve facilities and redecorate. Create partnerships.
Theme 2 – Conservation, Woodland Management and Produce	
◆ Develop community firewood project	Validate supply source. Seek funding to purchase equipment. Identify suitable location for firewood processing and storage from timber sourced elsewhere.
Theme 3 – Tourism and Recreation	
◆ Interpretation for Loch Arkaig Pine Forest	Collaborate with Woodland Trust Scotland to design appropriate media and placement. Seek funding in conjunction with WTS. Potential to consider a bespoke replacement building as this partnership develops.
◆ Seasonal pop-up coffee station (if linked to events/ races on GGW)	Work with activity providers and event organisers to trial this and/or Identify suitable franchise/business to deliver this.
◆ Wildlife watching tours/facilities along the lines of 'Mull Eagle Watch'	Collaborate with Woodland Trust Scotland and other wildlife/nature tourism providers to determine market and viability.
Theme 4 – Environmental and Outdoor Education	
◆ Develop environmental resources and programmes for schools and others.	Ranger/Development Officer to create resources in close collaboration with schools and colleges.

8.6.5 Partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland

ACF already have a strong and successful working partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) working mainly on the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest sites where they work together to restore the native woodland habitats of the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest. There is significant potential to continue to work alongside WTS in

order to develop opportunities at the Clunes Forest School site. The building is already used as a base for WTS staff when working in the area and with a Ranger/Development Officer in post, some of the Ideas/Options identified for Phase 2, in particular ones regarding nature tourism and visitor services, could be explored together with WTS.

The Trust have commissioned a Socio-economic Baseline Report for Loch Arkaig Pine Forest to monitor the socio-economic impact of the future management of these forests. The authors of the report consulted members of the community in July 2018 and discussed wide ranging themes. The report highlights the potential and the benefits for partnership working and also states that a local ranger would be a key role to facilitate engagement of businesses, organisations, educational trips and tourists, and to co-ordinate services offered. There are clear synergies here with a potential Ranger/Development Officer post at the Clunes Forest School and it would be advantageous ACF to discuss the potential for collaboration on this.

8.6.6 ACF and Woodland Trust Scotland Partnership Benefits

The potential for Arkaig Community Forest to bring the Clunes Forest School and Woodland into community ownership would benefit the partnership in several ways, including:

- ◆ creating a hub for the partnership;
- ◆ raising awareness about the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest project by providing a space for interpretation, demonstration, and engagement; and
- ◆ providing the space for collaborative partnership projects such as a community firewood scheme and a local venison scheme.

Additional opportunities for Woodland Trust Scotland in particular include:

- ◆ the provision of a suitable workspace for the two Woodland Trust Scotland staff that are based at the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest;
- ◆ the possibility to recruit new Woodland Trust Scotland members/supporters through the partnership hub;
- ◆ the ability to meet and host Woodland Trust Scotland stakeholders (such as volunteers and supporters); and
- ◆ the potential for an equipment storage facility.

For all these reasons ***Woodland Trust Scotland are supportive of the effort to bring the Clunes Forest School and woodland into community ownership.***

8.6.7 Loch Arkaig Pine Forest – Community Venison Project

The community venison project has been developed as a way to contribute to the restoration of an ancient Caledonian Pinewood by managing over grazing by deer, while delivering a sustainable source of local affordable venison to the community. Arkaig Community Forest and Woodland Trust Scotland are developing an innovative social enterprise model with a mobile deer larder unit that aims to deliver conservation and food supply as well as training and employment opportunities to community members. The project will be taken forward through the continuing and strengthening partnership between ACF and Woodland Trust Scotland and the community ownership of the Clunes Forest School Buildings can support this by providing a base and tool storage.

8.7 Purchase and Development Funding Opportunities

8.7.1 Purchase Funding

The Scottish Land Fund have awarded ABC/ACF a Stage 1 grant and as such it will be receptive to a Stage 2 application as long that meets their criteria. SLF will fund up to 95% of eligible project costs but a minimum of 5% of funding should come from other sources including fundraising efforts, negotiated discounts on the valuation, or other funders.

