

“MAKING WOODLANDS WORK”



REPORT

The Community Woodlands Association Annual Conference

23 and 24 October 2010 McLaren High School, Callander

INTRODUCTION

The 11th Annual CWA Conference “Making Woodlands Work” took place on 23 & 24 October 2010 at McLaren High School, Callander. The weekend was a great success, with over 70 delegates making their way to the National Park for lively discussion, excellent company and a bit of a jig!

The event explored the numerous ways that Scotland’s communities are managing, developing and promoting their local woodlands. Social Enterprise, Carbon Offsetting, Woodfuel, and Woodland Gardens and Allotments were among the topics under the spotlight at the event.

Here are just a couple of quotes from the great feedback we got.

“After due reflection, I am convinced that that was the best conference I have ever been at ... ever. It was fascinating to look round the hall and recognise where everyone had come from, the work they were doing and the expertise / knowledge / experience and skills present in that hall.”

“Great conference indeed, best bit though I think was bringing the date forward to before the clocks change. Gaining that afternoon sunlight for the outings was fab. Good to catch us all before we come down with SAD for the winter.”

The following report contains an overview of the weekend, with notes taken by volunteer scribes and CWA directors and staff members.

All PowerPoint Presentations from the event are available via the CommWoods Channel on YouTube. A video of the weekend will also be available in the coming weeks.

www.youtube.com/user/commwoods.

Photographs from the weekend – including the lively Ceilidh and site visits, can be viewed at CWA’s online photo bank:

<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/community.woodlands.photobank>.



CWA gratefully acknowledges the support of our funders: Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme, the Robertson Trust, the Hugh Fraser Foundation, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Community Land Unit of Highlands & Island Enterprise

SATURDAY 23 OCTOBER 2010

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Short movie about the future of agriculture.

PEAK OIL

EAMON KING

WOODS, WORMS AND VERMICULTURE

RON GILCHRIST, Fairlie Organic Growers & Greenlink Consultancy

COMMUNITY LAND BANK

HELEN PANK, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

COMMUNITY WOODLANDS EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT

DI OLIVER, CWA Social Enterprise Development Officer

WOODLAND EMPLOYMENT CASE STUDY

MILTON COMMUNITY WOODLAND

CWA AGM

SATURDAY 23 OCTOBER

KEY NOTE SPEAKER: JAN BEBBINGTON, Sustainable Development Commission Vice Chair (Scotland)

Jan began by emphasising the importance of focusing on the here and now and highlighted Angkor Wat, Cambodia, as a source of inspiration with its entrance of stone angels on one side and devils on the other, demonstrating the need for constant flow.

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the Government's advisor on sustainable development and although affected by recent cuts, its statutory duties remain. Many people involved as advisors are academics who are interested in the roots of things – they look at specifics and try to understand how things work whereas social sciences look at how things join together and are therefore not so narrow and specific. Jan believes we need to concentrate more on how things join together.

The UK Framework for Sustainable Development is still active with the outcomes being to live within environmental limits and ensure a strong healthy and just society and this framework differs from previous as the economy is now an enabler not an outcome. The SDC is trying to address the 3 crises simultaneously, these being:-

1. Environmental - Climate change, resource and waste issues
2. Financial - Created by increase in levels of debt to buy stuff to drive the economy and now fiscal contraction and related issues caused by belief in needing to cut spending
3. Social recession - Unequal and unhappy society both in UK and at global level

Living within environmental limits is important - Angkor Wat crashed because of environmental destruction including salination of their river. CWA and their members already practice sustainable development and woodlands offer financial, cultural and social benefits (although in Scotland they probably don't offer much in terms of beating climate change due to their size). Climate change is coming, 2% is not avoidable and resilient communities are very important in order to survive this.

The recession offers us a space in which to try and get to terms with some of the food and fuel prices issues, however, the Big Society is probably more about the State getting to withdraw and others getting to pick up the pieces and the effects will leak into Scotland.

SDC has been working with the Development Trust Association looking at cash and how communities can get both capital and revenue funding - traditionally these sources are either private or through grant aid/public spend however, it now needs to come from other sources – ie within the community. Very important for people to buy resources locally and keep money circulating locally. Jan is originally from New Zealand where most land is held by the state. She highlighted that desirable change cannot be forced but must come from ground swell.

Questions and discussion focussed around using forests to try and prevent climate change; the conflict between what community woodlands aim to do and some of the environmental agencies and organisations who are often stuck to their agenda and therefore operating in isolation. It was agreed that there should be an opportunity for environmental organisations to come together to agree a shared agenda and acknowledge that this will involve compromise.

Diane Oliver

MAKING WOODLANDS WORK: MICHAELA HUNTER, Kilfinan Community Forest Company

Michaela introduced herself as a familiar face to CWA, having worked as a development officer, and now being a member of the board. Michaela explained that since her time with CWA she has become increasingly involved in the Kilfinan Community Forest initiative. "I can safely say I've been involved in every aspect of the project so far" the project finally culminated in the community buy-out of an area of forestry which concluded in March of this year (2010).

KCFC comprises of an active volunteer group of directors who represent different areas within the Parish of Kilfinan. They bought 127ha (315acres) of mostly conifer plantation forestry from the Forestry Commission Scotland in March of this year. This concluded 4 years of community consultations, public and steering group meetings and finally raising the cash to buy it. "It wasn't easy but the best things in life rarely are."

This is a tiny rural community whose hamlets and settlements are dispersed across a rocky landscape with thin soils, which are able to support little more than conifer plantations. The area is a red squirrel haven, and home to all the top predators – golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ravens, with the odd White Tailed Eagle glimpsed over Loch Fyne, as well as otters and badgers, red and roe deer, and wild cat sightings.

The forest was purchased following community consultations that identified key themes concerning the community's future viability. Employment opportunities were essential as most of the local economy is directed around tourism over the 6 month spring/summer period. Thereafter work is thin on the ground and many workers are underemployed in the community.

