

# Morvern Community Woodlands

## Lochaline Community Forest Business Plan

25/06/2025



Overview of Cmpt 9751 above Struthan.

### Morvern Community Woodlands (MCW)

Piers Voysey & Willie McGhee, Community Woodlands Association

Jamie McIntyre, Woodland Crofts Partnership

Stephen Beasley & Nick Thomson, Rural Design



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## Executive Summary

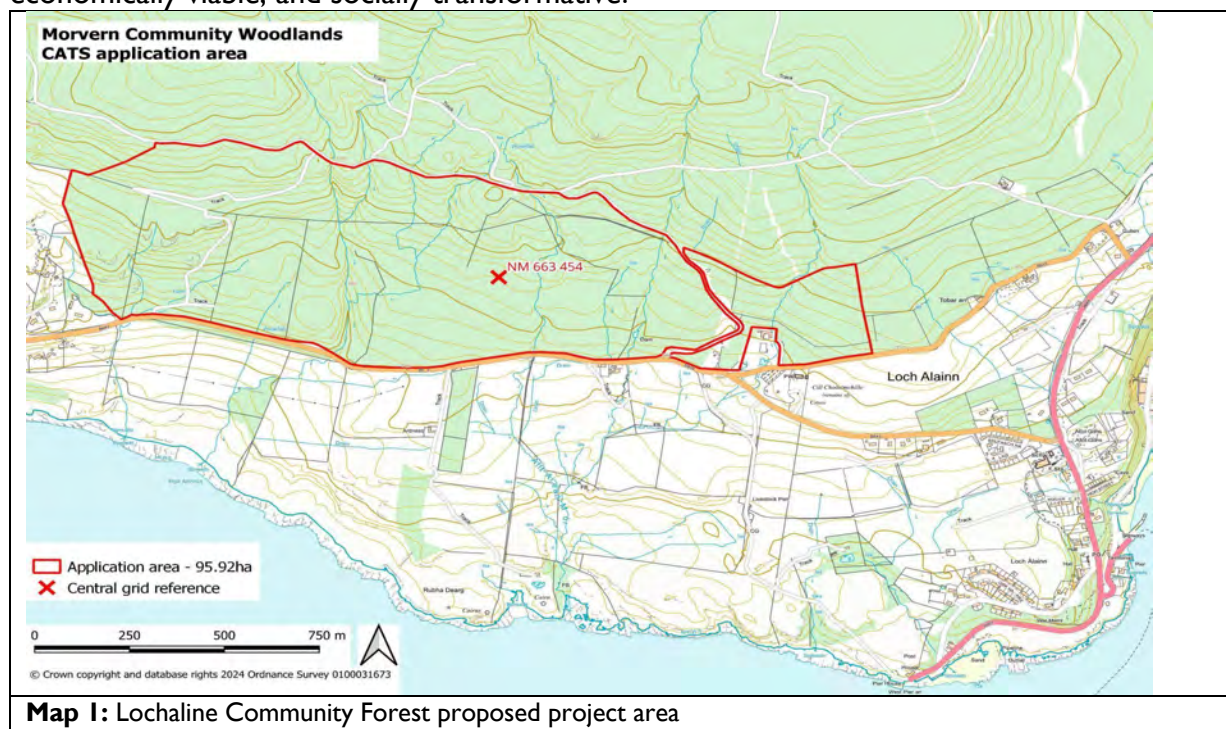
Lochaline Community Forest represents a unique opportunity for Morvern to shape a resilient, locally rooted future. Through community ownership of 95.96 hectares of forest near Lochaline, Morvern Community Woodlands (MCW) aims to address critical challenges facing the area—population decline, housing need, limited land access, and a lack of local economic opportunities.

The plan is the result of extensive community engagement, beginning with a 2017 scoping exercise and culminating in a feasibility study and 17 submitted draft woodland croft business plans. It aligns with both the *Live Life Morvern* Action Plan and is included in the 2024 Local Place Plan for Morvern. Consultations revealed overwhelming support for community ownership and land-based livelihoods, with strong emphasis on sustainability, biodiversity, and inclusion.

To achieve this vision, MCW is seeking to acquire the site through the FLS Community Asset Transfer Scheme, supported by the Scottish Land Fund. A phased approach will allow for targeted development and adaptive management to create woodland crofts, a woodlot, community managed areas that restores native woodland and public access improvements. Early project officer funding is already secured for late 2025, and Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC) has pledged continued staffing support post-acquisition for the first year of the project.

Management will be overseen by a volunteer board with part-time staff, supported by woodland croft & woodlot tenants and volunteers. Planning permission in principle will be sought concurrently with croft registration, and the forest will be managed under a long-term plan that integrates economic, social, and environmental priorities.

Lochaline Community Forest will not only secure access to land for local people, but also offer a replicable model of community-led development that is ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially transformative.



## I. Proposed core developments

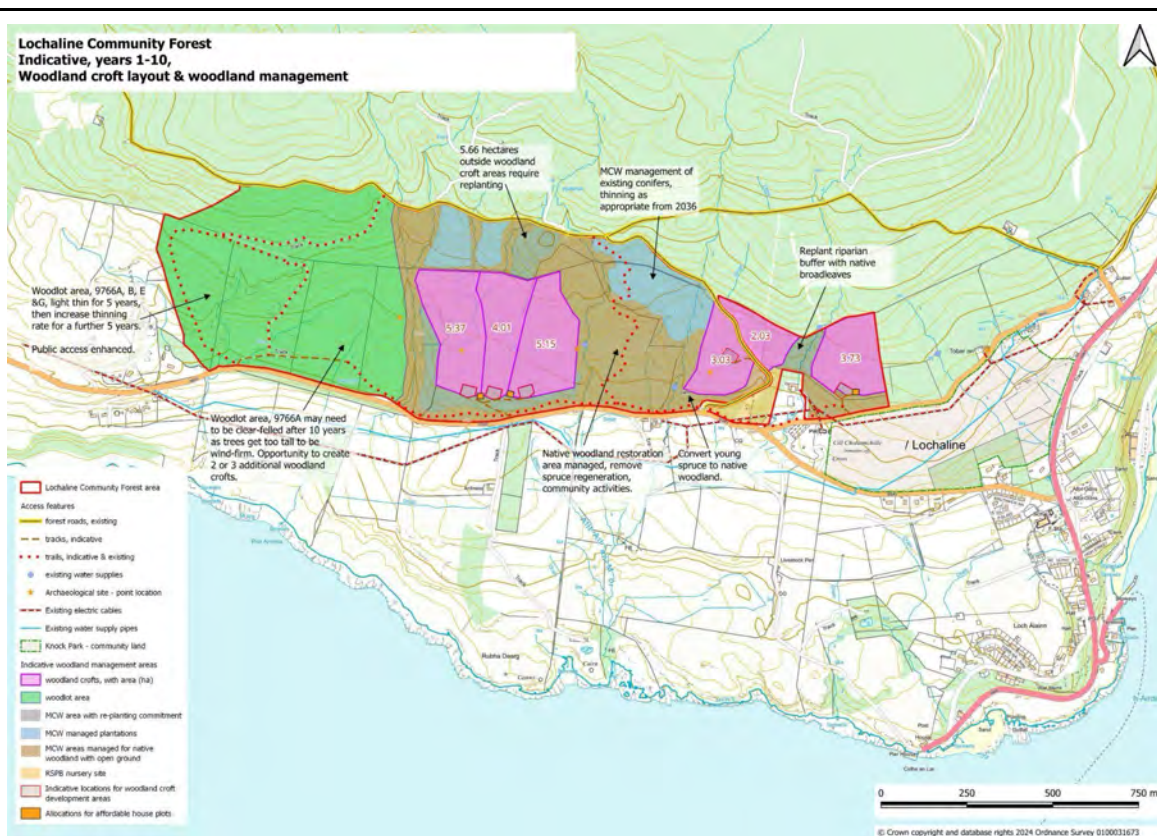
This business plan sets the following core developments proposed for the community forest:

