

## Outdoor Volunteering Group meeting

**Held 16 08 18 at Trees for Life Dundreggan Conservation Estate**

**Present:** Alan McDonnell, Tom Gilpin, Rona, Stephen Wiseman, Suzann Barr, Gail Duff, Vicky Hilton, Simon McLaughlin, Michelle Henley, Erika Pöltz Faggiani, Mirella Toth, Caroline Vawdrey

**Apologies:** Ross Watson, Mike Woolvin, Liz McLachlan, Imogen Furlong, Julie Bond

The aim of the meeting was to exchange news and experience, and to learn more about the conservation work being carried out on Dundreggan Estate and how Trees for Life works with volunteers. The notes below illustrate some key points from discussion:

Alan McDonnell lead a tour of some of the features of Dundreggan estate close to the main hub. There is a core of local volunteers who work at Dundreggan, and this is supplemented by once a month volunteer days. There are also week long conservation holidays, for which people pay - nonetheless these are not income generating for Trees for Life. Volunteers help with planting out on the estate and in the tree nursery where they help with the propagation of native species. Aspen is a speciality - the majority are grown through root cuttings, but there is also experimentation with stressing trees, to encourage flowering and seed production. This having some success.

Trees for Life are hoping to develop a local volunteer group to carry out regular work. This is an approach now being adopted by a number of organisations - as the points below illustrate:

- 1) Trees for Life, RSPB and Woodland Trust Scotland are working together to establish a North Ness Glens volunteering hub that will give a coordinated approach to developing a more local volunteer base. This will involve developing a joint poster and programme. The three land holdings at Dundreggan, Corrimony and Glenurquhart will be the initial focus, but there is potential for the group to work on other land holdings, if it is successful.
- 2) Scottish Wildlife Trust, through Michelle Henley, is also working to develop volunteer groups, who 'adopt' their local Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve.
- 3) Vicky Hilton described the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative that is working with 10 fisheries trusts north of the Tay Estuary to tackle five invasive species along river systems. These are Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed, skunk cabbage, white butterbur and mink. The programme aims to establish a volunteer base that will continue beyond the four years of project funding.
- 4) The National Trust for Scotland has a group of enthusiastic volunteers, and would be keen to work with other organisations to offer them an expanded programme of volunteering opportunities.
- 5) Trees for Life, Abriachan Forest Trust and Scottish Waterways Trust are continuing to work together to build a progressive volunteer programme that could be offered to the Green Health Partnership, once an officer is in place.
- 6) The Green Health Partnership post has been advertised, with a closing date of 18th August. An update will be shared with group members, when it is available.