



Community Woodlands in Central Scotland Networking Day

Thursday 15th March 2018 10:00 am – 4 pm
@ East Kilbride Community Trust & K-Woodlands

AGENDA

- 10:00 Arrive EKCT** - tea/coffee, refreshments.
- 10:15 Welcome/Introduction & the Community Woodlands Association**
– Chris Marsh (*Community Woodland Officer, CWA*)
– Jon Hollingdale (*Chief Executive, CWA*)
- 10.30 Forestry Commission Scotland – Policy Context, Advice & Support**
– Kevin Lafferty (*Policy Advisor: Access, Health & Recreation, FCS*)
– Sasha Laing (*Policy & Development Officer, Central Scotland Conservancy, FCS*)
- 10:45 Central Scotland Green Network**
Linda McConaghie (*Development Officer, CSGN*)
- 11:00 Beechbrae**
– Ally Graham (*Project Manager, Beechbrae*)
- 11.15 VAT Run, South Queensferry & the Community Payback Scheme**
– Iwan Thomas (*Ranger, Edinburgh Council*)
- 11.30 Dalgety Bay Community Woodland**
– Dick Alderson (*DBCW Group*)
- 11.45 Cassiltoun Housing Association**
– Stuart Whittaker (*Community Woodland Officer, CHA*)
- 12:00 East Kilbride Community Trust**
– Monique MacAdams (*CEO, EKCT*)
- 12:15 General Discussion & Feedback**
- 13.00 Lunch & Networking**
- 14:00 K Woodlands – Site Briefing & Site Visit**
– Monique MacAdams & EKCT staff/volunteers & Andy Hines (*consultant/contractor*)
- 15:30 Finish & Depart.**



In Attendance:

Ally	Graham	Beechbrae
Alan	Fraser	Cairnhill Woods Group
Stuart	Whittaker	Cassiltoun Housing Association
Linda	McConaghie	Central Scotland Green Network Trust
Jon	Hollingdale	Community Woodlands Association
Chris	Marsh	Community Woodlands Association
Ben	McCallum	Craigmillar Woodland/Edin & Lothian Greenspace Trust
Dick	Alderson	Dalgety Bay Community Woodland Group
Beata	Mielcarek	Dalgety Bay Community Woodland Group
Tom	Andrews	Douglasdale Real Group
Monique	McAdams	East Kilbride Community Trust
Stephen	Porch	East Kilbride Community Trust
Tracey	Wilmot	East Kilbride Community Trust
Andy	Hines	East Kilbride Community Trust (<i>rep: principal contractors</i>)
Kevin	Lafferty	Forestry Commission Scotland
Sasha	Laing	Forestry Commission Scotland
Alison	Park	Friends of Homhills Wood Community Park
Alasdair	Watson	GalGael Trust
Anna	Lawrence	Random Forest/ CWA Director
Susan	Williamson	Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust
Iwan	Thomas	The VAT Run / Edinburgh City Council
Lindsey	Duncan	Urban Roots
David	Sparkes	Valley Renewables

Apologies for non-attendance & Best Wishes from:

CLEAR Buckhaven, Doune Community Woodland Group, Dunbar Community Woodland Group, Friends of Stonehouse Park, Green Aspirations Scotland, New Caledonian Woodlands, Stoneheap Woodland Action Group, Three Hares Community Woodland, Under the Trees CIC.

Welcome: Chris Marsh welcomed everyone to the first Central Scotland community woodland networking event – hopefully the first of many – thanking hosts East Kilbride Community Trust (EKCT) for their hospitality and organisation and also those groups who had offered to make a presentation. The aim of the day was to provide an opportunity for groups engaged in community woodlands to network and share experience of some of their project work as well as visit K Woods – EKCT's owned woodland to see how early efforts to manage the woods for increased community woodland value were getting along. It was hoped that the morning's presentations might stimulate some discussion and possibly identify areas of common interest to form the basis for further networking events in the future.

There were 8 separate organisations providing presentations. To begin with, three key support organisations presented: Community Woodlands Association, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Central Scotland Green Network.



