

Andrew Raven Trust Annual Weekend, 18-20th June 2010.**‘Owning Land for Good?’****Convener: Simon Pepper, Chair, The Andrew Raven Trust.**

The fourth Andrew Raven Trust weekend once again created a relaxed forum for the exchange of diverse perspectives on sustainable rural land management, taking forward the achievements of previous years. The 2010 gathering celebrated Andrew’s vision by bringing together 37 peer-selected participants, from diverse backgrounds and professions, developing the conversation in the informed, inquiring spirit of the man himself. As in previous years, members of the public were welcomed to the Saturday morning plenary session.

If the first two AR weekends concentrated on climate change and the built environment, this year’s topic ‘Owning Land for Good?’ focused on the relationship between landownership and community, initiated in last year’s discussion of ‘Vital Communities’. In some respects it’s the most challenging topic to date, touching on questions of leadership as well as social and environmental responsibility. Historically, private landowners in Scotland have had a bad press, and quite deservedly so. Too often, especially in Highland Scotland, their legacy is a depopulated landscape and a degraded natural environment, barely offset by the positive facts of capital input and development. In the twenty-first century, against a backdrop of devolution, environmental anxiety, and increasing community ownership, it’s time to reconsider the question of ‘Owning land for good?’

Friday PM

Amanda Raven welcomed the participants gathered in Ardtornish Main Hall on a sun-baked Friday evening, reminded us of the Trust’s mission, and ran over the weekend’s schedule. **Angus Robertson, Faith Raven** and **Hugh Raven** then gave us local orientation by offering perspectives on Ardtornish estate, past and present.

As Ardtornish Factor, **Angus Robertson** acknowledged the estate’s responsibility for Morvern’s human and natural resources, covering as it does over 60 square miles of mainly marginal land, and (directly or indirectly) employing 35% of the population. Alongside some stunning slides showing aerial photographs of Ardtornish landscapes

(mainly the work of Patricia Macdonald), Angus presented the estate's mission statement: *"To manage the estate, to the best of our abilities, to support the strength and prosperity of the community, to maintain and enhance the natural and cultural heritage and to develop sustainably the value of the estate for the benefit of both the owners and the community"*. While other farmers have given up in the face of adverse conditions, Ardtornish has persisted with 2,000 blackface hill ewes and 250 hill cattle; at present, one half of the estate's farming is undergoing organic conversion. Taking the responsibilities of landlordism seriously, Ardtornish monitors standards of husbandry in fish farms, while traditional staples like stalking and fishing, as well as holiday lets, provide diverse income streams to the estate. The mothballing of the Lochaline Sandmine, an early victim of the recession, was a blow to the whole community. On a positive note, the Loch Tearnait Hydro-Electric scheme, currently under construction, is central to Ardtornish's vision of sustainable development. With its big income potential and environment-friendly power generation, the scheme will benefit estate and community alike when work is completed and the turbine in place by April 2011.

Faith Raven offered historical orientation with an overview of the various phases of her family's 80-year ownership of Ardtornish, from its purchase in 1911 by her father Owen Hugh Smith, to the present stewardship of her son Hugh Raven, who now resides in the community with his family. Conforming to the pattern of many 20th century Highland estates the new owners were based in London: Owen Hugh Smith was a Thames wharfinger. The traditional style of management was autocratic and paternalistic, but also impelled by a sense of social responsibility. The current mood of retrenchment was anticipated by the cut-backs of 1930, when a large part of the estate, together with mineral rights, was sold to the Forestry Commission. Owen Hugh Smith played a major role in establishing the Lochaline Silica mine during the Second World War, the royalties of which underpinned Ardtornish for the next 60 years. An industrial plant signalled the end of monolithic estate control, with the construction of council houses in Lochaline, and an influx of workers from Ballachulish and elsewhere.