In March 2010 KCFC were awarded £167,000 from the Climate Challenge Fund, a government initiative which aims to support communities to become more sustainable. This allowed the employment of a full-time post to coordinate the development programme in the forest and one part-time administrator to support the post. This flexible(ish) fund gives KCFC 100% support to installing the following community services and amenities:

- Initial forest access for timber harvesting and processing of woodfuel
- Community composting facilities and machinery shed
- Food growing and polytunnel facilities with meeting hut
- All abilities access route from the Primary School into the forest
- Full services installation for FOT cabin, meeting hut and polytunnel
- Generate initial woodfuel supply chain
- Free home energy audits and advice on grant funding for everyone

KCFC were keen that everyone in the community could benefit from some aspect of these developments. They accessed Future Jobs Funding which was only available to the voluntary and community sector, to secure 3 full-time employees for 40 weeks.

Future Funding: Most of the government funding available is to help enterprises set up their businesses with capital equipment and infrastructure support and for land management contracts. However, KCFC also need to raise cash to enable cash flow too. The group are currently drafting their Forest Design Plan, and will be submitting proposals for rhodo and deer management, harvesting, replanting of conifers and native woodland regeneration. A woodfuel supply chain, timber processing and further access and recreation work is on the agenda.

The benefits are numerous: at least 3 new families have moved to the area on the strength of the community woodland developments. 3 full-time employees are gaining skills development and training in land-based work. Monthly markets showcase local produce and 17 families interested in growing food in the forest. Enquiries for woodfuel and timber products increase every day. Dog walkers, hikers and kids are all out there exploring the forest.

The group have had 4 years to draft, prepare and finalise plans to develop the forest sustainably, (a lot of hard work and determination) these are vital steps in order to get the plans right and to ensure that developments actually do alleviate the issues the community face. Maintaining energy is also key, after the community buy-out, the group were absolutely exhausted, but... the directors pulled up the slack, more people came on board and picked up the lead.

Although the work is now only just beginning, the group have learned a lot of lessons so far, which can only give them an advantage in the future. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic, but they do have down days too. An active board, some volunteers and dedicated staff will take any group to the next level... making money!

Below is an outline of some of the Q&A's that followed:

Q: Woodfuel competing with other suppliers?

A: Michaela was keen to dispel the myth on displacement activity. Yes KCF would be in competition with other suppliers and competition is good. Most suppliers in and around the area are approximately the same price and by working together can only benefit each other.

Q: Woodfuel is still a minority element so do they think there is room to grow?

A: There appears to be a growing interest and there has been an increase in Wood-burners being installed in the village.

Q: Anywhere with local affordable house building within KFC?

A: This had been part of plans but things take longer than you hope. It is still an aspiration of KCF and will be looked at again in 2 to 4 years. The Community a bit nervous of the idea but will be in the new horizon.

Q: What about wood extraction on sloping land?

A: Walking horses are brought in sometimes. Costly, worth it for educational resource.

Q: Do you have funding for a Carbon Development Officer after March 11?

A: No this contract will finish but it is hoped that a new 5yr post will be created with funding from SRDP

Q: What about a local community woodland housing Assoc?

A: Fyne Homes approached KCF to build houses but the community didn't like it and had no control over the waiting list criteria so it was thrown out.

Q: Any response to community garden enterprise?

A: Some of the community have signed up to the raised bed systems. More people just need to try out growing for themselves etc first perhaps.

Comment: Rural Homes for Rent Scheme - they draw up criteria with the community. They very much come from the point of view - local land for local people

Lara McDonald

THE FUTURE OF CWE, JOHN PATERSON, CWA Business Development Manager

John gave an overview of Community Woodland Enterprise (CWE), the transition and current development within CWA, the future strategy for CWE, what opportunities exist for CWA members, activities and benefits, and discussion of potential next steps. He began by discussing what opportunities exist despite being in a recession and suffering social, environmental and fiscal crises. In this context, it was suggested that broader economic horizons are required, looking beyond traditional markets to realise mutual benefit for communities, woodland groups and the CWA. This will lead to social, environmental and financial security for us all.

These opportunities include markets for traditional saw log production as well as development and production of products and services. In addition, the private sector offers a key market opportunity that will be focused on. These markets and opportunities can be exploited by member groups with support from CWA for capacity building and from Community Woodland Enterprise (CWE) the new income generating trading subsidiary of the CWA.

John outlined the key aspects of CWE as a mechanism to generate income for member groups and the CWA. The model is designed to build capacity of member groups, encourage local growth with centralised support to raise the profile and develop national marketing with CWE's assistance.

John then provided an outline strategy of CWE's activities. These activities will be in four stages, over two phases. The first phase will include provision of specialist consultancy – such as Management Plans, Marketing and Market Development – national marketing of local products/services, and development and promotion of woodland as a venue – areas such as Corporate Workdays and Team building. The second Phase will be developing activities that require capital investment, such as providing a machinery hire service and support for monetising local timber resource.

The presentation then focused on what sort of activities could be delivered where there are market opportunities for. John noted that this is wide, and is based on the facilities, skills, expertise and vision of local groups – and that CWE and CWA wish to empower local decision making. Areas discussed included recreation and corporate activities, tourism, health, education, access, community services, environmental activities and timber product sales. John used this as a springboard to discuss the social, environmental and financial benefits associated with undertaking these activities. In short, the building of resilient self-sustaining communities creating jobs, products, services and generating sustainable income.

Finally, John discussed the next steps. CWE is currently going through the process of incorporation. He encouraged each member group to discuss opportunities with him and the CWA team on the weekend and afterwards, note interest and this will be follow-up. Then, development of a marketing and branding programme will be undertaken, identification and engagement of key customers and participants, establishment of a pilot programme and then replicating this working model throughout Scotland with other keen participating groups.

John closed with a summary of the presentation emphasising the role of CWA and CWE in support, capacity building and aiding groups realise their potential, opportunities and income generation – building a strong resilient community woodland sector; generating income locally and nationally – win:win.

John Paterson

WORKSHOPS

Delegates had the choice of four, 1 hour workshops.

