

Achieving Results in Communities (ARC) Warwickshire, England



A social enterprise bringing environmental and education projects onto a small 2 hectare urban post-industrial site

This case study is one of a set written as part of a Forest Research project. Some case studies are written by the community group, others by researchers who visited and interviewed group members, but they have all been validated and endorsed by the community groups.

Forest Research developed a standard method for describing the case studies, outlined in Lawrence and Ambrose-Oji, 2013 “A framework for sharing experiences of community woodland groups” Forestry Commission Research Note 15 (available from www.forestry.gov.uk/publications).

The case study comprises three parts:

1. The **Group Profile** provides essential information about the form and function of the community woodland group. Profiles were prepared following the methodology
2. The **Change Narrative** which documents key moments in the evolution of the community woodland group with a particular focus on the evolution of engagement and empowerment
3. The **Engagement and Impacts Timeline** documents milestones in the development of the community woodland group, its woodland and any assumed or evidenced impacts.

The case studies collectively provide a resource which documents the diversity and evolution of community woodland groups across Scotland, Wales and England. The method ensures that the case studies are consistent and can be compared with each other. We welcome further case studies to add to this growing resource.

For further information, and for the detailed case study method, please contact:

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1. Group profile

Woodland: Foundry Wood
Map ref: SP 310 653
Webpage: www.foundrywood.co.uk
Date of profile: August 2013
Resources: site visit, interviews

1. Institutional context (in August 2013)

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| 1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s) | <p>The woodland is currently owned by a development company. The transfer of ownership (lease freehold) to Achieving Results in Communities (ARC) Community Interest Company (CIC) is under negotiation as part of a Section 106 agreement. At the moment the CIC lease the land for a peppercorn rent.</p> <p>Classification of tenure: Lease (private)</p> |
| 1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s) | <p>Access is open to the community who are welcome to visit the site to take part in activities and events. The site is fenced and gated, so access is controlled, and is only open when members of ARC or events organisers are on site.</p> |
| 1.3 Regulations/responsibilities affecting the woodland(s) | <p>This is a scrubby secondary woodland developing on a post-industrial site so it is currently burdened with very few regulations/responsibilities. However, an England Woodland Grant Scheme-Woodland Improvement Grant supporting public access infrastructure and some planting was in the process of being awarded so the terms of the grant will need to be observed. There are responsibilities around the control of invasive and noxious weeds (particularly Japanese knotweed) so these have been sprayed for.</p> |

2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise

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| 2.1 Group members, representation and decision | <p>The Achieving Results in Communities (ARC) group is formally constituted as a Community Interest Company (CIC) and is structured accordingly. There are four Directors, some of whom are employed by the CIC.</p> <p>The community that ARC feels it represents comprises local residents and inhabitants of Leamington Spa.</p> |
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| <p>making</p> | <p>Decision making is largely done by the Directors who meet each other on a regular basis. There are formal and informal consultation opportunities when other members of the community are asked about their views. The formally organised consultations tend to occur when particular specific developments are likely, and take the form of public meetings and surveys. A steering group has been organised to take part in the regular Directors meetings this involves community members that have a long term commitment to Foundry Wood more closely in decision making.</p> |
| <p>2.2 Communication and learning processes</p> | <p>Events and activities at Foundry Wood as well as important meetings such as the Foundry Wood open day are regularly communicated by email (from an initial mailing list of 300, this has grown to 600), the ARC website and blog, Twitter, Facebook, leaflets and posters distributed at important local community venues.</p> <p>From the response to the communications and discussions with participants at events and open days, ARC is developing a sense of the kinds of on-site activities that the community values the most. There is also ongoing learning about the best ways to communicate and market what courses and activities are available.</p> |
| <p>2.3 Structure and legal status</p> | <p>The group is formally constituted as a Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee. Foundry Wood is one of ARC's projects, other services include: litter picking and recycling at large events (e.g. Warwick Folk Festival), green marketing and event support. ARC is also interested in the possibility of taking on the restoration of other derelict sites in the Leamington Spa area.</p> <p>As a CIC, annual audited accounts and reports are sent through FCA and also to the CIC regulator.</p> <p>Classification of legal form: Company Limited by Guarantee - Community Interest Company</p> |
| <p>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</p> | <p>No particular responsibilities were noted that affect the group's working and decision making.</p> |
| <p>2.5 Forest management</p> | <p>An informal management plan is in the process of being refined as part of the woodland planting grant application and award process. The overall aim of management is to encourage wildlife, improve biodiversity, manage alien</p> |

