

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland Scottish Borders, Scotland



A 44 ha community moorland where conifer plantation is being replaced with native woodland

Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland

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: Leadburn Wood Map ref: NT 233 545 Webpage: http://onlineborders.org.uk/community/leadburnwood/ Date of profile: December 2013 Resources: Interview with two FLCW Directors, informal conversation with Forest Research colleague; Leadburn Community Woodland website, Leadburn Community Woodland leaflet	
1. Institutional context (in December 2013)	
1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)	<p>Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland (FLCW) owns the majority of Leadburn wood (44 ha out of a total of 51 ha). The remaining 7 ha (east of the access road) is owned by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), which manages it as an experimental plot.</p> <p>A neighbouring farmer owns the original access road to the forest, which is not used by the community.</p> <p>Classification of tenure: Ownership</p>
1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)	<p>Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) is guaranteed by the Land Reform Act.</p> <p>Cyclists are only permitted on the two railway line paths, which have a compacted surface, as they would damage the unsurfaced paths. Motorised vehicles are not permitted, except when needed to allow access by disabled people or for transport of tools and equipment required for forest management. Vehicular access to the woods is regulated by means of bollards at the woodland entrance, the key for which is held by a small number of active group members.</p>

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	<p>The access road to the FLCW-owned part of Leadburn Wood passes through FCS-owned land. The group has been granted a wayleave to create and use this unmetalled road to access the forest. Parking is available in a nearby lay-by on the A703.</p>
<p>1.3 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)</p>	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.</p> <p>Part of the purchase agreement with FCS was to plant a 'reasonable number' of trees for the area to develop into woodland again.</p>
<p>2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise</p>	
<p>2.1 Group members, representation and decision making</p>	<p>Anybody, regardless of post code, is eligible to join the group and influence decision-making. The individual membership fee is £5 / year and family membership is £10 / year. There is not a separate junior membership fee. The group currently has about 50 members drawn from the surrounding rural areas of Eddleston, Howgate, Lamancha, Leadburn, Peebles, Penicuik and West Linton.</p> <p>The Board of Directors meets on a monthly basis, in a public space to enable other interested people to contribute to decisions. The meetings, typically attended by about five people, serve to decide upon activities to be carried out within the near future, to review implementation of the management plan and to suggest future management activities.</p> <p>In line with company/charity guidelines, the committee holds an AGM at which accounts are reviewed. These guidelines also specify that there should be a minimum of two Directors with one third of the Directors retiring each year and allowed to be re-elected once only. In practice only the two main officers (i.e., Chair and Treasurer) are elected (on an annual basis) as there is a low level of interest in joining the Board within the community. FLCW has thus evolved from having a formal structure with a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Volunteer Coordinator to a more informal structure with only a Chair and Treasurer operating within a larger committee of people contributing to decision-making and forest management.</p>

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<p>2.2 Communication and learning processes</p>	<p>Communication with group members is largely done via a regularly updated website on which information can be found on: (volunteer) activities, wildlife sightings, contact information, funding sources and minutes of AGMs. The group also distributes newsletters, albeit on an irregular basis, to their membership.</p> <p>Activities by FLCW are also advertised on the websites of Howgate and Eddleston Community Councils. AGMs are announced with at least a three week notice through a combination of a press release sent to local newspapers, an announcement on the website, posters and an email to members.</p>
<p>2.3 Structure and legal status</p>	<p>FLCW is constituted as a company limited by guarantee (SC286916) with charitable status (SC037052) since July 2005. This model was chosen to limit the legal liability of the Directors following woodland acquisition, while still allowing for grant applications.</p> <p>Most decisions are made informally by the committee. One major contentious decision was taken through a formal vote at an AGM.</p> <p>Funds have come mainly from grants, donations and selling Christmas trees.</p> <p>Classification of legal form: Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee</p>
<p>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</p>	<p>Company Law, Charity Law</p>
<p>2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures</p>	<p>Principal objectives are to create a pleasant and varied site with public access that is also good for wildlife. This uses planting of native tree species and gradual removal of most of the alien tree species. Ponds and access paths have also been created. Part of the site is used to try to restore the original raised bog; this also maintains an open view to the Pentland Hills.</p>