- **Establishment of woodland crofts**, to enable local people—especially younger residents—to live and work on the land while supporting sustainable livelihoods.
- **Creation of small-scale community woodlots**, giving local residents the opportunity to harvest timber and firewood for personal and community use. This will support household resilience, reduce reliance on imported materials, and strengthen local knowledge and skills.
- **Forestry management of young and maturing conifer plantations**, directly by MCW and through the lease of a woodlot to generate timber products for local use and sales, create income streams to support the woodland's management, and provide employment and skills development opportunities in low-impact, sustainable forestry.
- **Restoration and regeneration of native woodland**, contributing to Morvern's role in the national effort to restore Scotland's rainforest; enhancing biodiversity, improving carbon storage, and providing a thriving, community-managed natural space for learning, health, and recreation.
- **Development of a woodland path network**, including the creation of an off-road trail linking Lochaline with Achabeag, improving public access and promoting active travel, especially for those without private transport.
- **Community acquisition of the existing RSPB-managed tree nursery**, with the intention to bring it under local ownership; supporting rainforest restoration, and offering training, employment, and education in propagation and forest stewardship.

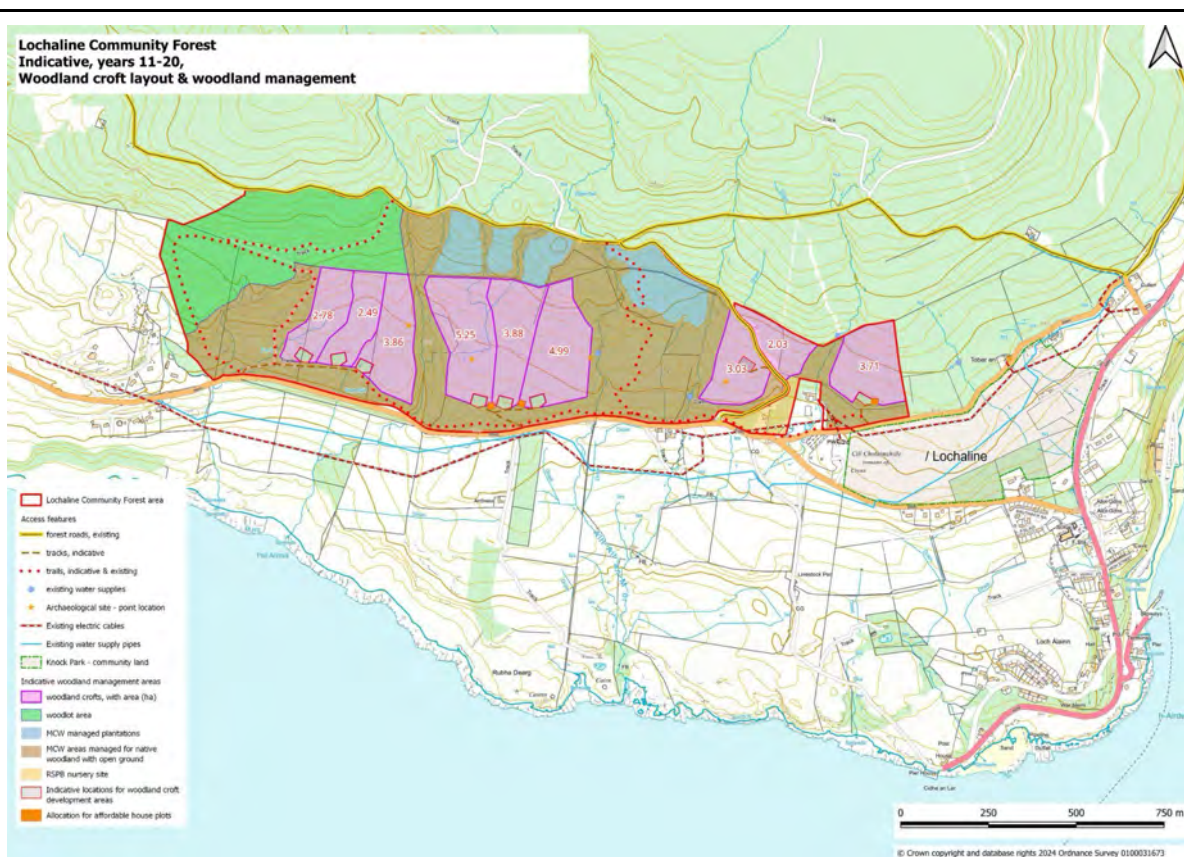
## 2. Summary of proposed land use and outcomes:

Land Use	Description	Outcome
Woodland crofts	At least 6 in first 5 years. Enterprises may include woodland crafts, food-growing, tourism and education.	Sustainable livelihoods, access to land, engagement in woodland management, potential homes
Woodland croft house plots	5 in first 5 years	Enabling people in Morvern to build their own homes
Growing space	On-going support for RSPB nursery, long-term evolving into a community growing area, sustaining the provision of trees to rainforest restoration.	Engagement in native woodland restoration
Native woodland restoration	Initially 15ha will be the focus for restoration work. A long-term aspiration is to bring 36ha into sustained native woodland management.	Nature restoration, community engagement in restoration
Public access	1.8km of core path improved. Creation of a 1.8km link route between Achabeag & Lochaline	Greater opportunities for outdoor recreation, sustainable travel options
Forestry	Management of young and maturing conifer plantations to harvest timber products and create revenue, both directly by MCW and through a woodlot leased to a local forest management enterprise.	Create income streams and timber products for local use, supporting employment and skills development





**Map2:** Indicative illustration of woodland croft layout and woodland management within years 1-10



**Map3:** Indicative layout of woodland crofts and woodland management by year 20.

### 3. Background

*(For more detailed background to this project please refer to the Lochaline Community Forest feasibility study 28/05/2025.)*

#### 3.1 Morvern

Morvern is a remote peninsula on the West Highlands, covering around 520 km<sup>2</sup>. Land ownership is mainly in large estates, owned privately, by the state or by third sector organisations such as the RSPB and Scottish Wildlife Trust. It is a focus area for the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest.

The two main settlements are Drimnin and Lochaline, with around 320 residents across the peninsula and approximately 200 in Lochaline. The population is ageing and declining. The local primary school roll has dropped from 64 pupils in 1970 to just 8 in 2024.

Forestry dominates land use but currently offers limited local economic benefit, with most timber harvested and processed outside the area. Local forest-related businesses include a sawmill and a firewood supplier. Other employment comes from the Lochaline silica sand mine (Lochaline Quartz Sand), Ardtornish Estate, Nc'Nea Distillery, tourism, and ferry services. Lochaline also hosts essential village facilities and services.



**Map 4:** Location of Lochaline Community forest proposal area & Achnaha Wood.



### 3.2 Morvern Community Woodlands

MCW is a company limited by guarantee (SC275782) and a registered charity (SC050538) with over 120 members from the local community. It is run by a board of volunteer trustees. The company's purposes are: the advancement of environmental protection or improvement; the advancement of citizenship or community development; the provision of recreational facilities or the organisation of recreational activities. MCW has a proven track record in community engagement and woodland management, having been set up in 2004 to manage Achnaha Wood (3 miles West of Lochaline) as an amenity woodland, and has since built paths, cleared rhododendron, built a shelter, harvested and sold firewood, put on a range of events and worked with volunteers and other partner organisations. MCW acquired Achnaha Wood from Forestry Commission Scotland in 2014 through the National Forest Land Scheme.