8.7.2 Development Funding

Phase 2 relies on leveraging other sources of funding to enable some of the approved Options to proceed. A Ranger/Development Officer would be able to work up the Options and develop business cases and funding applications. The funding sources that could potentially yield good results for most if not all the Options identified have been researched and compiled and these are listed in Appendix 5.

8.8 Environment, Risk and Mitigations

8.8.1 Environmental Sustainability

Good stewardship through management and conservation of the woodland will be a key priority for the ACF group in the future. In order to discharge this responsibility well it is essential that all activities that the group develop at the site have a link back to agreed guiding principles. A useful way to approach this is the bring into effect both the principles of sustainable development as an underpinning ground rule of guidance for all activities. Sustainable Development has been defined in the Brundtland Report (1987);

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainable development in a more regional context is set out in The Highland Council’s vision for sustainable development which is to establish a prosperous future, strong communities and a healthy environment. The SNH Corporate Plan also contains a valuable framework for promoting sustainable economic growth while still caring for a natural habitat. The management activities will also be subject to compliance with legislation for forestry, access and for any protected species under UK and EU legislation.

As ACF move towards ownership of the buildings and woodland then a management plan will be required that will set out the objectives and principle for management to ensure good stewardship of this area by the community.

8.8.2 Risks and Mitigations

The risks for achieving the financial results in this business plan are as shown in the table below. risks and impacts are scored where Score 1 is low and Score 5 is high. The mitigations are either those action that have already been carried out in order to reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring or those action that could be carried out to reduce the incident likelihood.

Risk	Possible Reason	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations proposed / carried out
The Forest Sale is not approved for Community Asset Transfer	FLS judge that it does not meet the criteria	1	5	5 Low	Ongoing liaison with FLS through development of Study show a high degree of commitment to the asset transfer.
ACF cannot raise the funds for purchase	SLF application not successful Match funding applications not successful	1	5	5 Low	Ongoing liaison with SLF has increased confidence. Capital purchase cost is low. ACF contribution is very low. Conversations with funders indicate success
ACF do not receive funding for Ranger/DO	SLF do not approve revenue costs are proportionately too high vis-a-vis capital costs	2	3	7 Medium	ACF can operate the facility without this post. The Hydro Community Benefit Fund have indicated an application to them would be welcome.
SLF do not grant the discount requested	SLF deem that the discount is not eligible or too high	2	5	7 Medium	There is a solid case for a discount and FLS have confirmed they would incur costs of the sale does not proceed.

WTS income is not continued	Change in partnership agreements/commitments	1	5	5 Low	There is a strong partnership arrangement between ACF and WTS in which both sides mutually benefit. Commitment has been received by ACF from the CEO of WTS
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There are no high risks in this analysis and the Medium risks have a mitigation option that would prevent them affecting the success of this community acquisition proposal.

9 Study Conclusions

The ACF Group have proved themselves to be a positive force for community ownership through their acquisition and subsequent management of Loch Arkaig Pinewoods. They have demonstrated a successful and ongoing partnership approach with Woodland Trust Scotland and a commitment to managing the Forest School Buildings and Tom an Eireannaich woodland on a voluntary basis. They are in a very strong position both in financial viability and community capacity for taking on the asset transfer of this site from Forestry and Land Scotland.

The community and stakeholder engagement process showed that while this is only a small rural community, there was overwhelming support for the ACF to proceed with purchasing this site for community benefit. The stakeholders were also extremely supportive however they quite rightly expressed concern about the limitations on the developing larger scale tourism project at the site until some of the identified constraints have been ironed out.

