

# Dunbar Community Woodland Group East Lothian, Scotland



*An 18 ha urban community woodland that was gifted as an endowment by the developer of a housing estate*

# DUNBAR COMMUNITY WOODLAND GROUP

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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](http://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:

**Bianca Ambrose-Oji** (Bianca.Ambrose-Oji@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

For further information about this case study, please contact

**Isobel Knox** (isobelknox@aol.com)

## 1. Group profile

**Woodland: Lochend Wood**  
**Map ref: NT 675 779**  
**Webpage: <http://dunbarwoods.org/>**  
**Date of profile: February 2014**  
**Resources: Attendance of committee meeting 19<sup>th</sup> February 2014, interview with DCWG-Director, Draft Management Plan Lochend Woods 2003-2007, DCWG website, DCWG Facebook page**

<b>1. Institutional context (in February 2014)</b>	
<b>1.1 Ownership of the woodland(s)</b>	<p>Eighteen hectares of the 33 ha woodland is owned by Dunbar Community Development Company (DCDC), which is chaired by a Councillor. Dunbar Community Woodland Group (DCWG) manages this part of the woodland on behalf of DCDC. The remaining 15 ha of Lochend Wood is in private ownership.</p> <p><b>Classification of tenure: Ownership (by associated community body)</b></p>
<b>1.2 Access and use rights to the woodland(s)</b>	<p>Responsible public access (by foot, bicycle, horse or canoe) is guaranteed by the Land Reform Act.</p> <p>DCWG maintains the rights to all woodland products.</p> <p>Lochend Wood is surrounded by housing and split in half by an access road (to the housing estate). All entrances to the woodland therefore border directly to the public road. On-street visitor parking is available within the neighbouring housing estate.</p>

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<b>1.3 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the woodland(s)</b>	<p>The minimum legal requirements for H&amp;S, historic monuments and pest and diseases management as outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.</p> <p>DCDC management agreement.</p>
<b>2. Internal organisation of the group/enterprise</b>	
<b>2.1 Group members, representation and decision making</b>	<p>There are no restrictions on who is eligible to join the group. Nonetheless, the membership is exclusively based in Dunbar with the highest concentration of members residing in the housing estate directly adjacent to the woodland.</p> <p>DCWG offers two types of membership. Individual membership is £5 and a family membership is £10 p/annum. There are currently 88 paying members out of a total of 101 members (on a total population of c. 9,700).</p> <p>Decisions are made by the Committee of DCWG meeting on a monthly basis and members attending these meetings and the AGM.</p>
<b>2.2 Communication and learning processes</b>	<p>Communication to the membership proceeds via a bi-annual newsletter distributed to the email list of members. In addition to the newsletters, members are also informed by email about any group meetings, the AGM and events. Thereby, it is aimed to limit emails to a minimum in order not to overload people.</p> <p>To appeal to a wider audience, including non-members, events are also advertised via posters in the local supermarket, townhouse and library, a notice board at the town house and press releases sent to regional newspapers and radio stations. DCWG furthermore maintains a Facebook page, which is regularly updated with event information and reports including pictures. In the past, DCWG has distributed leaflets to local people to advertise the AGM. Telephone and email are used for communicating within the group of active members.</p> <p>DCWG has received peer evaluation from Community Woodlands Association (CWA) colleagues and, internally, from a highly skilled and knowledgeable tree surgeon.</p>

