

# Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland

## December Newsletter 2011

A Company Limited By Guarantee without shareholders  
registered in Scotland No SC249676

Scottish Charity registered number SC034434

[www.laidewood.org.uk](http://www.laidewood.org.uk)

**After** what was a disappointing end of Summer and an indifferent start to Autumn along came November and things were remarkably quiet. Cold clear Autumnal days you can only dream of and at last the little pests took refuge elsewhere and we were able to get back to working parties and various tasks without the discomfort of suffering the dreaded midge. However December has been a different exercise all together. Lots of rain sleet and high winds have meant things have taken that bit longer to complete and we have had to address the odd urgent situation. This usually involved a tree which has succumbed to both age and the elements and fallen, blocking one of the well used trails. Many of the older trees as you would probably expect have come down in these the first real blows of Winter but fortunately in areas where the general public would not wish to venture.

It is true there are a number of unsightly pockets of downed lodgepole pine making parts of the wood untidy. Unfortunately these are not easy to deal with and it may take some time before we are able to tidy up these areas. In the meantime our intrepid band of volunteers have several tasks which are ongoing. The logsol milling machine is now in action producing

*A Very Merry  
Christmas and a  
Good New Year  
To you all*

good quality lumber which we are using as boardwalk planks to improve the path leading to the waterfall cascade area. Being able to produce our own timber is a great benefit and it will mean we will be able to produce posts and beams which will allow us to fulfil some of our more ambitious projects. These have been shelved in the past as a cautionary measure whilst we try to maintain a

a healthy bank balance. Giving us adequate reserve funds to start our Visitor Centre should our latest round of funding applications prove successful.



*Tangled trees - windthrow casualties*  
**There** is a great deal of thought and initiative going into the regeneration of Aultbea, rightly focussing on Loch Ewes' important role as Port X in the world war two, the staging point for the Russian Convoys. We support and want to be part of this initiative and feel the development of Laide Wood has already made a substantial contribution.

## **Mink - To Be or Not to Be?.**

At the end of summer and through Autumn we were involved in a project headed up by SNH (Scottish National Heritage) involving ourselves, local Estates and National Trust for Scotland at Inverewe. Mink had been seen locally so mink traps were set throughout the area and lifted at the end of November. Several mink were caught very close to Laide Wood on the Little Gruinard Estate but along the foreshore, none were caught further inland. When we agreed to participate in this initiative we realised we had to carry out the necessary risk assessment and develop and adopt the correct procedures. Trapping any animal requires many disciplines. You have to know your prey - humane traps, the type we use, don't kill or injure the animal and should be inspected in every 24 hour period. Entry into the trap by other species can be denied due to their size. In our case we attached otter guards to the entry point, the otter being a much larger animal than our target prey, so reducing the entrance prevented this particular animal getting in. However, the pine marten is similar in size, slightly bigger but could gain entry - so part of our operating procedure was to release a pine marten or any other species safely, without harm to the animal or the person carrying out the task and with the least possible distress. Finally we had to face the fact that if we did trap a mink then as it was illegal to release a mink back into the wild it would have to be destroyed and we adopted the SNH guidelines on how we would carry

that task. We felt strongly that we should be involved because the American mink has created so much carnage in other areas of the UK. In some places completely wiping out colonies of water vole to such an extent that the very survival of the water vole is now threatened. In Laide wood we have an active and healthy colony. The fact that none had been caught inland would indicate that they are not yet established here but is this the forward recce?. This furry army is definitely on the march the question is: Are they going to reach this far North? The consensus amongst all the experts we talk to is, "it is just a matter of time". Therefore the answer to the title of this article is **To Be.**

## **Membership**

Have you renewed your membership for year 2011-2012? If not this will be your last newsletter, so please continue to support your woodland which gives so many people, so much pleasure. We are still in the early stages of development and things improve each year but it is a slow job and the vision won't be achieved until long after the present trustees are no longer around - It will be up to future generations to carry on the work. Our aim is to make sure that we hand over the woodland in a better stage of development than we received it and we hope that aim will be adopted by subsequent trustees who take over. As always, the way this organisation is structured relies on a healthy membership so your support is needed and appreciated. If you are reading this on our web site and would like to become a member please download a form and apply.

## **Sponsor a Tree**

The sponsor a tree project goes on, and its continued popularity has given us a few problems which have slowed up the issue of certificates. A selection of trees were planted in a designated areas allowing us to attach numbers when the sponsorships came in and issue certificates reasonably quickly. It soon became obvious that we would run out of certain species and although we re-planted in an effort to compensate for the popularity of a specific tree the requests quickly exhausted the number of additional trees. The fact that we were receiving requests throughout the year proved perplexing after leaf drop which came very early on certain species giving us an identification headache. However, we intend to carry on, but at moment we are restricting choice to Scots pine and Sessile Oak. A second area is now in use with a mixture of trees and close to the main trail making it easy for the sponsors to visit trees. An easier method for identifying trees has been developed and current sponsors will be issued with a map and instructions when they get their sponsorship certificate. The map and a full list of sponsored tree numbers will be published on the notice board by the car park in the New Year. Obviously names and dedications will not appear just the number of the tree and its position in either area one or two. The grid reference has gone which did confuse a few people so all you need is your tree number and a visit to the wood and you should be able to locate your tree quickly. Please remember the trees are planted in rough ground take care when you try to find your tree we don't want any injuries.