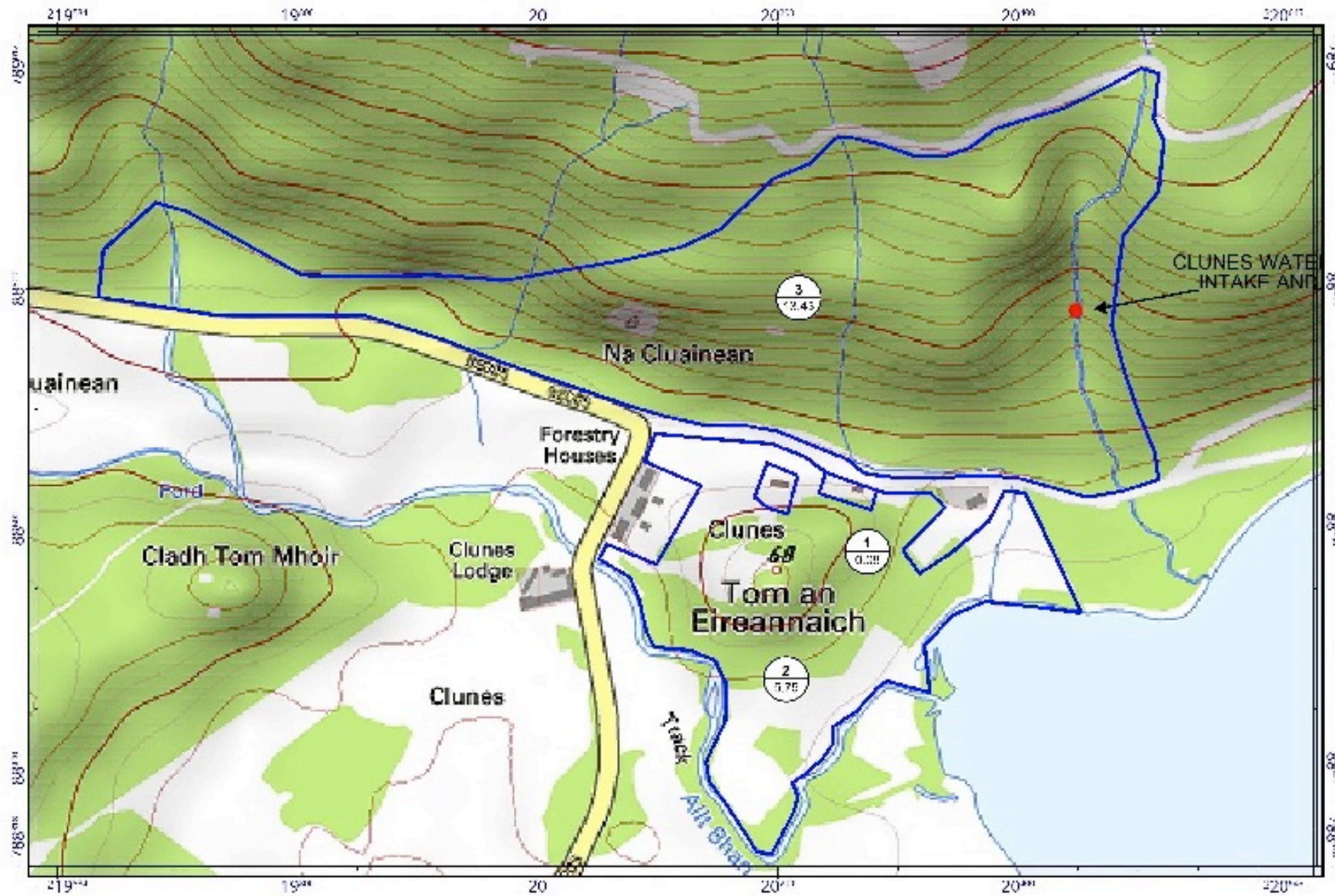
It is clear from this study that there are enough strong and stable income streams to enable a 'small and safe' business approach to the acquisition of the site by the community which will safeguard ACF from any financial risk through ownership of this site. The Feasibility Study has identified projects that could be developed and these have been subject to consultations by the community and stakeholders giving ACF a mandate to take them forward.