### 3.3 Development of this project

MCW has been exploring the potential for community ownership of local woodland on a larger scale since 2015. In 2017 MCW commissioned Jamie McIntyre of the Woodland Crofts Partnership to conduct a scoping study, which identified significant opportunities for woodland crofts in Morvern. During Covid, Killudine estate became available for purchase which MCW pursued and was successful in an application to SLF, however locals felt it was too large and too far away from the main areas of population, and MCW did not pursue this project following a community ballot.

Since COVID the demographic of the area has changed with many young people returning. In 2021, Live Life Morvern Action Plan was completed after extensive consultation and the creation of community owned crofts fulfilled many of the aims and aspirations the community identified in the plan<sup>1</sup>.

In 2023, MCW raised the possibility of creating woodland crofts adjacent to Lochaline by purchasing FLS land and returned to the 2017 report. A meeting was held which over 30 people attended, most of whom were local to the area. In 2024 MCW commissioned the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) to undertake a full feasibility study into acquiring forestry land closer to Lochaline. This was funded by the Highland Council's Community Regeneration Fund and the Scottish Land Fund. The CWA team, led by Piers Voysey, included input from consultants in architecture, forestry, and rural planning.

Community engagement and interest has been extensive. 17 people have submitted detailed business plans for crofts. MCW has established a Woodland Crofts Steering Group comprising of trustees, prospective crofters, neighbours and representatives from MCDC and Ardtornish Estate. In 2024/25 the Lochaline Community Forest proposal was included in the Morvern Local Place Plan<sup>2</sup>, with an overwhelmingly positive response from the 70 people who engaged in the proposal through the online consultation.

The project has been developed so far by MCW using input and feedback from its members and as wide a range of people from the local community as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> [Live Life Morvern Community Action Plan 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Draft-Local-Place-Plan-and-Proposals.pdf>

MCW volunteers have contributed hundreds of hours of on consultation, fundraising, and planning. With a clear vision, wide community support, and a strong partnership with MCDC, the project is now well-positioned to move into acquisition and delivery.

## **4. Context**

### **4.1 Site Characteristics**

The proposed Lochaline Community Forest is located immediately west of the village of Lochaline. The site is within walking distance of the village. One end is adjacent to Knock Park and Kiel Church and the other end is close to the existing community woodland at Achnaha. The site lies adjacent to one of the main agricultural areas on Ardtornish Estate, overlooking the Sound of Mull, and is surrounded by commercial forestry on all sides with the exception of one privately owned residential property.

The site comprises a mix of young and mature conifer plantations (predominantly Sitka spruce, with some larch), planted native broadleaf areas, and significant sections that have been clear-felled in the last 5 years and now await replanting. Open ground within the site is tending to fill with Sitka spruce regeneration and native willow bushes. The terrain varies from gently undulating to steeper slopes with generally good drainage, with burns running through steep-sided gullies. The site offers suitable conditions for low-impact forestry and crofting activities, including areas well suited for natural regeneration and amenity woodland and has a south facing aspect.

### **4.2 Organisation and management**

The site is currently managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) under a conventional clear-fell/replant regime, the forest has seen phased harvesting, with limited thinning or diversified silvicultural practices. The current structure presents both challenges and opportunities for transitioning to continuous cover forestry and community-led management.

The project to purchase the site is managed by the steering group who report to the MCW board of trustees.

MCW are working closely with MCDC. MCDC is one of Scotland's largest community development companies. MCDC own and manage fuel pumps in Lochaline, Lochaline Harbour, Lochaline Business Hub, three one-bedroom houses at Miners' Court, Lochaline hazelwood and the Barr Hydro which is one of the largest community owned hydro schemes in the UK. MCDC have agreed to take an active role in the management of any paid staff on the project should we be successful in acquisition.

Together, these organisations and individuals bring a wide range of skills and experience to the project and its management.



### **4.3 Community and Stakeholder Context**

The project has a great deal of support from members of the local community. It reflects community priorities such as; an increase in housing for local people, restoration of crofting, the creation of woodland crofts, improvements in public access and the protection and expansion of Morvern's rainforest identified the 2021 Live Life Morvern Action Plan.

The local community are generally supportive of community land ownership and management. The hazelwoods in Lochaline are owned and managed by MCDC. Achnaha wood is owned by MCW. Knock Park has recently come under community ownership through the management of the Morvern Games and Gala Committee. CLAM (Community Land Association Morvern) manage community allotments in Lochaline.

MCW projects have been supported by Morvern Community Trust, which was established in 2009 to provide finance for Community Benefit in the area of Morvern Community Council.

The project is supported by Morvern Community Council.

The project has the support of the local sawmill owner and other local businesses.

### **4.4 Regulatory Considerations**

Future management will adhere to regulations from the Crofting Commission, Scottish Forestry (including felling permissions and restocking obligations), and relevant CATS and SLF frameworks. Existing leases—such as that with the RSPB for the tree nursery—will be integrated into a long-term community vision. Watercourses and private water supplies will be protected.

## **5. Vision**

To create a community-owned forest that supports local livelihoods through crofting and woodlots, restores native rainforest habitats, and provides inclusive access for recreation and learning, thereby delivering lasting social, economic, and environmental benefits for Morvern.

## **6. Project Need**

The proposed community ownership of this part of Fiunary Forest presents a rare opportunity to address long-standing barriers to land access, sustainable livelihoods and community resilience in Morvern. Despite the predominance of forestry in the area, there is little opportunity for local people to access woodland for their own use. There is currently no mechanism for residents to obtain local firewood, timber for building, or to meaningfully engage with forest management.

Woodland crofts offer a powerful solution. The Woodland Crofts Partnership (WCP) defines a woodland croft as 'a registered croft with sufficient tree cover to be considered a woodland under UK forestry policy'. Woodland crofts allow residents to build homes and establish small-scale, sustainable businesses rooted in woodland management. The model gives people secure tenure and supports affordable housing, food production, and employment through crofting agricultural grants while promoting environmental

stewardship. The seventeen detailed business plans submitted propose activities such as firewood supply, forest schools, craft production, and biodiversity-focused management. These proposals show clear potential for strengthening Morvern's social fabric and economy.

In addition to croft creation, the project would establish managed woodlots, allowing local households and small enterprises to sustainably harvest timber and firewood. This would reduce dependence on external supply chains, support emerging forest-based enterprises, and contribute to a local circular economy.

The standing conifer timber on site offers an immediate opportunity for sustainable income generation. Community-led harvesting—both directly and through leasing to a local enterprise—would provide building materials for local use, potentially including off-grid cabins, while helping fund long-term forest restoration and infrastructure improvements. Projects such as holiday cabins, which would be developed in later project phases, would support low-impact tourism and bring additional income to support ongoing community woodland management.

Crucially, this project also enables a community-led model for managing and restoring native woodland, including potential long-term community ownership of the adjacent RSPB nursery site. Through education, training, and access, the forest would become a shared community resource delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits that existing patterns of ownership in Morvern do not provide.

## **7. Feasibility Study Key Findings** *(See full feasibility study for details.)*

The feasibility study confirmed that part of the area initially considered is highly suitable for community ownership and management. The study focused on a 130-hectare area with aims including the establishment of woodland crofts, development of community forestry, and activities to deliver financial support for the key objectives. The findings have informed both site selection and development priorities. The feasibility study recommends focusing on a smaller area than originally considered, around 95ha.