Community Woodlands Association – Chris Marsh (intro) & Jon Hollingdale

The Community Woodlands Association is a membership organisation established in 2003 to support and promote community woodland involvement and management in Scotland. CWA currently employ three members of staff: Jon and Chris and part-time administrator Fiona Newcombe. They look after the needs of over 150 member groups – typically covering establishment, governance and land acquisition/partnership/management queries as well as representing the sector at a national level in policy and political circles. Members receive regular e-bulletins with funding and event updates, quarterly e-newsletters with more in-depth group case studies and news, and also organises an annual conference which allows a ‘meeting of the tribes’ and is consistently an inspiring forum for new ideas and experiences. Finally there is an email discussion group which allows members to post any queries to the whole membership so that feedback/advice can be drawn from the entire organisation. The CWA is managed by a voluntary Board who typically meet every other month - either face-to-face or by teleconference. There is a conscious effort to have a good geographic spread in Board Directors to ensure good regional representation and reflect a breadth of interests/concerns from member groups both urban and rural, large and small.

Jon followed with two current ‘opportunities’ that attending groups might wish to follow-up on:-

CWA has recently been offered (via Woodland Trust Scotland) a large number of hand-axes; if any groups were interested in taking some e.g. for a volunteer group please let him know.

‘Pocket & Prospects’ Fund: The CWA has been allocated up to £18k from the Scottish Government to distribute to organisations contributing to enhanced well-being for deprived communities by providing opportunities for outdoor volunteering and projects designed to benefit physical and mental health. The money is to be targeted at areas of greatest need - usually quantified using SIMDs (there is a very useful interactive mapping tool at www.simd.scot/). Your woodland does not need to be in a highly deprived SIMD area, but will need to demonstrate that the proposed activities will benefit people who do live in such an area. Grants are likely to average around £2k a group, with a range of £1k - £4k. Match funding is not required. Possible activities which could be funded are:

- Costs of setting up and running volunteering groups (tools, PPE).
- Training for group members to work with volunteers.
- Outreach and promotion of opportunities available in your woods.

This is not however an exhaustive list. Other important criteria that need to be met for funding eligibility are:

- Your project needs to be additional: i.e. doing something new or extending your activities to work with a new group of clients / volunteers.
- Your group must be a paid-up member of CWA.
- You should aim to spend the money in 2018.

If you have questions or wish to discuss a project idea, please contact jon@communitywoods.org.

You can find out more about CWA at www.communitywoods.org and at www.facebook.com/Communitywoods.

The CWA website contains a range of support information including archived training and workshop event reports. The Argyll-based ‘A Wood of Our Own’ networking programme – similar in style and ambition to this networking event - has been running for over six years and all 14 event reports are at <http://www.communitywoods.org/resources-details.php?id=16>.



Forestry Commission Scotland – Policy Context, Advice & Support

– Kevin Lafferty (Policy Advisor: Access, Health & Recreation, FCS)

Kevin covered two specific themes in his presentation: the structural changes taking place in state delivery on forestry matters in Scotland; and the current emphasis within social forestry policy that may be of relevance to community woodland groups.

There is a new Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill going through parliament to complete the full devolution of forestry powers from UK to Scottish government. The draft Bill proposes that forest policy, grants and licences (currently administered by 5 FCS Conservancies) be moved into Scottish government as a new Forestry division. At the same time, Forest Enterprise Scotland – who manage all state-owned forestry – would become 'Forestry and Land Scotland': a separate stand-alone agency re-organised into 5 management regions (currently 10 regional forest Districts). Whilst there is still cross-party debate and stakeholder consultation to be considered, the next twelve months will be a transitional phase towards agreed new arrangements to reach full implementation by 1st April 2019. For the time being – for central belt community woodland groups - Sasha Laing (Policy & Development Officer at Central Scotland Conservancy) remains the first and best point of contact for any advice and 'signposting' about government support for woodland management and development options.