The business plan recommends a phased approach with small scale projects being implemented in phase 1 and then larger more aspiration projects being developed in Phase 2. Pivotal to the development of Phase 2 is the engagement of a Ranger/Development Officer who can foster and develop partnerships and projects as well as lever in grant funding.

In conclusion the purchase of the Clunes Forest School Buildings and the adjacent Tom an Eireannaich Woodland is supported by the community, is financially viable, and offers great opportunities for the future social and economic well-being of this small community as well as the conservation of this valuable oak woodland.

10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 – Map (from DVS Report)



10.2 Appendix 2 - Postcard Invite

Postcard Invite side 1



Post Card Invite side 2

Arkaig Community Forest SCIO is a registered community-based charity which manages woodland for the benefit of the local community. We currently own and manage part of the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest and now have the opportunity to acquire Clunes Forest School and the surrounding woodland (Tom An Eireaneach) through the Scottish Government's Community Asset Transfer Scheme.

We would like to know what you think about the idea of the community taking on ownership so please tick the boxes below as appropriate, and if you cannot attend the Open Day, please let us have your thoughts in this online survey: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CBTC9C7

- I am/we are* supportive of the community taking on ownership of Clunes Forest School and woodland for the benefit of local people and visitors to the area
- I /we* would like to attend the Open Day on 5th May.
- I /we* would like to become a member/members of Arkaig Community Forest SCIO and be kept in touch with news about Clunes Forest School and other activities.

** Delete as appropriate*

Name(s):

Address:

Email address:

I am over 16 and consent to my contact information being retained by ACF solely for the purposes of future contact about the community woodland

Please drop your completed postcard in the box at Clunes Forest School Building or post to:
ACF, 2 Clunes, PH34 4EJ

THANK YOU

10.3 Appendix 3 - STEEPLE Analysis Framework

Category	What it assesses	Sources of evidence
Social	<p>Delivery of community benefits – meeting identified needs (e.g. community cohesion, sense of place, creation of jobs, maximum accessibility, improving health and well-being)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How the proposal will address ‘gaps’ in, or provide enhancement to, the current community and visitor experience - the impact that development may have on local businesses, and the potential for displacement - impact of forest management on environment and social frameworks - what is “appropriate” at the site? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Community engagement ◆ Stakeholder engagement ◆ Review and assessments of visitor experience of current forest school infrastructure from existing information and reports ◆ Wider known Social Impact Assessment measures ◆ Case studies
Technological	<p>Opportunities to deliver services in particular using technology e.g. renewable technologies; social media for community and tourism benefit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Case studies ◆ Best practice in woodland interpretation
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial viability, taking into account the local economic environment and medium-term trends - Purchase costs - development costs - Running costs, incomes, and cash flow for 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Outline financial appraisal including cash flow impacts ◆ Fundability of proposals ◆ Evidence from the wider economy and other case studies ◆ Tourist and other visitor information ◆ Case studies
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on the landscape and visual environment - Impact on the natural heritage - Environmental sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Forest design planning ◆ Ecological Design principles ◆ Consultation with SNH and FC ◆ Case studies
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In this case, the requirements for a successful CATS application - Stakeholders’ ambitions and constraints on development - Existing plans and documents - Stakeholder consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Consultation with Forestry and Land Scotland ◆ Evidence from the CWA ◆ Case studies
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulatory requirements to be met for any development - Regulatory compliance enhanced by proposals - Consents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Forestry Commission requirements ◆ Planning requirements and constraints ◆ Health and Safety / Landlord Liability
Ethical	<p>This is the “wider context”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does the option meet with the wider view of community-owned assets - What “feels best” to ABC and its community? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Community Engagement Event