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| objectives and planning procedures | <p>invasive species, and create areas of educational interest. Public access will be improved, but, partly because of the small size of the location, and the proximity to the railway line, the intention is not to create an open access space. Access will be managed and controlled.</p> <p>Overall aim of plan: Conservation, heritage and education.</p> | | | | |
| 2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan | <p>The management plan is implemented by volunteers through working groups or through organised events and activities.</p> | | | | |
| 2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability | <p>The overall objective of ARC is not for profit provision of community benefits. Strategic development of the group does include revenue generation to realise these objectives, and ensure the sustainability of the Foundry wood site and any future sites the group might take on. At this stage in ARC's development the majority of the funding comes from grants and part of the Section 106 monies.</p> <p>The overall sources of income for the group in 12/13 financial year are estimated as:</p> <table data-bbox="488 895 1279 963"> <tr> <td>Grant aid and matched funding</td> <td>95 % of total</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fundraising</td> <td>5 % of total</td> </tr> </table> <p>Revenue generation</p> <ul data-bbox="439 1038 2069 1286" style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and products traded – Activity days and sessions, craft activities, courses for adults. The children's activity sessions cost between £3-6, the adults training considerably more. The income from this does not necessarily come to ARC: it is raised and may be kept by the course organisers. • Market – Local people and residents of Leamington Spa; there is a large demand for children's activities and educational services. <p>Marketing – Follows the general patterns of communication as listed above. ARC advertises any of the events on site by those means.</p> | Grant aid and matched funding | 95 % of total | Fundraising | 5 % of total |
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| Fundraising | 5 % of total | | | | |
| 2.8 Benefit distribution | <p>The tangible benefits are mostly the public benefits of improved greenspace, the opportunity for access and educational activities. Income generated by courses and other paid for events may help to support the course</p> | | | | |

