

## **TARBERT WOODLAND WALKS**

If you've been in Tarbert recently you may have noticed a great deal of activity on the hill behind Sir E Scott Secondary School, despite the distractions of the impressive new school buildings rapidly taking shape in the foreground.

Ground preparation and fencing are well underway for the new Allt na Creige Woodland on Direcleit and Ceann Dìbig Common Grazings.

An area of 25 hectares will be planted with 50,000 trees, native species, mainly downy birch with smaller pockets of rowan, willow, alder and Scots pine where the soil conditions allow.

A route will shortly be established through the woodland which rewards walkers with a panoramic view over Tarbert from the West Loch to the East, starting at the existing gates at The Caw or by the West Loch Pier, whichever you prefer.

It will be great to have a short hillside route by Tarbert which people can get around in their lunch break if they like, and the views are really worth it!

The best way of providing a good start for saplings is to plant them in a mound of at least 60cm by 60cm, dug from the ground and turned upside down to provide a bare weed free area in which to plant your tree.

The easiest and quickest way to create the mounds is with an excavator. The land in question here presented quite a challenge, being steep and covered in large boulders in places, however Norman Mackay's digger drivers, Murdo Murray, Malcolm Mackenzie and Jonathan Mackay, were undaunted and managed to get to a surprising proportion of the ground.



***Machine mounding, overlooking the West Loch and the hand mounding team: Donald Macdonald, Lachlan Macleod and Farquahar Macleod***

The steeper sections were beyond the diggers, however, and an intrepid team of three have been tackling those areas with remarkably speedy spadework since January and they look on track to reach the 50,000 mound target required before the trees need to be planted in March.

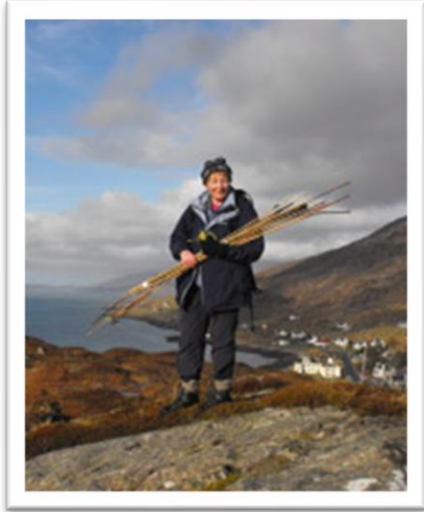
The fencers, Colin Chisholm and Norman Nicolson, have had to contend with 45 degree slopes, undulating lazy beds and soils too thin to support fence posts and strainers, but the digger drivers and fencers have worked together to come up with some solutions, as the following picture illustrates.



**Banking created by digger as a foundation for the fence and Norman Nicolson and Colin Chisholm on the 45 degree challenge**

Alice Read has been the main driving force behind the woodland development and she is delighted with how well things have progressed:

*'Everyone is working so hard and so enthusiastically to get the job done. It's great to see things progressing so rapidly. I am looking forward to involving local schools and anyone in the community who would like to learn about tree planting to come and get involved in March when the planting gets underway'.*



***Alice Read marking out planting areas***

The exact date when planting will begin will depend on when the fence is finally stock proof, so the dates when community members can get involved will be publicised closer to the time.

It would be great if crofters from other areas in Harris would come along to learn more about tree planting, and see that you don't have to bring tree planting contractors from elsewhere to do these things – we can and are building the capacity locally.

Funding for the woodland was secured from the Scotland Rural Development Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme.

***By Joan Cumming, Landscape Partnership Manager for Harris Development Limited.***