

Kilmun Community Council Update 12.11.24

Good afternoon both

Please see FLS update for tonight's meeting.

Changes in red below.

Current Felling:

There are a number of SPHN sites being worked or in process of starting within Kilmun Community area

- Allt na Blathaich East Loch Eck – harvesting has been ongoing since before Christmas. Extraction now is majority winch work and requires forest road to be closed this will mean no public access allowed on this route. Harvesting likely to last until end of summer.
- As per map attached a new harvesting site at Kilmun will commence in the coming weeks this will mean that access on forest roads will be restricted and would ask that public adhere to forest signs and wait until machine operators signal it is ok to pass machinery working close to forest road. This coupe has been brought forward to deal with the infected Larch that is rapidly dying and keep contractors working until other sites become available. The work is being carried out again by Glennon Brothers.

We are hoping to start work in Coupe 10017 in next 2 weeks, with PCM to be scheduled end of week or early next week. Work will begin in the lower section of spruce by harvester and top section will have areas to be winched. We have also requested permission for a stacking bench to be excavated by our CE team so Forwarder can access stacked timber from within wood. Since last KCC Update work started at Kilmun Junction, Coupe 10017 West side on 15.04.24. I have attached an approximate map of work to date. Civils started work this week 04.06.24 to stone a service area on west side and create stacking bench and access ramp on east side, so forwarder on rubbers can access road. This work should be completed by end of today 6.6.24 Harvesting work by wheels has mostly been completed on West and quite a lot of Timber now at roadside. Any walkers should proceed with caution as Timber now stacked on both side of the road.

The harvester will then move to East side and then Winch will arrive to start working on top of coupe this could be in late July. There will be lots of upcoming chainsaw work in preparation for the winch and racks of trees felled ready to be dragged. Kilmun junction harvesting coupe progressing well and anticipated site will be completed within the next two months. Timber haulage will take a further month so hopefully all works completed by end of this year. As mentioned in last report machines were vandalised and police followed this up but as yet not out come of investigations. Police did offer to undertake crime prevention training. **Kilmun Junction this site has progressed well and harvesting and extraction to roadside should be completed early December. Timber haulage should be completed early January and civil engineering will carry out road maintenance thereafter. The next harvesting site is coupe 10033 at the end of dead end top forest road and will be worked later in 2025 I will provide map and timescales after christmas.**

- It is hoped that we will be able to plant some of the originally felled coupe towards end of April and into May but this will depend on plant availability from Nurseries. The entire Kilmun face is going to be part of Kilmun Arboretum expansion where we will plant a number of different species on a larger scale that have done well in the Arboretum. However getting plants of these species will take time so the initial planting will be majority Birch that will act as a nurse crop. There will also be elements of Sitka spruce being planted in order that future extraction of productive timber can still be achieved. Due to lack of plants this work will now not be carried out until October 2024.
- Beinn Ruadh (above Coylet Inn) – There is a small section of Larch still to be felled adjacent to SSE Overhead Power line still to be completed when a shutdown can be organised. No confirmed date as yet however.
- Beinn Ruadh(above Coylet Inn) – Harvesting site currently on stop. There have been a number of issues on this site that have to be resolved and a contract review meeting was held at Glenbranter this morning. An SSE OHPL shut down will be required to complete works and as yet this is not planned.
- Corrach (Scottish Water Treatment Plant) Harvesting site – site is currently inactive but hoping contractors will return to site soon. Likely to resume early 2023. This site is likely to commence works in next two weeks with timber haulage starting early March. This site is in standstill due to breeding bird and wont start until late summer. It is expected that this site will not start until September.
This site now on hold until new merchant identified unlikely to start until October.
This site will not commence until early 2024
- West Loch Eck (opposite Coylet Inn) – site is currently active including timber haulage. Harvesting operations have ceased only timber haulage remains active. The remainder of the felling coupe is to be worked by a new merchant as yet to be determined. This site will not commence until early 2024.
- Pucks Glen –. Pucks Pylons currently inactive but will resume early 2023. This site is likely to resume late April. This site has recommenced and harvesting should be completed by end of June, haulage will take an additional month to complete. Harvesting operations now complete only minor remedial work and timber haulage remaining on site.
- Kilmun Hill – Timber felling operations are complete with exception of some chainsaw remedial works only timber extraction and timber Haulage ongoing. Site not complete as yet timber haulage ongoing. Only a small amount of timber to be uplifted. Kilmun Hill operations complete.
Kilmun Triangle and OHPL resilience felling will commence early July this will remove infected timber and clear trees along the OHPL corridor.
Public access along the forest road will be restricted. This site has recently commenced but a larger felling area has been taken to deal with SPHN area. Waiting on SSE shut down to fell adjacent to power lines. Site ongoing and harvesting is hoped to be finished by end of November and haulage completed by end of December. Harvesting complete ongoing timber haulage should be finished 31.3.24 this may be extended by a month due to lack of suitable timber markets.
Kilmun Arboretum – Plans are being put into place to be able to fell and extract infected Larch above Riverside Surgery this will take a bit of planning and consultation and likely not to be worked until later this year or early 2024. No further work has been done on this as yet, site visit planned for September to look at harvesting infrastructure requirements and specimen trees that would like to remain on slope above surgery. No discussion as yet with surgery – on my list of things to