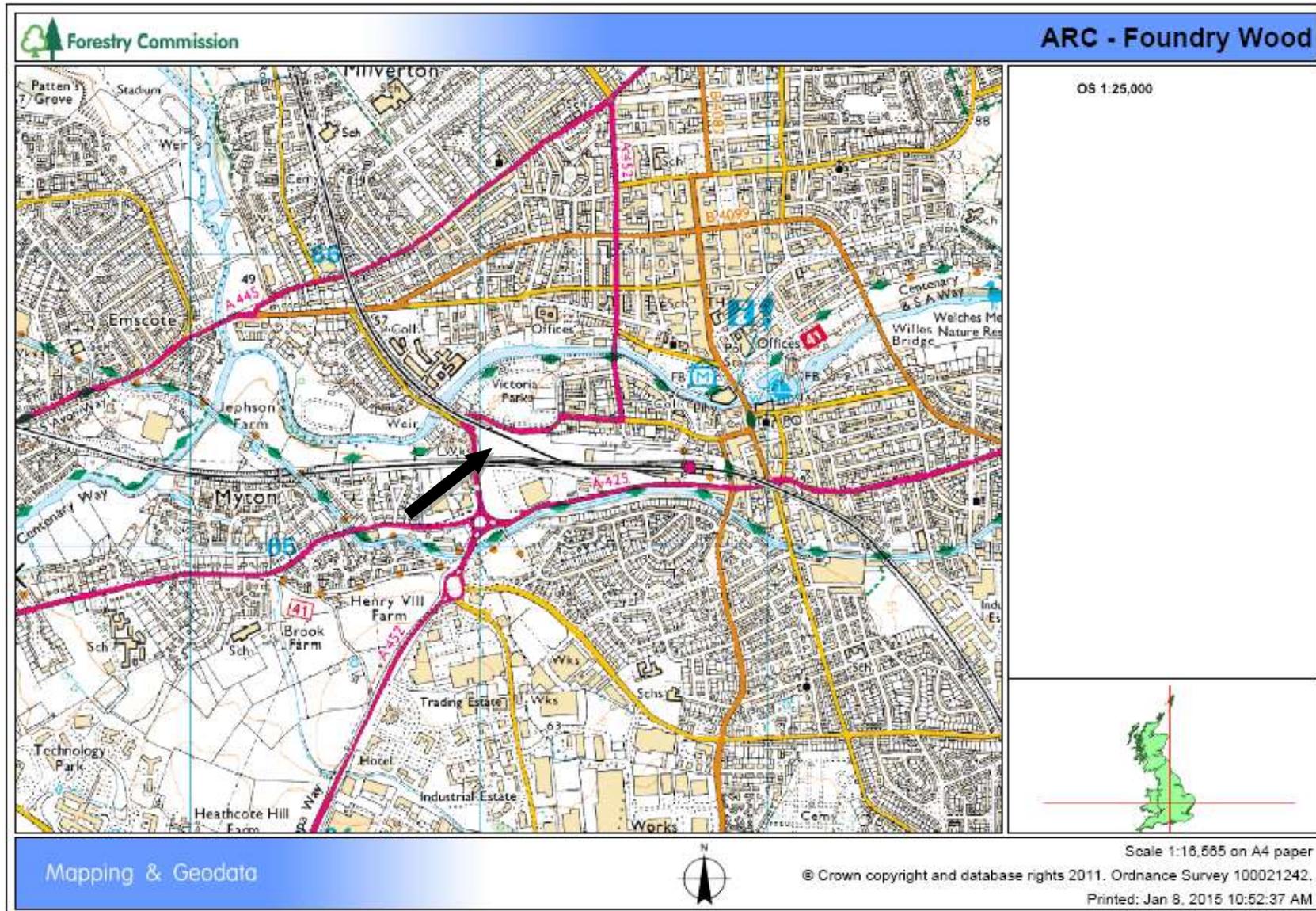
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| rules | providers. Some of ARCs directors are employed by the CIC. |
| 3. External linkages | |
| 3.1 Partnerships and agreements | There are formal partnerships with the local authority and the developer over the development of the Foundry Wood site. |
| 3.2 Associations | ARC is a member of Small Woods Association. |
| 4. Resources | |
| 4.1 Forest/ woodland | <p>Describe the forest/woodland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wood and land covers 2 hectares. • The woodland is located in a small green triangle of land near the centre of Leamington Spa. It is situated between the main railway lines and Princes Drive, close to Victoria park, on the west side of the city. Access is via the main A452. There is a car park close by the woods below the railway viaduct. There is no vehicular access to the wood. • The soil is best described as a brownfield mix. The presence of a foundry, railway sidings, and other industrial units on the site for many years has left a post-industrial substrate. • The species found on this site are mainly scrubby shrubs recolonising the industrial site. The mix is mainly elder, willow and hawthorn, but also includes sycamore, walnut, and ash. The age of the trees is hard to determine. • Major operations in 2012/13 included tree surgery at the main entrance and walkways, the planting of new trees, laying of a path, planting a willow hedge along the railway boundary line, and digging a pond. • There are three main management compartments. • Classification of woodland type: Broadleaved (young trees) • There is some biodiversity on site, including muntjac deer. The pond has introduced amphibians and dragon flies. Biodiversity surveys are planned for the coming years. |