COMMUNITY SHARES & WOODLAND ACQUISITION

Douglas Westwater, Community
Enterprise

WOODLAND GARDENS & ALLOTMENTS

Ron Gilchrist, Greenway Consulting
& Fairlie Organic Growers

WOODFUEL AND ENERGY

Simon Lockwood, Scottish
Native Woodlands

WOODLANDS AS VENUES

Jon Hollingdale, John Paterson
CWA

COMMUNITY SHARES & WOODLAND ACQUISITION: DOUGLAS WESTWATER Community Enterprise

Community Enterprise was commissioned by CWA to investigate the potential for using share issues to raise capital for land purchase. They are now working with agencies to develop a legal model and mechanisms that will work for Scottish organisations, and further discussion will be required in terms of community consultation required by Community Right to Buy, National Forestry Land Scheme etc. Further info was requested as the timescale and mechanism for disseminating answers back from agencies and OSCR are currently unknown.

The idea of community shares is still relatively new in Scotland and their use is more widespread in England. Douglas gave an outline of how share issues work, the types of organisations that can issue shares and some of the pros and cons around the potential structures and processes. Nearly all current share issuers are Community Benefit Societies (CBS). These have a maximum £20k shareholding for individuals and can pay dividends from profit (many renewables organisations work this way). Investors can also choose to forgo their profit or the CBS can stipulate this as part of the issue up front. CBS can also state when shares can be withdrawn i.e. not unless the company is in profit / before a set time limit etc.

There is a current debate for groups around membership ie are they a member of the charity separately or does membership come as part of the share offer. The trading subsidiary of a charity can raise shares (OSCR is not particularly enthusiastic about this as it potentially raises control issues). Discussion centred round the importance of asset locks (state dissolution procedures) and shareholders dying / becoming ill and a lack of clarity for executors/ guardians.

www.communityshares.org hosts info from the 2 year development programme in England by the DTA and Charities Commission. There are concerns re the potential resources if large numbers of organisations start using share issues to raise finance and it was recognised that it won't necessarily raise large amounts of funding for buy outs etc but will raise some clean match funding.

Email Douglas for a copy of his presentation douglas@communityenterprise.co.uk. The report on CE's investigations can now be downloaded from <http://www.communitywoods.org/news/521>

Diane Oliver

WOODLAND GARDENS: RON GILCHRIST

Greenway Consulting & Fairlie Organic Growers

Ron welcomed the group and gave everyone the opportunity to express their interest in woodland gardens. Ron outlined that our planet is in rapid decline. We must act effectively ... and NOW. Current initiatives in reducing our carbon footprint are not working. Anaerobic decomposition produces methane this means that when we put rotting vegetables on a compost heap bin, if we do not get our fork and turn it over regularly, we could be "rotters" not composters!

Ron asked everyone to reflect on the natural and inherent productivity in forests with no intervention or chemicals whatsoever.... No tractors, no digging, no fossil fuel derivatives [fertilisers or pesticides]. Awesome! The inherent fertility in forests comes from their ability to efficiently reuse all the organic debris which falls to the forest floor. This in an ecosystem in balance, we can learn from Nature.

Thermophilic Composting: Ron then introduced the concept of thermophilic composting where organic material is composted in a hot composting box, which has been insulated. The action of the naturally occurring microbes multiplying increases the internal temperature to approximately 60°C which kills harmful bacteria, all pathogens and weed seeds over a period of just 2 weeks ... but remember to open up the box and stir up the pile after 7 days to let more air in to these magnificent microbes. The material is then ready either to go into its 'maturation' period, which is a cold process taking 6 months before it becomes fully mature compost. The plastic compost bins sold by local authorities actually lose this valuable heat, they sweat and don't work for the thermophilic phase but are fine for the cold maturation phase.

The composition of feedstock for the hot-composting process is:

- 60% green material (grass clippings, weeds, chopped veg peelings and stalks - or stable manure in winter)
- 40% brown material (hedge clippings, leaves, cardboard, etc)

(Paper is composed mostly of clay, so does not work very well. It should go to the paper recycling skip.)

The hot-composting material should be placed in a simple wooden box which has been insulated. To be sure you are getting it right, purchase a compost thermometer. After the temperature has hit 55 - 60°C for a week or so, it will then drop as the microbes have used up the oxygen. Open up the box, turn over the contents and place the thermometer back in. Cover up the box tightly again. The temperature will now return to 50-60°C for a further week, which will cook and kill the weed seeds. The rapid, hot composting phase is now over.

Compost Maturation: Now you can use this material in either of two ways. You could incorporate woodchip, clippings and/or cardboard and transfer to your compost bin or, preferably, wooden bay, keep it covered and moist, and it will mature in 4 - 6 months. Remember to turn it over to let air in at least every month. When it is mature, it can then be used as compost or mulch on your vegetables.

Composting with Worms – Vermicomposting: The alternative is to have a wormery and feed your processed material from your Hotbox to your compost worms. People generate lots of kitchen waste from vegetable peelings etc. If we chop up the peelings and stalks, this material can be fed to your compost wormery and the worms generate good friable humus, called wormcast, which is highly fertile and great for growing vegetables.

Compost worms are the litterworms we find in the leaf litter of our woodlands. They are surface dwellers. A wormery essentially recreates the woodland floor ecology and environment. Therefore, your WormBox requires a broad surface area and low depth.

DIY Wormeries: A domestic WormBox should measure approximately 800cm in length x 500cm in width x 600cms in height. This is more than adequate for one household's kitchen waste. The end product is extremely valuable. It is advisable to staple on a floor of 25mm sq stainless steel weldmesh to keep any marauding moles from eating your workers! Or the WormBox can be placed on slabs. The wormery requires a closely fitted lid which keeps voles and shrews out.

In these days of Peak Oil, wherever possible, we should never use fossil fuel derivatives so wood is best. Anyway it is warmer in winter and in plastic containers, condensation tends to flood your Wormbed. Use thick wood [35 – 50mm] so that throughout the winter, your worms remain warm and working to produce lots of lovely wormcast.

To start your wormery, place a layer of around 150 – 200mm of the hot-composting material mixed with leaves and torn cardboard in the bottom to serve as bedding [where the worms live]. Then bury your starter pack of worms (www.compostworms.co.uk). Then, say, twice a week, bury the contents of your kitchen caddy in the bedding layer and cover the bed with a newspaper and place the lid back on. In 2 to 3 months your worm population will double ... and then double again. That is the productivity of the woodland floor!

Occasionally pick up a handful of the bedding and squeeze. Only 2 drops of water should appear. The bedding should be damp – not wet. If the mix appears too wet, add more torn cardboard; if too dry add a little water. All your kitchen scraps will disappear in 2 - 3 weeks .