The second aspect of Kevin's presentation related to his work in emerging Social Forestry policy development:

“Our Natural Health Service” – led by SNH with partners including NHS & FCS – is a cross-sectoral initiative to realise the potential that the natural environment can play in improving public health. There is an Action Plan (<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-07/A2239751%20-%20Natural%20Health%20Service.pdf>) outlining the ambition and focus of the initiative. There are already a number of CWA member groups running successful projects, however new groups wishing to develop green health infrastructure and more pro-active partnerships in delivering health and exercise programmes should visit <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/contributing-healthier-scotland/our-natural-health-service> as well as contact local SNH and NHS offices to understand the current state of local provision and explore potential opportunity to become involved in both/either 'Local Green Health Partnerships' and 'Green Infrastructure for Well-being Partnerships'.

Early Years Childcare provision – there is a Scottish Government (SG) target to double pre-5-year-old childcare provision (<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/early-years-framework/>). This is expected to require a large expansion in facilities and new jobs – with community woodlands well-placed for outdoor nursery provision. Policy makers have been influenced in particular by Scandinavian models for childcare and are keen to see outdoor play incorporated as much as possible given its benefits to the broadest spectrum of young people, as well as encouraging more men into work in this sector. The charity “Inspiring Scotland” has been given an SG budget of £830k to increase outdoor play provision and uptake. Their role is to work with local authorities, private companies and third sector organisations to this end (www.inspiringscotland.org.uk) and would be a good starting point for anyone wanting to understand the opportunities, contacts and options/processes within any locality. There is also a new 'early years' provision qualification (SVQ Level 7) which will be funded through this budget and planned for delivery through the network of local higher education colleges.

Kevin also recommended OWLS – Outdoor Woodland Learning Scotland – as a good starting point for resources, training opportunities and local branch contacts.



Central Scotland Green Network Linda McConaghie (*Development Officer, CSGN*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/7KUT-d6aHEo>

Linda showed a map of the CSGN catchment area (below) and outlined the organisation's long-term vision of seeing Central Scotland transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people's lives are enriched by its environmental quality. The 2025 Delivery Plan has a number of component 'parts' or themes (derelict land, habitats, active travel, community activity etc) and CSGN's support is prioritised where population density, developmental 'pressure' and multiple social deprivation indicators provide strong evidence to warrant concerted input.

As a rule, CSGN tend to work in partnership with other public sector organisations (FCS, SNH, NHS, local authorities etc) but also with local communities, businesses and developers. They have a number (4.5 fte) of Development officers, technical and administrative staff as well as 6 Project Delivery staff.

There is also a CSGN Development Fund open annually to applicants (public- and third sector groups) who have project proposals that plan to meet as many priority themes as possible and deliver tangible improvements on the ground. It has historically been a highly competitive fund and always over-subscribed (last round: £1.5 million-worth of applications for £400k fund) but Linda encouraged any groups within the CSGN catchment to get in touch for advice and discussion of eligibility if they have proposals that appear likely to meet a number of priority themes and that are otherwise ineligible for grant-aid provided by other sources (e.g. SNH, SRDP woodland grants etc).



The CSGN Catchment Area



A Community Tree Planting Day

You can find out more about the work of the CSGN at <http://www.csgnt.org.uk>

Beechbrae – Ally Graham (*Project Manager, Beechbrae*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/Ghe8eB7a66l>

The Beechbrae Wood initiative was established in 2012 and is a social enterprise located on the edge of Blackridge, West Lothian – an ex-mining village of c.2,000 with all the issues associated with high levels of unemployment, economic deprivation and limited opportunity. Ally described the evolution of Beechbrae whose aims are to use holistic woodland management as a catalyst for wider social and environmental improvement including supply of fresh quality produce, practical skills training for the local community, biodiversity improvements for the local area and increased physical and mental health & wellbeing.



At times it has been a particularly challenging ‘journey’ for Ally, the volunteer board and (2 additional) funded staff with demoralising levels of vandalism at the outset although this has decreased more recently. However, now over five years on, they have a number of strong relationships with the community, including an emphasis on local children and school groups, in food growing, woodland and orchard tree planting, tree seed collection and nursery establishment as well as delivering summer activities programmes, outdoor cooking, food tasting, composting, bee keeping, and study visits to other like-minded woodland/growing projects.

Currently they have funding for a 3-day/week Ranger, a 2-day/week Gardener and 1-day/week Administrator. They have also been delivering a programme of Branching Out sessions – working with individuals referred from mental health/social services partner organisations. This has been very rewarding for the individuals and Beechbrae themselves. In summary Ally said the folk at (and those involved *with*) Beechbrae are just as likely to be getting their hands dirty as they are just going for walk or simply sitting and enjoying the silence.