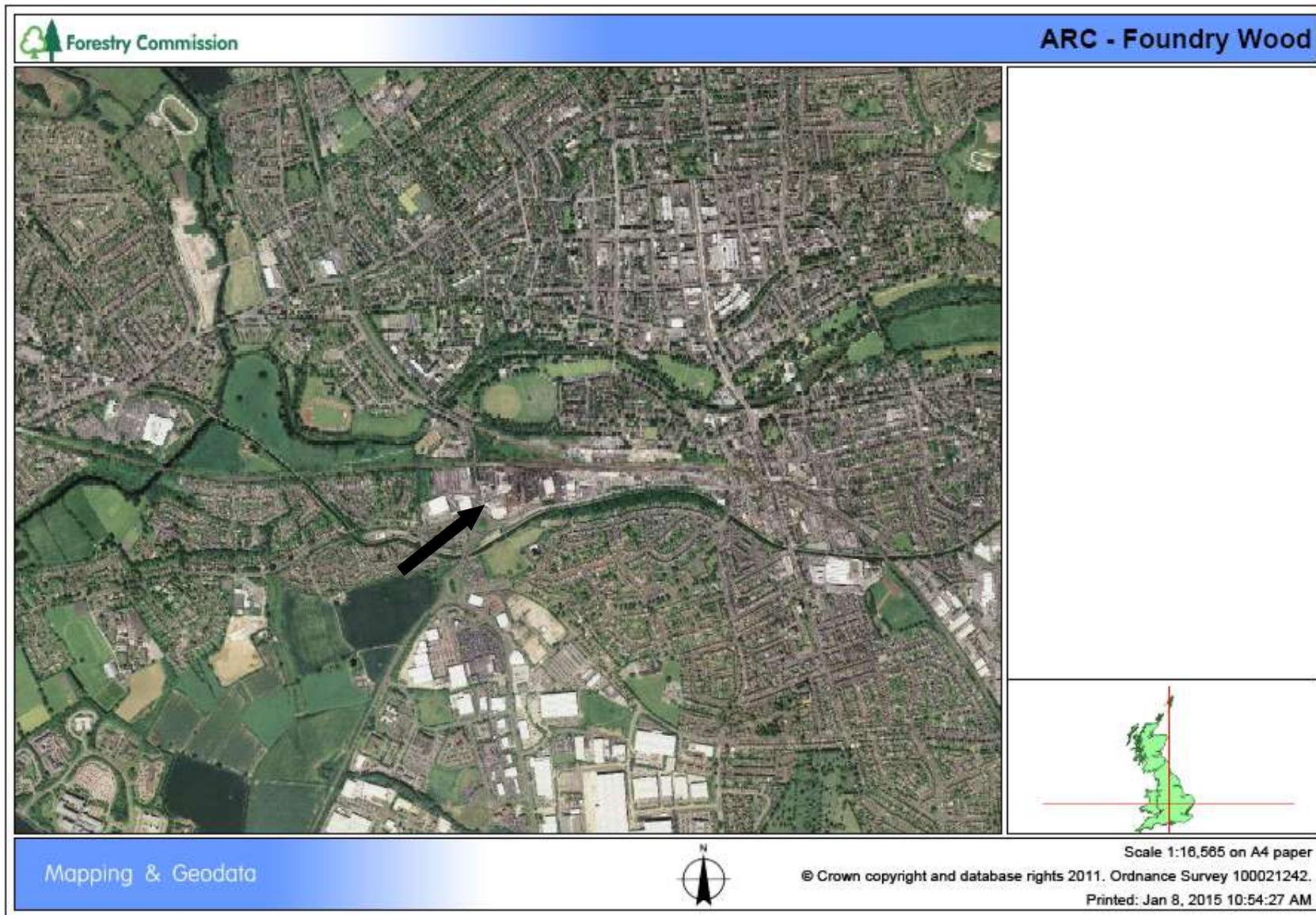
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| 4.2 Woodland and group funding sources | <p>The woodland was donated to the community through a Section 106 agreement. A lease (999 years) is being arranged between ARC and the developer that owns the land. Before the completion of the lease agreement a peppercorn rent has been charged. The developer has supported the group with funding to engage solicitors to prepare the lease agreement and organise the associated insurance.</p> <p>Additional income is generated through fundraising, through the provision of services, but mostly from grants. Funding has come from the District Councils and Leamington Town Council. Small donations have come from the Wildlife Trusts, The Natural History Society, Rotary, and similar organisations.</p> |
| 4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital | <p>Founding members and directors of ARC had skills in accountancy, business management, fundraising, marketing, community development and natural resource management, so they were well placed to start-up the CIC and begin working on Foundry Wood. The main sources of additional advice around the benefits of different legal constitutions as well as the legalities of land ownership and appropriate insurance have come from Co-operatives South West, the Community Lands Trust and the Community Land Advisory Service. ARC became members of the Small Woods Association so that they could take advantage of the member support and training, which upgraded their skills and knowledge of woodland management, and familiarity with routes to forestry grant support. In addition, the group is enhancing its skills and knowledge through "learning by doing".</p> |