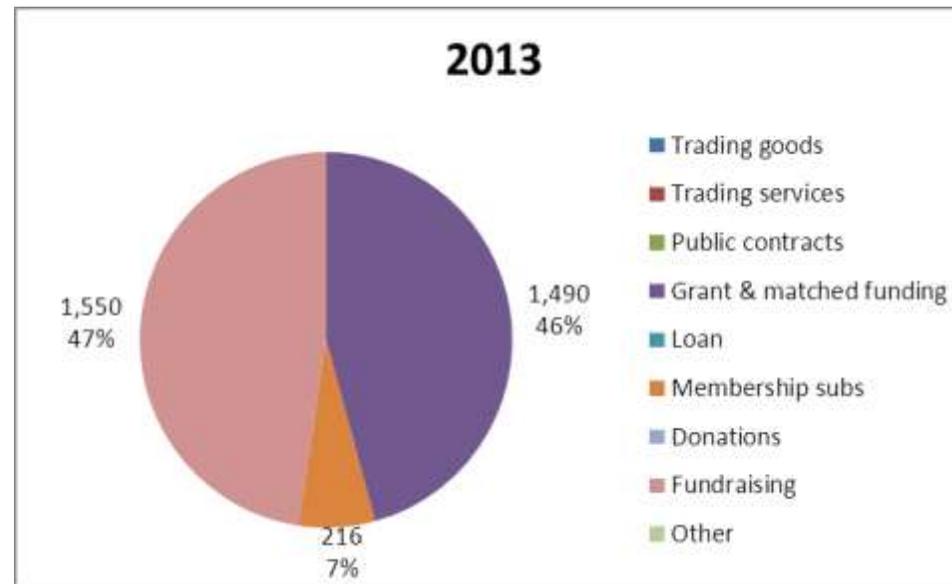
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	<p>A formal five year management plan was created soon after the site was acquired. The first draft was written by an employee of Borders Forest Trust with later additions by members of the committee. Progress was reviewed at the end of this period and most of the proposed activities had been completed. A formal follow up plan has not been written.</p> <p>Overall aim of plan: Public access and recreation</p>
<p>2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan</p>	<p>FLCW undertake the implementation of the woodland management plan with support of a group of volunteers from the community, who meet on a monthly basis. Several FLCW-members volunteer on a more regular basis. FLCW is also assisted by volunteers from Borders Forest Trust (BFT) and Lothians Conservation Volunteers. Various groups of people (e.g., school children, scout groups, sport groups and mental health groups) have assisted in tree planting. As the woodland is still very young, the group is able to undertake all forest management activities without using specialized equipment or skilled workers. The group does not have paid employees</p> <p>External contractors have been used to restore the raised bog, dig wildlife ponds and dredge drainage ditches beside access paths.</p> <p>Funds have been obtained from various sources including grants, donations, membership fees and selling of Christmas trees.</p>
<p>2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability</p>	<p>FLCW is not interested in making a profit from trading goods or services in the short run and also does not require income from timber sales to operate successfully in the future.</p> <p>The group generates an income of through the sale of Christmas trees and also sells plants at an annual plant sale day organized by Eddleston horticultural society. Membership fees (£5 per person each year) provide a third source of income.</p> <p>GMP Print Solutions contributed to the purchase of trees and tubes as part of their carbon offsetting programme.</p>

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Many other trees have been donated.

The group also receives financial support through an annual payment by Scottish Rural Development Programme (Land Managers Options), which will terminate in 2014. This reimburses some of the costs involved in improving public access to the site.



2.8 Benefit distribution rules

Any profits made by FLCW are re-invested into woodland management.

