

**Community Woodlands Association  
Knowledge Share Programme 2011 – 2013**



Community  
Woodlands  
Association

**Final Summary Report and Compilation of Feedback**

## The Knowledge Share Programme 2011-13

### *Locations and Scheduling*

The 2011-13 Knowledge Share programme comprised 36 events (some held over multiple weekends) which attracted a total of 830 participants (details in table overleaf). The 36 events were widely distributed across Scotland, with 17 in the Highlands & Islands Enterprise area and 19 in the Scottish Enterprise area, while the event venues ranged from city centres to community woodlands.

There are c. 200 Community Woodland groups across Scotland, the vast majority being members of the CWA, either directly or through membership of regional “Umbrellas”, e.g. Borders Forest Trust and North Highland Forest Trust. These groups are seeking to deliver a wide and expanding range of social, environmental and economic benefits for their local communities. Consequently they have a wide spectrum of training needs, from governance, communication and community engagement, to practical woodland management, environmental surveying and business development.



The CWA Knowledge Share programme seeks to design and organise training events to meet the needs and suit the requirements of participants, who are usually volunteer members of community woodland groups. This means scheduling events at convenient times, using venues that are accessible and welcoming, and ensuring that there is an appropriate balance of formal learning and informal networking opportunities.

## Events

| Event title                                       | Location       | Attendees |
|---|----------------|-----------|
| Train the trainer                                 | Inverness      | 6         |
| Cordwood walls                                    | Milton         | 16        |
| Charcoal making                                   | Kilmory        | 9         |
| Wood product development                          | Jedburgh       | 8         |
| Woodland heritage                                 | Grantown       | 13        |
| Scribe log building                               | Morvern        | 24        |
| Conference 2011                                   | Boat of Garten | 89        |
| Tree & flora identification                       | Alva Glen      | 18        |
| Soil fertility & composting                       | Lybster        | 60        |
| Greenwood working & tools                         | Dunbar         | 10        |
| Mountain Bike trail construction (6 events)       | Greenferry     | 69        |
| Woodland heritage                                 | Cree Valley    | 41        |
| Greenwood working                                 | Dunnet         | 17        |
| Train the trainer                                 | Edinburgh      | 3         |
| Engaging communities with woodland                | Strathcarron   | 26        |
| Conference 2012                                   | Melrose        | 72        |
| Woodland forage                                   | Alva Glen      | 19        |
| Footpath development (4 events)                   | Broadford      | 60        |
| Managing woodland for coppice                     | Kingussie      | 13        |
| Train the trainer                                 | Oban           | 6         |
| Introduction to woodland management planning      | Fife           | 13        |
| Willow fedging                                    | Killearn       | 14        |
| Living and working in woodlands                   | Carbeth        | 14        |
| Coppice techniques                                | Glasgow        | 12        |
| Governance for community woodlands                | Milton         | 10        |
| Charcoal burning                                  | Killearn       | 15        |
| Woodfuel processing                               | Ullapool       | 4         |
| Woodland survey techniques                        | Fintry         | 14        |
| Drystone dyking                                   | Dunnet         | 10        |
| Plain English techniques for funding applications | Perth          | 5         |
| Train the trainer                                 | Perth          | 5         |
| Green woodworking weekend                         | Wooplaw        | 19        |
| Working with Wordpress                            | Edinburgh      | 16        |
| Shakes and shingles course                        | Glasgow        | 14        |
| Conference 2013                                   | Skye           | 79        |
| Aspen conservation and silviculture               | Armadale       | 7         |



## Event topics

The 36 events covered a wide range of topics, with a number of common themes emerging:



Adding value to wood products is increasingly seen as a key mechanism to support the financial sustainability of woodlands.



Green woodworking skills and woodland crafts are a great way of engaging a broad spectrum of the local community.



Community woodland groups are keen to develop environmental management and facilitate a greater understanding of the history and cultural heritage of their woodlands.

