

Woods belong to Corpach – at last

By Stuart Taylor

TWO woodlands at Corpach are now community-owned following the conclusion of a four-and-a-half-year-long negotiation process.

At the annual general meeting of the Kilmallie Community Company, held last week in Kilmallie Hall, it was officially announced that the company had taken ownership of the two woodlands – the 1.92-hectare Corpach Pine Wood (Tom Guibhais), and The Oakwood (Cnoc nam Faobh), which covers 3.25 hectares – from their previous owner, Arjo Wiggins.

The mature woodlands have been used by local residents for more than half a century and it was seen as essential by the

company that they should be preserved as a recreation amenity for use by residents and visitors to the area.

When Arjo Wiggins decided to close the Corpach Pulp Mill in September 2005, Corpach residents were concerned about the future of the pine wood which sits between Guisach Terrace and the Farrow Drive estate houses.

A meeting was called and 27 Corpach residents met in the Scout Hall.

At this inaugural meeting a steering committee was formed to negotiate with Arjo Wiggins the transfer of ownership of the wood to the Corpach community.

From this meeting the Kilmallie Community Company was formed.

During negotiations it became clear that Arjo Wiggins also owned the old oakwood on the main Road to the Isles and bounded on two sides by the Drumfada residential area and the BSW Sawmill.

Kilmallie Community Company asked Arjo Wiggins to include the oakwood in the negotiations and multi-national agreed.

“The negotiations have been lengthy for various reasons including a major restructuring of the Arjo Wiggins Group which caused a delay of 14 months,” explained community company member Ossie Veitch.

“However Arjo Wiggins indicated they still wished to donate the woods and were willing to transfer ownership of the two woodlands at nil value to the

local community on the basis that the woodlands would remain as such and providing all legal fees and costs connected with the transfer of ownership would be for the account of the beneficiary.

“By this time we had applied for grants and were able to raise funds to cover the solicitors’ fees and the conveyance documents necessary for the transfer.”

The Kilmallie Community Company’s acquisition of the woodlands was made possible by grants from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Community Land Unit Fund and The Big Lottery’s ‘Investing in Ideas’ fund.

Valuable assistance also came from Voluntary Action Lochaber.

Mr Veitch added: “In

September 2009 Arjo Wiggins was given the green light to go ahead with the transfer of the woodlands and our solicitors, MacPhee and Partners, have had a hectic time since October but were able to complete the acquisition of the Corpach Woodlands by the end of January 2010.

Mr Veitch emphasised the woods belonged to the entire Corpach community albeit through the Kilmallie Community Company.

He added: “The Kilmallie Community Company welcomes and looks forward to the community’s active participation in sustaining the woodlands.

“With ownership comes responsibility and liability. Let’s look after them and make them real community woodlands.”

Mountain rescuers in action

TWO climbers were rescued in separate incidents in Glencoe at the weekend.

On Saturday, a man suffered a shoulder injury while climbing on Aonach Eagach ridge. Emergency services were alerted about 4pm and 12 members of Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team walked in to find the injured climber.

He was flown to Belford Hospital, Fort William, by coastguard helicopter.

On Sunday, a woman sustained a shoulder injury while climbing in the Aonach Dubh area. She alerted the police at about 4.15pm.

Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team personnel located the climber who was airlifted to the Belford by a Royal Navy rescue helicopter.

Event aims to