### ***Suitability and Condition of the Land***

The site's fertility and south facing gentle slopes, make it well-suited to a mix of land uses including woodland crofting, forestry, amenity access, and nature recovery. Around half the site is currently clear-felled, and this offers a significant opportunity for community-led replanting and habitat restoration. The rest of the site includes a mix of maturing Sitka spruce, young regeneration, and native broadleaf planting. There is no indication of major physical constraints that would prevent development of woodland crofts or amenity infrastructure.

### ***Timber Value and Forestry Management***

Standing timber has been valued at just over £280,000, based on standard forestry models. While haulage challenges on the B849 slightly reduce market value, a phased approach to local extraction and processing—particularly through small-scale operations such as woodlots—can create meaningful economic and community benefits. The presence of a local sawmill strengthens this opportunity. The feasibility study also notes that, while much of the site historically was planted with commercial conifers, a transition to continuous cover forestry is viable and desirable for long-term sustainability.

### ***Crofting and Land Tenure***

The feasibility study identifies several viable clusters for woodland croft creation and confirms that access and service proximity meet the practical requirements for establishing at least six crofts initially, alongside a leased woodlot area. Future development might see the creation of a further 3 woodland crofts as the woodlot moves to manage other stands within the community forest area. The proposed woodland croft boundaries exclude water supply catchments and allow for a significant buffer between woodland croft areas and potentially busy forest haulage roads. Draft layout plans show how housing, land-based activities, and forestry work could coexist without compromising ecological goals or current land use regulations.

Woodland crofts and woodlots will be leased. Potentially the only land that needs to be sold are small plots for building woodland croft homes. Plans also illustrate the option to create and sell a limited number of affordable house plots as the need arises.

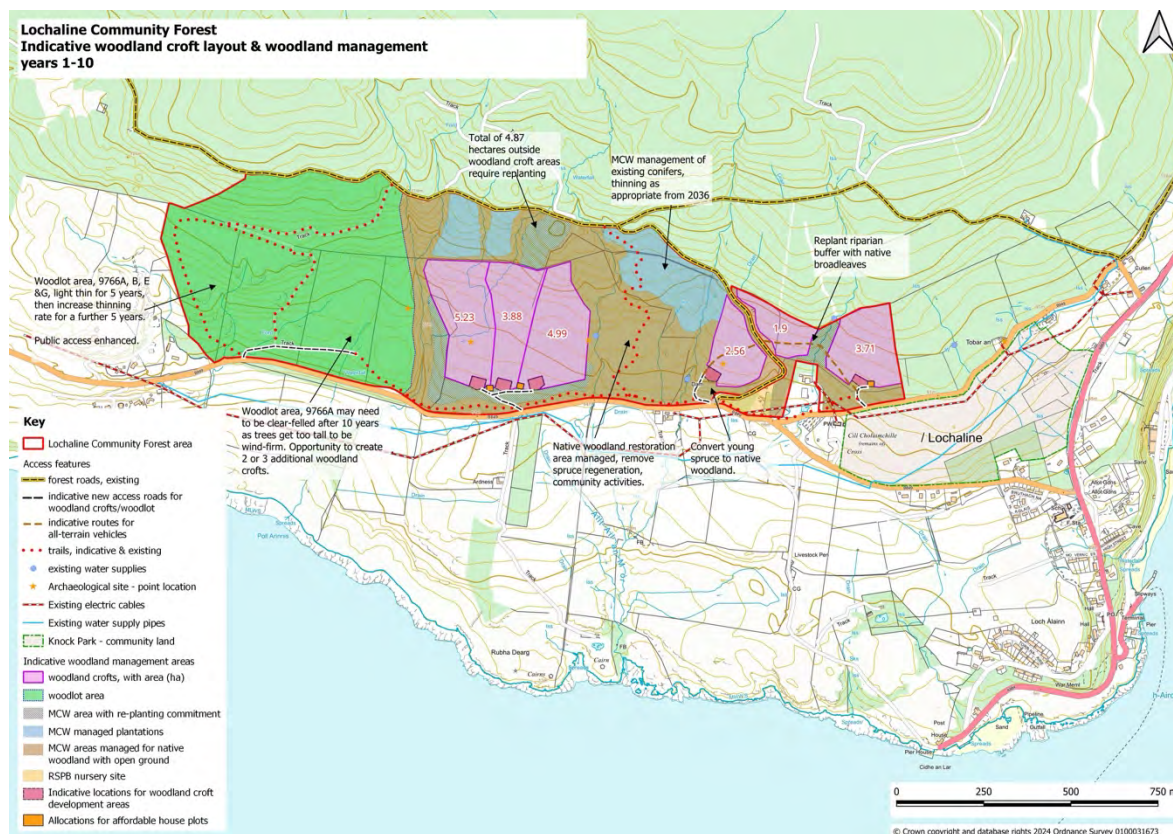
### ***Environmental Potential***

The site has huge potential for restoration and nature recovery. Areas along the watercourses are particularly suitable and these are proposed to become key linkages to expand rainforest from remaining fragments. There are existing areas of native woodland, planted around 25 years ago, on the site and these have the potential to be enhanced and managed sensitively for nature. Other nature-related projects on the site could include the creation of wildflower-rich glades in the woodland, ponds and wetlands, mixed conifer and native productive woodland and sites for hands-on conservation and education projects.

### ***Access and Recreation***

The feasibility study highlights scope for improved access through path reinstatement, connections to existing routes, and creation of an off-road trail between Lochaline and Achabeag. Enhancing recreation and non-motorised travel options emerged as important community priorities, and the site lends itself well to delivering this.

The forest haulage road that runs above the site to take timber to markets off the peninsula is at times very busy. The haulage road that runs through the site to access to West Pier is equally busy, when the West Pier is operational. While these roads are identified as core paths, FLS have made it clear that these roads are suitable only for occasional woodland management access, not daily woodland croft access. This constraint was not fully reflected in the feasibility study in order to make full use of the site for woodland crofts and to reduce the cost and impacts of creating new access roads for woodland crofts. The business plan illustrates a viable layout of woodland crofts access from the B849. Upgrading the existing access point at the West end of the site will include provision of parking for a limited number of cars.



This map shows two options to access to the smallest croft area adjacent to the main haulage track on the east, with the expectation of connected this croft area to the most westerly croft area with a track across the burn.

### ***Risk and Opportunity***

Risks—including windblow in older stands, deer pressure, and water supply constraints—are manageable. The study recommends focusing on Lots 1–4 for initial acquisition, which balances community value and practicality while allowing scope for future expansion. Other risks identified in the study included reliance on grant funding and the fluctuation of timber prices both of which could be mitigated by some initial land sales to increase cash flow to the project in its initial stages and the development of self-sustaining community enterprises as part of the project.

The feasibility study concludes that community ownership and phased development of the forest is achievable, and would deliver high value across housing, livelihoods, biodiversity, and rural regeneration.