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3. External linkages	
3.1 Partnerships and agreements	<p>FLCW works in partnership with Borders Forest Trust (BFT), which helped to prepare the forest management plan and provides advice. In addition, FLCW has signed an agreement with BFT to take on ownership in case FLCW folds.</p> <p>FCLW also works with Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), which inspects, and undertakes remedial work to, dams in the drainage channels of the raised bog.</p> <p>By working with the Lothians Conservation Volunteers, FLCW receives regular hands-on support in carrying out forest management activities. Finally, a partnership with the Botanical Society has been formed in order for plants and trees surveys to be undertaken.</p>
3.2 Associations	Member of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA). This is valued for the knowledge exchange and training opportunities it provides.
4. Resources	
4.1 Forest/ woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadburn Wood extends over 44 ha and is located approximately 12 miles south of Edinburgh city centre and some 4 miles south of Penicuik at Leadburn. The site lies at the southern limit of the Esk valley, between the Pentland Hills to the north-west and the Moorfoot Hills to the south-east. The woodland is a central point between the rural communities of Eddleston, Howgate and Lamancha. • The woodland is accessed from a lay-by that is situated one km south of Leadburn off the A703. An unmetalled access road on third party land connects the woodland owned by FLCW with the lay-by. Two disused railway lines cross the site and provide the main access paths. These have now been converted into flattened paths with a gentle gradient, good drainage and continue beyond the forest. The group has been putting in additional footpaths. • The land is fairly level (279 to 286 metres asl) with a central viewpoint from which a panorama of the surrounding landscape can be gained. The soil of the community-owned land comprises a layer of peat with

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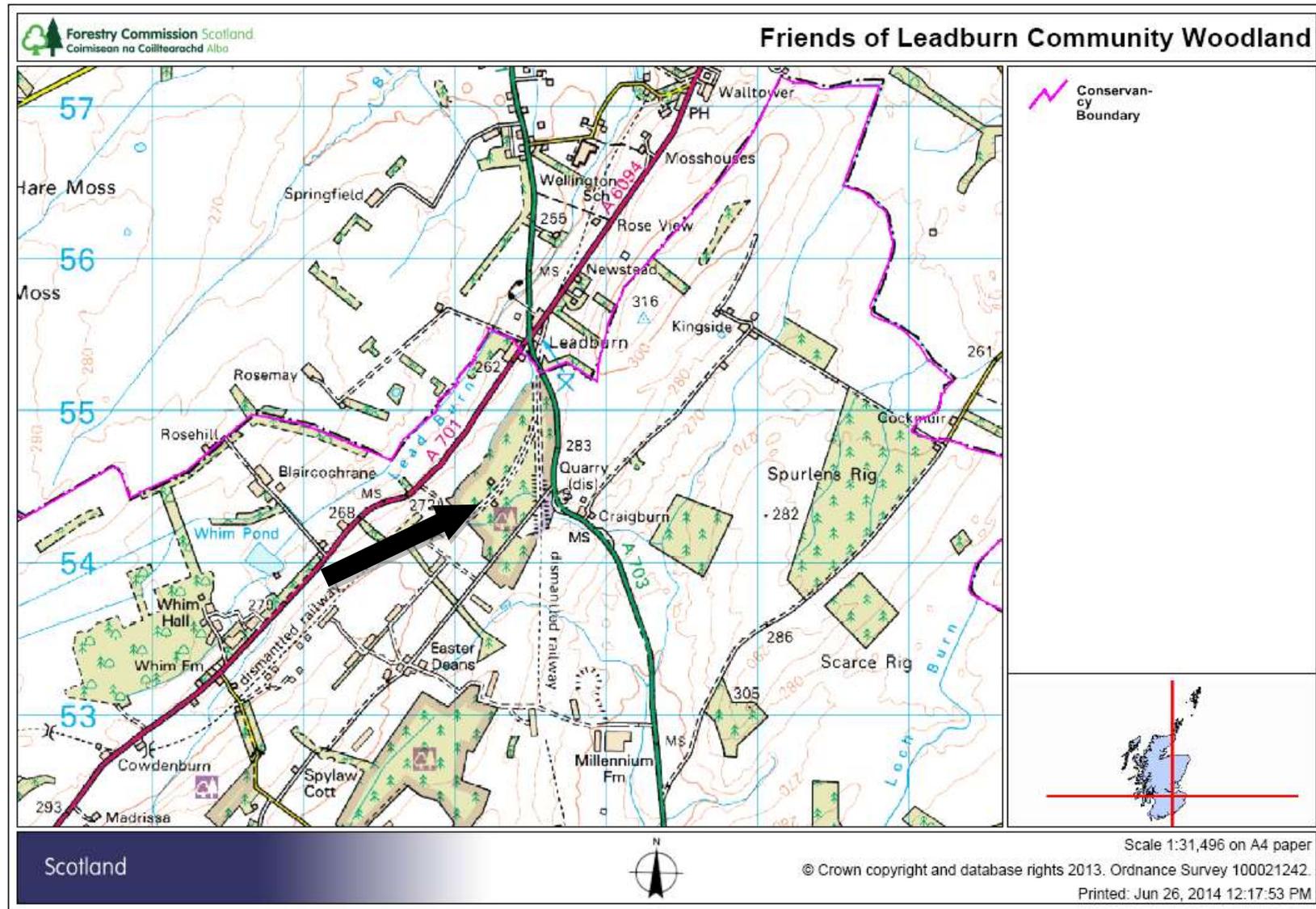
remnants of bog vegetation in wetter parts and heathland plants in drier areas. The banks of the former railway have alkaline soils.