Faith underlined the network of interests connecting Ardtornish with London and the South of England; her marriage to Cambridge academic John Raven added

another element, and King's College contributed significantly to the Ardtornish ethos over the years. The estate is financially sustainable, and a policy of collaboration and openness has been central to policy; long before current 'right to roam' legislation, 'Keep out' notices were unknown. Assistance has been given to employees and other local people to buy and build affordable housing, and furniture workshops and kitchen gardens are run as commercial partnerships. Without a willingness to take risks, Ardtornish couldn't have benefited from new opportunities, whether in relation to farming, tax planning, or renewable energy.

Picking up on Faith's emphasis on risk and opportunity, **Hugh Raven** concluded the Friday evening session with an up-beat assessment of local economic opportunities, notwithstanding recession and the credit crunch. Inspired by Angus McDonald's Moidart Trust seminar, Hugh stressed that would-be entrepreneurs no longer needed to turn their back on the West Highlands in order to launch successful business enterprises. Renewable energy, land development, food and farming, and eco-tourism offered economic opportunities to the region unparalleled since the days of kelping and sheep farms (hopefully without the long-term negative repercussions of either!) Hugh reflected on his mother's comments on the relationship between the Highlands economy and London, still strong despite its controversial nature in the current nationalist/devolutionary mood. The axis of power has undeniably changed, and with it the pattern of dependence, yet the current political climate in Scotland offers new economic opportunities to both private and community landowners in the Highlands. The major obstacle in Morvern is population decline, given that all studies show that a healthy and sustainable population accompanies economic growth. Judging from data based on the local doctor's records, Lochaline showed a 7-8% decline between 1991-2001. How might responsible estate management help to redress this pattern?

Saturday AM (Open Session).

Next morning, after a full breakfast and a brisk stroll to view work in progress on the Tearnait Hydro-electric scheme, the two plenary speakers were introduced by Simon Pepper. Discussion would focus primarily on the pragmatics rather than the political and ethical dimensions of landownership. Although both speakers were private owners, many others in the room represented the public and community sectors, and the ensuing conversation would embrace diverse forms of landownership.

The first speaker, **Mark Gibson**, gave an engaging account of his success in transforming the 3,000 acre East Ayrshire estate of Craigengillan, situated near the former coal-mining community of Dalmellington. When Mark purchased the estate in 1996, both the policies and the handsome mansion house – constructed in the 1780's by the family of John Loudon MacAdam (of 'Tarmac' fame) – had suffered nearly a century of neglect. Roofs were falling in, walls crumbling with dry rot, fences down, and dykes collapsed. The owners had lived in fear of the local community two miles away in Dalmellington, blighted by poverty, unemployment and crime in the wake of the 1970's pit closures. Although the estate contains two SSSIs and is located within a designated Environmentally Sensitive Area, 'Keep out' notices were posted everywhere, like the garden of Oscar Wilde's 'Selfish Giant'; to little effect, however, as vandalism and grass fires were rife.

Despite its degraded condition, MG fell in love with Craigengillan ('the place had a magic, like a sleeping beauty'), aptly communicated in his slide-show of Loch Doon, woodlands and snow-covered hills showing traces of a medieval land-use, MacAdam bridges, river gorges and frozen waterfalls. A dramatic 'about turn' was made in the first week by taking down all the 'keep out' signs. Employing local builders and craftsmen to restore the 'Grade A' Listed mansion house, he rebuilt the roofless cottages, converted the farm to organic status, and enhanced and protected the estate's natural habitats, planting nearly 300 acres of new native woodland and 16 miles of new hedgerows.

The real secret of his success lay in winning the trust of the local community. Initially local lads were hired as fire patrols to curb vandalism, while others were employed in the school holidays to cut tracks through river gorges, build footpaths, and assist with hedging and tree planting. Craigengillan is situated in Robert Burns country, and Burns's maxim 'A Man's a man for a' that' inspired MG's respect for the community, and (he trusts) the community's respect for his vision. Now the estate is involved with the local primary and secondary schools, provides placements for school leavers, and works closely with East Ayrshire Council, SNH, SEPA, Historic Scotland, and other bodies. Progress has been facilitated by the Princes' Trust, as well as the open-minded attitude of the E. Ayrshire planning authority.