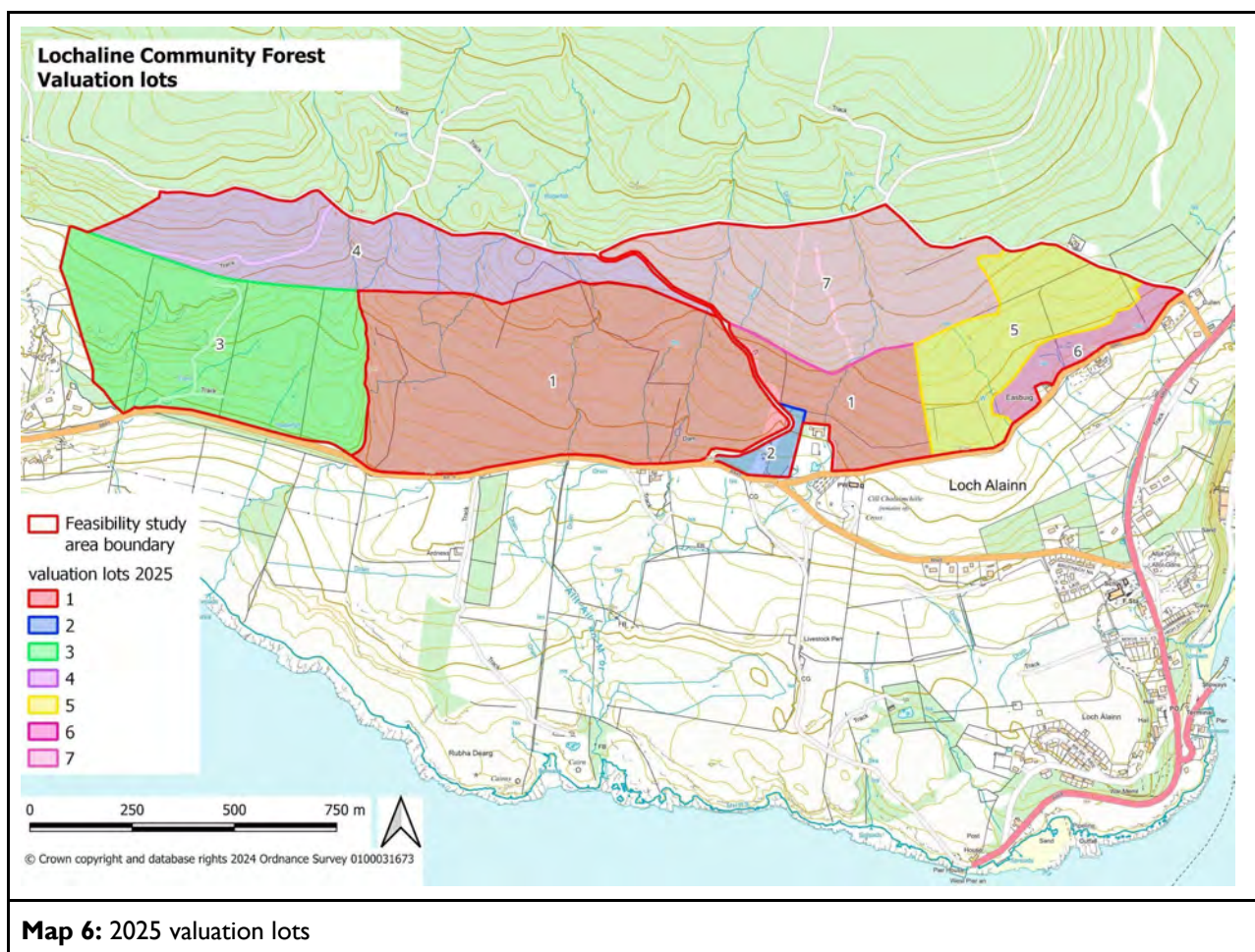
## **8. Acquisition and Management Strategy**

The acquisition will be pursued through the Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS). MCW hope to secure a significant discount on the market value through CATS by demonstrating the substantial social, economic, and environmental public benefits of community ownership.

A desktop valuation was been carried out by John Clegg & Co., valuing the entire 130-hectare study area at £1,044,291. This forestry-specific valuation was based on crop planting year, age-class data, limited aerial imagery, and generic yield models. It did not include a physical site visit or visual assessment and excluded any consideration of



development value. The area is divided into seven distinct lots to support strategic assessment and phased acquisition. Based on community priorities and the feasibility study, MCW plans to focus acquisition on Lots 1–4, which are closest to the village and offer the greatest potential for crofts, community access, and amenity woodland. While Lots 5–7 hold value as a timber reserve, they also present increased financial and management risks and are not the immediate priority for purchase.



Lot	Desc	£/ha	£
1	47.04ha, mainly young conifer stands, young native broadleaf planting and clear-felled areas.	2,594	122,018
2	1.18ha, tree nursery lease area, minimal standing timber value.	2,400	2,834
3	26.04ha, mature productive spruce, some open ground and larch.	14,150	368,462
4	19.00ha, immature spruce, open ground with small areas of felled and broadleaves.	6,008	114,135
5	12.67ha, mature productive Sitka spruce.	19,044	241,377
6	3.67ha, mature and over-mature Sitka spruce, some broadleaves.	10,675	39,178
7	20.48ha, younger productive Sitka spruce and open ground.	7,630	156,286

A draft Redbook valuation has also now been produced for lots 1-4 valuing these at £550,000. This valuation assumed mineral rights as part of the freehold however which may need to be reassessed in the light of FLS arrangements with Lochaline Quartz Sand Mine.

The community, via Morvern Community Woodlands (MCW), intends to apply to the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) to support the purchase and related costs. This will be supported by a wider fundraising strategy, including local contributions from individuals and businesses, pledges from neighbours with an interest in supporting local housing and land access, and applications to charitable and community funds. The fundraising strategy, developed by the Community Woodlands Association (CWA), will guide this process.

In anticipation of this, £10,000 has already been awarded to MCW through the Highland Third Sector Interface's Community-Led Local Development Fund to employ a part-time Project Officer from September to December 2025. This role will focus on community engagement, refining plans and proposals for the overseeing the acquisition, preparing funding applications, and liaising with FLS and SLF. Jessica Boucher has now been appointed to this role.

From the point of acquisition, Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC) has pledged to support and co-fund a Project Officer post at £14,000 for the first year. This post will be line-managed by MCDC and supported in-kind through administration and accountancy support. The Project Officer will play a critical role in coordinating project delivery, securing further funds, and supporting crofter allocation, forestry management, and infrastructure development.

The management of the forest post-acquisition will be overseen by MCW, supported by the steering group of trustees, crofting applicants, community stakeholders, and specialist advisers (see Appendix 1). This group will guide a phased and financially viable implementation plan, aligned with the community's aspirations and the feasibility work already completed.

## **9. Operational Plan** (see also the timeline, Appendix 2)

### **9.1 Developing a Master Plan**

A master plan will be developed for the site based on research and community consultation to meet the needs of the community that also fits with the surrounding area and requirements of FLS.

This will then be used for applications for planning, development work on the crofts, new croft registration, new access tracks and paths. It will form the basis for a woodland management plan for the areas retained in MCW management including the woodlots.

Work will be required to survey potential access routes and building plots. The archaeology features also need to be further mapped and described so that their protection can be secured.

## 9.2 Woodland Crofts

The process to design and map the woodland crofts will start pre-acquisition. Following acquisition the crofts will be registered with the Crofting Commission. MCW will work with the Crofting Commission and The Highland Council concurrently to register the crofts and obtain planning permission in principle for the crofts, croft homes, affordable house plots (if needed), access roads and new public access trails.

Each croft will maintain at least 80% woodland canopy cover and have a management plan approved by Scottish Forestry that combines sustainable woodland management, a house and woodland croft enterprises. MCW will be the crofting landlord, retaining the crofts as community-owned assets. Each croft will need to be registered with SGRPID so that tenants can apply for forestry and crofting grants.

Work will be done with a specialist crofting lawyer to ensure MCW has the power to evict absentee or neglectful crofters, to ensure that crofters do not have the right to buy, and that croft land cannot be de-crofted without the consent of MCW.

A robust allocations policy, developed with community input and expert guidance, will ensure fairness, transparency, and alignment with local priorities. Preference will be given to applicants with local connections, strong woodland management plans and viable land-based business plans. Training and information sessions will be delivered beforehand.