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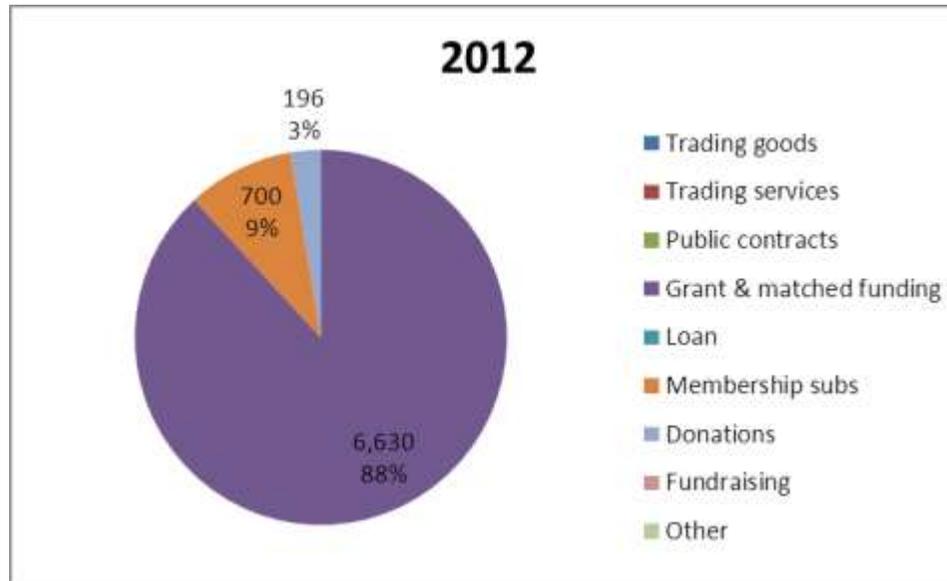
<p><b>2.3 Structure and legal status</b></p>	<p>DCWG is constituted as an unincorporated association with charitable status (SC034990). Dunbar Community Development Company is the name of the parent charity, constituted as a company limited by guarantee (SC182197) with charitable status (SC028313).</p> <p>The applications for some of the initial grant funds were made under the banner of DCDC, which was done based on the belief that a VAT registration was a necessary requirement to qualify for grant funding. As a result, DCWG occasionally needs to liaise with DCDC around the payment of large bills for activities such as path upgrading and paying a tree surgeon following storm damage.</p> <p><b>Classification of legal form: Charitable Unincorporated Association</b></p>
<p><b>2.4 Regulations/ responsibilities affecting the group/ enterprise</b></p>	<p>Charity Law, the terms and conditions of the management agreement with DCDC are the main responsibilities which structure the management and actions of the group.</p>
<p><b>2.5 Forest management objectives and planning procedures</b></p>	<p>The objectives of DCWG are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To manage Lochend Woods as a community resource.</li> <li>• To maximise potential for educational and recreational use.</li> <li>• To value and nurture wildlife.</li> <li>• To encourage all who use the woods to treat them with respect, to clear litter and to discourage damage to the trees and wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• To steward the environment, and maintain pathways and waterways.</li> <li>• To encourage group membership and conservation volunteering.</li> </ul> <p><b>Overall aim of plan: Public access and recreation</b></p>

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<b>2.6 Implementing the woodland management plan</b>	The management plan is implemented by volunteers of DCWG. Any large scale woodland works have been outsourced to contractors, which has been funded by FC Scotland's Wood In and Around Towns programme (WIAT).
<b>2.7 Business/ operating model and sustainability</b>	<p>DCWG does not have the intention to develop forest-related enterprise. However, in order to remain sustainable in the long run, DCWG is planning to generate an income from the sale of firewood, organizing training events, organizing other events such as weddings, and obtaining grant funding for small-scale woodland projects in the future.</p> <p>In 2012, the group received grant funding, which made up the majority of income (88%). Income from membership was lower than in the previous year, both absolutely and relatively (9%), whereas income from donations increased (3%). There was no income generated through fundraising.</p> <p>Figures for 2012 (the latest on record):</p>

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**2.8 Benefit distribution rules**

All income raised by DCWG is reinvested into forest management and/or forestry-related activities/events.

**3. External linkages**

**3.1 Partnerships and agreements**

DCWG has a partnership with Sustaining Dunbar around improving access to the woodland. This has resulted in the production of a Tree Quest leaflet with information on woodland walks, woodland features and a tree quest trail.

The group also has partnerships with Scottish Native Woods and Woodland Trust around the provision and planting of native trees in area of the woodland called the Learning Woods.