10.4 Appendix 4 - ACF Trustees Skills and Experience

Name	Skills/experience
Maggie Goudie Chair	Maggie moved to Clunes two years ago with her family, lured by the forest location and the benefits of a strong community. She is enthusiastic about the future of the local forest and the community so being a part of the ACF was a natural decision. Maggie is a secondary school Design & Technology teacher with a degree in Building Surveying and hopes her practical skills could be put to some good use in the future.
Ali Austin Treasurer	Alison lives in Clunes with her husband Davie and two children and works for the John Muir Trust as Site Manager / Conservation Officer on Ben Nevis Estate. She has 11 years experience planning and implementing wildlife and habitat monitoring on Ben Nevis estate including monitoring annual browsing effects on trees and heathland as well as annual bird, mammal and invertebrate monitoring. She also represents JMT on a number of local forums and committees and holds a role as a director of the community led Lochaber Geopark which gained UNESCO status in 2006. Previously Alison worked for Lochaber Environmental Group developing and supporting community managed compost sites including responsibility for funding applications, cash flow, reporting to funders and negotiating with the Local Authority and national steering groups. Alison's background is as a countryside ranger both in Scotland and the USA, an environmental educator and science communicator. With a BSc. (Hons) Geology and Applied Geology and MSc. in Environmental Science].
Lorraine Servant Secretary	Lorraine has been a Trustee of ACF since its inception, helping to develop the partnership with WTS and the subsequent acquisition of the Arkaig pinewoods from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 2016. Lorraine has worked SNH for 14 years as an Operations Officer and is currently the SNH lead for a number of protected areas including Sunart, Ben Nevis, the Rahoy Hills, and Morvern woods. Her responsibilities include protected areas casework, site condition monitoring, SNH representative for two local Deer Management Groups, and working with land managers to achieve favourable conservation status of various protected areas. She has a PhD in forest ecology, which specialised in regeneration of timber trees in West African rainforest. Prior to working in the public sector she worked in land and estate management in Lochaber, and has worked on various conservation projects, for example tree planting and botanical surveying. Lorraine has lived in Clunes for thirteen years and has two children.
Gary Servant	Gary was a founder member of ACF in 2015 and helped to oversee the establishment of the charity and the acquisition of 1086 hectares of forest from FCS by ACF in partnership with Woodland Trust Scotland in late 2016. He helped to set up the ABC Group as a constituted community group in 2007, and chaired the ABC group from 2007 to 2011, subsequently leading the 'forestry and renewables sub-group' of ABC negotiating community benefit from the various new hydro schemes in the Loch Arkaig catchment. He lives in Clunes and runs a forestry, ecology and rural development consultancy and contracting business, established in Lochaber in 2003. He has completed over 300 contracts for a wide variety of clients - including project managing the EU Leader funded trans-national woodland skills project of the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative from 2005-2007. He has also worked for Forest Research on the NWSS project, and has worked extensively in some of the most important native pinewood remnants in Scotland including Glen Tanar Estate, RSPB Abernethy and Mar Lodge Estate. He has particular expertise in muirburn, fuel loads and fire behaviour within native pinewood habitats. He has recently prepared forest plans for the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and the Isle of Rum Community Trust, the SSSI Management Plan for the Phuiteachan Native Pinewood in Glen Loy for FCS, as well as woodland management plans for two National Nature Reserves in Lochaber.
David Austin	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 60%;"> <p>Davie is Engineering Manager at Nevis Range which includes a range of roles in the winter getting the mountain ready for skiers in a range of weather conditions. His role also includes supervising and implementing environmental monitoring on the ski hill and mountain bike track and liaising with SNH as the area sits within Ben</p> </div> <div style="width: 35%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat experience and certificate (now lapsed) • Cross cutting chainsaw certificate. </div> </div>

	<p>Nevis SAC. Previously he managed Nevis Range Snowsport School for 10 years and also coached ski-ing in New Zealand. Davie has held a lead role in Lochaber ski club for 10 years including planning and arranging training opportunities for members and successfully applying for funding for kit to support the club. Davie is an active member of Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team a keen mountaineer, sailor, and mountain biker and set up the first mountain bike hire business in Scotland - Off Beat Bikes - in 1988.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Years of experience of setting up, owning and running Off Beat Bikes mountain bike hire. • 30+ Years of experience working outdoors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the Engineering Team for Nevis range over the last 10 years. • Presently Environmental, Hydro Scheme and winter lift staff Manager along with maintenance duties at Nevis Range <p>Interests include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation • Hutting • Woodlots • Sustainable Living
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10.5 Appendix 5 - Development Funding Sources