Access roads can be installed by MCW, with support from woodland croft tenants, in the way of an 'entry fee'. Track construction costs will be reduced by digging rock and suitable sub-base on site.

While the crofters will have the right to build on their croft land (subject to planning permission) and will be eligible for a croft housing grant, securing a mortgage for building on rented land is currently not possible. To address this, a model will be developed allowing crofters to purchase dedicated housing plots adjacent to their crofts. These plots will be sold with a rural housing burden or pre-emption attached (if it is not possible to gain a mortgage with a RHB), to ensure they remain affordable, within the control of the community, and tied to the croft.

Ongoing management of the crofts will include annual reporting, support with grant applications, and fostering knowledge exchange.

Croft tenancies will provide MCW with long-term income, any housing plot sales will give an injection of funding to pay for other developments.

### Key Considerations for Croft Design:

- **Boundaries and Layout:** Each woodland croft will have a clearly defined boundaries to enable independent management. Crofts are designed to avoid public access routes and sensitive water catchments.
- **Croft Size:** Crofts will vary in size, offering enough space for woodland management, food production, and small-scale enterprise. The smallest croft illustrated will be allocated to one of the neighbouring crofts.
- **Access and Suitability:** The central area north of Struthan, already planted with native broadleaves, is less suitable for croft development due to steep gradients

and limited access. It will instead be used for nature restoration and community use.

- **Renewables:** While a wind or solar installation is technically possible, it poses high planning and financial risk and would reduce land available for crofts. It is not prioritised at this stage.
- **Development Zones:** Areas adjacent to crofts are identified for potential house plots, workshops, or yards. Tenants will apply for planning permission for any development.
- **Affordable Housing:** Up to three additional plots may be allocated for affordable housing, offering flexibility for the provision of affordable homes locally and the opportunity to sell these plots to a local rural housing provider.

### 9.3 Woodlots

Woodlots will be created for local residents or enterprises to harvest timber and firewood for household use or small business activity. At least one larger woodlot will be leased to a low-impact forestry contractor to manage standing conifers, extract timber for local use, and contribute income to the project. All woodlot activity will follow low-impact, continuous cover forestry principles where possible and be overseen by MCW.

The area at Achabeag East (compartment 9766) will be leased as a woodlot for low-impact timber extraction. Standing timber belongs to MCW and will be sold as it is felled which is reflected in the project's financial planning.

A plan for the woodlot area will be made by agreement between MCW and the woodlot enterprise and will be incorporated into the woodland plan that covers the MCW owned area. This will include the required felling licences for any tree felling work.

The limitations of the B849 mean that timber from the woodlot area can only be extracted onto the road in small quantities. Larger volumes requiring timber lorry haulage will need to go out via the forest haulage roads above the site. Wood felled from the woodlots will need to be extracted using newly created tracks and not use forestry haulage routes. One-off agreements may be requested to use FLS haulage routes for clear-fell path construction or management purposes.

To be eligible for forestry grants MCW will register with the Scottish Government Rural Payments & Inspections Directorate (SGRPID) for the area that they manage, including the woodlot.

### 9.4 Path Networks and Public Access

A new woodland path network will be developed in phases, including accessible loops and a key off-road trail linking Lochaline with Achabeag. This network will provide recreational opportunities and safe, active travel routes, supported by grant funding and volunteer effort. Early design work will be informed by community input and ecological constraints.

The initial focus will be on reinstating and maintaining the existing core path network. Work will be prioritised based on levels of use, with bracken and bramble clearance and replacement of degraded boardwalks. The core path through the central woodland area will be re-routed to avoid water supply burns, minimising contamination risks.



A longer-term goal is to create an off-road link between Lochaline and Achabeag. This multi-use path (1.5m gravel surface, with bridges and culverts where needed) will connect to Knock Park's planned public access routes, allowing safe, off-road travel between village and woodland. Small-scale parking (up to 4 cars) will be created at the Achabeag East access point.

Path infrastructure will be developed efficiently and phased alongside other operations. This includes coordinating works with forestry activities and ducting services under access routes where appropriate. Development of the off-road link will be timed to follow the establishment of the woodland crofts and woodlot.

Mountain biking demand is currently limited, so designs will prioritise walking access. Equestrian access will be incorporated where feasible.

Project sequencing will balance staff and trustee capacity, giving priority to core path upgrades and aligning major access improvements with broader infrastructure development.

## **9.5 Rainforest Restoration**

The vision is of a matrix of restored species-rich rainforest connecting watercourses and other areas, with well-managed woodland crofts set within it.

Clear-felled and semi-natural areas will be restored using native species aligned with Scotland's Rainforest recovery goals. This includes deer control (by local licensed stalkers), minimal soil disturbance, and enrichment planting where appropriate. The primary action will be to remove spruce regeneration and invasive species such as, beech, cotoneaster and Himalayan honeysuckle. MCW will collaborate with the RSPB, Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest, and the adjacent community-run tree nursery (currently managed by RSPB).

Existing areas of planted broadleaves will be managed as exemplars of native woodland restoration, and be a focus area for demonstration teaching skills in native woodland creation, and management and in silviculture, including growing oak for timber and birch firewood.

Riparian areas can be the best places to focus on native woodland restoration: reducing the spread of invasive non-native species along riparian corridors and enabling them to become networks for indigenous rainforest habitats.

MCW will retain management of these areas and woodland areas between and surrounding the crofts and focus management on native woodland restoration.

## **9.6 Deer Management**

Deer will be controlled largely by shooting, and there are currently several people from the community with the necessary skills. If it is not possible to secure broadleaf tree regeneration by shooting alone, deer fences will be required to exclude deer from discrete areas.

There is potential to collaborate with Ardtornish Estate for use of their deer larder.

Deer fencing costs can be shared with woodland crofts, and factor in light vehicle access along with pedestrian access gates.

## **9.7 Community Engagement**

The central area of the forest (compartment 9751) will serve as a community hub for volunteering and learning activities, including path building, maintenance, and rainforest restoration. The project officer's role will include including organising and supporting volunteer sessions making community engagement a key priority.

Tasks will include path creation, spruce removal, tree planting, seed collection, and potential collaboration with the RSPB nursery. A woodland shelter may be built to support events and training, modelled on the Achnaha shelter.

Efforts will ensure balanced support for both Lochaline and Achnaha sites, with a focus on building momentum locally. Close proximity to Lochaline is expected to increase volunteer participation. MCW will maintain regular communications and provide opportunities for residents to engage in woodland-based activities that benefit both the environment and community wellbeing.

## **9.8 Staffing and Oversight**

In Year 1, a part-time Project Officer funded by MCDC will coordinate implementation. Their role includes supporting croft establishment, managing woodlot leases, developing access infrastructure, and reporting to the MCW steering group. Long-term, further staff or contracted roles such as a community forester may be funded through forestry revenue, cabin development, or grants.

## **9.9 Quality Control and Timeline**

All activities will follow a phased plan (see timeline in Appendix 2), with regular reporting, peer review, and community engagement used to monitor delivery and adjust approaches as needed.

## **10. Financial Plan**

*Please refer to cash flow, Appendix 4.*

The Lochaline Community Forest project is supported by a robust financial plan based on a detailed 10-year cash flow model, incorporating projected costs and revenues associated with croft creation, woodland management, path infrastructure, and community staffing.

Over the first five years after acquisition, the plan anticipates total expenditures of approximately **£623,000**, with the highest costs incurred in Year 3 due to infrastructure and capital investments. These include setting up the crofts, developing woodlot infrastructure, and implementing a comprehensive path network to improve public access. The plan assumes a gradual expansion of activity, with key elements like croft development and woodlot leases beginning in Years 2 and 3.