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	<p>There is a partnership with Dunbar Cycling Group around implementing a bicycle fitness track within the woodland.</p>
<p><b>3.2 Associations</b></p>	<p>DCWG is a member of the Community Woodland Association (CWA), which plays an important role in providing advice. One of DCWGs committee members also serves as Director on the CWA board. CWA has been especially important during the first years since forest acquisition through matching the group with potential funding sources.</p>
<p><b>4. Resources</b></p>	
<p><b>4.1 Forest/ woodland</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lochend wood is a 33 ha woodland of which 18ha is managed by DCWG and 15 ha is in private ownership.</li> <li>• The woodland is situated to the south of the old town of Dunbar. The woodland borders a recently developed housing estate to the east.</li> <li>• The woodland can be easily accessed from a variety of roads running through, or bordering the perimeter of, the forest. Although there is no main entrance with visitor parking, there is a main threshold sign at the junction of Kellie Road and Middlemass Road. These roads provide access to the housing estate and fragment the woodland. There is also an off-road track connecting the woodland to the town centre and the railway station. A formal and well-maintained path network can be found within the woodland, which includes a trim trail and a woodland trail (both described in the 'Tree Quest' leaflet). These routes include benches and bridges.</li> <li>• The predominant species is sycamore and ash. Other species include: elm, larch, pine and spruce, some lime, beech, birch and a few rowan and aspen, plus an alder nursery. Lochend wood also includes several older trees (yew, cedar, walnut &amp; grand fir) that are the remains of an old garden. Ground flora is patchy due to a dense forest canopy.</li> <li>• The majority of trees have been planted immediately after the Second World War and are now around 70</li> </ul>

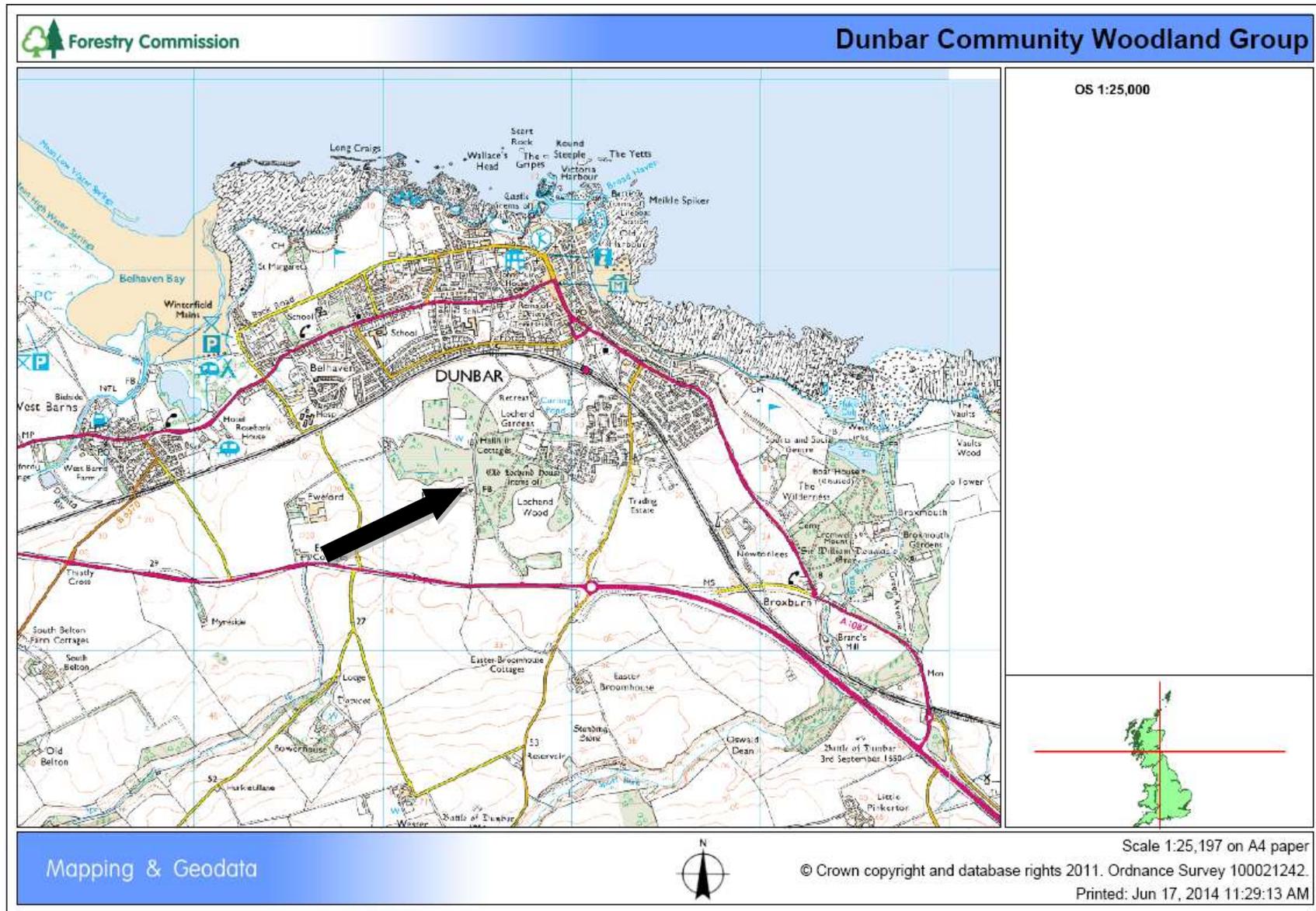