You can find out more about Beechbrae at <http://beechbrae.co.uk/> - including an archived blogs going back as far as May 2012 charting the progress of the project. Their Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/beechbraewood> .

The VAT Run & Community Payback Scheme – Iwan Thomas (Chair, The VAT Run & Ranger, Edinburgh Council) This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/wFVhkeqapJ8>

The seven-hectare VAT Run site lies directly under the elevated approach to the Forth Road Bridge at South Queensferry and was – until eight years ago - derelict, post-industrial ground (a railway and oil storage depot past as well as whiskey distillery bonded warehouse associations – hence the ‘VAT’ moniker). A group of local volunteers originally got together to tidy up and begin to manage 30-50-year old scrub woodland – to improve habitats and hopefully discourage anti-social behaviour there.

Four years ago the group became a registered charity and have continued to develop access to, and amenity facilities on, the site (one significant key driver: mountain biking trails and skill park development – with integral training programmes). They have also increased the number of relationships with local groups including schools (forest school and outdoor education emphases) as well as toddler, pre-school and pensioner groups. Through their connections with TCV they have also



tapped into a 'rich vein' of corporate volunteers (especially RBS). Many large city-based businesses are increasingly looking to provide corporate social responsibility programmes for staff.

Iwan went on to talk specifically about the involvement of the VAT Run with the Community Payback Scheme – the first partnership programme to provide direct assistance to the volunteers on the site. Iwan now works at Edinburgh & Lothian Council specifically with the Community Payback Scheme and elaborated on the how the scheme works and may be of potential benefit to some community groups.

Whilst the amount and quality of work undertaken cannot always be guaranteed, CPS can very useful in providing regular labour toward more mundane and routine land management tasks that local volunteers are less keen to keep on with. They particularly like demolition work(!) and projects that have clearly achievable start, middle and end points. The harsh reality is that CPS clients cannot always be relied on. Many have, or come from, pretty chaotic backgrounds with often complex personal histories and a wide spectrum of abilities. However the VAT Run has clearly made substantial progress over the years with CPS involvement that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. This has in turn offered many attending CPS clients all-important and positive work experience, an opportunity to feel valued and to gain an often much-needed sense of self-worth.



You can find out more about The VAT Run at their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/thevatrun/>

and about nominating projects for receipt of support from the Community Payback Scheme at

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20048/crime/551/convicted_offenders_-_sentences.

Dalgety Bay Community Woodland – Dick Alderson (*DBCW Group*)

This presentation is available online at https://youtu.be/Oj_tPHCBAYw

Dalgety Bay is ostensibly a 1960's coastal new town on the north side of the Firth of Forth. Many of the fragmented woodland areas scattered across the conurbation are remnants of Victorian policy woodlands associated with large estates from that era and earlier. Three significant areas of woodland (gross area: 3.21ha) – proposed for open market sale by housing developers in 2011 – were eventually transferred (on appeal) to community council ownership in 2013.

The Dalgety Bay Community Woodland Group was subsequently set up to manage the woods and established with charitable status in 2014. DBCWG's objectives are to manage and improve the



woodlands with the involvement, and for the benefit, of the local community. Much volunteer effort is spent managing access corridors and amenity thresholds with particular emphasis on integrating biodiversity improvements in this work (tree planting, wildflower restoration through sowing and ground cover control etc). Whilst it is difficult to recruit new volunteers, the group have a good relationship with the primary school who have been involved in a variety of conservation projects, the development of an outdoor classroom area and are keen to do more.

The woodlands have now had a detailed arboricultural survey and have a resultant, detailed management plan. Survey work of old WWI coastal defence buildings in one of the woods is presenting an interesting and ambitious heritage access and interpretation project whilst in other areas they have had funding through CSGN for botanical interpretation boards. The biggest ongoing challenge for DBCWG is securing and sustaining core funding to administer and promote their work into the future. Recently there have been some time consuming, fractious and demoralising disputes with a few adjacent land owners which proved fairly divisive within the organisation but the Group have successfully worked through these and look positively and optimistically to the future.



