



Community  
Woodlands  
Association

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**FOR APRIL 2004 TO MARCH 2005**

# **COMMUNITY WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR APRIL 2004 TO MARCH 2005**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This year has been a period of growth and development for CWA. At the start of the year, the organisation was less than one year old, and has achieved a great deal in terms of its aim of providing support for community woodlands, raising their profile and representing them in the corridors of power.

Throughout 2004 / 2005 targets have been monitored, collated and reported to funders by the Development Officers (DO's) on a quarterly basis. This report brings together that information in a more easily accessible format for distribution to funders, members and other interested parties.

CWA now has a varied and active Board of Directors, with currently 10 in post. All Directors have been active in supporting the DOs, representing CWA on fora, committees and networks and working with potential members to give support and encourage them to join.

Two development consultants worked up until August to secure 3 years of core funding and to progress the appointment of staff. Two new (DOs) were appointed in August and September respectively, and have been implementing the targets in the Development Plan. The DOs meet regularly with the Directors, in order to report on progress and collectively develop ideas.

Membership has almost doubled in the year and the channel of information to members is well established through the website, e-group and newsletter. CWA is well represented on several key committees and fora, and has a new logo and exhibition material with which it promotes the community woodland movement at events around Scotland.

The year has not been without its difficulties and setbacks. Commencement of the employment of the DOs was delayed by various factors, which resulted in an 8, rather than 12 month period in which to implement Year 1 output targets. The conference had to be postponed, which led to a withdrawal by the appointed conference organisers and a resultant greatly increased workload for the DOs.

In spite of these difficulties most of the output targets have been met and indeed many exceeded CWA is looking forward to a period of further growth and development in 2005-6.

### **The Report**

- Part one of this report is written narrative outlining action taken to develop the nine outputs agreed with funders for year one of the CWA.
- Part two lists the statistical information relating to targets achieved, and is a summary of reports for each of the four financial quarters.
- Part three is the financial statement for the period.

## CHAIR'S REPORT

I love energy, commitment and forward movement, and I have seen all of that this past year within the Community Woodland Association.

By the time this report reaches you Matilda and Diane will have been in post almost a year and I know that the directors and I feel that they have brought great professionalism and vigour to the organisation, and increasingly are helping us shape up our future support for the community woodland movement. Their work and ours would not have gone forward without the foundation work put in by Shan Edwards and Doreen Macintyre, and we warmly thank them for that. Three of our directors also moved on Les Bates; George Moffat; and Colin Parsons. All three had contributed well, thank you.

We founded the organisation on the principles of an active board of directors, and they have lived up to expectations. They have represented the community woodland sector on many groups across Scotland. Not only that, I believe that the individuals concerned are helping change policy and lead the way in rural development. We now have the National Forest Land Scheme, we have new Regional and National Forest Forums, and I believe communities will increasingly lead the way delivering the Biodiversity Action Plans for the nation. Let's not lose this momentum.

Over the year we have developed good and growing working relationships with our major funders and are increasingly working in partnership with them. I look forward to the 2 major projects we will be undertaking this year on biodiversity training and landscape planning. Both again have the scope to shape thinking and move us forward on a national scale. We will also be continuing to develop training with our partners and blazing new trails.

I stepped back from the Chair of the CWA in February. I was glad to do so because I saw folks coming through that will take the organisation on to the next lap. You have a strong board and a thoughtful Chairman with Jon Hollingdale.

I am still on the board of directors and will continue to extol the virtues of community involvement with land and trees as I travel the country about my work. What is happening in Scotland is extraordinary; let's keep up the good work.

Margaret Davidson  
Abriachan  
May 2005

## **I. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Visits to Member Groups**

Directors and DO's have been out visiting groups. Towards the end of 2004 they began using a standard format list of questions to ensure that the same information is collected from each group. The information is then written into a report and used as reference for future development. This information has also been useful in advising groups and taking forward projects such as the regional groupings and training events. Information gathering from groups informs the development of our projects. To date we have visited 42 groups including attending 14 committee meetings and have contacted 45 groups to request information about activities and training required.

### **Contact with Non Member Groups**

Prior to the conference, research was carried out and 105 potential member groups were contacted and invited to the event. Of these we encouraged 9 new members who then attended the conference.

As well as identifying potential members ourselves, the DO's are now being contacted by new groups seeking advice on various issues such as; how to set themselves up, the right people to contact for particular information and general guidance with project development. These groups are given our contact details through government and non-government bodies we have developed working relationships with such as SNH, FCS and Reforesting Scotland as well as other woodland groups they have consulted.

### **Membership Development**

DO's give advice on first contact with non member groups but will always encourage groups to join the CWA and send out a membership form. If on second contact the group has still not paid a membership fee then they are given advice but informed that we are a member organisation and as such must encourage membership for further advice to be given. We have seven groups who are now considering membership under these circumstances having received guidance in the first instance.