Harvesting your worm compost: To harvest your WormBox, a couple of times each year, simply lift out the top 150 -200mm of bedding material which will normally contain the majority of your worms. Set this aside, and harvest the rich organic, fertile material beneath. Use your free supply of Wormcast to mix with topsoil (1:10) to increase fertility in your garden. Use a teaspoonful stirred in a 10 litre bucket of water, and place somewhere warm for 24 hours. The microbes increase exponentially and in 24 hours, the resultant foliage feed protects your plants, feeds them and reduces pests, diseases and rusts.

Action Plan: Ron urged the group to set up their own Action Plan and start their own wormeries NOW. You do not need a HotBox. It is really for your garden waste. Just make your WormBox and feed it with your kitchen scraps. After a few months, you will have your own supply of the end product. It is massively valuable and very fertile ... and its FREE. You will produce bumper crops of vegetables – both delicious and nutritious.

Remember: Learn from Nature. Mimic the woodland floor. Never leave your garden soil exposed to the elements. Soil fertility depends on the soil microbes and worms. When the soil dries out, both are killed... And the nutrients contained in the soil will be washed away. Between crops, always cover your precious soil with mulch, such as grass cuttings, seaweed, hot-composting material or cardboard. All winter the microbes and worms will feed on the mulch, building up the soil fertility. THAT is mimicking nature Learning from what we see happening in our local woodland.

For more information and lots of innovative ideas, go to: www.green-way.org.uk

Michaela Hunter

WOODFUEL AND ENERGY: SIMON LOCKWOOD

Scottish Native Woodlands

Scottish Native Woods have 13 years experience of thinning woods ...Poland heats and cooks with wood... how much of Scotland does? Of the 16 participants in the workshop: one gets all heat, hot water and cooks using wood, two have log stoves, the remaining participants did not, but may have had open fires.

More and more people are switching to wood burning stoves, which both cut energy costs and can be carbon neutral. Because of this, demand for wood burning stoves is at an all time high, with sales quadrupling for many manufacturers. This has led to a 6 month waiting list to purchase a stove, and a longer wait for their installation. Stoves will cost between £600 and £4000 depending on make and model.

Scottish Native Woods have been selling 10ft lengths at road side for £40 / tonne (.TONNE IS M3); they have been paying landowners £14-15 / tonne up to £20 / tonne for harder extraction. Fire wood sold at the roadside is wet. Burning wet wood is one of the two top barriers to pleasurable, efficient woodburning (the other is bad chimneys). A wood burning stove / boiler can only operate with high efficiency and low emissions if your fuel wood has the right moisture content. Properly seasoned firewood has moisture content of less than 20 per cent and is a pleasure to use. The symptoms of poor performance related to wet firewood include:

- difficulty getting a fire going and keeping it burning well,
- smoky fires with little flame,
- dirty glass,
- rapid creosote build-up in the chimney,
- low heat output,
- the smell of smoke in the house,
- short burn times,
- excessive fuel consumption and
- blue-gray smoke from the chimney.

In short, trying to burn wet wood is annoying and wasteful. Many of these problems can be eliminated by burning properly seasoned firewood. Seasoning wood is not just a matter of cutting your wood and throwing it into a pile. Dry wood is the result of specific actions you take. A commercial wood supplier may claim to have wood "cut last summer", or "two years old" and so on, but, if the wood has been heaped in a field or just recently split, it will prevent your heater from performing to its potential. This is particularly true of modern certified stoves which perform extremely well when given the right fuel.

Air dried wood with a moisture content of below 20% can be bought at £100/tonne soft wood and £150/tonne hard wood. 20% should be regarded as the absolute maximum moisture content for firewood. 8% moisture is about the best that can be achieved from a polytunnel; at this dryness the heat energy is c.4600kwh/m³. Wet wood gives c.1800kwh/m³. So you need to burn much less wood to get the same heat if it is dry. Pellets are available at 8% and logs dried in a ventilated poly tunnel under ideal conditions might get to 8% over one season, otherwise two years drying in a well ventilated shed may get moisture content down to 12% at best.

3% of Scottish energy is currently produced by biomass. Sweden gets 27% of heat from Biomass. The maximum Scotland could achieve based on 16% forest cover is 11%. So the plan to get 25% of Scotland covered by Forest, would raise our potential heat from Biomass. As land for forest becomes scarce there is the potential for more fire wood yield could come from coppice.

Commercializing Firewood <http://www.northernwoodheat.net/html/publications.php> Potential for CWA to produce a toolkit to encourage community woodland groups to look into firewood marketing and use. "HOW TO DO FIRE WOOD" - with 5% VAT rate on energy products and produce, this could be a cost efficient income generator. (Please note that 15% VAT must be paid on any delivery – method to avoid this would be to offer free delivery.)
General Notes: Open Fires 80% inefficient, Log stoves 85% EFFICIENT

Henry Fosbrooke

WOODLANDS AS VENUES

Jon Hollingdale & John Paterson CWA

This workshop was designed to flesh out the details of one element of the CWE plan – the development of a business around using community woodlands as venues, in particular to host corporate work days and team-building events. The attraction for CWA/CWE is that these activities require only limited capital outlay; are targeted at a national market; will benefit from co-ordinated national marketing; and enable progressive transfer of responsibility over time to member groups.

Programmes can be configured to suit groups' needs and capacity: CWE *could* market, organise and deliver the service, using employees / contractors and simply pay a rental to the member group for use of their woods; *or* just market the service and deal with the customers, whilst contracting service delivery to member groups.

We will seek to develop packages that match outcomes for both customers and member groups: using existing venues and wherever possible existing staff and delivering existing management and business plans. We will also provide support for group development and encourage the development of longer term relationships between customers and host groups.

The obvious benefit for the CW groups involved is income: payment for venue hire and in some cases payment for staffing & delivery; but there will also be benefits from increased profile, capacity building: skills, employment, and delivery of work in the forest – path building, rhodobashing, tree planting etc.

We will also investigate the development of an event package for corporate / public sector team building: an active and competitive team event involving teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and decision-making skills, which would be transferable and deliverable at a range of venues. This might also entail weekend packages and require working in partnership with existing accommodation providers, spreading the economic benefit wider in the community.