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	<p>years old. DCWG planted 600 native trees in 2011, and 50 Alders in the low lying wet area. and intends on keeping hazel and elder coppices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are several features of interest within Lochend Wood. These include a pond ('Lily Pond'), a relatively open wetland area ('the wilderness'), a play area, a cycle fitness track, a community gathering area with clay oven, the ruins of Lochend House, an old garden, the ruins of an old wash house and the John Muir stone.</li> <li>• <b>Classification of woodland type: Mixed mainly broadleaved</b></li> <li>• Following a period of neglect, Lochend Wood has been thinned after community acquisition. Deadwood has been removed for a period of time, but this practice is no longer permitted by DCWG.</li> <li>• Despite woodland neglect in the past, a high proportion of trees have well-formed stems. All dead and dangerous trees have been removed. Windthrow poses a problem for some of the large conifers, but it is hoped that the thinning operations will help counteracting this in the future.</li> <li>• Wildlife of interest includes: Roe deer, barn owl, sparrowhawk, buzzard, mallard, moorhen, great spotted woodpecker, goldcrest, chiffchaff, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch, siskin, bullfinch, and other bird species.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2 Woodland and group funding sources</b></p>	<p>DCDC acquired Lochend Wood after it was handed over by Hallhill development company following the development of the housing estate to the east of the woodland. This was part of the agreement that the development company signed when purchasing the land off the local authority. DCDC also received an endowment from the developer (£50,000) to be invested in the development of a path network and a play area. These funds have been mainly used to cover emergency expenses and large bills, such as remedial works on trees and path upgrades.</p> <p>Following acquisition, DCWG successfully applied to FCSs WIAT funding. Income from this was used towards</p>