- A total of 40 tree and shrub species had been planted by 2014. The most commonly planted tree species were (5% or more): rowan, common alder, sessile oak, hazel and Scots pine. Towards the north-eastern end of the forest, near the main road, a section of mature, mainly non-native, conifers can be found. This stand comprises lodgepole pine and Norway spruce, planted in 1962 or soon after, which were not felled before the land purchase. Self-sown sitka spruce and lodgepole pine, the species originally grown on site by FCS, can be encountered in the clearfelled area. These are being gradually removed and some have been sold as Christmas trees or given away.
- FLCW aims to restore the native woodland. The community planted a mixture of species (not divided in stands) and deliberately leaves some open spaces. The spacing between trees is wider than usual in a plantation. The group also aim to restore a peat bog to the north west of the western dismantled railway. Any natural regeneration is removed from this area on a regular basis.
- **Classification of woodland type: Mixed mainly broadleaved (young trees)**
- Amongst features of interest are two buildings, previously used by the navy during the 1939-45 war, that have fallen into disrepair.
- The group has recently put in four small ponds to improve biodiversity. Frogs and palmate newts breed on site. Several dragonfly and damselfly species have appeared since the ponds were created. Bird species that are regularly recorded on site include: Teal, shelduck, snipe, woodcock, kestrel, barn owl, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, reed bunting, crossbill, redpoll, and stonechat. Butterfly species that are regularly recorded on site include: orange-tip, small heath, ringlet, small pearl-bordered fritillary and common blue. Moths include six-spot burnet, narrow-bordered five-spot burnet and herald.