do. Site visit has taken place but still to finalise plans and discuss plans with surgery. Unlikely any works will happen until early 2024. Tender to be put out before easter with works to commence early May on completion of consultation with surgery. Work has been awarded and will start early May to fit in with SSE for power shutdown, will confirm exact dates before next meeting. Initial contact has been made with Doctors surgery. 150 Dangerous trees and infected Larch behind the medical centre will begin on the 4th June. Works are planned to be complete by 14th if all goes to plan. Operations will consist of climbing taking top of trees and sneding all branches. Leaving the remainder of the tree to prevent timber from rolling and any erosion. Material will be left on site placed into habitat piles where possible. Signs have been placed around arboretum and risk measurements are put in place. The next phase of this work will commence Thursday 12 th October which will result in some sections of Kilmun Arboretum trails being closed. All signage and banksmen will be in place during operations. Works expected to last 2-3 weeks. Ongoing vegetation work is being carried out in Kilmun Arboretum in fenced areas on recently planted sites. This is mainly hand tools weeding and cleaning grass and vegetation .

- There will be ongoing civil engineering maintenance works associated with harvesting sites as listed above.
- Benmore Botanic Garden (Burmah Road) – Chainsaw felling and extraction of larger timber above BBG Courtyard there is no timescale for this as yet due to complex nature of operations. Will update when plan in place.
- Fell to waste of young Larch within KCC area – Fell to waste operations have been carried out in Inverchapel/Pucks Glen area with further areas close to Gairletter Sand quarry to be carried out at a later date. Some individual trees still to be removed that have been missed. Now able to deal with these as no environmental timing restrictions. This work is ongoing. This work will recommence September 2023. This work has been paused to concentrate on areas with in Priority Action Zone.

There are new harvesting sites planned to be sold and worked throughout 2023 as per map provided that may impact on KCC area, I will update you well in advance of any of these sites starting. Due to timing restrictions for SSE shut down which take at least 90 days to be authorised no coupes have been agreed as yet.

There is the potential for a harvesting coupe to commence early in 2023 in Ardentinny that timber haulage may use A880, I will confirm when this is to commence. This coupe is likely to commence late April. This coupe has now started and haulage is expected to use A880 and A815. Site is active but very slow with on going timber haulage utilising A880 and Larach Forest Haul route onto A815 at Whistlefield.

Recent removal of storm damaged/diseased trees on High Road, further tree safety surveys will be carried out and potential rhododendron clearance later this year.

Wildlife Management:

Night shooting is ongoing until 31st March 2024

Night shooting has started. As ever, Police Scotland will be notified of all FLS night shooting prior to it taking place, so any concerns would best be raised on 101 at the time.

Public Access:

We have recently carried out some maintenance and tidying up around Benmore and Puck's Glen in terms of vegetation management and way marker/bridge cleaning more of this work is expected to take place after Christmas.

We will be getting the path works and railings fixed on the Big Tree Trail as soon as we can get the contract awarded.

Benmore Big Tree Trail is now reopen after repairs

Glenbranter Waterfall trail is currently diverted due to some damaged bridges

Works ongoing to improve Glenbranter car park signage, traffic flow and reposition of Trailhead to Main car park.