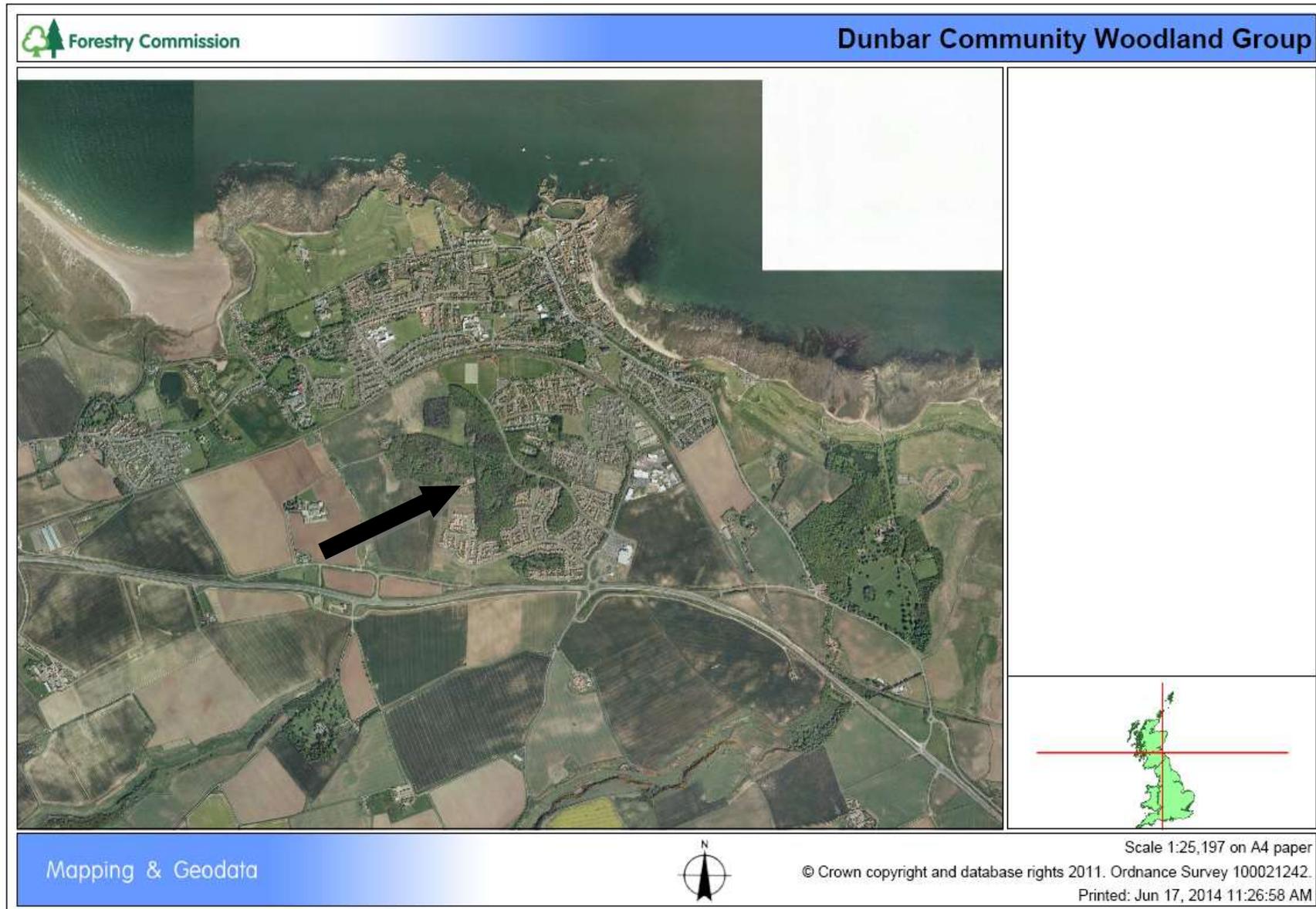
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	<p>thinning and felling of dead and dangerous trees, upgrading forest paths, rhododendron spraying, fixing of the commemorative plaque by the John Muir stone, purchase and erection of signs and barriers, purchase of a banner, purchase of a marquee for events and funding a consultant to manage the forestry work.</p> <p>Another large project was the implementation of a £17,600 cycle fitness track ('Pump Track'), which was carried out in collaboration with Dunbar Cycling Group and was funded by Viridor Credits.</p> <p>Other grant income has been received from Forestry Commission Scotland. The Community Seedcorn Fund was used towards providing courses and materials (e.g., building a clay oven, woodworking), whereas the Forestry for People Challenge Fund (£1,500) covered the purchase of small equipment for volunteer days (e.g., litter pickers, wheelbarrows, a small marquee) and a newsletter. Funding by British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) has accommodated tidying of the woods following the large-scale felling operation under the WIAT bid.</p> <p>Scottish Native Woods and The Woodland Trust have provided tree saplings without cost. DCWG has furthermore won £1,000 prize money by ending as runner-up in the Scottish Finest Woods Awards, which was spent on purchasing equipment.</p> <p>The accounts for DCDC show expenditure in 2013 was around £310,000 and income around £105,000. The accounts from DCWG show an income of around £38,000 and expenditure of £25,000 in 2013.</p>
<p><b>4.3 Knowledge, skills, human and social capital</b></p>	<p>The board of DCWG has a membership of people from a variety of professional backgrounds, mostly incomers. Group members have skills and expertise in Forest School education, woodworking, bird surveying, organizing community events, forestry, archaeology, mechanics and coordinating infrastructural projects. The Secretary of DCWG is also a Director of CWA, which is drawn upon as a useful forum for sharing ideas and gaining knowledge.</p> <p>Group members have attended training on volunteer coordination and practical woodworking skills.</p>