One major success has been MG's conversion of the ruined stables into a riding school; starting up seven years ago with a single horse, it is now home to 54 horses and employs seven full-time workers, six of them local school-leavers. Another new projects is the construction of a 'crusader castle' in collaboration with local Scout groups and cadets, and MG is currently bidding for funds to construct an observatory, taking advantage of the estate's situation within the 'dark sky park' of the Galloway Forest. Dalmellington will soon be in touch with the whole universe! MG sympathises with the community's resistance to wind turbines, on the grounds that it's already made huge sacrifices to the energy needs of the nation. Above all, underpinning his inspiring success at Craigen Gillan is the vision of a sustainable future, working 100% with the local community. Mark left us with his watchwords; trust, tenacity, love.

The second plenary speaker was **Priscilla Gordon-Duff**, who reflected on her twenty years' experience of co-running Drummuir Castle Estate, Banffshire, owned by her husband Alex's family for 400 years. In contrast to Mark Gibson, Priscilla described the experience of an inherited rather than a purchased estate, although her guiding principles ('stewardship, sustainability, community partnership, and sense of place') harmonised with his. She consolidated her initially intuitive approach to 'running the family business' by taking a postgraduate diploma in Land Economy from Aberdeen University (and later a MRICS) when her four children were old enough to allow her time off from being a full-time mum. Despite the downturn, PGD felt that the current political climate was auspicious: principles of transparency, creativity and co-operation were being promoted by coalition politics in Holyrood and now Westminster. The current Scottish Government had been of great benefit to rural Scotland, and she praised its well-publicised target of 25% forest cover [**by when?**]. Richard Lochhead, Minister for Rural Development, had himself paid a visit to Drummuir.

Reflecting upon changing fashions in farm management, Priscilla recalled that in the 1970s it was widely held that 5,000 acres of tenanted farmland was more efficiently run by one farmer with two tractors than by 16 farmers. Fifteen years later, however, Drummuir has exactly the same number of tenants, having successfully

resisted the trend. Like the mansion house at Craigengillan, by the 1980s the Victorian Gothic pile of Drummuir Castle was pretty run down, so the family had sold some land to invest in restoring the fabric, and PGD ran a bed and breakfast business for a time until she realised it wasn't her forte. Drummuir's location in the heart of whisky-distilling Banffshire proved a more significant asset, and the family signed a long term lease with Diageo to convert the Castle into a whisky hospitality centre, employing 30 local people.

Like MG, PGD had much to say about landowner/community relations. Her main contribution on this front was the foundation in the late 1990's of 'Drummuir 21', a Community Trust dedicated to the principle of sustainable development. Drawing upon local authority funding as well as a BBC 'Breathing Space' grant, the Trust has sought to engage the community in a number of ways. We were shown slides of some of the Trust's activities: developing a footpath network on the estate, organising school visits (the 'parachute game' was a favourite), improving a pond formerly used for shooting, encouraging rural skills and engaging those with learning difficulties. New ideas about community ownership are being developed by the Trust, based on informal consultation rather than formal meetings; a 'wishing tree' encourages individuals to make constructive suggestions about policy, while the Village Hall (run by the community, not the estate) is available for events like the screening of Michael Moore's 'The Age of Stupid', a film recommended at a previous AR Trust Weekend. But PGD was concerned that the more active members of the community were incomers rather than traditional residents, a theme that resurfaced in subsequent discussion.

The land is always there, although its use changes, a maxim illustrated by images of a former grouse moor on the estate being re-forested, and a wind farm constructed on a hill. We were also shown the construction of a new estate office and holiday houses with wood-chip heating systems; and Priscilla commended the practice of retrofitting older properties, an idea that she had picked up from the second AR weekend. The key to success was integrated land management, and the Scottish Government's new Rural Development plan was welcomed for providing an enabling framework. But the problem of ever-increasing bureaucracy remains;

hopefully the dual threats of economic downturn and climate change will force creative thinking to remedy this situation.