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2. Change Narrative

1. Group History. Moments of change, motivations and engagement

The Foundry Wood site was in the ownership of Ford until 2007. It is a derelict brownfield site with railway sidings adjoining the site of an old foundry dating back to the 1800s, most recently used as the Ford foundry. A developer bought the site and levelled the foundry but the Foundry wood parcel of land was too small for real use. As part of the planning agreement, the local council put in a Section 106 planning agreement that the developers had to provide the land for community use as a community woodland or similar. They approached the local environmental group Action 21 (the local agenda 21 group that one of the founders of Achieving Results in Communities used to work for) to put this into action. However, they had just lost staff and did not have the capacity to deliver. One of the founders and another colleague decided to take the project on. The key motivation was to take on a piece of derelict land and put it to sustainable community use. The first step was **group formation** to set up ARC, a Community Interest Company (CIC), at the start of 2011, as a mechanism to deliver the project. The CIC form was chosen as most appropriate because of the asset lock, which was understood as the best vehicle for holding ownership once the developer was in a position to lease the land to the community.

As part of the Section 106 agreement there was an allocation of funds, a total of £50,000, to achieve the work that was needed. A steering group comprising the Local Authority, members of the development company and stakeholders from local interest groups, discussed and agreed specific categories of work: **community consultation**; improving access; installing signage and interpretation; and publicity around the woodland opening. This agreement also involved drawing up a legal contract that included defining the mechanisms for the draw down of the developers funding. ARC also engaged in additional fundraising. The combination of the developers grant and funds raised have, in addition to site improvements and other group activities, contributed to the part time employment of some of the Directors of the CIC as well as that of consultants and contractors helping with planning and improvements.

The community consultation showed a desire for a woodland that would become a wildlife conservation space and an education space. **Full management** of the woodland by the group is based on these community preferences. Infrastructure on the site

such as paths, and a cobb shelter, as well as other tasks such as clearing work, have been the result of community **volunteering** and the organisation of events that involved a specialist leader where specific skills were required.

The ambition for Foundry Wood has been to develop it into something more than a park, which would make it different from the other greenspaces in Leamington. Rather than being another place to “walk the dog”, the idea is to continue to develop a woodland, and to open it to all kinds of different activities and events, so that it becomes a place in which “*you engage, you learn, you like take something away with you, you have like a very different experience of it being a woodland rather than a park*”.

2. Challenges, barriers and opportunities for change: Key issues in evolution

Facilitating factors

- The main reason that the Foundry Wood project has moved ahead at such speed is the **support of the Local Authority and the developer**.
- In addition to this, **support around the establishment and development (legal and financial, including the terms of the lease) of the CIC** and how this can remain sustainable over time, was an important issue in the early stages of the group’s evolution.

Barriers and challenges

- Dealing with the **legal issues around lease and ownership**, and the **associated costs**.
- **Ongoing costs** are also a concern from the point of view of the wood’s continuing sustainability. At the moment the **insurance** is approximately £450 per year, which is a considerable amount for a community group managing a site like Foundry Wood, that will not be producing timber or other woodland products.

3. Evolution of income streams

There has been a good deal of learning about the kinds of activities that are most in demand by local people, and how these might generate income in the future to maintain the woodland site. Entertainment and summer holiday activities for primary school age children have been particularly well attended, whereas adult activities and courses have not been so well attended.