You can find out more about the DBCWG at <https://www.dbcwg.org/> and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/DBCWG/>.

Cassiltoun Housing Association – Stuart Whittaker (*Community Woodland Officer, CHA*)

This presentation is available online at <https://youtu.be/1hbLkeLlbj4>

There are over 62 hectares of woodland throughout the Castlemilk housing estate in south Glasgow. Whilst the estate ranks very highly in terms of formal indicators of social deprivation, it is a very vibrant community. The Cassiltoun Housing Association manages both the built- and open space environments across the estate and have employed a Community Woodland Officer since 2011 (part-funded by FCS). Stuart took up this role in October 2017 and is responsible for running events and the wide variety of groups and programmes that give and encourage local people to access, and be involved in managing, the parkland areas as a whole.

By 2017, a lot of the positive engagement achieved in the early years was beginning to fall away so the CHA and Stuart have been taking a close look at the most effective ways to revitalise community links. Children's activities through holiday periods as well as seasonal family events are perennially popular, but volunteering has dwindled and new energy and promotion is now being put into bringing in new recruits. The local primary school has an Eco Club that regularly uses the Park whilst the secondary school now has John Muir Awards that get children involved in conservation projects there.

Working in partnership is seen by Stuart as a real key to success. TCV and Jobs Business Scotland are helping and involved in Employability and Skills Training initiatives, whilst Stuart has three new groups starting this year to attract young people in different age ranges: 'Woodland Nippers' (pre-school children with attendant family members); 'Castlemilk Explorers' (for 7-12 year olds – delivered in partnership with SWT) and the Junior Ranger Award (for 12-18 year olds – delivered in partnership with the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association).



You can find out more about Cassiltoun Housing Association at <http://www.cassiltoun.org.uk/> and the Castlemilk Park at and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CastlemilkParkProject/>

East Kilbride Community Trust – Monique MacAdams (CEO, EKCT)

EKCT ran a slide show of images from their community events, available online at <https://youtu.be/BVkuFIZUYZU>

EKCT was set up as a company limited by guarantee and Scottish charity in 2009. Their overarching objective is to bring the community together and promote healthy lifestyles to everyone in East Kilbride. Monique has been involved with the charitable trust since its inception and is also a local councillor. Early project work for the Trust revolved around Outdoor Learning programmes – working with local schools and Additional Special Needs children – as well as the establishment of the K-Park Training Academy: an all-weather sports ground with indoor facilities and the associated wide range of community events, sports clubs and competitions that run from this facility throughout the year. It's estimated that over a thousand people a week use EKCT facilities or are involved in associated clubs and projects.

Future ambitions are to develop employment and skills training programmes as well as developing affordable housing however a significant amount of the Trust's time and resources have been taken up in the last few years in the acquisition and establishment of K-Woodlands as a new and accessible community resource.

K Woodlands occupies the site of an old lime quarry and its resultant bings (spoil heaps). EKCT managed to raise 100% funding for the acquisition of the woods in 2013 (initial feasibility work funded by FCS) and they subsequently received CSGNT funding to employ a Community Woodland Engagement Officer to begin to run a programme of local events.

Active management at the woods – ostensibly restructuring work involving felling, thinning work and trails development – only began in 2017 under WIAT and Forestry Grant Scheme funding. In 2016, a warehouse/distribution building on adjacent industrial estate land came on the market and EKCT purchased the property.



The £300k purchase price was reached through significant local fund raising as well as a £75k loan and has allowed EKCT to consolidate the woodland site with neighbouring indoor facilities for use by visitors/visiting groups. Although already proving useful as an indoor and wet-weather venue for volunteer and youth group activities (plus tools and equipment storage), currently the majority of the building stands empty. The Trust is actively considering a range of potential uses for other parts of the building (e.g. childcare provision, radio station, community café, fitness/gym area).