The financial model factors in core staffing: a part-time project officer/administrator and a forester will be supported with a tapered grant funding requirement. By Year 5, these posts are expected to be partially or fully sustained through revenues generated by woodlot leases, limited timber sales, and rental income.

Significant one-time and ongoing capital costs are offset by grant applications and charitable trusts. Volunteer contributions and in-kind support further reduce operational costs.

Revenue streams include lease fees from crofters and woodlot holders, limited local timber sales, and projected income from off-grid woodland cabins or other new projects (developed in Years 3–5). Cabins could offer both environmental education opportunities and holiday accommodation to support long-term sustainability or house volunteers.

Overall, the plan is designed to ensure financial viability, reduce dependency on grant funding over time, and build a resilient, locally controlled woodland economy. It strikes a balance between social outcomes and long-term sustainability, underpinned by cautious, phased implementation.

## **11. Community Consultation – Key Outcomes**

Extensive community and stakeholder consultation was undertaken during the feasibility process through public meetings, surveys, and targeted conversations with prospective crofters. The following key themes emerged and directly informed the project design:

### ***Affordable and Sustainable Living***

Woodland crofts were widely supported as a way for young people and families to stay in Morvern, offering affordable housing and land-based livelihoods. Flexibility is essential—some tenants may live off-site initially, but all crofts must allow for future homes. There was also support for allocating nearby land for additional affordable housing.

### ***Environmental Stewardship***

Respondents supported land uses that enhance biodiversity, including native woodland restoration, orchards, ponds, and sustainable forestry. Alternatives to clear-felling—such as woodlots and continuous cover forestry—were strongly favoured.

### ***Water and Landscape Protection***

Protecting water supplies was a key concern. Sensitive catchments will be excluded from croft leases and managed for native woodland. Crofts will be sited to protect privacy and minimise visual impacts, respecting the area's coastal settlement pattern.

### ***Croft Management and Governance***

Clarity in croft boundaries, fair allocation, and minimum maintenance standards were priorities for avoiding neglect.

### ***Access and Recreation***

There was strong support for improved access, particularly an off-road path linking Lochaline and Achabeag. Trails will be carefully routed to avoid watercourses. Additional features such as picnic spots and a shelter were also welcomed.

### **Future Demand**

Six crofts were seen as a good starting point, but demand may exceed this. The master plan allows for future expansion where appropriate.

## **12. Conclusion**

The acquisition and development of Lochaline Community Forest represents a transformative opportunity for the Morvern community to take ownership of its future—socially, economically, and environmentally. It builds on years of community dialogue, visioning, and practical planning, responding directly to the needs and aspirations identified through public consultation, feasibility studies, and strategic planning documents including *Live Life Morvern* and the Local Place Plan.

At its core, this project aims to reverse rural decline and restore balance to local land use. By transferring forest management from external interests to community stewardship, the project will create opportunities for younger generations to live and work locally through access to woodland crofts, land-based enterprise, and affordable housing. In doing so, it fosters population retention, skill development, and economic diversification, while embedding a model of long-term sustainability.

Community ownership will also unlock the potential for better environmental outcomes. Lochaline Community Forest will deliver a significant contribution to native woodland restoration in a nationally important rainforest zone, support local responses to the climate and biodiversity crises, and develop models of low-impact forestry and continuous cover management. The inclusion of a woodlot and the proposed acquisition of the tree nursery further expand local capacity for sustainable land management, education, and enterprise.

Governance will be rooted in fairness, transparency, and accountability. Allocation of crofts will follow a clear policy that prioritises community benefit. Tenancies and land use will be structured to ensure woodland integrity, with management plans and regular reporting required. Income from croft rents, house plot sales, and timber production will support operational costs, reducing long-term reliance on grants.

This business plan demonstrates not only a compelling vision, but a practical and achievable route to delivery. Early-stage funding has been secured, the site has been professionally valued, and a phased, risk-managed implementation strategy is in place. Planning and registration processes will proceed in tandem, ensuring readiness for occupancy and activity shortly after acquisition. A lean, skilled staffing plan—backed by volunteer leadership and supported by wider community partnerships—will ensure effective management and delivery.

Lochaline Community Forest is more than a land project; it is an investment in community resilience. It will create new homes, new livelihoods, and new forms of connection between people and place. By aligning national policy with local ambition, it has the potential to be a replicable model of community land use that delivers for climate, economy, and culture. Its success will be measured not just in hectares managed, but in the lives sustained and opportunities created for generations to come.



## Appendix I: MCW Trustees and Steering Group Skills

The list of skills within the current Morvern Community Woodland Board of Trustees, as of February 2025, are listed below. They are supported by additional community members who are part of a woodland crofts steering group. The steering group brings on board neighbours, Ardtornish Estate, and MCDC as well as other prospective woodland croft tenants and it demonstrates the breadth of community engagement in this project and MCW Trustees' ability to collaborate across the community and more widely:

Forestry & Woodland management Native Woodland Restoration Tree nursery management Fencing Woodland ecology, Plant identification Invasive Species Control, Rhododendron eradication Mapping & GIS Land management  Crofting & Croft law Vegetable growing Livestock Rearing (cattle, sheep, goats, chickens) Tiny House construction  Project management, Business Management, Budgeting, Human Resources and recruitment Property Management Administration Press and Public Relations, Social media/ marketing Fundraising Data management and analysis Charity Governance Outreach & Education, Teaching (children and adults), Workshop leading  Filmmaking, Animation Community arts Music Composition, Music performance Creative Writing Graphic Design Creative collaboration, Creative workshop leading (children and adults, diverse settings including for those with ASN or dementia)  Deer stalking Electrical (certified electrician) Renewables installation Carpentry Craft work
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## Appendix 2: Timeline for Management / Project Implementation

The following table is an indicative timeline for the implementation of management and development projects after the purchase of the woodlands has been secured:

Month-Year	Management Activity	Fundraising activity
06/2025	CATS application	SLF application
07-11/2025		Securing expressions of interest for revenue funding
12/2025	CATS & SLF decisions	
01-03/2026	Establish management structure, recruit project manager	Apply for implementation grants
02/2026	Initiate Planning Permission In Principle application for the woodland croft houses and community forest master plan.	
03/2026	Final agreement on the overall plan for the area, including recreation and community engagement.	
03/2026	Prepare Woodlot tenancy agreement	
03/2026	Initiate volunteer engagement & training	Scottish Forestry Community Fund, National Lottery
09/2026	Secure Planning Permission in Principle for the woodland croft houses	
09/2026	Afirm woodland croft boundaries and register woodland crofts	
02-08/2026	Prepare woodland croft lease template	
10/2026	Advertising and allocation of woodlot area	
10/2026	Upgrade Achabeag East access for Woodlot area.	FGS
11/2026	Appoint deer management services.	Secure FGS funding for forest & deer management as appropriate
11/2026	Secure approval for forest/woodland plan.	FGS if LTFP route taken
02/2027	Advertising and allocation of woodland crofts	
09/2027	Approval of individual croft plans	
2027	Install access for woodland crofts and initiate work on core public access infrastructure.	FGS/National Lottery/Paths for All/National Park, National Lottery/Sustrans, Crofting grants.
2027-2030	Implement forest thinning & restructuring plans as appropriate	FGS
2027-2030	Annual woodland management work as per forest plan, including replanting.	FGS
2031-2035	Ongoing project maintenance, woodland enhancement, update forest plan.	FGS & other restricted, project funding and unrestricted funding from donations and sales.
2036-2040	Schedule timber harvesting (clear-felling) work as appropriate.	Timber sales
2036-2045	Ongoing project maintenance and woodland enhancement, update forest plan.	FGS & other restricted, project funding and unrestricted funding from donations and sales.
2036-2045	Clear-felling, as required, re-appraisal of woodland plan, creation of 2 or 3 additional crofts, as agreed	Timber sales

