KNOYDART FOUNDATION

Land Management

2023 Update

Black Hills Regeneration Project

Regeneration at Garsley 15 years on

The Black Hills Regeneration Project aims to restore a patchwork of sensitive habitats across 3000 hectares of the west of the Knoydart Peninsula, with the Knoydart Foundation, in collaboration with Knoydart Forest Trust, working in partnership with private landowners. We are now halfway through the initial two-year implementation of the £300,000 project, which has been funded by NatureScot's Nature Restoration Fund with support also from Fauna & Flora International, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and Knoydart Foundation's own resources. We have already built three new, relatively short deer fences to link up existing woodland fences in Glen Guiserein, with KFT as the main contractor. Some of the existing older fences will be upgraded with new timber this year and a stock fence on Inverguseran Farm will allow continued sheep grazing there. The completed strategic deer fence line has provided the opportunity to reduce the red deer density and impacts within the project area to the west. Because of the loss of open deer range, a compensatory cull is being carried out, to avoid increasing deer impacts on neighbouring habitats. Maintaining this lower deer density will require ongoing management control as new woodlands are established and existing fences are eventually removed.

As well as native woodland expansion the project is facilitating the landscape scale restoration of habitats such as heathland and montane scrub; remnant juniper and eared willow have been discovered high on the ridge. These revitalised habitats will support the expansion of rare species such as black grouse which already have a foothold. Peatland restoration projects will be facilitated by the reduced herbivore impacts, helping to sequester additional carbon and tackle climate change. Previously cultivated and inhabited land around the coastal fringe will have the potential of being brought back into productivity and be re-settled. The implementation of the project is bringing additional employment into the community and will leave an ongoing legacy of a more diverse local economy. We are exploring how best to benefit from the developing 'natural capital' market, incorporating carbon credits with biodiversity gains and community sustainability. We hope that the project will help guide land management over the wider peninsula in the future, as national targets for deer density reduction and habitat regeneration are implemented in the coming years.

NRF NATURE RESTORATION FUND

Venison for All

Do Good - Feel Good - Eat Good

Traditionally Knoydart's deer cull carcasses have been exported to a game dealer but over recent years the high cost of shipping to Mallaig coupled with the low prices for carcasses often meant it wasn't economically viable. With the onset of the covid pandemic and the national venison market collapsing it became crucial we action the community's long term aspiration to butcher all carcasses produced and expand into value added products.

Part financed by HIE and Knoydart Trading's own resources in 2021, improvements were made to the existing historic larder and septic tank and purpose built butchery unit were installed on site. Butchery happens during the cull and trims are processed into our value added products all through the year. We employ the equivalent of at least 1 full time position – a handful of dedicated and passionate locals with wildly different jobs.

We are proud to utilise this abundant resource to sustain our community and support the regeneration of our environment. We actively contribute to Knoydart's circular economy and the community's aims for climate action, food security and resilience.

Wild venison is a completely sustainable source of food and income for Knoydart with profits being reinvested back into our community to provide jobs, housing and other community services. We feel this is a truly ethical meat experience!

Completely natural, nutritious, very low fat and versatile, wild venison is also super tasty. We hang it just long enough and transform it into convenient cuts from mince, diced, steaks and roasts right through to sausages, burgers, meatballs and more. Our products are small batch, high quality, freshly frozen and available all year round from our community SHOP in Inverie and shops in Mallaig and Eigg.

We are delighted to now sell our venison online - pop over to our website **www.shopknoydart.online** and explore the products we have on offer. We are particularly proud of 'Eat Venison – Plant Trees', teaming up with Knoydart Forest Trust with a pack which includes a £15 donation to KFT to help plant and maintain new native woodlands, plus you receive a succulent piece of sirloin in exchange for your support! You can stay up to date by following **knoydart.wild.venison** on Facebook and Instagram or email **venison@knoydart.org** to get yourself on a mailing list.

Knoydart Forest Trust

Knoydart's new woodlands - biodiversity, carbon capture & community.