In hindsight Monique said the amount of time, paperwork and financial insecurities of the past few years had been immense and she even questioned whether she would have embarked on the K Woodlands venture knowing the effort and uncertainties that lay ahead. The woodland grant aid was particularly troublesome in the last twelve months as this money is only paid in arrears whilst substantial sums of money were being spent on woodland restructuring and access work. She is however very optimistic for the future now that they have the facilities secured as they offer significant potential benefit to the local community. Particular praise was given to Stephen Porch who – with Tracey Wilmot – has delivered over 200 events in the last year at the woods.

You can find out more about EKCT at <http://eastkilbridecommunitytrust.co.uk/> and at their K Woodlands Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/KWoodlandsEKCT/>

Photographs from the day....



The morning's group discussion to identify common interests & concerns



Andy & Monique welcome & introduce the group to K Woods



Walking around the circular trails - admiring the restructured woods



Amenity spaces and new tree planting



Taking in the panoramic views across the South Lanarkshire countryside



Winding our way back to EKCT HQ (note its sheer size!)



Central Scotland Community Woodland Networking Event 15th March 2018
Feedback Summary

Please rate the following by ticking the statement which best matches your opinion:						
	Organisation	Location	Venue	Catering	Speakers	Site Visit
very good	10	9	8	9	10	8
good	2	2	4	3	2	2
fair		1				
poor						
n/a						2

Do you feel that the event delivered your expectations?

Yes: 11 No: 0 Partly: 1

If your answer was ‘No’ or ‘Partly’ please tell us why, & how we can approve things.

We are at an early stage of developing projects in an urban park and the woodland aspect has not been involved to date - ponds and grassland easier at early stage and visitors are generally too scared to enter fenced-off woods.

Maybe get vegetarian sandwiches separate from meat ones.

Definitely found new opportunities for work through contacts made.

Meeting lots of interesting people doing community forestry in the same region.

What benefits do you feel you gained from attending the event?

Networking – lots of similar issues, lots of new ideas. Found it very beneficial.

Better understanding of community woodland issues, possibly new clients.

Ideas of what has been done elsewhere and hence might be possible for us. Networking opportunities.

Realisation that some community woodland group issues are universal.

Hearing from others and getting ideas that will help with our development.

Peer to peer support – so good to hear from others – both wins and challenges.

I met people in a similar position to our group and met people who can help to get us into a better position.

Great to hear about fantastic community-led projects and networking opportunity.

Great to meet other like-minded people throughout the central belt – when you work for a small charity and are spread so thinly it’s easy to forget there are others out there.

Would your group be interested in hosting a future event?

Yes: 5 No: 4 Possibly: 1 Not yet: 2

Is there a site / type of site you would like to visit at a future event?

Any of the community woodlands mentioned during the presentations.



Are there particular themes or interests you would like to see featured or discussed at a future event?

Engaging with community. Finding and retaining volunteers. This is easier if individual is employed to engage but to be able to employ need to have enough volunteer support in community.

Liability issues. Volunteer recruitment and retention.

Recruiting volunteers. Practical urban woodland management.

Volunteer management.

Volunteers – attracting/retaining. Fund raising. Do's & Don'ts of land purchase.

Focus on solutions for barriers.

Volunteer attraction and retention and funding opportunities

Would you recommend others to take part in such an event?

Yes: 9 No: 0

Please explain why / why not:

Invaluable to find peers in this work.

Helps to talk about ideas. Raise confidence. Helps with queries.

Great opportunity to meet other woodland groups and share knowledge/troubles.

It's invaluable to hear other groups experiences and to find out what help is available.

Lots of shared interests in a broad range.

Definitely – good to meet others doing similar things

I always recommend groups join CWA.

Yes, really useful ideas and meeting others with a common goal

Please list any other training/ events you would like to see organised:

How to apply for funding.

Getting quotes from companies (or getting companies interested in doing work).

Woodland management – perhaps more walk arounds highlighting issues + resolution

Creating events in woodland.

Practical woodland management.

Managing woodlands for biodiversity.

How to raise money from woodland.

Charging for events.

Arts/crafts from coppice.

Any other comments:

Very worthwhile, found it hugely helpful.

We were really pleased to host this event and are glad the feedback has been positive. We can't wait to see this event grow and to visit the other projects throughout the central belt.

Learnt a lot and great opp. To network. Definitely keen to attend future events.

Very enjoyable as all CWA events always are.