

## Best Value Assessment for Ardura

The District Valuer has placed a value of £248,000 for Ardura Forest. Mull and Iona Community Trust are offering £186,000 which represents a discount of £62,000.

The infrastructure proposed within Ardura Forest if ownership is transferred to the MICT will provide a number of community benefits;

1. The Forest School will provide an excellent opportunity as an outdoor learning space. Lochdonhead Primary School currently has five children but has capacity for just over 50. Proactive measures are being taken locally to boost the number of families with children in the catchment area of the school. Prompted by local community activists, West Highland Housing Association are advancing plans for the construction of 14 houses in the village. It is realistic to estimate in the first five years of the project post-acquisition, that as many as 10 children from Lochdonhead Primary will be spending one day per week at the Forest School. MICT would facilitate this with the local authority as a means of adding value to the school to help attract new children. In addition, the Forest School will be offered to other primary schools, particularly those driving to the nearby community swimming pool for swimming lessons. It is hoped that swimming lessons could be combined with outdoor learning in the forest school to make a full day activity away from their school building.

The cost estimate for the forest school shelter is circa £25,250 plus (irrecoverable) VAT and 50% of this would be funded by MICT from the proceeds of timber sales.

2. Reinstating the "Old Road" as a multi-use path will increase the amenity value for residents and visitors, increasing public access into the woodland. Currently the Old Road has sections which are submerged under peat and floodwater due to a number of culverts which have been either blocked or blocked and washed away completely. In addition, the multi-use path will help towards the long term aspiration for the long distance route (LDR) from Fionnphort to Craignure. The socio-economic study commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage on the LDR concluded that once completed, the full route would bring around £1m of financial benefit to the local economy for accommodation providers, cafés, restaurants, shops and transport providers.

The cost estimate for reinstatement of the Old Road as a multi-use path is circa £44,800 plus (irrecoverable) VAT and at least 50% of this would be funded by MICT from the proceeds of timber sales.

3. Construction of new paths within the forest area will further add to the amenity value of Ardura Forest. The paths will provide options for shorter circular walks and in conjunction with the upgraded car parking facilities will encourage visitors into the forest.

The cost estimate for the new paths and car parking is circa £76,200 plus (irrecoverable) VAT and 75% of this would be funded by MICT from the proceeds of timber sales.

4. Construction of a wildlife viewing hide will help establish Ardura as a destination for ornithologists, tourists and young people on educational visits. Ranger led visits to the hide and walks within the woodlands will enhance the visitor experience and increase the

viability of the Ranger Service by offering extra activities. Composting toilets will ensure that Ardura is well served with this most basic off facilities in an environmentally sensitive way.

The cost estimate for the viewing hide and composting toilets is circa £25,000 plus (irrecoverable) VAT and 50% of this will be funded from the proceeds of timber sales.

5. In addition to the above items, there are other general costs to facilitate the infrastructure (car park fencing, drains, entrances onto the highway, signage, picnic tables...etc), that will be paid for by MICT with income from the proceeds of timber sales. This amounts to £127,914 plus (irrecoverable) VAT which will be funded from the proceeds of timber sales.

MICT intends to allocate a total of £206,475 plus VAT on the visitor infrastructure described above