Fund	Summary	Capital	Revenue	Website/contact
The National Lottery Community Fund (Scotland):- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awards for All • Community Led Activity • Community Assets • Scottish Land Fund 	Funding to support communities to bring real improvements to the places they live and the wellbeing of those in need. They will fund organisations to deliver work that achieves the following outcomes: Everyone in the community has the opportunity to influence and get involved in community led activity; people in the community are better connected and work together to improve their wellbeing. Awards for All - Min: £300 Max: £10,000 Community Led Activity - Min £10,000 Max: £150,000 Community Assets - Min £10,000 Max: £1,000,000 Scottish Land Fund - Min £10,000 Max: £1,000,000	Y	Y	www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk advicescotland@tnlcommunityfund.org.uk
Scottish Forestry – Community Fund	The fund aims to support community groups and organisations that are encouraging and facilitating greater use of woods by people to derive health, well-being and community benefits. Maximum: £20,000	Y	Y	www.forestry.gov.scot highland.cons@forestry.gov.scot
Scottish Forestry – Forestry Grant Scheme	The Forestry Grant Scheme offers financial support for the creation of new woodland and the sustainable management of existing woodland.		Y	www.forestry.gov.scot highland.cons@forestry.gov.scot
The Robertson Trust – Open Grants	Strengthening Communities looks for solutions which address local need including: reducing health and social inequalities in Scotland’s communities; supporting people and communities to find routes out of poverty; empowering communities. Minimum: £500 Maximum: £250,000	Y	Y	www.therobertsontrust.org.uk funding@therobertsontrust.org.uk
Foundation Scotland - Baillie Gifford Community Awards Programme	The Baillie Gifford grants programme supports grass roots community organisations across the whole of Scotland. It replaces Foundation Scotland’s Express Grants programme. Priorities for the programme are: children and families, elderly people, education, environment, health, people who are physically disabled, homelessness, women and grass roots sports. Minimum: £500 Maximum: £2,000	Y	Y	www.foundationscotland.org.uk grants@foundationscotland.org.uk
Gordon & Ena Baxter's Foundation	The Gordon and Ena Baxter Foundation supports a huge variety of projects. Generally, applicants should demonstrate a sound management plan, and a clear benefit to communities in Moray and the Highlands and Islands. They will fund projects that cover one or more of the following: Education and Training, Health, Care, Sport, Arts and Heritage, and Conservation and Environment. Minimum: £100 Maximum: £25,000	Y	Y	www.gebfoundation.com kay@gebfoundation.com

<p>Sport Scotland - Sport Facilities Fund</p>	<p>The fund supports capital projects that create or improve places that people take part in sport and physical activity. Awards of up to £100,000 are available for sports facility projects within club & communities, school & education or performance sport environments. They will support facilities that provide or improve access for outdoor sport and adventure activities. Minimum: £10,000 Maximum: £100,000</p>	<p>Y</p>		<p>www.sportscotland.org.uk facilities@sportscotland.org.uk</p>
<p>Climate Challenge Fund - Development Grants</p>	<p>Development Grants are available in 2019/20 to help Scottish community-led organisations to scope out a potential climate action project. Projects can: enable community-led organisations to develop ideas for a climate change action project which would support low-carbon behaviour changes, increase climate literacy and reduce carbon emissions; assist in progressing to a full CCF Grant application or similar activities for another funder; organise a community consultation event and survey work; engage a consultant or advisor to support project development; cover expenses associated with visit(s) to other projects/organisations; develop a low-carbon project idea; host an event using the Scottish Government's Climate Conversation toolkit. Maximum: £500</p>		<p>Y</p>	<p>keepsotlandbeautiful.org ccf@keepsotlandbeautiful.org</p>