The proposals were welcomed in the "round-table" discussion which followed Jon's presentation. It is clear that there is considerable difference in capacity and potential between groups, and in the sort of activities which might be appropriate in their woods, but this was seen as a strength, in that the community woodland "portfolio of opportunities" would be so wide ranging - from Crossgates to Knoydart.

Next steps: John Paterson will press ahead with contacting potential host groups to explore the possibilities in more depth – our current timescale envisages pilot projects in the summer of 2011 (perhaps using agency staff from e.g. HIE as guinea pigs) to iron out creases and check and evaluate procedures before a launch in 2012.

Jon Hollingdale

SITE VISITS

Delegates had a choice of four local site visits.

FINTRY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Kelly McIntyre

STRATHFILLAN COMMUNITY

WOODLAND

Dr John Holland, SAC

CALLANDER WOODLAND LINK

John Snodin, Jane Begg

HELIX PROJECT

Simon Rennie

FINTRY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Kelly McIntyre

In the village hall, we met 2 directors and 2 members of staff who talked us through the process behind acquiring a turbine for the community.

History - when it emerged that there was to be a windfarm some of the local community approached the developer to ask for a turbine. After early community consultation and little/no objections to the windfarm, it became a group of 4 who pursued the turbine. They decided not to apply for grant funding but to finance it privately through a loan and eventually the windfarm developer offered them reasonable terms in return for a turbine (cost to purchase £2.3M). The developer would retain ownership and be responsible for maintenance. The agreement lasts 10 years and the community now have an annual income of c. £50k pa, this will rise once the loan is repaid to c £4-500k pa.

Fintry Development Trust has been using the income to improve the carbon footprint of the village by increasing insulation levels on all houses where possible and have secured Climate Challenge Fund for a post to offer advice re renewable technologies - many households are now in the process of installing GSHP / biomass.

We then headed off for a site visit to the 14 Turbines. Also visible from the site is the woodland that the Trust is currently trying to acquire.

Di Oliver



STRATHFILLAN COMMUNITY WOODLAND

Dr John Holland

Dr Holland introduced himself and immediately proceeded along to Strathfillan Community Woodland site to get the group out of the chilling wind. It was a bright, sunny cold and clear day.

This 100ha site was purchased by the community in 2006. The site was in poor condition due to a severe forest fire in September 1997 which destroyed over 4ha of woodland. Originally a Millennium Forest Trust Project, the group replanted 90ha of area with native conifers and broadleaves. The Scots pine seeds, gathered locally, are at the southern-most range of the original Scots pine forests.

Dr Holland explained that the site was undulating with high rises which are the original glacial moraines and not drumlins. The group planted Scots Pine on the hummocks and downy birch in the hollows. The lochan just behind is called a kettle-hole lochan. It's an original ice-age feature. Pollen records held within the core of the lochan reveal the vegetation in the area around that time.

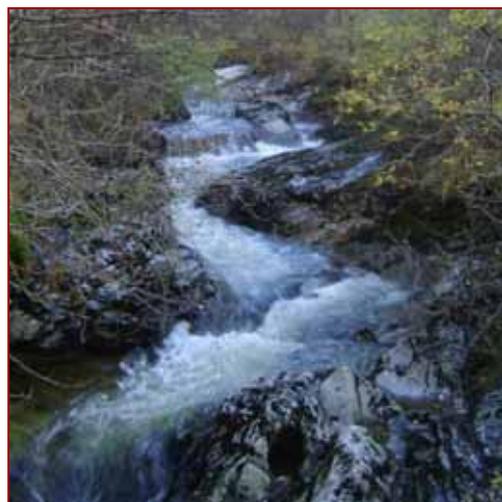
Legend has it that Robert the Bruce and his men were fleeing the redcoats in 1306, and they hid here and flung their weapons into a local loch.

Dr Holland then outlined some of the species which could be found there throughout the year. Fritillary, Scotch Argus, Common Blue butterflies were abundant. Crossbills, black grouse, grass warblers, otters and pine martins also frequented the area. There had been surveys of over 144 vascular plants, over 48 species of bird being identified. There was also plenty of rainfall with around 2600mm of rainfall annually thanks to the surrounding mountains.

A small section of the West Highland Way runs through the area and it is highly accessible for summer schools, orienteering, and even gold panning at Strathfillan.

Most of the children in the local area have planted trees here and continue to do so.

Michaela Hunter



CALLANDER WOODLAND LINK PROJECT

John Snodin and Jane Begg

Those of us who were either keen to hear about what's been happening in Callander woods or who wanted to avoid a bus journey (all that time or all that carbon?) set off on foot down towards the Meadows, where we stopped by a bit of a flood (no doubt why the Meadows were there: public park & floodplain all in one). Here we had a discussion about the Walking to Health project. We were joined by a two of the local Health Walk Leaders, who represent a diverse group of people who take regular walks in and around the town. Participants tend to feel a mentally and physically better, and got a wee shot of sociability on the move (they were not averse to kidnapping tourists and taking them along for the walks!). The local doctors were supportive, but had not started issuing walk prescriptions yet.

After we had negotiated the flood and the town, we found ourselves in the woodland that forms such an important part of the landscape setting of Callander, a mixed woodland of Long Established Plantation Origin stretching up steep slopes from the back of town gardens. While Henry did a wee bit of woodland management to help long term health of a young oak tree we talked about ownership (the lowest ground was owned by the Council. The wood above the path is part of the National Forest Estate, managed by Forest Enterprise). We also heard about Callander Woodland Link, and the way in which it had evolved over the years, with the first community involvement 20 years ago working with SWT to remove some blocks of young conifers from the woods. We walked and talked, stopped and talked our way along the woodland, with a wide ranging discussion. The role of Beech and Norway spruce in the wood; both made a major landscape contribution. Some of the Beech were landmark trees, big and characterful and approaching veteran status. Callander is on the front line for the red and grey squirrel interaction, and some of the Norway spruce was to be managed to maximise seed production for the red. Big trees next to people's gardens could be an issue, both because of potential windblow, and because they steal the light. Some of the conifers are likely to be felled soon because of this.