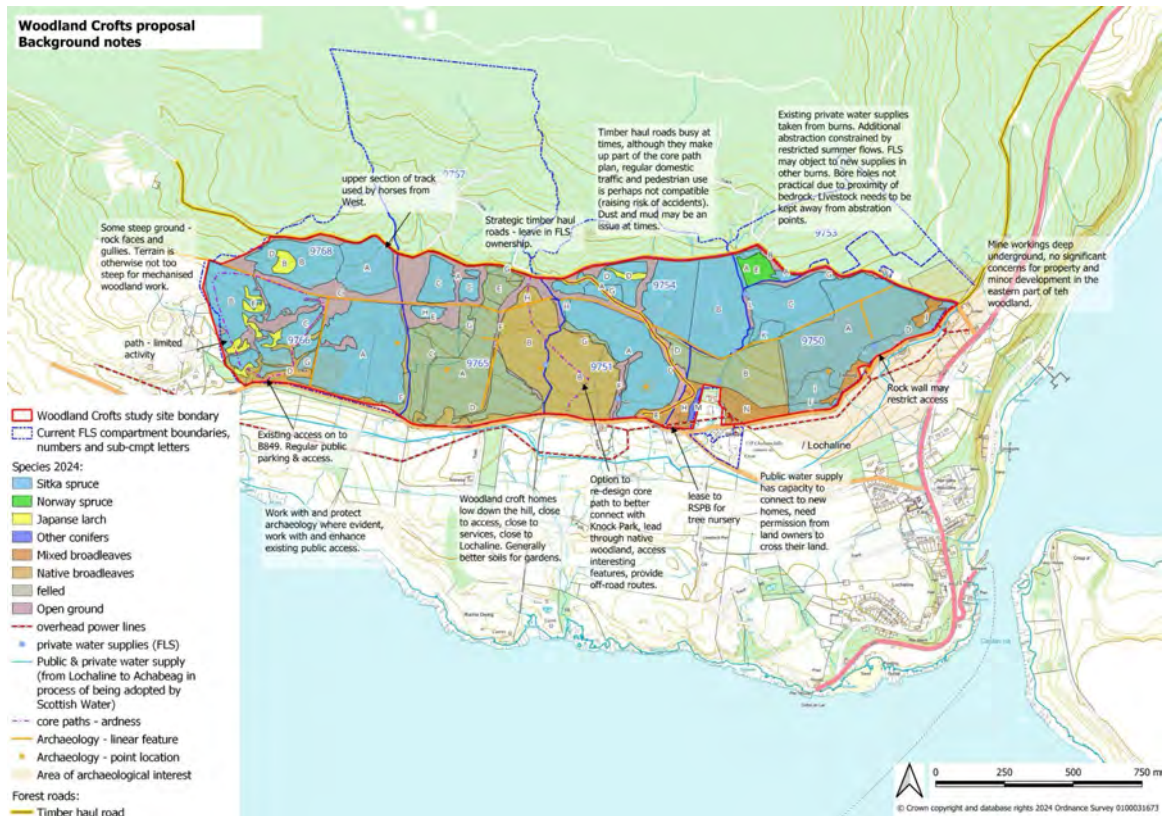
### Appendix 3: Fundraising Strategy

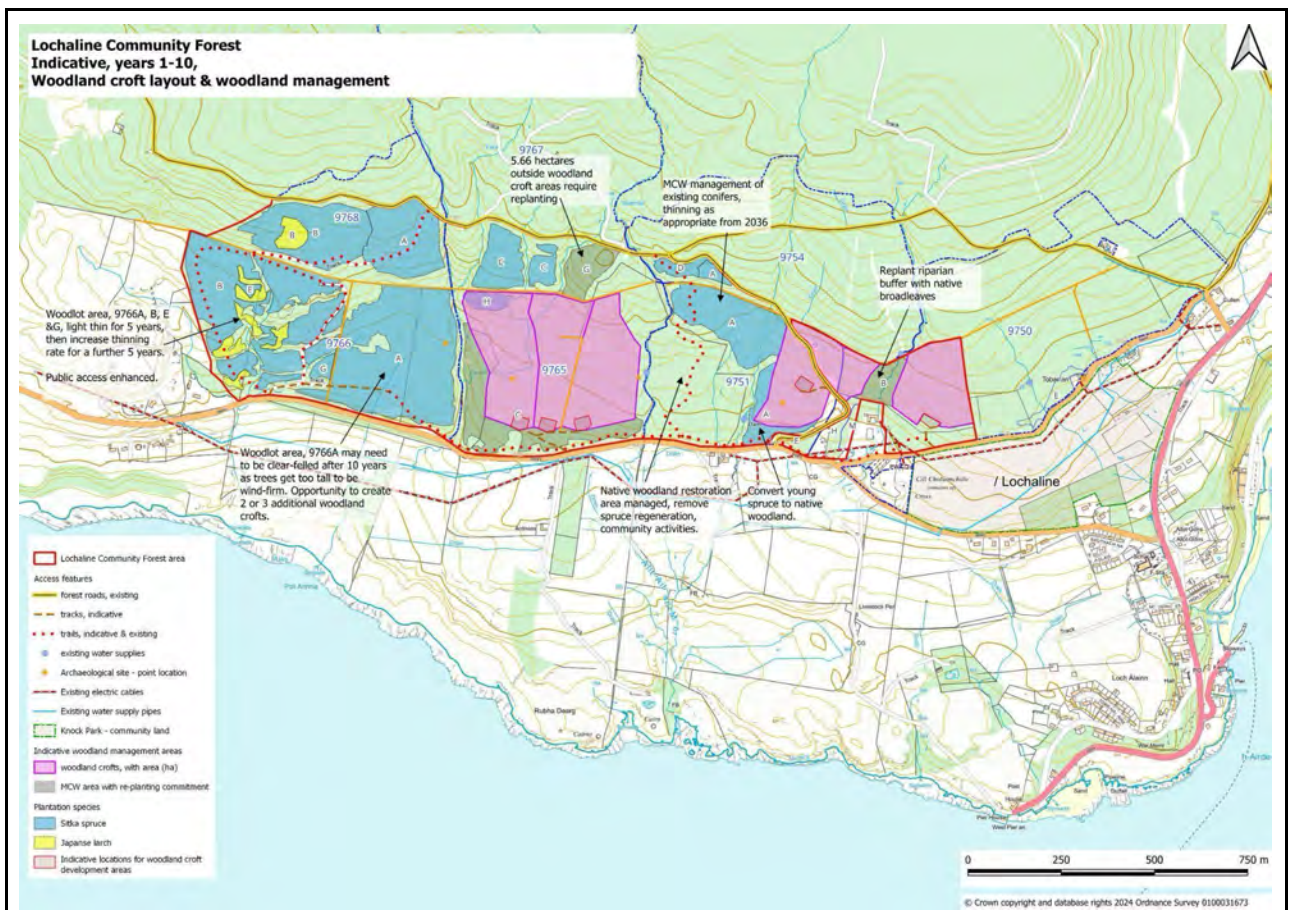
See separate document.

### Appendix 4: Indicative Cash-Flow Forecast

See separate document.

### Appendix 5: Additional Maps





**Map 8:** Indicative layout of woodland crofts and woodland management with reference to species and compartment/sub-compartment references.