

P07 Woodland Artisan Project



Project Overview:

This project aims to fulfil local demand for training courses using local timber and woodland resources to create products such as spoons, bowls, furniture, hazel hurdles, baskets and wild food products. Courses have been run since the start of the Scheme conjunction with the local learning centre at various locations throughout Coigach and Assynt.

The aims of the project are to:

- Introduce the art of working with natural products to ensure that traditional crafts and skills are maintained and passed onto the next generation.
- Reconnect people with the land and uses of the natural products.
- Foster a desire to manage the land in order to increase local natural sources for future use.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Culag Community Woodland Trust and Assynt Leisure Centre

Project Location: Coigach & Assynt

Project dates: March 2018 to September 2021

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Courses (6 per year) offered throughout the duration of the project	30	32	See Annex 1
People attending the 30 courses	150	189	See Annex 1
100 school pupils have engaged with the project and gained traditional skills	100	2	Birch bark pots 2; 2/12/20 NLHF accepted target "40 school children involved with project and gain traditional wood working skills" but no formal change - achieved through P06 Outdoor and Woodland Learning project
An outdoor learning area for Coigach	1	1	Achieved through P06 Outdoor and Woodland Learning project
Volunteer Days	5	0.8	

Scheme Outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

	1. The key features of the Coigach and Assynt Landscape will be better understood and restored with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained.
	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats will be mapped.
Y	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and the threats to the unique heritage. <i>Participants at workshops learnt about local habitats and have a greater awareness of the unique local biodiversity.</i>
	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publicly accessible and celebrated by the local community.
Y	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage. <i>189 participants were taught new skills</i>
	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites.
	7. Local groups and individuals understand, enjoy, value and take action in the Coigach and Assynt area in ways they did not at the outset.
	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
Y	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits. <i>Anecdotally reported from participants that the carving workshops were therapeutic and the social benefits particularly post lockdown of all the courses contributed to benefits for mental health.</i>

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of CALLP?

The greatest achievement of this project, to me, is that the aim of the project was to be community led, reconnect people with the land and its natural products, learn traditional skills to pass onto the next generation. All of this was achieved throughout the 5 years.

All Workshops were well attended and successful. Requests for organising workshops in Assynt and Achiltibuie were followed through. Participants could learn new skills and progress to intermediate levels, as we could cater for beginners as well as those who had previous experience. All ages of the community engaged and workshops were open to tourists to join also.

Some of our tutors were able to offer more/new workshops as the project progressed as they trained in other skills which they could pass onto others.

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of Coigach and Assynt?

The participants on the workshops have not only acquired skills in relation to the activities but also an awareness and understanding of the natural resources, habitats and heritage of Coigach and Assynt. The management of these natural resources for small scale use is being incorporated into the update of the local woodland management plan for Culag Woods in Lochinver as there is a desire from participants to continue working with these resources. Both locals and visitors alike are keen for more workshops to continue building on the knowledge gained so far.

What difference has this project made to People?

Through Evaluation Forms and engaging with participants during workshops all feedback has been very positive. As well as learning new skills/up skilling participants have had a chance to meet up with friends, meet new people they may have not had the chance to meet at any other time and attend workshops with their children.

"The spoon carving workshops were empowering and enriching on many levels, not least because it was good to make connections with other people who enjoyed similar things, but whom one might not meet in such a vast area with geographically dispersed communities. The set-up was well organised, with health and safety as the top priority. The class size was perfectly calibrated to allow for safe-keeping, individualised attention and good craic. Teaching was clear and supportive, and Chris' approach worked well across different ages and abilities. Having the use of the tools provided meant we could try out the activity before investing in our own tools.