### **Location Distribution**

To determine where member groups are situated in relation to each other a map was drawn up showing the location of all members and published in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Woodland Voices. (Copies of Woodland Voices issued throughout the year are available on request) This map enabled groups to see which of the other member groups were close to them, encouraging more networking and knowledge sharing. It also helped the Development Officers to have a clear split of groups between north and south. The map also highlights areas where membership is low allowing CWA to target these areas to locate woodland groups and encourage them to join, such as the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland

### **Membership statistics**

The following is a breakdown of the statistics for Membership throughout 2004/2005

#### **Increased membership**

At the beginning of April 2004 we had 56 members of Community Woodlands Association. Recruitment since then has been very healthy with an additional 22 members in the past year. That is an increase of over 39%.

#### **Breakdown**

The total membership of 79 at 31st March is broken down as follows.

36 Full members, 24 Standard members, 10 Individual, 4 Umbrella Members, 4 Associate Members, 1 Founder Member

Of the 22 new members 6 were Full, 12 Standard, 2 Individual, 1 Umbrella and 1 Associate.

#### Income

The total income from memberships in the year was £2460.

#### **Renewals / cancellations**

A database has been developed to keep up to date with changes to membership details and new members and renewals. This is updated on a regular basis. Four members did not renew their membership during 2004/2005 of these 2 were standard members who did not become fully established groups one was a full member who is going through reorganisation and one was an individual.

#### **Difficulties**

Due to the organisation of the conference it has been difficult for development officers to put as much time as desirable into membership development. We are aware that there is much more that could be done and feel that the best way to achieve this is by personal contact and discussion with committees and volunteers heavily involved with the groups.

## **2. REPRESENTATION**

#### **Working with members to identify key issues**

CWA has been active in working with members to assess issues important to them in creating a collective voice to represent the community woodland movement. One element of a survey of 45 members was to ask what they would like to see CWA doing. 31 respondents expressed the key issues in terms of representation, as follows:

- Proactive representation at national level with all important associated Government and NGOs
- Lobby for funding support not yet available, e.g. for running costs
- Co-ordinate responses from all groups on national consultations relating to community woods
- Be able to represent and promote members in political circles
- Lobby for Community Woodlands in general

These requests have been taken on board in the activities over the year, and are indeed in keeping with the Development Plan objectives. In addition to this survey, the template form for meetings with members encourages them to give a view as to priorities they see for CWA in its representational role. From the 42 meetings with member groups, the feedback has reflected the points listed above. Members are also given the opportunity to comment on the CWA response to consultations. This year, CWA has provided a response to the FC National Forest Land Scheme and to the SNH Strategic review.

#### **Contribution to National Seminars and conferences**

Alongside the CWA 3-day seminar and conference in February 2005, CWA has been involved in many events, such as attending and networking (e.g. the Healthy Environment Network Seminar in Stirling), giving presentations (e.g. at the Community Land Unit's Project Officers seminar in Balmacara) and taking a joint role in the organisation of

events (e.g. Youth on Board Seminar at Abriachan). In all CWA has been involved in 15 such events.

### **Contact with relevant national and local politicians**

Development Officers and directors have lobbied and involved various politicians throughout the year on behalf of members. 20 MSP's were contacted directly, inviting them to the CWA conference but also informing them about the work of CWA.

In addition, there has been direct verbal contact with several MSPs and MPs. One of the directors has discussed the work of CWA with Jack McConnell, Maureen McMillan, Rob Gibson, Eleanor Scott, Peter Peacock, Margaret Curran and Malcolm Chisholm.

### **National Fora**

The directors, DO's and active members represent CWA on a range of national and regional fora.

- Forestry for People Panel
- Scottish Forestry Forum
- 3 Regional Forestry For a – Highland, Grampian and South Scotland
- Cross-Party Parliamentary Forestry Group
- Healthy Environment Network
- Forest Habitat Networks Steering Group
- Native Woodland Discussion Group
- SFGS users group
- NFLS advisory group
- Forestry and Rural Development Scheme Steering Group

This has enabled a strong collective and informed voice for community woodlands.

## **3. NETWORKING**

The main networking event was the CWA Community Woodlands Conference held in Glasgow in February 05. The organisation of this event has taken up to 70% of the full time DO's time since November. However the benefits have been enormous. Members and non-members attended as well as many agencies and NGO's, increasing the visibility of CWA and encouraging others to take a more positive view of community woodlands both in cities and rural areas.

CWA are working closely with CLU and Paths for All in the Highlands and Islands to take forward their training programmes which will benefit both Community Land Initiatives and Community Woodland Groups, each event is a networking opportunity for groups. A training support project is being put forward by CWA during 2005/2006.

