

Best value assessment - Longrigg Wood

In December 2022 Bell Ingram produced a valuation report for Longrigg Wood which placed the market value at £305,000. Sunart Community Company, on behalf of the community of Strontian and beyond, are offering £152,500 - a discount of 50%.

We believe community ownership, development, and management of Longrigg will deliver significant benefits across the Seven Best Value Themes (highlighted in section 13.3 of statutory guidance for relevant authorities):

- Economic development
 - Community control and use of revenue from commercial timber extraction
 - Employment opportunities for the local community in running the project and realising the wood's potential for small scale enterprise including a wood fuel business, timber milling.
 - Increased tourism income through development of the site for recreational use and potential woodland camping or glamping accommodation.
- Regeneration
 - Strontian lies with an area of extraordinary beauty but there are significant economic challenges facing our community, including the impact of tourism on the cost and availability of accommodation, and availability of quality jobs for young people. This project will provide employment, increase skills training for young people, and in time may help to deliver affordable accommodation for local families and key workers.
- Public health & Social wellbeing
 - This project will offer significant increased opportunity for physical and mental health benefits for the community; and the development of a more biodiverse, native forest will create significant intangible public health and wellbeing effects.
- Environmental wellbeing
 - The planned development of the wood will include commercial felling of the most valuable timber crop, facilitating and financing its replacement with appropriate broadleaf native species and a management plan focused on building biodiversity. The remainder of the wood will be managed and utilised in a much less intensive manner, allowing a more natural regeneration of the woods to occur.
- Reducing inequalities of outcome from socio-economic disadvantage
 - As noted above, there are significant economic and social issues within our community. We believe this project will help to train young people and provide quality jobs that enable them to stay, live and work in our community. We also have longer term ambitions to explore the potential for sensitively designed affordable eco-homes and crofts on the site, helping to address the chronic housing crisis affecting locals.
- Any other benefits that might arise through the alternative use of the asset.
 - We are excited about the community benefits of this project - from volunteering opportunities, to community cohesion, to the dividend of collaborative

participation in defining and achieving shared goals. Much of the potential of Longrigg Wood is yet to be identified.

Specific costs that will be incurred by the SCC over the first five years, if we are successful in securing approval and funding for the buyout are detailed below, including details of the community benefits that will be generated by the creation of this infrastructure are set out below. Costs here were estimated in 2020, so are anticipated to have increased since then (see addendum document for further details on costs and calculations).

- Onsite vehicle infrastructure will be constructed to enable access for timber extraction which will also enable future recreational access, particularly helping those with disabilities to easily access the site, and to support the community enterprise and educational uses of the wood.
 - Form new access and bell mouth at forest access to Longrigg Road £12,500
 - Access track - from Longrigg Road to new turning/stacking area in wood and woodlots £20,000
 - Turning and timber stacking area in woodland £18,750
 - Road and track repairs £50,000
 - Maintenance £13,640
- To establish a community run woodfuel enterprise we will need to invest in processing equipment estimated at £16,250, as well as constructing a polytunnel priced at £8,750
- Undertaking the fence repairs necessary to realise the benefits for the community and environment of planned investment in biodiversity of the site will cost an estimated £10,000
- Preparing the site for replanting, and the replanting itself, is estimated to cost £26,341 over the first 5 years
- To encourage the use of the site, and to ensure it is used in as environmentally sound way as possible, we will be constructing compost toilets - £6,250
- We plan to invest in creation of paths through the site as well which will incur significant costs.
- Educational infrastructure: As detailed in the *Educational section for Business Plan 22* supplementary document we anticipate dozens of pupils using the wood as part of their educational development on a monthly basis.
 - The costs of curricular planning input to this will not be borne by SCC - there is an expectation that curricular reflection and design will be conducted as part of faculty level planning and whole school flexible learning pathway design “in house” at Ardnamurchan High School. Beyond this, building an educational resource bank of ecological field equipment and forestry skills teaching tools (quadrats, probes, pooters, keys, bio-chemical analysis kits, chainsaws, PPE for users of forest tools and manual extraction tools) will all incur significant initial financial input.
 - Teaching Hub: a wooden barn type construct that could be used to base school pupils as well as trainees to deliver theory and store equipment. This could

become a multi-purpose base from which Forest Managers and external trainers could site themselves. Depending upon the style and size of building, an estimated cost in the region of £25,000 (a simple outdoor learning timber structure) through to circa £40,000 for a more complex classroom/educational hub.

In summary, we anticipate investing over £207,481 from timber felling income and grant and foundation sources to transform Longrigg into a thriving community woodland which is a long term asset for the visitors and current and future generations of Sunart residents. The potential ways the woodland can be utilised are likely to constantly expand - we will have greater scope to adapt if we are able to secure agreement on a favourable price with FLS.

We are also facing unstable market conditions, and the threat from *Phytophthora ramorum* meaning there are greater risks incurred by the community in taking on this project. A lower price will reduce this risk and maximise the potential benefits that can be accrued for the community. For this reason we are requesting a discount from the market value of £152,500. We are very open to discussion on this matter.