Knoydart Forest Trust's mission is to use woodland as a resource to enhance biodiversity, capture carbon and increase the resilience of the land and the community. A big part of this involves creating new woodlands, with the vision being to link up the woodland habitat across the peninsula from Loch Nevis to Loch Hourn.

Since 2020 we have made big strides in achieving this vision and have created 4 new areas of woodland on community owned land – Mary Ann's (between Sandaig & Doune), Coire Sgreucha (out Glen Guiserein), Ben's Wood (at Croulin) and Abhainn Bheag (at the Folach). A total area of 184 hectares of new woodland with 272,000 trees planted. We have also worked with neighbouring landowners, through our trading subsidiary Wood Knoydart, to create new woodlands on privately owned land which helps to achieve the community's vision and to reinvest in community owned woodlands.

A huge amount of work goes into creating a new woodland from surveying the site and designing the woodland (to take into account landscape, soil and peat), building a deer fence, preparing the ground, planting the trees and then, bracken weeding and ongoing deer management and fence maintenance. Currently we are faced with maintaining fences for at least 30 years until the woodland is resilient enough to cope with the level of deer on the open hill which is a costly and labour-intensive operation.

The Black Hills regeneration project is an exciting move to being able to create new woodland (and enhance a wide range of habitats) without further fencing. You can already see an amazing amount of natural regeneration happening after KF's deer management teams concentrated efforts over the past year. The first new woodland as part of this is Doire Fada, above the Airor road between Glaschoille Loch and Sandaig Burn woodland, which will be planted with a mix of native species next year. There is a lot of bracken on this site which is an indicator of good soil for trees but the flip side is that for the first few years the young trees will need to be weeded by hand to allow them to thrive and the ongoing deer management will also be crucial.

The local origin of the seed used to grow the young trees that we plant is another important factor and the launch of Knoydart Tree Nursery CIC means that we will be able to plant trees that have been grown on Knoydart from locally collected seed giving them a head start in coping with the exposed and sometimes harsh environments they are planted in on the open hill. The Nursery won't be able to provide all the trees that we need (at least initially) but they are focussing on the species that we find harder to get from bigger nurseries.

The environmental benefits of creating new woodlands are clear. However, the launch of Knoydart Tree Nursery and Knoydart Wild Venison highlight that managing the land responsibly also provides opportunities to strengthen the local economy and resilience of the community.

You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep up to date with what is going on and if you would like to support our woodland creation work you can make a donation to our Plant KnoydarTrees campaign https://www.knoydartforesttrust.org/donate.html

Knoydart Tree Nursery CIC

Knoydart Tree Nursery started with a small pilot project being set up over late autumn/winter 2020/21 to establish the feasibility of a commercial tree nursery at Inverie.

By establishing a nursery on Knoydart we could collect native tree seed, grow the seedlings on to planting size and supply Knoydart Forest Trust plus other residents and landowners in the local and surrounding area with local provenance nursery stock. There is a huge need for local provenance nursery stock to enable Knoydart Forest Trust (KFT) to keep up with the demand for woodland creation on the Knoydart peninsula.

The pilot project was a success with the following being achieved:

- Knoydart Forest Trust directors approved a proposal to work with the nursery, buying all suitable planting stock.
- Collected seed locally and trial growing various native species

- Became a registered supplier of Forest Reproductive material (FRM) with the Forestry Commission
- Produced around 8,500 nursery stock in the first full growing season
- Had a site visit from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and became registered as a Professional Operator who is authorised to issue plant passports
- During November 2022 we sold our first trees to Knoydart Forest Trust!

We are nearing the end of our 2nd growing season which has also been a success. The tunnel is currently surrounded by 15,000 native trees, most of which will be ready for planting out this winter. Every single one grown from a seed hand- picked on Knoydart - Hazel, Oak, Birch, Rowan, Alder, Hawthorn, Bird Cherry and Holly. We were kindly donated some Scots Pine cones from the Loch Arkaig Pine Forest and they're growing away fine. At the same time as all of this happening we have also leased a larger plot of land at Millburn from Knoydart Foundation to expand the nursery – if you would like to keep up to date with all the news you can find us at www.facebook.com/knoydarttreenursery or contact Jacqui by email on nursery@knoydart.org with any questions.