Groups use the e-group regularly to request information from others on various issues. Topics have included requests for advice on, insurance, funding, contractors and lawyers. Woodland Voices, our quarterly magazine provides current information on events for training and networking as well as funding opportunities and successes of woodland groups.

The website has been updated and will be developed throughout 2005/06 to include searchable databases of consultants, training courses and trainers, funding opportunities and other useful contacts.

Throughout the six months to March 05, the DO's, as well as the directors, have been meeting with many agency and NGO representatives and are building strong working

relationships with them. Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Community Land Unit - HIE, Central Scotland Forest Trust, Borders Forest Trust, North Highland Forest Trust, Paths for All, Development Trust Association Scotland, Senscot, The Woodland Trust, Small Woods Association, Reforesting Scotland are a few but there many more we contact and are continually building ever closer partnerships with these bodies.

#### **4. SUPPORT**

##### **Insurance**

One of the aims of CWA during 2004/2005 was to set up a group insurance policy for members. Unfortunately due to pressures within the insurance business we were unable to do so. A report was commissioned and compiled outlining the reasons for this, which is available to our members.

To try to assist with this problem CWA has identified the cheapest options available to groups and have passed these on. Reforesting Scotland has updated their information sheet on insurance using the information from the report commissioned by CWA and including the insurers identified by us.

##### **Training**

A training analysis was carried out on the returned questionnaires issued to groups at the beginning of 2004. These identified the areas where groups felt that more training was required. DO's have been working closely with bodies such as North Highland Forest Trust, Community Land Unit, Paths for All and Borders Forest Trust to avoid duplication in provision of training courses. CWA will build an application for funding to provide training in those subjects not covered by others. The application will also include Conference and seminar costs over the next 3 years.

Groups are continuously informed of training opportunities in their area as well as throughout the country and given funding information about how to finance members' attendance.

##### **Conference**

The fifth annual Community Woodland Seminar and Conference was the first major event to be organised by the Community Woodlands Association. The 2005 Seminar and Conference, entitled "Town and Country – Linking and Learning", was held in the centre of Glasgow, and co-hosted by the CWA and the GalGael Trust, based in Govan. The event had a particular focus on how groups in rural and urban situations can learn from each other and provide support and encouragement for future development. The main aims of the event were to:

- Facilitate networking and sharing of knowledge and experience between community groups in both rural and urban locations, agencies and NGOs working to develop community woodlands.
- Highlight the similarities between rural and urban groups in their difficulties, achievements and future development and identify ways they can work together for success.
- Provide useful information for these groups through various means including printed information, presentations, displays, workshops, site visits to urban community projects and informal discussion.

- Raise awareness amongst groups of opportunities for enhancing and conserving the natural heritage of their woodlands, as well as opportunities for timber and non-timber products, access improvements, social enterprise, education, green tourism and community development.
- Support, promote and represent community woodlands in both rural and urban locations through focussing on the positive aspects of what community woodlands deliver.

### **Seminars**

**Youth on Board** - At the end of March 05 Abriachan hosted the first of the seminars in which CWA has involvement. This was done through the CLU training programme and involved 10 groups linked to CWA. The seminar was highly successful in delivering guidance to groups about how to engage the young people in their community and keep them interested. There was also a great deal of networking going on between groups throughout the day.

## **5. INFORMATION**

As outlined in the Networking section we are continuously encouraging groups to use the e-group as a means of communicating with other groups. This is beginning to happen on a regular basis. We have also split the groups so that we can post regionally relevant information without annoying other members to whom it is not relevant.

Use of the e-group has increased considerably during the past year. The e-group was set up in March 2004 and since it has begun there has been a steady increase in its use. There are now 95 members taken from all the CWA member groups as they are entitled to have up to 3 members from each group. In March 2004 there were 3 messages posted on the egroup rising to a peak of 23 in July. The highest number of messages posted in one month was in Feb 05 when 46 messages were posted by DO's and members.

The most significant change of use is members using the e-group to seek advice from other groups on issues such as insurance, contractors, articles of association, setting up as a company and funding for land purchase. The CWA development officers post events and current information such as CWA responses to public consultations from SNH, FCS and Highland Council.

We have reviewed the information posted on the egroup by CWA and are now giving groups information on a monthly basis on training opportunities, funding, relevant events, consultations and activities by CWA. The quality of information now being received is much higher and groups regularly thank the DO's for info posted. We also post important information throughout each month.

The CWA magazine "Woodland Voices" is issued on a quarterly basis with a summary of what has been happening over the previous quarter. Groups' successes are now being included as well as regular features on funding, training, events and articles of interest. The magazine has a distribution of 155, which includes all members, and a list of NGO's, Government bodies, politicians, individuals and other interested parties. Each new member receives a copy of the most recent magazine. "Woodland Voices" is also issued at events attended by the CWA promotion stall.

