

Date: Monday 26th May 2025

Subject: Meeting between representatives from FLS and Core Initiating Group.

Introduction

A productive meeting was held to discuss potential activities that could form part of a future agreement between FLS and the Balloch Woodland Community Group. We reviewed some of the history of the original group, recent forestry activities, the way in which other groups had developed (notably Kilsture Forest Community Group), and some of the activities that Creetown community members had mentioned would be good to do.

Outcomes

1. Felling of Management Coupe 86002 ((near the town, above the Whinnie Face henge; Creetown LMP 2021). FLS have decided that it is likely they will submit an Amendment to fell the coupe this year rather than 2037. Although the main driver for this is the instability of many individual trees and edges around the trees, it will be an opportunity to restore the core paths to a state as good as, or better than, they were before forestry operations started. FLS will leave all the broadleaves that they can and consult further with us before operations begin. The timeline for this – approximately - could be something like:
 - End of June: submit Amendment
 - End September: Amendment agreed
 - End October: Felling begins
 - End November: Felling ends
 - December / January: Planting of all of Balloch Wood starts
2. We noted that the three ‘arms’ of sustainability (environmental, social/cultural, economic) would be an overarching framework for our activities. FLS will connect us with some folks who are doing relevant things around the Region.
3. A 25 year agreement (as before) is not needed. Rather, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) over 10-15 years is perhaps a better way forward. This would need to specify the activities we wish to do, where they are, and who has responsibility for what (e.g. maintenance, risk assessments). As a guide, FLS will send us previous MoUs and Risk assessments to look at. A reasonable timeline for agreeing this MoU would be end of October. We do not need an agreement to do most activities that we are planning (such as children’s activities, youth engagement, organised community events in the woods). These could be undertaken under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC, <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/scottish-outdoor-access-code-visitors-and-land-managers/what-scottish-outdoor-access-code>). For any infrastructure activities, licenses could suffice.