

Partners:	
	Scottish Native Woods
	Argyll Green Woodworkers Association
	Reforesting Scotland

Summary of Community Consultation in Kilfinan Parish

Tighnabruaich has been identified by Communities Scotland as one of the top 15 places in Highlands and Islands in need of affordable housing.

In June Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) launched the National Forest Land Scheme – allowing the FCS to sell land for the purpose of affordable housing. The proposed ‘forest village’ project aims to take advantage of this scheme to create good quality housing at low-cost in Tighnabruaich/ Kames.

Project partners include Scottish Native Woods, Argyll Green Woodworkers Association, the Dunbeag Project and Reforesting Scotland. The project has been discussed in detail with the Kilfinan Community Council, the Argyll and Bute Planning Department, Communities Scotland, Fyne Homes and FCS – all of whom are supportive.

This outlines the process and outcomes of two community consultation exercises held in August and October 2005.

Objectives of community consultation

The purpose of the consultations were:

- a) To inform people of Tighnabruaich/ Kames of the project and its possible opportunities
- b) To involve local people in designing the project to ensure that it addresses the needs and interests of the local community

- c) To gauge public opinion about the project – and specifically the opinion of key interest groups¹
- d) To gauge whether there is community support for the project at this stage
- e) To agree how the community can be involved and obtain agreement on next steps, and if possible establish a working group to take the project forward on behalf of the community

Informing people

The public meetings, consultation exercises and open day on the 17th, 18th and 20th August were advertised by posters placed in key public places such as the post office and local shops. People were also contacted through a local newspaper article, mail drops and direct contact on the street and on doorsteps, the community council meeting and school.

The meetings on the 19th October were advertised through posters and providing leaflets to each household on the Kilfinan peninsula, with the help of local volunteers.

Process of consultation

<i>Consultation event:</i>	<i>Summary of process</i>
Public exhibition: Kames village hall 17 & 18 August 2005	The exhibition provided information about the geography and biodiversity of the woodland area, examples of timber-framed housing in the UK and Scandinavia, and examples of rural development linked to forests in Scotland Project staff were available all day to discuss the project

¹ A range of different ‘interest groups’ who would be affected by the project were identified during the consultation process. This included local business and tradesmen, young people leaving school, retired people and working adults.

<p>3 public meetings:</p> <p>Kames village hall 17 & 18 August 2005</p> <p>Tighnabruaich Hotel 19 October 2005</p>	<p>The meetings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the possible project and the benefits that it could provide • Question and answer sessions to provide clarification about the project • Feedback about discussions with community members and outcomes from previous consultation meetings • ‘Participatory exercises’ to identify development priorities of local residents – and the hopes and concerns of residents about the project • Discussions about how to raise awareness and interest in the project, in the community
<p>4 interest group meetings</p> <p>Tighnabruaich Hotel 19 October 2005</p>	<p>These meetings enabled residents to talk about opportunities and concerns of particular interest groups about the project. The following interest groups were identified during the public meeting on 18th August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with children • Local businesses • People with a personal interest in affordable housing • Retired people <p>These groups were considered as likely to have strong interest in the project – either for positive or negative reasons.</p>
<p>Open day at Dunbeag 20 August 2005</p>	<p>An opportunity to visit a local forest-based housing and woodland project</p>

Results of the community consultation

- Approximately 120 people were spoken to – including teenagers, young and older adults, families, and retired people (both incomers and people who had lived in Tighnabruaich all their lives).
- Most people consulted felt that the population of Tighnabruaich was ageing and that there was a lack of jobs and affordable housing. This was resulting in a sense that the community was gone or ‘dying’. A ‘timeline’ of Tighnabruaich (see attached) showed that in the last 50 years, 8 shops, a cinema, the forestry office, a hotel and regular ferry services had closed. Positive changes included the opening of the sailing school and the opening of the Cowal Way. There has also been an increase in holiday housing.

- **A large majority of people spoken to were supportive of the project – and some local people already noted that they would like to be involved.** They felt that the project could encourage more young people to stay and that it would support local businesses.
- A few people thought that Tighnabruaich/ Kames was fine as it is.
- There is some misunderstanding in the village about the nature of the project. In particular some people were unfamiliar with timber-clad housing and concerned about the lifestyle associated with living and working in forestry.

Main priorities of local residents for the project:

- More permanent residents
- Affordable housing
- Diversification of income-generating opportunities

Main concerns about the project:

- Practicalities of putting in sewage, water and access
- Apathy in the village and a lack of support for change from a minority
- Lack of understanding about the project

What next?

As a result of the community consultation there is a feeling that there is support for the project and some interest locally in being involved. There is also a need to provide more information about the project – particularly with respect to the affordable housing component and for greater involvement and promotion of the project by the community council and local interested residents. The next steps are:

- Project partners to work together with the community council in raising awareness and understanding about the project
- Project partners to work together with the community council to undertake a feasibility study and develop a business plan for the project

Contact details:

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