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## 2. Change Narrative

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

In 1998 Hallhill Ltd. acquired an area of land, including Lochend Wood, for the purpose of development. Following negotiations between East Lothian Council and Hallhill Ltd., permission for development was granted, provided that the existing forest would be preserved. Thereby, the Planning department successfully negotiated that ownership rights should be transferred to the community including an endowment by the developer.

Following this decision, a local councillor who was also a member of Dunbar Community Development Company (DCDC) approached a local person with the request if he would be prepared to start a woodland group. After a group of interested people had been identified by this individual, Dunbar Community Woodland Group (DCWG) was founded following a public meeting sponsored by East Lothian Council in 2000 (**informal enjoyment to group formation**).

Following group formation, it was anticipated that solicitors employed by Hallhill Ltd. and DCDC would arrange the transfer of ownership quickly. However, these negotiations did not take place until 2007 due to successful attempts of Hallhill Ltd. to stall the transfer of ownership. This was done to maintain the opportunity of installing new utilities and/or services if required. Therefore, it was not until April 2007, before the community acquired the forest (**group formation to full management**).

Between 2000 en 2007 DCWG had not been dormant, although it was limited in the variety of activities it could carry out. Amongst activities undertaken during this time were litter picking and the organisation of community events. A woodland management plan was also prepared with support of Reforesting Scotland. The objectives of this plan were informed by a community consultation exercise for which use was made of questionnaires and a participatory appraisal.

Following community acquisition of Lochend Woods, DCWG was successful in applying to WIAT funding. Thereby, it is likely one of the few community woodland groups who successfully applied to this fund since only woodlands in close proximity to a town

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qualified for this fund. The WIAT funding, combined with income from smaller grant funding, the sale of timber and the endowment from Hallhill, provided the main sources of income used towards forest management by the group.

The woodland is formally in ownership of DCDC, which is the parent company of DCWG. In May 2007 DCDC and DCWG signed a management agreement which, amongst other matters, states that DCWG is permitted to undertake all management activities. A revised agreement was signed in April 2014.

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

### Facilitating factors

- Crucial to ownership has been **the agreement between the local authority and the developer to transfer ownership of the woodland, including an endowment, to the community.**
- The **outsourcing of legal and financial matters to the parent charity**, DCDC, has facilitated the process of transferring ownership. In line with the management agreement, DCDC also provides public liability insurance.
- **Advice from the Community Woodland Association (CWA) on potential funding sources**, including WIAT, to which the group successfully applied.
- **The availability of a forestry consultant**, funded as part of the WIAT-bid, who provided a consultancy service on preparing the documentation required for the WIAT-application.
- **Active recruitment of new members** through distributing membership forms to public buildings such as the library, advertising on the website and creating leaflets (e.g., 'Tree Quest').
- Advice from Forestry Commission and Reforesting Scotland on how to set up a constitution for the woodland group.

### Barriers

- Although DCDC played an instrumental role in securing the woodland for the community, it sometimes also acts as a barrier to engagement. That is, DCWG have experienced **difficulties in the communication with their parent charity**

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around such issues as the provision of public liability insurance, the sharing of certified accounts, the agenda for meetings and the updating of the management plan. This has resulted in uncertainty and delays in decision-making. To improve this situation, DCWG intends on including a clause in the management agreement stating that DCWG may appoint a representative to represent their interests as a Director on the DCDC-board.

- In the past, engagement as well as group development has been frustrated by **the lengthy time frame associated with the transfer of woodland ownership from the developer to DCWG**. This has constrained woodland management for many years and discouraged some of the group members from getting actively involved in the early days.
- **Decreasing membership numbers** and **lack of response by members to requests for renewal of membership or payment of membership fees**.
- DCWG is currently in the transition from the woodland investment stage to the woodland maintenance stage. As a result, there is only **a limited number of available funding schemes** that can be applied to in regard to woodland management.
- Due to the location of the woodland close to a housing estate, DCWG has experienced several **conflicts with local people**. For example, there have been issues with illegal timber extraction for private purposes, and associated with that, damage to the paths due to motorized vehicles. There have also been instances of fly tipping and illegal fires. Furthermore, there have been complaints by local people about overhanging branches or, conversely, the removal of trees. There has also been one instance of private garden encroachment into the forest. DCWG aims to deal with these situations through communicating with the people involved and putting up notices outlining the woodland policy.

