

# Woodland crofts gathering momentum



INTEREST in woodland croft development is gathering pace following an initial series of information days around the Highlands and Islands.

"Knowledge-share" events were held in Argyll, Wester Ross and Sutherland in the latter part of 2012 and they proved so successful that another one has been scheduled for Wester Ross next month.

They are part of a range of awareness-

**Eamon King (second from right) of Kilfinan Community Forest makes a point during the Woodland Crofts Partnership event at Tighnabruaich, Argyll.**

Photo: Cameron Harris / HIE

raising and promotional measures being delivered by the Woodland Crofts Partnership, comprising the Community Woodlands Association (CWA), the Scottish Crofting Federation and the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, with funding from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Forestry Commission Scotland.

The information days are hosted by a different partner in the Woodland Crofts Partnership working with a local group.

The first took place in Tighnabruaich, Argyll, at the end of October. It was followed by further meetings at Gairloch the following month and in Dornoch in December.

More than 60 people attended those three events, and the positive response has led to another one being planned for Tuesday, March 5, in Lochcarron, to be hosted by Kirkton Woodlands and Heritage Group.

Traditionally, crofting was based on the production of food for the home combined with additional employment to supplement basic domestic needs.

The Crofting Reform Act 2007 amended existing crofting legislation and introduced significant changes, including the ability to create new crofts and for crofts to be put to purposeful use other than purely cultivation.

As a result it is now possible to create crofts from existing woodlands. This would involve managing them as woodland, with the opportunity to run woodland-related businesses.

The Tighnabruaich event was hosted by

Kilfinan Community Forest Company and the CWA. Those who took part were told how the country's first new community-owned woodland crofts had been created on Mull, while a site visit was arranged to the community forest.

Eamon King, the Kilfinan Community Forest development officer, said afterwards: "I would say the event was not only useful to those who attended but a great benefit to us as an organisation, as it gave us a great insight as to what local residents can expect from the creation of new woodland croft sites at our forest."

A dedicated website for woodland crofts is being launched soon at [www.woodlandcrofts.org](http://www.woodlandcrofts.org)

Meanwhile, a Woodland Crofts Register of Interest is being used to match up those who wish to obtain a woodland croft with those who have them to offer or plan to develop them.

Despite limited publicity so far, the register has attracted almost 40 names in its first four months. These have come from throughout the Highlands and Islands - from Campbeltown in the south to Durness in the north, and from Mull in the west to Nairn in the east, as well as Ardnamurchan, Lochaber and Easter Ross.

Proposals put forward so far include woodland management, firewood, crafts, courses and tourist accommodation.

A registration form for the Woodland Crofts Register of Interest is available by visiting [www.communitywoods.org](http://www.communitywoods.org)

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