Enthusiastic Scots rally round to revive hutting

Wednesday 9 July, 2014

The Broons with their But an' Ben might be a national icon – but the truth is that very few Scots are as lucky to have a simple, back-to-nature retreat to escape to with their families. On Saturday, Scots from all walks of life will gather in Glasgow to change that and make the vision of huts for ordinary families a reality.

Around 150 people are expected to attend the Hutters' Rally[1] at Maryhill Burgh Hall, arranged by Reforesting Scotland's A Thousand Huts campaign[2]. It comes hot on the heels of the publication, on 23 June, of the new Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)[3], which supports – for the first time – the construction of huts[4] in rural settings for recreational accommodation.

Delegates at the Rally will debate the revival of hutting in Scotland, and the formation of a new Hutters' Federation to drive forward practical solutions to meet the surging demand for simple, low-impact, back-to-nature retreats. The Rally will feature a lively panel discussion as well as talks by broadcaster and commentator Lesley Riddoch (who is making a comparative study of hutting traditions in Norway and Scotland) and land rights campaigner Alastair McIntosh.

A number of expert-led small group workshops will cover the many practical aspects of getting a hut – from the options for accessing land to build-your-own techniques, off-grid living and the economics of starting a hut site.

In the afternoon, delegates will travel by double-decker bus (the Broons would enjoy that!) to the Carbeth Hutters Community, Scotland's largest remaining traditional hut site with over 140 huts. Here, they will experience hutting first-hand, and hear from some of Carbeth's hutters.

Those attending the Rally will also hear about the latest progress of a pilot project to create a new hut site in woodland near Saline in Fife. The project, led by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) in collaboration with Reforesting Scotland, will potentially see the building of ten huts on FCS-managed land, giving ordinary Scottish families access to a back-to-nature retreat in a woodland setting.

Meanwhile, A Thousand Huts has just launched its survey of prospective hutters[5], inviting anyone who would like to have a hut of their own (or the use of one) to go online and provide information to help shape the future of hutting in Scotland. It is also collecting information about Scotland's existing huts in a separate survey of current hut users[6].

"Hut availability is still extremely limited in Scotland, but things are changing fast," said Karen Grant, one of the campaign co-ordinators. "While current hut supply is nowhere near enough to meet demand, recent policy changes mean there's a good chance that new opportunities will begin to emerge soon, with the possibility of significant improvement in the next year or two. The growing network of hut enthusiasts will be able to start creating opportunities of its own – on private land, public land, and community owned land."

ENDS

For images, interviews, photo ops and further information, please contact:

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The Hutters' Rally takes place on Saturday 12 July 2014 at Maryhill Burgh Hall. Full programme at www.thousandhuts.org
Ticketed event – press places and a photo op are available by arrangement.

Reforesting Scotland (RS) is a grassroots membership organisation and registered charity which aims to nurture and promote a forest culture in Scotland. **A Thousand Huts campaign** was started in summer 2011 by members of RS to encourage the growth of a Scottish hutting culture similar to that seen in Scandinavian countries. This would offer ordinary people from all walks of life the chance to build a rustic, low-impact retreat where they could relax and spend leisure time surrounded by nature.

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www.reforestingscotland.org and **www.thousandhuts.org**

The inclusion of huts in the **new Scottish Planning Policy** (SPP), published on 23 June 2014, is the result of lobbying and consultation input by Reforesting Scotland's campaign group A Thousand Huts[3]. The new SPP recommends that local development plans make provision for huts for intermittent recreational occupation. Previously, there was no specific provision in Scottish planning policy or legislation for the building of a simple hut or cabin where people can sleep from time to time for leisure and relaxation.

The reference to huts within the new SPP appears as follows in the section on Promoting Rural Development: *79. Plans should set out a spatial strategy which: ….where appropriate, sets out policies and proposals for leisure accommodation, such asholiday units, caravans, and huts;...*

The definition of a hut in the glossary of the new SPP reads as followsiHi: *A simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (ie. not a principal residence); having an internal floor area of 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.*

The survey of prospective hutters is online at www.thousandhuts.org/?page_id=387

The survey of existing huts in Scotland is online at www.thousandhuts.org/?page_id=399

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