Ardentinny has been quieter than previous years. Parking Charges relatively well received with a decent honesty rate.

Both Seasonal Rangers now operating over weekends

No permissions currently approved for August.

Not too much from VS this month.

Kilmun Arboretum Larch felling will impact on trails below forest road from 4.06.24 – 14.06.24 signage and herras fencing will be in place.

There is a cycling event (Grit of Dunoon) scheduled for the 29th June. Starting and finishing in Dunoon, riders will pass through from Inverchapel to Kilmun arboretum throughout the day. This is not a race, so riders have been asked to ride carefully with traffic in mind through the Arboretum in particular. There are 2 events in September which will be making use of the forest around Kilmun/Benmore.

The Dunoon Ultra Marathon on the 14th is starting at Benmore garden, heading up Puck's Glen then looping back to Benmore before heading down the riverside to Glen Kin.

The Dunoon Dirt dash – Bikepacking event on the 21st and 22nd will see riders entering Kilmun forest via the gate beside the church and heading to Blairmore where they follow the public road round to Ardentinnny and onto Carrick. The return the next day brings them down East Loch Eck to Benmore.

The stewardship team have been busy doing a fab job of clearing the vegetation off the track up from Inverchapel to the forest road above East Loch Eck, allowing people easier access to the viewpoint and beyond. Already been a number of good comments from MOP in person and online.

The Loch Eck Loop remains closed on West side due to landslide blockages, it is now possible to reach as far as Bernice from Benmore garden on the west side of the loch.

Puck Glen Gorge is closed due to windblown trees and root plate overhanging bridge and path – this will take some time and planning for careful removal.

Numerous site visits have been undertaken to look at different options to deal with wind blown root plate and other potentially dangerous trees but as yet no decision has been made – Arboriculturists, Geo technical specialists and Helicopter specialists. Thanks to hard work from Geo technical contractors Pucks Glen has now

re-opened. FLS are looking at other options to remove debris and dangerous trees from the gorge to protect longevity of this facility.

Loch Eck loop remains closed due to landslides and fallen trees on both sides of the loch in addition to harvesting commencing on the Inverchapel to Whistlefield section. Pucks Glen is now open but Diverted – hopefully to be fully open by end of May?

The Loch Eck Loop remains closed on both sides of the Loch due to landslides and felling above Coylet.

Visitor season begins at the end of March, unfortunately like many other organisations, we were unsuccessful in obtaining additional funding for Seasonal Rangers this year. We will be utilising existing staff to carry out weekly patrols/site visits and will be focussing on key holiday dates in particular. Please report any visitor associated issues to Enquiries.central@forestryandland.gov.scot or ring 0300 067 6600 or report to Police Scotland via 101 if appropriate.

Our Seasonal rangers have now finished their contracts for this year. Permanent ranger staff will continue to carry out weekly patrols on our destinations.

The Stay the night scheme for motorhomes, due to finish on the 31 October has now been Extended to 31 October 2024 at Jubilee point, Ardentinny, Honeymoon bridge and Ardgartan.

We will be selling Xmas Trees from Glenbranter again this year Friday to Sunday, 1st to 17th December 10am to 4pm (see attached poster).

Ongoing Engagement:

Now that spring is here we will start to see early indications of new infected areas of Larch and fully expect to be served with further SPHN's to add to the current served ones that we are working on.

As of May 2023 we have received a number of suspected locations within Cowal and Trossachs area as a result of helicopter surveys. The indications on the ground show that the infection is spreading further west and North.

No further SPHN's have been received, we have currently got 73 active SPHN's within the Central Region of which 16 of these are non-compliant due to complexity of sites, terrain, location, lack of infrastructure. Since June 2014 we have cleared over 100 SPHN's in Central Region with the majority being in Cowal.

We have received 7 new SPHN in the Priority Action Zone and 37 in the Risk Reduction Zone so far this year and are waiting on further helicopter and ground trothing surveys to be completed.

PAZ is an area that has a short timeframe to fell infected Larch (6 months) and this area takes in Arrochar, Glen Croe and Cruach Tairbeirt.

The RRZ has a longer timeframe to deal with infected Larch and we have had confirmed infections in KKC area and new sites in Glendaruel and Strathlachlan indicating a wider spread of the pathogen.