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ARC is unsure whether it is the choice of course, the pricing structure or the (inadequate) advertising which has acted as a barrier to adult participation. Children’s activities are priced at between £3-6 per day. In general, other businesses and facilitators provide the workshops and activities and charge for them. The revenue raised from these activities is not necessarily accrued by ARC. There is an ambition to develop Forest School modules that might be supported by grant funding for the first year, and will be charged for after that time.

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| 1 st YEAR 2011/12 | | 2 nd YEAR 2012/13 | |
| Grant aid and matched funding | 95% of total | Grant aid and matched funding | 90% of total |
| Fundraising | 5 % of total | Fund raising | 10% of total |

4. Woodland history and change: Benefits and impacts before group involvement

Foundry Wood is located on a brownfield site, so the history of the woodland is industrial. It is not a planned wood but comprised largely of natural regeneration. There has been a foundry adjacent to the site since the 1800s. The Imperial Foundry closed in the 1930s when it was taken on by Ford Motor company. The area that is now woodland was railway sidings from around 1900 until around 1950s. The factory and foundry closed in 2007, at which point the site lay empty until it was bought for development. Although much has been cleared by the developers, evidence of past railway sidings and industrial waste can be found across the site.

| Time Period | Owner/Manager | Objectives / Benefits (and evidence) | Major operations | Access and use rights |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1800s-1930s | The Imperial Foundry and others | Industrial production | Metal working | No public access |
| 1930s - 2007 | Ford | Casting engine blocks | Metal working | No public access |
| 2007-2011 | Developer | Derelict land – awaiting planning permission and development | Removal of waste | No public access |

4. Woodland history and change: Benefits and impacts since group involvement

| Time Period | Owner/Manager | Objectives / Benefits (and evidence) | Major operations | Access and use rights |
|-------------|----------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| 2011 | Development company - ARC CIC | Biodiversity conservation and education | Litter picking, tree safety work and silviculture, tree planting, pond establishment, willow hedge planting, events and education | No public access |

5. Future plans

The future plans of ARC are to increase the accessibility of the site (i.e. make it easier to access by people of all abilities) and raise some more permanent structures (e.g. bike shed, class room). ARC is planning to look for other woodland and green sites that they can also improve and bring into better management. The other important ambition for ARC is to establish and develop a formally constituted Friends of Foundry Wood group, perhaps in the form of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a less onerous part-way to Charity formulation). This would allow ARC to eventually cede management to the Friends of group allowing the community to take over. With management of Foundry Wood in the hands of a Friend of Group, this would provide an alternative legal body and legal form that could secure funding from a different range of funders to those ARC are able to apply to. There are two key reasons why ARC view the future this way, firstly, a Friends of Group would involve the community more closely in management of the wood, and secondly, ARC could then move forward developing other projects in line with their social and environmental objectives.

3. Engagement and impacts timeline

| Year | Event | ENGAGEMENT | Reasons | Changes/Impacts and outcomes Social (evidence) | Changes/Impacts and outcomes Woodland (evidence) | Changes/Impacts and outcomes Financial/Economic (evidence) |
|-----------|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| 2011 | A CIC was created to deliver the Foundry Wood project | INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to GROUP FORMATION | Developer seeks planning permission, S106 agreement provides land for community | | | |
| 2011 | Consultation exercise funded by the developer | GROUP FORMATION to COMMUNITY CONSULTATION | To establish the needs of the community | | | |
| 2011-2012 | ARC established and takes on management of site | COMMUNITY CONSULTATION to FULL MANAGEMENT | Steering group of local stakeholders oversees establishment of project | | Litter picking, potential for improved biodiversity through tree planting, pond establishment and willow hedge planting | Directors employed by CIC |

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| 2012 onwards | ARC provides community volunteering opportunities to help with site management and community ownership of project | FULL MANAGEMENT to ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT by community | | Education opportunities for children and adults, increased opportunities for community socialising | Potential for improved biodiversity with continuing site work | Income from courses and educational events |
|--------------|---|---|--|--|---|--|