## Event Feedback

Participant feedback was collected post-event with a template form provided to all event hosts and distributed by them to participants. For certain events the form was modified to gather additional feedback on particular elements of the event: site visits, individual speakers, etc.

This report compiles, summarises and analyses feedback for 34 of the 36 events (the forms were not distributed at two of the events). 432 forms were returned in total, representing 52% of the total number of participants. (NB: not all respondents answered all questions.)

Two questions assessed participants' overall satisfaction with the event.

| Do you feel that the event delivered your expectations? |       |    |    |        |      |       |
|---|-------|----|----|--------|------|-------|
| Yes   |       | No |    | Partly |      | Total |
| 399   | 92.4% | 0  | 0% | 33     | 7.6% | 432   |

| Would you recommend others to take part in such an event? |       |    |      |       |
|---|-------|----|------|-------|
| Yes   |       | No |      | Total |
| 390   | 99.7% | 1  | 0.3% | 391   |

This feedback demonstrates a very high level of satisfaction with events held under the programme. A range of additional positive comments were received:

*“The event overall was well organised with both classroom and practical sessions, which led to all the volunteers gaining an understanding in trail design and building techniques. There was a good sense of community spirit and everyone was keen to get on with the tasks.”*

*“It was well organised and did what it said on the tin.”*

*“Being part of a team involved in creating a community facility whilst learning new skills is always a good thing. It’s a win-win situation.”*

*“Yes, the gathering of experts from a variety of subjects to give talks is an invaluable way of learning more and gives you the chance to talk and discuss your thoughts with like-minded people.”*

Participants who responded “No” or “Partly” were given the opportunity to make additional comments explaining their feedback, although not all did so.

In some cases the issues were around the content of events not meeting participants' expectations:

*“Didn’t cover everything I thought we would”*

*“I thought there might be more information on crop rotation”*

*“Different from expectations but offers a challenge to existing thinking”*

*“We were hoping to learn more about the biodiversity in the woodland – and how to manage woodland to encourage new bird species.”*

Sometimes participants' comments were around the balance of the event, or just the amount of information provided:

*“Would have valued less presentations (or time on presentations) and a bit more time hearing from and networking with other participants”*  
*“Too much information for one day”*

Whilst one or two events were victims of their popularity, with more attendees than may have been optimal:

*“Partly - felt the first afternoon was not organised to suit the number of people & the terrain with narrow paths which lead to a disjointed result.”*

*“I found that aspects of the site visits were not well planned or with clear objectives. They were very much specific to the visited site and much of the content was not easily transferable to other woodlands.”*

*“Guided walks sessions in the afternoons were not well coordinated, the size of the groups was too large and many stops appeared to be unplanned and much discussion had occurred before all participants had arrived.”*

The single “No” response to the “Would you recommend others to take part in such an event? Question seemed to focus more on the nature of the course, rather than any qualitative aspect of the event.

*“I could not recommend to colleagues that they attend a course that was of such local interest.”*

Naturally it’s disappointing that we weren’t able to meet the expectations of all participants; as ever we shall seek to learn from feedback and wherever possible incorporate that learning in the planning and design of future events.

### **General Feedback on Event Arrangements**

|              | V Good |     | Good |     | Fair |    | Poor |    | V Poor |    | Total |
|--------------|--------|-----|------|-----|------|----|------|----|--------|----|-------|
| Location     | 339    | 79% | 84   | 19% | 7    | 2% | 0    | 0% | 0      | 0% | 430   |
| Organisation | 345    | 81% | 77   | 18% | 6    | 1% | 0    | 0% | 0      | 0% | 428   |
| Catering     | 309    | 73% | 92   | 22% | 18   | 4% | 2    | 0% | 0      | 0% | 421   |
| Facilities   | 292    | 68% | 118  | 27% | 19   | 4% | 0    | 0% | 0      | 0% | 429   |

CWA Knowledge Share events are held in a variety of locations, and a number of events with a practical themes used log buildings and outdoor venues in the community woodlands themselves. In these circumstances it isn’t easy to guarantee the highest possible standards for catering and other facilities, so we were very pleased with the generally very high ratings received from the feedback, with more than 95% of respondents marking Location, Organisation, Catering and Facilities as Good or Very Good.

