**NOSAS, & the Aigas Community Forest?**

On March 5th 2015 the purchase was completed by the local community of the Aigas woodland from Forestry Commission Scotland. Therefore, after six years of planning and fundraising, Aigas Community Forest Trust was officially open for business. The Trust consists of a board, members within the adjacent postcode areas, and one employee, a forester called Donnie Chisholm.

Much of Aigas Forest were planted by Forestry Commission Scotland in the 1960’s around numerous older sections of woodland. The forest has been poorly managed in the last 20 years however and there are significant management challenges ahead.

As part of the Scoping process, the Trust needs to arrange an archaeological survey. The purpose of this is to:

* Identify archaeological features, so that ….
	+ they can be preserved during subsequent forestry operations
	+ they can feature in the list of amenities of the site
* Understand and describe the history of land use on this site

Roland Spencer-Jones was approached earlier this year to see if he was interested in undertaking a walk-over archaeological survey of this forest. He initially responded positively, as it represents a contribution to a local community enterprise, as well as providing the opportunity to research and survey a local ancient woodland site.

As the forest comprises 267 hectares of mature forest he knew he needed some help. He has approached the local community trust, and already two of the community members have said they would be willing to help. He has also discussed this at length with Anne Coombs who is keen to be a co-Lead for the project. Together, we are now approaching NOSAS to see if either as an organisation, or as individual members, help would be forthcoming.

The survey will be to identify any built structures, particularly: settlements, hut circles, shielings, tracks, forest and field banks, etc. We hope that at the end of the survey it will be possible to describe the history of the forest, in sequence, in terms of its land use and tree planting.

The help needed would be to undertake the walk-over survey. How this is done could be decided by those willing to do it, but our initial thoughts are to do one to three days of walking per month over the winter, and maybe a more sustained week of activity in the late Spring. It’s hard to know exactly how long it would take. There is no deadline for the survey, though.

RSJ & AC would be responsible for:

* The initial desk-based assessment
* Training in survey skills for any volunteers who need it
* Collating the results of each day’s survey, either on paper or via .gpx files.
* Liaising with the Trust, its members, and its forester.
* Writing the final report

The Trust has insurance to cover third party risks for any volunteer. Access to the bulk of the forest is via a gated track.

Were the NOSAS committee to decide to take this on as an official project, then the probable implications are:

* A commitment to see this project through, with support for RSJ & AC as leads.
* The option of buying up to three Garmin eTrex 10 hand-held GPS devices. These currently retail at £75 (or £135 for the colour-screen eTrex 20). The need for these is so that those undertaking the walk-over survey can track their route, and upload to me. It also allows the marking of specific archaeological features.

Please see the attached maps for further background information.

**Roland Spencer-Jones & Anne Coombs**

**6th November 2015**