The path through the wood took us uphill to a fine viewpoint in the afternoon sunshine. Woodland Link have produced a new leaflet highlighting walks in the town. These wee walks in a wood might be as near as many of the coach borne tourists who are so important to the Callander economy come to the nature of Scotland. Enquiries suggest that even more might take a walk if the footpath was improved a bit, making the gradients a bit easier and the surface a bit more level. After a brief hunt for glacial erratics, we turned to the matter of timber. The woods could be thinned to produce firewood (or, as Eoin Cox remonstrated, 40 chair legs from that pole stage ash alone). Firewood days had proved popular locally, with extraction being solved by "bring your own" wheelbarrow, and community funds boosted by cash generated.

Finally we headed uphill and out of the established woodland through younger conifer plantations to reach a fine bit of gorge woodland at Bracklinn Falls. However the group's attention was focussed on the new Malcolm Strong bridge that was being installed. The Douglas fir, copper & steel structure certainly has the wow factor, and should help to put the Callander woods on the map. After that it was away back through the town to the School for welcome tea & biscuits.

Gordon Gray Stephens



HELIX PROJECT FALKIRK

Simon Rennie

This is a large regeneration scheme for community enterprise, recreation and conservation where the River Caron meets the Forth Clyde canal. On completion the most striking feature will be two silver kelpie heads rearing out of the canal basin and standing 30m tall.

We spent much of the time though being led around the community woodland and we were in the company of the public artist who has been commissioned to develop something for the community space. he has already abandoned the idea that had been an original brief for him - that of building a hill using the earth from digging a new section of canal. The possible stability problems associated with mud were a key reason for abandoning this idea, but also the community feeling that "you can't put your muck in our back yard"! So, creating views and avenues in the woodland might evolve as a new idea. The woods do need some thinning, having been planted at fairly close spacing 15 to 20 years ago, but they also need a new community management group. They are well used by locals, not only for walking, but also for gathering hazel nuts from the hundreds of trees planted under the power lines.

Piers Voysey



SATURDAY EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

Following on from the site visits, delegates were given some time to gather their thoughts and prepare for the evening activities. Dinner was served in the Dreadnought Hotel at 7.30pm, the meal was welcome warmth from the cold evening, and although debatable on quality everyone enjoyed the company and the wine! Delegates sat in groups of ten and the hall was filled with chat and excitement.

At 8.30pm The Tatties Ceilidh Band took centre stage and led the way with a very lively ceilidh. The band was excellent, managing to get almost everyone on their feet dancing. It was a pleasure to watch so many people laughing, giggling and “woo hoo’ing”. The evening continued on to the early hours, with delegates making the most of the hotel bar. Lively discussion and excited gossiping took place; I believe it was a great success.

Ros Mills



SUNDAY 24 OCTOBER

A FARM FOR THE FUTURE – REBECCA’S WILD FARM

Wildlife film maker Rebecca Hosking investigates how to transform her family's farm in Devon into a low energy farm for the future, and discovers that nature holds the key. With her father close to retirement, Rebecca returns to her family's wildlife-friendly farm in Devon, to become the next generation to farm the land. But last year's high fuel prices were a wake-up call for Rebecca. Realising that all food production in the UK is completely dependent on abundant cheap fossil fuel, particularly oil, she sets out to discover just how secure this oil supply is. Alarmed by the answers, she explores ways of farming without using fossil fuel. With the help of pioneering farmers and growers, Rebecca learns that it is actually nature that holds the key to farming in a low-energy future.

PEAK OIL: EAMON KING Energy Saving Scotland

Eamon introduced himself explaining that his presentation would complement the film previously; he was here to discuss Peak Oil and what it could mean for woodlands in the future.

He began by talking about Peak Oil, explaining that Peak Oil is a phrase often used to describe the situation we will be in when global oil supplies reach a peak. Alarmingly this is predicted to happen in 2015! Following this peak, oil supplies will decrease and never rise again. Peak Oil will force us to look at the world differently. We will have to reduce our consumption because prices will force us to and not because of attempts to be green and environmentally friendly. (Because of the energy required to produce any good or service, we need energy prices to remain low in order for all other prices to remain low. With oil depletion, energy prices will rise as supply fails to keep up with rampant demand.)

Following peak oil the world will enter a new phase. The globalization of production will end with global delocalization replacing it. Industrialism - whether communist or capitalist - will cease to be viable, and consumer-focused societies will become redundant. Suburban life will change dramatically as soaring fuel prices make the long distances required to travel between work, home and leisure unviable. The entire economy will have to change - many people will likely work the land as they did in the past, with 'own-work' in many cases replacing paid employment across the board. But as the present economic and financial system is not sustainable and unfair to millions around the world, Peak Oil provides an opportunity to change things for the better - Our reconnection to the land through food and woodlands is an essential part of this transition.

Eamon showed a number of graphs to support the claims of reaching Peak Oil in the near future. He then discussed how we as woodland managers / land managers can benefit from this global catastrophe. "Trees, Aren't They Great!" they harmonise our living space through wildlife habitats, local temperature modification, and have human mental and physical health benefits. We can manage them to create a truly reusable & renewable resource in the form of building materials and fuel. Locking down carbon with a potential 0.75 tonnes of CO₂ being locked on average to every cubic 1.5 meter of hardwood, creating oxygen-up to 0.7 tonnes, giving off in return for each 1.5 cubic meter of growth. Sustainable land use and diversion from the use of large scale monocrops - that are blighting the global food market and adding the instability already being caused by Peak Oil.

Ros Mills

WOODS, WORMS AND VERMICULTURE: RON GILCHRIST

Fairlie Organic Growers & Greenlink Consultancy

Ron began by referring back to several of the speakers who had presented before him. He talked about how the localised economy will become robust and link everything up together. He also told the audience about having a Scottish Christmas this year, with all elements of your dinner sourced locally and gifts from Scottish sources. He commended John Paterson's approach to moving away from grant to a business model, and commented that there was no choice but to change. He felt that the approach was to start rural and move the learning to urban situations

Scotland is a small country and capable of change it also has a good climate for growing. Woodlands are the key to a fruitful future. They need minimal labour input for fertility, and help people to understand where the fertility comes from. You only have to look at nature to find the answers to fertility!