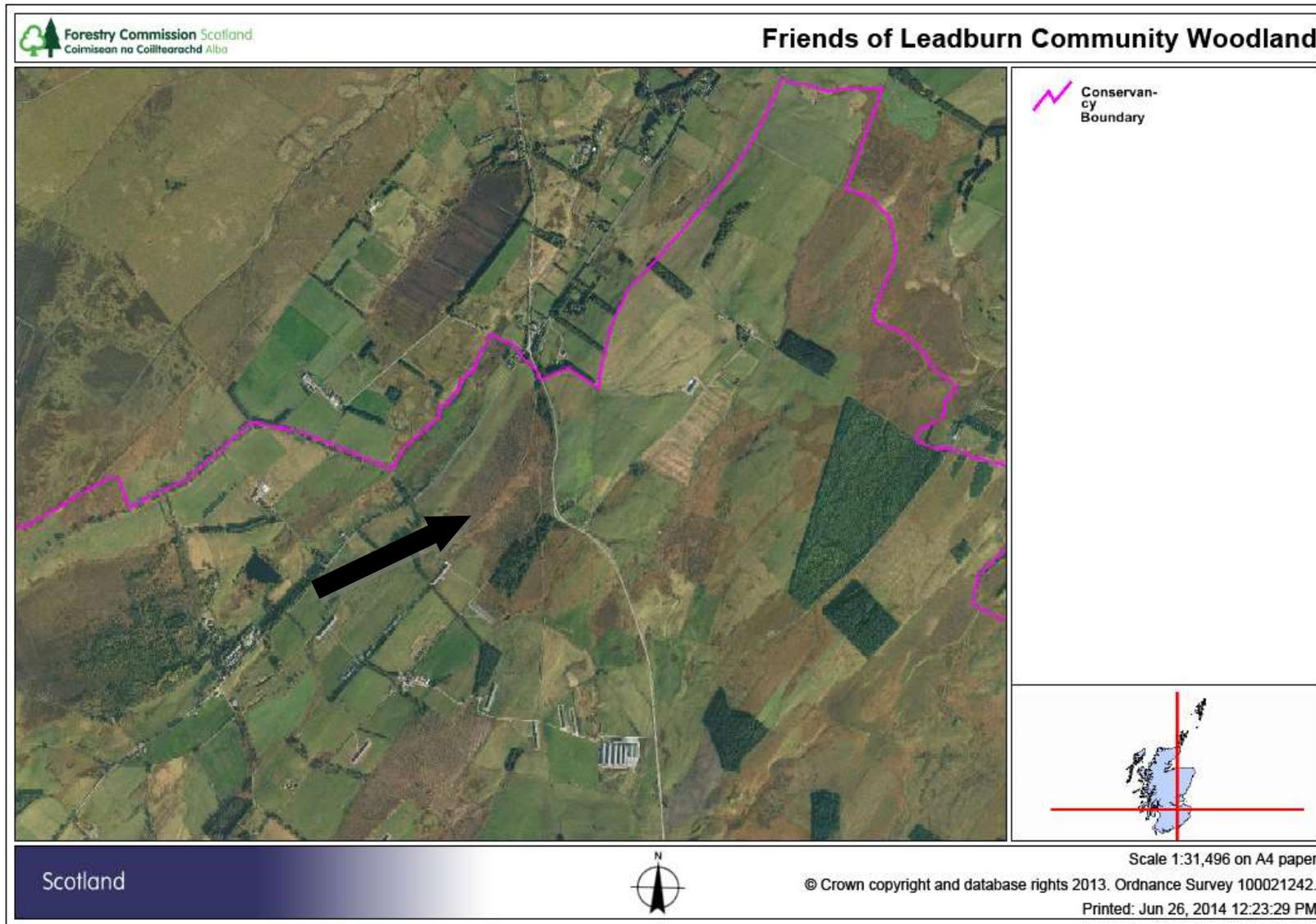
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4.2 Woodland and group funding sources	<p>The site was purchased in February 2007 for £37,000, which was made possible through grants by the Scottish Land Fund (£27,500), Scottish Borders LEADER + (£8,000) and pledges (£1,500).</p> <p>FLCW has generated income through the sale of Christmas trees and sale of plants at an annual plant sale event organized by Eddleston horticultural society.</p> <p>It has also received donations from GMP Print Solutions as part of their carbon offsetting programme, which could be used towards the purchase of trees. The group has been donated trees by the Woodland Trust, Borders Council and other organisations.</p> <p>An SNH grant enabled FLCW to put in plastic barriers in drainage ditches as part of the raised bog restoration project by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. This grant also covers regular inspection of, and remedial work to, dams in the raised bog. The digging of four ponds was funded through a grant by WREN, to compensate for a nearby landfill.</p>
4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital	<p>Group members have gained forestry-related knowledge and skills through courses, training and observation. BFT, CWA and Lothians Conservation Volunteers have provided forestry and wood management knowledge transfer. Knowledge on biodiversity has been gained through the Botanical Society, which carried out a plant and tree survey, and a local bird recorder, who visits the site occasionally.</p> <p>Forest management has further benefited from several group members with strong DIY skills and from two local people with knowledge on legal matters and accountancy.</p>

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2. Change Narrative

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

After the majority of Leadburn Wood was clearfelled by FCS in 2001/2, local people from a nearby village called Lamancha approached FCS to enquire about future plans for the forest. After establishing that Leadburn wood was on the disposal list of FCS, several members of the community started to regularly meet up in a local pub to discuss the potential for forest acquisition from the end of 2004 / beginning of 2005 onward (**informal enjoyment to group formation**). They managed to interest people from Eddleston and Howgate, two other local villages, in their plans as well. One outcome of these discussions was that the community preferred ownership over a management agreement with a third party to prevent any conflicts of interest from arising.

