

Press release: 10 May 2002

Highland Perthshire Communities land purchase (Dùn Coilich)

Today, 10th May 2002, 1100 acres (420 hectares) of hill land embracing the 1800 foot hill of Dùn Coilich (a Marilyn*) between the straths of Tay and Tummel become the property of the Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust. This is the culmination of six months dedicated hard work by a group of people representing the community of Highland Perthshire and a magnificent response from within the community.

In November 2001 the property known as Glengoulandie Hill, which neighbours the John Muir Trust land on the east side of Schiehallion, came on the market. The John Muir Trust was not in a position to purchase the land but offered support should the community make a bid. In three months a steering group of interested local people managed to surmount the considerable obstacles involved in such a purchase and in late January were successful with their bid for the hill property.

The steering group solicited support from the community through public meetings and by developing contacts with the ten Community Councils in Highland Perthshire, and began to develop a policy and gather the necessary resources. Initially raising the money involved application to the lottery-financed Scottish Land Fund, which might give up to 75% of the purchase costs, the rest to be raised from the community. Although they did make a substantial grant towards the preparation costs, including community consultation, feasibility study and business plan, in the event the Land Fund declined to support the purchase. Almost at the last moment the steering group was faced with a very considerable shortfall and further appeals were

made to the community to guarantee the purchase cost. The community responded and donations both large and small were made enabling the bid to be submitted on the closing day. The bid was successful and today Dùn Coillich becomes the property of the community of Highland Perthshire. The steering group and the Trustees are enormously grateful for the generous support from within the community of Highland Perthshire that has made this purchase possible.

Between the success of the bid and completion today (10th May) there was much to do. The first step was to establish the Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust, a Scottish Company Limited by Guarantee and recognised as a charity. This was formally set up with the election of 11 Trustees, under the chairmanship of Professor Paul Jarvis, on 27th March. The Trust was created with the objects of benefiting the communities of Highland Perthshire, advancing education of the public about living and working in the area and the promotion and conservation of its biodiversity.

The Trust immediately began work planning the development of Dùn Coillich as a community resource. The project will be approached in a scientific manner with careful measurement of what is achieved. In order to do this it is essential to know the present ecological and heritage status of the land. Thus the first task is to survey the property recording the plants, fungi, insects, birds and other animals, and the archaeological features, that are there. Later, controlled planting of native tree species through a Forestry Commission approved Woodland Grant Scheme will enhance the biodiversity of Dùn Coillich and set in train change of the land towards the magnificence still to be seen in the Black Wood. Other immediate tasks include the establishment of off-road parking and access onto the land,

developing further community involvement of all age groups and raising additional funds for these purposes.

Until 10th May such planning work has been largely theoretical pending Conclusion of Missives. Now (10th May) the Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust owns Dùn Coillich and can begin work on the site.

*A Marilyn as any hill that has a drop of at least 150 metres on all sides, regardless of distance or absolute height. Dùn Coillich satisfies this criteria and hence gives exceptionally fine views.