Discussion

- Importance of a vision that can be communicated and shared by all the stakeholders, based on mutual trust. Lack of creative planning often blights rural communities. In many parts of Scotland there's still a crippling lack of trust between landowners and the community. Sometimes formal structures of communication are less important than goodwill.
- There was a need for an 'honest broker' to mediate between landowners and the community, sharing policy information without any vested interests.
- In the case of private landowners, much depends on individual vision. For the community to take on the responsibility of ownership is a huge step, and often depends on the energy of charismatic individuals. The Isle of Eigg Trust was mentioned as an instance of transformative thinking in this area; 96 residents have formed a cooperative, and almost a third of the population now work for the community, often on a voluntary basis. Community buy-outs are more common in Western than in Eastern areas, perhaps because land ownership has more contact with social enterprise in the West. But private estates in the West are more vulnerable because more dependent on the will of their owners.
- How to ensure that leadership, energy and vision are passed on to the next generation? It's a problem afflicting both private and community owners. One answer might be the importance of celebrating 'commonweal' – tearing down those 'keep out' signs – celebration, enjoyment, having fun.
- Innovation and vision are more often associated with private than public owners.
- The sense of private property ('This is mine') can undoubtedly discourage community initiatives. Maybe the Native American sense of ownership is preferable ('we don't own the land, it owns us'). The Falkland Centre for Stewardship is concerned to find answers to this problem, and to evolve structures for enabling a more communal form of stewardship. A 'deep engagement' with land gives a truer sense of ownership.

- What about gender? How successful are women at owning land and providing leadership? There are, and have been, more successful women landowners than is normally acknowledged.
- What else needs to happen? What kind of encouragement, what sort of invigoration will create a more sympathetic engagement between landowners and the community? Watchwords are Trust, Confidence, Leadership, Communication.

Saturday PM

After lunch, Chris Hughes, Community Development Officer from the Glasgow-based environmental arts charity NVA (Latin ‘nacionale vita activa’, or ‘the right to influence public affairs’) gave a short talk about the group’s work, conveying the apologies of NVA founder Angus Farquar, who was unable to attend. NVA is committed ‘to transform natural landscapes and urban settings in order to change the way people see their environment...how places shape, and are shaped by, their inhabitants’, introducing a new perspective on the question of ‘Owning Land for Good?’ Previous projects include ‘The Path’ (Glenlyon, 2000), ‘The Storr Unfolding Landscape’ (Isle of Skye, 2005), ‘Half Life’ (Kilmartin Glen, 2008) and ‘White Bicycles’ (Glasgow 2010). CH’s talk focused on NVA’s current SAC Lottery Public Art bid to create ‘a world-class creative landscape’ at St Peter’s Seminary and Kilmahew Woodlands, Cardross. The challenge of the Kilmahew project lies in transforming a degraded Victorian designed estate surrounded by natural woodlands, at the heart of which lies the abandoned St Peter’s RC Seminary, described as ‘the most important modernist building in Scotland’.

NVA work with the local communities of Cardross and Renton to create a shared communal space, in order (in the words of one resident) ‘to reactive a sense of pride and ownership for future generations to enjoy’. But the two communities have different priorities: the inhabitants of Renton, with high unemployment and poverty, are keen to tap into the site as an intermediate labour market, whereas those of more affluent Cardross want woodland paths to walk their dogs. These and other issues have been addressed by the formation of the Kilmahew Woodland Restoration Group, a small-scale project due to its limited funding. The owners (the Archdiocese of

Glasgow) favour the status quo and have no real interest in the project. CH concluded with the intriguing idea of landscaping St Peter's Seminary as Scotland's first 'modernist ruin'. Appropriately, after the talk we spilled out into the brilliant afternoon sunshine for an eight-mile 'reflective walk' to visit the prototypical medieval ruin of Old Ardtornish Castle. Archaeologist Jenny Robertson provided a full history of the castle, as we sat, buffeted by a warm Atlantic wind, overlooking spectacular views of the Sound of Mull and the Innibeg cliffs.