A committee was formed to take the purchase forward in early 2005 and the group organised themselves as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in July 2005 in order to apply to the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS). FLCW acquired the forest for a total of £37,000 in February 2007 with support of the Scottish Land Fund, LEADER + and pledges (**group formation to full management**). The forest was formally opened with the planting of the first couple of trees on 1 April 2007. The purchase had been delayed somewhat by the need to put in an extra access road as the neighbouring private landowner would not allow right of way on the access track to the forest.

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

Facilitating factors

- The **NFLS** that provided the group with the opportunity to buy land in public ownership before being put on the market.
- **Support by Borders Forest Trust** (BFT) in setting up the business model, writing the management plan, pointing out potential grant funds and sharing volunteers. Furthermore, they agreed to take on ownership in the unfortunate event of the community company being wound up.

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- **Highly motivated members of the community**, who took woodland purchase forward.
- **Events organised by the Community Woodland Association (CWA)** on managing raised bogs as well as constructing and maintaining footpaths.
- **The involvement of the Botanical Society**, who undertook a plant identification survey on part of the site and offers consultation on plant identification.
- **The provision of labour by Lothians Conservation Volunteers**, which is a group with experienced conservation volunteers.

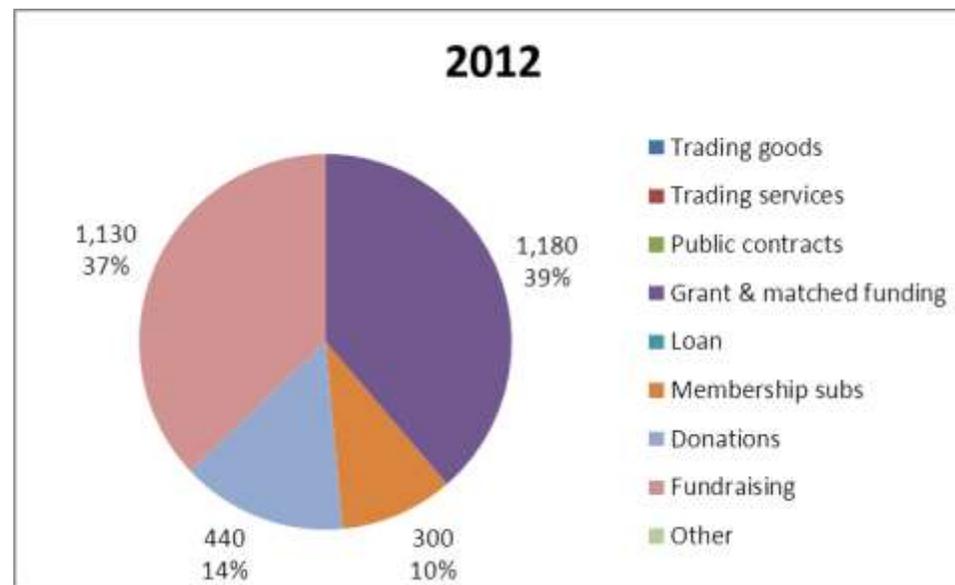
Barriers

- **The refusal by a local landowner to grant right of way** to members of the community out of fear over his access being blocked by visitor cars and bird flu transfer. This issue was overcome after FCS granted permission to put in a new access track across publicly owned land.
- The **small uptake of new volunteers** despite an extensive publicity campaign in all of the neighbouring villages. It is the experience of FLCW that people are more interested in volunteering on special one/off events – especially when these concern tree planting – than on the routine monthly meetings intended for this purpose. Related to this, there is a **low level of interest by members of the community in joining the Board as a Director**, which hampers election of new committee members at AGMs.
- Model development is challenged by a **lack of legal knowledge**, resulting in the persistent belief amongst some members of FLCW that Directors are personally responsible for debts. In the past, some committee members therefore chose not to register, or resign, as a Director.
- BFT formerly provided the insurance for FLCW, but this service has ended. A recent challenge to model development is therefore **the financial cost of insurance**.
- **Use of motorbikes by woodland visitors**. There have also been instances of **graffiti vandalism** to signs, buildings, tubes and other objects and **theft of railway sleepers**. The group has dealt with this by putting in bollards at the woodland entrance, which prevent any unauthorised access to the woodland by four-wheel motorised vehicles.
- **A lack of rights to distribute copyrighted materials**, such as maps, in the forest management plan and other outputs. To overcome this, the group has drawn their own maps.