### **Benefits & Experience Derived from Attendance**

More general feedback was also sought from event delegates as to what they felt they gained from attendance, and how they would use what they had learned:

*“What benefits do you feel you gained from attending the event?”*

*“What will you do with the experience / skills you have had from attendance?”*

Again, the overwhelming majority of feedback was positive, with many answering simply:

*“learned new skills”, “will put skills to practical use” and “will pass on to others”*

Much of the feedback was event specific:

*“To increase my knowledge and understanding of the history of woodlands and forests”*

*“To gain knowledge, ask questions and see how I could organise a garden and compost facility”*

*“I am interested in crafts and wanted to extend my knowledge of basketweaving”*

*“To learn more about green wood working and the different crafts that can be achieved through simple techniques”*

*“To gain more information on woodland foraging and identifying species of trees.”*

*“To gain knowledge of trail building techniques to aid in the construction of a mountain bike trail.”*

Many respondees emphasised that they would be using the skills that they had learned, and would be seeking to pass them on to others in their community woodland group:

*“I now feel confident in my skills and ability to build quality trails and features sympathetically in the woodland. I am also aware of my limitations and of the elements of the project that are perhaps best left to an expert.”*

*“Confidence to make something, design something. Take skills to workplace and pass it on to workmates and volunteers”*

*“Take away with me new skills that I can put into practice and share with others”*

### **Networking**

The value of these events as networking opportunities was a common theme across several sections of the feedback form, and was the most frequently reported benefit of attendance. Networking opportunities were also noted as one of the major reasons for recommending a CWA Knowledge Share event to others.

Respondents regularly described events as *“Friendly and relaxed”* and *“interesting, informative and very enjoyable”*. Others commended events as:

*“A good opportunity to exchange ideas, meet new people, trying to do similar things, but possibly from diverse starting point.”*

*“A great source of information, inspiration and contacts.”*

This demonstrates the value of designing and delivering events for the community woodland sector, and supports our belief that participants will learn more and better if they are relaxed, enjoying themselves, and feel that they are with likeminded friends and colleagues.





## **Future Events**

Although we do not anticipate being able to extend the Knowledge Share programme with the current funding sources, there was widespread encouragement for CWA to seek alternative funding to continue a training programme run along the same lines.

A great number of potential topics were suggested, with green woodworking skills and product marketing, woodland cultural history, and a number of aspects of woodland management: thinning, control of invasives, and identification of fauna and flora, including birds, flowers, lichens, liverworts, mosses and ferns, amongst the favourites.

As always with the Knowledge Share programme, the key is to make training locally relevant:

*“Similar key practical trainings on basic issues ... but held nearer to our local area. We also have a number of town orchards we have established so would be interested in CWA training on how to manage those best. Perhaps also training on working with schools - for planting, managing woodlands, environmental activities”*

Where this happens, the benefits for host groups can be substantial:

*“The benefits this event has brought to The Vat Run are many. The regular volunteers are now all singing from the same hymn sheet and it has enhanced the intuitive understanding of trail flow that many of them held already. It has also given them the confidence to work on the trails without direct supervision and make decisions on what needs to be done. It has also given the overall project a little kudos by being directly identified with Pete Laing and his positive reputation. The project has taken a significant leap forward directly attributable to this series of events. Many thanks to CWA for all their help and funding.”*



## **Acknowledgements**

CWA would like to thank all member groups who hosted events, and all the participants who contributed to the events and made the programme such a success. We would also like to thank the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme and The Robertson Trust who contributed to the costs of organising and delivering the Knowledge Share training programme, and also to Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Forestry Commission Scotland for supporting delegate T&S at selected events.