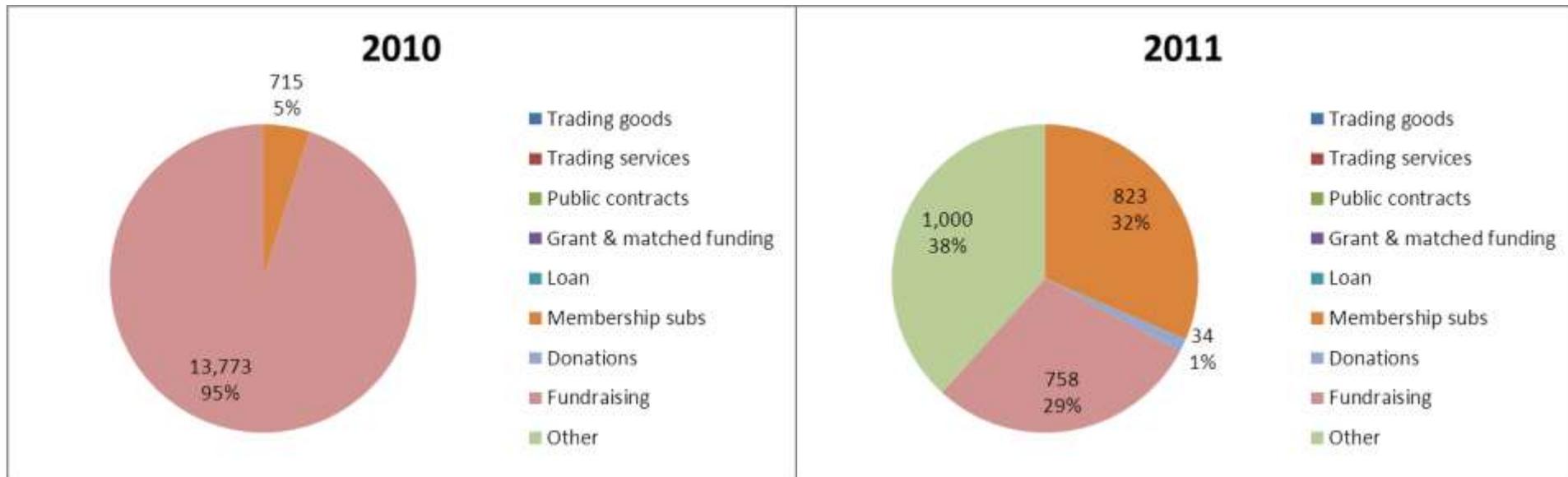
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### 3. Evolution of income streams

Accounts for from the period between 2010 and 2012 show marked contrasts in the distribution of income streams over the years. In 2010, the majority of income was received from fundraising (95%). Note, this comprises all income from timber trading as a result of thinning carried out as part of the WIAT agreement, which was classified as fundraising. The remainder of income was from membership subscriptions (incl. donations). Since 2010, income from timber, firewood and wood products has been negligible. In 2011 income was relatively low and, as a result, the largest income source was a financial reward for being

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runner-up in Scottish Finest Wood competition (39%). Other sources of income were membership subscriptions (31%) and fundraising / events (29%). There was a small income from donations (3%).



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

Early records from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century show the area on which the current woodland is situated to be in the ownership of the Barony of Lochend. Several noble families owned the woodland before it was sold to a local farmer, in addition to the farms of Eweford and Hallhill, in 1947. Originally planted in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the woodland was clearfelled during Second World War, with exception of an old garden. Most of the current woodland was planted immediately after the Second World War.

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In 1997, Hallhill Developments Ltd. purchased the woodland and surrounding farmland to construct a new housing estate, a hotel and a golf course. As part of this development, a woodland strip was cleared for an access road. Hallhill was not permitted to build any houses in the forest and agreed with funding the construction of a path network and play area in the forest in order to improve access and recreation.

