**Woodland Trust Beinn Shieldaig update**

3rd September 2019

Woodland Creation:

* These surveys and report will help inform our management plan for Beinn Shieldaig for the next 20 years.
* We have now contracted Trees for Life Woodland Services to establish the ecological baseline condition of the entire site through detailed surveys. This will result in an ecological baseline report with detailed information on the current presence & distribution of species on the site, the habitat types and archaeological features would be provided to inform a valuable picture of the ecological condition of the site at present
* These surveys, which will be contracted out to Taylor Wildlife, include:
  + Vantage Point survey
  + Breeding Bird Survey
  + Protected species survey
  + National Vegetation
  + Survey (NVC)
  + Archaeology survey
* Further site surveys would be undertaken by Woodland Services, in conjunction with the site manager, to establish the potential for woodland expansion on the site.
* One of the options may be the possibility of a joint woodland creation project, working with Couldoran and Kinloch Woodland estates to plant trees on suitable ground throughout Glen Shieldaig. Working collaboratively has a number of advantages including minimising the level of deer fencing which would have to be installed.

Woodland Trust base

* We aim to contract an architect to carry out an options appraisal to assess the feasibility of a number of possible sites for a modest WT building which will contain a small office, meeting room and a small flat/accommodation (for visiting staff/volunteers/researchers). We have spoken to some architects to discuss the brief and hope to select a firm shortly to undertake the work and provide a report with options and their potential impact.
* The process of purchase for the house plot at Baile Shuas has been put on hold until this work has been completed and we have had a chance to discuss with the community further.
* We aim to produce an Interpretation and Engagement Plan for the estate by Spring 2020. This will outline how Beinn Shieldaig can best be experience and the potential activities and opportunities for visitors to the site. The idea of a visitor or interpretation centre will be looked at as part of the process to produce this plan.

Access, Engagement and Interpretation

* As part of the interpretation planning, we will hold some workshops in Shieldaig, facilitated by a heritage and interpretation specialist, which will explore how the estate can best be interpreted and experienced.
* We will be installing a number of temporary wildlife cameras in September to try to capture some images of squirrels and pine martens. We’re looking for any volunteers who might like to help fill the feeders up occasionally.
* We hope to meet with the local primary school shortly to see if we can help facilitate more outdoor learning, and interest more young people in their local woods.
* We will shortly produce a questionnaire which we’ll distribute shortly – the aim will be to gather information on how the estate is currently used and accessed, and what opportunities there may be in the future. It will also gather some socio-economic data which will be used to measure the impact of our activities as time goes on.
* We have now changed to using the Gaelic spelling of the estate – Beinn Shieldaig, though there may be times when ‘Ben’ is still seen in older documents.

Communications

* We will produce an update such as this for the community at least every 3 months to inform everyone of our activities and plans.
* As our plans for the site develop, there will be a number of other opportunities to engage with us and feedback throughout the year. We are happy to discuss our plans at any time.
* Malcolm has set up a facebook account and joined the Shieldaig Community Association page – this will be used to put updates too.
* The WT will launch its new website in October. This will allow us to provide regular updates on Beinn Shieldaig to the wider public.

Deer Management

* We plan to contract a professional stalker for two initial two-day visits to give a good indication of deer within the enclosure and provide an initial reduction of deer numbers within the woodland areas of the estate. These visits will take place in September (males) and October (females). The stalker will produce a report for both visits outlining numbers seen/culled and the movements noted. The stalker would retain the carcass value.
* Thereafter, we hope to contract someone locally who could carry out maintenance culls within the woodland as dictated by regular monitoring of deer numbers and their impact. This would form part of a Deer Management Plan for the estate, as part of the overall Management Plan, and would tie in with the wider Deer Management Plan for the area.
* We are keen to understand what the demand for venison is locally to see what opportunities there may be in the future.

Tree Safety

* The tree safety works will be carried out

Wild-fire Plan

* Met with Kinloch Woodlands, Applecross and the fire service to design a fire plan for the area.
* Beaters to be removed?