KCC forested areas now falls into the new *Phytophthora pluvialis* (a fungus like pathogen) demarcated zone, this is another tree disease that impacts on Western Hemlock, Douglas Fir and Pine.

Visitor Services – Going forward the VS team will be contributing an article for each edition of the new East Cowal Echo Newsletter a copy of which can be provided. New signage and furniture is in the process of being installed on the Black Gates Trail (now waymarked with Black bands rather than Orange) and around Pucks Glen.

Concerned regarding volume of bagged dog waste being left at Pucks Glen and Kilmun Arboretum and would encourage owners to pick up waste and take home for disposal. Have contacted Argyll & Bute Council to ask warden to increase visits to these areas.

The stewardship team have recently completed the repair/upgrade works at Puck's Glen car park, thanks to the public for their patience with the closures associated with this.

They are continuing with a programme of replacing Key Information Panels at Benmore, Jubilee Point, Kilmun Arboretum, Corlarach and Tarbet Isle over the next two weeks, so there may be some delays to people accessing these sites (don't have a schedule for which ones are being done when) Ask that people follow any onsite signage or instruction.

The steps and platform over the fallen Grand Fir on the Big Tree Trail at Benmore, which have been out of action for a while, are to be replaced during the next 3 weeks (no confirmed start date yet). The Big Tree Trail will be subject to a signed diversion during these works.

Civil Engineering – CE team are hauling stone from Kilmun Quarry to Ardentinnay over the next few weeks. This work is complete for time being.

Road maintenance and upgrade works are also planned on forest road at Kilmun Hill which may impact on recreational activities for a short time. This upgrade work will be completed this week.

Civils contractors are currently carrying out remedial and repair works on the West side of Loch Eck dealing with October 23 flooding damage this is likely to take several weeks to complete and public should adhere to signage and wait until machine operators wave them through.

Regarding potential flooding from Kilmun quarry silt mitigation is being put in place around the quarry to minimise silt entering water courses this work also includes sumps and bunds being created to act as settling ponds which will be monitored and cleaned out regularly. Water bar installation will be created below quarry to catch surface run off from quarry floor before entering water courses.

Civil engineering team are currently dealing with large volumes of flood damage to forest roads across Cowal. The volume of rain that fell has caused a significant amount of damage to infrastructure and will take some time to open roads and trails. Civils team are still dealing with flood damage from October and recent storm and rainfall has only added to work loads for an over stretched team.

Light resurfacing works are to be carried out on forest road at Kilmun Hill and some remedial works at Blairmore Quarry – exact information to be provided ASAP.

There is a planned visit with SEPA to view Kilmun Quarry after complaint due later this month.

Additional site visit with FLS/SEPA/SF have been carried out and a remedial plan is to be implemented in the next month.

Hello Fraser,

With the dreadful summer we have all experienced and obvious concern of a possible repeat of the flooding conditions that was experienced during 'Storm Babet'. A resident asked at the last Kilmun Community Council meeting to contact FLS to establish if the community could be advised if there were any safety measures being

put in place to prevent flooding and how the culverts are being managed to mitigate for potential flood conditions along the Shore Villages?

Furthermore it was requested for the FLS to provide KCC with a map of the culverts and drainage associated with the Shore Villages, and a copy of the FLS maintenance regime along with the policy to mitigate flooding issues coming off the hill.

Many thanks

Kind regards

Diane Nicholson

Kilmun Community Council

With regards to the above questions we have an annual drains maintenance programme that is in place – Smartsheet's is the system that we use. This system flags up an automatic reminder that drains inspections are required throughout September, October and November. The first phase of inspections are planned for next week. We have individual maps highlighting culverts and drains to be inspected in Kilmun and Blairmore.

Forest roads are inspected after periods of high rain and recorded and reported to Civil Engineering team to carry out maintenance. Forest roads are inspected prior to and after harvesting operations with culverts being inspected and changed to larger diameter where required.

FLS have worked with Argyll and Bute Council on the issue of ownership and responsibility for the culvert in Strone Brae and a further email with the updated position was sent mid October to Mark Borland, Vice Convenor. Mr Dalgleish is working to try and identify the owner of the path and therefore the culvert and work with them once identified to carry out the required works and hopes to have an update in a few weeks.

If you require any additional information please get in touch.

Thanks

Fraser