In 2000, Dunbar Community Woodland Group (DCWG) was founded to take on the management of Lochend Woods. It was, however, not until 2007 before community ownership of the forest was achieved. The outline of the current woodland still follows that of the original forest planted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
17 <sup>th</sup> century – 1947	Several noble families	Managed as a country estate	Planting in late 18 <sup>th</sup> century; Clearfelling during WW2, with exception of trees in (old) garden	
1948 - 1998	Local farmer	Woodland part of the farm, surrounded by cultivated fields.	Tree planting	Until 1998, access to the woods was discouraged by a gamekeeper employed by the landowner
1997 - 2007	Hallhill Developments Ltd.	Building a housing estate, hotel and golf course	Constructing an access road to housing estate splitting the woodland	Woodland open for access to the public.

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

Since Lochend Woods was acquired by DCDC in 2007, the DCWG has engaged in thinning and felling operations, in addition to other woodland management activities to sustainability of the forest and improve access and recreation. To improve biodiversity, the group has planted c. 600 native trees, donated by Scottish Native Woods and the Woodland Trust, in a

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clearfelled area, and a further 200 in other parts of the woods, in collaboration with pupils from Dunbar Grammar school. Thereby, it has also undertaken woodland maintenance activities (e.g., controlling encroachment of understory to paths, remedial work on trees) and wildlife monitoring (i.e., bird survey).

DCWG has facilitated the development of a woodland bicycle fitness track; a project initiated by Dunbar Cycling Group. DCWG provided an area of land and facilitated the preparation of the grant application to Viridor community landfill tax. To involve, entertain and educate the community, DCWG regularly organizes events such as Easter egg hunts, open air performances and courses on woodworking, stool making and building a clay oven. Most of these events are held in the 'gathering space', which the group created as a space for the community to meet. In partnership with Sustaining Dunbar, DCWG also developed a Tree Quest leaflet providing information on two woodland walks, features of interest and a tree quest trail with different tree and bird species that visitors can tick off when visiting the woods.

Time Period	Owner/Manager	Objectives / Benefits (and evidence)	Major operations	Access and use rights
2007 -	DCDC/DCWG	Public access and recreation  Improve biodiversity  Education and quality of life (programme of events, Tree Quest leaflet)	Thinning, remedial works on trees, path upgrades, construction of a cycle fitness track, installation of new signs and fences, constructing a cob oven.  Planting of native trees  Programme of (training) events, creation of 'Learning Wood'	Land Reform Act

## 6. Future Plans

DCWG is currently in the process of preparing a new management plan as the current one (2003-2007) is outdated. Compared to the previous plan, the focus of the new plan will be more strongly on managing the woodland as a community resource, partly given issues with timber taken out by private individuals. The group aims to continue to focus management activities on maximizing the amenity value of the woodland. One of the ways in which this may be done is through putting in a trim trail for which plans are currently being developed. The group has also applied to Paths for Life for a grant to fund path upgrades.

A future source of income to the group might come from community events in the gathering area of the woodland. This summer, Lochend Wood will host its first woodland wedding and the group hopes to raise funds through donations by guests and leasing out a marquee.

It is believed that the recent decline in membership numbers could be counteracted by doing more to engage the current membership. Options that are considered by DCWG are providing presentations on the AGM, better communication of events and undertaking a survey. DCWG considers appointing a PR-person to manage these and other outreach activities. In addition, DCWG aims to develop more greenwood and Bushcraft activities, as well as more social activities. There are also plans to incentivise the use of the community cob oven by offering its use as 'free to members'.

## 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)
2000	Public event organized by East Lothian Council	INFORMAL ENJOYMENT to GROUP FORMATION	To discuss the potential of community ownership	Involvement of local people in woodland through events (programme of events)	Litter picking	Baseline
2007	Community ownership of the woodland	GROUP FORMATION to FULL MANAGEMENT	To manage the woodland in the interest of the local community	Education and skills (programme of (training) events)	Thinning and felling, path improvements, new visitor facilities, erection of signs and fences, planting of native trees, construction of a cycle fitness track	Receipt of grant funding and endowment (accounts)