DIET is the main factor in the requirement for huge number of hospitals being built and prisons. We can rely on community to create jobs locally there is enough food to go around but it can't be distributed easily enough. Ron showed a picture of a gorge and showed the amazing growth there. He explained the different layers of woodland from canopy to ground and explained the abundance there.

Crop failure around the world is linked to farming in soil with no nutrition, which would be the case without oil to provide fertiliser and machines to spread it - yet another reminder of the negative impact on society when we reach Peak Oil.

Copy nature! It's very basic.

Use a heat box, not plastic bins to compost. Composting needs heat. Heat boxes are small and insulated and produce billions of microbes. Lift the lid once a week to let oxygen in. Within two weeks a box full of kitchen scraps is reduced to half its size. All weed seeds are killed during the process. You keep adding to it and within 4 months you have great compost. Alternatively use a wormery to take 2 weeks to produce wormcast.

Compost is worth £10 per tonne Wormcast £20K per tonne.

It's not earth worms that get used they are litter worms that live towards the surface and pull things into the earth to process. They consume ½ their own weight per day and breed very fast. Put scraps on the surface.

Ron has taught the way of the wormery to Largs primary kids. They now grow their own and harvest 20mins before dinnertime. They love their veg. They bury kitchen scraps from their meals back into the soil to start the process again. The school is linked with a school in Malawi and Ron has been asked to give advice there too! The Scottish kids have been sharing their knowledge with the kids in Malawi and they want to know more...

Raised beds are the best method with a sealed bottom and worm cast. 130 families are supported in 130 raised beds with the same yield as a normal sized allotment. There is no need for digging or weeding. A football pitch sized piece of land could support 1000 families. All you need is a old football pitch and a water supply.

What will you be a Worrier or a Warrior? We have the knowledge and we can put back the balance.

Diane Campbell

COMMUNITY LAND BANK: HELEN PANK

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

Helen introduced herself and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), provided an insightful look at the work of the Federation, stating that they do “exactly what it says on the tin” - Support, Promote and Represent city farms, community gardens and other community managed green spaces. Helen gave a number of example projects that they have been involved with, including: Good for Ewe, Poolewe (a small, remote community polytunnel in the Highlands, growing fresh produce for local people) and Gorgie City Farm, Edinburgh (to a 30 year old city farm in Edinburgh, running a cafe, produce stall, and providing educational activities for children).

Helen referred to the morning film, watched by most of the delegates; stating that the film has helped to make connection between community gardening and farming, and woodlands.

Many of the FCFCG projects use trees in one way or another – either for shelter or windbreaks, or for a harvest of fruit or nuts. FCFCG gets an increasing number of calls from community gardens interested in starting orchards, and are putting on a series of training events this winter to help people with planting and pruning. Helen showed a diagram that demonstrated how community growing projects are often not just a garden, or woodland, or orchard, or allotment – they can be a combination of them all at the same time. This similarity means that community growing projects are likely to face the same problems.

One of the biggest barriers for community gardens at the moment is access to land. There are over 6000 people on allotment waiting lists in Scotland just now, and waits of 7 years in some areas. There are also great swathes of vacant and derelict land, especially now, given the economic climate and stalled developments. Some of this land might not seem very appealing at first, but it’s possible to do amazing things even with a small amount of land, even on a temporary basis. And yet, despite this demand for land, and apparent availability, many groups are finding it hard, if not impossible to find. The FCFCG noticed this trend at the beginning of last year, and was commissioned by the Dept for Communities and Local Government and DEFRA to do research into ways to overcome the barrier.

The FCFCG consultants talked to a range of stakeholders, including public and private landowners and community groups, over several months, and convened a series of consultation events. Helen discussed the barriers to community use of land, including Skill Shortage, Lack of Funding, Lack of Brokerage Skills and technical assistance service needs (e.g legal advice).

Helen explained that these barriers are echoed by the key concerns of landowners – predictably they are worried about whether or not they will get their land back, and if so, how, and in what state. Helen mentioned a group that she had recently spoke to, who were trying to negotiate with their local estate for use of their land. The estate had had a bad experience 40 years ago, when they lent some land to the council who then used it for housing, so they won’t let the community group have any land for growing now. The FCFCG research has suggested that there is need for an agency/service/body to help both sides overcome their fears and lack of skills – for now it will be called “a Community Land Bank”.

The proposed core functions for a CLB were given on the final slide. Some of these are already being done by others at the moment. For example, Landshare, has a land matching service, as well as some template leases, the Development Trust Association Scotland is working on asset transfers, and the Forestry Commission and NHS Lothian, both already have experience leasing public land to community groups.

However, there are still gaps (e.g. if land isn't registered on Landshare, there isn't a service that will actively find land for you at the moment) and there is no consistency (eg: NHS Lothian have been very progressive by leasing land at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for a Community Garden, but what about all the other NHS boards?) Helen explained that the next step is working out how a CLB would work in practice – what would its structure and business model be? Would it just apply to growing projects, or other types of community land use, like play or sport? And, most importantly, how would it work in Scotland, rather than in England?

So far, the research has mostly been in England, as it's been funded by Westminster government. However, a couple of months ago, the FCFCG got funding from the Central Scotland Green Network to research how a CLB might work in Scotland. That is what Helen is doing now, along with a colleague Angus Hardie, who runs Local People Leading, a coalition of community sector networks, which the CWA is a member of too.

Helen is keen to discuss the future of this project and the potential impact for CWA members and aspiring community woodland groups. Her contact details were provided at the end of the slide show.

Ros Mills

COMMUNITY WOODLANDS EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT: DI OLIVER CWA Social Enterprise Development Officer

Di Oliver joined CWA in October 2010. At only three weeks into her new role within the association and took the opportunity to introduce herself and her project to members at the conference, explaining what is expected of her in the next 21 months.

Di explained that the employability services project will set about securing contracts to deliver training, however it is really about people – people who use their local woodland and area to utilise their skills, gain new skills, meet people and provide training for others – so they can use their skills, gain new skills, meet people and continue on into employment.