Saturday evening. We weren't finished for the day, though, and while we rested our limbs before dinner we were treated to a stimulating presentation of work-in-progress by Annie McKee, Pippa Wagstaff, and Jayne Glass, doctoral students from the UHI Perth College's Centre for Mountain Studies. The students were introduced by their supervisor, Dr Charles Warren of St Andrew's University: a fourth member of the team, Rob McMorran, who is studying the sustainability of community-owned estates and community buy-outs (Knoydart, Sout Uist, Assynt, North Harris) was unable to be present. Funded by the Henry Angst Foundation, the project is entitled 'Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century'. Undaunted by the fact that this was the first public presentation of their research, Annie, Pippa, and Jayne, provided a scientific perspective on many of the themes of our earlier discussions, enhanced by power-point presentations of methodologies and data.

- Annie McKee. Project: 'The role of private landowners in facilitating sustainable rural communities in upland Scotland.' Based on in-depth case studies of 6 estates based on questionnaires, interviews and participant observation. Underlined the key role played by private owners in the sustainability of estates, the potential impacts of management decisions on community resilience. Recommended importance of landowner role in ensuring estate 'business' viability for employment and supporting community-owned entrepreneurship.
- Pippa Wagstaff. Project: 'Landowner motivations and perceptions of sustainability: exploring visions for Scotland's uplands.' Study of landowner motivations, perceptions of sustainability, and attitudes to government policy, based on questionnaire sent to 245 landowners (34% return), 10 case study

interviews, and Q methodology to achieve triangulation. Subjects represented a cross-section of resident/absentee landowners and inherited/purchased estates. Results indicated that economic sustainability is paramount for all groups; inherited estates tend to focus on social sustainability once immediate economic needs are met, whereas purchased estates more interested in environmental sustainability; some government policies restrict the achievement of sustainability.

- Jayne Glass. Project: ‘Developing a toolkit for monitoring sustainability on upland estates.’ Brings stakeholders (land management professionals, researchers, policy-makers and members of representative bodies) together in an anonymous forum to develop the toolkit, over a series of four interview and questionnaire rounds (89% response rate). After each round, responses were collated and fed back to the panel to permit evolution of ideas. Sixteen ‘opportunities’ for sustainable upland estate management identified and developed; the extent to which each estate responded is classified as ‘proactive’, ‘active’, or ‘underactive’. Toolkit currently being piloted on a selection of estates owned by NGOs.

Discussion.

- Doesn’t the questionnaire format, and the categorisation of ‘types’ of estate, tend to over-schematise the picture, which is in reality a lot muddier? How adequate is the sample, and how reliable the information tendered? Don’t some estates invest to an equal degree in economic, social, and environmental sustainability?
- Pippa responded that many landowners in her sample didn’t expect to make a profit, but were happy to plug money in. All seemed to share a desire to hand their estates on to family/heirs.
- Pippa defined her notion of economic sustainability as an ‘ability to keep going in the long term (ie. 20 years)’.
- Inheritance taxation threatened sustainability. For example, it shrunk the private rented sector, costing the Treasury more to create new affordable housing for evicted tenants than it gained from levying inheritance tax (at least at current levels) on landowners.

- It was often difficult for purchased estate owners to interact successfully with the community, given the average 17 year cycle of purchase/repurchase. Hardly surprising that inherited estates have better community relations.
- Are new community-owned estates more responsive to the community than private ones? The students found this hard to answer.
- All welcomed the news that economic sustainability is a major aspiration, even if the pie-chart shows that over half of the estates studied are not sustainable, and continue to depend on external funding.

After dinner on Saturday night, musical entertainment was provided by Will Boyd-Wallis (guitar and song), Andrew ‘Slowhand’ Hamilton (electric guitar), Nigel Leask (fiddle), John Hutchison (Gaelic song), Andrew Bradford (‘Cornkisters’), Annie McKie and Jayne Glass (jazz and contemporary songs, guitar).

Sunday AM. Hugh Raven chairs round-table discussion on ‘Owning Land for Good’.

Session 1: ‘Community Relations’

Short presentations by John Hutchison, Mark Gibson, and Priscilla Gordon Duff.

John Hutchison returned to the theme of the ‘honest broker’ raised in previous discussion, given the many difficulties dogging landowner/community relations. (Especially in the case of an ‘absentee landowner’ like the John Muir Trust). As SNH representative and Chair of Eigg Heritage Trust, JH himself plays the role of ‘honest broker’. This entails being one step back from the community, which is why he prefers not to reside on the island.

