

A peatland restoration project

Has been created in an area of forest where the trees were growing badly due to water-logging. The original forestry drainage ditches were blocked, and the peatland restored as a carbon sink. This project produces no income but was fully **funded** by Peatland ACTION (SNH).

Community hydro

The Trust has secured planning permission and gone through a design and build tender process, with projected costs in the £250-300k region. The plan is to raise the money through a community share offer, and funding was secured for a part-time post to engage community groups, individuals and enterprises about the offer – this person is now in post. The feasibility of the project is dependent on the Feed-in-Tariff, which they secured before the scheme ended in March 2019.

Anaerobic digester – they are working with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, to rejuvenate an existing digester which had been out of use. This is a pilot project being funded by Local Energy Scotland, and if successful could lead to a part-time job based at SMO.

Building a shop, post office and mini two pump petrol station

The build is ongoing, and the plan had been to open in June 2020. This was delayed by Covid and we now expect to open in November 2020. Current facilities are housed in refitted shipping containers, one of which has a toilet, and these will be available for sale once the build is complete. The temporary shop also required planning permission, a building warrant, electricity, water and sewage connections. One lesson the business development officer wanted to pass on; was that it took 18 months to secure the funding on the quotes and in that time, costs had risen leaving a £40k shortfall, which with Covid is likely to increase further. As grant applications generally include specific quotes without a provision for contingencies and grant making bodies can take months to take decisions, this gap is a difficult problem to avoid.

An electric minibus is to be delivered in autumn 2020. In the meantime, we have a diesel minibus on loan from Highland Council. It was collecting people twice a week and taking them to the village shop on one day and to the shops in Kyle on another, with the plan being to expand these runs as demand increases. Covid has put a halt on the minibus taking passengers, so it is currently being used to deliver groceries to those who are self-isolating/vulnerable/without transport.

Wireless community broadband

Improving the broadband service to remote parts of the peninsula.

Community owned forest - Tormore

Managed by Sleat Renewables Ltd.

In September 2005 an advisory group was established to consider the viability of bringing Tormore Forest into community ownership using the National Forest Land Scheme. The community was engaged through public meetings, the newsletter and a Planning for Real exercise. A joint valuation by the local valuation officer was agreed, but in 2009 the Forestry Commission without warning advertised in the local press that Tormore Forest was surplus to

requirements and was to be sold. The community group were invited to register an interest, (which they had already done) but were compelled to repeat the process. They then had 58 days to show the National Land Scheme Committee they were fit to manage the forest. The community were behind the acquisition and voted for it. The forest was valued at £330,000, and eventually the land was purchased, and it is now managed by Sleat Renewables Ltd.

A community forester has been employed in the past, deer fencing installed, forest roads created to facilitate harvesting and that harvesting is now ongoing. Trial replanting is also under way. Path maintenance and clearing of the bracken is generally done by volunteers, and The University of the West of Scotland is conducting a long-term pine weevil study in the forest.

A wood-fuel business was also established. It supplies split logs to the community almost at cost, which is one of the benefits the community identified as a desirable outcome of community ownership, and wood chip is supplied to the boiler at the Gaelic College as well as other local customers (dried in a shed, not a kiln). Because the forest is managed with a commitment to good practice, it is covered by the Scottish Woodlands Group Certification Scheme, which allows wood-fuel products to be sold which are dual-certified as responsibly sourced timber through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

Funding for the forest:

- Social Investment Scotland
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Highland Council
- The Tudor Trust
- Individuals/businesses/organisations who "sponsored an acre" for £20.
- Loan facilities from Highland Opportunity, Triodos Bank and Social Investment Scotland made up the short fall (with financial liabilities of which may well last longer than the 3 to 4 years of fellable timber, and therefore income, which remains).