Diane stated that CWA is regularly being asked for advice in terms of developing a social enterprise. Six groups came together with CWA to find a route to overcome the challenges of moving from running bits of training, courses and placement to running a longer term employability service. Funded by Highland Leader and Fairer Scotland this 22 month project was established to provide intensive specialist support to assist 10 groups in Highland to move towards and become a social enterprise.

“This is a challenging time – we are witnessing budgets being cut everywhere, however, people remain and the woodlands remain and skills and training last a lifetime and beyond. It is our role to seek out the funding to deliver the training and create sustainable partnerships.”

Through providing support and delivering training and networking opportunities, groups will be able to procure longer term contracts to deliver employability services – this might be as individual projects or by collaborating. Employability services can be to a wide range of people from different backgrounds and to gain different skills. Some will be about confidence building and life skills, others about qualifications and certificates. The projects will also benefit as the trainees will be able to undertake work on the woodlands as well as contract out their services to other organisations.

The 6 groups currently make up the Steering group for the project are; Culag Community Woodland Trust, Abriachan Forest Trust, Assynt Foundation, Milton Community Woodland, Laide & Aultbea Community Woodlands and Dunnet Forestry Trust. All 6 groups have provided training

and skills opportunities previously and all are determined to deliver longer term more sustainable employability services.

Di will be looking at ways of working with these groups through training, developing programmes and securing contracts. She will also be seeking a further 4 groups from the Highland Leader area with whom to work. Any interested groups were advised to contact Di direct. Although the funding for the project is primarily to work with groups in the Highland Leader area, this does not prevent networking across the wider area. Di would like to hear from any groups who run a successful training programme.

For more information about this project, please contact Di di.oliver@communitywoods.org

WOODLAND EMPLOYMENT CASE STUDY Milton Community Woodland

Di followed her presentation with a fantastic video from Milton Community Woodland. The documentary introduced two members of the community woodland who have had very positive experiences with the groups' back to employment / woodland skills project. To view the video please visit: <http://www.youtube.com/user/commwoods>

CONFERENCE SUMMARY **JON HOLLINGDALE CWA CEO**

Jon provided a brief summary to close the conference.

He began by thanking the many individuals who had contributed, notably:

- Ros Mills, as lead organiser
- Diane Campbell & Caroline Derbyshire, who had also put a lot of time into organisation
- The catering staff and janitors at McLaren High, who had been very supportive and helpful
- The speakers, workshop hosts and site visit hosts
- Everyone else who helped arrange, scribe, herd, tidy

He also expressed CWA's gratitude to the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme, the Robertson Trust, the Hugh Fraser Foundation, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Community Land Unit of Highlands & Island Enterprise for their financial support.

And finally he thanked the delegates, not only for their attendance but for providing so much enthusiasm and so many good ideas – it is this positivity and these aspirations that keep the community woodland movement going, and make the annual conference such great events – long may they continue!

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Name		Organisation
Henry	Fosbrooke	Milton Community Woodland Trust
Ian	Whitehead	Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust
Michaela	Hunter	Kilfinan Community Forest Company
Piers	Voysey	Anagach Woods Trust
Sasha	Laing	Individual Member
Paul	Cookson	Drumchapel Woodland Group
Gordon	Gray Stephens	Argyll Green Woodworkers Association
Mike	Steele	Closeburn Community Council
Mark	Lazzeri	Assynt Foundation
Ron	Gilchrist	Organic Growers of Fairlie
Douglas	Westwater	Community Enterprise
Jan	Bebbington	Sustainable Development Commission
Simon	Lockwood	Scottish Native Woods
Eamon	King	Energy Saving Scotland
Sara	Cudahy	Energy Saving Scotland
Helen	Pank	Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens
Brigitte	Geddes	Gearrchoille Community Wood
Frank	van Duivenbode	Gearrchoille Community Wood
Neil	Gerrard	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Ian	Cooke	Development Trusts Association Scotland
Wendy	Reid	Development Trusts Association Scotland
Diane	Campbell	Ullapool Community Trust
Tess	Darwin	Falkland Conservation Group
Jean	Barnett	Dunnet Forestry Trust
Michael	Barnett	Dunnet Forestry Trust
Kirsty	Rosie	Dunnet Forestry Trust
Joyce	Faulkner	Greenferry Trust
Clair	Malpas	Cassiltoun Housing Association
Gavin	Mitchell	Bushcraft Scotland
Doris	Brown	Bushcraft Scotland
Alice	Wallace	Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust
Julia	Preston	Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust
Brian	Slaughter	Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust
Kenny	Grieve	Clatto Community Woodland
Berni	McCoy	Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust
Dean	Wiggin	Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust
Nigel	Lowthorp	Hill Holt Wood
Hamish	Davidson	Milton Community Woodland Trust
Gracie	Craigie	Crossgates Community Woodland
Isobel	Knox	Dunbar Community Woodland Group
Ute	Penny	Dunbar Community Woodland Group
Eoin	Cox	Wooplaw Community Woods

Tom	Conway	Redhall Community Woodland
Amanda	Calvert	Kingussie Community Development Company
Steve	Robertson	North Highland Forest Trust
Karen	Purvis	Knoydart Forest Trust
Andrew	Irons	Knoydart Forest Trust
Margaret	Stead	Kilmaronock Community Trust
Ian	Hepburn	North West Mull Community Woodlands Company
Kate	Bulloch	Fernaig Community Trust
Crisdean	Macrea	Fernaig Community Trust
Keith	Henry	Cambusbarron Community Development Trust
Arline	Brisbane	Cambusbarron Community Development Trust
Chris	Davies	Cambusbarron Community Development Trust
Lesley	Campbell	Cambusbarron Community Development Trust
Alison	Hitchings	Ullapool Community Trust
Bob	Frost	Forestry Commission Scotland
Jamie	McIntyre	Individual Member
Lorne	Robertson	Individual Member
Kirsty	Martin	Individual Member
David	Niven	Individual Member
Nick	Marshall	Individual Member
Lara	McDonald	Individual Member
Zoë	Niven	Individual Member
Jane	Begg	Stirling Council
John	Snodin	Callander Woodlands Link
Jake	Willis	Morvern Community Development Co
Jon	Hollingdale	CWA
Roslyn	Mills	CWA
John	Paterson	CWA
Diane	Oliver	CWA
Caroline	Derbyshire	CWA

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