

30 May 2019

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Another first for Scottish woodlots at Corehead

A grassroots forestry co-operative has consolidated its presence in the South of Scotland – courtesy of Borders Forest Trust.

The Scottish Woodlot Association, set up to facilitate affordable access to woodland for woodsmen, has teamed up with a conservation body for the first time at Corehead Farm near Moffat where the Trust has established a woodlot.

A woodlot – managed via a woodlot licence – is a model of woodland tenure which allows individuals to rent an area of woodland from a landowner on a long-term basis, to manage productively. The Association has pioneered woodlots in Scotland, inspired by the situation in British Columbia (BC) where the Provincial Government has been running a highly successful woodlot licence programme on Crown land for over 30 years.

The site at Corehead Farm comprises a number of small woodland parcels which have been combined into a single woodlot licence. Ross Donald, the licence holder, who will be working the woodlot with two fellow woodsmen commented:

“We are delighted to be given this opportunity by Borders Forest Trust. I’m personally looking forward to getting stuck into the hard work of managing the woodland”.

One of his woodlot colleagues, Ross Gemmell, added:

“It’s great to be able to work alongside the Trust, who are allowing us to achieve the objectives of our management plan, whilst we assist them achieve their vision for the site”

Together with John Hanratty, the three woodsmen will manage the woodlands in their spare time using small-scale techniques and expect to produce firewood for local sale, alongside a small quantity of milling timber. Over time, the softwood stands will gradually be converted to native species suitable for coppicing.

Nicola Hunt, Programme Manager of Borders Forest Trust, remarked:

“We are very excited to be working with the woodlot holders to bring these woodlands into better management. Borders Forest Trust is a community based native woodland conservation charity, and creating woodlots with local people has provided the ideal solution to the challenge of managing these conifer blocks and gradually converting them to native woodlands.

It’s a far better alternative to clear felling, with many additional benefits for local people, and we look forward seeing the conversion of these areas into working native woodland over coming years.”

Ends

Additional quotes:**Andy Brown, Secretary, Scottish Woodlot Association**

'We're now working with an increasingly diverse range of landowners, and are delighted to see the first woodlot licence established by a conservation organisation'

Brian McNaughton, general manager, Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations

'On behalf of the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations, congratulations to the Scottish Woodlot Association on the creation of Scotland's latest woodlot licence. We look forward to the continued growth and expansion of the woodlot programme in Scotland.'

Notes:

1. The Scottish Woodlot Association (SWA) is an Industrial & Provident Society: a Co-operative. It is a grass-roots, non-profit distributing, forestry co-operative, whose members are working to implement Woodlot Licences and encourage small-scale forestry. It was founded in 2012 by a group of forestry professionals to bring Woodlot Licences to Scotland, giving rural people a stake in their local forests.
2. In Canada, woodlot licences are seen as an important part of a diverse forestry sector, delivering particular local and community benefits, and as such are being actively promoted and expanded by the Government of British Columbia. The SWA hope in time that woodlot licence tenure will also become an important 'family forestry' model in a more diverse Scottish forestry.
3. The SWA has received financial support towards the development and administration of Woodlot Licences from Scottish Forestry.