## **6. PROMOTION**

CWA staff and directors feel strongly that part of the role of the organisation is to raise awareness of CWA and its members.

In 2004-5 the following work has been carried out to raise the profile of the organisation:

- A CWA logo has been developed following a tender process involving 6 design companies. The colours of the logo are now being used in all publicity material, thereby giving a clear and strong 'corporate' identity to all CWA publicity material
- A design company was also appointed to develop an exhibition panel. Each Director, as well as the Development Officers, has a copy of this to take to exhibitions and events.
- The same company has developed stationery design for CWA, including letterhead, compliments slips and business cards for staff and directors, again enhancing the sense of identity.
- 4 articles about the work of CWA have been published in national press and journals, and at least three in local press.
- The Community Woodlands Association Conference received coverage on STV Gaelic television. BBC Landward have also been approached and are keen to run a feature on the work of CWA.
- A Director was interviewed about CWA on the Out of Doors programme on BBC Radio Scotland
- 33 key decision making organisations across the country have been informed about the work of CWA, e.g. head of the Communities team at SNH and FC Head of Policy and Business Development.

## **7. DELIVERY**

Two development officers are now in post. One part time DO was appointed and began work in August 04 and the full time DO began in November having completed 2 months part time prior to that. It was decided that general administration should be carried out by the DO's and any specific admin jobs would be contracted out. Both DO's have set up home offices and have established a professional logo and stationary for official letters and documents.

A financial reporting system was agreed and implemented in January 05 and has been used to complete the final accounts for this financial year. The DO's and the directors are continuously recording and monitoring progress in respect of the outputs determined for 2004/05 and a new workplan for 2005/06 has been put forward for agreement with the funders.

## **8. MONITORING**

CWA is committed to monitoring its work for effectiveness and efficiency. Quarterly progress reports have been produced and distributed to funders, culminating in this Annual report, which will also include a summary of output targets reached and a financial report. A draft monitoring form for members has also been devised. In order to avoid 'questionnaire fatigue' this survey of member satisfaction will be carried out in 2005-6 in the form of a telephone survey of a randomly selected sample of member groups. Development Officers carried out a review of strategy and procedures at the

end of Year 1, and have as a result produced draft work programmes for year 2 which are to be considered by the Board.

## **9. COMMITMENT – OTHER PROJECTS**

The CWA is one of 16 partners from 5 nations (Sweden, Norway, Finland & Iceland are the others) who will be working in a recently approved 3 year international project, funded by the EU Northern Periphery Program, designed to widen the scope of community involvement in forestry. The Scottish project area will be selected during 2005 – the ideal area will be geographically well-defined, have a wide range of forest types and ownerships, and have one or more active community woodland groups. A locally-based Project Officer, to be managed by the community, will be employed by the CWA to run the project in Scotland. Over the following two years, the local community will lead the development of a strategic plan for local forestry, focusing on how new and existing forests can be established and managed to optimise their long-term contribution to the sustainable development of the local community. The project will also support 8 international exchanges of 4 persons each to our international partners. Exchange participants will have experience of and/or interest in one (or more) of four themes: community woodland development, tourism (based on forest land and resources), exploitation of non-timber forest products, and local processing of forest products (from craft scale to small sawmill).

CWA has been investigating and developing a variety of projects, many of these in partnership with other organisations or individuals, and indeed in general in continuously strengthening relationships with other organisations in order to develop further ideas for projects as well as to avoid duplication.

The Development Officers have considered areas that would be useful for research and have been working with appropriate organisations to progress these, for example, by involving SNH officers in discussions to develop an audit of biodiversity, and management for biodiversity, in member woodlands. A proposal for this was developed into a funding application which was unsuccessful but will be re-submitted in 2005-6.

CWA has been working with a Masters Student to evaluate the impact and constraints of Forest Certification upon community woodlands, and develop this subject into a dissertation topic. The student will be carrying out research work on behalf of CWA on Certification across Scotland over the summer of 2005. A further proposal is for student research into health and the environment with particular reference to current Scottish Executive Initiatives and funding opportunities. This proposal is with an agency that distributes topics to students requiring applied research subjects.

Development Officers have also been progressing a scheme to facilitate 10 training courses, hosted by member woodlands, on managing woodlands for biodiversity. The courses are to be one-day events with a balance of practical 'hands-on' training as well as seminars and workshops. Tutors are to be as locally based as possible, with the aim of delegates having the opportunities to establish links with tutors, thereby enabling ongoing support and further training. A draft application to the Scottish Biodiversity Action Grant has been prepared in order to fund the project.