Mark Gibson favoured a more informal process of liaison: take people as they come, just be yourself. He ran over the gradual steps of his own rapprochement with the community of Dalmellington. One old ex-miner had informed him, pityingly, that the community had rallied round because ‘we feel sorry for you’! The local community council (‘Dalmellington Partnership’) was non-elected and comprised organisations like the Forestry Commission, Police, local retailers, school etc. It benefited from the Minerals Fund Trust for community regeneration, set up by East Ayrshire Council.

Priscilla Gordon-Duff recalled an unsuccessful attempt to develop an estate forum at Drummuir. She was concerned that women were under-involved in the community, although some did join 'Drummuir 21'. Despite its achievements, some saw this as entirely an 'estate initiative'. Tensions between landowner and tenants were an abiding problem, as well as the disproportionate involvement of incomers (as opposed to traditional inhabitants) in community initiatives.

Discussion.

- Problems of communities split between newcomers and traditional residents. (Because Dalmellington was an ex-mining community with few incomers, it wasn't an issue there).
- In Morvern, there had been resistance to the idea of new housing: many families in N. Argyll didn't want to see more people coming into the community. 'Incomers will take our jobs'. But in fact incomers often resemble tortoises, carrying jobs on their backs.
- The 'Fear of Change factor': but we should remember the quip that 'a Developer is someone who seeks to build a house in a beautiful area, and a Conservationist is someone who already has'.
- Often Fear of Change can be addressed by a stable management context: for example, a written mission statement defining estate policy is helpful (like the Ardtornish MS discussed by Angus Robertson on Friday).
- Public consultation is important for gauging community aspirations, even if it's also a valve for the release of entrenched prejudices. It's crucial to sell development as a tool for preserving vital local services (primary schools, post offices, etc.) Standing still isn't an option: refusing to embrace change will degrade rural communities.
- How to define 'the good'? A landowner's 'good' might not fit with that of the community or the environment. (Sometimes, especially with environmental issues, essential change is highly unpopular). Estates should be in dialogue about this: 'respect' and 'humility' regarding the community might not be enough. How to achieve a disinterested view? We must also

consider non-human communities, a ‘Council for all Beings’, and see issues through the eyes of an eagle or a stag.

- In Austria, building sustainable village communities had benefited from the establishment of citizen’s juries or ‘Wisdom Councils’, 12 members of the community who debate local policy issues. This avoids the problem of the ‘usual suspects’ swaying decisions. Local government facilitates the process, then steps back, but much depends on how effectively the agenda is set up. While an SNH facilitator might seem tendentious, a network of local advisors appointed by SNH might work.
- However important an ‘honest broker’ might be, he/she should never substitute for direct landowner involvement in community, especially in the case of absentee owners like the John Muir Trust.
- How does one ensure the continuation of good practice after the death of a charismatic landowner? It’s important to think about the next generation, but also to build community resilience to outlive individuals.
- Anarchy and experimentation can be enabling – we’re all too hung up on control. Need for trust, allowing other to take responsibility. Big estates have the power both to enable and suppress initiatives.

Session 2 ‘Giving it all Away’.

Short presentation by **Nigel Lowthrop**, founder of Hill Holt Wood, an environmental Social Enterprise in Lincolnshire, 2009 winner of the Green Apple Awards Champion of Sector (Build Environment and Architectural Heritage) and Champion of Champions.

Nigel Lowthrop described the challenge of transforming this 34-acre ancient mixed woodland, devastated by former owners, into an environmentally sustainable social enterprise, with a range of off-grid eco-buildings in straw, rammed earth and timber. His practice is guided by principles of ‘sustainability entrepreneurship’. Reversing the conventional commercial logic of maximum financial return in the shortest time possible, he pursued the goal of enhancing and maintaining resource quality (both human and natural) over the longest possible time scale. This entailed regenerating the degraded woodland and engaging with the local community, creating jobs for

disengaged young adults. Maximum salary is four times the minimum wage, with a well-defined career progression structure to incentivize employees. The project relied on ‘multiple benefit streams for multiple ends’, balancing financial viability and ecological sustainability, preferring qualitative to quantitative outcomes, and rewarding worthy contributors to the project.