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3. Evolution of income streams

In 2012, the level of income was quite similar to that in 2013 although income from fundraising and grant funding was slightly lower. Unlike 2013, however, some income was received through donations.



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

Before community woodland acquisition, Leadburn Wood was managed experimentally as productive woodland by FCS. This was to test what timber species would grow well on peatland sites. The results were used to promote forestry plantations in the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland. Forestry and associated drainage of the land have degraded the endangered raised bog habitat over this period of time.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
1962-2001	FCS	Experimenting with productive woodland.	Tree planting, clearfelling, draining raised bog	Public right of way
2001-2002	FCS	Harvesting crop.	Clear felling and harvesting.	Public right of way
2002-2007	FCS	Fallow.	None	Land Reform Act

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

FLCW aims to improve biodiversity by planting native trees and removing natural regeneration of non-native trees. It also aims to restore the peat bog to the west of the dismantled western railway by damming the drainage canals put in by FCS and by removing naturally regenerating shrubs and trees. Other activities undertaken to improve biodiversity include: creating four ponds and putting in a new, lockable entrance door, as well as perches and entrance holes, in a brick building within the wood. This is to provide an undisturbed nesting space for owls and kestrels.

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No formal surveys of fauna and flora were undertaken after the clear felling in 2001/2 and before planting started in April 2007 or in the early years of the project. An informal bryophyte survey (mosses and liverworts) was undertaken in July 2005. A plant diversity survey was carried out in July 2007. Follow up studies have not been made yet.

The active members of the group do make informal observations on the fauna and flora while working on site. In addition, a local bird watcher visits the site and records species. Some of these wildlife records are communicated on the website for public engagement and publicity purposes. However there is insufficient prior information to quantify changes.

Some changes have been evident. For example, the creation of the ponds has encouraged some species of ducks, swans and waders to visit. There has also been an increase in the variety of dragonflies and damselflies visiting. The work on the raised bog has changed water levels and led to an increase in sphagnum mosses and cotton grass. Most of the young trees are still too small to have had a major effect on insect or bird species.

The group has improved the accessibility of the forest by:

- constructing a new access road with parking opportunities,
- constructing new paths,
- putting in new visitor seats roughly 500 meters apart
- installing signage and finger posts
- installing an interpretation panel for the raised bog.

The group aims to increase the amenity value of the forest by planting a wide variety of mainly native tree species, with relatively wide spacing between newly planted trees. The group has planted tree species which attract birds, such as hawthorn, near to paths so that birds will be easily visible to visitors in the future.

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Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
2007 -	FLCW	<p>Public access and recreation</p> <p>Conservation (Planting history, bird and wildlife records)</p> <p>Education</p>	<p>Constructing footpaths, access road, and visitor facilities</p> <p>Planting of native trees, restoring raised bog habitat, digging four ponds, removal of non-native trees, creating bird nesting places in building.</p> <p>Installing an interpretation panel for raised bog, visits by schools (planting trees and installing nest boxes). Duke of Edinburgh students.</p>	Land Reform Act

6. Future Plans

FLCW would like to put in an interpretation panel for the ponds and also has plans to renovate the roof of one of the buildings in the wood. By doing so and installing nest boxes, the group intends to convert this building into a nesting site for owls or kestrels. In addition, the building could be used for promotional purposes. FCLW is also considering thinning its small section of mature woodland to create a garden-like area that could be used for picnics etc. FLCW is also working on a new five-year forest management plan.

3. Engagement and impacts timeline

Year	Event	ENGAGEMENT	Reasons (Barriers and challenges)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Social (evidence)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Woodland (evidence)	Changes /Impacts and outcomes Financial /Economic (evidence)
2005	Community applies to NFLS after woodland is put on FCS disposal list	INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to GROUP FORMATION	To reinstate the forest for recreational purposes	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
2007	Community acquisition of the woodland	GROUP FORMATION to FULL MANAGEMENT	To engage in decision-making around forest	Woodland is now a popular site with dog walkers; also used by at least two wildlife photographers?	Planting and protection of native trees, the creation of four new ponds, restoration of raised bog, new pathways, access road, seating and signage, increased variety of birds and insects.	Revenue from Christmas tree sale, receipt of grant funding