We all came away feeling socially connected, artistically inspired and personally empowered. We would certainly welcome more courses of this nature!" Student Spoon Carving workshop

"I attended the basket making workshop with Prof. Tim Palmer in November 2020. So beneficial to have such an expert as Tim on hand to advise although I am not a beginner, but always needing help with new techniques. These workshops are extremely good fun and worthwhile as impossible to get help otherwise. Also it is a useful skill to have when all the material you might need is to hand in the area and I'm now growing some of my own in the garden. Thank you to Assynt Leisure for enabling this very useful, fun and sociable workshop and to Sandra for organising. Looking forward to the next one." Student Basket Making Workshop

"I attended the advanced spoon carving workshop with Chris Goodman. Chris is a great teacher. He explains all aspects of the process very well, including the choice of wood, care of tools, various techniques and most importantly- safety. He's warm and friendly and I had a lovely day making my spoon! As I purchased tools I plan to carry on whittling at home as I find this very therapeutic - I am also hoping I can attend more sessions!" Student Advanced Spoon Carving Workshop

Useful Links

[Assynt Leisure Centre](#)

[Woodland Artisan-Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape](#)

Future Plans and Legacy

Feedback from the participants has been that they would like to continue with workshops and build on the knowledge gained so far. There is also a desire to source local supplies for the continuation of any workshops. Culag Community Woodland Trust, the local woodland where some of the outdoor sections of the workshops were held, is in the early stages of working up a project which incorporates the information gained from running the Woodland Artisan project. The woodland is in need of skilled volunteers who are able to assist with the management and maintenance of the woodland not only for amenity purposes but also as a resource of a local sustainable supply of timber for small scale projects. The structure for the management of such a project will hopefully involve working closely with Assynt Learning to incorporate the learnings from the project over the last 4 years, although this is yet to be fully discussed and agreed on.

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. A Community Led Project equals success
2. Always be Flexible
3. Participants want workshops to be informative, interesting and enjoyable

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Covid Lockdown, Participants did not want to engage with online sessions
2. Participants cancelling at very short notice; meaning no time to fill vacant place(s)
3. Due to demographic reality school pupil engagement was not realised

Funding Partners



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THE RADCLIFFE TRUST

Photographic Evidence



Willow weaving workshop © Sandra Callus/Assynt Leisure



Spoon carving workshop © C Goodman



Spoon carving workshop © C Goodman



Birch sap workshop © Sandra Callus/Assynt Leisure

Annex 1: Table of courses run and participants attending

Woodland Artisan Project - P07			
Course number	Date	Course name	Number of participants
1	May-18	Axe Throwing	19
2	Jun-18	Wooden Spoon Carving	7
3	Sep-18	Birch Bark Pots	7
4	Oct-18	Willow Weaving	8
5	Nov-18	Cup Carving	7
6	Mar-19	Birch Sapping	9
7	Mar-19	Willow weaving	7
8	May-19	Willow Cord	7
9	Jun - 2019	Cup Carving	6
10	Aug-19	Flora Lino Print	7
11	Oct-19	Spoon Carving	6
12	Nov - 19	Whittling - Achiltibuie	5
13	Nov-19	Willow Weaving	5
14	Dec-19	Whittling - Lochinver	3
15	Mar - 20	Birch Sap	7
16	Oct - 20	Simple Spoon Carving	6
17	Oct - 20	Spoon Carving	3
18	Nov - 20	Willow Weaving	5
19	Nov - 20	Spoon Carving	3
20	Dec-20	Nature Printing	5
21	Jun-21	Wood Mizer	6
22	Jun-21	Wood Mizer	4
23	Jul-21	Willow Cord	6
24	Jul-21	Make your own Sgian Dubh	4
25	Aug-21	Kalrosing - 1	6
26	Aug-21	Kalrosing - 2	4
27	Aug-21	Nature Sketching/Sculpting	6
28	Sep-21	Nature Walks Painting	6
29	Sep-21	Spoon Carving	6
30	Sep-21	Tool Sharpening	3
31	Sep-21	Birch Pendant Carving	4
32	Sep-21	Fork Carving	2
	Total		189