Most pertinent to the present discussion however was NL’s decision to ‘give it all away’. Holt Hill Wood council was established with the goal of disseminating sustainable principles amongst the project’s various stakeholders, and to encourage trust and responsibility. In order to guarantee its future, NL proposed that the council take over management of the estate. In 2002 Holt Hill Wood was designated a ‘Social Enterprise’ with NL as Director and Project Manager: community ownership increased its success rate in financial, social and environmental terms. Subsequently NL resigned altogether, his wife taking over Project Management, on the grounds that ‘it will do better without me’. The business continues to flourish, with the construction of 5 affordable houses for staff, and community support for planning permission to permit NL and his wife to build their own home in the woodland. With a diverse range of income streams, its annual turnover is £1million, employs 30 staff and makes over 10% surplus per annum. It is a registered charity owning two woodlands and managing three others. Trust is the key concept: if you operate openly and transparently, with justice, you achieve trust.

Discussion.

- The challenge of reproducing best practice across generations was raised again: are community-owned estates more sustainable than privately-owned ones in this respect?
- In the case of inherited estates, there’s a huge burden of responsibility on individual owners not to fail. Perhaps less pressure in community-owned estates: on Eigg, continuity seems to be guaranteed as a new generation steps into the shoes of the old, many of whom arrived on the island in the 1960s as refugees from the social mainstream. A healthy community has the ability to reproduce itself.

- Research indicates that Local Councils aren't successful at transferring assets to communities, and distrust their ability to regenerate. It was pointed out that this could apply to any landowner – personality was all-important. For example, the century-old Stornaway Trust has become 'trustated', creating local tensions.

Conclusion: Public Policy

Sally Thomas was invited to speak briefly about her work as Head of the Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy Team, responsible for taking forward the commitment in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to develop a strategy for sustainable land use.

In March 2010 the Scottish Government organised a series of stakeholder workshops across the country in preparation for Scotland's first Land Use Strategy. The statutory consultative process gets underway in Autumn 2010, and the LUS is unveiled in March 2011. Some common concerns emerged from the workshops:

- A strong desire for government to take a decisive leadership role, but also for decision-making powers at local level.
- Stable policy environment: changes in land use take time, beyond the lifetime of a single parliament.
- Rural/Urban relationship. A holistic approach favoured: it's important to take Scotland as a whole, rather than a split entity.
- Land managers strongly favoured economic sustainability over public subsidies, government grants, etc.
- Desire for improved transparency and communications.

Discussion

- The Land Use Strategy offers an enabling framework rather than trumping all others: it's conceived holistically and applies to urban as well as rural planning.

- In England rural planning policy has suffered from over-centralisation which inhibits local agency. The Coalition Government seems committed to freeing up Departmental budgets, breaking the bunker mentality to allow greater flexibility, but how will this apply to Scotland? It was pointed out in response that the Scottish Government already permits far more local flexibility than is possible in England.
- Andrew Raven was committed to a single, integrated framework for land-management. If he was with us today, he'd surely be asking why this has been so long in coming? The Scottish Government had made tentative moves in this direction in 2003, but there was no positive feeling about the stakeholder community being ready for a Land Use Strategy. One achievement of the present government has been to foster a much more constructive climate for taking this forward.
- In conclusion, the Land Use Strategy was commended as an example of good leadership in practice, a bold initiative that would bring many issues to a head.

The weekend ended with some closing words from Amanda Raven, who thanked all participants for making it such a resounding success. E-mail addresses will be circulated, and discussions initiated this weekend continue in an open forum.

Participants in their turn thank Amanda, Simon Pepper and the Andrew Raven Trustees for an exceptionally well-organised, constructive, and enjoyable weekend. Thanks also to Jane Stuart-Smith and the catering team for feeding us so well, and Mrs Faith Raven and other members of the family for providing open house at Ardtornish; the beautiful weather contributed its magic, making this a weekend that none of us will forget in a hurry.