Doors open at Scotland's first hutting site for 70 years

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Once in a Lifetime Opportunity to be a Carnock Hutter

Ever dreamed of owning your own hut? For nearly a million Scandinavians it is a reality but by comparison only a few hundred Scots have the same opportunity. Now, for the first time in 70 years, it is going to be possible to build your own personal retreat and stay in it overnight.

In the early decades of the 20th century, hut sites did spring up all over Scotland as a response to the dirt and grime found in the cities. The most famous is Carbeth north of Glasgow. However, changes in planning law after WW2 led to the end of this practice as huts just weren't recognised in law. Reforesting Scotland's Thousand Huts campaign has resulted in huts being officially defined in planning policy and the burden of building regulations being relaxed. This means that the historical hutting movement can now be revived.

Expressions of interest are being invited to become one of twelve hutters or hutting families at Scotland's first new hutting site since the 1940s. The site, known as Carnock Wood, is located in west Fife, near the village of Saline. It is part of a larger mature pine plantation managed by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) as part of the National Forest Estate. The lucky hutters will have the opportunity to build their own huts which they will own, whilst paying an annual ground rent to FES.

The project is being steered forward as a pilot study by Reforesting Scotland's Thousand Huts campaign, with the full support of Forest Enterprise Scotland. One of the Thousand Huts organisers, Donald McPhillimy, said, 'We are very happy to have developed this project to the point where we can now start making it real for 12 prospective hutters. This is the first time for 70 years that huts can officially be built. We have applied for and received Planning Permission from Fife Council for 12 huts plus an outdoor classroom for the local schools. We are now inviting people to register an interest in going through the process to build and use one of the huts on the site. If more than 12 people come forward, we will hold a ballot. It will take a little more time but we are getting closer to this hutting site becoming a reality.'

The definition of a hut is fairly precise and contained within the Scottish Government's Scottish Planning Policy (2014) (1). It is small, generally off grid and used for intermittent recreational use. The huts at Carnock will be of a variety of sizes, some with double and some with single pitched roofs. They will nestle into an area of mature birch woodland and be finished with wood so that they will be unobtrusive in the landscape.

Two of the huts will be reserved for local people in a separate ballot. It is expected that most of the remaining 10 hutters or families will live within 50 miles of the site, which easily includes Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and everywhere in between. Other sites will appear in other parts of Scotland and 'hut miles' is a consideration. It is important to the campaign that huts have a small carbon footprint.

The Registration of Interest will be officially declared open at a Hutters' Rally to be held in Edinburgh on Saturday 18th November (2). At the Rally there will be a number of expert speakers, news from the campaign and small groups focusing on a number of related topics. Owners of potential hutting sites will mingle with those aspiring to have a hut.

The first steps to developing a hutting culture have been taken and the pace is picking up.

Donald McPhillimy Reforesting Scotland's Thousand Huts Campaign

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- A hut is a simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (ie. not a principal residence); having an internal floor of area no more than 30m2; constructed from low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace at the end of its life. Huts may be built singly or in groups.

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- https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hutters-rally-edinburgh-2017-tickets-39003066221
- The campaign for A Thousand Huts was launched in 2011 by Reforesting Scotland – a network which has campaigned for over 20 years for a sustainable forest culture in Scotland. As well as running projects on all aspects of forest culture, Reforesting Scotland produces a well-loved journal and runs a fantastic Annual Gathering.
- The aim of the Thousand Huts campaign is to promote huts and hutting – the building and enjoyment of simple structures (usually wooden) for living, working and recreation in the countryside. We are working to remove the barriers to simple, low impact hutting in Scotland. We have already achieved a lot in terms of successfully lobbying for the inclusion of huts in Scottish Planning Policy, and for the creation of appropriately light-touch building regulations for huts. We want to achieve a situation where those who wish to build a small, simple hut and pursue hutting can do so freely and within the law.

Photo available of Site for some of the huts at Carnock Wood, west Fife.

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